

**The
Writings
of
*W. Carl Ketcherside***

Volume 1 • Essays

Mission Messenger
1957–1975

Stone-Campbell *e*-Prints

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

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As indicated by its subtitle, this volume contains a presentation of the essays of W. Carl Ketcherside published in his journal, *Mission Messenger*, from 1957 through 1975, and are arranged by volume in chronological order. An alphabetical index of titles and an index of topics, linked to a topical index of essays, has been added.

Although Ketcherside wrote dozens of essays for journals other than his own— most of which are included in Volume 3 of this series— the fundamental ideas of his thinking are all set forth in the contents of this volume.

While this publication has altered nothing of substance in Ketcherside's essays, minor changes have been made to accommodate the electronic version of the text, such as the spacing around em dashes. An occasional footnote has been added to identify sources from which Ketcherside quoted, and long quotations have been set in block format— something Ketcherside did often, but not always.

Neither this publication nor any of the essays it contains are restricted by copyright. They may be republished in any format without further permission.

In closing this brief preface, I wish to acknowledge a personal debt of gratitude to Natalie Murrie, a retired college professor, for her tireless effort in digitizing the entire contents of *Mission Messenger* for 1957 through 1975. This volume is the beneficiary of her work. It was Professor Murrie's initiative that prompted the creation of the Unity-in-Diversity.org website,

over twenty-five years ago, where most of Ketcherside's post-1955 works were posted. That site continues to be accessible at the time of this writing.

Editor, Stone-Campbell *e*-Prints
May 24, 2024

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MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1957)

Volume 19

Thoughts on Fellowship

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THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE (1)

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The little congregation of disciples of the Master now numbered thirty-two and it was no longer possible for them to meet in private homes with any degree of comfort. It was decided to try and secure a plain, modest house which was more commodious. While the band of saints was considering purchasing a dwelling and removing the partitions, they learned of a religious organization that was erecting a large brick structure, and consequently had listed for sale the smaller building where they met. After some negotiation the congregation secured an option on it, and after several months of waiting, the building was turned over to them.

All who could do so worked on it day and night, thoroughly renovating it, and making such repairs as were requisite. On Saturday night all assembled in it, and the evangelist suggested that they express their gratitude unto God for the grace which had bestowed upon them the greater responsibility and enlarged opportunities of the new location. The entire group kneeled and one after another the brethren voiced their thanksgivings.

When the prayers were concluded and all were again seated, the evangelist stated that there were practical matters which needed attention. While the building was in no sense the house of God, since God's house was composed of living stones,

it would reflect to the community the attitude of those who used it. If the place could be kept neat and attractive, it would have a salutary effect. He said that slovenliness was not simplicity, nor was slouchiness humility.

Since every member would derive equal benefit from use of the property, each should share in the responsibility of upkeep. Accordingly, he suggested that each spring and autumn, on a day appointed, all gather to thoroughly clean the premises. In the meantime, he had prepared a list of the twelve months, and he desired that each one affix his name to one of those months, and during the month selected, he would be responsible for upkeep of the building. He pointed out that since all service was ministry, that all could minister in this regard.

A brother then asked about securing an appropriate sign for the front of the building. The evangelist asked for an expression from the body and a majority indicated that they favored it. A brother then asked what wording should appear upon it. To this, another replied that after hearing the discussion with the Methodist preacher, he had done a lot of thinking, and he was convinced that the word “church” did not correctly represent the original, and he felt that if we were going to try and restore the primitive order of things, we ought to have the courage to break with tradition and not try to perpetuate another sect. He further said he was not convinced we did not sometimes make a sectarian usage out of a scriptural designation.

A brother “who had formerly been a member in a southern state said he thought we ought to put up a sign saying “The Church of Christ” because that was the way they always did it where he came from. The previous speaker said that expression was not in the Bible at all, although in some versions certain congregations were several times called “the churches of Christ,” just as the same congregations were several times called “the churches of God” and once, “the churches of the saints.” In

view of this, he felt that to select one designation and copyright it as an exclusive title, would be to sectarianize it, and brand us as just another denomination.

A sister said that if they put “Church of God” on the sign, they would be confused with another organization by the same name. A brother replied that recently two groups had united under the title “United Church of Christ” so if we used the title “Church of Christ” there would be more confusion, and moreover, he did not want to always be answering the question as to whether we were “united” or not.

The evangelist listened quietly while the exchange was going on, until a brother asked him how the early congregations met this problem. He replied that the primitive communities of the saints did not exhibit such signs for several reasons. In the first place, they were looked upon as enemies of the state, to be persecuted and hounded to death. Instead of marking their places of assembly, they did their best to keep them secret, stealing away under cover of darkness, to caves and dens, or to underground catacombs, to worship among the skeletons of the dead.

Moreover, the early Christians had not yet made the error of erecting buildings in which to proclaim the gospel to the world. Their homes and upper rooms were for the edification of the body. They met to worship, and scattered to preach the gospel, so it was not necessary that the public know where they met.

A sister asked how one from a distant nation would locate the meeting place of Christians in such a large city as Rome or Ephesus, where the place must be kept secret through fear of death. The evangelist said that one of the earliest symbols of direction was the figure of a fish. Even before the apostles died, it is apparent that the Christians were chalking the figure of a fish on walls and fences, and by following the direction in which the

head of the fish pointed, one might discover the secret place of assembly. He pointed out that the fish was connected with the life of Jesus and the apostles in many ways and upon many occasions, and Christianity was viewed as a life promoted by fishermen who had been made “fishers of men.” Another thing which popularized the fish as a symbol was the fact that “fish” was spelled in the Greek with five letters, and these formed an acrostic with the initial letters of the words “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” The sign of the fish can still be seen on the walls of the cavernous catacombs, drawn there by the hands of Christians during the Roman persecutions.

One of the brethren remarked that conditions had certainly changed when the congregation could now meet openly under protection of the government, and discuss putting up a sign to inform the world where Christians met. He felt they might make the most of such an opportunity to let men know that there still existed those who were one in spirit with the saints of the catacombs, and he suggested that the evangelist express his idea of how a sign might be worded. The evangelist said he did not wish to force his ideas upon the brethren. He quoted, “Not that we are masters of your faith, but we are helpers of your joy; for by faith you stand.” The little group unanimously requested him to give his ideas.

The evangelist said that it was what the congregation did when they assembled at the place, which would merit the approval or disapprobation of God, and that God would not look at a sign on the building to determine if the congregation was his or not. However, it would not be right to erect a sign that was misleading. He said that so many are influenced by tradition and sectarian practices about them, it required real courage to break away. Few had that courage, and he was not certain that the congregation there possessed the bravery of the Christians in the catacombs.

He had listened with interest to the discussion, but so far

the brethren had missed the whole point. They had been discussing not a designation for the building, but for the congregation. He held that the congregation of the saints had no official name. He asked them to think of these statements:

1. It is scriptural to designate the congregation by any term used in the sacred scriptures.

2. It is unscriptural to designate the congregation by any term not used in the sacred scriptures.

3. It is sectarian in tendency to select one term to the exclusion or derogation of any other term or terms employed in the sacred scriptures.

The congregation of saints, popularly referred to as “the church” is composed of living stones, the members of the body. The congregation is in the city seven days per week. It is just as much the body of the Christ on Wednesday morning, when some of its members are at school, others in offices, shops, homes, or filling stations, as when met together. We do not destroy, disband or divide the body of God’s Son, when we dismiss them from the assembly. They are as much a unit after they are dispersed to their several homes as when sitting together in the meeting place. To put such a term as “Church of Christ” on a meeting house, must mean one of two things: either the building of wood or stone is the “church;” or else the members only constitute the body when in that building, thus Jesus is left without a body most of the time. Either position is grossly misleading.

The evangelist pointed out that it was not our business to select a designation for the congregation. The Holy Spirit had already used all such terms as were divinely authorized, and we should neither add others to them, nor subtract any from them. But we might well select a designation for the building in which the congregation would assemble, and in doing so we ought first

to consider what information a sign should convey. He believed it might designate the building so it could be easily located, give its nature, use, and the purpose of those who met there. Under no circumstance should a sign make it appear that any child of God was excluded. It should convey no sense of sectarian bigotry and intolerance.

One of the sisters said that such a sign as suggested would have to be quite large. The evangelist replied that was not required. Insofar as location was concerned, the building was located on Walnut Street. The word “chapel” means “a place of worship, especially Christian worship.” By calling the place “Walnut Street Chapel” it would be easily located. He suggested the words, “A congregation of Christians meet here for worship” would specify the use of the building, and the quotation from Paul, “We are your servants for Jesus’ sake” would indicate the brethren were there to serve and not to be served. The evangelist sketched the sign on the blackboard:

Walnut Street Chapel

A congregation of Christians meets here for worship

“We are your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

The members of the body studied it carefully. One brother said he liked it because it had no sectarian implications at all, and no one could brand those who met as anything except “a congregation of Christians.” This would be no reflection against any person on earth. Another brother said he could see the wisdom of designating *the place without trying to name the congregation*. You do not direct strangers to the congregation but to the place where they meet. He said he was thinking that the apostle Paul could have put under the sign “School of Tyrannus” the words, “A congregation of Christians meets here for worship.” It was agreed to post a neatly painted sign with this wording.

IS THE WAR OVER?

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

While the hearts of men fail them for fear, as the shadow of war hovers over the earth, it is a startling phenomenon to notice the unconcern and indifference of those who profess to be soldiers of the cross, toward the mighty conflict in which they are purportedly engaged. It is said that the tyrant, Nero, fiddled while Rome burned. During the last world war, the citizens of Alexandria drank liquor and danced in their night clubs while the reverberations of the big guns shook the city from Cyrenaica. In the midst of the titanic struggle for right today, our brethren have time for the golf links, the bowling alleys, television buffoons and cinematic comics. Thousands are dying all about them and are doomed to hell. The brethren are fiddling while the world burns!

On one side of this war of the ages is the arch-fiend of the universe. Clever, cunning, scheming and sly, Satan plots his attack and plans his blitzkrieg. He is flanked by all the demons of hell, masters of infiltration. These trained spies from Tartarus are conversant with every human weakness. They are fully aware of the love for ease, luxury and popularity, which motivate so many. They can play any tune upon the strings of the heart, which the mood of the minute demands.

This concourse of diabolical geniuses has lulled the opposition into sleep. They have administered a sleeping potion

which has produced a state of lethargy. While “Christians” slumber, their armament is being stolen or sabotaged. Most men are lazy. They are spiritual “gold bricks,” passing the buck to others. The result is that a state of uneasy truce exists. A tacit agreement has been made to let the devil alone if he will leave us alone. He is perfectly agreeable to such an arrangement. Any cessation of hostilities is a victory for the forces of evil.

The congregation of saints in these days acts as if a permanent peace pact had been signed. They are conducting themselves as men on leave. But there can be no real truce with Satan. The battle is incessant. It is a gruelling hand-to-hand fight with swords— bloody, dirty, hard! It is not for namby-pamby, coddled, weak-stomached, spoiled babies. It is not a “Children’s Crusade.” It is for soldiers who are grown up, emotionally mature, willing to endure hardships, to suffer and die for a cause. It is for men who can be reviled, maligned, misunderstood, betrayed and hated, yet who will dare to stand with their backs against the rocky ramparts of Jerusalem and swing the sword until death relaxes the grip.

The devil has infiltrated the congregation with his own fifth column. There are too many in it who just “belong.” They didn’t know there was a fight on. They thought they were enrolling for a Sunday School picnic. The devil persuaded them to “join up” at a time of great emotional stress. They were high-pressured in by a professional recruiting agent who enlisted them with promises of how pleasant and sweet life would be. The life in the foxholes is not for them. They want cushioned pews, soft carpets, ice water fountains and air conditioning on the battlefield. They want to loll back and doze in comfort while their hired champion swings a few ineffective blows at an invisible enemy.

How Satan must laugh in his headquarters tent. He never made a bolder stroke nor pulled a slicker coup, than when he convinced the “followers of the Lamb” to move the battle off the field and into the house. And when his demons collected up all

the swords, and put little pre-digested pellets of God's revelation in their stead, he rendered the soldiers helpless. You could study the average "class quarterlies" for a quarter of a century, and be just as much of a push over for the devil as when you started. He has taken away our guns and given us cap pistols, he has substituted pea shooters for heavy armament. How it must scare the legion of demons when a company of Christian soldiers line up against them and aim water pistols in their direction.

The army is infested with a horde of people who do not know which side they are on. They vacillate back and forth, hunting a lieutenant who suits them, looking for a preacher to please them. Some who fight for years, grow old and get tired, then sell out and desert to the enemy. Weak as dish water without detergent, they are ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. To them principle means nothing. They have no positive convictions. They are impotent, feeble, defenceless and wishy-washy. They want the whole army to stop fighting and baby them. They would turn the elders into nursemaids instead of field directors. They did not enlist to serve but to be served. They built upon a foundation of sand and they cannot stand the roar and shock of battle. They are spectators, mess hall soldiers. They do not intend to face the sulphurous, fiery darts of the wicked.

Many of our brethren are like little boys playing at war with broomsticks for guns and kitchen chairs for fortresses. They expect Satan to fall over and play dead when they yell "Bang!" They do not attend services as those who go to an ammunition depot to load up for combat. They go like those who belong to the country club or a high school fraternity. They have no thought of slogging with wet feet through sleet and snow on the front lines, of standing watch through the dark night at some disputed barricade, of creeping and slithering under the barbed wire of sin with the acrid smell of smoke in the nostrils and the groans of the dying in the ears.

They have sheathed their swords, buried the hatchet and smoked the calumet of peace with the emissaries of hell! The white flag is flying! We've learned how to negotiate with the devil, and outsmart him at his own game. We've placed diplomats in the pulpits and all we need to do is to make ourselves comfortable and let them explain the terms of the compromise. War is now civilized. The devil has been tamed and pacified. Hell isn't hot any longer. There's nothing to get excited about. Anyone who still insists on wielding the sword is a fanatic, a hobbyist and a radical. The fangs of the Old Serpent have been extracted. The teeth of the Dragon have been pulled. It's easy now. The baptistery is ready, the water is warmed, it will only take five minutes and the battle will be over and the victory won! There will be nothing left to do except "go to church" and pay!

Statement of Fact

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

With this issue we begin our nineteenth year of publication. It is not certain how much longer we can continue. A comparison of printing costs with those of eighteen years ago will show what fantastic price increases have occurred. This paper was originally started to provide news of spiritual activities, especially in Missouri. As the circle of readers increased we were forced to extend our coverage. Contacts made in Great Britain and elsewhere in 1947 and 1951 proved there was even an interest abroad in some of the subjects with which we were occupied.

Work among the congregations gradually convinced us that the significance of the restoration movement was lost. The brethren generally assumed that the efforts of Campbell, Stone and their contemporaries, had taken us all of the way from Babylon to Jerusalem in one magnificent leap. As a result we were fast becoming merely another sect, bigoted, intolerant, narrow and factious. A letter from the aged Gilbert O. Nations stated that if he had his life to live over, he would dedicate it wholly to helping complete the unfinished work of the pioneers of restoration.

Through long prayer and intense study we became convinced that a program of wide diversification would accomplish but little in our remaining years. We decided to

concentrate our feeble talents upon the two greatest themes which can challenge the thinking of mortals— the restoration of the ancient order and the unity of all believers in Jesus, the Messiah. Our efforts have not met with unqualified success. Most of the brethren are satisfied to “settle on their lees,” being convinced that they are the special recipients of divine grace, and all others are sectarian except themselves. So long as we write pungent articles about the errors of others, we are hailed as brilliant and courageous defenders of the faith, but when we point out our own frailties and inconsistencies, we are losing our mind and becoming a traitor to the cause. The binding power of traditionalism is seen every day.

If we were content to make this little journal an organ for a faction, we could at least be popular with the constituency of that faction. But we are convinced that the party spirit is a work of the flesh, and in the same category as adultery, fornication and murder. Every faction has its paper; we are resolved that here is one paper which will not have its faction. But the party spirit is so prevalent, that it may be that a paper pleading for restoration and unity cannot have enough friends to survive.

Any paper of this nature must depend upon its friends. Nell and I have been careful not to take one cent from the subscriptions or gifts in the entire eighteen years. In that period, uncounted hours have gone into this work of faith and labor of love. But we have been able to carry on only because of the generosity of those who believe in what we are trying to accomplish.

Few of our preaching brethren ever send in a list of readers. Many of them do not even keep their own subscriptions paid up. We hear from them infrequently, and generally when a successful meeting has been held. We rejoice to report their good work and it thrills our souls when they accomplish something worthwhile for the Christ. We wish that even those who do not bother to read the paper would let us share in both their seasons

of sorrow and rejoicing. We love the brethren.

It would amaze you how few congregations ever announce that a subscription list is being made up for the paper, and that those who desire it may give their subscriptions to a certain brother. That is about all it would take to get a list, for many will subscribe if they do not have to exert the energy to mail it in personally. We asked an elder in one congregation in Missouri if he would announce about the paper, and he said he would take it up with the other elders. In a few days I got a letter stating they thought it best not to announce about the paper. In a postscript, he added, "We are enclosing an announcement of our annual all-day meeting, which we would like to have you put in the paper if you have space." We found space, because Nell and I believe in the "golden rule." Not many in his congregation saw the announcement though.

We are now operating each month at a loss. We will not be able to do that much longer. A careful evaluation of our needs indicates that to survive we need to get a thousand new subscriptions this year. The sooner we do so, the easier it will be. We have decided to break the total down so more people can help, if they wish to do so. If *ten* brethren will each volunteer to get 25 subscriptions; if *twenty-five* others will get 10 each; and if *one hundred* will send 5 each— the task will be completed. Of course, every subscription will help!

We would like to have you send a list of names with correct addresses. If you cannot do that, and want to help, we'll add names from our waiting list. Last month alone, Nell and I added 45 names at our own expense. Some of you who get the paper without having subscribed, will know it is because of our interest, or that of a good friend or brother. We hope you'll enjoy reading this little journal. In ten years, we have sent 24,000 copies to lands across the sea, and with few exceptions have borne the full cost. Talmage Weekley has been a faithful helper in this work.

It is not our intention to write congregations about the paper. If brethren, in reading this, are not sufficiently motivated to aid in building up the list, we will continue as long as possible, then conclude that God's will is being done in our cessation, as we feel it was in our publication. We believe in doing the best we can with what we have, and when we can no longer do one thing, we shall not be embittered, but will merely turn our attention to other worthy channels. For several years we have needed a new addressing machine to simplify and ease the burden, and we've prayed that we might see our way clear to getting one. Since we could not, we've merely tightened up the old one and gone ahead.

We do not regret that we cannot compromise our convictions to please any of the various factions among the brethren. We love all men with a deep and abiding affection, and we crave the fellowship and brotherhood of all upon the basis of a covenant relationship with God. We cherish for all the freedom that is in Jesus the Christ, and we shall contend earnestly for the truth as we understand it. If such a program merits your confidence, and commends itself to your heart, we trust you will help provide readers for it.

Law and Love

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

Man was made in the image of God, but that image in man was polluted, corrupted and shattered by the impact of sin. The restoration of man to his former guiltless state is the whole theme and purpose of divine revelation. Man could no more restore himself than he could make himself in the beginning. It required creation for his advent into the world; it required a new creation to make Him once more worthy to talk with God.

The revelation of God is perfectly adapted to serve that great end. The motives which are held forth in it are the highest and most compelling ever conceived; its precepts are exalting to the human spirit; the rewards which are offered will challenge man to extend the greatest effort and make the greatest sacrifice.

Conformity to the spirit of this revelation will transform man and render him capable of walking with God. It will restore that fellowship which was rudely severed by sin in the primeval garden, and open the gate to the tree of life. The flaming sword of the cherub will be sheathed and the hand which held it will conduct man to the glory from which he was previously debarred.

Nothing else, then, can be so important as the familiarizing of ourselves with the great truths revealed, by which we can again bask in the sunshine of divine favor and find grace to help

in time of need. This is not the task of a special group or a special clique. It is the sacred responsibility of every human being. We will not be judged in the final accounting, upon what some uninspired man has written, said or done, but upon what God has spoken in His Word. It is the bread and water of life, and we can no more sustain our spiritual beings by hearing someone talk about it, than we can remain physically alive by listening to one describe the blessings of food and drink. The word must be imbibed, digested and assimilated. It does not merely provide a way of life—it is life!

And it should be remembered that it is the word of God of which we must personally partake. A cookbook may describe methods of preparation, arouse gustatory anticipation and encourage you to try a recipe. But you do not eat the cookbook! So one may read about the Bible, he may devour the contents of numerous books which describe and picture it, but it is only the sacred writings which will produce a healthy personality. All other books are dead or dying because they are written by dying men; the Bible alone is a living word because it is written by the Living God!

The new covenant writings contain the sheet anchor of our liberty. To desert them means to revert to a state of slavery or spiritual peonage. Our hope of a better world and a better life is wrapped up in those pages. It is inconceivable that the Creator who designed the intricate synchronization of the planets, who made the majestic machine called the human body, who devised the life-giving processes called photosynthesis, would give us a revelation calculated to bring us into a state of harmony with the Infinite, and yet allow it to be so casual, haphazard and unsystematic, as to defy human reason to fathom or untangle.

Nor does this demand a legalistic declaration of every minute and microscopic detail. Those who spend their lives in seeking to bind upon their fellows the hair-splitting technicalities woven out of the gossamer thread of imagination and

speculation miss the majesty of the design of heaven as far as those who disregard it entirely and invent new approaches to fellowship which heaven never authorized. The first defeats the purpose of fellowship by rigid fences which would debar many whom God accepts; the second by removing all barriers to include those whom God rejects.

More than anything else in these days we need a wholesome, pure and consistent attitude toward God's revelation. It is the constitution of our absent King; by it He exercises authority over human hearts. Let us once be convinced of this fact and many of the schismatic problems of yesterday will disappear. The law of our Lord exercised in reverence for Him and in charity for our fellows, will restore us to Him and to each other that we may "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Freedom In Christ

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

No innovation has ever been introduced into the church of God by an avowed enemy of truth. Every digression which has turned the community of saints into a battleground of intestine strife was led by those who thought they were doing God service. The sincerity of man is no guarantee of his spiritual rightness. This solemn fact should give rise to sober judgment. Every man should weigh his own actions in the light of this historical truth and remember that nobler and wiser men than himself have gone astray. Good intentions will not necessarily protect against deviation from and destruction of the faith.

Those who are inclined to follow men because of their manifest abilities, skills, wisdom or humility, should proceed cautiously in view of the wrecks which line the highway of life. We should carefully weigh what men say in the scales of divine revelation. Too often we measure the teaching of the Bible by what a favorite preacher says, instead of measuring what he teaches by what the Bible says! A commentary is good if used as a commentary instead of a yardstick; a paper such as this one is good if used as a medium of stimulating thought instead of as a criterion.

In short, we should not be led to question the motives of all who differ from our position. We should not assume that others are dishonest simply because they disagree with us, or vice versa.

We should not measure them by ourselves, nor should we measure ourselves by them. To do so is to demonstrate a woeful lack of wisdom. But we should be reluctant to follow any person on earth. No man among us is perfect in all matters. All of us lack knowledge in some fields, all of us lack some knowledge in all fields. Preachers may be conscientious, earnest, sincere— *and wrong!* Religious papers but express the sentiments of their editors and contributors. They are all beset with human failings. They must not become measuring reeds!

No good man will want other men to follow him blindly; anyone who does so is not a good man. Our task is to teach men to read, think and speak for themselves. Each person, regardless of how lowly or uneducated, must formulate his own convictions. The ecclesia of God is in a healthy state when men question, challenge and test their leaders; nothing is so detrimental to spiritual welfare as a supine state of resignation in which we are robots instead of robust men. Exercise your freedom and you will keep it; allow it to die and you will die with it!

Grilling the Editor

Mission Messenger (February 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

(Editor's Note. The following recorded interview may be of some interest to our readers. It represents my reply to questions proposed relative to my views on current topics. We trust that you will give the article a careful reading.)

1. I have noted the repeated usage of the term "restoration" in your writings. What do you mean by this expression?

By the term "restoration" I mean the full and complete return to the ancient order as established by our Lord through his holy apostles; that is, the reinstatement upon this earth of the community of saints as originally planted in conformity with the purpose of heaven.

2. Does this mean that you consider that no existing religious organization has yet achieved that goal?

Exactly! We have not yet arrived at the place where any congregation or group of congregations can assert that they represent the primitive order in its fulness. There remains yet much land to be conquered.

3. Why is a restoration necessary in the first place?

The ancient order began to be corrupted even during the

days of the apostles. Paul declared while he was yet alive that “the mystery of iniquity” was already working. The plan of God was obscured, the sun was eclipsed, and the congregation forced to “flee into the wilderness.” The actual bondage in spiritual Babylon lasted for 1260 years, before the first rays of light began once more to penetrate the darkness. We are not yet completely free from the influence of Babylon.

4. Is this attempt at restoration a new thing?

Not at all. It began in England with such men as John Wycliffe in the fifteenth century, and was carried forward by Martin Luther in Germany in the sixteenth century. While these and their contemporaries were actually reformers of the existing order, they laid the ground-work for such men as Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone, et al., who actually sought to go back beyond the Roman and Protestant schisms, and restore the original order as ordained by God. Our efforts are enriched by their discoveries of the last century.

5. Has progress in restoration been as rapid in the last fifty years as before?

Not at all! Those who were the spiritual descendants of the men mentioned made the mistake of thinking that they had taken them all the way back to the original, and thus they have rested on the oars, and spent most of the last half century trying to defend what they already have and wrangling with each other over what it is.

6. What has been the end of all previous reformation and restoration attempts?

Every such attempt has invariably ended up by producing another sect, generally more narrow, intolerant and uncharitable than those which have preceded it.

7. Do you see any tendencies to indicate that the movement for restoration which was launched a century ago may suffer the same fate?

Indeed, the most casual observer can detect such portents upon every side. The aim of Campbell and his fellows was to unite all true believers in Christ in one body. Their descendants are themselves fractured into some twenty-five factions, each one of which proclaims it is the only faithful body on earth today, and designates all of the others as sects.

8. What real contributions to restoration were made by the Campbells?

They contributed much by their discovery that the blessings of God were contingent upon His ordinances. Thus they recaptured from error the place, nature, purpose and design of baptism, as well as the relationship of the Lord's Supper to the community of the saints. They also began a work of rescue for some of the terms used by the Holy Spirit which had been much abused in the sectarian jargon of the day. We can never be too grateful to these pioneers who blazed the trail across the untrammelled wilderness of sectism.

9. Do you have any well defined ideas as to what realms need further examination to effectuate the restoration?

Yes, I do. Of course, I hold that every generation of men is obligated to make a complete and thorough investigation of God's entire system of revelation, so that the faith of each generation will not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. It is too easy to become traditionalists, and most people become such for two reasons— they are by nature hero worshippers and they are mentally lazy. As a stimulation of my personal study I have listed ten categories in which we are yet influenced by sectarianism, and where considerable research will be required before we approach the walls of Jerusalem.

10. It would probably take too long to enumerate all of these, but I wonder if you might mention a few which you deem of greater importance?

They are all important, for all have to do with our approach to God, and nothing is unimportant in that area. But I will mention a few: (1) A candid study of the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. We need to recapture the original distinctions between such terms as gospel and doctrine, preaching and teaching. We need to batter down unscriptural distinctions in such terms as minister and communion. We need to study diligently such words as fellowship and heresy. I am doing extensive research on these last two now, and hope to publish something regarding them soon. (2) The means of induction into Christ. We have reduced this to a sort of five step, kitchen stepladder method, by which men have become convinced that they can pull themselves up into God's grace and put Him under obligation to save them. The idea of a personal covenant with the Lord, based upon conviction, conversion and consecration, is almost foreign to our thinking. Thus the congregations are filled with many who were converted to water baptism but were never converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Immersion in water of a penitent believer is essential. But we should be immersed not because we believe in baptism but because we believe in the Christ. (3) The subject of worship and what constitutes it. There is a general and widespread ignorance on this matter at present and the idea of "five items of worship" is no more in the Bible than the expression itself. (4) The subject of the official name of the ecclesia of God. In this matter we are following the lead of the world of sectism about us, without due regard to God's revelation. We are defending our traditional pattern simply because we have always done it that way. These are a few of the ten areas of scriptural thought in which I feel we must make some adjustment if we restore the ancient order.

11. What do you consider the greater hindrances to resumption of the restoration movement?

There are a number of hindrances. One is prejudice. We are generally opposed to anything which cuts across our thinking, and we condemn it without investigation. It seems ridiculous that anything could possibly be right if we haven't known it. Then there is traditionalism. Most of us, like the Chinese, are ancestor worshippers. We want to do things like they do them "down home," although they may be wrong "down home." I suspect pride is our worst foe. We have berated and ridiculed other religionists so long, it goes against the grain to have to break down and admit that we have been wrong on some things. One of the greatest hindrances is the divisive state of those who claim to be "The Church of Christ." In some localities there are as many as five congregations, all claiming to be the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic Church of Christ, not one of which will even be civil to the other, many of the members living in such mortal fear of the "powers that be" they will not even speak to each other on the street. It is difficult for the remainder of the religious world to see how a family can pull the drawstring of unity with one hand while slashing at each other with a meat cleaver in the other hand.

12. Do you think that what is generally referred to as "The Church of Christ" today is co-extensive with the scriptural expression "the body of Christ"?

Of course, I might ask which "Church of Christ"? But I think I know what you mean. The congregation of God spoken of in the new covenant scriptures is identical with the one body mentioned in the same scriptures. It is composed of all the children of God. Not one saved person on earth is outside of it. God adds to it every person who surrenders to the sovereignty of His Son and enters into covenant relationship with Him on the basis of the terms laid down by heaven. Every person on this earth, motivated by faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, who has turned away from sin, and submitted to immersion of his body in water on the basis of that belief, is a member of God's family, and is my brother. I'm not sure that

when we use the expression “The Church of Christ” that we use it in that sense. It is possible that we use it as a designation for a small and exclusive segment of believers who agree with our position on various points of teaching. Thus, we would imply that thousands of immersed believers in the Christ were not added to the family of God. This is, of course, a sectarian usage of the term.

13. Do you believe that some of God’s children may be in sectarian bodies?

There are many people who belong to sects and yet are not sectarian. When fleshly Israel started out of Babylon they did not all leave at once. A contingent went out under leadership of Zerubbabel, later another went out with Ezra, and still later another under Nehemiah. Those who were in Babylon until the last were as much God’s children as those who had already arrived in Jerusalem. They were just in Babylon for a longer period. Thus it is with spiritual Israel in “Mystery, Babylon the Great.” They may not all go out of Babylon at once, but as they become aware of their state, learn that they are in a foreign place, and have the glory of the city of Jerusalem pictured to them, they are led to evacuate the city of exile and start the trek toward Beulah land.

14. Does this mean that it is possible to be saved in sectarianism?

Let us put it this way! No sectarian can be saved, regardless of where he is. Sectarianism is a personal attitude toward truth. It is the “party spirit” and is condemned just as adultery, fornication, murder, lying, theft and drunkenness. When a man becomes convinced that the party spirit is sinful, he ought to leave it, just as he abandons adultery or lying when he sees the guilt attached to them. You might as well ask if one can be saved if he continues in adultery as to ask if he can be saved while he continues in sectism. If one of God’s children sees he is

in a party which separates, segregates and aggravates the remainder of God's children purely out of partisanship, he ought to get out of it and do so at once. Otherwise, he will be lost because of his factious practice.

15. Would this not imply that some might have to get out of "The Church of Christ" in some places?

Certainly, it might be necessary in some areas to leave "The Church of Christ" in order to remain in the church of Christ. If one is a member of a group that is sectarian in its attitudes and practices, he would either have to reform them in harmony with God's revelation, or leave them, regardless of what name they wear. "Passions, intrigues, dissensions and factions" are called works of the flesh and it is said "that those who act this way will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

16. Do you not oppose theological seminaries and the one-man minister system as well as other things which some baptized believers endorse, and if so, does this not make you sectarian according to your definition?

Yes, I oppose both of the things which you mention. I oppose the first because I believe it sets up a plurality of bodies where God has set up only one; and I oppose the second because it sets up one minister where the Lord has set up many. But I am not creating an "anti-college party" or an "anti-ministerial party." I have convictions, very deep ones, upon both of these matters. But I do not deny that those who differ with me on these issues are my brethren. I think they are in grave error upon these matters and I recognize a responsibility to try and teach them out of that error, but they are still my brethren, and I love them, not because of these errors, but in spite of them. I go among them, I talk with them, and although many of them hate me, speak evil of me, and misrepresent my position, I feel no rancor towards any of them. I recognize that God will avenge anything that is out of harmony with His will, and I am too busy

to engage in hate.

17. Are there not some who believe that you are allied with a sect because you use more than one container for the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper and worship with congregations which have classes for Bible study?

That is true, and we should not forget that there is not a single group on earth that is not branded as a sect by some other group. We should rejoice that we will be judged by the Lord rather than by men, for then no one would ever be saved. Many earnest, conscientious persons believe that for the Lord's Supper to be acceptable, the fruit of the vine must be dispensed in one container. While I do not have that view, and think it is unduly exclusive, I do not disfellowship those who hold it. I am not a leader of a "multiple cup party." Those who hold to the one container are my brethren, and I love them. We have the same spiritual father and mother. I think it is sinful to call them "one-cuppers" and to divide the family of God into "cups groups" and "one-cup groups." Such language is the terminology of narrow sectism, and reflects the party spirit. I am trying to purge myself of it, although it is difficult to do so, because we have always used it as a reflection on those who differ from us. But a realization that they are really my brethren, and the cultivation of a sincere love for them, which rises above partisanship, helps me to eliminate hurtful and hateful phraseology. I trust that some day many of us will actually be able to work together as one in Christ, but I know that I cannot promote unity while defending partisanship.

18. How do you regard the Mission Messenger as relates to the thing you are striving to achieve?

I am firmly resolved that it will not become an "official mouthpiece" for any sect, clique, party or faction. The paper is my own individual enterprise. It is my means of communicating my views to my brethren and friends throughout the world. It is

just a loudspeaker tuned in on a world frequency. Nell helps me to mail it out and is my constant stay and strength, God bless her! I know that many papers are recognized as official organs of various factions. The editors can often make or break a man. I feel sorry for brethren who are subservient to such a party spirit, for they are not free men in Christ Jesus. Their lives are miserable. I have asked several brethren to share regularly in this medium of expression and have invited all to do so to the extent of limited space. But MISSION MESSENGER is purely a personal, individual undertaking, and nothing more! Occasionally pressures are applied upon me to eliminate someone from writing with whom some of the brethren disagree. There are many who are anxious to use such a medium to get their views and opinions before the people, but they want to deny other brethren the same privilege, and they become disgruntled if I publish something with which they are out of harmony. But so long as I publish the paper, it will be a free journal and not the organ of a sect or faction.

19. Do all of the regular contributors agree fully with your views?

I have never asked them, but I am almost sure they do not. I am sure that I do not fully agree with any of them upon every matter. It is not necessary that they agree with me upon all things to get their material printed. I do not agree with everything they write for the paper, nor demand that they agree with everything I write. But I do defend their right and freedom to think, speak and act for themselves. If I disagree with something they write, and I think it is important enough, I'll attach a dissenting note; they also have a right to reply to anything I say, and so do any of our readers.

20. What are your personal primary aims for the future?

There are two of them which I think to be of vital importance. I want to help in my weak way to restore the

primitive pattern of the ecclesia of God, and also to lift up my feeble voice in behalf of the unity of all believers. I hold that the sheep of God have been neglected and driven out to wander among the hills of sectism. It is my fond hope, that if my life is extended sufficiently, that I may help summon them to the high mountain where salvation and safety await. I would like to put my shoulder to the wheel of the Restoration vehicle and push it out of the mud and mire of neglect and indifference where it has been stalled so long.

21. How do you plan to accomplish these objectives?

I am hoping that lovers of truth everywhere, and in all segments of Christendom can be aroused and enlisted to help. If there are enough people who want to engage in a crusade to free their loved ones from the bondage of sectism, we may be able to use this little paper effectively. At the present time, the future of this little journal is precarious. Nell and I are operating at a loss each month, and we may be forced to discontinue. However, that will neither deter nor discourage me.

I plan to go wherever the Lord opens up a door for me. I have spoken several times in Jewish synagogues. I have visited Roman Catholic classes and talked with the priest in the presence of the students. I have met in personal discussions members of the clergy of the Lutheran and other faiths. Several times recently I've been allowed to speak to groups of the Christian Church. In none of these conferences has anything but a spirit of humility and kindness prevailed. No one became angry or heated, despite our great differences. I shall miss no opportunity to go where I can find a hearing. It is ridiculous to refuse to go to a place where there is no one who sees things as I do. That is the place where I want to go. If the apostles had refused to go to places where there was no congregation, there would be none on earth today. They purposely chose the very places where there were none who agreed with them, and so shall I. Fortunately, I have lost all fear of what men shall do to

me, and my whole trust is in God. The vision of many of the preachers is pitiably limited. They refuse to go to a place where there is no “faithful church” and yet there can be no “faithful church” until they go! On that basis, the greater part of humanity would be doomed to hell, unless they accidentally stumbled on to the truth and started a congregation. Then they could get a preacher to come and tell them what was wrong with them. I want to go where people do not see things as I do. I get uncomfortable being around congregations that are all lined up with me. I want to get into virgin fields, or fields where Satan has been working! I do not like to build on another man’s foundation all of the time. I want to go beyond the present regions. If I wait until there is a congregation there, I will never go, and I know that if I never go, there may never be a congregation.

22. Are there any encouraging aspects to be observed at present?

Yes, there are. I do not worry about such things, and the word “discouragement” is not in my spiritual vocabulary. The One whom I serve opened up the Red Sea for His people, and caused the walls of Jericho to fall down before them. He has not lost any of His power. All I need to do is to get my bearings and march forward in faith. He will open up ways before me. It is my task to sow and plant; it is His task to give the increase. All I need to do is to fulfill my part. But there are some good omens. Many people are being shaken, jolted and scared into studying more than ever before. I have spoken several times of late in denominational meeting-houses and been well received. The question periods which always follow my addresses have elicited many pointed and excellent questions. One encouraging feature is the increasing interest among some of my good Jewish friends.

23. Have you always held your present views with reference to restoration?

No, I have not! I came into this fellowship from a Lutheran background. My people on the maternal side were Danes. At first, I labored under the misconception that because we had discovered some truths which had long been hidden that we had found them all. Thus there was a time in my life when no problem was too great for me. I had all of the answers. I accepted without question the orthodox sermon outlines which had been handed down from previous generations, but when I saw that they misapplied many scriptural texts, and violated most of the laws of Biblical interpretation, I began to investigate for myself. I became convinced that we were well on the road toward creation of another sect. I saw the pressure groups manipulated by editors and preacher cliques, and beheld how the bulk of God's sheep were often exploited for the fleece. I learned how little any of us really knew, and how much there was yet to learn. Accordingly, I began to lift up my eyes to look upon the fields. I saw how white they were unto the harvest. My love for truth grew and with it a burning desire to share truth with my brethren and the world of mankind. I have made many mistakes which are saddening to reflect upon. I have wasted much time. However, I trust in God to extend unto me His amazing grace, and to save me through His mercy and love. Without that prospect I am sure that I would be of all men most miserable, but with it, I am lifted up and walk on higher ground.

24. What do you feel is the first great need of the congregations which are restoration minded?

Our greatest need is for godly, qualified men to serve as bishops of the local flocks. This is God's own pastor system. There is a great dearth of qualified men to serve in this office, and many who are called elders are wholly incapable of discharging the grave responsibility adhering thereto, and should resign from it. Many are sectarian in their attitudes and are actually using the office to thwart any real restoration of the primitive order. They know but little of God's great plan for the ages, but refuse to allow those who do to teach. The brotherhood

of Christians is dominated too much by preachers. They do the thinking, the writing and the serving. When meetings are held in various areas, the preachers are the prominent ones on the program. Of course, that comes about because they are generally the best informed, but they should not be so. There is little respect for the office of bishop in many areas. This is due to several factors. We have exalted the office of evangelist and urged all young men to train for it. If we had spent as much time, effort and money training brethren to be bishops, we would have been much better off, and they could have trained brethren in their respective flocks to become evangelists. Another thing that has brought this office into disrepute is because of the conduct of some who occupy it. They are sometimes little men trying to do a big job, and they must emphasize the authority without being able to lead. We need to restore dignity to the office and encourage respect for it. We can never have a genuine restoration until we regain the proper status for the office of bishop. I hope to see the day come when bishops will be supported by their flocks until they can carry on a full measure of service for the congregations.

25. Do you think that the holding of public debates will hasten the restoration?

No, they may actually hinder it! I doubt that they will achieve any substantial good, for the simple reason that in modern public debates, two factions each select a champion and throw them into the arena in defense of partisan views. Debaters today are actually representatives of party positions. I know that theoretically their purpose is to examine the evidence, sift it, and determine what is true, but practically it does not work out that way. Debates, as now conducted, do not lend themselves to calm, unbiased appraisal of issues. There is the constant temptation to use any means at hand to gain personal victory. The lust for combat fires the brain and kindles the blood. I would not want to become a professional debater or a recognized Goliath for any company of Philistines.

It is true that I have engaged in some public debates, but not often from choice, and it troubles me that I like debating! I may be forced to debate again rather than see truth stigmatized, but my honest opinion is that in the long run, the cause may suffer in a community where such forensic struggles are waged. A much better approach would be that of the forum. With an unprejudiced chairman, two speakers would sit down at the same table on a public platform. Each in turn would be allowed 15 minutes to state his personal conviction on the issue at stake. Then each would be allowed 15 minutes to question his respondent, and the audience would be permitted to question either or both for an hour. I am losing confidence in hit-and-run speakers who will not permit their position to be examined in free and open questioning. Why should I spend two hours of my precious time listening to a man air his views, when I am not given an opportunity to request clarification, or to examine those views?

Since our time is growing short, I want to thank you for these questions, and assure you that even if you disagree with my answers, I still love and respect you very much indeed. I will pray for you and ask you to pray for me. When this report is published in MISSION MESSENGER, I trust the readers will see fit to question the replies, as I have tried to reply to your questions. Thank you!

That They All May Be One (2)

Mission Messenger (February 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

One Lord's Day, immediately following the regular meeting, a young man sought audience with the evangelist. He had been in attendance for several weeks, since having been transferred to the town, by the implement company with which he was employed.

He expressed a desire to be identified with the congregation of saints and to utilize his talent for the good of the cause, but he was fearful that he would not be acceptable to the brethren, and he did not wish to cause them any embarrassment. He said he had been reared in a community where every religious organization used instrumental music in their praise service unto God, and he observed that the little group in this locality did not. He had been present often enough to know that they opposed it, although it was the first time in his life that he had known of such opposition being made. He felt that they were honest, and were earnestly desirous of planting a congregation based on the primitive pattern, and he said he had never been associated with a band of believers who were as consecrated to God, or as devoted to each other.

His problem was one of trying to formulate convictions without having enough facts as yet to establish his thinking. He could not personally see that the use of the instrument in the praise service was in serious violation of the divine commands,

although he expressed a willingness to examine the question thoroughly. In the meantime, he wished to be in the fellowship of the brethren and do what he could to aid them. He agreed that it was not essential to use the instrument, and was willing to regard his present views as mere private opinions and not cause strife or contention over them. He wanted to know if he could be received on that basis.

The evangelist quoted, "Receive the man who is weak in the faith, but not to make decisions on his inward questionings." He said that while this did not specifically apply to the type of problem now confronting them, it at least laid down the principle of receiving those into the fellowship who still entertained honest doubts. He pointed out that we are not all equals in learning, knowledge and experience. All of us are affected by our environments, early training, and previous investigations. We should not think of ourselves as climbing the mountains of faith in clumps. Each of us is striving along the road as best he can, and all are strung out along the way. So long as all are looking unto Jesus, and have hearts filled with love for him and for each other, we should be charitable and patient toward those who have not advanced as far as others.

He told the young brother that it was not the purpose of the congregation to debar any child of God from ministering unto the Father, so long as he loved the Lord and was not possessed of a factious spirit, but had a wholesome attitude toward truth. He assured him that he would be welcome so long as he did not disturb the peace and unity of the brethren by advancing ideas or interpretations with a view to forcing them upon the congregation and disrupting their love and fellowship for each other. The young man said that this was the farthest thing from his mind, and that he knew that even if it proved that it was legitimate to use instrumental music, it was certainly sinful to drive a wedge into the body of believers.

The young man then asked the evangelist what method he

should pursue in order to be recognized as a member of that congregation and subject to its oversight. The evangelist replied that he would merely state the desire of the young brother the following Lord's Day, and would welcome him to the fellowship of the congregation and to the table of the Lord. He felt that it might be best to inform the congregation of saints very briefly as to the feelings which had been expressed so that all would understand.

The evangelist then told him that they would study the question of the use of instrumental music in the worship, and do so as brethren. He suggested that the issue itself might be merely a symptom of a greater problem, and that when they began to do research upon it they might find that there were two grave matters involved: one dealing with a recognition of divine authority; the other having to do with what constituted acceptable corporate worship of a congregation of saints. But he said that while they were laboring together to understand more fully the teaching upon these issues, they would strive together in peace for the growth in grace and knowledge so much needed by every child of God.

The Sheep On The Hills

Mission Messenger (March 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The prophet Ezekiel paints a graphic picture of the flock of God scattered among the hills, a prey to lurking beasts, and filled with fear and distress. He attributes their condition to two sources. First, the shepherds who were to feed the flock, fleeced them and fed themselves. Instead of searching for those who were driven away and seeking for those who were lost, they ruled them with force and cruelty.

As a result, God declares that He is against these shepherds, and will hold them responsible, even requiring his flock at their hand. It is interesting to note that those who are called shepherds by Ezekiel (34), are called pastors by Jeremiah (23:1, 2). He writes, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord . . . Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord." It is apparent that God's sheep have been scattered by the very leaders to whom they looked for guidance and instruction.

Another factor in the production of the condition is the arrogant, proud and boastful attitude of the fattened members of the flock. They are depicted as pushing and thrusting with side and shoulder, and horning the humble and meek aside, until they are scattered abroad. They are charged, not only with

eating the best pasture and drinking the pure water, but also with trampling the remainder into muck and mire, and fouling it and defiling it for the rest. This is an apt portrayal of religion in many places today, where the sheep are exploited by an official board, and forced to meet a budget they did not arrange, and subscribe to a program they did not originate. They must knuckle under or get out!

“My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did seek or search after them.” That is a picture of the flock today. They are wandering through the mountains and hills of sectarianism. They are separated and scattered because of neglect, abuse and cruelty, to which they have been subjected. This is not the will of God. It is his desire that they be together, that there be but one flock and one shepherd. He does not want them divided by partisanship or factionalism, but united in love and peace. They were scattered in “a cloudy and dark day” but a brighter day is coming.

God has designed that his sheep shall be brought out from the people, gathered from the countries, and restored to their own estate, where they shall be fed in a good pasture, upon the high mountains of faith and truth. There will the flock be safe under the supervision of one shepherd, the prince of David. They shall have a covenant of peace, and will dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. None shall make them afraid. They shall know that the Lord is with them and they are his people.

Our appeal goes forth to all of the scattered flock wandering over the hills which have been created by men. We would do our humble best to search and seek after every good and honest heart, “scattered upon the face of all the earth.” Every person in the whole wide world who possesses such a heart is my brother— either in prospect or reality! Those who have heard and learned, and come unto Christ, believing in Him,

and demonstrating their faith by immersion into His death, are the sons of God. They are His children and my brethren, wherever they may be wandering as the result of the cloudy and dark day. Those who have not yet been immersed into our dear Lord, because of lack of knowledge, environment or teaching, need only to have the truth brought to bear upon their good and honest hearts, and they will also accept it.

We plead with all who believe in Jesus, and yet are divided from one another, to be no longer content with the meager pasturage upon the hills. The hand of God beckons on to the high mountains where is located the good fold. Salvation is not in the hills. It is not the wish of heaven that we should be divided in heart and spirit. Let us heal the breaches in Zion. Let us restore the good way and walk in it. Our dear Lord does not want those who believe in Him to be split into divers sects. Even small communities are often fractured into Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Roman Catholic fraternities. Those who compose these bodies all affirm that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. They do not deny a single fact connected with his personal ministry. They are divided over the interpretation they place upon these facts, or their opinions about them. It is true that God loves every one of them. It is true that Jesus died for every one of them. It is true that God wills that all of them shall be one. It is true that Jesus prayed they might be one. Is it true, then, that they can never answer that prayer? Is there no solution for the problem? Our appeal will never fall with favor upon the ears of those who love the party spirit, regardless of the party to which they are attached. Our appeal is directed to the good and honest hearts in all parties. Let us arise and return in spirit and in fact to Him who died for us all. Then shall we be a blessing as he has promised, "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings."

God has given us a revelation from heaven. It is a divine love letter to the whole world. If we love its author as we claim to

do, let us labor to help fulfill His eternal purpose. Let us seek to unite in Him, and upon the basis He has given. It is later than you think! The world hovers on the brink of despair and destruction. We have but two alternatives. We must convert the world to Jesus, or the world will commit universal suicide. All that is essential to leading the world to believe that God has sent Jesus, is for those in the world who believe in Jesus to become one. This is His own blessed assurance. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also who believe on me through their word; that they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

What would be the glorious results of such unity? Wars would cease and the rumble of cannons die away. The shrieks and groans of dying men upon the battle fields of the earth would be heard no more. The mighty energies of the universe would be expended in the betterment of all mankind. We could safely travel any place upon earth. Prejudice and hate would fade out. The desert would blossom like a rose. We would experience a true brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

In the face of such a benign prospect, how pale and insignificant are the doctrines and dogmas of men, the opinions and interpretations which rend and tear the hearts, and set us back into the jungle of passion under the reign of fang and claw. Sectarianism, division, party strife and schism must be dethroned. They cannot be tolerated in a heart in which the Lord God is sanctified. Let us seek the one Lord, the one faith, the one body. Let us come unto Him through the one baptism He has appointed.

What can we do? Those of us who love the Lord more than men, who exalt his revelation above human rationalization, who seek to restore the one body in its primitive perfection, must seek to study together, to investigate, to question that we may know "the Way." Regardless of what party we may now be in, we must

seek the ultimate destruction of all parties by merging through mutual acceptance of the truth, into the grand concourse of saints which will compose the one body. We must further our aim in love. "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (Mal. 3:16). To help in my very feeble way, I offer to go personally to any synagogue, cathedral or church building, which I can reach, at home or abroad, and express my views on these issues, and submit to questioning at any length. I will respect those who differ and love their souls. I will listen to their views!

Brighter days are coming. A mighty army of earnest seekers after truth is being raised up all over the earth. Men are beginning to discard the shackles of slavery devised by human agency. The sheep on the hills are lifting their gaze to the high mountain peaks of safety. Men are examining their positions by the Book. The campfires of the pilgrims can be seen flickering all along the road to Jerusalem.

Let us here issue a word of warning. Let not those who are fortunate enough to have discovered the green pastures first, devour and tramp the residue with their feet. Let not those who have been drinking of the deep waters foul the pure stream by jealousy and bigotry. It is no time for those who have found certain great and abiding principles "to thrust with side and shoulder, and push the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad." Brethren, make room for them! Let them in! God's sheep are coming home from the hills! There is room on the mountain for every good and honest heart. God has reserved thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal! Longing eyes are looking upward, hungry hearts are turned heavenward. The sheep are starting to move toward the shepherd, for they have heard his voice again as it echoes amidst the hills! Don't stone them or beat them back with force and with cruelty. Let them come home to the fold of the prince of

David. They are his sheep not yours!

That They All May Be One (3)

Mission Messenger (March 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

As the months passed, the little congregation of saints continued to grow in grace and knowledge. The meetings on Lord's Day were stimulating and inspirational. Each brother seemed to be constantly on the alert for material with which to edify the others, and when the presiding brother announced that the time had come for those who desired to speak to the edification of the body, there was no dearth of willing volunteers. Each seemed to take to heart the apostolic admonition, to seek to excel in this department of service.

The season of prayer was always filled with petitions voiced to the Father in behalf of the sick, the distressed and wayward. Often the eyes of the saints were filled with tears as their sympathetic hearts were touched with the fervent appeals. There was an ever increasing consciousness of the inward abiding of the Holy Spirit, and spiritual strength was imparted because of this. The saints were walking with God and the influence of the divine companionship was daily more evident in the peace and tranquillity which were promoted.

It became evident to the evangelist that he should prepare them for the time when they could stand alone, mature and capable. He sought to achieve this by increasing his efforts at development of those who could become capable bishops, as well as by counselling the congregation concerning the day when they

must assume their increased responsibilities. He asked them to point out deficiencies which had not yet been corrected, and told them it was his duty to make such adjustments in their congregational life before bishops were appointed.

A young married woman said that several of the sisters of her age had talked to each other, and had expressed a need for teaching relative to the duties devolving upon them as Christian wives and mothers. The evangelist told her that he sympathized with their needs and had already taken steps to correct the lack in that field. An older sister, a home economics teacher in a nearby town, and a member of a sister congregation, had consented to come and meet with the younger wives and mothers, once per month, and to give them the benefit of her training as well as of her Biblical knowledge. The evangelist suggested that these meetings be held in the homes, so that they could be kept on an informal basis.

He again impressed upon the congregation that the work of an evangelist with any group of saints was intended to be temporary, and was ordained only to correct problems, establish orderly procedure, and train the members of the body until the appointment of bishops. The ultimate goal of the congregation is to function independently in every phase of spiritual activity. The evangelist who proclaims the gospel in an area begets those who accept the glad tidings, and sustains the relationship of a father to them. The apostle who took the message to Corinth, wrote: "I am not writing this to shame you, but I am offering you advice as *my dearly-loved children*. For even if you were to have ten thousand instructors— for all that you could not have several fathers: it is I who in Christ Jesus *became your father* through the Good News."

For that reason he wrote to the Thessalonians: "You know that we acted towards every one of you as *a father* does toward *his own children*, encouraging and cheering you, and imploring you to live lives worthy of fellowship with God, who is inviting

you to share his own kingship and glory.” For that same reason he calls Timothy “My own true son in the faith” and says of him, “Like a child working with his father, he served with me in the furtherance of the Good News.” The evangelist said that the real task of every parent was to work himself out of a job. He must train and develop his children until they can carry on in life without the constant supervision of the parent. If he does all the work for the children and never allows them to share in the responsibility, if he pampers and spoils them by always spoon-feeding them, and never teaching them to eat by themselves, he will make them neurotic, unstable and helpless. Children must be reared with such a degree of emotional strength that they will look upon the time when they can cut loose from the parent, as a natural part of life itself. If they are so insecure that a foster parent has to be appointed to continue to rear them when the one who begot them is gone, they reveal their own immaturity.

The evangelist pointed out that a foster father is one who performs the duties of a parent to the child of another. If the evangelist who begets a congregation is their father in Christ, then another evangelist who is later brought on the scene to do the same task is a foster father. He remarked that some congregations which had existed for fifty years were still under foster fathers, and the children were contributing to support the father in that role. He quoted the words of Paul, “I desire not your money, but yourselves; for children ought not to put by for their parents, but the parents for the children.” The modern “located evangelist” system is one of foster fathers. A line of prospective fathers is paraded by an orphaned group, who listen at them demonstrate their wares, and then select a candidate upon the basis of a tryout sermon.

The evangelist showed that this ridiculous procedure was not only without a shred of scriptural authority, but could never produce the system which God had authorized, a system which was designed for the real development of every one of His children. He urged those who could do so to qualify themselves

for leadership, and he exhorted the brethren to observe the lives of such, to encourage and strengthen them for the day when they must shoulder the grave responsibility of bishops in the congregation.

He proposed that he would give the brethren a thorough course of instruction in the qualifications and functions of bishops, and in the responsibility of the congregation toward them. He encouraged them to question every step of the discussions so that they would become wholly convinced of the truths to be taught. Children grow into mature thinkers by amassing informative data from which to reason; such data is accumulated by asking questions. God's children should grow by the same method.

The evangelist told them that in the primitive congregations there were bishops to oversee, and deacons to administer unto the needy, and the saints functioning in conjunction with these, constituted a body lacking in none of its parts. He urged them to look forward to that date when they could cut themselves loose from the one who planted them, and exhibit a state of affairs where all of the worship of the Lord was carried on as a regular procedure and without spasmodic periods of revival. The congregation was asked to study as a prelude to the instruction, three chapters: Acts 20, 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1. This they all agreed to do.

The Spirit and Liberty

Mission Messenger (March 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

Within this tenement of clay called the body, dwells a spirit. God hath “formed the spirit of man within him” (Zech. 12:1). That spirit is the inward man which can be renewed daily, even while the outward man perishes (2 Cor. 4:16). It is strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16). It is the spirit, held captive in the body, which longs and groans for the day of adoption when the body shall have redemption (Rom. 8:23). It is the spirit, confined to an alien realm, which aspires to a higher sphere; which yearns and gropes and reaches out to embrace its creator, and to know again the bliss of perfect union which was so rudely shattered by sin.

The spirit of man can expand and grow only in the atmosphere of freedom. It was never created to be dominated, brutalized or made subservient to men. Our fleshly parents gave us our physical bodies, and they may chastise them for our social good, but they did not give us our spirits, and those spirits are not subject to them. “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb. 12:9). Our fathers may set forth principles of religion which they deem to be worthy, and while we are young they may take our bodies to the place where they worship, but in the final analysis we shall be judged, not by what they thought God meant, but by what He said. And here we must reason with God

as individuals, for we shall be judged in that manner.

A man and a maid decide to form a union, and in marriage they create a social unit called a home, or family. Over this unit the husband and father is the head. But this gives him no rights or prerogatives in the spiritual realm. “He shall cleave to his wife and they shall be *one flesh*.” “But he that is joined unto the Lord is *one spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:17). “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife” (1 Cor. 7:4). To which it may be added that neither one has any jurisdiction over the spirit of the other. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth” (Rom. 14:4).

This should be a source of comfort to all of us. Many are exercised in conscience, because, as they grow older, they find their thought pattern differing from that of their parents. They suffer inner pangs of chastisement because they are torn between loyalty to the belief of the parents and fidelity toward God. But no parent can formulate a code of spiritual conviction for his offspring. He can teach what commends itself to him to be truth, he can exemplify his teaching by his conduct, but he cannot tyrannize the minds and hearts of his children. Wise parents will teach their children to love truth for truth’s sake; they will encourage them as they develop, to seek and search for truth as the chief aim in life. They will make such amendments and adjustments in their own thinking as are necessary to conform to newly discovered truth, and freely admit their past errors to their children. Thus will be produced emotionally mature children who will not hesitate to adopt truth, regardless of the cost.

It is the truth that makes men free. But for truth to accomplish this, it must be free, and not shackled by human dogmatism or political pressure. A veil upon the heart in approaching God’s revelation will shut out the light of truth, as effectively as a window shade while drawn will exclude the light

of the sun. This is the problem of our Jewish friends today. Their heart is not turned to God, but to a defence of Judaism. They fear to depart from the traditions of their fathers. "But whenever the heart of the nation shall have returned to the Lord, the veil will be withdrawn. Now by 'the Lord' is meant the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, freedom is enjoyed" (2 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Those who are in the Christ have been called unto freedom (Gal. 5:13). They are exhorted to be free men (1 Peter 2:16). Even a slave, whose body was purchased by an earthly master was still free. "For a Christian, if he was a slave when called, is the Lord's freed man" (1 Cor. 7:22). His body still belonged to a master, but his spirit was made free in the Christ. "You have all been redeemed at infinite cost: *do not become slaves to men.* Where each one stood when he was called, there, brethren, let him still stand— *close to God*" (1 Cor. 7:24). There is the big problem of the ages! Men are not content to let him stand where he stood when he was called. They must mould, shape and alter him to fit their pattern. If he does not do so, they conclude he does not belong to God, because he will not bow to them. After he is called they will work him over, and make him conform to their pattern Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran— or— dare I say it? What is the answer to all of this? It is in the words "*Do not become slaves to men— stand close to God.*"

Ever since the day Christ set men free, there has been a constant struggle to maintain that freedom. In a less enlightened era, the rope, stake, fagots, cross, rack, and whip, were employed to torture the bodies of men to bring their consciences and opinions into line with the orthodox religious views which prevailed. In these days men employ more exquisite means of torture, such as ridicule, malignant whispering, misrepresentation, lying and boycott. The same spirit which lighted the fires of Smithfield, and prompted the Spanish Inquisition, motivated the "powers that be" at Freed-Hardeman College to arrest Leroy Garrett and cast him into a filthy jail

cell, because he would not “conform.” He was treated as all dissenters are treated when they cannot be answered. Freed-Hardeman College forfeited its right to the respect of every honest lover of truth when its president moved away from the Christ and joined with the pope in this flagrant attempt to tyrannize thought. “The Church of Christ” in Tennessee is motivated by the same spirit which caused John Calvin to sign the death warrant of Michael Servetus. It is merely another sect, employing the sectarian method of threat, boycott, brain-washing and arrest. Do not be so foolish as to try and palliate the crime by divorcing Freed-Hardeman College from “The Church of Christ” in Tennessee.

We cannot bring the hearts of men into subjection by force or tyranny. Even atheistic communism learned that lesson in Hungary! We are limited in our attempts to change the minds of men, by the very nature of Christianity, to reason and persuasion. Charity and sincerity are characteristics of true religion, and it must utterly disown bitterness and hypocrisy. These are the weapons in the arsenal of false and vain religion, which must deceive where it cannot persuade, and force where it cannot deceive. Of what good are abuse, ranting, cavilling and misrepresentation? Can we adjust the hearts of men with a wrench as we would tighten a resistant lug or bolt?

Is not an error in thinking a species of intellectual lameness? Will such lameness in another hurt me any more than if he had a crooked leg or a deformed arm? Will a wild opinion do me any more injury than a wild look out of his eye? Why should I become enraged or provoked at his internal defects any more than his external ones? Shall I try to force every cripple whom I meet to walk as I do, by twisting his deformed leg, or shall I not rather lead him to the physician and surgeon of my acquaintance who can straighten the twisted member? And how shall I regard him during the straightening process— with sympathy and charity, or as an object of my spite and ridicule?

I must maintain the dignity of every man's spirit. I cannot force another to grovel and kneel before me without first losing my own dignity. I must defend his right to think, reason and act for himself, or establish the principle by which I will lose my own right to do so. If I fail to see in my enemy the image of God, though defiled and shattered, I shall fail to restore myself to that image. One who is egotistic, proud, arrogant, conceited and boastful, and who feels that God belongs exclusively to him, reveals he does not yet belong to God.

These are the sins I fain

Would have Thee take away;

Malice and cold disdain,

Hot anger, sullen hate,

Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,

And discontent that casts a shadow gray

On all the brightness of the common day.

To My Catholic Friends

Mission Messenger (April 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

This article is addressed to my good friends who are members of the Roman Catholic Church. It is written in love and without rancor. It is sent forth with a fervent prayer that it may be a source of good in advancing the cause of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. I am fully aware of the fact that few of my Roman Catholic friends will read what I write. Most will not dare to do so, having been reared to believe it is a sin to read such an appeal. I must trust that those who are lovers of truth, and there are some, will rise above partisan restraints and exercise their right to freely investigate. I hope that those who do so will pass this humble message to their friends.

It is not my intention to engage in ridicule nor to make sweeping charges, for one does not indulge in such actions with those whom he loves. It is rather my purpose to reason with you as with true friends, so that if we do not remove any of the barriers which now exist between us, we may erect no new ones to bar our further progress toward understanding each other and the will of God.

We hold a great many truths in common. Both of us believe in one God, the Father of all mankind. Both of us believe that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. Both of us believe that human reason unaided is an unreliable guide in religion, and that revelation was required to disclose

supernatural truths. Both of us believe that Jesus founded only one church, and both of us believe it is a visible church. Regardless of how widely divergent we may be upon other matters, or even upon our explanation of these matters, it is refreshing to remember that we have some common ground upon which to stand as we reason together.

It is obvious that we are in disagreement as to the nature and identity of the church of God, for you are a member of the Roman Catholic Church and I am not. To be in disagreement does not mean that we must be disagreeable! You are sincere in your conviction that the Roman Catholic Church is the one, holy, apostolic church mentioned in the word of God. I am sincere in my conviction that it cannot be. One of us is in grave error. If the subject was one of mere temporal interest we might both laugh at our disagreement and forget about it and each other. But eternal souls are hanging in the balance and I cannot thus easily dismiss the topic nor forget you and your loved ones. I trust that you will feel a little of the same concern for me.

It strikes me that your first reaction will be to ask me if the Roman Catholic Church is not the one which was founded by Christ, to point out among the myriad Protestant Churches, which one he did found. I quickly reply that he did not found a single one of them. It is a common error to conclude that since the Protestant Reformation all believers in Jesus the Christ, must either be in the Roman Catholic communion or in one of the numerous sects of Protestants. The fallacy of this is realized when one recognizes that before there was even a church in Rome, and hundreds of years before the first Protestant sect was formed, there were thousands of baptized believers in Jesus the Christ. These humble disciples were all saints and priests unto God.

The gospel of God's dear Son was first proclaimed in Jerusalem. This was in accordance with the instruction of the Saviour to his holy apostles "that repentance and remission of

sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke 24:47). When the message was first proclaimed, thousands became obedient to the call, and the church was founded unto which the Lord added daily those who were being saved. The church of Jerusalem existed several years prior to the planting of one in Rome. The church in Rome was not the first one at all, and since it was not the *first* it is impossible for it to be the mother of *all* churches. If priority of existence is taken as indicative of parenthood, the church in Rome was the *daughter* of the church in Jerusalem, and not the mother of *all* churches. And even though it may be proven that the Protestant churches of today are the offspring of the Roman Church, it will forever be true that the church of our Lord existed in Jerusalem prior to the existence of any congregation of believers in Rome or anywhere else. The divine words “beginning at Jerusalem” exclude for all time the idea that any Roman church could be the first.

The church in Jerusalem was founded, flourished, and carried on the work of heaven before the church in Rome had its existence. Now, union with the Church of Rome is either essential to the being and truth of a church, or it is not. If it is essential, then the church in Jerusalem was not a true church, for it could have no union with the church of Rome, which was not in existence. If the church in Jerusalem was not a true church, then all of the “holy apostles” were impostors and charlatans, for they planted it and claimed to do so by the authority of Jesus. Moreover, the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles and inspired them, and would have to be charged with the deception. Even worse, the Lord added to them daily, such as were being saved, and such a conclusion would make the Lord add the saved to a church which was not a true one.

But if you admit that the church in Jerusalem was a true church, then you grant that union with the Church of Rome is not essential, and if you admit this, the entire fabric of the Papal system is swept away, for your admission is that a true church

can exist without the hierarchy.

It will do no good to say that Peter was present and was the spokesman at Jerusalem, and *later* was transferred to Rome, for even if this were proven, which it cannot be, Peter could never testify in truth that the church of Rome was the *first* church, seeing that he had long before helped plant one in Jerusalem. And is this not the reason why, when the church was threatened with schism, it was determined that “they should *go up to Jerusalem* unto the apostles and elders about this matter?” (Acts 15:2). Were not the dogmas which were delivered to the churches to keep, ordained at Jerusalem, and not at Rome? (Acts 16:4). Then Rome was not the seat of authority for faith and morals. And even in Europe, a congregation was commended because the brethren became followers of the churches of God, *which in Judea*, are in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 2:14).

If you have been willing to read thus far, dear friend, please let me encroach upon your goodness a little longer. I commend you for your spirit of freedom and your sincere desire to know the truth that makes men free. It is possible for us to heal the wounds and repair the breaks in Christendom. We cannot do this by hating and reviling one another. Jesus died for us all, and as he loved us we must also love one another. Wild, reckless assertions, false accusations and flamboyant charges against each other will only widen the *gap*. We should all be willing to admit all truth, regardless of who holds that truth.

I would not seek to make a Protestant of you. There is no more justification for the existence of Protestant sects than there is for the hierarchy. What all of us should do, if we really love Jesus, is to attempt to restore to this torn and bleeding earth, the faith and order as perfected by the holy apostles, without regard to what we have formerly believed and taught, or of what we have been taught. It is to this great task that we dedicate ourselves. It is to a mutual investigation of that faith and order,

as exemplified by the church founded at Jerusalem, that we humbly invite you, as our good neighbors and friends. This design is too great to be approached in a spirit of bigotry and intolerance.

Can we not sit down as friends, in your living room or ours, and converse about these matters of eternal weight? It is not necessary that we try to force our thinking upon each other, or that we try to compel each other. We can surely take the sacred word in our hands and study it together with hearts yearning for that truth which is not sectarian. Even though we depart from each other with the same views as when we met, the value in human relations will be an experiment worthwhile. And though you may not gain the consent of your conscience to allow me the great privilege of conversing with you, please be sure that even your refusal will not quench my love for you, nor lessen the fervency of my prayers for the ultimate salvation of you and yours.

May the God of all grace grant that soon the intellectual mists will be dispelled, barriers be removed, and hearts welded together as members of the One Body for which our Lord shed his precious blood. May that day speedily come when we shall be no longer Roman Catholics or Protestants, but free from all partisan spirit and bias, be humble Christians, servants of our Master and each other. Is this not worthy of our sincerest effort and unremitting labor? If so, will you help to attain it?

The Clergy and the Church

Mission Messenger (April 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The chief foe of pure Christianity in every age has been the special clergy. The idea that the world can be led to Christ by a select group, trained and polished as front men and professional champions of the lowly Nazarene is as foreign to God's eternal purpose as the idea that the kingdom of heaven is dependent upon the collection of huge sums of money and the erection of huge cathedrals for its perpetuity. The principal hope of religious promoters in these days is what the word of God labels "carnal things." And just as spiritual men put their trust in spiritual things, so carnally minded men trust in carnal things. These become the primary considerations. It is a sign of the degeneracy of our times that men go forth first to raise money before they go to raise the dead in sin, and if the guarantee of the first is not forthcoming, the second is not performed.

The system of "located evangelists" in "The Church of Christ" is simply the clergy system operating under an assumed name. These men are the special clergy of "The Church of Christ" and sustain the same identical relationship to it as the Methodist clergy, the Presbyterian clergy, and the Episcopalian clergy do to their respective denominations. The Methodist sect sends men of promise to a Methodist seminary to teach them to become Methodist ministers; the Presbyterian sect sends men of promise to a Presbyterian seminary to train them as Presbyterian ministers; "The Church of Christ" sect sends men

of promise to its theological seminaries to train them to become “Church of Christ” ministers.

The seminaries of all of these denominations have special courses in theology and their diverse doctrines, and each one seeks to turn out men who are “sound” in parroting the party line. It is a mark of distinction to place as many graduates as possible with big churches in the denomination at lucrative salaries. This serves as an advertising inducement to secure more students, as every ministerial student looks forward to the day when he can draw \$600 per month, plus car expenses and a parsonage which someone else has to paint and maintain. To assure the prestige of the theological school, other courses of business administration and secular subjects are taught. Graduates of these courses will almost automatically win places on the official boards of churches within the denomination, and will support men for “the pastorate” who are graduates of the “alma mater.” By this means the seminary can exercise thought control over the various units in the denomination.

We do not imply that all of the “local ministers,” as “The Church of Christ” conveniently calls its salaried pastors, are satisfied with this status. Many are well enough informed to know that the office they occupy was no more a part of the primitive ecclesia of the saints than was the pope. Some of them are troubled in mind, uneasy in conscience and disturbed at heart. They try to soothe their inner fears by branding all others in the community as sectarians, on the basis that by decrying the mistakes of others they will lessen the stigma of their own faults. They run out and conduct a couple of “big revivals” during the pastoral vacation provided by their contracts, and take comfort in reporting the four or five immersed in such campaigns as evidence of evangelical zeal!

Many of them honestly believe that the restoration has been completed and that what they designate “The Church of Christ” is identical with the church of God revealed in the new

covenant scriptures. Sincere students of the Bible are no more fooled by this claim than they are by the claim of the Baptist sect to be identical with the initial congregation of saints planted at Jerusalem. In both instances the fallacy of the claims can be easily revealed by showing what these modern denominations have which was no part of the primitive ecclesia of God at all. For your benefit, we suggest a few deviations from the congregation revealed in The Book.

1. No group of bishops ever hired a man on contract to preach the gospel of Christ to a congregation of saints.

2. No group of bishops ever advertised for a gospel preacher to fill a vacancy as a “local minister.”

3. No gospel preacher ever exhibited his wares or dangled a trial sermon as bait to secure a salaried position.

4. No gospel preacher ever resigned as “located minister” to go out and do “evangelistic work.”

5. No congregation of saints owned real estate in the form of a manse, rectory, parsonage, or preacher’s home.

6. No gospel preacher ever created any organization in a community to do religious work except a congregation of saints.

7. No gospel preacher ever raised money for any organization as such.

8. No gospel preacher ever promoted an organization or organized scheme for proclaiming the gospel.

9. No congregation of saints ever contributed to anything except the relief of human need.

10. No congregation of saints ever adopted a specific title as the copyrighted and exclusive name for the church.

Almost every error in the history of struggling Christendom has been injected and perpetuated by the clergy. They will twist and wrest the scriptures for the support of their “brain children.” By the use of fair speech they deceive the simple into believing they are indispensable, and once the people are convinced of this they are taught to listen only to the interpretations of the clergy. The rights of the people are soon abrogated and they become helpless pawns, existing only to pay. They are threatened with hell if they do not give, but are allowed no voice in spending the money they contribute. A budget is drawn up by an official board in a back room, providing for expenditure of money not yet on hand, and the membership must accept it or be excommunicated. Theirs is “taxation without representation” but they must supinely submit to such tyranny under threat of eternal damnation.

The clergy system will be the hardest of all innovations to overthrow. Those who are a part of it will fight to the end to retain its prestige, power and pelf. It appeals to the indolent, slothful and indifferent membership. They would rather pay someone to study, preach and teach for them than to do these things. But there can never be a full restoration of God’s plan so long as we retain the one man pastor system. Here is the real test! You can never restore a thing by adding something that was not in the original.

(NOTE: The reader should not confuse those congregations of Christians who do not believe in a hireling one-man ministry system with the modern faction known as “The Church of Christ” which has become involved with human institutionalism and the clergy system which spawns such things).

That They All May Be One (4)

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The evangelist began his series of lessons on the eldership by pointing out to the congregation that the God who created the universe is a God of order and arrangement. To maintain order where two or more parts function in relationship, there must be control. God has ordained three organic institutions as a blessing to mankind. These are the family, civil government, and the congregation of the saints. Government is an essential feature of each. In each one there is authority to be respected, and rule to be obeyed, if we merit God's approval. In the home, children must obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). In the political realm we "must be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake" (Rom. 13:5). In the congregation we are told "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (Heb. 13:17).

God has revealed three great systems of religion, corresponding to the needs of mankind at the time of their revelation. These are the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian. In each of these, a proper evaluation has been placed upon the wisdom and experience which comes with age. In every dispensation the rule of elders, or ancients, has been sanctioned as the most appropriate to man in his earthly state.

The patriarchal age recognized the prerogative of the father as the oldest member of the family, and later of the clan,

for every nation was first a family, then a clan or tribe, and finally a nation. Abraham was a patriarch (Heb. 7:4). God said, "He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19). Melchizedek was a king and priest among the Jebusites who inhabited Salem.

But the patriarchal age involved not only the family of Abraham. So the land of Egypt had elders (Gen. 50:7). It was these senators whom Joseph taught wisdom (Psalm 105:22). The word "senator" is from *zagen* which means "aged, bearded." It is the word for "elders" in such passages as Exodus 12:21; 17:5; 18:12. Our word "senator" is from the Latin *senex*, meaning "old." The lands of Moab and Midian had elders (Num. 22:7) and so did Gibeon (Josh. 9:11).

The word patriarch is from a combination of *patria*, from *patro*, "father;" and *archos*, "a leader, chief," from *archein*, "to lead, rule." More is involved than mere age. Included is a respect for the aged one as a leader, a deference to his judgment and decisions. "In a multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 24:6). It was a natural step from the leadership of the oldest man in the clan, to that of the aged ones in a body, or presbytery, when the complexities of the social structure increased because of greater numbers. Thus, the children of Israel had elders when residing at Goshen. To these Moses was sent from Midian (Exo. 3:16); they went with him to Pharaoh (3:16); the message of liberation was given to them (4:29); and also instruction relative to the passover (12:21, 28).

In simple primitive times age was probably the only qualification. The import of the word implies as much. But there are varied degrees of experience and competence in any age group, and men of executive ability are required to conduct affairs in any society of diverse temperaments and personalities. This was recognized by Jethro, who suggested to Moses a tribunal of men possessed of four additional qualifications: (1) Ability, (2) Reverence, (3) Integrity, (4) Hatred of covetousness.

This was ratified by the Lord (Exo. 18:23).

During the wilderness journey when Israel became such a burden upon Moses, that he pleaded to die, God proposed the creation of a presbytery of seventy men, whom he would spiritually endow, and of whom he said, “They shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone” (Num. 11:17). These overseers, or superintendents, formed the basis of the Sanhedrin, the future great court of the Jewish nation.

It has been reasoned that men by necessity would have been forced, in order to protect and perpetuate the social state, to transfer a portion of the right of each individual, to chosen agents, authorized to act in behalf of the group. No organized body can function as a body except through agents. Affairs can best be administered by those who possess the greatest experience. In the simple eras of social development, experience could only come with age, no code of precedents having yet been established. It was fortunate and providential that in such ages men were allowed to attain unto many more years than at present, when such is not essential to administration of government, seeing that we have all the chronicled experience of the past upon which to draw. But there can be no substitute for the sobering influence of age and personal experience.

God authorized and recognized the responsibility of elders chosen by the body of people, and under the Mosaic economy, these were considered as spokesmen of the assembly (Deut. 5:22-24). When the whole congregation sinned, the congregation was required to offer a young bullock for sin. But “the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord” (Read Lev. 4:13-15). This did not mean that each individual did not have to offer a sacrifice when he was personally guilty of transgression, but in any organized community, the members have both a personal and related responsibility. Each acts personally in matters affecting his

person, but in a corporate action, the organization must perform through chosen agents, else there is no organization at all.

The expression “elders of the congregation” (Lev. 4:5) is the exact equivalent in the Hebrew of the expression “elders of the congregation” (James 5:14) in the Greek. In every age, the wisdom of God has seen fit to endorse a senate or presbytery to lead, guide, feed and superintend his people. This was as true in “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) as in “all the churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:32).

No congregation of disciples has developed to the degree of spiritual maturity which God expects it to attain until of its own number it can select godly, capable, qualified men as overseers or superintendents. This does not mean that a congregation should place in office incompetent, stupid, inefficient men, just to comply with the form of the law. Nothing is a greater detriment to the cause of the absent King than to place the affairs of his congregations under the control of arrogant, rash, indiscreet or thoughtless men.

The evangelist urged the brethren who loved the Lord to seek to qualify for the office of bishop. He urged the congregation of saints to encourage, edify and stimulate each other in the Spirit, so that brethren would have the desire to serve in this capacity. At this juncture several hands were raised in question and it was agreed that the next session would be given over to those questions. It will be our privilege to report those questions and the answers of the evangelist in our next issue.

The Name of the Bride

Mission Messenger (March 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The community of saints planted by the Messiah has no official name or title. It is called the church of God because it originated in the mind of the Father; it is called the church of the firstborn ones, because it is composed of the heirs of heaven. The congregations are called churches of the saints because they are composed of holy men and women; they are called churches of Christ because they belong to the Messiah. Other terms such as house of God, body of Christ, and temple of God, are employed, but not one of these is an exclusive title.

The title “Church of Christ” as used by a large segment of believers today is employed in a denominational sense, just as the terms Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Christian Church, etc. This is very difficult for many to see, for they have been taught that their salvation depends upon the name “The Church of Christ” although that expression is not once found in the sacred scriptures. Such a thought must have motivated a brother who wrote me as follows:

I do not agree with your idea about the name of the church. The church is the bride of Christ, and the bride ought to wear the name of the husband. I would not want my wife to wear some other name than mine.

I can sympathize with one who uses such loose reasoning,

for I used to engage in it before I learned better. There are two things wrong with my brother's views. In the first place, they are unscriptural; in the second place he doesn't practice what he preaches. I can prove both charges.

The idea that a wife should wear her husband's name, as he means it, is not a scriptural one. No married woman in Bible times was ever called by her husband's name. That practice is a fairly modern one and by no means universal even now. In both the old and new covenant scriptures, married women wore their own names, as "Sarai, Abram's wife" (Gen. 16:1); "Zacharias, and his wife, Elisabeth" (Luke 1:13). The word "church" is not a name at all. It is a common noun like "house" or "wife."

But my brother doesn't believe what he argues, and to prove it, I will put him to the test. He believes the expression "The Church of Christ" is the bride wearing *the name* of her husband. He wants to see that "name" over the door where he worships. I have sad news for him! The word "Christ" is not a name for our Lord at all. It is *his office*.

The name of the "groom" is Jesus. The angel said "Thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Matt. 1:21). "And he called his name Jesus" (Matt. 1:25). "God also hath highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:10). His name was Jesus, and that is what he was called at birth, but "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Christ is no more his name than is the word "Lord." The word "Christ" is merely the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah." It isn't a name at all; it is an office which God made him to occupy.

The brother who wrote is a janitor for a school. He says "I would not want my wife wearing another name than mine." Well, he would not want her to be called "Mrs. S. Janitor." Now, if he is consistent he will demand that they repaint the sign on their building to read "Church of Jesus." He must either do that

or admit that his argument is worthless. I predict he will do neither. When we have engaged in a practice without scriptural warrant so long that it becomes one of our traditions, we'll stick by it if we make void the word of God. We dare not admit that we have been wrong about anything. The expression "church of Christ" is no more out of place than the expression "church of God" or "church of the firstborn." It is the denominational usage of it that is wrong. The community of saints for which our Lord died has no official distinctive and exclusive name or title. Why should it? It includes every saved person on the face of the earth, and it is without competition as a spiritual body.

Wild Grapes

Mission Messenger (May 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

Have you ever read the song of the vineyard by Isaiah (5:1-7)? It is a portrayal of God's disappointment with his people. It demonstrates how little esteemed are the blessings which heaven bestows. The Lord planted his vineyard in a fertile hillside. He fenced it for protection; gathered out the stones, thus removing obstacles and impediments; planted it with the choicest vines; constructed a tower for guarding it; and made a winepress in anticipation of the fruit. But when the time of vintage arrived it consisted of bitter, acrid wild grapes. The vineyard was the house of Israel, the men of Judah were the pleasant plants. From them God expected to glean a harvest of justice and righteousness. Instead he received only oppression and strife. The lament of the husbandman is thus recorded: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

After the congregation of God was given two great wings like an eagle, and fled into the wilderness, to be nourished of God in the secret recesses of the human heart for more than twelve centuries, the time came when under the intrepid leadership of Wycliffe, Luther, and other noble souls, the veil which had eclipsed the face of truth was slowly lifted. As the word of God began to have free circulation, however, men followed leaders and thinkers of great ability, who sought to

codify their interpretations and make them the basis of fellowship and salvation. Thus the work of the reformers crystallized in the formation of a group of intolerant, schismatic sects, the adherents of which battled against each other with a fury unsurpassed by even the papal dogmatists.

Then, about the commencement of the nineteenth century, began a movement which seemed destined to sweep the world for Christ. It was launched by men of deep conviction who were affiliated with various sects. It did not begin in America. The fire first burned in the bosoms of honest individuals in Ireland and Scotland. But it was in this new land where there was no establishment of religion, where men were reaching, grasping, seeking, searching for new homes, new fortunes and liberty, that a fertile hillside was created for planting the restoration vineyard. Here where men were free to think, free to speak, free to act, to question, challenge and dispute, it seemed that providence had combined her talents to provide the proper setting to present a great drama of the ages.

The choicest vines were planted. Persons of noble character, high ideals and brilliant intellects, abandoning the parties of which they were members, resolved to be no longer partisan defenders, but to use their talents and fortunes to advance the cause of the King to whom they declared allegiance. They did not seek to unChristianize others. They recognized all truth, regardless of who held it; they rejoiced that Christ was preached regardless of who proclaimed him. They opposed error but loved all men; they sought to maintain even the human dignity of an opponent. They did not “stoop to conquer.”

Seldom did two of them agree in all points. They held widely divergent views as to the work of the Spirit, the functions of grace, the nature of man, the subject of future judgment and the problem of eternal punishment. But they conceived that Christ was greater than their personal views, and they tolerated the divergencies of opinion, believing that to make of an opinion

a test of fellowship, would only create two diverse parties, and they had but too recently fled from partisan division to the city of refuge. The sound of their plea fell like welcome rain upon a parched earth. The religious world was jaded and jaundiced. The petty bickerings and fierce antagonisms of the sectarian world had driven many to skepticism and infidelity. The plea that all who recognized the sovereignty of Jesus could be one in him, and no one surrender any truth he ever held, was one to rally the thinking hearts. It appeared that simple Christianity would sweep the universe. Some believed it was a millennial harbinger.

What happened to the powerful movement to restore the ancient order and to unite all believers in the Christ? As it was in the days of Isaiah, it has come to pass again. In spite of all that heaven did in behalf of the vineyard, it is producing wild grapes, bitter, acrid, poisonous with venom and hate. The noble effort of the giants of yesteryear has been diverted by men of pygmy spiritual stature into an excuse for civil and fratricidal strife which makes it a laughingstock to the world. The restoration movement which proposed to unite all in Christ is now shattered into more than two dozen warring factions, each of which proclaims itself to be the bride of the Messiah, and all of which are contesting the provisions of his will before the court of human opinion.

That you may savor just how wild are the grapes, we mention but a case or two by way of illustration. The Son of God left the community of saints a feast of fellowship by which the citizens are to proclaim His death until he has returned. All who are sealed unto God are to participate in unity of purpose. "We are all one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." But the children have fallen out with each other, and because the Lord has delayed his coming, they have taken to smiting each other. The very expression of unity and fellowship of the one body has been made one of the most fruitful causes of division and disfellowship.

Think of it! Men have divided over whether the bread which represents his body should be leavened or unleavened; whether it should be prepared with oil or some other ingredient; whether it should be broken or passed whole; whether it should be made of wheat or some other grain. Congregations of believers have actually been divided over whether the fruit of the vine should be fermented or not; whether it should be passed in one container, several, or in many. Here is the spirit of intolerance and the love for factionism gone to seed! And when factionism exists in the hearts of the members, it does not make any difference how they partake of the elements— *it is not the Lord's Supper!* When a congregation is filled with party spirit, until the members eye each other with disdain and suspicion, they need not be concerned about how they prepare or pass the emblems, for they are an abomination unto God when they pretend to communion with him and hate their brethren.

The one who died in agony for my sins has bound upon me to eat the bread and drink the cup in memory of him until he comes. When I sit down at the table with the saints, I shall not scrutinize or examine the bread to see if it is leavened or unleavened, or made with oil or not. I am not told to examine the bread. I am told to examine myself that my motive in participating be without reproach. I shall not concern myself with how it is broken or how it is passed. I am told to *eat the bread* and thus share in his death. Regardless of the grain from which the flour was made, whether there is yeast in it or not, it is bread, sanctified by the giving of thanks to its purpose and I shall seek to discern the Lord's body, rather than trying to discern what my brethren are thinking.

I know that factionism is sinful! It is a work of the flesh. To build a party around a type of bread, or a manner of presenting it, is a sin! A man may have scruples as to the type of bread. I should recognize them in the community of saints, and out of love should seek to keep from offense to my brother. It is a sin for either of us to build a party so that the body will be rent into

a “leavened party” and an “unleavened party.” And that goes for the cup of the Lord. There is no such thing in Christ as “cups churches” and “one cuppers.” These terms represent divisions created by men. These designations are the vernacular of narrow, intolerant, factional spirits. They are disgraceful and sinful. Those who love the Lord should purify their hearts of the attitude which creates such unscriptural verbiage so that they may purge their tongues and pens of such language. We are disappointing God with our wild grapes of hate, bitterness and the party spirit. God help us to rise above the schisms which men have created!

A Sense of Values

Mission Messenger (May 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The true Christian is one who evaluates things in harmony with the perspective of Jesus. Having fully surrendered himself to the Christ, he sublimates his will to that of the Master. He sees the world about him through the eyes of Jesus. Needless to say, his vision is greatly altered. Things which once seemed important become matters of no consequence; the things he once disregarded become momentous. There is no finer example of this than Saul of Tarsus. After he faced Jesus on the Damascus highway he was never again the same man. He expressed the transformation in these words, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. . . . I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung. . . .”

The greatest work of Jesus was the changing of values. To this task his earthly sojourn was primarily dedicated. To it he devoted most of his teaching; to enforce it his life was a constant example. Many of us who profess to be his followers are sadly deficient in following his precepts or pattern. I shall illustrate with one specific instance— our exaggerated regard for human life. This is a distinctive feature of our age in contrast with previous eras. We are liable to think of it as an expression of Christian feeling. It is not!

To many people there is nothing worse than physical death. They feel that life must be harbored, nurtured and sustained at all cost. When one dies, his friends give way to uncontrollable fits of grief. Often they render their own lives useless and futile by their emotional attitudes. Much of such grief is purely selfish. It demonstrates not so much a love for the departed as a lack of faith in God. We want our loved ones to remain for our benefit, regardless of the pain and torture to them, and when they must leave us, we summon a mortician to rouge their cheeks and to use artificial means to make it appear they are still alive. We try to fool ourselves by calling their temporary resting place “a slumber room” and labeling the cemetery a “garden of memories.”

We speak of death as a grim reaper, we talk of it as a demon or monster. We think of it as a dragon relentlessly stalking one to deprive him of every blessing. We allow ourselves to be cowed into thinking that when a man is killed the greatest tragedy imaginable has come to him, taking from him all that possesses real value. It is true that we do not always act upon that basis, for men forfeit their lives for scores of causes and we call them heroes. We admire the man in the research laboratory who fights to subdue cancer, and when he succumbs to the radium he used, we laud him as a courageous example of all that is best in humanity.

Our present philosophy is not at all that of our primitive brethren. It is virtually the opposite. They were taught to respect the present life very lightly as contrasted with the eternal. Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body.” The average disciple of this age greatly fears and shrinks from any form of violent death. But Jesus also said, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” This ought to give concern to those who are always writing to one who is zealous, urging him to slow down, husband his strength, and save his life, when the cause he loves demands that he “be poured out as a sacrifice.” They may, by their senseless dread

and unchristian fears, deprive him of that which is worth far more than life.

Why is it that our sense of values has swung so far from that of the Christ? No doubt our thinking is a product of our age and environment. It is the composite result of many factors. Let me suggest a few of them. We live in a world of earthly security. In spite of the abuses of political agents, our governments and police powers have protected us against much violence. We are not accustomed to seeing men killed, unless it be in highway accidents. The age span has been extended, and we have come to think of violent death as a much more dreadful thing than our forefathers thought it. We shrink from physical wounds and faint at the sight of blood. We recoil from death. It is no longer a travel agent arranging a vacation from vexing surroundings; it is now a masked robber stealing that which is precious and giving nothing in return.

Too, it has been many centuries since our Lord left the earth. He has delayed his coming and the faith of his servants in immortality wanes and becomes dim. In spite of pious platitudes spoken in sympathetic tones at funeral services, we bear our dead to their resting places under the turf, as those who have suffered loss rather than gain. The Christian is carried away to the sound of the dirge and lament, rather than in a fierce sense of triumph as the fallen soldier borne on his shield from the thick of the battle. As the faith in the immortal vanishes our hold upon that which is mortal tightens.

Perhaps the most serious thing of all is the loss of faith in spiritual things as opposed to material. We are creatures of comfort. In our lives of luxury we have come to trust in the things that are seen. It is the things which are not seen that are eternal. We look upon this earth as home. We conceive of a Christian who dies as leaving home, rather than going home. To the extent that we believe we have an abiding city, we cease to seek for one to come. We would be content to stop looking and

settle down here. This false sense of values operates in many fields. Religion begins to trust in the material for strength. Church edifices increase in size and worth, and in proportion as the financial outlay for these externals increases, the moral standard of worshipers decreases. A preacher who planned a huge edifice died recently, just before the “dedication service,” whatever that is. The whole theme of the speakers at his funeral was one of sorrow that he could not live to see the completion of this huge pile of brick and cement. These considerations combine to give a false sense to the value of human life at the expense of the soul. We cease to fear him who can destroy both body and soul, and become increasingly afraid of him who can only destroy the body. As faith in Christ goes up, a love for this present life goes down. There are many things worse than death, and violent death may be visualized as a much more terrible experience than it really is. To depart and be with Christ is better than to be present in the body and absent from him. The true value of life is not in retaining it, at whatever cost, but in using it, and even losing it, in the service of the Lord. Many a man who seeks to save his life will only lose it. You may lose your life and thus gain it!

Fear of Love

Mission Messenger (May 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

We live in an age of frustration, disappointment, and discouragement. In a land of plenty men are not satisfied; living in luxury and physical comfort they are not at ease. Our educational institutions are filled to overflowing, but so are our courts for juvenile criminals. In spite of the numerous organizations dedicated to mental hygiene and social welfare, there are more neurotics and insane than at any time in our history. A symptom of our times is found in the tremendous upsurge of publications dealing with how to attain peace of mind, and the variety of suggestions is so great, and often so contradictory, as to upset the minds of some who were relatively at peace. The manufacturers of sedatives, tranquilizing drugs and barbiturates, are having a field day. America has one big headache and hangover. She is paying the price for it!

In this state of crisis, what contributions are being made to the welfare of humanity by believers in the Messiah? When he came personally into the world, it was in much the same state as now, except that wars had been ended by the sway of a universal empire. The very extremity of man was an opportunity for God. The sun of righteousness beamed brighter because of the darkness of slavery, corruption, degradation, immorality and suicide of the world. If ever Christianity should be able to exhibit itself to the greatest advantage, it is under such conditions as presently obtain. Instead, the nominal disciples of

the Master, seem actually to be enlarging the problem rather than providing a solution. The moral defections of those reared under Christian influence, the nervous and mental breakdowns suffered, constitute an alarming barometer of unhealthful attitudes.

It is high time that we awake out of sleep! The expenditure of effort to promote factionism and hate will take its toll of wrecked minds and sick bodies as certainly as we now live. Hate and fear are toxic poisons! They will kill as certainly as arsenic or strychnine! Many of my own brethren are the most unhappy people on earth today. They are gloomy, morose and despondent. They are fearful and unbelieving! They are worried and scared! They are spiritually sick! Many who put on an outward show of gay spirits are troubled with worries, jealousy and envy. They cannot save the world, because they have nothing real to offer it. What would be the gain for men to leave the world where they have been fighting their enemies to come in to the church and start fighting their brethren?

Why is it that Christianity does not arouse the vibrant passions, kindle and enflame the spirit, and surcharge men with the thrill and joy that the first believers experienced? It is because men persevere in right actions and service to others, merely through force of habit, or because of social consciousness, or to escape from the brooding thoughts engendered by an imperious conscience. It is the lack of a guiding principle which poisons the springs of happiness in action, and makes life dull and spiritless.

The guiding principle of Christianity is *love*! But it is not love for a particular race, nationality, faction, congregation, segment or group. It is a love for mankind, not for a certain kind of man. To be children of God implies more than entering into a relationship with God; it entails the responsibility of growing Godlike in character. But "God is love." The expression of that love was universal. "God so loved *the world*." His was a divine

philanthropy. He loved men because they were men, made in his image. “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.”

It is an amazing thing that under the guise of religion we are being taught today to *not love men!* The human heart was made to love. But it cannot retain a vacuum. If love is educated out of it, hate will rush in to fill it. Love is the most powerful, active, vital force in the universe. It is world-shaking and revolutionary. Nothing can stand before the application of its full potential. But a universal love for mankind is designated sentimentality, it is ridiculed, scoffed at, belittled even by those who profess to be children of that God who is love.

We are urged to love our group, our race, our church, our nationality, our sect. We are afraid to love all men. To do so will upset our “little world” of security. We will be turned out of the little nest we have woven about ourselves. The churches of our land are employed to foster prejudice and animosity “in the name of Christ.” We are taught to have nothing to do with Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, Negroes, etc. But God loves everyone of these. He sent his Son to die for them. That Son came among those who hated him. He ate with publicans and sinners. He visited in the homes of Pharisees. But we are told to not visit them, to keep away from them. They are not “faithful.” We are! So our physicians are administering to the well. We have no sick among us. We do not love the spiritually sick. If you want our love and service you’ll have to get well!

Have you ever heard our brethren explain Matthew 5:43-48? Then, have you ever watched them try to put it into practice?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you; love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

you, and pray for them which despitely use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” Love! Bless! Do good! Only by this means can we be children of God. The world of mankind is divided into friend and foe as respects relationship to each of us. But both are men and if we love mankind as such, we will have no problem of loving the various categories within the human realm. God made us men, we have made various things of ourselves. We should love men because God made them, and in spite of what they have made of themselves.

If I am a true child of my Father, I shall desire and yearn for every man to be my brother. Man was created in God’s image, and in whatever respect he has lost that image I must help him repair or regain it. He did not shatter that image because he was a Jew, a Negro, or a Japanese. Sin antedated the advent of racial differences. In the attempt to help one regain the spiritual image of God, I am not to see him as a Jew, Japanese, or Negro, but as a man. “*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*”

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” To restrict our love to those who agree with us on some points of religion, is to deny at once the very basic element of Christianity, the equal and infinite value of every human soul. To love all men is actually looked upon as a sign of weakness. The truth is that it takes a strong man to really love his enemies. Weak men hate, despise, and feel envy. Cowards are jealous, embittered and distrustful. When Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” he was meek, but not weak!

Those who are afraid to love all, may actually love no one.

It is observable that those who cannot love all men, end up by disliking most men. Those who would restrict their love to their own brethren, do not even love those brethren, and will backbite, undermine and seek to destroy them. It is amazing that through the years those who have not learned to love, and who censure a deep affection for others than those with whom they associate, will divide those associates, and soon will not love a great part of them.

Our problem is not so much of having love dwell in us, as it is of our dwelling in love, as a state. God, who made *all men*, cannot live in a heart that hates *any man*! “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” No man can say he is like God, whose love is partisan, national or racial. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” Many bold, blatant race-haters will be snivelling cowards in the day of judgment.

The lever which will move the world to Christ is love! Regardless of how pure your doctrine may be, it will repel, instead of compel, when set forth in bigotry, intolerance and animosity. The real test of faith in the Christ is the reformation worked in your own life. “For we ourselves also were one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” Now we are associates of the Father and the Son, purveyors of *love unlimited*!

That They All May Be One (5)

Mission Messenger (January 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

(NOTE: Our daughter, Sharon Sue, thinks that we ought to tell our new readers that this series of articles relates the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. At present he is assisting in the development of men qualified to serve as bishops, and as we drop in on their meeting today, he has just finished giving them a preliminary dissertation on the subject of elders, and is now receiving and answering questions of the brethren).

1. How old should a man be to qualify for the office of bishop?

I think the term “elder” contemplates more than mere calendar age. While its primary significance has to do with age, we have learned that it came, in an official sense, to apply to those possessed of certain executive abilities. I would not set an arbitrary age limit, but certainly one should be old enough to be sober in his thinking and possessed of sufficient experience to enable him to administer spiritual affairs acceptably. There could hardly be a “young elder” any more than there could be an “old youngster.”

2. Can a man be appointed a bishop against his will?

No! A man cannot be appointed over his own opposition.

The scriptures are very specific in stating that one should take the oversight “not by constraint, but willingly.” Every Christian man who can qualify ought to be willing, if chosen to serve as a bishop, for if he can fulfill the responsibility, and refuses to do so, he may have to answer to God for his reluctance and refusal. But if a man feels that because of his temperament he cannot qualify, he should not accept the office, and his brethren should not try to force him into it.

3. Can a man resign from the office of bishop?

Certainly so. Any office, the acceptance of which is contingent upon the willingness of the individual, must be retained upon the same basis. It would be just as wrong for one to keep an office unwillingly as to take it that way. If a bishop becomes convinced that he is disqualified, or if he deems it essential to the peace and welfare of the congregation, he should resign. On the same basis, if the community of saints becomes convinced that a mistake was made in selecting a man, and if they conclude that he is disqualified, they should ask him to resign. God has made no arrangement for the perpetuity of a situation intolerable to an individual or the congregation which he serves.

4. Why is there no scripture for a man resigning?

None is needed. The word of God specifies that a man must serve “willingly” and “of a ready mind.” When he can no longer gain consent of his will, and his mind tells him that he cannot serve the best interests of the congregation, he should return the office to the congregation which entrusted him with it. The office belongs to the congregation and not to the individual, else they could not bestow it. You cannot bestow upon another that which you do not have. If the office belonged to the individual he could give it to another, or will it to one of his heirs. It is a trust held in behalf of the community of saints.

5. Is it possible for a bishop to get too old to serve?

There is no calendar age minimum and no maximum. But just as one may be so young that his judgment is not adequate to the task, so he may become so old that his judgment is impaired, and the infirmities of age may render him incapable of tending the flock. A bishop is a shepherd. A shepherd can get too old to go out and endure the rigors of watching a flock. So it is with a shepherd of the Lord's flock. He may become senile and childish and hold back the work of the Lord by his petulance. Under such circumstances, he should be asked to relinquish his office. This is no reflection against him, but he may reflect against the congregation if he remains in office. Unfortunately, it is a mark of childishness that a person resolves to hang on when he has served out his usefulness in a given sphere. He considers himself indispensable. This is an admission that he has not done his duty in training successors.

6. Can a congregation be scriptural without having elders?

Yes and no! If a congregation does not have men who are qualified, it cannot be counted unscriptural. However, when men are qualified, if the brethren refuse to have them appointed, they are acting in violation of God's will. The divine program is that elders be ordained in every congregation (Acts 14:23). Until such men are qualified the congregation should continue under the guidance of an evangelist whose duty it is to develop men for the office (Titus 1:5). It is not God's will that a congregation continue interminably without bishops, and if there are men who could qualify and will not, they will be judged for failure to meet the full degree of responsibility.

7. Do you consider that a plurality of elders must be appointed in each congregation?

I believe the divine plan embraces a plurality of bishops in each congregation. It is not for each place to have a presbyter,

but a presbytery, i.e., a body of elders (1 Tim. 4:14). The apostle and his evangelistic companion ordained elders in every congregation (Acts 14:23), and consistent with this we find a plurality of elders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), Philippi (Phil. 1:1).

The plurality of overseers appears evident from undesigned and casual statements of apostolic admonition. “Obey them that have the rule over you” (Heb. 13:7). “Know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:12). Peter wrote: “The *elders* which are among you I exhort” (1 Peter 5:1, 2). Paul said: “Take heed unto *yourselves* and the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20:28). It would have been impossible to obey the injunction “Is any sick among you? Let him call for *the elders of the church*” (James 5:14) on any other ground than a plurality of bishops in the local congregation.

(At this juncture, no more questions of a preliminary nature being asked, the evangelist announced that he would continue his instruction of the congregation on the subject by an analysis of the different terms used in reference to the office. It will be our privilege to visit the congregation again next month and share in the interesting instruction and discussion).

The Power of Christianity

Mission Messenger (June 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The impact of Christianity upon the world is greatly underestimated and seriously misjudged by the age in which we exist. Most of us suffer from such limited vision, smug conceit, and restricted experience, that we cannot conceive of the dynamic force unleashed upon an alien world by the cross. We are hindered, too, by our confusion of Christianity with creedalism, and our equally reprehensible error of identifying the universal Kingdom of the Messiah with narrow partisan prejudice.

Christianity is a world-shaking revolutionary force. It has not failed, and it is not failing, to achieve its objectives. The fact that it marshals no mighty armies, and employs no thundering armament, is no indication that it is ineffective. That it has been advanced by the poor of this world, rich in faith, is but proof of the inherent power of principle to triumph over the externals such as wealth and wisdom. The proof of its conquests lies all about us. Every social gain that has been made has been won as a tribute to it. The provision for care of the aged and infirm, the interest in the welfare of the handicapped and retarded, the elimination of sweat shops and improved status of the working classes, the council tables at which representatives of belligerent nations sit down to forge the links of peace— these are the trophies which Christianity has won in its battle against selfishness and greed. The gains would have been inestimably

greater except for the fact that most professed Christians view their religion as static rather than dynamic.

The monastic idea which teaches men to withdraw from social contact in order to *preserve* what they have, is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Jesus. It is this attitude which makes the church appear as an exclusive club, and causes the poor and humble to conclude that it is not for them. Even the administration of charity is done as an irksome duty, and with a patronizing air, which robs the recipient of dignity and self-respect, while filling his belly or clothing his body. Every scriptural example of application of power is upon the basis of personal contact. We are the salt of the earth. As long as salt remains in the shaker it is useless to purify, preserve or perpetuate. It must come in contact with the substance it is to affect. The revolutionary force of leaven can never be seen until it is placed in contact with the dough. The apostles were told to go into the world, the modern disciples retire into a church building. And the salt has lost its strength!

Jesus was not a social reformer, in the sense in which the world uses that term. He did not grapple directly with the social, political or industrial problems of the time, while he was upon earth. He accepted government as it was, whether Roman or Jewish. He did not give specific laws and statutes to regulate economic conditions. The sheriff, the tax collector, the magistrate, the emperor, the master, the slave— all were accepted as integral units of an existing order. To Jesus they were not vicious and divergent types, but each was merely a human soul. And it is in this concept that Christianity found its strength. It came with no organized program advertised as a panacea to reform the world with a united effort or corporate action. But the individual was awakened to love his neighbor as himself, and by the reformation of the individual from within, this reformation of self, the purpose of heaven was accomplished.

Jesus did not inveigh long and loudly about the spectator sports of his day, although some of them were brutal spectacles. He did not condone men going, or recommend that they refrain from going. He did not mention them. But from the moment that the ferment of Christianity began to work, gladiatorial combat in the Roman arena was doomed. It would have been so, even if the Christian, Telemachus, had not jumped into the arena to thrust himself between the two gladiators, and remonstrate with them saying, "Why seek to kill one another, seeing ye are brethren?" And it was not the death of the aged Christian, cut down by the angered gladiators, which eventually caused such to be outlawed. It was the death of Christ on the cross, with all of its implications of unselfish love.

It has long been a puzzle to sociologists as to why Jesus did not lead a crusade against the human slavery which was such a blight upon the world of his day. The mistake is in thinking that because the methods of the Nazarene do not coincide with the modern theories of reform that he did nothing effectively. We live in an age of organization. Men can see no way of achieving an objective except by first creating an organization. Are there those in society who libel others? We form an Anti-Defamation League! Do some drink to excess and become a menace to society? We form a Temperance Society! Do some poison their bodies and weaken their offspring by the constant inhalation of nicotine fumes? We form an Anti-Cigarette Union! And what happens? The Anti-Defamation League meets to combat radical hate propaganda and many of its members fog the room with cigarette smoke, and some may get drunk.

Jesus created no organization, as such, to reform the world. This does not mean that he had no intention of reforming it. But the mistaken idea that this is the purpose of the church of God, as an organization, has been the greatest hindrance and the most serious obstacle to effecting the divine purpose. The success achieved by Christianity, has been in spite of, and not because of, this alien philosophy. So long as it prevails, the church will

try to save the world by organized campaigns, crusades and conventions. It will seek to bring the dough to the leaven, and the meat to the salt. It will practice the super-speed injection method of the ten day inoculation, and it will fail. It will fill its buildings to overflowing with those whose spirits are deformed, instead of with those whose lives are reformed. And real reformers will be subjected to brutality, and driven out, as they have always been. In every age, those who are chiefly concerned with maintaining things as they are, have looked upon real Christianity, not as pure and peaceful, but as dangerous and subversive. *Every reformer whom we now fulsomely praise was regarded as a divisive heretic by his contemporaries!* The monuments we erect to the reformers are made up of the stones hurled at them by their brethren!

The churches of God in Christ Jesus, did not organize to combat slavery in the days of the apostles. Instead, they were often composed of masters and slaves. But where is slavery today? It has virtually been banished from the civilized earth. The traffic in human chattels is repugnant to the enlightened social conscience. And although, in our own nation, men felt so deeply about the matter, that they met upon battlefields in civil strife, there is not one state in the union today which would dare to secede and set up a pattern of human slavery, even if it were legally possible. This is a victory for Christianity.

And Christianity is not a dead or dying force. Its revolutionizing power is still working quietly, but in undeniable fashion. It is affecting areas and avenues of human relationships of which we have not dreamed. It is for this reason social inequality and racial discrimination is doomed. Segregation in the public schools is a lost cause. I say this without fear of the repercussions it will raise. Integration of all of our citizenry at the fount of public learning will come. It will not be the result of court decisions or human legislation, although the Judge of all the earth can make use of those to His glory. But you cannot legislate goodness into hearts. That day will come because of the

power of Christianity, for the same influence which can make the wolf and the lamb dwell together, and the leopard and kid lie down together, can make white and colored children sit together in the same classroom. And then we may say, “This is the Lord’s work, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Class Controversy

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Volume 19

[Abstract]

The disciple brotherhood has been rent and torn by strife until it presents a spectacle of disgrace to every candid observer. The movement started to unite the shattered forces of Christendom has degenerated into a melee of factionism and civil war. Prejudiced partisans, under the guise of “preaching the gospel” assail the ears of their auditors with creedal statements, and sow discord on the basis of arbitrary interpretations and uninspired opinions, actually holding up some factional view as the key to heaven, while excommunicating and disfellowshipping every person who cannot repeat the party shibboleth, or whose enlightened heart will not allow him to be made a servile slave to a paper hierarchy.

Every factionist proclaims his faction to be the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God, the body of Christ, and the Kingdom of heaven. He regards it as “the faithful church” but judges its fidelity upon its adherence to the party line rather than upon its espousal to Christ, so that it is not unusual to find as many as five “faithful” churches in the same town, no two of which will regard each other with charity, and with all the partisans of each, regarding the members of the other congregations as pagans, unbelievers or heathen. One group is “the faithful church” because it does not have Bible classes for study; another because it does not have individual containers for

the fruit of the vine; another because it does not use unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper; another because the members always kneel in prayer. In every one of these a man may be guilty of moral dereliction, suffer from gross ignorance of the nature of God's revelation, and present an example of worldly conformity indicative of an unregenerate heart, but he is a welcome member of the fraternity, if he can pluck the one string on the party harp, and repeat the sacred password.

If a godly, consecrated saint from another group comes into a meeting, he is shunned as a leper. The leader will call upon some person to lead in prayer whose reputation for morality is questionable, but he dare not step across the legal unwritten creedal barrier and recognize one who is "not our kind." Thus, the closeness of the personal walk with Jesus is esteemed as nothing compared to goose-stepping to the party tune. And much of the division exists over matters of opinion and indifference. The opinion crystallizes into law, the law is enforced against unwilling subjects, a rent is made in the body, and two groups are formed of those who sat at the same table of fellowship for years. Prominent men stir up emotional feeling, sides are chosen, Christ is forgotten, love is crucified, hate is enthroned, and sectarianism reigns supreme.

Of all the multitude of divisions among God's people, none seems to me to be more useless or senseless than the schism over teaching the word of the Lord in classes. I do not wish to impugn the motives nor impeach the sincerity of all who have made this a test of fellowship, but I feel that the cleavage into partisan factions over this issue will certainly spell the doom of some in the day of final accounting. I have examined every point made by those who oppose teaching God's word by this method, and to this present moment I have not found a single sound or rational argument which will assay as genuine when tested in the crucible of logical interpretation. I have seen more scriptures taken out of context, and wrested, twisted and distorted on this issue, than on any other. I cannot see one semblance of excuse

for two conflicting parties, one a “class party” and the other a “no class party.” Such factionalism is caused by unscriptural agitation and injudicious attitudes.

It is too much to expect that one who has created any human test of loyalty to God will so far forget his idol as to sit down and study the issue objectively. Most factional leaders who rate high with frenzied supporters would go unrecognized in the great stream of Christian thought. Deficient in real scholarship, lacking in constructive ability, their only hope is to remain in the limelight by controlling an exclusive segment of the brotherhood of disciples. But in every sect there are those who are bigger than sectarian surroundings, those who possess good and honest hearts. All such will sigh for unity of the Spirit and for healing the breaches in the walls of Zion. It is only with such persons that this appeal will register, and they must be prepared for vicious attacks from their former associates who will loose against them the venom and pent up hate which lie at the core of every factional movement. No one who lacks courage should enter the arena to contend for unity of God’s scattered sheep unless he is prepared to pay the price of crucifixion by the party with which he has been affiliated. Yet we know there are those in every party who have courage unmarred by pride and false bravado.

It is time to cease agitation on this question and to close our ranks. This division ought never to have occurred and should not be perpetuated. Those responsible for driving the knife into the body of God’s Son must answer to Him for that; those who cling to the hilt and continue twisting it cannot escape responsibility. There are scores of congregations of humble saints where the Bible is taught in classes, and where the brethren are definitely opposed to a separate organization to carry on this function. To accuse them of creating another body when they merely function systematically as the one body of Christ, is indicative of an unfair approach to the issue.

The community of saints should miss no opportunity of teaching the word of the Lord. The method of doing so can well be left to the discretion of the community, seeing that God has not legislated on this feature. There is a difference between an organization and a method. If an organization is created, it must still employ a method. It is sinful to divide God's people into warring factions over the method of doing a thing, unless that method is in contravention to God's holy revelation, properly understood and correctly interpreted. Of course, it is here that the point of controversy lies, and it can never be resolved until we apply the rules of interpretation to the sacred scriptures on this issue. It is a lack of knowledge of those rules, or a misapplication of them, that has caused every religious division on earth among those who sincerely respect the Bible as the word of God.

The first appeal generally made by our brethren who oppose the class method of study is to 1 Corinthians 14:31, "For you can all prophesy, one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." It is affirmed that this is a sacred dogma regulating the teaching program of the community of the saints. But this is a fallacy in inductive reasoning, the fallacy of generalization from a specific. In the first place, the gathering of saints in this chapter, was not for the purpose of a systematic study of the new covenant scriptures and an attempt to arrive at knowledge of the truth by an exchange of ideas as to what is meant by such scriptures. The congregation at Corinth had no such scriptures at this time, and the verse cited has to do with revelation of the divine will and not with investigation of it at all. To infer that because only one person at a time was allowed to orally reveal God's word to an assembly, that the members of such an assembly could never from henceforth, separately and severally, discuss the import and application of the revelation, when committed to writing, is a species of logic of which a student ought not to be guilty.

Is 1 Corinthians 14 not a pattern for procedure today?

Certainly it is! Beginning with chapter 11:1 the apostle regulates the public gathering of saints for commemoration of the royal feast and the mutual edification attendant upon that meeting. And, say what you will, this is the only assembly which the Lord has made incumbent upon the community. He has arranged it, and in correcting the abuses of it by the Corinthians, he has legislated as to its conduct and procedure. Other meetings can be arranged by the community of saints at their discretion, to take care of emergencies, transact business, investigate the sacred scriptures, and do any other thing that is legitimate in itself and falls within the domain of community activity. Such gatherings are subject only to principles of decorum which should govern our social intercourse with each other.

It would be sinful for the saints assembled about the table for the corporate worship regulated in chapters 11-14 of 1 Corinthians to divide into groups or segments, for such would be contrary to the purpose of the gathering, but to conclude that the community may not, of its own volition, arrange other meetings for the study of the scriptures, and do so in smaller groups, where such is not contrary to the purpose, is illogical indeed. God has not designated the method or course to be pursued and we are, therefore, at liberty to employ any method not in violation of the tenor and principles of the Christian profession.

The context shows that the expression, “You can all prophesy one by one” was to avoid disorder in the assembly, which would be created by two or more persons speaking simultaneously to the same group. Yet, our brethren who oppose the class method of conveying instruction, are not consistent in their practice, for in their “song service” they urge all to speak at the same time, and at the top of their voices. And they, of all people, seem in many places, to favor part songs of the after-beat, rock and roll variety, so that a visitor may be treated to the sight of a whole congregation standing up, all teaching and admonishing one another at the same time, with the tenor and

soprano shouting one thing, the alto and bass shouting something else, and all exhorted by a leader frantically waving his arms to beat out the catchy melody. They, like the rest of us, are a long way from the primitive pattern of solemn corporate worship.

Many of the arguments made by our brethren who oppose the class method have to do with abuses that have crept in. There is nothing good that a man cannot corrupt. But the abuse of a thing does not constitute a legitimate objection to its right to exist. We should be forever aware of the frailty of man and his tendency to corrupt whatever he touches, and we should profit by all just criticism, correcting abuses in a spirit of dedication to the Master, and of love for our critics.

Those who preserve inviolate the regulations of God for the assembly He has ordained, and who summon all and sundry for periods of study, investigation and exchange of views, should not seek to bind their method of procedure upon other communities of the saints. If I am privileged to worship with a congregation of the saints where the members have agreed not to have classes, I will not be guilty of disrupting their peace and harmony. In such a congregation I will hold my opinion and not thrust it upon others as a dogmatic rule. I will love and respect those who are my brothers and sisters even though they entertain opinions diverse from mine, as to the advisability of certain methods. Instead of pitting them in conflict against each other, I will “follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” I do not propose to allow anyone to make me a leader of a “no class party” or of a “multiple class party.” I want nothing to do with the party spirit. I do not intend to allow this little paper, which is my individual method of reaching my brethren, to degenerate into a recognized mouthpiece or journalistic oracle for any faction. I serve notice that I will not be a party lackey or stooge, nor will I clear what I believe and think with some headquarters on earth. I do not think the test of allegiance to my absent King is an attitude

toward Bible classes. I have never believed that, and my conviction upon this matter is stronger than ever. believe a congregation can be faithful to the Christ and teach the word in Bible classes; I believe a congregation can be without classes and be unfaithful to the Lord. The first is not faithful because it has classes; the second is not unfaithful because it does not have them. This is not the divine test of approbation, and should not become our test. Let each community of saints determine the method it will employ in those realms where God has not legislated, and when its means do not contravene the word of God let us walk together in love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. There are enough real giants in the land, and it is foolish to act like a modern Don Quixote and joust at windmills.

That They All May Be One (6)

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Volume 19

[Abstract]

This is the story of a little congregation banded together by an evangelist who is now laboring to complete his task by training men for the office of bishop. As we visit them today the evangelist is teaching the group relative to the distinctive terms applied to the office. There are six words in the new covenant scriptures used to designate the officers who oversee the local churches of God. A proper understanding of these in their relationship to each other will help in understanding the nature and purpose of the office.

1. *Elders and presbyters.* The word “elder” is a translation of the Greek *presbuteros*, which occurs 67 times, and 62 times is translated by the English word “elder.” In its simplest form it means “an aged person.” It is used in both a general and a specific sense. In 1 Timothy 5:1 it refers to an older man in contrast with younger men. In this sense age is the only consideration. In Acts 20:17 the term applies to overseers in contrast with the flock which they superintend. In this sense the aged person must possess certain special qualifications.

The office of elder cannot be bestowed upon a youth, nor even upon an old man who is young in the faith. Since experience is essential as well as years, an elder may not be a novice. This word is from *neophutos*, “a new plant, i.e., a recent convert to the faith.” The word of God does not specify the

calendar age at which one may qualify, for wisdom and ability are not always to be determined by birthday anniversaries. A man can know when he is no longer youthful, for David said, “I have been young, and now I am old” (Psa. 37:5). Likewise society recognizes when one has become settled and sedate. Of David’s father it was said, “The man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul” (1 Sam. 17:12).

The term “presbyter” was well known to the Jews, and is used primarily in congregations of Jewish extraction. Every synagogue had its elders and deacons, and the qualifications were much the same as those specified for officers in the Christian church. The synagogue was closely allied to the church in the beginning and the term was applied to the churches for more than a century (James 2:2). If the Holy Spirit had not legislated a form of government for the congregations of the Messiah, it is almost certain that those composed of Jews would have selected a presbytery for each local unit. Indeed the primitive Jewish converts to the Nazarene had no idea of organizing a separate body outside the pale of Judaism, but expected to constitute a synagogue composed of Jews and proselytes who recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. Consequently, if an entire synagogue became convinced that the Nazarene was the Messiah, there was required no particular change in government, officers, procedure or corporate worship. The introduction of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of the Messiah’s death would be the only essential addition.

2. *Bishops and overseers.* The word “bishop” occurs five times in the King James Version. Once it refers to Christ (1 Peter 2:25), the other times to the elders or overseers (Cp. 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7; Phil. 1:1). It is from *episkopos*, from *epi* “over,” and *skopos*, “to inspect, view.” It thus refers to an overseer, supervisor, inspector or superintendent. It is rendered “overseers” (Act 20:28). The word *presbuteros* has to do with the type of man for the office; while *episkopos* has to do with the

governmental responsibility involved in the office. “Any man who aspires to be a superintendent aspires to a noble task” (1 Tim. 3:1).

As the Jews were familiar with the rule of elders in their synagogues, so the Greeks were accustomed to the oversight of bishops in their civil affairs. The word *episkopos* is not of ecclesiastical origin. It was a military term. In the Greek Version (LXX) of the old covenant scriptures, it is used to translate the word which appears in the King James Version as “captains” (Num. 13:14). It is also the translation of the word for “officer” (Judges 9:28). Robinson’s Lexicon says, “Among the Athenians it was the title of magistrates sent out to tributary cities to organize and govern them.”

The original term is translated “looking diligently” (Heb. 12:15) and “taking the oversight” (1 Peter 5:2). Oversight involves two things, expressed by the words “over” and “sight.” The first implies superintending and directing; the second implies association and inspection. One cannot be a bishop by proxy, long distance, or remote control. He cannot govern upon hearsay or secondhand reports. He cannot remedy defects unless he first inspects.

The elders are to rule or govern. The congregation is to submit and obey. The elders demonstrate their fitness to rule God’s household by ruling their own (1 Tim. 3:4). They are to rule well (1 Tim. 5:17). The word “overseer” signifies that someone is *under* supervision. No one can be over those who are not willing to be under him. There is no provision for despotic or arbitrary rule. All government must be by and with the consent of the governed.

3. *Shepherds and pastors.* The term “shepherd” is not directly applied, but implied, in the King James Version. After Peter told the elders to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight” (1 Pet. 5:2), he adds, “And when the

chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” The word “feed” is from *poimaino*, “To tend as a shepherd.” Thus the apostle recognizes Jesus as the chief Shepherd over the under-shepherds, or elders.

The word “pastors” occurs once in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11). It is from *poimen* “a shepherd or feeder.” The Hebrew equivalent is eight times translated “pastors” in Jeremiah. It is translated “herdsman” 7 times, and “shepherd” 62 times in other portions of the old covenant scriptures. The pastors in the New Testament congregations are to be the elders or bishops. The word “pastors” (Eph. 4:11) is from the same word as “feed” which means to “tend as a shepherd” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). This is the duty laid upon the bishops. To hire a man to feed a flock is to make him a pastor, a hireling pastor. The etymology will allow no dispute about this fact.

It is a common error in this degenerate age for men to reason that the duty of elders is to oversee and supervise the work, but they may hire another to do the work. They are willingly ignorant of the fact that their relationship to the flock *in a governmental sense* is expressed by the term bishop; but their relationship to the flock *in a developmental sense* is expressed by the term pastor. Now they would refuse to hire a man for the first, and claim to hire him only for the second. But it is the second which makes him a pastor, and not the first.

Ask a hireling minister or “located evangelist” the difference between his position and that of the other sectarian pastors about him. His sole glib reply will be that he does not run or manage the church, but is under the elders. This has nothing to do with “pastorating.” The overseeing or superintending is covered by the term *bishop*. The question is not about hiring bishops, but pastors! If a rancher hires a man to prepare feed and dispense it to his sheep, to visit the flock and lead it, has he not hired a shepherd? And if the work becomes too arduous and an associate is hired to assist, is he not an

associate shepherd? Could these argue that they were not shepherds because they worked under supervision of the rancher to whom the sheep belonged, and were subject to him as an overseer? Supervising is the work of bishops, feeding the flock is the work of pastors. Just because one is not hired to supervise or govern is no sign he is not hired to pastorate. The whole truth is that the very argument of the hireling ministers is a candid admission that they are “pastors” and “associate pastors.”

The word pastor applies to a feeder or shepherd. When Laban hired Jacob he did not relinquish the control of his flock. He could hire, fire and change his wages! Jacob worked under his supervision, but this in no sense lessened the fact that he was Laban’s hired pastor. Indeed their negotiations were much like those in the modern sectarian body known as “The Church of Christ.” Jacob tried out for a month without salary, then Laban said, “Tell me, what shall your wages be.” Jacob stipulated his wage and they drew up a seven year contract, although there was a rider in “the fine print” which Jacob did not detect. At the completion of his term of service, Jacob offered his resignation. “Let me go, for you know the service I have given you.” Laban was reluctant, because under the pastorate of Jacob, the congregation had been blessed with considerable increase of members. He said, “If you will allow me to say so the Lord has blessed me because of you, name your wages and I will give it.” Jacob remained six more years with the flock and then took off without waiting for a big farewell party. Now, who will deny that Jacob was a shepherd, a hired pastor, merely because he did not boss the whole ranch? The “Church of Christ” today has an unscriptural hireling pastor system exactly like the sectarian world about it, and all the twisting, agonizing, writhing, and wresting of scripture will not change the fact! These brethren have sold the church down the river with their professional clergy and the incubators which hatch them. Stop bidding on the chickens and the hatchery will shut down!

Positive and Negative

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Volume 19

[Abstract]

While awaiting my train at the station in Nashville, Tennessee, I looked over the array of religious literature displayed in racks by the various denominations in that city. I selected some reading material from each section as I like to know what others are thinking, and I can learn from all. The “Church of Christ” rack yielded up a booklet bearing the title “A Church that is neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish.” As I read, I thought how typical it was of the negative attitude which is so characteristic of my brethren. Most of their time, money and effort is utilized in telling the world what they are not. Perhaps they have more to boast about in that department.

“Faithfulness” in these days is judged almost solely upon what men disclaim in doctrine or practice. A congregation is deemed “faithful” because it does not support colleges, have a hired minister, contribute to orphan homes, teach in Bible classes, use individual cups, use unfermented wine, or expect the Lord Jesus to return before the millennium. It just depends upon what section of the country you may be in, what segment of believers you may be among, or what the latest fight is about. Whatever the current criterion, it will not particularly concern what you believe, but what you do not believe.

A congregation may thus be “faithful” if it is in the doldrums, composed of lazy, indolent, indifferent members who

will not talk to a neighbor, distribute a tract, or contribute a cent to support an evangelist in the field, just so long as it does not have a “regular preacher.” Its leaders may talk about the Lord’s system of mutual ministry, but frequently that is neither “mutual” nor “ministry” and the members have to be punched, prodded and programmed before they reluctantly agree to do anything. Yet the church is “faithful” because of what it does not have.

Another congregation may be “faithful” whose members have never supported one aged widow or cared for a single helpless orphan. The members may spend their Lord’s Day afternoons driving about in luxurious limousines, attired in the latest fashions, while there are those who languish in hospitals to whom a visit would be like a cool refreshing draught to the spirit. The aged members are neglected, forgotten, and condemned to eke out their days in tiny little cubicles which their old age assistance will cover. No one thinks of taking them for a drive in the country. But the congregation is “faithful” because it does *not* support orphan homes or homes for the aged.

Now we could run the entire gamut of factions and fractions and the story would be the same. It is not the life of surrender, consecration and closeness to God which is the mark of faithfulness in these days. It is not what you are, but what you are not, that counts. We do not minimize the necessity of opposition to all evil in faith or practice. It is essential that we stand against what we conceive of as detrimental to the rule of our King, but real Christianity is a positive force. There is a danger that we shall conceive of it as wholly negative and thus live helpless, powerless lives.

I trust that I may be allowed to live until I can see my brethren who love the Christ gain a sufficient degree of courage that they may go anywhere, meet anyone, and contend for the truth under all circumstances. I would like to see them have a knowledge of God’s word and the English language, so that they

would unhesitatingly pass out a tract bearing the title: “A church that is catholic, and composed of protestants and Jews.”

The Church is catholic

The church of God is the only truly catholic church in the world. The word catholic means: “1. Universal or general; affecting mankind as a whole, or affecting what is universal in human interest. 2. Comprehensive in sympathies or understanding; liberal. 3. Of or pertaining to the church universal, specifically, designating or pertaining to the ancient undivided Christian church or a church claiming historical continuity from it.” There cannot be two “catholic” churches in the same realm at the same time. The church for which our Lord paid with his blood embraces within its fold every saved person on the face of this material globe. There is not one such being outside of it. That church is catholic as pertains to:

1. Scope. Its ambassadors were told to “Go into *all the world* and preach the gospel to *every creature*” (Mark 16:15).

2. Nationality. “In *every nation* he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

3. Social classes. “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, *bond nor free*” (Col. 3:11).

4. Sex. “There is neither *male nor female*, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

5. Languages. “Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

6. Membership. “And the Lord added to their number

daily such as were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

One who claims to be a Christian must either be a member of the catholic church of God, or of a sect. The Roman Catholic Church is not the church of God. It is a sect; indeed, the mother of many sects. It is Roman, but it is not catholic. Any person who contends for the church with which he is affiliated, yet admits that it is possible for people to be saved outside of the circle of communion which he recognizes, is a member of a sect. The church of God is not a sect. It contains every redeemed person from every kindred, tongue, people and nation.

Composed of protestants

A *protestant* is one who makes or enters a protest. The verb form “protest” is from the Latin “pro” and “testare” to be *a witness*. It is a mistake to think that to protest one has to be against something. Indeed, the first definition of *protest* is “to assert; affirm; aver.” One makes a protestation of faith in the Messiah when he publicly acknowledges him, for the word means the “act of protesting, or solemnly declaring true, existent, or the like; a public avowal.” Any person who makes an affirmation or declares a truth is a protestant. One who is not a protestant in any sense would be in a sad condition.

Of course, a protest is also “an expostulation; complaint; objection or remonstrance.” One who objects to being designated a protestant proves the designation is correct by his objection. It is not an uncommon thing to see a man *protesting* that he is not a *protestant*. One thing wrong with the members of the church of God in these days is that not enough of them are protestants. They accept anything that comes along, submit to being robbed of their rights, privileges, and prerogatives without ever raising a protest. No man can be a true follower of the Christ without being protestant. One reason why our Lord was killed was because he was such a strong protestant.

Composed of Jews

Every member of the church of God is a real Jew; every real Jew is a member of the church of God. This is clearly taught in the New Testament, which also teaches that no one can be a Christian without being circumcised. “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:11, 12). Only those who are thus circumcised are real Jews and in covenant relationship with God.

There are those who claim to be Jews outside the church of God, just as there are those who contend they are catholic or protestant outside of it, but the first are not real Jews any more than the others are really catholic or truly protestant. “For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual, and not literal” (Rom. 2:28, 29).

Instead of delivering talks on why we are not catholic, protestants, or Jews, why not let the world know we are? I will be happy to see the day come when my brethren will not, through ignorance, surrender perfectly good words to a group who will capitalize and misuse them, but will have the courage to take a positive attitude toward the new covenant religion. I want to see them bold and brave enough to flood the communities with a non-sectarian tract about the church that is catholic, and composed of protestants and real Jews!

Brethren in Slavery

Mission Messenger (July 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

Thousands of professed followers of the Messiah are ensnared in an evil bondage of their own making and are helpless victims of an insidious habit which may doom them to a premature death. Like a modern demon, their bodies are possessed of a cruel unnatural desire which drives them relentlessly on regardless of cost in health or money. Even worse, their sense of reason becomes so twisted and warped that they actually seek to defend and protect the killer which fastens its fangs in their vitals, and become angry and vicious when their slavery is mentioned. Many, for example, will pass on to their innocent children the same fetters, and will see them locked in the same handcuffs of despair.

Cigarette smoking is catering to a physical craving or lust. It satisfies no real hunger, furnishes no necessary element, and offers no genuine satisfaction. Nicotine is a narcotic and the habitual user is a drug addict who becomes weak, trembling, and even nauseated when deprived of it. It drives men to despair when they do not have it, and to extreme lengths to obtain it. A man who is too tired to visit a next door neighbor who is ill will walk three blocks in a blizzard to secure a pack of cigarettes. Some will take their last cent to buy tobacco even though there is no milk in the house for their babies. They will allow their debts to run on interminably while they blow their money out through their nostrils!

Tobacco users frequently lose their sense of respect or modesty. Their insatiable craving forces them to forget or ignore a sense of decency. Not long ago, in a southern state, I visited a congregation, the members of which thought they constituted “the faithful church.” They were arrogant, hateful and haughty in their denunciation of congregations which taught little children the word of the Lord in Bible classes. Before we had talked very long every man in the group had lighted a cigarette in the meeting house, and was sucking and puffing away, in between quoting the scriptures and making sarcastic remarks about the brethren. They claimed to be the last vestige of hope to deliver the rest of the religious world from error, but “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*” (2 Peter 2:19).

Nicotine is a poison, a deadly poison! Only the ignorant or prejudiced will argue otherwise in the face of facts. Men will hide rat poison and put other deadly potions out of reach of their little children, but they will leave cigarettes lying about the house, and blow smoke into the faces of their babies. This insensate unconcern by those who are gullible stooges for the propaganda of huge tobacco trusts is bad enough on the part of those who are worldly and indifferent to the Christ, but it is the height of folly for those who claim that the Spirit of God dwells in them. Who can visualize the Son of God with a “Lucky Strike” hanging out of the corner of his mouth?

It is not to be expected that what we say here will register seriously with the average member of the congregation of God who is enslaved. I am not so naive as to suppose that many will be influenced by what I write when the cravings of lust tug and twitch at every fiber of their flesh. But I want to be free from their blood, and I will not see them commit a slow and painful suicide without speaking my sentiments. They will not be made free because they do not will to be free! They will deny this but it is true. It has long ago been proven that a man will be what he

wills to be. Those who possess the character and will power can climb to any height!

We are past that time when weak men can argue that use of tobacco does no harm. Recently I was in a hospital all day. I saw them wheel three shrouded figures into surgery. With their agonized families I awaited their return. I saw doctors and nurses fight to keep the spark of life glowing after the shock sustained when their bodies were cut almost half across. I saw wives and children weeping, and looked into the frightened faces of little grandchildren who were awed by the strange surroundings. Every one of the three men had a lung cut out because a cancer was gnawing away at the vital organ. The surgeon said they were three more of a fast growing multitude of human sacrifices at the shrine of the great god, Nicotine. The next day one died with a bloody froth bubbling out of his nostrils. The other two were more fortunate.

Two months ago a group of seven scientists published a report that "Scientific evidence establishes beyond reasonable doubt that cigarette smoking is a causative factor in the rapidly increasing incidence of lung cancer." These men are not fanatics, killjoys, or moralists. The group was appointed last June at the suggestion of the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the National Cancer Institute and the National Heart Institute to review the effects of tobacco smoking on health.

Here is a statement from their report. "Lung cancer occurs much more frequently (5 to 15 times) among cigarette smokers than among nonsmokers, and there is a direct relationship between the incidence of lung cancer and the amount smoked. . . . It is estimated that on a lifetime basis, one of every 10 men who smoke over two packs a day will die of lung cancer. The comparable risk among nonsmokers is estimated at one out of 275."

I am a grandfather. I have three little grandchildren. They are everything to me in this world. Nothing has ever meant more to me than to have their baby arms about my neck, and to hear the word “Granddaddy” from their lips. I have never smoked but if I had done so in the past, I would quit immediately. I would not want one of these sweet innocent little ones to take up smoking because I smoked, for if the time came when one of them was wheeled into the hospital room to have a lung slit out because of cancer, and I knew that I was responsible, I would never breathe an easy breath again. They may smoke cigarettes when they grow up— God forbid!— but they will never point an accusing finger at their grandfather as their excuse for doing so.

It is for that reason I would not appoint a man as bishop or elder who was a slave to tobacco and a drug addict. We are told to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). No man can “watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Heb. 13:17) who indulges in a habit that wars against his own soul. A bishop must first take heed unto himself and then to the flock. He is to be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). I do not want a man as an example to my children or grandchildren who is so weak he cannot control his appetite. If a man know not how to rule his own body, how shall he take care of the body of Christ?

All the reasons assigned for smoking are puerile, silly and futile when measured by the standard of the Nazarene. At the root of the trouble is the fact that modern “Christianity” is weak, saturated, and watered down, filled with compromise and worldliness. Our brethren could no longer face lions in the Roman arena. They can’t even whip a “Camel.” They are afraid to be thought different. They do not set a standard for the world, they follow the one set by the world. They cannot endure the ridicule, sarcasm and derision of their associates. The salt has lost its strength; the leaven has forfeited its power. Men will damn their souls to have others think well of them.

Men can quit the tobacco habit! Thousands have gained a victory over the weed. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. But one must be fully convinced of the evil effects accruing from the habit. He must recognize that it will be in the interest of health, happiness and spiritual influence to stop it. It is not a task for moral cowards or spiritual weaklings. It cannot be done by “cutting down” or “tapering off.” That is like cutting off a dog’s tail an inch at a time to make it easier on the dog. Doctors who advise their patients to “cut down” want to coddle them and keep their good will— and get their money!

There is just one way to get the job done! Pray to God for strength, rely on the Holy Spirit for inner fortitude, and make a vow to God never to inhale another “coffin nail.” Your mind will become clearer, your breath sweeter, your taste purer and your appreciation of life much keener. We pray for all of the victims of this slavery. We want to see them gain deliverance. It can be done through the help of Jesus. “If the Son shall set you free, then are you free indeed.”

That They All May Be One (7)

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Volume 19

[Abstract]

The elders of the congregation are shepherds and bishops. Jesus is the “Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25). He is that “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:19). He is the good Shepherd who has created one flock of those who hear his voice and follow him (John 10). The elders are to sustain the same relationship in these respects to the local flock as Jesus does to the universal flock. They are told to “shepherd the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made you the bishops” (Acts 20:28). Again they are instructed to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising the office of bishop” (1 Peter 5:2). They are informed that “when the *chief Shepherd* shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory.” Nothing is clearer than the fact that while Jesus is the “Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” in a universal sense, the elders are shepherds and bishops in a local sense, and as such are to “watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Heb. 13:17).

The office of elder carries with it a grave and serious responsibility. It must not be given to men because they are popular, good business managers, or happen to be the best material available. The Holy Spirit has detailed specific qualifications which one must have to enter this office. For a man to assume the responsibilities of this sacred office when he is not capable of fulfilling the divine requirements is to put him in a position where he may damn his soul. God not only holds us

responsible for what we can do and will not, but for what we pretend and profess to know. Some who accept the eldership because they consider it an honor will be eternally dishonored because they did not discharge the sacred office in a manner acceptable unto God. To take on a responsibility through pride or conceit which one cannot meet is a sure road to the flames of an eternal condemnation.

What is the relationship of an elder to the congregation? It is that of a shepherd to his flock. Unless we understand this figure of speech and its implications we will never be able to grasp its spiritual import. In the primitive age of the world men were all farmers or herdsman. The first two persons born into the world illustrate this fact. Cain was a cultivator of the soil. His brother was a keeper of flocks. Since men can only use as similes those things with which they are familiar, the members of the human family came to be looked upon as sheep at a remote date in history.

Men are gregarious creatures. This word is from *grex*, meaning “a flock.” Men tend to flock together, to live in proximity to each other, and to establish communities. The herd instinct actually militated against the divine command to “fill the earth” and the city and the tower of Babel were started “lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.” Our word “congregation” is from *grex*, and means “to collect into a crowd or mass; to flock together.”

Men in a mass or group require direction or leadership. Without such they are “scattered like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34). A community of men can function as a social unit only through recognized leaders or agents. Destroy the leadership and the community will disintegrate. Jesus recognized this fact in his repetition of the axiomatic proverb, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matt. 26:31). It is observable that the shepherd is to provide a unifying and integrating influence, to weld the flock

into a compact unit for its own strength, protection and safety. Political rulers in the state as well as captains in the army are designated as shepherds, because they are to gather, lead, protect, and provide for the welfare of their subjects. Thus, Cyrus, king of Persia is called a shepherd (Isa. 44:28); and so are the Assyrian army captains.

Just as men are referred to as “the sheep of God’s pasture” (Psa. 79:13; 95:7; 100:3) because they possess the nature, temperament, and characteristics of sheep, so the elders are called shepherds because they are to perform the same offices and functions to the flock of God which shepherds do to their sheep. If we can determine the work and responsibility of shepherds, we will then know what God expects of elders of the congregation. The Holy Spirit never employed a figure that was inappropriate or intended to confuse. Fortunately we do not need to go outside the holy scriptures to learn the work of shepherds. We have the examples of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and many others, who tended sheep. A word of warning is essential. The deductions we draw must be based upon the life and work of eastern shepherds, that is, those who led and fed their flocks in the lands of the Bible and in the time when it was being written.

The shepherd was motivated by a deep love for his sheep. This is repeatedly portrayed by Jesus. He alludes to it when he refers to the man who has one sheep which falls into a pit and is rescued on the sabbath day (Matt. 12:11); and also in the story of the man who had a hundred sheep, and left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, while he searched for the lost one and found it (Luke 15:4). The extent of that love is expressed in the statement, “The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). It is interesting that Jesus immediately introduces another type of character, “But he that is *an hireling*.” Both shepherds and hirelings watch sheep and feed them. One does it for love of sheep, the other for love of money. Bishops are told to “Feed the flock . . . not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1

Pet. 5:2). Any one who cannot make up his mind until he knows how much money is in it, is a hireling, and that cannot be denied.

The elder must lead the sheep, not drive them. “When he puts forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him” (John 10:4). David said of the shepherd, “He leadeth me beside the still waters . . . he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23). There is no way to coerce or force the flock of God. They cannot be made to do that which they are unwilling to do. Instruction, reason, and persuasion are the tools of spiritual pastors. It is true that elders are to rule (1 Tim. 5:17), but they must rule through love and the power of example. Shepherds are distinctly forbidden to rule “by force and cruelty” (Ezek. 34:4). After instruction, if reason and persuasion will not gain the cooperation of the congregation in a given project, the elders are left with one of two alternatives—they must either abandon it, or resign so they will not be answerable for the dereliction. They cannot club or bulldoze the sheep into submission by threats or force. The subject of ruling or governing will be handled at greater length in a subsequent study of the qualifications.

We can learn much about the work of elders by a study of Ezekiel 34, which deals with the functions of shepherds. Let us consider that chapter.

1. Feed the flock (verses 2, 3). This necessitates the ability to dispense knowledge. “I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). It is the duty of elders to present the correct food in proper amounts at the right time to assure the full growth of every member. They are to be able to provide what is lacking in spiritual development. “And I will set up shepherds over them *which shall feed them:* and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, *neither shall they be lacking,* saith the Lord” (Jer. 23:4). It is for this reason the bishops must be “apt

to teach.” They are not required to be apt to preach, which, in the New Testament sense, has to do with announcing of the Good News to aliens. Teaching is instruction in systematic fashion. It has nothing to do with acquiring knowledge, but of conveying it to others. Regardless of how much a man may know about the Bible, if he does not have the ability to instruct others, he cannot qualify as a bishop. The shepherds should be able to supply every intellectual need of the flock in the spiritual realm.

2. Strengthen the diseased (verse 4). The diseased are those who are ravaged by protracted maladies or who suffer from a chronic condition which weakens them. The shepherd must be skilled in diagnosis. He must recognize symptoms and correctly interpret them. Spiritual diseases, like physical ones, are multitudinous, and a correct understanding of the nature of a difficulty before prescribing for it, is essential. The elders should know the members of the flock so intimately that they recognize the individual frailties, weaknesses and susceptibilities. The sheep of God’s pasture may suffer from spiritual blindness, heart trouble, nervous prostration, and a hundred other conditions of the soul. These require strengthening if they endure at all.

3. Heal the sick (verse 4). This refers to those who become ill from exposure, improper diet, or some other cause. Many of God’s sheep risk their spiritual health by exposure to worldliness, and gradually grow cold and indifferent. It can be said of many places, as of Corinth, “Many are weak and sickly among you.” Others become ill from eating poisonous weeds which are often concealed in pastures which appear wholesome. Some who are proud, become sick about questions and strifes of words (1 Tim. 6:4). The proper treatment in each instance should be known to the bishops. How foolish it would be for the medical profession to hire their most fluent speaker to assemble the citizens in a community for thirty minutes each week to prescribe the same treatment for all regardless of need or nature of illness. Yet that is exactly the basis upon which the flock of

God is treated in these days.

4. Bind up the broken (verse 4). The eastern shepherd carried in his scrip a vial of ointment and a horn of oil, as well as a roll of bandages. If a sheep sustained an injury it was given immediate attention. Frequently a head wound was sustained. In such a case, oil was poured into the wound to cleanse, soothe and hasten the healing process. It was this practice which prompted the statement, "Thou anointest my head with oil" (Psalm 23:5). Sometimes, in descending into a valley of shadows, a sheep would slip and fall on a sharp declivity, or stumble over a precipice. Occasionally, a broken bone resulted. In such cases, the compassionate shepherd bound up the break, and carried the sheep upon his shoulders, that it be not left to become a prey to the lurking wolves. Often the other sheep stood about bleating in sympathy with the stricken member of the flock. When one member suffered, the others suffered with it.

The sheep of God today are subjected to many pitfalls and stumblingstones. The way is not always easy or smooth. There are steep hills to climb and deep valleys to cross. Many times a sheep will stumble and fall. While it is the duty of all to restore such a one (Gal. 6:1) it is the special responsibility of the elders to see that he has the break bound up, and they should support and carry him until he is again able to walk alone. They should administer the balm of Gilead and not the gall and wormwood of criticism.

5. Recover those driven away (verse 4). Sheep are driven away as the result of the actions of others. There are those which "thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with their horns, until they have scattered them abroad" (Ezek. 34:21). There are always some who are self willed, stubborn, arrogant and persistent. They must have their way without regard to the feelings of others. They have no respect for age, length of service, lack of knowledge, or anything else. They must rule or ruin, boss or bust! Frequently they have a good

knowledge of the Bible, and feel that this entitles them to a position of superiority. While pretending to be humble they are saturated with conceit. Men must kowtow to their whims or be forced to undergo their public scathing and venom. This is always administered for “the good of the church.” They never make a mistake and are never guilty of an error. This kind of conduct will drive the sensitive and weak from the fold, and leave them out in the wilderness to perish.

Great indeed is the responsibility of the elders under such circumstances. If they do not agree in every detail with the position and tactics of those who are ambitious for leadership their influence will be undermined secretly; if they show compassion for the weak they are accused of favoritism and compromise. It is because of such conditions that God’s elders must be strong men. It should be remembered that they are the overseers and superintendents. It is their business to know the spiritual needs of the flock and to govern it. They are not under the dictation of any member, clique or faction. They must consider the welfare of all. If one persists in agitating and teaching that which is detrimental because of the attitude or spirit manifested they should restrict him from teaching until he learns to cooperate for the good of all.

They should not allow the weak and helpless to be browbeaten, buffeted or bullyragged, but should protect them. They should never lose interest in a soul that has been driven away, but should love, visit, teach, and persuade, with the hope that some day that one might be reclaimed. Never should they cease to pray for such a person. They should strive to keep in contact, be ready to help in time of need, and confirm their love for the unfortunate soul. In no case should elders be guilty of driving one away by their coldness, formality, or insistence upon rigid procedures, when kindness, forbearance and love would bring all safely home. Too many bishops think of themselves as a supreme court created to try criminals, or as policemen guarding against legal infractions. This impersonal and aloof

spirit has driven many from the fold to seek warmth and understanding elsewhere.

When Jacob met Esau, he demonstrated the true quality of a shepherd, priority of concern for his flock. Against the urgent insistence of his brethren, he said, "My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the flocks and herds giving suck are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die" (Gen. 33:13). Many a flock has been killed by being overdriven. We need to learn the value of the words of Jacob, "I will lead on slowly according to the pace of the cattle . . . and according to the pace of the children." With shepherds such as those described in Isaiah 40:11, few sheep would ever be driven out. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

6. Seek that which is lost (verse 4). While men are driven away by others, they wander away of their own volition. The clump of grass on a remote hillside looks greener than that close at hand, and the sheep is enticed by its own craving to stray from the flock. The allurements of sin promise much but give little. Once a person has gone so far, he may continue in sheer desperation, or be filled with a sense of shame which keeps him from returning. The loving shepherd can never forget his sheep. The one that means most to him is the one that is in greatest need. The lost sheep occupies the mind more than all of the ninety and nine in the safety of the fold. We believe that hundreds who have strayed could have been saved if only someone would have shown understanding and compassion at the right time. In a fit of sudden anger, in a spasm of revolt, or in the throes of a great temptation, one deserts the flock. He becomes at once the target of barbed arrows. There is only one problem that concerns many elders under such circumstances, and that is how to maintain their own dignity, prestige and command. There may be little real concern for the feeling of the lost sheep, except to force him to come cowering and dragging

back to the fold. We dare not minimize the danger of rebellion against rule, but often it is the symptom of a sick personality caused by the frustrations, inhibitions and discouragements which reach back into a childhood that was devoid of the warmth and understanding so essential to the proper growth of wholesome character.

Elders, as shepherds, should seek that which is lost. They should never despair of reclamation so long as one lives. They should look eagerly, search diligently, and enlist the help of others. Nothing is a greater source of real pleasure than to hoist a lost sheep upon the shoulders and bring him back in rejoicing to the safety of the fold. Ezekiel makes it clear that those shepherds who do not seek the lost will give account unto God. The sheep belong unto God. The shepherd who loses one through neglect or carelessness that could have been saved must answer to God. The shepherds watch for your souls as they that must give account.

We are prompted to ask what there is for an imported hireling to do in a flock that has scriptural shepherds or bishops? He must either serve as a sheep or a shepherd! Will any person be so foolish as to say that we can hire one to be a sheep? What does the modern hired clergyman use as the basis for his existence in the congregation with qualified elders? What does he need to be paid to do as a sheep which is not the duty of every other sheep that is qualified? What does he need to be paid to do as a pastor which was not the duty of the true pastors before he was hired and imported? We are bold enough to affirm that the presence of “the located evangelist” in a congregation with elders is a living proof of an unconverted membership, an unqualified presbytery— or both! We challenge those who champion this hireling clergy system to put a finger on one thing that the “local minister” is to do in a properly organized congregation. He is a functionary without a function, a parasite and a fungus growth upon the body of the Christ!

The greatest need in this age is to develop godly, qualified bishops in the congregations of the saints. We have spent precious time trying to make preachers and evangelists, when we should have been concentrating upon the training of shepherds for the flocks. The result is that those men who are appointed to office to meet the “form of godliness” are helpless and powerless to do the things that the office demands. In desperation they turn to a substitute, and a man is hired as a specialist in organization and congregational management to come in and keep the thing going. The very existence of the “located evangelist” system is a monument to our tragic failure, and a proof of our willingness to adopt the sectarian methods in emergency, rather than to admit our weakness and start from the ground to build congregations after the original faith and order. The congregations are plagued by an unconverted membership brought in under high pressure evangelism, who exist, not to serve but to be served, and who clamor for good and entertaining speakers. The elders, unqualified to meet the demand, feel forced to hire a professional and turn over to him their work with the flock, retaining only the privilege of hiring and firing. Once embarked upon this course, the congregation is doomed to continue in it through sheer helplessness.

A Sad Commentary

Mission Messenger (July 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

Derrel Starling is the local minister of Westside Church in Phoenix, Arizona. As such, he is the publisher of the bulletin which is titled “The Perk-Up.” In the May 12 issue is a quotation from John T. Lewis, on the topic “The Modern Pastor System.” It is good, and we want you to read it.

It does not take a Solomon to see that the “modern pastor system” is fastening itself upon the churches today. And when the system is fully developed, the preacher will look upon the pulpit as his personal property, and he will talk to other preachers about trading pulpits as they would talk about trading any other chattel, and all the elders will be expected to do, will be to ratify the deal, and if they should hesitate, the chances are they would be voted out, and new elders appointed. And the elders themselves will be responsible for this unscriptural and unfortunate condition.

The most glaring evidence of this evil today, is when the ‘local preacher’ goes out for meetings through the summer months, he has to procure, or help the elders procure, some young preacher from one of ‘our’ Bible colleges, to take over and carry on, in his absence. If this is not an admission upon the part of the elders that they cannot ‘feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood’ *even for a short time*, then I do not know what it is. And where this is practiced, what idea can

the rank and file of the membership have other than the preacher is ‘the pastor’? It is a sad commentary upon the work of preachers and elders, when they labor together and cannot build up a congregation strong enough spiritually to stand alone without the help of a preacher.

Read that again! That is “Ketcherside doctrine”! It is for this that I have been branded a hobbyist in Birmingham where Bro. Lewis lives. Now he has joined the ranks of the “hobbyists” on the relationship of the evangelist and elders to the congregation of saints! What will the *Gospel Guardian* do? Bro. Lewis is their chief prosecutor of Guy N. Woods at present. Will they repudiate him on this? I want you to note some of the things in the published statement.

1. “The modern pastor system” is fastening itself upon the churches today! Will Bro. Lewis name the congregations where such is happening? He might not dare to do so, but we will name every congregation he has planted in Birmingham! When I was in his home and made this charge personally, he informed me that it was none of my business and none of his! Apparently he has changed his mind! I asked him why he did not oppose the system among the churches which he had planted and he said that was the business of the elders. I asked if he would say anything if those elders wheeled a piano in for worship. He answered in the affirmative. I asked what difference there was in corrupting the worship of the body and its government; and if it was any more sinful to add something to the worship than to add another officer to the ones the Lord ordained. He did not reply. But I deny that the elders are to blame for the “modern pastor system.” The preachers, like Bro. Lewis, are the ones to blame! They developed and appointed these men to the eldership, and they played along with the “modern pastor system” while doing it. The elders deserve pity, not censure! They are not qualified for the task of feeding the flock, and never were. They have turned to the unscriptural method out of sheer desperation!

2. Bro. Lewis labels this an “evil.” The most glaring evidence to his mind is that when the local preacher leaves for a meeting he has to get a substitute to take his place. That isn’t the most glaring evidence! It is the presence of “the local preacher” in the first place. If the elders are to feed the flock through the summer months, why not through the fall and winter months? Has Bro. Lewis been developing “summer elders”? His idea is that the time when the elders should feed is when the “local preacher” goes out for meetings through the summer months. We had the idea that being an elder was kind of a year around job! If it is all right for the elders to have a substitute for eleven months in the year, why cannot the local preacher have one for four weeks?

3. Bro. Lewis thinks it is a sad commentary upon the work of preachers and elders when they cannot build a congregation strong enough to stand alone without the help of a preacher. Well, he has written a sad commentary in Birmingham, for every congregation he has started and worked with has a hireling to feed, and “the modern pastor system” has fastened itself upon the churches he has built. We hope that Derrel will publish some more sad commentaries. Perhaps brethren will listen to them if not to us.

That They All May Be One (8)

Mission Messenger (August 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

This is the account of the work of an evangelist in planting a congregation of saints and training them for service. At the present time he is conducting a study of the qualifications of elders, looking forward to the selection and appointment of men to this sacred office.

1. Is there general agreement as to the qualifications?

No! On the contrary, they have formed a fruitful source of conflict and dispute, almost since apostolic days. It is not to be expected that we will be able to bring about harmony amidst the diversity of opinions. Instead, we shall merely state our humble views and trust that brethren will weigh them objectively.

2. Is there danger of interpreting the qualifications too rigidly?

Yes, although the other extreme is usually followed. Some explain them so loosely that anyone can qualify; others so rigidly that no one can. These are qualifications for men— not angels. “If a man desire the office of a bishop.” No man is sinlessly perfect. Elders will make mistakes as do other men. No one who meets the requirements of God should be kept out of office on the basis that he may not remain qualified.

3. Must a man have all of the qualifications?

Yes. The list in 1 Timothy 3 begins and closes with the word “must.” Verse 2 says, “A bishop must . . .” and verse 7 says, “He must have . . .” It is not a question of what he might be, could be, or ought to be. He must have the character delineated in these verses.

4. Would this not require a state of perfection?

No. The degree of the qualifications is not expressed, with one exception. Inasmuch as the word of God does not specify that they must be in the superlative degree we have no right to require it. It is expected that an elder possess the qualifications in an exemplary degree (1 Peter 5:3) but this is a relative term. Certainly a man in office will grow in these various departments as he grows in knowledge of the truth.

5. If no man has the qualifications, but several men taken together have them, can they be appointed?

Certainly not! The qualifications are for individuals, not for a group. They are for presbyters, not a presbytery. The record does not say, “If a group desires the office” but “If a man desires the office.” In Titus 1:7 we read that “A bishop must be” the type of character specified. Any other conclusion would destroy the government of the church of God.

6. Should a man who shows promise be appointed in anticipation of his developing the qualifications?

No. The qualifications must be had prior to the office, and not vice versa. A man must not be given the office to qualify him, but he must qualify himself before he can be given the office. The book says, regarding the deacons, “Let these also first be proved; then let them use the office.” This principle will apply to the office of bishop in the same way.

7. Should one be appointed who might be offended if left out of the office?

Indeed not! In some places when two men are qualified and appointed, a third may also be put in because he would become angry and quit if he did not get the appointment. This is a flagrant disregard of the divine constitution. Such a character is not qualified to shepherd the flock of God. He is too little for the responsibility and the fact that he has to be pampered and petted to keep him in the congregation shows he was never really converted to our Lord. The sacred office is not a sop of appeasement to be thrown to a perpetual pouter. We should not play politics with the arrangements of the King.

8. Should a man be appointed as a reward for his faithful attendance and service?

No person should be appointed on any other basis than his possession of the qualities enumerated in the book. The office is not to be passed out like an award to a scholar for good attendance. The fate of the congregation rests with its leadership. A congregation cannot rise above its leaders!

9. Do the qualifications come under various categories?

For convenience we can classify them as moral, domestic, intellectual and executive. The first deals with behavior and conduct; the second with the marital and home status; the third with the attainments in aptitude and knowledge; and the last with the ability to govern or rule. It should be stated that these are our own classifications, as the word of God merely sets forth the qualifications with no particular regard as to sequence or relationship.

10. Which classification will be discussed first?

We will begin an exploration of the moral qualifications in our next study, and will seek to determine the meaning of the

terms employed by the Holy Spirit.

Disciples of Yesterday

Mission Messenger (August 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The modern religious organization known as “The Church of Christ” in many places has degenerated into merely another narrow and intolerant sect. It is no longer inviting all to retain the truth they possess and join in a search for more enlightenment. Instead, the membership arrogantly assumes that it possesses all of the truth there is, and everyone else is treated as a pagan or unbeliever. This was not true of the pioneers of the restoration.

A. S. Hayden in “History of the Disciples on the Western Reserve” tells that in Mentor, Ohio, in 1826, there was a Baptist Church, of which Sidney Rigdon was minister. He read *Christian Baptist*, and adopted its restoration teaching. In the spring of 1828, he visited Walter Scott at Warren. Upon his return nearly the whole church accepted cordially the doctrine of the Lord, exchanged their “articles” for the new covenant as the only divine basis for Christ’s church, and abandoned unscriptural titles and church names, choosing to be known simply as disciples of Christ.

Alanson Wilcox in “A History of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio” relates that in 1804, Barton W. Stone made a trip to Meigs County, Ohio, for the purpose of immersing a Presbyterian minister named William Caldwell. While there, he preached on its invitation to the Separate Baptist Association.

He says: “The result was that they agreed to cast away their formularies and creeds, and take the Bible alone for their rule of faith and practice; to throw away their name ‘Baptist’ and take the name ‘Christian,’ and to bury their Association, and to become one with us in the great work of Christian union. Then they marched to the stand where we were preaching, shouting the praises of God and proclaiming aloud what they had done. We met them, and embraced each other in Christian love.”

The modern inheritors of the restoration movement would not receive such as brethren. They would insist on all of them being re-baptized by a “Church of Christ” preacher. The *Gospel Guardian* has carried recent articles trying to show that even those who are immersed by preachers of the Christian Church must be baptized by one of our “loyal” group. We wish it known that we will act exactly as did Walter Scott and Barton W. Stone under the same circumstances as related above.

Peace Must Be Waged

Mission Messenger (September 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The religious world is in turmoil. Believers in the Lord Jesus are fractured into hundreds of warring camps. The partisans in these splinter groups are often filled with bitterness and hatred. This is contrary to the will of the Father. It is opposed to the prayer of Jesus. But the condition exists and it is useless to deny it. What should be the attitude of one who deeply loves the Christ and his fellowmen, as respects the problem of disunity and strife?

It would seem that his course is clearly outlined in the new covenant scriptures. First, he must recognize the party spirit for what it is. It is a work of the flesh. It will debar one from inheritance in the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19). This will eliminate the possibility of mistaking a desire for unity for mere ambition to build up a party. Secondly, he must actively engage in the attempt to promote peace. He must be a *peacemaker* if he would be called a son of God (Matt. 5:9). He cannot be indifferent, unconcerned or unmoved by the rents in the body of the Christ. He dare not withdraw into his castle and snap and snarl at those who are trying to do something. He must be actively engaged in promoting harmony or forfeit his right to be called a son of God.

In the third place, he must recognize that peace is not an accident. Unity is not a chance happening. Peace must be sought

and pursued (1 Peter 3:11). It is a fruit of the Spirit which is reaped by those who sow the seed. "The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18). It must be aimed at. It cannot be hit upon by those who wave their weapon aimlessly and pull the trigger. "Aim at righteousness, faith, love, *and peace*, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22). A state of division exists. It is contrary to God's will. We are charged with bringing about unity. Unity is the result of purposeful planning. It is not accidental. It follows then that true children of God must have a definite, positive approach to this problem, and they must be working on it!

We must not think we can be saved by maintaining the status quo. If a man is struck by an automobile in front of my house, I cannot shrug it off by saying that none of my immediate family are hurt, therefore, it is no concern of mine; nor can I be justified by criticizing the methods of help used by my neighbors. So it is while the body of Christ lies bleeding and broken. I cannot excuse myself by saying it does not affect my congregation or group, nor will I be justified by sitting in an ivory tower complaining that the bandages and remedies applied by others are inadequate and useless. What am I doing to bring peace to this troubled world? I must face this question some day! I want to face it now!

Peace must be waged! Some men wage war and endure untold hardship, privation and suffering to attain their objectives. What am I willing to sacrifice as a soldier for peace, with a part of my uniform the footgear of the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)? Can I continue the campaign if others misunderstand my motives, seek to undermine the strategy of peace, misrepresent what I say, and hate me for not hating others? Can I endure the long hours of study, the absence from loved ones, and the constant pressures? That all depends upon whether the Cause in which I have enlisted is a passing fancy, a shimmering delusion, or a real and all-consuming

passion. If I am dedicated to the Christ, crucified to the world and sanctified by the Spirit, then “none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.” The disunity, bitterness, party spirit and division which exist today have come from the seeds of hatred and animosity, planted in fertile soil by our forefathers. Shall we continue to walk in the same weary rut like a blind horse on a treadmill? Will we bequeath to our children and grandchildren a granary stored with the seed of distrust and malice? If peace is a fruit, it cannot be gathered until men prepare the soil and sow the seed!

How can peace be waged? Perhaps we have *practiced* disunity so long we do not know how to *plead* for unity. I will venture to state a few convictions which I feel must be a part of a strategy for peace. Peace must be waged in love. “If there is . . . any incentive of love . . . complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:1, 2). Love is the incentive to unity, not vice versa. We do not love each other because we are of the same mind; we come to be of the same mind because we love each other. It is not unity which promotes love, but love which promotes unity. “If you love those who love you, what reward have you?” (Matt. 5:46). I must begin, continue, and finish in love.

It is inconceivable that I would mistreat, abuse, or take unfair advantage of one whom I love. Therefore, if one differs with me upon matters relating to the service of God, I must make a difference between the person and what he advocates. Jesus died for him. He may not have died for what he argues. In love for the person, I must listen to what he says, weigh it carefully and dispassionately, always acceding to what is truth, and then, in kindness, reasoning with him upon points of disagreement. “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.”

Under no circumstances must I sacrifice principle in order to have the goodwill of men. However, I must distinguish

between those things that are basic and essential to a relationship unto God, and those matters which are incidental. "It is my prayer that your love may be more and more accompanied by clear knowledge and keen perception, for testing things that differ, so that you may be men of transparent character" (Phil. 1:9, 10. Weymouth). Love accompanied by clear knowledge and keen perception. What a trio of excellencies! To be willing to talk together, to exchange views in love, to treat each other as equals, does not imply an acceptance of all the varied viewpoints at once— or ever!

We do not shoot men full of peace nor bombard them with unity! Peace and unity come as the result of patient striving in love, of long years of fruitful discussion and contact, of mutual understanding arrived at through long periods of prayer and study together. Unity can never be secured by two persons or groups who draw their rigid battle lines, and seek only to replenish their own supply of ammunition from God's arsenal so that they may blast each other into subjection. Such a course makes for wresting the scriptures, creating arguments where God made none, public debates with their rabid partisan followings, and the drawing away in sadness of those hungry souls who ask for a fish and are given a serpent!

Fair treatment of those who differ with us, a recognition of brotherhood in Jesus of all immersed penitent believers— these do not mean endorsement of error, compromise with false concepts, nor acceptance of interpretations that we believe to be wrong. They rather constitute only the foundation upon which we may explore our major problems, and from such contacts as are established build a better and brighter prospect for tomorrow. It is only those who have an inner fear that they lack truth, who shrink back from contact and withdraw into the confines of partisan citadels. Let us feel a sense of compassion for those who dare not face the battle, but let those who possess the vision and courage not be daunted, but press the battle for peace. "For God hath called us to peace."

The Class Controversy

Mission Messenger (September 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

I was born and reared in a Lutheran environment. At an early age I was immersed into the Christ. It was my good fortune to find my lot cast among those brethren who seek to further the restoration of the community of saints to its primitive faith and order, as set forth by the envoys of the Master. As an associate in a movement launched to bring about the unity of all believers in the Christ, I have long been disturbed by the fact that the effort has broken up into more than two dozen rabid, partisan factions, each with its own tests of fellowship and unwritten creeds.

Because I am not of the temperament to sit idly by and raise no hand to alleviate a condition so harmful to the propagation of the Good News, and so foreign to the intent of the Messiah, I have dedicated my writings in this little journal to exploring avenues of peace and tranquillity. I have not sought to bind my views upon others, nor to offer them as a panacea which must be adopted. I have been ever aware of the frailties and weaknesses to which I am subject, and have sought to avoid a dogmatic and arbitrary approach to our existing problems. I do not feel toward those who disagree with me, that they are enemies. I know they must be judged upon the basis of their personal conviction before God.

Recently I penned an article entitled “Class Controversy.”

It was devoted primarily to a discussion of the difference of opinion which has arisen among brethren in the United States, as to the obligation and method of teaching the word of the Lord, which difference has resulted in an actual severance of all fellowship, and the creation of two factions in some localities, each of which claims to be the body of the Christ, to the exclusion of the other. In all of my career, I have never before been bombarded with such a barrage of letters, as I have received from those who hold that it is a sin for a congregation of saints to dispense the bread of life simultaneously to a multitude sitting in different rooms. Every one of these letters is from the southland, and with few exceptions every one is from a preacher. That point may be significant!

The tragic thing is, that even now as I write, there are four letters lying before me. No two of the writers will fellowship each other. Each is a member of a different segment of the disciple brotherhood. Each writes for a different paper. Neither would dare call upon the others to pray. I have been able to do for them what Jesus could not. I have succeeded in uniting them in opposition to me, but they cannot unite in service to Him. It is enough to make angels weep and strong men bow themselves in sorrow.

Every letter contains long lists of questions. These have been hammered out by years of frantic public debate, when the party spirit ran high, and the lust for party victory made men cruel and insensible to compassion for each other. It is easy to see from the questions that these brethren do not agree with each other on the subject of teaching. The tone of the letters, in some cases, is saddening. I am accused of trying to arouse prejudice and party feeling by my plea for unity. I am accused of being "bitterly opposed to the No Class method of teaching" despite the fact that I wrote, "Let each community of saints determine the method it will employ, in those realms where God has not legislated, and when its means do not contravene the word of God, let us walk together in love, joy and peace in the

Holy Spirit.”

I am challenged to debate in person or in writing, and if I will not, to get a man to represent my belief in the matter to debate it. Brethren, I do not propose to debate the matter with you. All that can be said by you on the subject is no doubt in print, and those who are interested can get it and read it. I doubt that such a debate as you suggest would advance the Cause of Him who did not strive nor cry, and the sound of whose voice was not heard in the streets. Modern debates are too often gladiatorial combats, in which each side chooses a champion to represent a party. Victory, and not truth, is too frequently the object. This is one time I am brave enough not to debate; you may goad a coward into doing so if you tantalize him long enough. But I just happen to love all of you enough that I do not care to be pitted in the arena as your foe. As to getting a man to represent my belief, I do not know who I would get. My views are my own. I do not know if any one else shares them. I’m not attached to a “class party” or “no class party.” This is not my test of fellowship!

What is this all about? Hundreds of our readers will be surprised to learn, but because these issues are so indicative of those things which have shattered the ideal of unity into fragments, it might be well to examine them, not so much for their own merits or demerits, but as a barometer of the false concepts held today on the subject of what constitutes fellowship and heresy. In my statement of the position I wish to be very careful and objective so as not to mislead you. There are few men on earth today who can be trusted to state the position of one with whom they differ. In this instance, the situation is somewhat complicated because the brethren are not fully joined together in the same mind on the issue.

Basically, the contention is that it is sinful for a congregation of the saints to call the brethren together to study the word of the Lord, and to divide them into classes for such

study.

I think that we are agreed that the creation of any human organization to do the work of the community of saints is wrong, but there is a difference between organizing the work of the divine organism, and creating another organization through which to do it. The congregation is a social unit, and no such unit can function effectively without organizing or systematizing its work.

In my previous treatise I did not once mention “Sunday School.” I dealt solely with the right to teach the word of the Lord simultaneously to various groups. I said nothing about when it might be done. Without fail, those who have replied have injected “the Sunday School.” I am not a defender of such an organization, nor am I concerned with it in these articles. However, it is due our readers to state that the use of the term by our brethren may be misleading. They are opposed to brethren coming together on Monday, Wednesday or Friday to study the word of God in classes. They are just as opposed to a “Monday School” as a “Sunday School.”

Here is the issue exactly as stated by one of the brethren: “The church cannot scripturally call a plurality of groups into separate rooms for simultaneous instruction under different teachers.” I do not say the congregation *must* instruct in this fashion or by this method. I do believe that it is an infringement upon the freedom and liberty of God’s people, for men, regardless of intention, to set up laws and issue dogmas, in realms where God has not legislated. What is the basic problem in the above statement? Is it not the right and prerogative of the body of saints to do a certain thing? Is this not a law curtailing that right? Where is that law found in the New Testament? The church cannot do a certain thing! Here is a negative law. Who is the lawgiver?

Upon what reasoning do our brethren thus legislate? As I

pointed out in my previous article, this negative law is based upon a conclusion drawn from 1 Corinthians 14:31, "For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged." Our brethren have been guilty of a fallacy here, the fallacy of generalization from a specific. The conclusion is, that since God legislated, that in the absence of new covenant scriptures, all members of the community of saints must assemble together to listen to the revelation of His will, once such revelation has been completed and committed to writing, and a copy placed in the hands of each member, the community may never henceforth separately and severally meet to discuss in various groups, the import of those writings possessed by each.

Certainly there were no classes for the discussion of the various portions of the new covenant scriptures in the meeting considered in 1 Corinthians 14. What was there to study? The brethren had no new covenant scriptures at Corinth. They learned by impartation of God's will through men speaking directly under divine impulse. And when we meet around the table of the Lord today to perform a public and communal service, whatever we do should be done in harmony with the nature of that assembly as arranged by the Lord. But to conclude from this that the community of saints may not arrange other gatherings for its investigation, research and discussion of the sacred scriptures, in various groups, when the nature of the gathering is not such as the one ordained by the Lord, is a fallacy in reasoning. To base a law upon such a fallacy, and then to proscribe and drive out humble brethren who cannot recognize any other lawmaker than God's Messiah is a tragedy of deepest concern.

If the body of our Lord is composed of five congregations in one city, and these may meet at their five places of assembly at the same hour to study the word of God, and still compose the one body; it would appear that each of them could meet in five classrooms to study and still not destroy the unity of the Spirit. The division condemned in the living oracles is not physical or

geographical, but spiritual.

Brethren, let us end this division, contention and controversy, over the method of studying the word of the Lord. Let each community of the saints study the word of the Lord diligently; let each determine the method it will pursue, and so long as that method does not violate the law of the King, let us, as His subjects labor together in peace. Let us not compose a “class faction” or a “no class faction.” Let us be brethren! Surely the cementing power of the blood of the Lamb is greater than the divisive power of human opinion! Surely the cross is a better rallying place than our own shibboleths and creeds! Let us walk together in love! Let us seek peace and pursue it. Let us demonstrate to this generation that our faith in Jesus is greater than our opinions; that our love for each other is a greater force than partisan selfishness. We do not need a debate, we need a prayer meeting! We do not need to get in the stand to defend our views, but to get on our knees to confess to God! Time is running out! It is later than you think! Tomorrow may be too late!

That They All May Be One (9)

Mission Messenger (September 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

We are now to consider the qualifications which a man must have to be a bishop in the flock of God. As we study those within the moral realm, let us not forget that every child of God should possess these characteristics.

1. **BLAMELESS.** (1 Tim. 3:2). This is from *anepileptos*. It literally means, “not laid hold on.” It will help to remember that it is the word for “unrebukable” in 1 Timothy 6:14. It does not refer to “sinless perfection” as that term is used in the religious creeds. Elders are men, and are liable to err in judgment and behavior. But no man can be appointed to this office who is guilty of wrong, or subject to censure at the time. One who is without blame, is one against whom no charge of misconduct can be brought and sustained by credible testimony. It is obvious that if a man is guilty of any charge of dishonesty or unchastity, he cannot hold this sacred office. His life must be above reproach, his behavior undeserving of reproof.

2. **VIGILANT.** This is from *naphaleon*. Primarily, it means “sober, temperate, or abstinent, especially in respect to wine.” Our word “temperate” is a good translation. The implication is of one who keeps a cool, clear head at all times. It relates to a trusted guard. Such a person must not becloud his mind, either by drink or any other means. His task requires him to be alert, watchful, and observant. One who is a ranter, and not sober-

minded, is a cause of danger, rather than a shield from it. Bishops must be alert to detect error creeping in from without, or arising from within. They need to have all of their mental faculties at all times.

3. SOBER. This is from *sophrona*, which means “wise, rational, discreet.” The R.S.V. translation is “sensible.” Albert Barnes suggests that the word “prudent” would come nearer to conveying the meaning of the apostle than any other single word. If this be correct, the statement of Chaucer is in order: “Prudence is goodly wisdom in all things.” We know the expression forbids undue levity and folly. If a man is flighty in judgment, undignified in behavior, and indiscreet in conduct, he cannot meet this divine requirement. A bishop must have a proper sense of values and be able to deliberate and weigh all matters seriously and carefully.

4. OF GOOD BEHAVIOR. This is from *kosmion*. The literal meaning is “orderly, systematic.” Thayer defines it as “well-arranged, seemly, modest.” His explanation in this place is “of a man living with decorum, a well-ordered life.” This qualification deals with outward deportment. The preceding one referred to the internal function of judgment. In plain terms, this specification means a bishop must be a gentleman. He must not be sloppy, slouchy or careless. In dress he must be neat, in manners refined, in appearance respectable. The congregation of saints will often be judged by the appearance of its public functionaries. We should not be proud, but we need to be neat. There is a difference between being humble and being a slouch; between meekness and slovenliness. One does not advance the Cause of the King by personal carelessness. He demonstrates neither talent, learning, or religion by a haphazard, unsystematic, disordered life. It might be difficult for one who cannot find a shirt at home to find one of the Lord’s sheep if it was lost.

5. NOT GIVEN TO WINE. It will be observed that the

Marginal rendering is, "Not ready to quarrel and offer wrong, as one in wine." The Bible does not condemn the drinking of wine as such. It was a common item of diet in Palestine. It is true that Nazirite did not drink it (Num. 6:1-4) nor did the Rechabites (Jer. 35:6). John, the Immerser, being a Nazirite, did not use it (Luke 1:15) and Jesus said, "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber" (Matt. 11:18, 19). The drinking of wine is placed in the same category as eating of meats (Rom. 14:21), neither of which could be indulged if a brother was thereby caused to stumble.

In view of the general tenor of this teaching, we are constrained to feel that the R. S. V. rendering, "no drunkard," is a fair representation of the apostolic prohibition. The Greek is *paroinos*, a combined form, which Thayer says refers to "one who sits long at his wine." He defines the term, "given to wine, drunken" and mentions a secondary sense, "quarrelsome over wine." A drunkard cannot be retained in the fellowship of the saints (1 Cor. 5:11) and cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). No man can become drunk who never takes a drink, and the temptation to go to excess is ever present with one who indulges. In the sense in which the apostle here introduces the matter, it is obvious that he is not commending the use of wine as a beverage, although he does recommend it medicinally (1 Tim. 5:23). An elder will do no harm by abstaining entirely; he may seriously injure the congregation and himself if he does not.

6. NO STRIKER. A striker is one who uses physical force to attain his ends, that is, one who smites with the fist. This is used in conjunction with the previous qualification, because one who is under the influence of intoxicants is ever more liable to be quarrelsome and contentious. A fist fight never proves the right or wrong of a thing. It may demonstrate which one of two opponents has the greatest brute strength, but that can better be determined by more peaceable and gentle means. Brain power is

not measured by biceps; knowledge is not found in knuckles. A man who “flies off the handle” under pressure is like a hammer which does the same thing— he loses his head! Shepherds are to lead the sheep beside the still waters, and not agitate the waters by violence and disturbance!

7. NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE. The Greek, literally rendered, would be, “Not desirous of sordid gain.” A person who was thus avaricious would prostitute the sacred office for money. We believe that the elders who devoted full time to their spiritual service were supported as to their needs by the congregations in which they served. Peter instructs the elders to “tend the flock of God . . . not for shameful gain but eagerly” (1 Peter 5:2). It would not be necessary to warn bishops against tending the flock for *shameful* gain, if there was *no gain* connected with such service. Moreover, 1 Tim. 5:17, 18 indicates that elders who labor in preaching and teaching, should be supported on the basis that “The laborer deserves his wages.” “Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Gal. 5:6). But there is a difference between accepting a living for service in the word, and choosing to serve in the word for a living; just as there is a difference between making the Christian profession, and making a profession out of being a Christian. Although the needs of the elders were provided, this should not be the motive for desiring the office.

8. PATIENT. The original is translated “gentle” in Titus 3:2 and James 3:17. An elder must be longsuffering and forbearing, meek and mild. Rash, impulsive and boorish conduct will hinder one from qualifying for service.

9. NOT A BRAWLER. The Greek *amachon*, means “not contentious.” Ill-temper makes a man ill-fitted for a position of responsibility. One who is quarrelsome and belligerent in attitude will create problems rather than settle them. “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife; but every fool will be quarreling” (Prov. 20:3). “Good sense makes a man slow to

anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense” (Prov. 19:11). “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion” (Prov. 18:2).

10. NOT COVETOUS. The original is *aphilarguron*, literally, “Not a silver lover.” The R. S. V. translates it, “not a lover of money.” It should be remarked that it is not earning or having money which is here condemned, but loving it and trusting it. Some men accumulate money without loving it; others love it but are never able to accumulate it. Money is a convenient medium of exchange. It is those who desire to be rich who “fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs” (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

11. A GOOD REPORT OF THOSE WITHOUT. This has to do with reputation among those who are not members of the congregation of saints. An elder must have a clear record and a good standing in the community. If he has been guilty of shady business dealings, or if he is known as one whose life is inconsistent with the Christian walk, he will reproach the Cause. Placing one in a position of responsibility serves to focus attention upon him. The congregation will be judged by the type of men chosen to lead it. The record says he must have a good report of them which are without “lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Often, when a man has had a poor reputation, he may be inclined to despair and conclude he cannot improve his lot. He may persuade himself that it will avail nothing if he does live right, since his past will always be held against him. In such a state of despondency, he may be ensnared by Satan, who would like to convince men that there is no use to live righteously and godly. To place such a man in a prominent position in the congregation will only serve to increase the shafts of accusation

hurled against him. If allowed to remain quietly in the background, he may live down his past, and the world may cease to blame him for that of which he repented.

12. NOT SELF-WILLED. Some men are wholly unfitted for elders because they have an exalted view of their own opinions. They must have their way in arrogant disregard for the rights of others. They refuse to listen to pleas and reason. When they speak, others must jump. They issue edicts and ultimatums like royalty— *the king can do no wrong!* Such highhanded display of power will drive men from the faith, and some communities exhibit a trail of factions and splinter parties which eloquently testify to the rule or ruin spirit. Stubborn insistence on having one's own way, regardless of consequences, is not a commendable attribute for any, and certainly is a poor recommendation for an elder.

13. NOT SOON ANGRY. This relates to control of the emotions. Our word "anger" is from the Latin *angorem*, "compression of the neck," from *angere*, "to choke." The Greek term also means "to press tightly." Anger affects one adversely in a physical, mental and moral sphere. The digestive processes are stopped, the excess sugar in the body stagnates, and one takes the first steps toward dyspepsia when he becomes angry. It was found through actual tests on patients with stomach disorders, that the physician could increase the hydrochloric acid in the patient's stomach 300 per cent, by merely talking about a subject that made him angry.

A man who is violently angry is temporarily insane. He is deprived of the power to reason. He will say things which he would not think of saying or doing in calmer moments. Moreover, intense anger may actually make one a criminal in thought.

14. A LOVER OF GOOD MEN. The original *philagathos*, means a "lover of good" and may refer to good men or good

things. The translation does no violence unless it places an undue limitation upon the intent of the apostle. All good men and all good things should appeal to a bishop and share in his respect and affection.

15. JUST. This means “fair, equitable, honorable.” It has to do with our relationship to others. We must be considerate and maintain the rights and dignity of those with whom we have dealings. Men in the eldership sometimes have two standards, one for self, and a second standard for others. If members of their own families are guilty of unbecoming conduct, it is hushed up or minimized; if others do the same thing they are made to publicly confess their errors. Such partiality is unfair and dishonorable. We must be honorable and equitable in all of our conduct and behavior. The “Golden Rule” has not been revoked or repealed.

(NOTE: In our next issue we shall deal with the question of domestic qualifications, and will answer the question, “Must an elder be a married man?”).

Smoking and Cancer

Mission Messenger (September 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

On July 19, the Associated Press released a statement from Dr. Ernest L. Wynder, of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, to the effect that about 25,000 persons will die of lung cancer this year, and at least 80 per cent of the deaths could have been prevented if the patients had not smoked. In plain terms, this means that 20,000 persons will go to their graves this year as the result of lethal poison administered by their own hands. That is suicide!

In the face of this, the editor of “The Gospel Guardian” also released a statement about the same time to the effect that he had never been much concerned about the moral aspects of smoking, although he was becoming increasingly disturbed about the reports of the physical aspects as relates to tobacco as a causative factor in cancer. Is there no “moral aspect” about self-murder in gratification of physical lust? If it be argued that out of the millions of smokers, only 20,000 will thus die at their own hands, does that eliminate the moral aspect? If some foreign agent were to plant germs in the food of millions of our citizens would we exonerate him from guilt if only 20,000 suffered death?

Of the 20,000 who die this year from the habit of smoking, the great majority will be husbands and fathers. They will leave behind a vast retinue of weeping wives and crying children.

Many of these will follow in the pattern of the life of the deceased, so that they will continue to inhale the same noxious fumes which deprived them of their loved ones. Even before some depart from the cemetery they will light up their cigarettes and inhale the toxic tars which deprived them of a husband or father, and may eventually spell their own doom. Is there no “moral aspect” in this?

Beloved brethren in the Lord, do not permit your conscience to be soothed by smooth editorials or by pussyfooting preachers. While puffing away on your “Lucky Strike” look at your sweet little children or grandchildren playing about your feet. The day may come when you will weep scalding tears if one of them is taken into surgery and his body slashed open to have a bloody, cancerous lung cut from its moorings in the chest. If lung cancer strikes your family as a result of your folly, it will not be a “lucky strike.” Why don’t you quit today? Now is the accepted time! Throw off the chains of slavery. Be a man!

Must Elders Be Married? (1)

Mission Messenger (October 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

“Mias gunaikos andra.” These are words of Paul. They were written to both Timothy and Titus. They constitute one qualification for an elder. What do they mean? The King James Version translates them “the husband of one wife.” The Revised Standard Version says “married only once.” Does the expression mean that marriage is essential to being a bishop? Almost before the last apostle died this was a matter of controversy. It has continued to be so in every generation since. This question bothered the reformers of the nineteenth century, both here and abroad.

On Wednesday, August 4, 1880, the annual conference of Churches of Christ in Great Britain met at Huddersfield. Brother G. Y. Tickle presented a paper on “The Eldership.” Later, he published it in *The Christian Advocate*, of which he was editor. Here is an excerpt from the printed version:

I respectfully submit that there is nothing in the directions given to either Timothy or Titus to make it imperative that they should be married men, and that they should have children. . . . The *one*, as opposed to plurality, is evidently the emphatic word. But it may be asked, Does it not even in that case include the injunction that he must be a married man? Most assuredly not. If the apostle has before him a man with a plurality of wives and intends to exclude *him* from the eldership on that ground, you have

no right to say that is equal to having a single man before him who is to be excluded simply on the ground of his being unmarried or a widower— for to be consistent the language must exclude both.

At the same time, Bro. David King was editor of the *Ecclesiastical Observer*. He took exception to the speech made at the conference. This provoked Bro. Tickle to write in the next edition of his paper as follows:

When we presented our paper on ‘The Eldership’ to the Annual Meeting we did not expect, and had no desire that it should escape the sifting of a full and fair criticism. We know that it is only by such means that the question can be lifted out of the ruts which a superficial exegesis has sunk for it, and be made to move forward on broad apostolic lines. That the Editor of the *Ecclesiastical Observer* should allow the whole of our positions, some of them so widely divergent from those he has accepted so many years as unassailable, to pass unchallenged, was not at all to be expected. We have felt, therefore, no surprise either as to the points of his attack, or to the manner in which the attack has been made, but we are bound to say we have never known the Editor so rash and heedless as he has shown himself in this critique on our paper.

After another rebuttal by Bro. King, the controversy was suspended by Bro. Tickle in these words:

We do not think it would be profitable to enter into further controversy on this subject. D. K. intimates that he is not satisfied with the reply in our last issue. We were not *altogether* satisfied with his attack and are not *at all* satisfied with his rejoinder. If we answered in the same vein, we are sure dissatisfaction would be increased on both sides. So we prefer to let the matter rest where it is, in the hope that the brethren may be enabled to look away from the men and their little contention to the question in its different phases and on its merits, carefully weighing all that has been advanced in the way of argument in the

balances of truth and right reason.

Interest in the issue has been heightened in some sections of the disciple brotherhood in this country in the last two years. A Pennsylvania reader posed the following question to a fellow editor:

If a man has all the qualifications to be an elder except that he has no children, his wife being childless and thus he has no children through no fault of his own, would that in itself bar him forever to serve as elder?

The reply as published went far beyond the original question, for it would appear that the querist assumed that an elder must be married. But the editor responded in these words:

If brethren generally will be gracious enough not to hang me on Haman's gallows, I would like to say that I think we have stretched the domestic qualifications for bishops out of proportions. Paul's stipulations to Timothy and Titus deal with a 'normal' situation, and *normally* men old enough to be bishops are married and have children. But does Paul draw the line on bachelors or childless married men? I think not. Our straight-laced interpretations would bar even Paul himself from being an elder. The 'husband of one wife' qualification literally means a 'one-woman man,' which is likely a moral restriction against polygamy. Most all scholars take this view, if that means anything. The 'Church of Christ' stands almost alone in its idea that bishops must be married men, an interpretation that is linguistically weak. With such a liberal view I would, of course, say *No* to the above question. I am always amazed at brethren who think a man must be a husband and father in order to oversee a church, and yet believe that an evangelist who sets the church in order and trains men to be bishops can be either single or childless.

I was not disturbed by this reply. But I must admit that I was amazed at the reaction of many. They actually became

emotionally upset and agitated. Instead of bringing forward proof to sustain their position and to show any fallacy in the reasoning of the editor, they began to whisper that he was unsound and unsafe. Some quit taking his paper on the ground that they did not want to read anything which disagreed with their position. My attitude is just the opposite of that. I have long ago determined that I do not learn by reading after those in perfect agreement with me. Those who are not, present things to challenge my thinking. They force me to re-evaluate my convictions. I am thus made to test all things so that I may retain what is good. Accordingly, when I read such an article I invariably follow a three-point program. First, I read it over very carefully to ascertain just what the author intends to convey; secondly, I examine such proofs as he presents by the proper criterion; thirdly, I formulate my own convictions in the light of my personal investigation.

For several months in MISSION MESSENGER I have been conducting a survey of the eldership. Having considered the moral qualifications of the presbyters, I have arrived at the place where I must deal with the domestic requirements. The first question is whether or not a man must be married to qualify. Strictly speaking, the question is what Paul intended to convey in the expression "*mias gunaikos andra*." That is what should concern us. We ought not to be interested primarily, in whether these words confirm a qualification we have set up. We must seek to find what qualification they set up. Since I am dealing at such length with an issue which may appear to my readers to be of minor importance, I offer as justification the fact that I am of the sober opinion that we can never restore the church of God to its ancient order without restoring the polity ordained by the holy apostles. Any matter related to the government of the congregation of saints is important. This particular one has taken on added importance at this time.

I am deeply indebted to, and appreciative of, the great scholars who have done so much in clearing the ground for those

of us possessed of humbler intellects. I doubt that any person now living has a more profound respect for scholarship than the writer. Yet, I recognize that the mere fact that the “Church of Christ” stands almost alone in its idea that bishops must be married men, is not in itself, proof of either correctness or error in thinking. I shall seek to be objective and not concerned with the idea of any “church.” What did the inspired envoy of the Lord say, and what did he mean?

“Mias gunaikos andra.” In generations past men of great learning have held conflicting views. These words have been said to have the following connotations:

1. To forbid concubinage.
2. To forbid polygamy.
3. To forbid remarriage after divorce.
4. To forbid digamy, or deuterogamy (a second marriage after the death of the mate).
5. To demand that elders be married men.

At the outset, it must be admitted that most all scholars positively reject the last as being a proper interpretation. There are some notable exceptions to which we will later call attention. But it is likewise true that a careful poll of the same scholars may prove that a majority of them reject the idea that Paul was opposing polygamy by his statement. They believe rather that he was opposing deuterogamy, that is, a second marriage after death of a companion.

Goodspeed translates: “Only once married.” James Moffatt: “He must be married only once.” The Berkeley Version: “One wife’s husband,” with an added footnote: “If married at all.” The New Testament in Plain English has “Married only once.” The Revised Standard Version reads:

“Married only once,” with the footnote: “Greek *the husband of one wife.*”

On the original language itself, Kenneth S. Wuest, in his book on *The Pastoral Epistles* has this to say:

The two nouns are without the definite article, which construction indicates character or nature. The entire context is one in which the character of the bishop is being discussed. Thus one can translate ‘a one-wife sort of husband’ or ‘a one-woman sort of man.’ We speak of the Airedale as a one-man dog. We mean, by that, that it is his nature to become attached to only one man, his master. Since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife. It should be his nature to thus isolate and centralize his love.

Edmund J. Wolff, D.D., Professor of Church History and New Testament Exegesis in the Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, says:

Public sentiment at the time looked with disfavor upon the contraction of marriage after the death of one’s consort. It was held to be unseemly, if not immoral. To forego a second wedlock was regarded as a mark of high moral strictness. Even the heathen deemed it unbecoming for a widow. It, therefore, behooved one about to step on the high pedestal of pastoral oversight to conform to public sentiment— as long as it was not sinful, and to set an example of self-restraint.

Henry Alford, D.D., one time Dean of Canterbury, concurs in this view as shown by his statement:

The view then which must I think be adopted is that . . . St. Paul forbids second marriage. He requires of them pre-eminent chastity, and abstinence from licence which is allowed to other Christians. How far such a prohibition is to be considered binding on us, now that the Christian life

has entered into another and totally different phase, is of course an open question for the present Christian church at any time to deal with. It must be as a matter of course understood that regulations, in all lawful things, depend, even when made by an Apostle, on circumstances: and the superstitious observance of the letter in such cases is often pregnant with mischief to the people and the cause of Christ.

The reader is no doubt familiar with Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament. In espousing the above position, the author says:

The opposition to second marriage became very strong in the latter part of the second century. It was elevated into an article of faith by the Montanists, and was emphasized by Tertullian, and by Athenagoras, who called second marriage 'a spurious adultery.'

Among the commentators who believe that the apostle was forbidding second marriages are Bloomfield, Wiesinger, Van Oosterzee, Huther, Ellicott, Wordsworth, and Faussett. There are a number of others who dissent from this view, among them H. H. Harvey, D.D., of Hamilton Theological Seminary, who declares:

It seems clear, therefore, that the disqualification here intended is not remarriage after the death of a wife, but polygamy, or the having at the same time more than one living wife.

To complicate this explanation, Alfred Plummer, M.A., D.D., affirms that:

Polygamy in the Roman Empire must have been very rare. It was forbidden by Roman law, which did not allow a man to have more than one lawful wife at a time, and treated every simultaneous marriage, not only as null and void, but infamous. When it was practiced, it must have been practiced secretly. It is possible that when St.

Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, not a single polygamist had been converted to the Christian faith. Polygamists were exceedingly rare inside the Empire, and the Church had not yet spread beyond it.

As to the rarity of polygamy in the days of the apostles we have the testimony of E. F. Scott, Professor of Biblical Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

This has sometimes been taken to imply that only married men were eligible, but a rule of this kind would be contrary to the whole passage, which deals with character rather than status. Neither can it be polygamy which is forbidden, for this was never practiced in the civilized regions of Asia Minor. Perhaps Moffatt is right in translating *he must be married only once*. . . . But perhaps the meaning is simply that a bishop must show an example of strict morality. As a man of mature years he would presumably be married, and in the married relation, above all others, he must be above reproach.

Edward Hayes Plumptre, D.D., Professor in King's College, London, suggests another alternative:

A third explanation is, perhaps, more satisfactory. The most prominent fact in the social life of both Jews and Greeks at this period was the frequency of divorce. This, as we know, Jewish teachers, for the most part, sanctioned on even trifling grounds (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9). The apostle, taking up the law which Christ had laid down, infers that any breach of that law (even in the case which made marriage after divorce just permissible) would at least so far diminish a man's claim to respect as to disqualify him for office.

Walter Lock, D.D., in *The International Critical Commentary*, reaches about the same conclusion:

To be unmarried would incur no reproach: such a requirement (marriage) would be scarcely consistent with

the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 19:12) and of St. Paul (1 Cor. 7:7, 8); so the writer is only thinking of the character of a bishop, *if* married; as in verse 4 he deals only with his children, if he has children. . . . It also implies, and was probably meant to imply, not divorcing one wife and marrying another.

Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph.D., D.D., in Popular Commentary of the Bible, offers the following:

That a pastor lead a chaste and decent life, confining his attentions to his wife if he have one, as he normally will, not living in concubinage or bigamy, or rejecting a woman to whom he is lawfully betrothed for another.

N. J. D. White, D.D., in The Expositor's Greek Testament sets forth the view:

It does not mean that the episcopus must be, or have been married. What is here forbidden is digamy under any circumstances.

Nothing is more apparent to the researchist than the wide area of disagreement among the scholars. They are not agreed upon what the apostle meant. They are not even agreed upon what he did not mean. It is true that a majority take the position that Paul did not intend to set up the married state as requisite to office. On this point, we quote from R. C. H. Lenski, who says:

The emphasis is on *one* wife's husband, and the sense is that he have nothing to do with any other woman. He must be a man who cannot be taken hold of on the score of sexual promiscuity or laxity. It is plain that Paul does not say here that none but married men may enter the ministry, that every pastor must be married.

John Peter Lange, in his comments upon the passages under consideration, says:

The view that Paul speaks here only of the married

state, as a *conditio sine qua non* for the *episcopoi*, or that he merely discourages anything unusual, immoral, or illegal in the married life of such officers, does not fully explain his language.

Scott's Bible agrees with the thought expressed by Lange and others, with the words:

Some have inferred from this text, that stated pastors ought to be married, as a prerequisite to their office; but this seems to be a mistake of a *general permission*, connected with a restriction, for an *express command*.

A. S. Peake, M.A., D.D., lends the weight of his opinion to the same view, saying of the passages:

Sometimes wrongly interpreted as alluding to polygamy or adultery, or of forbidding celibacy.

Professor T. Croskery, D.D., in *The Pulpit Commentary*, also declares:

It does not necessarily compel pastors to marry, like the Greek church. . . . It seems to mean that the pastor was to be 'the husband of one wife,' avoiding the polygamy that was then common among the Jews, and the system of divorce still so common in that age, and remaining faithful to the wife of his choice.

We need to be careful, lest we leave the impression that all of the commentators and historians are united in the view that Paul did not set up marriage as a qualification. Carlstadt, the illustrious contemporary of Luther, and the fiery reformer, who advocated that a destructive process was the only method of reform, was a notable exception. This man, who was anxious to introduce into ecclesiastical and civil affairs an unconditional adherence to the obvious and literal construction of the Scriptures, steadfastly contended that the bishops should be

married men.

Thomas M. Lindsay, D.D., Principal of Glasgow College, in his book, “The Church and The Ministry in the Early Centuries,” says:

Titus is told that a presbyter or elder must be a man who is above suspicion, who is a faithful husband, and whose children are Christians of well-regulated lives.

In a footnote on the same page is contained the following explanation:

‘A faithful husband’ appears to be the best translation of *mias gunaikos andre*, one who acts on the principles of Christian morality and is not led astray by the licentious usages of the surrounding heathenism.

But Macknight in his work on “The Epistles” dissents from this view, in this language:

The direction I have been considering does not make it necessary, to one’s being a bishop, that he be a married person. . . . But the apostle’s meaning is, that if such a person be married, he must, as was observed above, have only one wife at a time

Albert Barnes concludes that the apostle intended to prohibit polygamy, but writes:

This need not be understood as requiring that a bishop should be a married man.

In the face of all of this contradictory material what is the honest student to do? What did the apostle actually mean by the terms he used? It is possible we may not be able, at this late date, to definitely determine, in the absence of more complete testimony. Certainly we should not be arbitrary or dogmatic in our personal views. We need to proceed with caution and

becoming humility, lest we advance an interpretation, then make of it a creed, and proceed to disfellowship others because they will not bow to our will. There is a difference between what the apostle said and what men think that he meant.

It is an easy matter for us to ignore the results of research and investigation and cling to a traditional view without regard to its validity. But this is not an honest approach to the revealed word of heaven. One of our greatest difficulties is that, having taught a thing for so long, we become lifted up with pride. We feel that we cannot change for this would be an admission of error! Or, perhaps, we learn better, but conclude that silence is the better part of valor. If we remain still and say nothing on the issues that are raised, we can retain the plaudits of the masses; whereas, if we speak out boldly we may be hated and hounded as troublers of Israel.

The writer does not feel that he should suppress his honest views in order to please men. In the next issue those views will be clearly set forth and the reasons given for them. Those reasons may not satisfy all of our readers. They may be deemed as insufficient to justify the conclusion reached, but they will be presented in kindness and love, and those who differ will not be castigated nor driven out by the editor. It is our very fervent prayer that you shall read this review again very carefully and save this issue until the next appears. In the meantime, we believe that there is one thing of which all may be certain, and that is that the enforced celibacy of the Roman Church is contrary to the word of God.

Drawing the Line

Mission Messenger (October 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

In *Old Paths Advocate*, for September 1, 1957 occurs an article under the above heading, written by one of the editors, Bro. Homer L. King, and we reproduce it here because of its implications.

Now and then, a brother or even a few brethren will in haste, impatience, and impulsiveness decide that they want to disfellowship the brotherhood, all because the brotherhood does not see an issue, or more than probably, an imaginary issue or opinion just as they see it, or just because the brotherhood will not go along in the radical view and action, which has, as a rule, become a ‘hobby,’ the only important thing in the world— the one important thing above all others that needs to be preached and talked — dreamed of by night, thought of, and talked of by day. Remember, brethren, that just as long as we have different degrees of knowledge, there will of necessity be differences arise among brethren; but they should not, and need not, cause open division and disfellowshipping among brethren. My brother, think seriously, study much the word of God, and pray much and earnestly before you take such radical steps. You may be the one who is in the wrong. There are a few brethren and a church or two who disfellowship me, but they fellowship good brethren and churches who do fellowship me, and they use my fellow-preachers who fellowship me— what of consistency?

Bro. King is one of the leaders in a faction composed of brethren who make a test of fellowship out of sundry matters pertaining to the Lord's Supper and the grouping of brethren for the purpose of instructing them in the words of life. It is not our purpose to impugn the motives of these brethren. We are not questioning the fact that they are sincere, but we are convinced they are wrong in their concept of the body of Christ and the fellowship of the saints. We feel that a legalistic attitude toward the revelation of God's grace has caused them to erect walls where our Lord has made none, and thus, in spite of their honesty, they are thwarting the purpose of heaven.

There are two terms used by our brother in his thesis which are employed in a sense in which they are never used by the Holy Spirit. One is "brotherhood" and the other is "fellowship." To Bro. King "the brotherhood" consists of those who subscribe to the policies and programs of the editors of *Old Paths Advocate*. "The brotherhood" of the new covenant scriptures embraces every person on this earth who has acknowledged the divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth and who has been immersed in His name on the basis of that faith. Much of the brotherhood has not even heard of some of the issues over which Brother King would "disfellowship" them, and they are wholly unaware that a few brethren have impulsively decided to "disfellowship the brotherhood." We need to face up to the fact that those who claim to represent the body of our Lord have created a whole bunch of "brotherhoods" and the title *brother* is not bestowed because of our relationship to the same Father, but because we subscribe to the same "hobby."

Bro. King should not too severely criticize those who decide "they want to disfellowship the brotherhood" for he made the same decision, but actually the whole problem relates to what constitutes fellowship as God regards the word. Once the scriptural connotation is understood, no one will ever again use the expression "disfellowship the brotherhood."

Our brother needs to be commended for a recognition of the fact that so long as there are various degrees of knowledge, there will be differences among brethren, but these need not cause division “and disfellowshipping.” His prescription for serious thought, copious study and earnest prayer, is certainly excellent and needs to be heeded by all of us. In view of this expressed attitude and recognizing that differences need not cause division, I make the proposal to the brethren who compose “the brotherhood” of which Bro. King writes that we meet for three days of earnest prayer, serious study, and sincere meditation, with a view to begin a healing of the breaches which have troubled the restoration movement. I will recognize and treat them as brethren, and will manifest a love for them in Christ, so that if we cannot come closer together I will certainly not widen the gap between us. Perhaps we have been held apart over an attitude that is wholly without justification. Let us explore means of working together. I await their proposal for implementation of such a meeting for prayer, study and meditation with a view to coming closer together.

A Serious Charge

Mission Messenger (October 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

A brother in the southland has become seriously upset by my reference to “The Church of Christ” of which he is a “Minister” as a sect. He bitterly reproaches me for branding the New Testament church for which Jesus died, as a sect. Of course, I did not do that. I am fully aware that the church of God is not, and cannot be a sect. The trouble with my brother is, that like the Roman Catholic priest, he confuses his sect with the church of God mentioned in the Word.

I unhesitatingly charge that the church with which my brother is affiliated, is no different in practice, than the other modern sects about us. I can demonstrate the following and present the proof when it is demanded.

1. “The Church of Christ” has a specially trained clergy and that clergy constitutes the policy making body in every major center of the nation.

2. “The Church of Christ” has its theological seminaries.

3. “The Church of Christ” has its boards for property control, and these hold titles and deeds to property used by congregations even in foreign countries.

4. “The Church of Christ” has annual conventions under

guise of lectureships, and at these conventions foreign and domestic missionaries make their reports, dinners are given in honor of the clergymen, band and orchestra concerts are provided, special choirs are featured, churches present exhibits of their handiwork, and pressure groups operate to control matters of faith and doctrine.

5. “The Church of Christ” has its missionary societies functioning regularly with funds pooled from numerous congregations which have mailed them to the headquarters.

6. “The Church of Christ” has its central bureau for national and international propaganda by radio and television.

7. “The Church of Christ” has its centralized charitable and eleemosynary boards for administration of its funds to the needy and destitute.

8. “The Church of Christ” has its parochial school system patterned in principle after those of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran bodies.

9. “The Church of Christ” has its district headquarters, with the editors of its journals in those headquarters serving as an ex officio board of censorship in matters of faith and doctrine.

10. “The Church of Christ” employs the boycott and various subversive means to keep its sectarian position from being exposed to its shame and disgrace.

These are but a few things which come to mind at once, which demonstrate that “The Church of Christ” is not a restoration of the primitive congregation of saints, but has degenerated into a twentieth century sect, employing all the means and methods of any other sect. We sympathize with the thousands of our humble brethren who are exploited for gain in this great institution, and we recognize that there are many congregations of saints who designate themselves as “Churches

of Christ” and are not sectarian in concept or practice.

It takes more than a belief in water baptism and opposition to instrumental music in worship to constitute a church of God of the new covenant pattern. We ask you to remember the things listed above when you hear a clergyman of “The Church of Christ” (generally presented as a “local preacher” or “located evangelist”) assault the members of the religious community in a radio speech, and abuse them because they do not subscribe to “Church of Christism.” It brings our hearts no joy to report the state of this body of “New Digressives.” But truth is truth, and we can prove what we have here written. It should never be forgotten that Rome exists today as proof of what happens to a church of Christ when it starts to apostatize.

What will be the result? Will “The Church of Christ” repent and return to the original pattern? All history testifies to the contrary! She is now in the grasp of big business men, great promoters, and mercenaries. She will continue to digress farther and farther from the pattern, growing ever more sectarian in concept, developing an attitude of exclusiveness and bigotry, until God’s people will have to come out of her that they be not partaker of her sins. We are sorry our brother is offended at us for telling the truth about his position, but we love the church of Christ too much to allow a substitute to go unchallenged!

Making Allowances

Mission Messenger (October 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

“Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other because you love each other. Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another. You will belong to one Body of which there is one Spirit, just as you all experienced one calling to one hope.”

That is the rendering of the first few verses of Ephesians 4, in “Letters to Young Churches,” by J. B. Phillips. I think that these paragraphs need to be in our hearts a great deal in these days when some few are laboring to “restore the restoration.” I thought of them when I read a little paper *It Is Written*, edited by Brother J. W. Bedingfield, at Carlsbad, New Mexico. A couple of brethren, Spurlin and Weakley, had recently presented some views in opposition to the setting of the Lord’s Table twice on the same day. A Brother J. S. Bedingfield felt called upon to reply, which caused the editor to state his policy with reference to the publication of articles so contradictory in nature. In summation he said:

As in this case, I have spent many happy hours talking with both Bro. J. S. and Bro. Weakley, on the scriptures and I am sure both know that we do not agree 100% on all points, yet we continue to study and work and pray together.

In the same issue, a Bro. W. E. Daniels asks and answers the question, "Is it all right to meet with Cups and Sunday School and Individual Bread Breakers, if there is no loyal church in reach?" He proceeds then to show that to do so would be the equivalent of accepting sprinkling for baptism if there was not enough water near in which to be buried. Several things are apparent in this. (1) Our brethren make a test of fellowship out of the manner of serving the Lord's Supper, the grouping of students for investigation of the sacred oracles, and whatever the last implies. I do not know if I am an "Individual Bread Breaker" or not, for I do not know what the brother is talking about. (2) The loyalty of a congregation is determined by its subscription to several items of an unwritten creed, and not by its relationship to God through the blood of His dear Son. Unless a congregation of saints would be willing to un-Christianize every group of saints on earth who did not agree with them 100% on these matters, regardless of the wide divergencies on a thousand other things, they would not even be recognized as children of God.

I have previously charged that the espousal of a factional and party spirit results in a twisting and wresting of the revealed will of God to sustain the partisan position, and in sorrow, I record that the same is true in this case. To prove that it is wrong to meet with brethren such as are designated, the writer cites 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 3:3-5; and Galatians 2:11-14, which have no connection near or remote to the question of meeting with brethren who employ individual cups to distribute the drink element to the saints, classes in which to teach students, or some form of breaking the loaf. But the second one does condemn the brother who writes, in stirring words: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" The holding of the views which are his, does not bring my brother under condemnation, but the creating of a party around those views does, and that is exactly what he has done, for his article is written to espouse the party spirit.

But the apparent thing about all of our modern factionism, and all of us have been tainted with it, is the fact that it creates inconsistency. Not a single one of the factions in the disciple brotherhood has perfect agreement among its constituents. The brethren in every one of them disagree about many things, but so long as they are agreed on the one thing which is the test of loyalty, that is all that is required. They can disagree about our relation to civil government, about going to war, about marriage and divorce— and a hundred other things— but if they adhere to the party line they will not be purged. Let one get weak on that and he is soon mustered out.

Bro. Bedingfield admits there is a three way division among three brethren as relates to the Lord's Supper. Bro. Weakley does not agree with Bro. J. S. and Bro. J. W. does not agree with either. "Yet we continue to study and work and pray together." Why can we not do the same on other phases of difference about the Supper? Which is greatest, the memorial of our Lord and the fellowship of his body and blood, or our own little cavillings about the manner of passing it? Is it not time that we measure up to the greatness, majesty, dignity and nobility which befits the citizens of the kingdom?

Our Plea

Mission Messenger (October 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

We plead for the following things in these days of departure and dissension.

1. The new covenant scriptures as a revelation of the will of the absent King, and as an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

2. A restoration of the primitive order as set forth by the apostles of Jesus the Messiah, in its fulness and simplicity, as essential to the maintenance of a proper relationship with God the Father.

3. The one body of our Lord, composed of every immersed penitent believer in the world, as opposed to human religious parties which segregate, separate and divide the people of God.

4. The priesthood of all believers, in *practice as well as theory*, and the rights and prerogatives accruing to all from such a priesthood.

5. The mutual ministry of the community of saints, utilizing every talent of every member, to the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom.

This plea, by its very nature, places us under obligation to oppose the following things which are in opposition to that plea.

1. Every human creed, written or unwritten, which seeks to bind upon the hearts of men that which God has not legislated, or to set up any opinion, doctrine or dogma of man as a basis for, or a test of, fellowship.

2. Every modern institution or device created by human wisdom to do the work which God has legislated as in the realm of the divine organism, and which, by its very existence, infringes upon the functions of that organism.

3. Every sect, denomination, faction or party which exalts any theory or opinion, to the division of the body of Christ, regardless of its name, prestige, power or influence.

4. Any semblance of special clergy, whether manifested in a hierarchy of prelates, or in a system of “located ministers” who are accorded special rights, encomiums, and privileges, denied to other faithful servants of the Lord.

5. The creation of a system in which an evangelist is called in from the gospel field, and hired as “the Minister” of a congregation, and thus becomes the pastor, employed to edify, train and exhort the saints, in a congregation having bishops or elders.

Our contention and our plea is based upon a positive conviction that it will avail us nothing to propose, devise, construct or establish any organization in the realm of the spirit, which is without warrant from God, and not authorized in His revelation. *Here we stand!*

Must Elders Be Married? (2)

Mission Messenger (November 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

In our first article on this subject, published in MISSION MESSENGER last month, we reviewed the positions taken by various scholars. We urge you to read it as a preparation for this second article. It will demonstrate the great differences that exist as to the meaning of the language used by the apostle. It will also show that only a small minority of scholars entertain the view that marriage is a requisite for the eldership.

Those of us who have always contended that a bishop must be married should face up courageously to the difficulties which must be met in the defence of that position. Let me cite but a few. Jesus speaks with commendation of those who “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:12). I understand this to refer to those who desist from marriage to advance the kingdom. Is it logical that one who deprives himself of marriage for the sake of the kingdom, should be deprived of an office or function in that kingdom, on the basis that he is not married? Again, we learn from the scriptures that continency is a gift (Matt. 19:11) and that it is a special gift from God (1 Cor. 7:7). Shall a man be barred from the eldership because he exercises this gift, or, if he desires the office of bishop, must he deny the gift of God?

The expression “husband of one wife” as relates to the bishop, is on par with the expression “wife of one husband” as

pertains to the widow in 1 Timothy 5:9. It is generally conceded, we believe, that the latter expression means that a widow is not to have married again after the death of her husband. In view of this, is it not implied that Paul, instead of setting up marriage as a qualification, was simply stating that no twice married man could qualify? If it be agreed that “husband of one wife” is a correct rendering, is the emphasis to be placed upon “husband” or “one.” If we were laying down a qualification of marriage for a position, would we say that a man had to be the husband of *one wife*? If Paul intended to establish marriage as a requisite to office, why did he not use the word for “married” since he was familiar with it and employed it frequently?

On the other hand, we should not feel that this is the only position beset with problems. Those who settle upon other meanings also have difficulties which they must meet. Certainly the language employed by the apostle meant *something*, and it meant just *one thing* when written. It is not a fair or wise approach to say that it could have included a number of various things, for this spirit would do despite to all interpretation, and it is the resort of shallow thinkers and surface reasoners who do not handle the word skillfully.

In presenting my own view as to the question in our heading, I must admit that I do so with some reluctance which I did not feel five years ago. Always before, when writing upon this topic, I have been bold, forward and positive. I merely stated my position derived from years of traditional teaching. It never occurred to me that any person would be so rash as to question it. I admit that I did not strive to find out what the apostle meant, for I thought I already knew. Now that I am again faced with the necessity of declaring my thoughts I find myself both humbled and hesitant. Yet I cannot be true to my readers without expressing my feelings.

My conclusion is that a bishop should be a married man. This is in opposition to the world’s scholarship. It may seem

presumptuous to array myself against the battery of great reasoners whose opinions I have cited. Surely I must present the bases for arriving at such a conclusion. I know these will be attacked and sifted, and they should be. It may be proven that they are inadequate and insufficient to justify my position. I submit them in all honesty and sincerity. They are my own. I have not consulted with others on the matter. No one else need be charged with them. My only justification in disagreeing with the scholars is that “God hath chosen the foolish to confound the wise.” Here are the reasons which lead me to believe that bishops should be married.

1. The primitive community of saints, being Jewish, was patterned after the synagogue in government. It is my personal feeling that the synagogue, which was a spontaneous production of the Babylonian exile, was used of God to cushion the shock of transition from Judaism to Christianity. This theme I hope to develop in a future book if God spares my life. At the present, it is sufficient to say that all scholars of note agree that the congregation in Jerusalem was a Messianic synagogue, with its permanent form of government developing along the lines with which the people were familiar. Out of the great bulk of material before me, I present statements from two writers of note.

The first quotation is from Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D., Dean of Westminster, in his “Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church,” Vol. 3, Page 409:

And thus, inasmuch as the synagogue existed where the Temple was unknown, and remained when the Temple fell, it followed that from its order and worship, and not from that of the Temple, were copied, if not in all their details, yet in the general features, the government, the institutions, and the devotions of those Christian communities, which springing directly from the Jewish, were in the first instance known as ‘synagogues’ and afterward by the adoption of an almost identical word ‘Ecclesia,’ assembly house.

The second quotation will be found in “The Temple Dictionary of the Bible” by W. Ewing, M.A., and J. E. H. Thomson, D.D., under the article “Synagogue.”

It is not difficult to trace the foundation and practice of the Apostolic Church to the Synagogue system, and to see that we have nothing to do with the Temple worship, which was meant to be unique and to be devoted to the sacrificial ritual. . . . Every detail of the Primitive Church organization is synagoga— the equality of elders and rulers (Acts 20:17, 28), the episcopal power vested in the presbyters, the daily ministration (Acts 6:1), the matter of collections, the use of the word angel (Rev. 2:1) for the presiding elder, and the general order of Christian worship: all are synagoga and presbyterian.

It should not be necessary to tell the serious student that the last word in the quotation has no reference to a denomination in the Protestant world, but to a form of government.

The Jewish disciples were familiar with the rule of elders in the synagogue. (See MISSION MESSENGER, June 1957, page 8). It is conceivable that when the apostles visited a synagogue and reasoned from the Jewish Scriptures, proving that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the entire synagogue might be converted, in which case there would be no necessity of a change of government, worship or procedure, except the addition of the Lord's Supper. But the Jews had a high regard for the married state and the home. For that reason they taught that a priest should be neither unmarried or childless, lest he be unmerciful.

Dr. Alfred Edersheim, D.D., Ph.D., in an article on “Marriage Among the Hebrews,” says:

Thus viewed, marriage was considered almost a religious duty, that is, not from lust, nor for beauty, nor yet merely for wealth. For whatever woman was, either for

good or bad, she was always superlatively. Stringing together several portions of Scripture, it was argued that an unmarried man was without any good (Gen. 2:18), without joy (Deut. 14:26), without blessing (Ezek. 44:30); without protection (Jer. 31:22), without peace (Job 5:24); indeed, could not properly be called a man (Gen. 5:22).

The same writer in his “Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ” has this to say:

We can understand how, before the coming of the Messiah, marriage should have been looked upon as of religious obligation. Many passages of Scripture were at least quoted in support of this idea. Ordinarily, a young man was expected to enter the wedded state (according to Maimonides) at the age of sixteen or seventeen, while the age of twenty may be regarded as the utmost limit conceded, unless study so absorbed time and attention as to leave no leisure for the duties of married life. Still it was thought better even to neglect study than to remain single.

In the same book, the author, himself a Jew who came to believe in the Messiah, has this to say about those who had charge of the conduct of public worship, as well as of the government and discipline of the synagogues:

They were men learned in the law and of good repute, whom the popular voice designated, but who were regularly set apart by ‘the laying on of hands,’ or the ‘Semichah,’ which was done by at least three, who had themselves received ordination. . . . The special qualifications for the office of Sanhedrist, mentioned in the Rabbinical writings, are such as to remind us of the directions of St. Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-10).

Our next authority is C. D. Ginsburg, LL.D., who writes in “Early Attendance at the Sanctuary” as follows:

It was deemed most desirable that he who acts as the mouthpiece of the people should be able to sympathize

with the wants of the people, and should possess those moral and mental qualifications which became so holy a mission. The canon law, therefore, laid it down that ‘even if an elder or sage is present in the congregation, he is not to be asked to officiate before the ark; but that man is to be delegated to officiate who has children, whose family are free from vice, who has a proper beard, whose garments are decent, who is acceptable to the people, and who has a good and amiable voice, who understands to read properly the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, and who knows all the benedictions of the service’ (*Mishna Taanith*, 2:2). How strikingly this illustrates the apostolic injunction, ‘A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, and modest . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity, . . . not a novice, . . . he must have a good report of them that are without’ (1 Tim. 3:1-7, with Titus 1:1-9).

It would not have been necessary to set forth marriage as one of the qualifications for the presbyters who were selected by the congregation at Jerusalem and appointed to administer the affairs of the community of saints. The brethren who constituted that community were all Jews. They regarded themselves as a synagogue of disciples of the Nazarene. Their superintendents and administrators selected by popular voice would be married men. And we believe that this pattern would be followed in other congregations, even those remote from Palestine. “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 2:14).

2. The whole tenor of the teaching seems to indicate that a presbyter will be a married man. It may be argued that a *definite rule* of marriage based upon the mere statement “*mias gunaikos andros*” is linguistically weak, but we do not think it will be seriously disputed that the context relates to one who is domestically situated as the head of a household. And just as a gem loses part of its luster out of the setting designed for it, so it

is sometimes difficult to appreciate fully a passage isolated from the general frame in which it is placed.

Edward Hayes Plumptre, D.D., Professor in King's College, London, has this to say:

Both this verse and verse 4 appear to take marriage for granted. It is obvious that in a community much exposed to the suspicions or the slanders of the heathen, this would be a safeguard against many of the perils to which a celibate clergy have always been exposed.

Much along the same vein is the statement of J. R. Dummelow, M.A., Queen's College, Oxford, who says the expression probably means that a presbyter must be faithful to his wife, "a man of one woman." He adds, "In any case the presbyter or bishop is contemplated as a married man."

3. The Holy Spirit presents an analogy in which the home, or household, sustains a relation to the congregation of God, and it is in ruling the first that one demonstrates his ability to govern the second. A presbyter must "rule well his own house." He must have "his children in subjection with all gravity." The purpose of this qualification is not to determine his ability to beget offspring but to afford a demonstration of his ability to govern them. The argument is that "If he know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God?" The word for house is *oikos* "the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household." A part of this family are children. In ruling them, the candidate for the eldership shows his ability to govern. If he is not married and has no children how can he demonstrate this ability? How can the congregation know he will be able to take care of the church of God if they have never seen a demonstration of his ability in a household? Can a congregation select a man to govern the church of God who has not demonstrated ability to rule his own house, including his children?

But what about the argument that by setting up marriage as a qualification, Paul would render himself, Barnabas, and Timothy, disqualified for the office? We propose to allow David King to answer this.

We consider that either polygamy or celibacy disqualifies for the eldership. It has been urged that celibacy cannot do so, as, in that case, Paul and Timothy would have been disqualified; certainly they would, and there is no evidence they were not. No one can produce proof that they were qualified for the elder's office, and nowhere are we taught that the qualifications for an apostle, an evangelist, and an elder are the same. On the point now immediately under notice, nothing could be more fitting than that apostles and evangelists, whose work largely required them to move from place to place, and generally rendered impossible a settled home, should be unmarried; while on the other hand, nothing is more seemly and desirable than that overseers in one church, whose duties require settled residence and involve frequent interposition between husband and wife, parents and children, should themselves be married men, who have given evidence that they understand and rightfully deport themselves in that relationship. No one can fail to see that such, other circumstances being equal, could not but present a fitness for the office which the unmarried are without. This is our conclusion after years of thoughtful investigation, and after reading, perhaps, all that can be said on either side.

What should be our attitude toward brethren who honestly differ from us and who think that we make a rigid interpretation without proper justification? Here is how Brother King resolved that issue.

Still the fact remains, that thoughtful, learned, pious brethren conclude that it is not certain that the intention is wider than the exclusion of the polygamist, and, therefore, they decline to reject an unmarried man who is, in all other respects, qualified. Now, we are not prepared to say

that these brethren must of *necessity* be wrong. That they are wrong we have little or no doubt, but the impossibility of their being right is not here affirmed. How then shall the difficulty be met? Each church must meet it for itself, and the understanding of the majority must prevail. Not that the church shall decree what the interpretation shall be; but that each member determine for himself, whether the person, or persons, named has, or have, the required qualifications; each to determine this according to his own understanding of the terms, and the declared will of the majority must be taken as the church-recognition or non-recognition of the fitness of the men submitted for their judgment. But just here comes in an important consideration, which to some extent should influence the decision. There *is* perfectly safe and certain ground. If only those are ordained who possess the other qualifications and who also are married, everyone will know that the requirements are fully met. Thus perfectly safe and reliable ground invites to occupation.

What course shall I pursue personally? Since starting this series I have learned of a group of brethren in another part of the world who do not consider marriage as a necessary qualification. They will not reject a man who is otherwise qualified but has never married. Suppose I should visit them and labor among them, as I have been invited to do. Would I seek to divide them over this issue? Indeed I would not! If asked to explain my position I would offer my interpretation in meekness and humility. I would avoid becoming dogmatic or arbitrary. I would not tell them that I could not worship with them, nor serve under an eldership, with one or more constituents unmarried. I could not conscientiously appoint such a brother to office with my present attitude, but I would not make an unwritten creed of my interpretation and divide brethren into “a married elder faction,” and “an unmarried elder faction.” If I have not grown much in knowledge in recent years I trust that I have at least grown in grace.

To any of my brethren, at home or abroad; to those who fellowship me and those who do not; I would like to say that I will be pleased to read anything you have to say on this issue which may help to throw additional light on the matter. I do not solicit your personal opinions, for I have more of my own than I know what to do with. But if there is some scripture I have overlooked, or some point of logic or reasoning I have failed to see, you will be my friend if you point out my shortcoming, and call my mistakes to my attention. I want to be right above all things else. I am willing to learn from any person who can teach me.

God willing, I shall deal with the questions concerning the children of bishops in my next issue. I trust that you will look forward to that, and that God may bless us all with a deeper insight into His revelation of truth.

Report of a Trip

Mission Messenger (November 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

In Charleston, West Virginia, a congregation meets at the corner of Boulevard W., at Vine Street. It bears the name "Boulevard Church of Christ." Clinton Looney is the minister. The advertisement in the church column of the Sunday newspapers bears the caption, "An Undenominational Body of Christians." On the bulletin board inside the auditorium is a list of "Loyal Churches of Christ in Florida." All of these use instrumental music in public worship. They are "loyal" because they do not support the United Christian Missionary Society.

A few blocks away, in easy walking distance, is another "Church of Christ" at the corner of Park Avenue and Main Street. Vestal Chaffin is their minister. The advertisement in the telephone directory carries the caption "No Instrumental Music." Bro. Chaffin will also list for you the "loyal churches." They are the ones that do not endorse instrumental music.

In the same locality are other "Churches of Christ" and they will provide you a list of "loyal" churches in any locality. They are the ones who do not use individual containers in distributing the Lord's Supper, and where students are not grouped for instruction in the sacred oracles. In short, here are three groups in one community which will give you a list of "loyal" churches of Christ, and no two lists will contain even one of the same congregations. To what are they "loyal"? In passing,

it needs to be remarked that I would not be recognized as “loyal” by either group, whatever that means!

Bro. Chaffin does not regard the members of the Boulevard Church of Christ as his brethren. He is concerned as to whether he ought to “accept their baptism” if they become convinced that instrumental music is wrong and want to join his congregation. He thinks they ought to allow him to re-baptize them, because they were born in Babylon, and therefore, are not really the children of God. In this he is joined by a fellow-clergyman in the area, Charles Garner, the minister of the Belle, West Virginia, “Church of Christ.” Charles doubts that those who were immersed by a Christian Church preacher should be considered as brethren. They were baptized into a sect. The truth is that all three of these abortive groups resulting from the restoration movement look upon each other as sects *and they are all correct*, in the fair meaning of the term.

I talked at length with Bros. Garner and Chaffin, while in Charleston recently, and went over to see Brother Looney, although without success. However, I did go down to Bluefield, Virginia, to attend a session of the Mountain States Christian Convention. I had several objectives in mind. I wanted to hear my former grade school teacher and good friend, Lee Carter Maynard, who was one of the scheduled speakers. I wanted to observe first-hand the use made of musical instruments, and I wanted to see a convention in progress for comparison with some of the college lectureships. All of my objectives were accomplished.

The convention hardly compared with those held annually under auspices of David Lipscomb College. In an attempt to achieve informality by indulging in levity, some of the participants hardly maintained the dignity associated with messengers of the King. The first speech had to do with “The Problem of Stewardship” and as usual the speaker limited the term to money. He held forth tithing, thus demonstrating that

the Judaistic party has not wholly died out.

There has been a great change wrought in the arguments used to defend the use of instrumental music in public worship since the day of its introduction. The instruments were brought in on one basis; their present proponents seek to keep them in on a wholly different one. The modern argument is that the instrument is not used *in the worship*, but is merely an aid in keeping the pitch. It is argued that if you can use a tuning fork to get the pitch, you can use a piano to keep it, and that it is only an aid, as a songbook is an aid. The practice does not coincide with the argument.

In addition to “aiding the singers” it was also used to “maintain the pitch” in the collection. After a spirited talk in which the dangers of torment were held out to those who did not give that night, several men started out with collection plates and the pianist started out with “It Pays to Serve Jesus.” The music was also started again at the close of the benediction to “aid” in emptying the auditorium.

As an unbiased observer I can testify that the singing was not as well rendered as that at Freed-Hardeman College when I debated Bro. G. C. Brewer on the right of that institution to exist. It is possible that the brethren have used the instrument as an “aid” until it has become “a crutch.” I noted that the one who played had to watch the song leader to keep up with his tempo. I feel that some of the good sincere brethren wish the instrument had never been introduced but since it has, they have to defend it or be tagged as “non-instrument,” a term which, among them, is next to slander. It is like an unwanted baby, which since its birth, has to be nourished and cared for! The brethren have to alter their defense for it like “The Church of Christ” has to alter the charters of their Bible Colleges, not to harmonize with the word of God, but to enable them to debate the other side.

The theme of the convention was “The New Testament

Church; the Answer to Every Problem.” The program stated “It’s high time the 20th century church began taking advantage of the divinely inspired answers to the questions that plague the church today.” I am convinced that the last thing the brethren want is to see a real restoration of the New Testament church. That is true of all three groups or factions in Charleston. They all have what they want and they will defend it regardless of consequences. I met Edsil Dale at the convention. He is the minister of Fairview Christian Church at Carthage, Missouri. He handed me a couple of his bulletins. In one there was a list of twelve men nominated in a primary election. The members were to vote on eight for elders to serve the coming year. So long as such practices are tolerated and condoned the brethren will continue closer to Babylon than Jerusalem. It is time that honest seekers after truth, arise in all of these factions, and “restore the restoration.”

A Wine Party

Mission Messenger (November 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

A recent exchange carries a plaintive letter which indicates how rife is the party spirit and how factious men may become under the guise of *loyalty*. A California subscriber wrote to the editor:

I have been running references on the Communion for a long time, and I honestly believe Wine is what should be used in the Communion Service. Since I've decided Wine should be used, for a long time I've not been going anywhere to Church. I wish I had somewhere to worship, where they use Wine. But everybody here uses grape juice. Maybe some day I can go where they use Wine.

With the spirit and attitude expressed, it will make little difference if the writer goes anywhere or not, for he indicates that he is walking after the flesh and not after the Spirit. Among the works of the flesh which are said to be plain are mentioned "selfishness, dissension, and the party spirit." He has built a party around the state or condition of the liquid served at the royal feast, and now seeks to un-Christianize every child of God who does not bow to his regulation. His problem is not over using grape juice. It is over the processing of it, or how long it has been left uncovered. Wine is grape juice! To rend and tear, to cut and slash the blessed body of God's dear Son, over such matters is almost unthinkable. What will men not do when

driven by selfishness and a factious spirit?

The brother has not learned his divisive way by “running references on *the Communion*,” for the Lord’s Supper is, nowhere called “the communion.” It is a part of the communion or fellowship of the saints, but every act we do in joint service is part of the communion. The Lord’s Supper is the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, but to call it “the communion” is as misleading as to talk about “going to church.” It is the church which does the going!

It is sinful to split the body of Christ into wrangling parties over the very Supper which the Son of God ordained as an expression of corporate fellowship. The word of God does not say if the grape juice shall be fermented or unfermented, if the bread shall be leavened or unleavened. I shall not refuse to eat or drink with my brethren over the state of the bread or grape juice, or over some manner of breaking the loaf or distributing the drink element. We need to rise above these partisan divisions and look unto Jesus!

Elders and Children

Mission Messenger (December 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

The question of whether or not elders must have children in order to qualify has long been discussed. The editor humbly submits his views on this issue in the form of questions and answers.

1. Is it your position that a man must be married to qualify as an elder?

Yes, and I gave my reasons for so thinking in the November edition of this paper. I admit there are difficulties presented by this position, but it seems to fulfill the requirements better than any other. Those who desire to study the opposite view, and all should do so, may see it set forth by Bro. Ralph Graham, in Bible Talk.

2. Do you think that an elder must have children?

Yes, I do, because he is contemplated as the head of a family, or household, and he must demonstrate his ability to take care of the church of God by ruling his own family well (1 Tim. 3:5). In connection therewith, it is said he must have his children in subjection with all gravity.

3. Does the term children imply a plurality, or could a man with one child serve, if he possesses the other qualifications?

The word “children” does not necessitate a plurality. It is used in its common application, and neither legally, naturally, or in the Old and New Testaments does it convey the idea of a compulsory plurality.

4. Can you illustrate what you mean by “legally” and “naturally”?

Yes. In this state, there is a law which stipulates that “All parents having children under the age of sixteen years must enroll them in school.” Could parents having only one child evade that law? Indeed not!

In normal conversation we use the term “children” in the same fashion. If the Parent-Teachers Association invites to a meeting all parents who have children enrolled in the school, it certainly would not be limited to those who had two or more in school.

5. Give us examples in the Old and New Testaments to illustrate your view.

A good case in point is that of Sarah, at the birth of Isaac. “And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age” (Gen. 21:7). Here the term “children” is certainly equivalent to “a son.”

In 1 Timothy 5:4 “any widow who has children” is to be supported by them. This certainly would not eliminate one son or daughter from any obligation, for that would contradict verses 8 and 16 where the singular is employed. Such examples could be multiplied far beyond our space to accommodate them.

6. If a couple having no children of their own, adopt children, would this satisfy the requirements?

Certainly it would. The qualification is not based upon a

man's physical ability to beget offspring, but upon his ability to rule or govern the family circle. A wife might be sterile even though her husband was not. If a couple adopts children and they demonstrate ability to rear them in subjection, the qualification is met.

7. Then why could not a man qualify by teaching public school and governing children?

Because the relationship sustained in a school is different than that in a home, and the government of a congregation is analogous to that of a home. There is more to "ruling a household" than maintaining youngsters in subjection. That is but one phase of it. An elder will be called upon to counsel and advise in domestic difficulties involving husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, etc. It is to qualify him to deal objectively with all such cases that he must be the head of a household so he may know "how to care for the church of God."

8. Do the scriptures teach that an elder's children must be members of the church, in order for him to qualify?

I do not think so. I believe that the statement "having faithful children" in Titus 1:6, is misunderstood by a lot of people. Of course, I may be in error about it myself, but I merely give my view of it, after making very careful and earnest study, as objectively as I know how to do so.

9. Do not most of the modern translations imply that the expression means "children who are Christians"?

Yes. Some of them even use the expression. For instance, *The Twentieth Century New Testament* says, "Whose children are Christians." But this is not a translation. It is a commentary. It expresses what the translators thought the apostle meant, not what he said. There is no word for "Christian" in the text, and it is not a translation to use this word for the term that does

appear.

10. Does not Thayer in his lexicon say the term means one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the author of salvation?

Actually, Thayer does not say that. He merely translates the words of Prof. Grimm to that effect. Strictly speaking, belief *in Jesus* is not included in this word at all. It simply means “trustworthy, of good fidelity,” and relates to one who can be relied upon. There is not one thing in the term itself to indicate belief in any specific person, proposition or thing.

11. Then why did the lexicographers assign it a specific application?

That is easily understood. The term *pistos* appears in a New Testament framework or background. In many cases, it has to do with a state of conviction relative to Jesus as the Messiah. The lexicographers of New Testament usage would obviously slant their thinking in that direction in any case of question. I think they have done so here. They thought the contextual usage justified it; I do not think so. The term is applied to God, Christ, servants, stewards, and the word, as well as to children.

12. Do you have some justifiable basis for disagreeing with these authorities?

That all depends upon who is to be the judge of what constitutes a justifiable basis. The Bible says “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,” but it also says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.” I think that I am correct in my conviction that a man may be appointed to the eldership before his children are old enough to accept the gospel and assume the responsibility of the Christian life.

13. On what ground do you reach that conclusion?

First, let it be remembered that the strict meaning of the term *pistos* is “trustworthy, reliable.” Qualifications relating to the children were written by the apostle to Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete. I do not think they differ. Whatever was required of children in one place would be required in both. If an expression used in writing to Titus is obscure or ambiguous, it may be explained in the language to Timothy, or vice versa. The statement to Titus is “having faithful children,” and to Timothy, it is, “having his children in subjection.” I conclude, then, that faithful children are children in subjection to the will or rule of the father. Faithful children are those who are trustworthy and reliable because they are in subjection to paternal government. Paul defines what he means when he says “Faithful children *not accused of riot or unruly*.” This is the negative attribute, while trustworthy is the positive.

14. Is it not to be presumed that children who are reared by Christian parents will obey the Lord when they get old enough?

That does not necessarily follow. God said, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isaiah 1:2) and I do not think that earthly parents are any better than God. The fact that God’s children rebelled against him is no reflection against the way in which he nourished and brought them up. We need to be careful in assuming that a profligate child is always a reflection against the parents, lest we reflect against the fatherhood of God.

15. If a man had one or more children, under subjection, yet none were old enough to become Christians, I take it you would ordain him as elder.

Of course, that is not the only qualification. But if a man was fully qualified otherwise, and his children were under subjection and obedient to his discipline, I would appoint him as elder, if the congregation selected him. The qualification is not

the ability to get your children into the church, as desirable as that may be, but to govern and control the family circle. I know a man who reared his family in a denominational influence, and they were always very close as a family. All became members of the denomination. When the father was somewhat advanced in years, he and his wife became convinced that denominationalism was wrong, and obeyed the pure gospel. The children, all being married, would not leave the denomination in which they were reared. But this faithful, godly man could qualify as a bishop over the flock of God.

(NOTE: This will conclude for the time being, discussions on the eldership. The series on “Fellowship” will begin in the next issue, and to it will be given the space previously allotted to the discussion we now close.)

What Is Heresy?

Mission Messenger (December 1957)

Volume 19

[Abstract]

I have a letter which I want to share with my readers, mainly because it affords me an opportunity for voicing certain convictions which I feel need to be stated.

We have been awaiting arrival of your book on “The Kingdom” in the hope that it may help us in our situation. We have a man in the congregation who holds the premillennial doctrine. He has discussed his views with a number of us, but has never caused any trouble in the church. He is a fine person and has a good family, all having the respect of outsiders. But the preacher who held our meeting last year found out that this man was a pre-millennialist, and he preached three nights on the subject, and warned us to get rid of this man because he held a dangerous heresy. The church is quite disturbed about the matter.

My book “The Kingdom of the Messiah” will probably not help. It is not intended to be a disciplinary manual for congregations. Only the word of God can occupy that position, and it has been here all of the time. My treatise will simply set forth what I think God’s word teaches. It will be my humble effort to explain what I understand the Holy Spirit to advocate relative to numerous issues. In regard to the millennium, it will establish that I do not hold the view that our Lord will return to earth and reign here a thousand years. I give the reasoning by

which I reach that conclusion.

But this book is not a handbook for a post-millennial party among God's children. It is not intended to urge brethren to take the criminal action of driving out into the cold those who hold a divergent view. I have worked in close harmony all my life with those who are of pre-millennial persuasion. They never forced their views upon me, and I never set up my own as a test of fellowship. We realized that Jesus was greater than any of our theories about His coming, and we were content to allow Him to show in His own good time which view was right, and we believed that He would gather us both into whatever state He had prepared for us.

Most of the problems relating to fellowship are created by preachers who get out of their place and become lawmakers and creed designers. The spirit of the clergy is to rule, dominate and domineer. That spirit can brook no interference; and tolerate no trifling with its edicts. The seminaries of "The Church of Christ" are grinding out a professional clergy and these men must hold their exalted position by forcing others to conform. Woe to the independent thinker who will not bow the knee, or who calls for evidence beyond the authoritarian dogma of the preacher. He will be hounded out into the cold, misrepresented, mistreated and maligned.

In the case mentioned in this letter, the brother who holds the pre-millennial view is not the heretic at all! I think he is wrong in his concept, and his interpretation of the scriptural teaching is all askew. But it is the preacher who is the heretic! Heresy, as that term is used in the New Testament, is not the holding of an opinion, either true or false. Neither is it the mere advocacy or expression of such an opinion. A man can be in error and not be a heretic; he can be a heretic in conjunction with the truth. The general idea as to heresy, held by most of my brethren, originated with Rome in her attempt to subjugate the world to papal tyranny. She planted the seed that heresy consists

of an opinion held in opposition to the orthodox view, and upon the basis of this false definition shed the blood of thousands of dissenters. Moreover, the acceptance of this theory by Protestants has caused the innumerable divisions that exist, and has even fractured and splintered the glorious restoration movement into bitter, wrangling partisans, whose attitude belies the expression of their noble ideals.

I have long known that the Holy Spirit gives no sanction to this distorted view which was enforced by the stake, rack and strangling cord in days gone by; but in these more refined days is enforced by the “gentler” methods of boycott, false propaganda, malicious whispering, malignant rumor, and downright lying. Heresy is the party spirit! A heretic is one who seeks to build a party around his view to the division of the children of God. A post-millennial *party* is as sinful as a pre-millennial party. I want nothing to do with either! I do not accept a man *as a brother* on the basis that he agrees with my interpretation of Revelation 20, but because we both have the same Father. Then I shall not reject him as a brother because he disagrees with my interpretation of Revelation 20. That is not my creed!

Mind you, I think the pre-millennial theory of interpretation is wrong. I believe that it is a warped and twisted view. But I do not encourage putting people “out of the fellowship” who have a physical deformity— a crooked foot, a twisted arm, or a slanted eye. Then why should I want to “disfellowship” those whose mental image may be slanted, or whose ideas may be out of line with mine? I would as soon think of casting out a brother for physical astigmatism as for mental. Do you say he cannot help the first? What makes you think, in view of his past training, environment, culture, prejudice and influence, that he can escape the second, without help? If I see a brother whose foot turns out at an angle and who cannot follow exactly in my tracks, shall I jump on him, pummel and berate him, or shall I put his foot in an iron vise and get others to help

me twist and pull in order to force him to walk like I do? Would it not be better for me to lead him to a specialist and help him secure proper treatment? For the same reason, I will not drive out my brethren, but will try to lead them to the Great Physician and Surgeon of the soul. It may be while I am there he can straighten me out also. Most of us could stand some adjustment!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1958)

Volume 20

Thoughts on Fellowship

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Thoughts on Fellowship (1)

Mission Messenger (January 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

The church of God at Corinth consisted of called saints, those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus (1:2). The state or condition to which they were called by God, is expressed by the term “*the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.*” To this state they attained through the “**grace of God which is given by Jesus Christ**” (1:4). Because they were called into such a state they were to avoid all schisms among themselves (1:10). Being bound by a common tie, they were to avoid those things which would disrupt the community. They were to “**endeavor to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**” (Eph. 4:3). By this means they would “**walk worthy of the calling wherewith they were called.**”

What is involved in “the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord”? How do we attain unto it? Who are participants in it? How do they remain in it? What action will separate them from this state? Surely these are matters of grave importance, and should challenge the thinking of every person on earth who believes that there is a God, and that Jesus Christ is his Son, and our Savior. The state of fellowship represents a complete change of relationship. The prior condition is described as “being alienated from the life of God.” The new state is described as one

of sonship, in which the participant is “an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7). From a state in which there was no sharing of the blessings of God, a transformation takes place in which the one who is called becomes a sharer of the divine bounty as a son.

It is our conviction that the community of saints in Christ Jesus is the earthly culmination of that eternal purpose which is described as “a plan for the ages to gather together in one all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The mystery of fellowship was hidden in God from the beginning of the world (Eph. 3:9). In other ages it was not made known unto the sons of men, but in this final age on earth, it was revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The purpose of this revelation was “to make all men see” (Eph. 3:9). If, then, we are to see the truth upon this wonderful subject we must go to the revelation contained in the Christian scriptures. Our ideas, opinions and notions relative to fellowship mean nothing unless they coincide with God’s revelation. Our task is to ascertain from the new covenant scriptures what significance and meaning is attached to the term by the Holy Spirit.

The concept of fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, belongs to mankind only since that Son came in the flesh. This is abundantly clear to the student of the first epistle of John. Judaism provided an elaborate system of rules and ceremonies by which its adherents were kept apart from God, each other, and the world about them. The keynote was struck at the foot of Sinai, when their constitution was to be announced. Bounds were placed about the mountain so that the people might not come near. The threat of death was held over the Israelites. They were literally fenced off from God. The ritualism of the law maintained barriers between the people and God. The Almighty communed with them from the thick darkness of the most holy place. He was separated from them by a thick veil.

The temple had its court of Gentiles, and across its barrier no Gentile dared step to mingle with “the chosen race.” There

was the court of women with its partition enclosing it, and there were separate precincts for Levites, priests and high priest. Much instruction was given to enable the people to keep in their proper places, separated and segregated. They dare not study how they might come together; they had rather to exercise diligence to keep apart.

The death of the Messiah marked the end of this state by a startling symbol. As he expired, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mark 15:38). The significance of this is graphically depicted by the writer of the Hebrew letter. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19-22). The boldness and full assurance which is ours should be contrasted with the excessive fear and trembling at Sinai (Heb. 12:21). Then the command was "Draw not nigh!" Now the invitation is "Let us draw near!"

The death of Jesus not only established a nearness of the people to God expressed by his language, "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you" (2 Cor. 6:17, 18), but it also removed barriers which separated men from their fellows. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . . that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:14, 16). It is worthy of note that the work of achieving unity is not credited to man. That is the work of Jesus. He made both one. He broke down the barrier of separation. He abolished in his flesh the enmity. He made in himself of two one new man. He reconciled both unto God in one body. He came and preached peace. It is through him we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. "*Therefore . . . ye are fellow citizens with the saints*" (Eph. 2:19). Not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done. The unity is achieved by the Spirit.

It is called “the fellowship *of the Spirit*” (Phil 2:2). All we can do is to guard and maintain that “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Any person who erects a wall of partition to divide, separate and segregate brethren, regardless of what that wall may be, thereby opposes the work of God’s Son and does despite to the Spirit of grace!

The temple with its sacerdotal orders and its ritual pageantry is gone. It “stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). What has taken the place of these things since Jesus has entered “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24)? My answer is that the *koinonia*, the fellowship of God, through the Spirit, has displaced the ceremonies and rules of the Mosaic dispensation. These things “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. 9:9). There was an impenetrable barrier between the person and his God, for “the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.”

What a change has been wrought by grace! The veil has been rent! We have access unto the Father by one Spirit. I need not climb a sacred mountain nor make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to feel a closeness with God. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” My body is a temple. My heart is a most holy place. God dwells in me, even as I dwell in Him. We mutually come closer together. “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). “Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16). This fragile structure of clay houses the Deity. The symbol of God’s presence in the tabernacle was the Shekinah, visible as a cloud or pillar of fire. The Holy Spirit rests upon us as the cloud did upon the tabernacle in the wilderness.

“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21, 22). A holy temple! A habitation for God! “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own” (1 Cor. 6:19)? “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Cor. 3:16)? What a transformation! In other days men had to go up to God. “Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God” (Exo. 23:17). Now God has appeared unto us. He dwells in us and walks in us, not at stated seasons, but every hour of every day. How foolish, therefore, for men to talk about sacred seasons and holy days. There are no special sacred places and no special sacred days. Under the old regime nothing was counted sacred unless it was fenced off from the profane on every side; under the new order all that God has made is sacred, and nothing is profane except for one who defiles it by his sinful attitude. “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:26).

Fellowship has to do with sharing. It can never be divorced from this idea. Through grace Jesus shared our lot. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb. 2:14). “He emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). The Christian life is a shared response to God called forth by the gift of God of which we have been made partakers. We are made partakers of Christ through the gospel. Our obedience to the demands of the gospel, introduces us into that state or condition called fellowship with God. We are in fellowship with each other only because we sustain the same relationship to Him. We cannot create that state, nor is it left to us to invent the terms by which we enter it. We are called unto it by the Father.

1. Fellowship with God is not contingent upon a perfect knowledge of the divine revelation.

2. It is not contingent upon attainment to a life of sinless perfection.

3. It is not contingent upon an ability to explain or expound every point of doctrine.

It is contingent upon a complete surrender of self to the Christ, and a willingness to follow as he leads. On the divine side, fellowship is a union with and a participation in the life of Christ through the Spirit; on the human side it is a communion with brethren whose mutual relations were transformed by the Spirit.

(This is the first of a series of essays on the subject of fellowship which will be presented each month through this year. The editor humbly requests your careful consideration of these articles and will welcome criticism and correction in harmony with the divine revelation.)

Church Autonomy

Mission Messenger (January 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The divine wisdom in making each congregation of saints autonomous, that is, self-governing, is apparent to every student of history. In the plan of heaven there is no provision for a super-organization, nor sanction for diocesan control. The language used in describing the responsibility of the church indicates that such responsibility is laid upon every congregation according to its ability. The only officers appointed are those over local units (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). One congregation cannot discipline or direct another; one cannot regulate or intrude upon the affairs of another. There is no organization larger than a local congregation under its chosen bishops empowered to discharge the work of the king.

An understanding of this great principle will effectively forbid a surrender of rights and privileges on the one hand, and operate to offset wholesale apostasy upon the other. No man is justified in relegating a divinely given obligation to another man, no congregation can be justified in delegating its obligation to another congregation. Both such transfers may find the work accomplished by proxy, but both will incur the wrath of God. It is not enough that good is being done in the world, but it must be done by those upon whom God has laid the burden of the task.

One of the attributes of usurped power is that it always seeks to increase the area of its dominance. It will not remain

static when wrongly acquired. The elders who surrender their work and authority even in a minute degree to a hired pulpiteer will soon find themselves displaced altogether. The congregation which assigns its legitimate functions to another congregation, or to a coalition of congregations, will soon find itself in the intolerable state of "taxation without representation." The organization which assumes the prerogatives belonging to another, and the congregation which divests itself of its proper rights, are both guilty of violating the constitution of heaven. Unlawful seizure and usurpation are no more reprehensible than abandonment and renunciation of heaven-ordained work.

Men are never satisfied with simplicity in government. They must tamper, meddle and experiment with it until it becomes complex and top-heavy and eventually crushes that which it was designed to preserve and protect. The Church of Rome with its hierarchy cracking the whip of despotism over the personal and intimate relationships of its helpless and supine subjects is an example of what happens when congregations barter away their functions. It is for that reason we should regard with concern every infringement upon congregational autonomy, regardless of how innocent it may be in its inception. The hole in the dike may be the portent of an inundation which will destroy all we hold dear.

In many sections of the southland "preacher's meetings" are a regular feature. The clergymen of "The Church of Christ" meet for luncheon one day per week at some hotel. In such meetings current problems of "the brotherhood" are frequently discussed. It may be argued that it is a harmless thing for brethren to meet and talk about matters which trouble Zion. But when it is recalled that those present are the official mouthpieces of congregations, that they have a direct pipeline to the minds of the membership through their control of the pulpits, and that they operate as political pressure groups to enforce conformity, and that any person who dares to cross them is castigated and driven out of the synagogue, it can readily be seen what a threat

is posed by those whose livelihood depends upon their staying in office. In national political conventions, the party choice is often made in a smoke-filled hotel room behind the scenes, and the rest of the delegates become stooges whose only service is to ratify that choice during the roll-call. Who will deny that in many places today the course of procedure is decided in a hotel dining room, and the congregation must endorse it without question or be brow-beaten into submission.

In these days of rapid transportation it has become popular to arrange for large gatherings at some central location when holidays make it possible for many to attend. Such occasions provide unexcelled opportunity for fellowship, mutual teaching and discussion, and spiritual sharing. But there is always a grave danger when there is a great accumulation of talent, wealth or power in any place. There is ever a tendency upon the part of those present to feel that they “represent” the brotherhood of disciples. Those who speak may do so dogmatically, telling others what position they must take on current issues, and those who attend may return home and try to bind upon those who were not present, the ideas they received. This is sectarianism. God has provided for no delegate conventions to regulate his church.

Editors occasionally seize power and attempt to subjugate the church to their plans and programs. Careless and indifferent members prefer to let another do their thinking and often regard a paper as a “brotherhood organ.” The editor is exalted to the position of “oracle” and his pronouncements become law. He debars from his column those who differ and funnels a one-sided propaganda to the readers. This is the essence of popery and smacks of the thought control and brainwashing of Romanism. There is no such thing as a “brotherhood paper.”

It is not the function of one congregation to discipline the members of another. The elders of one congregation cannot exclude the elders of another. One congregation cannot

disfellowship another congregation. There is no headquarters on earth for the church of our God and the elders are to oversee only those “among them.” That is the extent of their jurisdiction. When they go beyond that they are usurpers.

If the elders of a local congregation believe that error threatens the flock of which they are superintendents, they can instruct and warn them, but they cannot summon a meeting of delegates from other congregations to discuss and decide brotherhood policy with a view to binding a course of procedure or conduct upon the churches or brethren in general. They cannot create a brotherhood journal to represent the churches, nor select an editor to be the interpreter of brotherhood thought. Neither can they formulate a code or standard to which all must conform. There are no diocesan bishops, no delegate conventions, no ecumenical councils of talented men, no convocations of preachers, no consistorial and ecclesiastical courts for the trial of heretics, provided in the framework of God’s revelation.

If elders, preachers, editors, papers, and congregations, remain in their proper sphere, the church of God will move forward in glorious triumph. Let us remember that the smallest congregation of saints in a remote area is as great in heaven’s sight as the largest in a metropolitan center. The worth and dignity of each individual must be cherished, the rights of the local congregation must be protected. Then we will be free from creedalism and lordship of men!

Big Preachers

Mission Messenger (January 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Burton Coffman is the spark plug of the big promotional scheme to raise a million dollars to erect a church building seating 500 in New York. In the November 19 issue of *Firm Foundation*, he gives us an insight to the current thinking of the denominational “Church of Christ.” That thinking centers around big preachers, big drives, big programs and big money! Read this:

What would happen if these men, sometimes called ‘big preachers’ were to give up their positions and go to some weak and distant post to establish the work? Who would replace them? . . . Few people realize what a load rests upon the shoulders of a man preaching for a big congregation. The congregation is often in large measure the result of his excellent talents and consecration in the work of the Lord. The large congregation is not built up in the first place nor does it long continue without the ability and energies of a man in the pulpit who is truly ‘big’ enough to lead them into ever greater and greater paths of usefulness in the Master’s service.

I doubt that Burton needs to worry about the *big preachers* going to some weak and distant post. There is only one thing that would move them, and that’s a *big raise* in salary. Take the lucre out of religion and you’ll soon be looking for a replacement. But the above statement is a forthright admission that the big

churches are built around a clergyman rather than the Christ. The pulpit, unknown in the primitive congregation of saints, is a stage for the dramatic performance of a trained professional. When the entertainment ceases and the show ends its run, the congregation “does not long continue.” The attendants do not want to watch a stage-hand or a second-rate performer.

Then, may we keep these big men where they belong and where they are doing so much good stoking the furnace of the great powerhouses supplying the energy for so much of the church’s mission work today.

If you interpret this clerical terminology, you’ll find Bro. Coffman is really talking about *raising money*! “Stoking the furnace” means turning on the heat in a big financial drive like “Million for Manhattan.” “The great powerhouses” are congregations made up of oil magnates and cattle barons. “Supplying the energy” is pledging a fist full of greenbacks to help a huge promotional scheme. The clergy always employs double-talk and gobbledygook! Look that up in your dictionary! What they mean is *more money*! Bro. Coffman identifies a bunch of big preachers.

Men like John Banister, Cleon Lyles, Batsell Baxter, George Stephenson, George Bailey, Clifton Rogers, Leroy Brownlow, Clyde Hale, John Smithson, Melvin Wise, Ralph Russell, Harrison Matthews, Paul McClung, Ray Chester . . . their name is Legion.

You’ll recall that this was also the name of the demons which entered the two thousand hogs, and these were stampeded into a big drive, and ran violently down the steep slope into the sea. They also made a *big splash*!

Religion of Fact

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

The system of religion which God has proposed for the age of the reign of the Messiah is eminently adapted to secure the end for which it was revealed. Its purpose is thus stated by the apostle, "He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him" (Eph. 1:9, 10). His will has been made known as a plan. The purpose of that plan is to unite all things. We take it that the expression "all things" refers to men as intelligent beings, for the same writer declares it was his obligation "to make *all men* see what is the plan" (Eph. 3:9). Since no plan for unity would be required by those who were already united, it follows that the plan of heaven was adapted to those who were out of harmony with God and each other.

An investigation of that plan will show its superiority over every other religion and demonstrate its divine origin. God is the author of the human mind and the creator of the intellect. He can appreciate the scope and range of human thought and reason. He did not organize our minds alike any more than he arranged our facial features all alike. Men cannot think alike any more than they can look alike. It is impossible for all of them to entertain the same opinions. If they did, they would all seek the same employment and there would only be one universal vocation. The world would not function long if

imagination and rationalization were forcibly funneled into one rut.

In spite of this, every system of religion devised by man has been founded upon opinion. This is one of the trademarks of human religions. They are all religions of opinion. For that reason they are all calculated to divide rather than to unite men. The sectarian divisions are the logical fruits of such religions. They cannot help but divide for the germ of division is in the seed from which they all sprung. The first great cleavage from simple Christianity came upon the basis of opinion. Every other sect since has sprung from the same source, an attempt to confine the opinions and imaginations of men behind creedal barriers.

The religion of heaven is a religion founded upon facts. These are but statements of acts, of deeds done in our behalf. They are commended unto us by testimony, and upon the basis of that testimony we believe. Faith is the belief of testimony. And because the Father had mercy upon frail creatures steeped in ignorance and sin, and because, in His grace, He desired the salvation of even the lowliest in intellectual attainment and ability, He hinged our salvation not upon an understanding of abstract propositions, nor upon a complex and intricate philosophy or system of doctrine, but upon one fact, and only one— that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This is the foundation of the Christian religion, and one who was commissioned, like a skilled master builder, to lay that foundation, declared, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Any man who believes that fact and proves his belief by the one test of faith— immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus— is admitted into the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

In the Christian religion men dare not make opinions tests of fellowship. On this point the revelation of God is clear. “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for

disputes over opinions” (Rom. 14:1). The reason is clear. One man in Christ believes one thing, while another disagrees (verse 2). But God welcomes them both (verse 3). One man esteems a certain thing highly, another makes no distinction. Neither is to pass judgment on the other (verse 13). God recognizes that we cannot and will not entertain the same opinions, and His revealed religion takes this into account, and provides for a unity in diversity as relates to such matters.

His interest in this regard is that men not bind these opinions upon others as bases of union, for any attempt to do so will rend and divide. Therefore, such opinions are to be kept between a man and God, lest in his insistence that others conform, he destroy the work of God (verse 20). The plan for the ages is to “unite all things” but it does not include in the unity desired an absolute agreement upon opinions. In this area there is liberty. The unity here is an undivided belief that men are free where God permits liberty. “The unity of the Spirit” embraces seven planks in its platform, every one of which expresses a divine oneness (Eph. 4:4-6). It is ignorance of God’s will and plan which has plagued the ranks of professed restorationists and shattered them into bitter splinter parties.

But we will be asked to explain such passages as 1 Corinthians 1:10. “I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” Whatever this means it cannot mean that it was an absolute necessity to agree upon all opinions, for in this realm the apostle recognized there could be legitimate differences. Neither can it refer to matters of personal judgment unless Paul was guilty of advocating one thing and lapsing into contradictory conduct, for there was a sharp contention between Barnabas and himself “so that they separated from each other” (Acts 15:39). Nor can it refer to perfect knowledge and equal attainment of perception. “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the

same thing” (Phil. 3:16).

The context shows that the thing Paul was condemning in Corinth was the party spirit. He declares, “What I mean is that each one of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’” Please note that it is just as sinful to call *a party* by the name of Christ for the purpose of segregating it from other believers, as to call it by the name of Cephas or Paul. To designate a party in Christendom as “The Church of Christ” with the motive of separating it from other children of God, is as wrong as to call one after the name of Paul for the same reason. The party spirit is not rendered sinless by calling over it the name of the sinless one.

Paul was condemning the laying of other foundations and boasting of men (3:21). These defeat the eternal purpose of God. They give the impression Christ is divided. On the testimony of God (1 Cor. 2:1) there should be agreement and unanimity. “The same mind and the same judgment” is a phrase opposed to “dissensions” in the passage under discussion. This word is from SCHISMA, which means “a rent, or tear.” The fabric of Christian fellowship is to be kept intact, rather than torn or rent by partisan strife.

There is a diversity in the minds of those who compose the church of God. Some are highly cultivated, some are limited in ability, as evidenced by Matthew 25:15. Some are quick to perceive, some are slow and deliberate. In some the faculty of retentiveness is very acute, in others it is not. The environments, educational opportunities, circumstances of rearing, and local influences, are different, and all of these modify our individual thinking. Accordingly, men differ in every department and phase of life: science, jurisprudence, medicine, psychology, and agriculture, to mention but a few. It is by virtue of such differences of opinion that research is stimulated and constantly carried on. We learn forbearance and tolerance as a result of our divergencies of opinion, and thus we develop a sense of

social consciousness.

But we can rejoice and be thankful that in a world of marvelous variety, distinction, and disparity of views in the physical and mental spheres, God has ordained and revealed a religion founded upon facts, testimony and faith. The unity upon these, upon the part of those who are in the Christ, enables them to be united in enjoyment of those opinions which are not destructive nor detrimental to the planks in the platform of the Spirit, and which will not subvert the brethren. This, to our humble way of thinking, is proof undeniable and incontestable, of the divine origin of the Christian religion which we cherish as the means of bringing peace to a disordered world. We see no other hope.

Thoughts on Fellowship (2)

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

The word “fellowship” is generally from the Greek *koinonia*. This word is rendered fellowship 12 times, communion 4, communication 1, contribution 1, distribution 1, to communicate 1. Actually the term *koinonia* has such varied aspects that no single English word is adequate to express them all. It is a derivative of *koinos*, the word for common. “Common” has two different meanings in the Greek and English. It can refer to that which is jointly held by a large group, and it is in this respect that Jude speaks of “the common salvation.” It can also refer to that which is commonplace and vulgar as contrasted with that which is rare and distinguished. In this sense, it came to be applied to that which was unhallowed or not ceremonially clean (Cp. Acts 10:14, 15). This is comparable to the word “profane” from the Latin. This last word simply refers to that which was *pro fanum*, that is, left outside the temple or sanctuary, and thus not consecrated. We speak of “profane history” in contrast with the history of God’s kingdom.

The basic definition of *koinonia* as given by Thayer, is: “Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse.” In its application to the New Testament usage, he divides it into three parts: (1) The share which one has in anything, participation; (2) intercourse, fellowship, intimacy; (3) a benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution. It is interesting to note that this last is

a use unknown to profane authors. It is an acquired meaning given only by the New Testament writers, and even though Thayer defines *koinonia* as “a collection, a contribution,” he adds, “as exhibiting an embodiment or proof of fellowship.” Actually, the gift or benefaction is not the *koinonia* at all, as we shall later demonstrate. It is a manifestation of it. The *koinonia* (fellowship) is already existent and prompts the gift. We shall learn that for Christians, the only genuine riches we have are those which we share in the Christ, and we supply the bodily needs of each other because we all alike are redeemed and in Him. The sharing of earthly goods is a spontaneous expression of our sharing in the divine wealth.

The word “fellow” came into our language from the Old Norse term for a comrade or associate. The suffix “ship” is Anglo-Saxon in origin and is generally found in connection with nouns denoting persons. It relates to a state or condition in which such persons move. We speak of friendship, partnership, and sonship.

Ignorance of this fact prompts many to use rather ridiculous expressions. Indicative of these are some which come from various segments of the disciple brotherhood. Men write and ask me if I *fellowship* cups, classes, fermented wine, colleges, orphan homes or instrumental music. I would like for someone to tell me how one would do so.

One of the most tragic misconceptions is based on the idea that fellowship is synonymous with, or equivalent to, endorsement of everything the other “fellow” may hold or advocate. In any final analysis this must lead to the conclusion that no two persons could ever be in fellowship until they both reach perfect knowledge and complete agreement upon every minute detail. The folly of such a view can easily be detected by any thinking person. We do not make other kindred terms subject to such unreasonable interpretation. Can *friendship* exist between those who do not agree upon all issues. Can a

partnership exist between persons who are unequal in knowledge and attainment, and who possess divergent views? Certainly there are many close friends who disagree upon some matters, and many partners who associate in business in spite of divergent opinions.

We are to be in fellowship “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Does this mean that God does not accept us into fellowship until our understanding of all things is equal to his divine knowledge? If so, how can we “*grow in grace and knowledge of the truth*” after we come into the Christ? Now, if God being perfect, can fellowship us in our ignorance and imperfection, why do we set up a standard for others which he did not set up for us? If it be argued that John meant only the apostles were in fellowship with the Father and the Son, the difficulty is not lessened. Was Peter in the fellowship of Christ from Pentecost to the time of his vision on the housetop at Joppa? Certainly he did not realize that God had removed the restrictions upon eating of meats and zealously followed the ceremonial regime of Judaism. Nor did he previously grasp the great truth that “God is no respecter of persons.” If he could be in the fellowship until he learned these truths, may not others be in the same fellowship, while learning the truth more perfectly?

The fact is that the fellowship of the new covenant is not based upon unanimity of opinion, interpretation, or even understanding of scriptural doctrine. It does not imply nor indicate endorsement of the position of one with whom we may differ. Fellowship is one thing; endorsement of the position taken by another is a wholly different thing. Fellowship of Christ, and in Christ, is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel; endorsement of an interpretation or idea of one in or out of that fellowship is a rational act of our own minds. It is the jumbled, mixed-up thinking on this point that has created the factionalism, partisan spirit, and sectarianism, so rife among the heirs of the restoration movement.

Not long ago I attended a meeting conducted by a young brother. He announced in the paper that he would hold a “gospel meeting.” His “gospel” consisted of informing the partisans who were present that grouping of students in classes to study the sacred oracles of God was a tool of hell and an instrument of Satan. This was the Good News of salvation! After the meeting I introduced myself to him, and he in turn introduced me to several about him. He was careful each time to say “*Mister* Ketcherside.” As I spoke to each, I addressed him as “brother.” During what he referred to as his “sermon” the speaker alluded to “the brotherhood” several times. I asked him if he counted me as a member of it, and if not, to tell me what I would have to do that I had not already done to become a part of it. He was hesitant to commit himself on either count.

Later, at my urgent invitation, he attended a service where I was speaking. I mentioned my joy at his presence and requested him to lead in prayer. He shook his head in refusal. Afterwards he told me that he could not “fellowship” me because I did not oppose Bible classes, and he was afraid if he prayed to God at my request, it would consist of “fellowship.” I felt sorry for him, for I grew up in the same kind of bigoted and partisan environment. I can recall how we used to discuss whether it was right to call a man “brother” who disagreed with us on colleges, orphan homes, classes, cups, instrumental music, or the millennial theory. I was afraid to call upon a man to pray who was not of “our group,” for I realized what “the brotherhood” would do to me if they found it out. I have recently very carefully scrutinized my heart on all of these controversial issues. I find that I have not changed my position on a single one of them. I am stronger than ever in my previous convictions on most of them. But I am no longer afraid of what men will do unto me! I refuse to be the mouthpiece of a faction, or the cat’s paw of a clique! I want to belong unto the Lord and bow to Him only!

I have learned that those who differ with me on these

issues are my brethren, because of their relationship to the family, or household of God. We have the same Father, and Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all. Every baptized penitent believer on this earth is my brother, and we are in *fellowship* because we are a part of the *brotherhood* of Christ. I do not agree on much with most of them, and do not fully agree with any of them, but fellowship in God is one thing, and perfect agreement is a wholly different thing. My father had six children, and they often differed with each other and even with the parents, but it never once occurred to me to deny they were my brothers and sisters because we argued loud and long. We were brothers not because of what we had done but because we were introduced by birth into a family state or relationship. The relationship into which we are introduced by the new birth *is the fellowship* of the new covenant. We have been in fellowship with a lot more people than we ever realized, or even yet realize. I am in fellowship with every saved person on this earth, that is, if I am saved!

Every person who has received Christ Jesus, and thus has been born of the water and of the Spirit, who has experienced the riches of the glory of God's mystery "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory," is in the fellowship. They are *partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light, having been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Messiah. Having been called into the kingdom and glory of God, and having been sealed by the Holy Spirit they are in *communion* with God and with every other person on earth who has been born again. They are the beneficiaries of the grace of our Lord, of the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

When the apostle wrote to Corinth he told them they had been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. They were torn by partisan strife, tolerant of immorality, intolerant of the scruples of the brethren, impleading each other in heathen courts, and even so factious they would not eat the love feast

together. He was fearful of coming among them lest he find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder. Yet he did not tell “the faithful” to go and start a “loyal” congregation! He did not even intimate that he would split them and take out a group when he arrived. He asked, “Do you not know that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you fail to meet the test” (2 Cor. 13:5). What was the test? Was it an attitude as to classes for Bible study, individual cups, fermented wine, unleavened bread, orphan homes, etc.? These are tests which men have concocted to shatter and split into factious groups those who are in the fellowship.

God devised no such tests. Jesus Christ can be in men, who in their weakness and ignorance, differ in opinion as to these things. Paul said “What we pray for is your improvement” (2 Cor. 13:9). *Not once in all of the divine revelation of God was a congregation of believers advised to split or separate! Not once was a group of believers told to come out from, or separate themselves from among the believers. If so, where is the place?* Paul did not advise the congregation at Corinth to divide. He did not advise the establishment of two “Churches of Christ” in Corinth— one a “heathen courts congregation” and the other an “anti-heathen courts congregation.” Here is what he wrote: “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” Never in the checkered history of the saints has this exhortation been needed more than at present. Every word needs to burn and sear our hearts until “we put no obstacle in any one’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry” (2 Cor. 6:3). The Christian life is difficult enough in these days without adding an extra burden of hate and animosity kindled by the factious spirit. Let us labor for unity!

The Thing That Counts

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

Our regular readers are aware of our conviction that the Lord Jesus has not regulated whether we shall use leavened or unleavened bread, fermented or unfermented wine, in observance of the memorial feast, the Lord's Supper. We do not hold that our *communion* of the body and blood is dependent upon how the loaf is broken or distributed, or whether one container or many are employed in the distribution of the drink element. We are content to allow each congregation of saints to determine these things for itself, and we will sit down at the table with them in thankfulness that we may enjoy the occasion of breaking bread in their company.

There is, however, another side to the issue. Not all of my brethren share my views. Some cannot conscientiously regard these matters as I do. They have scruples against certain things, as for instance, the use of multiple cups. What shall be my attitude toward them? Suppose that I proclaim the Good News in a place and band together a group of immersed believers, and when the time comes to determine the order of our corporate worship procedure, one of these humble saints files an objection to the use of individual cups, and asks that the congregation employ but one container. Shall I ruthlessly disregard his feelings, ridicule him for his position, and demand individual cups be used regardless of consequences?

To act in such a manner would be to violate every principle of our relationship in the Christ, and would make my observance of the Lord's Supper a hollow mockery. Is that Supper not an overt and public expression of fellowship? Then how can I pretend to fellowship the Christ and His disciples when I crush the heart of one of the redeemed ones over a matter which I regard as immaterial and indifferent? Is not love the seal of perfection? Do I walk in love when I grieve my brother in such a fashion? "If your brother is being injured . . . you are no longer walking in love" (Rom. 14:15).

The apostle Paul said, "Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died." He further declared, "Do not for the sake of food, destroy the work of God." But he also said, "Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:12). I admit that Paul was not dealing with our modern problems, but will not the same principle apply? The salvation of a brother was worth more than food. The work of God was incomparably greater than having one's way about what he ate. Is it not also greater than the method of passing the fruit of the vine? If I force a child of God from the table of the Master, and drive him out into the cold by my insistence on having my way regardless of his feelings and compunctions, do I not sin against him, and in doing so, sin against the Christ?

I may excuse my harshness and pitilessness by reasoning that he is weak and unworthy of attention. But the word of God declares, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, *and not to please ourselves*; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him" (Rom. 15:1, 2). What good will it do to boast of correct doctrine and practice, if I callously disregard the injunction, "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor"? The law of God is rightly obeyed only when it is observed in an atmosphere of love. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

I do not intend to set up my opinions regarding the method of serving the Lord's Supper as a law to be bound upon my brethren. The fellowship symbolized is infinitely greater to me than the details of serving. I shall look beyond the mere physical aspects to the purpose of the feast. But I hold no brief for those who profess a loyalty to the King and treat His humble servants as dust under their feet. "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

Is It New Doctrine?

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

It is a matter of concern to every sincere thinker to know that the spirit of restoration has for a good many years become congealed and stagnated, with the result that little has been done to continue the noble efforts launched by such worthy men as Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and others. In truth, much of the real gains made by them in their attacks upon the citadels of sectism, has been lost, and as it has always happened in previous reformations, the sons of the pioneers have allowed themselves to grow into an exclusive and bigoted party, which has, in turn, fractured into numerous splinters over the opinions of leaders. We need to restore the restoration. To do that, means that someone, rising above the narrow partisan confines, must catch a vision of the land yet to be captured, and inspire and encourage brethren to begin anew the task which has been forsaken.

Any one who furnishes such leadership must be thoroughly immune to discouragement, and able to withstand the maligning of friends and brethren, for no one is more despised by sectaries than a man who refuses to be one. His very plea is a condemnation of their practice, and their minds will turn to means of ridding themselves of him rather than of their unchristian and uncharitable attitudes. No reformer ever attempted to call any people back to the *old paths* who was not charged with advocating *new doctrines*. Truth long hidden

always appears new to those who see it exposed for the first time.

As an illustration of what we mean, we mention our personal conviction that there may be children of God scattered among the various sects today. Since all children of God are born of the same Father whom we claim, we recognize them as our brethren, regardless of the mistakes in reasoning of which they are now guilty. We conceive that our task is to point out to them the fatal danger of continuing in human parties. We do not paganize them, nor do we seek to re-immense those who have been immersed as a result of their faith in the Christ. By some partisan souls this is designated “a new doctrine.” In thus branding it they manifest an ignorance of the Bible and of the history of the restoration movement.

We recognize no uninspired man as our authority in matters of religion. But we can certainly refer to the position of those gone before to refute the charge that what we advocate is something new, and I unhesitatingly affirm that in the matter under discussion I stand with such worthies as Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Moses E. Lard, Benjamin Franklin, David Lipscomb, Daniel Sommer, et al. If my position is “new” it is not nearly so “new” as it was when they advanced it. If holding such a position is “modernism” then these men were all modernists. It might do the brethren good to read what some of them thought and said.

Concerning the projection of the restoration movement, Alexander Campbell wrote:

A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolations and joys— the holiness and happiness— of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union— upon having a ‘*thus saith the Lord,*’ either in express terms

or approved precedent ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.’

Moses E. Lard, writing in his quarterly for March 1864, and dealing with the subject “Have We Become a Sect?” has this to say about those in sects:

Against the individual members of these parties we cannot have even one unkind feeling. Many of them we regard as true Christians, and love them sincerely. But as long as they occupy a place in bodies holding traditional and other unsanctioned tenets, holding practices unknown to the Bible, and supporting humanly imposed names, we must tell them plainly that they stand on apostate ground.

Most of our readers will have learned that it was Thomas Campbell who wrote the *Declaration and Address*, which helped to launch the restoration movement. This was addressed to the Christians in all of the existing sects. That our interpretation of the document is correct, we will prove by a statement of its author, who wrote 35 years later in these words:

We speak to all our Christian brethren, however diversified by professional epithets, those accidental distinctions which have unhappily and unscripturally diversified the professing world. By our Christian brethren, then, we mean the very same description of character addressed in our Declaration published at Washington, Pa., in the year 1809— namely, ‘All that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout the churches.’ If there were none such at that time throughout the churches, then Christianity was dead and gone. And if there be none such at present within the same limits, it still continues extinct.

Among the outstanding writers in the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1862, none was more illustrious than George W. Elley, who wrote:

That there are many Christians among the sects, I have never doubted; and that there are also many thousands among them who are pious, but not Christians, in Bible teaching, I do not deny. The brethren have uniformly said, that we receive from among the sects all the immersed who have piety, and that to such we give the bread and wine, and this not upon the score of our will, but that of our Lord. We urge fellowship, or communion, with all such as are entitled to membership in the house of God, and to none others.

In the same year, Benjamin Franklin wrote in the *American Christian Review* of which he was the editor:

There are individuals among the sects who are not sectarians, or who are more than sectarians— they are *Christians*; or persons who have believed the gospel, submitted to it, and, in spite of the leaders, been constituted Christians according to the Scriptures.

This position was not limited to the brethren in this country, but was also representative of the stand of the brethren in Great Britain. David King, wrote in the *British Millennial Harbinger*, Feb. 1, 1862, as follows:

We also recognize as in the kingdom many who are still in error upon baptism. All baptized believers who walk in love we regard as Christian brethren, though many of them hold to much error in regard to the design of baptism. Many of this class stand ‘among the sects,’ and the voice of God cries, ‘Come out of her my people.’

David Lipscomb, writing in the book *Questions Answered*, page 582, expresses his view in this fashion:

There are some in nonsectarian churches who are sectarians, who violate the laws of God in order to oppose sectarians. They are sectarians in their opposition to sectarians. There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which

they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.

Daniel Sommer, in his booklet entitled *Religious Sectism Defined, Analyzed and Exposed*, wrote thus:

What shall we say of those preachers who denounce all persons who happen to hold membership in a sectarian denomination with a sentence of sweeping impeachment, as though they were all under the influence of sectism? We should say that they are probably more sectarian than some whom they denounce. Their manner shows that they are unscripturally exclusive, and this is one of the elements of sectarianism. Should we acknowledge any of those to be Christians who are identified with sectarian churches and wear sectarian names? No, not in the full and scripture sense of the word *Christians*. In mind and heart some of them are doubtless converted to Christ, but they cannot keep the ordinances fully, nor be altogether in harmony with the gospel while they hold membership among sectarians and wear sectarian names. None of the denominations are wholly right and none of them are wholly wrong. We should admit the truth and condemn the error in each, and should admit that many among the denominations are better than their sectarian creeds. Sectarianism is bad enough, and preachers of Christ should not stain their spirits with sin by misrepresenting what is found in sectarian systems.

Our brethren have made the mistake of concluding that the restoration was finished and that we have gathered all of the sheep of God from the scattered hills into one flock on the high mountain. As a result they have become sectarian in their attitude. They have no doubt driven away as many as they have

saved. The self-righteous spirit, aided by legalism and dogmatism, has kept our plea from being heeded by real students and thinkers. It is time that we take stock of ourselves. The position occupied by many today would make them renounce as modernists brethren who lived, fought and died for the very faith we now hold.

Our Attitude

Mission Messenger (February 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

We recognize that those who read the MISSION MESSENGER in these days are seeing a different approach to the problems which confront us in the religious world. Those problems are no longer being ignored. We are striving as best we can, in our weakness, to face up to them. We feel that we must find a solution to them, or fail the generation in which we live. If we leave this world without having done anything to answer the prayer of our blessed Lord, if we leave behind us only more division and strife when we go, then we have not served the age in which we live, but have done disservice to the cross.

We do not know all of the answers! We are not big enough to achieve what we believe God wants us to accomplish. We are humbled by the fact that intellectually we cannot grasp all of the great angles which enter into the discord and division of Christendom into various sects. But we are resolved to explore the Word of God for the answer. Convinced that the solution does not lie in ill treatment of those who honestly differ, we shall pray for all, even our enemies. We will not seek to devise a plan upon which men must agree. Our views will be submitted in sincerity and with a contrite spirit. Those who differ will not be subjected to brutal attack in the paper. We will not try to undermine them. If they can accomplish the will of the Master in another and a better way, we shall thank God for them and what they do.

Our aim is to maintain an open heart and an open paper. We shall be eternally grateful to those who take the revelation of heaven and show us where we deviate from it, either in teaching or spirit. Humility is not cowardice. The meek and lowly One was not afraid. Neither are we! We do not intend to be moved by threats nor to be bribed with money. The cross of Christ is greater now than life. That cross is shattered by the littleness of men. We have sometimes in our ignorance assisted in the shattering; we shall seek to repair breaches and restore the peace of God to human hearts. We refuse to compromise; we dare not forsake the truth of heaven. But “with malice toward none; with charity toward all” we shall continue our plea for the unity of all believers in Christ and the restoration of a pure Christianity in this century in which we live.

The Party Spirit

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

“Now the works of the flesh are plain . . . strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit . . . I warn you, as I warned you before that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

The party spirit is a work of the flesh. It is here listed with other things which will debar from heaven. This alone should cause us to examine ourselves to see if we are free from its blight. We earnestly desire an entrance into the everlasting kingdom. We must be willing to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. But the party spirit is very deceptive. Those who boast the loudest about their freedom from it are often the tragic victims of its poison. How can we know if we are beset by it? We suggest a few indications of its presence.

Symptoms of Party Spirit

1. A reluctance to admit the truths held by others. Truth is truth, regardless of who holds it. The partisan is afraid to acknowledge truth held by those outside of his group for fear it will reflect favorably upon them. If he does admit truth on the part of another, he must hasten to speak deprecatingly of the person or some other position he holds. If someone remarks that Billy Graham certainly spoke the truth in his fight against evil in

a radio address, the partisan replies, “Yes, but look at all the money he gets for doing it.” If questioned as to how much Graham gets for his radio service, the partisan cannot tell you. He does not know, but he seeks to offset the fact that truth was spoken by creating suspicion against the man and his motives. No one in the group to which the partisan belongs ever preaches for money, but every person who is a member of another religious party and who speaks any truth, does so insincerely, because he knows better, and his sole object is to inflate his pride and secure filthy lucre.

2. *Inability to rejoice over the good done by others.* It seems that some would rather see men left to wallow in misery than to see others credited with helping them. They “pass by on the other side” and then revile the “Samaritans” who stop and relieve the wounded and desolate. Recently I was in a town where the local Christian Church preacher had made numerous trips to the home of a drunkard to read the scriptures and talk to the man about his soul. Eventually he had immersed the man who straightened up his life and gave evidence of making a good husband and father. I took occasion to express my gratitude for such an accomplishment in the home of one of the brethren. He scoffingly said, “They cross land and sea to make one proselyte, and then make him twice as much a child of hell as themselves.” I am opposed to instrumental music in the public praise service of the congregation, but I trust I never get so little that I would rather a man would stay in a drunken stupor, or kick and beat his wife and children, than to be led to faith in the Christ by someone who differs with me on instrumental music. I’m opposed to Roman Catholicism but I rejoice at every leper whose path on earth is made freer from pain by the ministrations of the Catholic nurses in a leper colony.

3. *Unwillingness to hear both sides of an issue.* The Catholic sect seeks to maintain its narrow exclusiveness by refusing to permit its members to read anything which conflicts with its tradition. The clergy can read what they please, but laymen are

not allowed to do so. Yet, at Paragould, Arkansas, a clergyman in “The Church of Christ” stood in the pulpit and advised his parishioners to mail back copies of “Bible Talk” and MISSION MESSENGER without reading them, although he reads them all of the time. I know a preacher who cancelled his subscription to one of these journals with a letter consisting of a tirade against the publisher, yet he can hardly wait until he gets his hands on the paper when it comes to a home where he is staying. He just wants to be “in the clear” when he is questioned, so he can say, “I do not subscribe for his paper.” Free men in Christ are not afraid to read anything, go anywhere, or hear anyone. Party men must stay in good with the party or be given a Russian purge.

4. *A tendency to abandon the search for truth and rest satisfied.* I asked a brother how the cause of restoration was progressing in a certain area, and he told me it was not progressing— they had already arrived! All of the debris of sixteen hundred years of the dark ages had been fully swept away. There was nothing left to learn, no new discoveries to be made. All that was necessary was to parrot the same sermon outlines, misapply the scriptures in the same fashion, defend the same fallacies in reasoning; mistake the same customs and traditions for God’s word, and stir up the same false emotions in the congregation toward others. Every reformation in history ended in another sect; every such sect proclaims that it has arrived in Jerusalem and persecutes those who call upon it to rouse up and keep marching onward and upward. There is nothing which bothers a sect more than to be around one who refuses to be made a sectarian. No partisan is ever at ease in the presence of one who is unwilling to allow the God of the universe to become a tribal deity or local divinity. A real partisan does not seek for new truths. He does not need to do so. His party has ascended to the highest peak of spiritual attainment. There is nothing beyond to challenge his thinking or stimulate his intellect. There is nothing ahead but stagnation and decay!

Effects of Party Spirit

1. *It breeds inconsistency.* There is not a congregation existing in which all of the members are agreed. In many, the arguments are frequent over marriage and divorce, relation to civil government, our obligation to non-members, etc. In all of these, despite these differences, the members recognize and call upon each other for prayer. Sometimes one is called upon to participate whose moral life has been a disgrace and whose conduct has been a constant source of trouble. He is a member of the party. But let one come in who has been a shining light in the community and who has lived a life of consecration, and he is given the deep freeze treatment, because he does not share with those present in their view upon some point of doctrine. He may be mild, inoffensive, and possessed of a sincere desire to know the truth, and may be doing the best he can in the light of his present knowledge, but he does not yet know the party pass word, so he is a pagan.

2. *It shrivels the souls of men.* The humanitarian love of God which should expand our souls and cause us to grow in grace withers under the chilling frost of the party spirit. In a certain community a prominent citizen died, and the grief stricken members of his family asked the local Church of Christ for permission to conduct the funeral service in their meetinghouse. They were refused on the ground that they were not using one of “our preachers” and the brethren were afraid of “bidding Godspeed” to one who brought not this doctrine. In another place the Red Cross asked permission to set up an emergency food kitchen in a meetinghouse to serve disaster victims. They were turned down because the brethren did not endorse the Red Cross and did not believe in having a kitchen in the church building. When the Methodist people offered their building, the members of the Church of Christ got in line and marched in to get their plates filled. Their bellies were not partisan; it was just their hearts.

3. *It destroys the sense of proper spiritual values.* The party spirit, in opposition to the Spirit of Christ, always demands “sacrifice instead of mercy.” In many places a man will be tolerated regardless of his life if he is sound on the party test. In one of the most intolerant and bitter factions of the disciple brotherhood, a number of the preachers have been loose in morals, but their straying from the path of virtue is whitewashed because they are adept at defending the party line. Some of the most bigoted, haughty attackers of “the sects” have personal records which will not bear too close inspection. Some are careful and scrupulous about the Lord’s Supper. The bread has to be prepared a certain way, it has to be broken just so, and passed to the audience in a certain manner. But some who are so zealous about these things often indulge in profanity and other wickedness. The murderers of Jesus would not enter the judgment hall “lest they be defiled and not be fit to eat the passover.” They did not scruple to kill the Son of God, but they must be careful not to be ceremonially defiled.

4. *It produces legalistic extremes.* The members of each party regard that party as the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God upon earth. In some cities there are six different “Churches of Christ” each claiming to be the “only faithful church.” The members of one hardly dare speak to the members of another. If one rises above the narrow confines of his unwritten creed and visits another to discuss with him points of difference, he at once becomes a subject of comment and censure. “When Peter went up to Jerusalem, *the circumcision party* criticized him, saying, ‘Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?’” If the apostle Paul were here today, he would not long be allowed to remain in a single faction of the disciple brotherhood. He would be talked about, criticized, and soon excluded from any of them now existing. Paul spent his life in opposing the attempt to bind anything upon men as a basis of fellowship except faith in God’s Son, as the Messiah. He was under constant fire from the circumcision party in the church, whose members insisted upon laying another foundation.

Recently a preacher announced as his sermon topic, "Where Would Paul Attend Church in This City?" I told him it would not make much difference, because they would soon withdraw from him, wherever he went.

The party spirit will keep us out of heaven. All of us have been tinctured with it. It is a passion of the flesh. We should try to overcome it. We need elders today who will cultivate in their flocks a breadth of vision, a charitable spirit, a love for fallen humanity, and a sense of the need of reformation. It is with the bishops that the future of the church of God actually rests. We must all revere God's revelation, refuse to compromise truth, and cling to the word of God as the sheet anchor of our liberty. But we do not need to be dogmatic, arbitrary and hateful. It requires no sacrifice of principle to make allowance for honest mistakes, early religious environment, or lack of proper education. We do not forfeit truth when we make a distinction between those who knowingly and deliberately disobey the Christ, and those who obey him to the best of their present knowledge, even though it is faulty and imperfect.

Just here a word of caution may be necessary. We should guard against unwise generalizations. It is easy to say there is no excuse for a person not seeing all of the truth since he has access to the Bible. But more is required than mere possession of the Book. A man who inherits a rich farm which was long since cleared from the wilderness may conclude that the poor man across the road with a hundred acres ought to be as well off as himself. But he may overlook the fact that the other has to dig sprouts, cut down timber and clear away undergrowth before he can plant his grain. Let those who have been more fortunate in inheriting truth discovered by others, exercise charity toward those who are still laboring to discover what we have. Let us not try to bind God with the law which He gave to bind us. It is better to use the truth we have in charitably helping those who struggle upwards than to use it to repel and drive them away.

Thoughts on Fellowship (3)

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

The essence of true scriptural investigation is an attempt to understand the real meaning contained in the revelation of God. The Holy Spirit conveyed to mankind the will of the Father in words employed by men in their communication with each other. Our task is to determine the meaning which God attached to those words. In order to do this we must divest ourselves of prejudice and bias, otherwise we will read into the sacred scriptures our own slanted views. It is an acknowledged fact that every sect in Christendom claims spiritual authority for its exclusive doctrines. Those who go to the word of God expecting to find confirmation for a preconceived idea will generally find it, although they get out of the scriptures something which God did not put into them.

What is generally true of the religious world is also applicable to the various factions in the disciple brotherhood. As a case in point we mention the controversy over the use of mechanical instruments in public worship, in which some of the arguments in its defence are about as ridiculous as some of those used by its opponents. Both groups have gone to the Book to confirm their respective positions. They found that for which they were looking. On the subject of “fellowship” even wider divergence is found among the two dozen splinter groups, few of whom even take the time to find out what God meant by the term.

A short time ago I wrote a prominent leader in a faction which makes a test of fellowship out of the matter of grouping students to instruct them in the word of the Lord. I presented to him a hypothetical case as follows. There is one brother in a congregation who does not think it is right to have classes to study the word of the Lord. All of the other members have a deep conviction that it is right and proper to do so. The elders go to the dissenting brother and express their regard for him and their respect for his personal views. They encourage him to come and participate in the corporate worship and mutual edification, and assure him that no reflection will be made against him if he waits to come until the classes are concluded. They confirm their love for him as a brother.

I asked the brother who is a factional leader these questions. What would you advise this brother to do? What scriptural basis would you give for such advice? He replied that he would advise the man to leave the congregation, call for a “loyal” preacher, and try to establish a “faithful” church. In the event that none of the members of the “disloyal” group would come out and take their stand, he would advise the man to move off to a locality where he could worship with a “loyal church.” And as a basis for this conglomerate scheme he cited just one scriptural text— 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Brethren, regardless of your position on grouping students to study the sacred oracles that is sectarianism gone to seed! This preacher, in spite of his protestation of “loyalty” is slashing the body of God’s Son to pieces. He is giving counsel which may destroy the souls of those who heed it, and is actually doing despite to the Spirit of grace. And he demonstrates his utter ignorance of the very basis he quotes for his divisive advice. We propose an investigation of this scripture which has provided a weapon for carving the church of God into bloody ribbons. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath

Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

Nothing is clearer to the honest student of God’s word than the fact that the primitive disciples of our Lord regarded themselves as a community of saints, separated from unbelievers and idolaters by faith in the Messiah as the hope of their salvation. Through the bond of this faith in Him, they were linked together as a family having God for their Father. They constituted a temple or shrine in which dwelt the living God. Their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, constituted the basis of their communal life. The believers were not always agreed among themselves, as witness the congregation at Corinth, but those in Christ who disagreed were not “unbelievers” and were not so designated.

There were two great communities upon earth. One was the church, the other was composed of the pagan world. The first was a *koinonia* of light, because God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. The temple in which God dwelled was aglow with the light of His presence. It was a kingdom of light, not because of the perfection in life and knowledge of those who composed the temple, but because the Light of Heaven dwelled therein as the pillar of fire once rested upon the tabernacle in the wilderness. The other was a *koinonia* of darkness. It was the habitation of Belial in whom is no light. Those who walked in it were past feeling, having given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. They had their understanding darkened, because they were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

Each of these communities had its sacrifices. Each expressed its fellowship by communal acts. Since eating and drinking together was an open manifestation of fellowship, this came to be the symbol of the mystic bond which united them. One temple sacrificed to God; the other to idols. One temple brought man into sacred unity with heaven; the other into fellowship with the demons who motivated the idolatry. The apostle writes: "What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:20, 21). Be sure to note the usage of the terms "fellowship" and "partakers."

We are now prepared to note the passage in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. The admonition to "Be ye not unequally yoked together *with unbelievers*," has no application whatsoever to any alliance or association between members of two branches, or sects, in Christendom. It is not even related to the question of whether a member of "The Church of Christ" ought to marry a Baptist, or buy a filling station in partnership with a Methodist. It certainly has nothing to do with whether a girl from a "one cup congregation" should date a boy in a "cups congregation" as the distinction is so naively made by some of the brethren. Regardless of whether or not such ought to happen, it was not the purpose of the Holy Spirit to suggest it here, and some of the more common applications made of the passage would be downright amusing, if it were not for the serious fact that factional leaders, with more ambition for personal power than love for unity in Jesus, cram such thoughts down the theological throats of gullible and unsuspecting partisans, who, in their ignorance, defeat the very purpose of the cross, and do it under the guise of "loyalty" to Him whom they crucify afresh and put to an open shame.

What does the passage mean? The *koinonia* of heaven is expressed by the terms righteousness, light, Christ, believer, and temple of God. The *koinonia* of the underworld is expressed by the terms unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, and idols. There is a community attached to the Christ. It includes the angels of heaven and the men on earth who have acknowledged Him as their prince. There is another community presided over by Belial. It includes the demons of hell and those on earth who are idolaters, refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in their lives. There can be no more fellowship between these communities than there is between their respective princes. They have *nothing* in common! So long as God lives in us and walks in us, we cannot participate in idolatrous practices, rites and services.

What is meant by the expression “Come out from among them, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing?” This is the handle that fits every factional tool ever devised. It has been used by spiritual demagogues to split and splinter those who met and worked together for years. It has been made the agent for separation, heartache and tears, and in many localities has clabbered the milk of human kindness, and inspired such gall and bitterness, that those who once sat together at the Lord’s Table, have set up rival tables, and treat each other with such lack of courtesy and respect as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.

Does this mean that when my Baptist neighbor, who is so kind, generous, and friendly, invites me to go listen to his preacher in a special meeting, that I must draw the garments of my self-righteousness closer about me, to keep from being defiled by his touch, and insult him, because he does not know that I am to “be separate and touch not the unclean thing?” What is the unclean thing? Is it a Bible class for little children, individual cups, fermented wine, a special way of breaking the loaf, colleges, orphan homes, etc.? Remember, the preacher to whom I posed the question about the brother who did not

believe in classes, would advise him to try and rend a congregation at peace among themselves in Christ, and this was the scripture he gave for *dividing believers in the Lord!* To him “the unclean thing” was a system of grouping students to teach them to develop *faith in the Christ!* Could ever a more damaging, destructive idea be advanced than that which would take the word of God and completely ignoring its purpose, use it in such a manner as to shatter the body of the Lord? This is carving the body of Jesus into bits with the sword which he furnished us to subdue an alien world.

The unclean thing which we are not to touch, refers to the contaminating lust and vice associated with the impure mystery religions of idolatry. The term is not even remotely related to differences among brethren as to interpretation of various scriptures. It would be impossible to describe the degradation and degeneracy growing out of the idolatrous worship, and believers in the Christ are to have nothing to do with such practices or those who engage in them. “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”

Even though modern sectism is deplorable, it is still a condition existing among believers in the Christ. Our opposition to it must not be based upon the idea that our religious neighbors are infidels or idolaters, motivated by a voluntary love and attachment to Belial. My Baptist and Methodist friends are firm believers in the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They are certainly mistaken about certain items contained in His will, and they have exalted their love for a party above their love for a unity of all believers. But to quote the verses under consideration and apply them to those who are of a different order in Christendom, for the purpose of forbidding association, even in order to reason with and teach them, is to make of us the most rabid of all sectarians. These people do not constitute a realm of “darkness” or “unrighteousness” as the terms are used here. Many of them live above moral reproach and have never engaged in filthy or immoral conduct because of

idolatrous leanings. They are frequently good examples in moral behavior for some of their rabid attackers. It ill becomes a preacher who is carrying on an affair with another man's wife, to get on the radio and slash away at others of the religious community as sectarian and in "darkness" when their lives are a credit to his!

Every honest, sincere believer in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, is my brother, either in prospect or in fact. If such a believer has submitted to immersion on the basis of his faith in Jesus, he is my brother in reality, a child of God, and a member of his family. He may not have understood all of the blessings accruing from baptism into the Christ, and he may even have been mistaken as to the time of the bestowal of some of them, but his ignorance of effect or time will not nullify God's grace or promise, if he surrenders his will to that of the Messiah. Since his birth, he may be in error about many things pertaining to his responsibility, worship or service, and he may require a tremendous amount of teaching and adjustment, but he is still my brother, and I will teach him as a brother, and not count him as a pagan or an infidel. If our hearts are both honest we will grow ever closer to each other as we both "grow in grace and knowledge of the truth." The transformation in our lives through conformity to the life of the Christ, will produce uniformity of heart and thought in the two of us.

Not all believers have been immersed. What shall be my attitude toward those who are in that state? It will be the same as the attitude of a family toward an unborn child. We do not revile, castigate or belittle a child in the womb. We rejoice that it has been conceived, and with an air of expectancy prepare for its arrival. So I shall labor to aid those who have been conceived by faith, to come to birth and full delivery into the glorious fellowship of the sons of God. If they die before delivery I shall mourn our loss; if they are born again I shall seek to nurture, strengthen and support them until they can walk alone. To this I am dedicated, believing it is the will of Him whose slave I have

become.

(Next month we will give attention to other scriptures which we have previously misused and misapplied in our misguided sectarian zeal. Our intent is to know the truth which makes men free— free from superstition, ignorance, the party spirit, and all that will hinder the free reign of Jesus in our hearts).

The Road to Ruin

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

The modern one man minister system in “The Church of Christ” is the sectarian pastor system in disguise. Calling those who engage in it “located evangelists” only white washes a system which is without divine authority and exists in opposition to God’s plan of edification for the saints. The idea of hiring a man to do what all are required to do appeals to a lazy, untaught and unconsecrated membership. The special reverence given “The Minister” pampers the pride of the graduate of a seminary who seeks a position of professional status in the community. Of no small moment is the fact that many wives of “Ministers” bask in the social prestige accruing to the office which has been created by the clergy caste among us.

It is not implied that all who are hired as “The Minister” of a congregation are necessarily hirelings, in the modern usage of the term. Many are tireless and self-sacrificing men, but this is true of the clergymen in many denominations. They are victims of circumstances, and lack the courage of conviction required to launch out into the deep through faith in God. A half century ago, the idea of elders hiring or firing a local minister was unknown to restoration-minded churches. But even then conditions were ripening for it to occur.

Brethren were wrapped up in the task of converting men to the Christ. The cause was growing so rapidly and there were

so many demands on their time they could not stop to consolidate their gains. They did not train their converts nor develop elders. Men were appointed as bishops who were untaught and unable to cope with changing situations. They had to turn elsewhere for help. In desperation, human institutions were created to supply the need. Every human institution to do the work of the church is a monument to the mistakes of the brethren. Through “ministerial courses” in Bible Colleges men were trained to take over the work and handle it with professional ease for a fee. Under their skillful manipulation congregations grew in size, and made the mistake of thinking that size meant strength. Discipline disappeared as the criterion for a “successful ministry” became the number on the church roster and the increase in contribution. “The church budget” was introduced and pressure methods of exacting money to keep the machinery moving were inaugurated.

Congregations began to bid for the services of “big preachers.” To secure a prominent name as window dressing on the sign in front of a huge cathedral-like building, meant constantly increasing salaries. Special inducements were offered in contracts. Congregations went into the real estate business. They built attractive residences for the “Ministers” although a few decades ago, gospel preachers decried parsonages, rectories and manses as symbols of a decadent sectarianism. Now a full-fledged pastor system is in vogue and a vicious circle is created. The college seeks to place its alumni in favored pulpits for advertisement; the alumnus seeks to recruit from his congregation ministerial students for his alma mater, and the church pays the bill. Scores of sincere individuals are drawn into this whirling vortex of politics and business and think they are doing God service. Many need to be pitied, for they blindly follow blind leaders.

Can “The Church of Christ” be rescued? It is doubtful! It is contrary to all history that a people once started on this giddy path can be checked short of rampant sectism. They now have

millions invested in human organizations and money considerations alone would keep them from returning to the old paths! Perhaps if bombs rained upon our cities to blacken and destroy our material temples, ruin our gadgets and drive us to dens and caves of the earth, we might see ourselves in a proper light; or if dearth, famine, plague and depression reduced us all to an equality with no one to whom we might turn except to the Lord, we might find a proper sense of spiritual worth. Otherwise, pride, power and pelf will continue to be motivating factors eating like gangrene at the vitals of the body.

What can be done by those humble servants of the Lord who love Him and His Cause, and who weep over the fate of Zion? They must with earnest devotion find the place they can fill in the Kingdom and dedicate their life to service. So long as brethren desire to be ministered unto, there will be those to do the ministering for hire; the answer is to make every disciple of the Lord a minister through love for God rather than for gain. Godly men must be trained as bishops. Here is our greatest need! The respect for God's eldership must be restored. In short, all Christians must be opposed to the clerical system which steals away their rights and privileges, and relegates most of the congregation to the position of a laity. All must resist the drift away from the simplicity of the divine arrangement and the ancient order.

Restoration

Mission Messenger (March 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

We do not think the church of God ever ceased to exist since the day when it was given birth in Jerusalem, but we do believe that it was forced to flee into “the wilderness” to be nourished of God for 1260 years, during which time knowledge was obscured and a pall of superstition and ignorance enveloped the earth. The love for truth was kept alive in the recesses of the hearts of those who yearned for communion with God, and that love kindled into a flame in the lives and deeds of the reformers, who did their best to uncover the purity of the original ideal of God. We are still laboring to get a clearer view of the divine revelation, and to scale the mountain of faith to greater heights.

When we talk of restoration, we do not imply that the church disappeared or went out of existence. We use the term in the same sense that the art dealer does when talking about “restoring” a painting. Through the years a beautiful work in oils accumulates deposits of foreign matter until the original luster is lost and the vision of the artist is only dimly seen. The work of the “restorer” is not to create another picture, nor produce a new one, but to remove the grime and dirt that has gathered until the original can be seen in its full glory. In the case of God’s masterpiece, much has been done by such worthies as Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and others, including the Campbells, Stone, Scott, Smith, and others of even more recent date.

But the work is not completed. The prayer of our Master for the unity of all believers has not been answered. That can only come through a restoration of the spirit and form of apostolic Christianity. We must meet the challenge of today! We dare not rest upon the accomplishments of the pioneers of restoration. We need to restore to this age the spirit of restoration! If we assume that we have it all, and that we are without additional challenges to meet, we shall stagnate and become a helpless and dying sect. The church of God must move forward to its great task of world conquest. This is not the time to stop for rest. There remaineth a rest for the people of God, but this is a time for action. The sheep are still scattered on the hills. The children are not yet all in the house. We have a work of gathering to do before the night falls. Are you meeting that challenge?

Not Many Fathers

Mission Messenger (April 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The relationship sustained by an evangelist to a congregation which he plants is vividly set forth in the words of Paul to the church at Corinth. When the apostle left Athens, he came to the great commercial center of Corinth, where he testified that Jesus was Christ, with such power that “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Later, when the congregation was torn by schisms, he wrote concerning his trials and hardships in proclamation of the word, but added:

I do not write to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:14, 15).

So pregnant with meaning are these three sentences that a proper understanding of them would correct many of the abuses extant in the churches today. We freely admit our own incapability of bringing out the depth of thought, but suggest a few items for your meditation. The gospel is the means through which spiritual children are begotten. It is the initial proclamation to aliens to enlist them as citizens. It is not the course of teaching or discipline by which children are to be reared. This is designated “the apostles’ doctrine.” This latter

was revealed as congregational growth or mistakes demanded it, just as we train our children in various phases of their growth. But the gospel was as fully proclaimed on Pentecost as it ever was. It had to be, else those who were born that day would have been deformed.

A loss of this distinction has been productive of many errors and is today standing athwart the path of restoration, barring the way to a complete return to primitive Christianity. It is directly responsible for much of the factionism promoted by "The Church of Christ." In a future article I intend to show that these brethren hold to the false premise that "the gospel" embraces the whole of the new covenant revelation. On that basis, since obedience to the gospel brings us into fellowship, they demand that one, in order to be in their "fellowship" must believe and understand every part of the new covenant scriptures exactly as they do. Refusal to conform in any degree means cessation of fellowship and creation of another faction. They are split over their interpretations of the apostolic doctrine on marriage, divorce, civil government, the Lord's Supper, the millennium, care of orphans and widows, Bible classes, and a host of other items too numerous to mention. Their divisions in many localities are a scandal in Christendom, and in their ignorance of fundamental truths they have raped the restoration.

I shall prove these grave charges at another time, but it is sufficient now to say that a child, once begotten, need never be begotten again. He may have many teachers, he has only one father. After being born, he requires instruction and discipline to correct deficiencies in conduct, but does not require begetting. We are begotten by the gospel, and having been begotten, we need not again hear the gospel. In spite of this, and because of a grave error in interpretation, congregations of saints are regularly exposed to what is called *gospel preaching* at the Lord's Supper, as a stripling fresh from the seminary labors to *beget again* old saints who were born again forty years before he was

born at all. “Can a man, when he is old, enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Paul declared that the saints in Corinth might have ten thousand instructors in Christ. This has a strange ring in these days, when, in spite of educational facilities and attainments, brethren are taught that they are not able to teach or instruct each other, but must hire someone for a fee to come in and do that. The apostle wrote to all, “Ye ought to be teachers;” the modern version is, “Ye ought not to be teachers.” But the theme of our remarks is that there is a difference between bringing men into Christ, and instructing those who are in Christ. Men are begotten by the gospel, they are taught in the apostles’ doctrine. The gospel is the good news! One does not teach news. He announces or proclaims it.

What is the relationship, then, of an evangelist to a congregation which he plants? The great evangelist, Paul, regarded those whom he had led to Christ, as beloved children. He declared that he became their father through the gospel. Now the duty of every parent is to work himself out of a job. From the moment a child is born, the true parent is dedicated to the task of training that child to the point where he can stand alone and be independent of the parent. If the child is pampered and spoiled, and does not reach emotional maturity, the parents have failed. Thus, the apostle wrote, “For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God” (1 Thess. 2:11). He also said, “We were gentle among you as a nursing mother caring for her children.”

Parents do not desert their helpless offspring. They care for them night and day, and often shed tears over them. Thus, Paul said, “Remember that for three years I ceased not to admonish you all, night and day, even with tears” (Acts 20:31). But, having brought them to maturity, he commended them to God, and the word of his grace, which was able to build them

up. The primary work of an evangelist is to proclaim the gospel. This we derive from the very word itself. Paul declared, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel." One is not a father because he assists at delivery, but because he begets his children. A doctor or midwife may assist the children into their new relationship. The work of training immature children grows out of the relationship of a father to his offspring. Fatherhood necessitates care for children until they are self-supporting. Thus, an evangelist is obligated to provide for a congregation of his planting until men are developed and appointed as bishops. The work of guiding and supervising then passes into the hands of these permanent officers. As relates to a congregation, an evangelist must be constantly striving to work himself out of a job, so that he may be on with his primary task. His chief purpose is to preach the gospel, but this is a work with aliens, not saints. The sooner he can rear a family to maturity, the sooner he can be out in his real field.

Because of a misconception of these great truths, many congregations never mature to the place where they can be free from the service of an evangelist. They grow up and become big, but they are helpless and unskilled. They must have a "nursing mother" to gently cherish and pamper them. They appoint elders to meet "the form of church government" but these are often not qualified, and it is never the intention to allow them to supplant the evangelist. In truth, their chief task in many places is to pass upon the merits of prospective foster-fathers, and to hire another for the family to support, when one deserts or is run off by the children.

A new term has been invented to designate these rotating foster-fathers. They are called "located evangelists." Since the holy scriptures know nothing of such a system, human organizations have been created to produce them. Those who would *enter the ministry* are shipped off from the local congregation where they hold membership and out from under the care of the bishops charged with their spiritual growth, and

sent to Tennessee or Texas, to be polished and perfected as pulpiteers, by a human organization. Then they go looking for a family to adopt, and exhibiting their wares, they await the verdict as to whether or not they will be adopted by the family and placed on the pay roll.

The present practice of sermonizing will never produce a mature congregation for it is impossible for it to do so. After years of it under one man, the church will be as weak and helpless as when he started, and upon his departure another sermonizer will have to be hired. No evangelist worthy of the name can engage in such a practice without a sense of guilt, for he is obtaining money under false pretense. Lest we extend this treatise unduly, we conclude with the words of Alexander Campbell, which we commend unto your careful reading and meditation.

This everlasting sermonizing! What good is in it? It resembles nothing that is rational in all the compass of thought. A. B. professes to teach arithmetic; he gets a class of forty boys from 12 to 15 years old, we shall say. He tells them to meet once a week and he will give them a lecture or sermon on some important point in this useful science.

The first day he lectures on cube root for an hour. They sit bookless and thoughtless, heedless, and, perhaps, often drowsy, while he harangues them. He blesses them and sends them home, to return a week hence. They meet. His text is arithmetical progression. He preaches an hour, dismisses as usual. The third day of the meeting up comes vulgar fractions; the fourth, rule of three; the fifth, addition; the sixth, notation; the seventh, cube root again, etc.

Now in this way, I hesitate not to say, he might proceed seven years and not finish one accountant. Who ever thought that a science or art could be taught this way? And yet this is the only way, I may say, universally adopted of teaching the Christian religion. And so it is that

many men have sat under the sound of the gospel (as they call it) for forty years, that cannot expound one chapter in the whole New Testament. And yet these same Christians would think it just to prosecute by civil law that teacher who would keep their sons four or five years at English grammar or arithmetic, and receive their money, and yet not one of their sons able to expound one rule in syntax or arithmetic.

They pay the parson— they are of maturer minds than their children, and they have been longer under his tuition, and yet they will excuse both the parson and themselves, for knowing just as little, if not less, of the New Testament, than their striplings know of grammar or arithmetic. . . .

People can never be taught the Christian religion in the way of sermonizing. Public speeches may be very useful on many occasions; but to teach a church the doctrine of Christ, and to cause them to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to enjoy them, requires a course essentially different from either hearing sermons or learning the catechism.¹

END NOTES

1. Alexander Campbell, “A Familiar Dialogue,” *Christian Baptist* 12 (July 1824): 234-35; Burnet edition: 77.

Thoughts on Fellowship (4)

Mission Messenger (April 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Some brethren are concerned about my explanation of fellowship and they are unable to reconcile it with traditional explanations of certain scriptures. It is difficult for them to see how we may be in fellowship and differ on any point, although most of them claim to be in fellowship and differ on many points. One passage which seems to give some trouble is Amos 3:3. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" It is assumed that this teaches absolute unanimity of opinion as a requisite to fellowship in the Christ, and since I contend that fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God, through acceptance of His Son, and that we may walk together in Him while we are learning, even though we now differ in some particulars, it is concluded that my contention is contrary to God's plan and purpose.

Accordingly, it will be necessary for me to take time out from my outlined study on fellowship, to deal with this problem, and while I am anxious to get on with my theme, I do not want to travel with such rapidity that I ignore objections which brethren consider valid. It is obvious that my thesis is in conflict with the common *interpretation* of Amos 3:3. I do not think it is in conflict with what Amos said, but it is in conflict with what some brethren *think he meant*. This should point up to us several grave dangers. One is that of jumping at conclusions while ignoring the context, or setting, of a scripture. Another is that of

creating an unwritten creed out of our interpretations. We are obligated to accept what God says; we are not obligated to accept what any person thinks that God meant. The basis of God's judgment will be His word, not some interpretation of it. He will open the books He has written, and we will be judged out of the things written in those books, every man according to his own works. God will not open up the books I have written, nor will He use the MISSION MESSENGER as a basis of judgment. I may be judged by what I have written, but you need not be.

Either my general proposition is in error, or the common interpretation of Amos 3:3 is wrong. Before I ever began this series of discussions on fellowship, I carefully listed every passage which might be deemed as being in opposition to the thinking which has crystallized in my heart. I examined critically every one of those passages. If even one had been in apparent controversion of my view, I would never have expressed that view. This passage was the first on my list. In my examination of its bearing on the subject, I became convinced that it has been misused and sadly abused. I have been no less an offender than others, and I must apologize for my error.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" They do so all of the time! I have never fully agreed with any brother upon every interpretation of the holy scriptures, yet I have walked in soul-stimulating partnership with many of them for years. Many a married couple has walked and worked together in spite of serious disagreements at frequent intervals. Many congregations have worshipped together in spite of varied and diverse concepts. Their love for Jesus was greater than their love for their own views and interpretations. To affirm that two cannot walk together until they have reached absolute agreement upon all issues is to deny the testimony of human history, and give the lie to our own experience.

The common explanation is a good indication of what happens when men engage in textual preaching. Nothing else has

scrapped the scriptures, or disjointed and butchered God's revelation, to the degree that it has been done by the popular method of preaching from a text. We want to deliver a talk on unity. Amos 3:3 looks like a good foundation, so we lift it out, and start to work. And the sad result is that we employ it in such a manner as to actually divide God's people and create disunity. The purpose of any talk on unity should be to bring brethren closer to the Christ and each other, but if you convince them that it is impossible to please God and walk together if they are not agreed upon every point, then when they disagree on any point, they will sever relations and think they are doing God a service.

But what did Amos mean? To understand this you must know a little about the man and his mission. Amos was not a recognized prophet, nor a product of the school of prophets (7:14). He was a lowly herdsman and a gatherer of sycamine figs, which were used as food by the very poor. God summoned him to travel north and pour out a condemnation in the very courtyard of the king of Israel, the ten tribe northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria. The statement in which we are interested occurs in one of the denunciatory speeches delivered by Amos. It is only one of a series of questions, intended to show the reason for his sudden appearance on the scene as a prophet. Here is the contextual matter.

Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The prophet is here using the common logical argument that for every effect there is a cause. If a lion roars in the forest, you can be assured he has a prey; if a bird is caught in a snare, it is because the trigger (gin) was set; if you see a trapper run to take up his snare, it is because he has caught something. A trumpet is blown only when danger approaches a city. In the same manner, when one of God's prophets speaks, you can be sure there is a reason. God no more speaks aimlessly through his prophets, than a watchman sounds a trumpet for entertainment.

The expression "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" is only one facet of the argument. The term "agreed" is from YAAD, which Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says is a primitive root. It is defined, "To fix upon (by agreement or appointment); by implication to meet (at a stated time), to summon (to trial), to direct (in a certain quarter or position), to engage (for marriage)." It is obvious that the point under consideration is that when you see two people walking together, it is as the result of an appointment to meet at a stated time. The purpose of the meeting is not under consideration. They might meet to *debate their differences* as they walk along together, but the fact they are walking along together, indicates an agreement to meet. They had an appointment!

It is possible, that in our thickly populated areas of today, one might run into an acquaintance and walk along with him, but Amos did not live in such an area. J. R. Dummelow, M.A., in his comment on the passage says, "R. V. 'have agreed,' have an appointment. If two people were seen walking along together in the desolate regions with which Amos was familiar it might be assumed they had not met by chance. Nothing happens by

chance. There is a reason and cause for Israel's calamities."

There is not one thing in the definition given by Strong which has to do with absolute agreement as two people walk together. The original word relates to an initial engagement to meet, regardless of the purpose. It does not cover the period of marriage, but relates to the engagement; it does not cover the trial in court, but relates only to the summons; it does not cover the purpose of meeting, but merely an agreement upon time and place. I might agree to meet my dentist at a certain time, and we might be *together* by appointment, but that does not argue that I am in harmony with all of his views or techniques. I'm not!

I do not argue that absolute conformity upon all matters of interpretation is not an ideal for which we should labor. I do argue that it is not a prerequisite to fellowship in the Lord. We do not come into relationship with the Christ because we understand every point of theology alike, but because we have come into Him, we seek to reach a greater degree of mutual understanding. We are not in fellowship *because* of complete unanimity of opinion but in *spite* of our divergencies of opinion. We walk together because we have made an appointment with Him to do so. If we wait until we get together upon all of our varying opinions, we will never walk together at all!

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, has quickened us together, raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6). We are together because of grace, the undeserved kindness of God. We walk with God and He walks in us. Is this conditioned upon our perfect understanding of all things as God sees them? If God can walk together with me while I am learning, seeking, searching, and yearning to know more about His will, can I not walk with all others in Him who are in the same condition? Jesus walked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and asked them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" After hearing their

stumbling explanation, he said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,” and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, *he interpreted to them* in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Will he who then walked with foolish men who were slow to believe all that was spoken, refuse to do so now? Or, will His gentle grace abide with us, through the Spirit, that our hearts too may burn within us while he talks with us on the road?

God’s purpose *as to ourselves* has not yet been perfected. It cannot be as it pertains to each individual, until the individual reaches the ultimate in his spiritual attainment. The temple of God is a growing structure. Each generation finds it reaching outward and upward. The ropes are lengthened and the stakes are strengthened. It is not static, but active. Strangers and foreigners become fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. These are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus is the chief cornerstone. In him “the whole structure is joined together *and grows* into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21). The act of joining the stones together is a divine one; the act of growth is a natural one, aided by the Spirit. Growth always indicates change and adjustment. We must make that in order to fit more fully into the plan of Him “in whom you are builded together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” *The fellowship* is the joint participation in the Christ, which makes us a part of the building. We are held together, not because of equality of ability, genius, attainment, accomplishment, or opinion, but by the cement of divine love. That cement allows for soul expansion as “*we grow up in every way* into him, who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:15). How shall we treat each other while we are growing?

The Power of Prayer

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Volume 20

[Abstract]

The spiritual condition was at a low ebb in Israel. The son of Omri, who succeeded him to the throne, exceeded him in doing evil. This was no small feat for the father had been more evil than all who preceded him. Idolatry was everywhere prevalent. To make matters worse, the monarch took as a wife, Jezebel, the wicked daughter of the Sidonian king. She resolved to crush out the worship of Jehovah and install Baal worship in the land. Her first act was to get her husband, Ahab, to build a great temple to Baal, and construct an altar to that idol, in his capital city of Samaria. Then she began a war of ruthless extermination against the remaining prophets of Jehovah. It was then that the national prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, showed what prayer could accomplish.

Realizing that a demonstration was necessary to bring the people to their knees before Jehovah, he prayed that all rain would be kept from the land. The heavens became like brass and the earth like iron. Springs ceased to flow and watercourses dried up and became dusty. The king called his prime minister and said, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." They divided the land between them to survey it. The king went one way by himself, the minister went in the other direction by himself. Three years and six months had gone by, and Elijah prayed

again, this time for rain. “And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain” (1 Kings 18:45).

James 5:17, 18 says, “Do you remember Elijah? He was a man like us but he prayed earnestly that it should not rain. In fact, not a drop fell on the land for three and a half years. Then he prayed again, the heavens gave the rain and the earth sprouted with vegetation as usual.” This is cited to illustrate a point. “*Tremendous power is made available through a good man’s earnest prayer.*” Elijah was a man like us in one way, but the thing we need is men who will be like Elijah. He knew how to turn on heaven’s generator, he had the key to the power plant of God.

The power of heaven is available to us. If it is not, there would have been no point in saying that Elijah was a man like us. But that power, tremendous in its potentiality, is only made available through prayer. It must be offered by good men. It must be offered in earnest. This is the combination which unlocks the vault of divine energy. A great mistake is made in concluding that God’s power is expressed only in the realm of the natural and miraculous. Men conclude that because supernatural power is not exercised that *extraordinary* power is not. There is a difference in the two. Not everything that is uncommon or unusual is miraculous.

I am convinced we do not use the might that is available for us. Our house is wired for electricity but we burn tallow candles. We possess dynamite but are content to shoot firecrackers. God is ready to do more for us, and through us, than we are ready for him to do.

We are self eclipsed, getting between ourselves and the light of heaven. When Jesus withered a fig tree to the roots by a spoken word, his disciples were amazed. He answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this

mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him."

Not all mountains are physical. There are intangible mountains of disunity and division. Because they loom big, men become fearful and unbelieving. They quail before the seemingly insuperable barriers. But no obstruction is greater than God's power. Any mountain is weak when it meets a man of God. When such a man rises up the mountain falls down. Does God want this mountain removed?

Furnish him the man who will say, "Be taken up and cast into the sea," and He will furnish the power. There are two things required of such a man. He must have a heart empty of doubt and full of faith. He must believe that what he says will come to pass. A heart is powerless when it vacillates between doubt and belief. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." "He must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God's help or not. The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment, and driven back the next. That sort of man cannot hope to receive anything from God, and the life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn" (James 1:6-8).

Secret doubts, inward reservations, divided loyalty— these sum up the reasons why so many are weak, helpless, frustrated, distressed and discouraged. Like Peter, they take their eyes off of Christ, and look at the water. That is when they start to sink. Jesus put his finger on the difficulty when he said to Peter, "O, thou of little faith!" Peter had faith to start when Christ called to him, but it was not enough to keep him going. We need men today who can keep their heads above water while walking to Jesus. We do not need to be satisfied with things as they are. During the Renaissance men re-made the world. We can do the same. We can help usher in a golden age. It is true that waves of

sectarianism beat high, the winds of false doctrine shriek through the rigging of the Ship of Zion, and the thunder of schismatic cries reverberates through the religious firmament. But I serve one who commanded the sea to be calm, and the winds and the waves to obey his will. There was never a storm which did not end. The sun will shine again!

I am asked if I really expect my feeble efforts to contribute materially toward restoration and unity. Men point to my lack of finance, my limitations of formal education, the puny size of this little journal issued only once per month. They picture the magnitude of the problem with almost three hundred great sects pitted against each other. They point to the huge seminaries grinding out thousands of clergymen annually, the millions of dollars in the hands of those who support sectarian enterprises, the hundreds of books and papers pouring in a stream from the press, to be used as propaganda mediums. They tell me of whisper campaigns of my own brethren, of secret meetings filled with fear and fuming. "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself!" Does Jesus want the mountain of sectism and partisan spirit removed and cast into the sea? Does he want all who believe in him to be one? Does he really? Then someone must arise who has no doubt in his heart that it can be done. He must believe that what he says will come to pass. Only then can God do for him what he prays to be done! He who works thus, and works for God's purpose, works with God! *Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer!*

God's power is not limited by education, finance, or feebleness. He can conquer by the few as well as with the many. He has not chosen the wise, the mighty, or the noble. He has chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, and the things that are despised! That lets me in. "Here am I, Lord, send me!" Yes, brethren, it will come to pass. The prayer of Jesus will not go unanswered!

Instrumental Music (1)

Mission Messenger (May 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

For almost a century those congregations which resulted from the restoration movement have been disturbed over the question of instrumental music in the public praise service of the saints. Next year will mark the centennial of the introduction of a melodeon into the worship of the church at Midway, Kentucky, by Dr. L. L. Pinkerton. During the past ninety-nine years countless reams of paper have been devoted to treatises on the theme, heated debates have been held, congregations have been rent asunder, families have been divided, and communities disrupted by the issue, and yet, the cleavage continues as great as ever.

Those of us who live in this generation have inherited the problem and its consequences. Have we the courage to face up to it in the spirit of Christ and to seek for a proper solution in calm humility, and not inflamed by the same passions and animosities which characterized previous generations? Is it possible for us to admit mistakes in attitude which only served to widen the breach, and now to labor together in mutual love for Christ and with respect for each other, that we may, by His help, eliminate the cause of the division? It is evident that our Father does not want His children divided over use of instrumental music in the corporate worship. He wills that we be one, and that we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are divided, and since such division is contrary to His will, we

must work toward a healing of the breach, and strive for unity.

It will not do for those who do not believe in using the instrument to wash their hands of the problem, and profess an unconcern about it, or declare that it is no affair of theirs. Regardless of who must bear the blame for the creation of the problem, or the responsibility for perpetuating it, not one of us dares to be insensible to the fact that the family of God is torn and rent, and the divine will is that “there be no schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25). If I dare not set at naught my brother, then I can never be callous toward, nor unaffected by, those things which act as walls to separate us.

The methods employed in introducing the instrument served to focus upon it an importance it probably does not deserve. In almost every congregation there were strong protests. Older brethren tearfully besought that it not be forced upon them. Locks were installed upon meetinghouse doors. These were often broken at night with an axe or sledge hammer and the organ brought in under cover of darkness. Congregations were split and lawsuits for the property were instituted. In many cases those who insisted upon having the organ regardless of consequences were younger men and women. Those who opposed it were designated “mossbacks,” “old fogies,” and “antis.” The ones favoring the instrument labeled themselves “Progressives.” They thus made it appear that the progress of the kingdom of heaven depended upon having the instrument. In turn, they were called “Digressives” by those who opposed them.

In many areas the two groups built meetinghouses in proximity to each other. Although both proclaimed the gospel and immersed the believing penitents who accepted it, there was no recognition and no common ground. Members often refused to employ common courtesy, not even deigning to speak to or greet those of the opposition. Both proselyted from the other with vengeance and diligence; both hailed it as a signal victory

when one left the other group to take a stand with them. Through the years, the instrument came to be the party standard around which the battle was waged in fury.

Recently, in Charleston, West Virginia, I visited two congregations within a few blocks of each other. Both bore the label "Church of Christ." One used the instrument, the other did not. The minister of the non-instrumental congregation was asked how he regarded those who attended at the other place. He replied that he regarded them just as he did any other sectarians. He said he would not call upon one of them to pray or to comment in a Bible study. He did not regard them as brethren and he felt if they "came over" they should be re-baptized.

In Birmingham, Alabama, during a debate held between two factions of "The Church of Christ" the writer took occasion to query a number of preachers from the Southland as to their attitude toward those who use the instrument. None of them recognized them as brethren; some said they would just as soon accept a Baptist on his "Baptist baptism" as a Christian Church man on "Christian Church baptism." They would insist that he submit to "Church of Christ baptism." It was a vain effort to try and show these men that their position was extreme party-ism. They were the products of David Lipscomb College, Harding College, Freed-Hardeman College, and Abilene Christian College, and in their seminary training they had been taught an arrogant exclusivism, and shown how to "handle the instrumentalists." It is worth remarking that when the division first occurred, the organ was only one of several issues placed in the same category, others being the hired minister, parsonages, and human institutions to do the work of the church. Now that the church in the south has "outprogressed the Progressives" on all of these other matters, the only issue left is the music question and around it the forces rally.

It is not unfair to state that since "The Church of Christ"

now has bigger cathedrals, better parsonages, and greater ministerial salaries, a number of preachers in Texas and elsewhere have suddenly decided that instrumental music is a sin, some even submitting to re-baptism in order to assure the congregations offering them a job that they are orthodox, and now look upon the instrumental brethren as being “of all men most miserable.” This does not imply that all who reach the conclusion that instrumental music has no place in the corporate worship do so from mercenary motives, for many suffer greatly for such conviction. Yet it is a known fact that a comfortable job at a good salary has been dangled as bait before some in order to “convert” them to the wrong of using the instrument.

There have been some notable changes wrought in the past several years among those who use the instrument. Whereas, it was introduced by the younger element over the protest of older brethren; now a great many sincere young people would be willing to abandon it to secure peace and unity, but they are restrained by the older ones, who would consider any such move as “a surrender to the antis.” In the seminaries the budding ministerial students are taught how to meet the arguments of “the antis” and in many communities it is felt that the organ or piano is a veritable symbol of freedom in Christ, so that just as some men die for freedom, some would die for the instrument. It is altogether possible that if a calm appraisal of the situation could be made, and if it could be shown that liberty in Christ does not need a material symbol as a bastion of defence, in not a few communities the breach could be healed. It is evident that many non-instrument groups have liberty in Christ, with a freedom to think, speak and act; whereas, many who use the instrument have little freedom in either respect. The reverse is likewise true. It is a consideration of this fact which prompts me to say that the instrument has been elevated to a position of importance it does not deserve. So long as a material thing is regarded as the embodiment of intangible rights and privileges it will be elevated in our thinking to a position not commensurate with its real value.

I think that I can detect throughout the whole world signs of a rising interest in restoration. Letters cross my desk from almost every continent on the globe. Many of these indicate a fervency of spirit, a degree of consecration, and a yearning for oneness in the Master such as I have never observed in any previous period of my life. Of course, some evince a spirit of timidity and fear, and many shrink back from contacts with those whom they have regarded as enemies. There is a belief in some circles that the Cause of Christ is being betrayed, and that the church is being "sold down the river," but brethren in general are able to see that our attitude in the past has driven away as many as have been led to Christ, and the narrow factional spirit is decried as unworthy of those who "seek peace and ensue it." It is now possible to discuss differences without rancor, hatred or animosity. This alone can only betoken good for the future.

My own personal views about the place of instrumental music in the public praise service of the body have tended to crystallize more fully as I have examined the question anew in the light of the arguments of those who defend it. I find myself more opposed than ever, if possible, and my conscience forbids my participating in corporate worship in conjunction with it. But those believers who use it are my brethren. They are children of my Father. Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother of us all. They are in my fellowship in the scriptural import of that term. I do not hesitate to go among them. I invite them to my home, not as enemies, but as brethren in Christ. Those who oppose instrumental music are not my brethren because they oppose it, those who use it are my brethren in spite of the fact. We are brethren not because of our position but because of our parentage. We have been born into the same family, and in that family we have inherited certain conditions which produce friction. We must work on these problems and seek a solution which will glorify God and maintain the human dignity which belongs to those who are in Him.

I do not recognize the instrument as a symbol of degeneracy, dishonesty, or apostasy. To do so would hinder a proper approach to our problem as much as to regard it as a symbol of freedom. Those who employ it may as honestly think that they worship God with it, as others honestly think they cannot. In most cases, in this generation, we were born and reared under one influence or another. Many do not know anything about the original disruption over introduction of the organ. They either have it, or they do not have it, but they could not give a sensible answer why in either case. They are content to leave such matters to the preachers and to follow the lead of the theologian who is most friendly and a good mixer. There are thousands who worship where the instrument is used who are blissfully unaware that anyone opposes it. To say that they have maliciously and deliberately conspired to violate God's command is the height of folly. It is possible that we have bombarded each other with slogans and symbols until the truth has been obscured.

Not long ago I was invited by the elders of a Christian Church to speak one night on "Restoring the Restoration." I readily agreed to go. I did not make any demands or issue any ultimatums, nor did they place any restrictions upon me. At the outset of the meeting, one of them announced that because of my personal convictions they would desist from use of the instrument in the service. I would have spoken in any event, but I hail such overtures as indications of a new day for restoration, as we learn mutual respect for one another.

A goodly number of young preaching brethren, reared in instrumental congregations, have told me that if they were planting new congregations, they would urge the brethren not to use the instrument, not because they oppose it as an innovation of Satan, but because they would not want to be responsible for creating a state of things which would debar brethren like myself from participating in every phase of the public devotions. This indicates real magnanimity of character. Of course, some of

the noninstrumental brethren might demand that they make a public confession that the use of the instrument was a sin before they would have anything to do with them. I would not do so, for to me that would be an exhibition of party spirit, and one should not be forced to confess a thing is a sin against his conscience.

I am of the opinion that this question will be worked out, if ever solved at all, upon a local level. There will never be, nor should there ever be, a top level meeting of representatives of the two groups to decide the course of action which must be taken by all the churches nationally. We must not be frightened by our differences into creation of an ecclesiasticism which would be far more harmful in its effects than what we seek to overcome. Above all, we must not expect the problem to be solved for us by editors, or papers, for these can dominate the brotherhood if they become dogmatic and arbitrary interpreters of God's will for His people.

The one thing essential to provide the proper atmosphere is love. With it we can achieve things above what we ask or think; without it we will accomplish nothing. We must remember that Jesus teaches us that the nail of love is the one from which is suspended all the law and the prophets. It would gain us nothing, if in our zeal to keep one commandment, we pull out the nail on which all hang, and let them all fall to the earth.

We must not assume that this is a closed question and that nothing further should be done about it. No question is closed for those who love God, so long as it keeps His children apart. There must never come a time when our hearts are so hardened we will not resume negotiations in love with the hope of lessening the barriers. We must never slam shut the door on further study of the issue. Even though progress appears imperceptible and it appears we are making no gain, God may be working through us as His humble instruments to lead mankind to a brighter day. The long days and weary nights spent in consultation and prayer

must produce fruit if we grow not weary in well-doing. Only Satan can gain when we cease to love each other, and become stubborn and adamant.

This is enough for this time upon this problem. Next month, God willing, I will present some of the reasons for my own personal conviction upon this matter, and at the same time I will notice one of the more recent arguments which is being made in behalf of the use of instrumental music. I solicit the prayers of all who love the Lord that what I say may be spoken in love, and that it will not worsen, if it does not help, our present status. Since only the peacemakers can be called the children of God, I want to be numbered among them if possible, and to that end I shall dedicate my feeble efforts and limited talents. May He help us to be kind and forbearing.

Thoughts on Fellowship (5)

Mission Messenger (April 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The divided state of believers in the Messiah is one of the most tragic blights upon our modern world. It is the chief deterrent to the subjugation of the alien world to our King. We must face up to the full implications of this condition, for we will not escape in the final judgment, any personal responsibility for creating or perpetuating it. We dare not slight or try to ignore the situation. This fact was clearly recognized by our forefathers and they sought to alleviate and eliminate the sectarian status. Thus Alexander Campbell wrote:

Tired of new creeds and new parties in religion, and of the numerous abortive efforts to reform the reformation; convinced from the Holy Scriptures, from observation and experience, that the union of the disciples of Christ is essential to the conversion of the world, and that the correction and improvement of no creed, or partisan establishment in Christendom, could ever become the basis of such an union, communion, and Cooperation, as would restore peace to a church militant against itself, or triumph to the common salvation— a few individuals, about the commencement of the present century, began to reflect upon the ways and means to restore primitive Christianity.”¹

The resultant effort amazes every student of the history of the church of God. Sectarian citadels were shaken to their very

foundations. Those who were “tired of new creeds and new parties in religion,” imbued with an unquenchable desire for unity in order to achieve the purpose of the Messiah upon earth, attained such goals as made it appear that this whole nation might be brought to the foot of the cross. Of the fierce ambition which burned within the hearts of these worthies, Campbell wrote:

Next to our personal salvation, two objects constituted the summum bonum, the supreme good, worthy of the sacrifice of all temporalities. The first was, the union, peace, purity and harmonious cooperation of christians— guided by an understanding enlightened by the Holy Scriptures; the other, the conversion of sinners to God. Our predilections and antipathies on all religious questions arose from, and were controlled by, these all absorbing interests. From these commenced our campaign against creeds.”²

It is interesting to note the simple way by which it was proposed to unite all Christians. We quote again from Campbell:

A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolation and joys— the holiness and happiness of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures; in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather *the christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union; upon having a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ either in express terms, or in approved precedent, ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice,’ . . . making faith in Christ and obedience to him, the only *test* of Christian character, and the only *bond* of church union, communion and co-operation.”³

What is the present status of those who are spiritual heirs of the “few individuals who began to reflect upon the ways and

means to restore primitive Christianity"? Are they tired of new parties in religion? Are they seeking to restore peace to a church militant against itself? Do they still look upon the union, peace and harmonious co-operation of Christians, as an object of supreme good? Do they deem this object worthy of the sacrifice of all temporalities? Are they yet laboring on the project of uniting the Christians in all the sects?

Far from it! They have been enticed into the business of producing sects. The noble ideal has been shattered. There are more than two dozen splinter parties which have grown out of the restoration effort. Each of these claims to be the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Each contends that it alone is the kingdom of the heavens. Each one is "the brotherhood." Each one is the "loyal church." There is no project to unite the Christians in *all sects*, for each sect claims, like Rome, to have all the Christians there are under its inconsistent wings. This is the bread upon which we have been fed, this is the milk we have drawn from the paps of our factional religious mothers, and upon it we have been nurtured and nourished into spiritual dwarfs of bigotry, hate and exclusiveness, "which say, Stand by thyself, come not near unto me; for I am holier than thou" (Isa. 65:5).

Physical dwarfs sometimes develop warped personalities. In a world of men of normal stature they must be over-assertive, pugnacious, resentful of every imaginary slight. They must walk with a swagger, cultivate a deep voice, and growl at every one else. Napoleon, the little Corsican, set out to conquer the world, to prove his power despite his diminutive stature. The same psychological reaction may be characteristic of spiritual dwarfs. Little men may appear big if they can rationalize all others into inferiority. A small faction can appear of tremendous importance if its members can be made to believe they constitute the sole survivors of the Israel of God, and are the exclusive recipients of God's grace, while every other person on the face of the earth is doomed to damnation because he does not see eye to

eye with them on every minute point of practice. But such delusions of grandeur are fatal to the intellect and deadly to the heart.

Indicative of the effect of such attitudes is the wresting of certain scriptures which may be twisted to justify schism and the party spirit in direct contradiction of those passages which forbid and condemn it. Men now love the party spirit. They advocate disunity and preach division among brethren. Under such circumstances any passage which seems to condone separation is seized upon with joyful abandon. As an example, I cite Ephesians 5:11, which says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Brethren seem to be overjoyed at the thought that they find here the expression "Have no fellowship." All they need to do is to make the term "works of darkness" elastic enough to cover the item currently in dispute, and another division is born.

A short time hence I was in correspondence with a brother who was contending that one could not scripturally engage in the Lord's Supper, except with fermented wine. He was bitterly partisan. I asked him for the scriptural ground upon which he made this a test of fellowship. He merely wrote down in big letters Ephesians 5:11, underlining it twice. Upon such ignorance of the intent of God's plan or purpose a new sect is introduced into the strife-torn religious world.

Did Paul who wrote in one verse instructing the congregation at Ephesus to manifest "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," write in another verse for the same brethren to fracture into splinter parties over opinions and preferences? Did he who wrote, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," write again to the same group to "have no fellowship"? Even a cursory examination of the context would demonstrate the folly of any such interpretation. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful *works of darkness!*" Are these

works to be interpreted to refer to classes to study the Bible, individual cups, leavened bread on the Lord's table, orphan homes, etc. Brethren should not add the stigma of being ridiculous to that of factionalism.

Whether the things enumerated, or a score of others in the same category, are right or wrong, this passage is not even remotely related to them. "The works of darkness" in verse 11 are the "things done in secret" (verse 12). These refer to the indescribable vices and licentious practices of the mystery cults of the Gentile world. Under cover of darkness and in the inner recesses of idol temples such gross sensuality was engaged in that the depth of depravity can hardly be fathomed by minds not attuned to base immorality.

Fornication, unchastity and idolatry debar from inheritance in the kingdom (verse 5). These things bring the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (verse 6). Because of these considerations the disciples were not to be partakers with them (verse 7). The state in which they existed had been changed. The apostle said, "You were sometimes darkness." Once they were steeped in idolatry and all of its filthy and abominable practices. "Now ye are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." To get a true picture of the darkness of which the apostle writes, one need only read Romans 1:21-32 and ponder the significance of the statement, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

Now to apply these passages to those in the realm of Christendom who are of a different order than ourselves and cite them *as the basis* for refusal to be partakers with them in their rituals and worship is to stultify any claim we make to fairness as scholars of the sacred oracles. There may be, and there are, good and sufficient reasons why we cannot endorse, assist or participate in the religious performances of many about us, but they do not fall within the category of characters described by Paul. The divided state of believers in Christ is a

sad and dreary thing to contemplate, yet in every sect and segment, there are good men and noble, those who are pure, chaste, and holy in life. We owe much to the scholarship of such men in the Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Quaker communions, as well as others. It ill becomes us to accept the fruit of ripe research from their hands, and then bite the hand from which we take it.

Please observe that we are not now dealing with whether or not such men are *Christians*. Our present treatise does not concern what they *are*, so much as what they *are not*. And we affirm that they are not the type of characters to whom Paul alludes in this passage. No sincere believer in the Messiah who is morally above reproach falls under this condemnation. To assume that a man is degraded and degenerate because he honestly disagrees with us upon the subject of baptism, for example, is a greater reflection against our reasoning powers than against his. Many of my neighbors are members of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and other Protestant sects, which today portray so graphically the deplorable state of division into which the world has fallen. But they are not walking in the darkness of which Paul wrote, nor do they have fellowship with the unfruitful works which he contemplated.

Theirs is the wrong of perpetuating a party to the division of God's people. This is a work of the flesh. But there is a difference in the influence upon society and the moral tone of the world in some of these works, as every logical reasoner must admit. Moreover, many of the adherents of the various religious parties are to an extent innocent victims of birth, environment and other circumstances beyond their control. And many love the truth, seek after it, and sigh for a greater knowledge of it. They pray for the unity of the church of God and long for a better day for Zion.

A person in one of the numerous sects of Christendom today may be a child of God, or he may not. That is also true of

those who are in “The Church of Christ.” Certainly one who is a child of God and still attached to a sect or party, is a child of God *and something else*. The mere fact that a man is in the Baptist party does not argue that he is not a child of God, but he may be a child of God *and a Baptist*, in the partisan sense of that term. I am a baptist, but not a Baptist. Our task is not to deny he is a child of God, but to get him to cease being a partisan, for the party spirit is a sin. The dividing of God’s children into schismatic groups labeled by partisan names, designed to keep them apart, is sinful. God wants all of His children to be one in the Christ. All who are truly His children are dedicated to the destruction of all religious parties, regardless of which one they may be associated with at present. A follower of the Lamb cannot condone, defend, uphold or perpetuate the party spirit. If he finds himself in a human party, he must either transform it or come out of it, if it is impossible of reformation.

We must be careful that in our opposition to the party spirit we are not mere partisans. I am fully convinced that many of my brethren are opposing sectism from a sectarian standpoint. They are interested in getting people out of “their sect” and into “our sect.” Of course they would not admit that, but that is what it amounts to. No doubt they are honest in their endeavor for they too are the victims of the circumstances of birth, training and environment. Some feel that sectism cannot exist in a religious body wearing the title “Church of Christ.” They think it serves as an amulet or charm with special powers for exorcising the demon of sectism. But some of the most partisan and bigoted sectarians in our modern world operate under that title. The very usage of the term in a segregatory and separationist fashion is indicative of the sectarian spirit.

There was a “Christ party” at Corinth. They were condemned in the same language as those who called themselves after the name of Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos. It is just as sinful to divide the body of Christ by saying, “We belong to Christ,” with the intent to separate yourselves from other brethren, as to

say, “We belong to Paul,” for the same purpose. It was to the members of this party that Paul wrote, “Look these facts in the face. If any man is fully persuaded as regards himself that he belongs to Christ, let him consider again with himself, that just as he is Christ’s, so also am I” (2 Cor. 10:7). Paul had accepted the Good News and been immersed into the Lord, and he did not propose to be dispossessed of his citizenship by those who claimed to belong to Christ in a special way, because they had formed an exclusive party wearing the term “Christ” to distinguish them from other brethren who had been immersed. There are scattered sheep on the hills of sectarianism today who could say to those calling themselves “The Church of Christ,” as Paul said, “Let them consider again, that just as they are Christ’s, so also are we.” God’s children have not all been gleaned from Babylon yet, and it will not help to wall off a little segment of Babylon and label it “Jerusalem.”

What is the essential equipment for those who would help answer the prayer of Jesus for unity of all who believe in Him through the testimony of the apostles? It is possible that we cannot detail all that is required. We have exercised such poor personal judgment in the past, and have so often mistaken the factional spirit for the spirit of righteousness, that we may be in a poor state to make suggestions. However, in humility and sincerity we mention the following as attributes of him who would walk toward the greatest goal that can challenge the thinking of the slaves of God on earth.

1. A firm and unshakable conviction that sectism is a sin, a work of the flesh, and will keep all who wilfully indulge in it out of the kingdom of heaven.

2. The ability to distinguish between the person and the party to which he belongs. Many are attached to sects who are not at all sectarian. Wholesale denunciation without recognition of the varying attitudes and degrees of knowledge is unwise and unreasonable.

3. A rigid determination to be nonpartisan and to call upon all men to rally to the cross, that at this common center we may become truly one in the only One who has a right to draw all men unto himself.

4. A spirit of forbearance and patience while men are learning. The road from Babylon to Jerusalem will not be covered in a day. Let us be content to contribute our little bit to the great work of the ages, and He who made the ages will weave it into His pattern so the thread will not be lost. No one of us can develop the whole pattern of God for the whole world in his lifetime.

5. A love of truth for truth's sake, which will crucify within us the dogmatic spirit, and make us realize that our intellectual "Geiger counters" may indicate a rich deposit of heaven's precious ore in areas which our human wisdom would cause us to pass by and leave unexplored. Let us prospect every inch of ground for truth.

END NOTES

- 1. *The Christian System*, London (1843), iv.**
- 2. *Ibid*, ix.**
- 3. *Ibid*, v.**

Thoughts on Fellowship (6)

Mission Messenger (June 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Fellowship in Christ is a state or relationship to which we are called by the gospel. All who are immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as believing penitents are in that fellowship. We share with each other because we are made partakers of the Christ. We are holy *brethren* because we share in a heavenly call (Heb. 3:1). We are fellow heirs and members of the same body, because we are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:6). In view of this we are to live “in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6). In order to do this we must “welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed us, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

We are joined and knit together as a body (Eph. 4:16). We have access in the one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). We must be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” seeing that there is only one body and one Spirit (Eph. 4:3). So long as the Holy Spirit dwells in any man he is bound by an invisible cord to heaven; and by the same token, he is bound to every other person in whom the Spirit abides. This is “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil 2:1). Because we sustain that relationship we are urged to “complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one

mind” (verse 2). We do not come into the fellowship because we are of the same mind, or have the same love but we come to be of the same mind and have the same love, because we are in the fellowship. God brings us into fellowship through grace; we grow together by mutual eagerness to maintain that unity.

One of the greatest tragedies of this age has been the lack of eagerness to maintain unity. There has been an eagerness to divide but a decided reluctance to unite. Men have no fear of separation, but live in mutual dread of ending it. Nowhere does the word of God counsel division among believers. In scores of passages unity is urged, but we could not be more divided if the word of God had commanded it. No one is so unpopular in some circles today as he who speaks for unity. Brethren take counsel together to stop the mouth of one who pleads for it, and if they cannot stop his mouth, they stop their ears. This is the sad state to which Christendom is reduced by our littleness, fears, frustrations, bigotry and hatred. Is it any wonder that under such circumstances we seek and earnestly look for scriptural warrant for our procedure? We have charted our course by ourselves; we must alter God’s chart and map to justify it. We now place a ban upon unity and a blessing upon division. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isa. 5:20).

Think of the frightful cleavages that invest the realm of Christendom. If you disregard the great division between Romanism and Protestantism, and regard only the latter as filling the nominal Christian domain, behold the almost three hundred sects and cults which cumber our own country. If you restrict your narrowed vision to the heirs of the restoration movement, you must contemplate no less than twenty-five splinter parties, each one belaboring all of the others as sects and factions. Nor is the end yet, for the germ of the seed which has produced this state is not dead or dormant, and there must

follow more division, factionism, strife, contention and bitter debate. We will bequeath to our children and our children's children a legacy of hate and intolerance, so they will bite and devour one another, and long after our bones moulder in the earth, the feuds will go on and damn our offspring to the flames of hell. With all of our modern skills and scientific acumen we have not yet solved the problem of how all believers in Christ can be one. Is it any wonder we cannot solve our national and international problems? The greatest challenge to Christendom today is to find the answer to the prayer of Jesus. There is an answer! There has to be!

Those who love God and revere His word will seek for the answer in that word. But they must learn how to handle it properly. It is a sword, and such a weapon in an unskilled hand may slay more friends than enemies. We want to deal in this little essay with one passage of scripture which we have used in a factional sense. It has been used over and over to create and widen schisms in the body of the Lord. We refer to 2 John 9, 10. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed, for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." This is the handle that has been shaped to fit every factional tool man has invented.

In Tennessee, a man reaches the conclusion that it is a sin to teach little children the word of God in a Bible class in the meetinghouse. This is made his party test, and "If any man bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not." In Texas, a man decides that the fruit of the vine must be passed to the congregation in one container. That is made his party test and "if any man bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not." In the same factional strain, one in his congregation concludes that the fruit of the vine passed in that one container must be fermented. This becomes his party test, and "if any man bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not!" To one "this doctrine" means a special way of breaking the loaf, to another it refers to orphan homes, to another our relation to

civil government, to another it has to do with certain regulations on marriage. But whatever the party test, one must bring *this doctrine*, or he is an outcast, and must be given the cold shoulder, disregarded as a brother and treated like a pagan.

Did the apostle of love intend to create such a conglomerate mess as we now behold? Did he who wrote that “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” also give us instruction to club the life out of them or to drive them out when they could not conscientiously agree with us on some point of interpretation? Did he who said “Any one who hates his brother is a murderer,” provide us with a verbal dagger by which to stab our brethren to death doctrinally? Did he who condemned Diotrephes because he “refuses himself to welcome the brethren, and also stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church,” lay down a principle which would propagate the Diotrephesian spirit in every church? What did John mean by “this doctrine”? Was he referring to individual cups, Bible classes, leavened bread, fermented wine, a special method of breaking the loaf, orphan homes, colleges, radio programs, instrumental music, tuning forks, baptisteries, collection plates, and a host of other items too numerous to mention?

Whatever “this doctrine” was, the man who did not bring it was not to be welcomed when he came, nor speeded on his way with good wishes when he left. We are of the opinion that we can only understand what John was talking about by consideration of the background and circumstances under which he wrote. John spent his final days in Ephesus, laboring in the vicinity of Asia Minor. It was in this area that the great error of Gnosticism was affecting the brethren. Ephesus was the home of Cerinthus, a Jew who studied in Alexandria, and who is credited with being the original propagator of the theory which was destined eventually to divide almost every congregation on earth. It is a conviction of ours that John was spared to deal the death blow to this cult of Greek mysticism, even as Paul was destined to save the church from the inroads of a mistaken Judaism.

The first and second epistles of John were written to deal with this problem. No one can rightfully understand them if he ignores this fact. We cannot here enter into a full analysis of Gnosticism, its origins, nature and effects. The word is from the Greek *gnosis*, i.e., “knowledge.” Paul alludes to it in warning Timothy to avoid “the contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (gnosis)” and affirms that “by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20). Although, because of its speculative nature, gnosticism finally took many forms, it generally denied the pre-existence of the Son of God in some fashion.

Cerinthus taught that God was exalted above all contact with the world of nature and sense, that the world was created by angels, and presided and ruled over by one of them, who was the Sovereign and lawgiver of the Jews. He affirmed that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary by the natural process of birth, but developed and grew in such a degree of wisdom, and of favor with God and man, that he was deemed to be worthy of divine honor. At his baptism by John, the Logos, that is, the divine wisdom and energy, descended upon him, thus making him the Christ (the anointed one). By this supernatural endowment he was permitted to work miracles and reveal the divine purpose, which the Logos could penetrate. Cerinthus further taught that when Jesus was arrested, the Logos left him and returned to the Father, so it was just the man who died, and not God, or the Son of God. One who is familiar with the teachings of the Jehovah’s witness cult will at once recognize the similarity in their doctrine and that of the Gnostics.

John wrote to refute this dangerous theory which had already infiltrated most of the congregations during his lifetime. This will explain many of the statements and emphases in his gospel record. He starts it by affirming, “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God.” He declares that “The Logos *became flesh* and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He begins his first epistle by affirming

that he had personal audible, manual and visible witness of the word of life, that this life had pre-existence with the Father, was manifested to the witnesses, and proclaimed to others so they might also have fellowship with the proclaimers, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3). The message of the proclaimers was that *God is light!* To say that one has fellowship with God while denying the manifestation of God (in Jesus Christ) is only to lie, and to walk in darkness. “To walk in the Light” (i.e., to be in God) is to be in fellowship with one another and in contact with the cleansing power of the Son of God (1:5-7). No one can be in the light (that is in God) who is not in the Son, for they sustain a divine fellowship. “No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also . . . If what you have heard from the beginning abide in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life” (2:23-25). What was it they had heard from the beginning which must abide in them, so they could abide in God? “*The life was made manifest, and we saw it . . . and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest unto us.*”

To say one is in fellowship with the Father while denying the pre-existence and revelation of the Son makes one a liar (1:6). “*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son*” (2:22). There are many kinds of liars, but the one with whom John was dealing while writing this epistle was the one who denied the Messiahship of Jesus. The Gnostic was not a Christian, but an antichrist. These men had created a party or heresy, for we read, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that it might be plain that they are not of us” (2:19). The saints were not to believe every spirit. They were to test the spirits, because many false prophets were abroad. The criterion was simple. “Every spirit which confesses that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.” By this the Spirit of God could be

identified (4:1-3). “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (4:15). “Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and obey his commandments” (5:1, 2).

We are now ready to appreciate 2 John. It was written to a sister in the Lord. Some of her children were following the truth (verse 4). The congregation may have met in her house. John wrote the same thing to her in verses 5 and 6 that he wrote in 1 John 2:7-9. He tells her “many deceivers have gone out into the world” (verse 7) as he previously said, “Many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). He identifies these as “men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh” (Cp. verse 7 with 1 John 4:3) and labels them in both instances as “antichrist.”

In verse 9, he tells the sister, “Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” The doctrine of Christ is the testimony “that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14), that is, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (4:2). Those who go ahead and do not abide in this conviction do not have God, but those who retain this conviction, have both the Father and the Son. As phrased in 1 John 2:23, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.” To “deny the Son” in this expression is equivalent to the expression “does not abide in the doctrine of Christ” in the other place.

The instruction is “If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, or give him any greeting: for he who greets him shares his wicked work.” The abuse of this passage by men motivated by a partisan spirit is indescribable in its awful effects; only eternity will reveal the tragic loss of souls caused by such abuse. It has

been quoted to justify driving out into the cold those humble souls who could not bow to clerical domination; it is the whiplash that has cut into the hearts of sincere believers in the Lord who would not do abject obeisance to an arbitrary interpretation of some despotic and tyrannical faction. It is the sword that has spilled the blood of the saints, the axe that has wrecked the house of God; and the rude hand that has torn the fabric of fellowship into a hundred bits and flung the pieces into the face of the Christ of Calvary who died that we might be one in Him. Dear Lord, forgive us the sin of mistaking zeal for your kingdom with the blood lust of the sectarian spirit! Let us truly know your will!

Men may have God, and God may have men, who sincerely differ on Bible classes, individual cups, leavened or unleavened bread, fermented or unfermented wine, lesson leaves, baptisteries, and a host of other things. Men may abide in the “doctrine of Christ” of which John speaks, and hold conflicting views about implementation of God’s will for us in this age. It is a matter of our attitude toward truth. But those who split, tear and rend the body of God’s Son, then try to call heaven’s blessing upon their destructive ways, by quoting as justification, “If any come and bring not *this doctrine*, do not receive him into your house, nor give him a greeting,” are the real factionists and troublers of Israel. Such a spirit is more dangerous to the well-being of the church of God than some “innovations.”

Those who profess to be defenders of the faith, may become wreckers of the church; those who pose as champions of orthodoxy may be intolerant advocates of an unwritten human creed. We are not apologists for error, nor do we excuse divisions in Christ, of those who earnestly strive to know His will, but we do not propose to settle our problems by driving out of the house our brethren who disagree. We shall not throw the baby out with the bath water! The members of the present factions and dissident groups need to get on their knees before

the Savior lest they be forced to do so before the Judge of all the earth. It is time to repent. Reformation must precede true restoration. Let us all love the brethren, and in that spirit resolve that we shall end factionism and party strife. The night is far spent, the day is at hand!

Instrumental Music (2)

Mission Messenger (June 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

There are two great themes which engross my attention in these days. One is the restoration of the ancient order; the other the unity of all believers in the Christ. I consider that they are related. I doubt that the latter can be achieved without a sincere attempt to accomplish the first. I recognize that the church of God is fractured by schisms, and we have not achieved the ideal of God, so I am interested in any problem linked either to unity or restoration. The subject we are discussing may have a bearing upon both.

Some of the arguments employed against the use of instrumental music in the public praise service have been very shallow and unprincipled. As an example, I mention Amos 6:5, where a woe is pronounced upon those who “chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David.” The prophet was condemning those who lived in luxury, spending their time in idle songs and musical entertainment, “but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” A careful analysis of the context would demonstrate that on the basis of the argument commonly made, one could prove it was a sin to stretch out on a couch, eat lamb chops or veal steak, and use perfume or shaving lotion.

An equally weak argument is often made by a cheap interpretation of Romans 14:23, a passage which becomes the

last stand for every embattled faction in opposition to what someone else does, without realizing the idea the apostle had in mind. It is as sinful to misuse a scripture to condemn a thing we believe to be wrong, as to misuse one to uphold what we believe to be right. We need to be fair with God and our brethren, lest in differing with the latter we separate ourselves from the former. A great deal that has been written in favor of instrumental music ought to be scrapped, and an equal amount of what has been written against it should receive the same fate. In both cases, much of it should be charged off to ignorance and the party spirit. Either of these is bad, a combination of the two is especially so.

The base of operations has shifted several times in the struggle over instrumental music among the heirs of the restoration movement. I am persuaded the instrument was introduced on one basis, but brethren now seek to defend it on a wholly different basis. As I compare the modern reasoning of some who retain it, with that employed a century ago by those who introduced it, I am persuaded that if all they had to commend it then was the basis of its present defence, they would never have brought it in at all. They would never have divided God's people over something in the same category as a tuning fork, collection basket, or bread plate, which is the category in which many brethren now place the instrument.

There can be little doubt the instrument was brought in as a means of expressing worship. So far as I know, the use made of the instrument today is the same as it was then, and in the minds of the unskilled it occupies the same place. It is the preachers and seminarians who ordinarily make the keen distinctions and draw the fine lines, so the battle can be waged to greater advantage against the opposition. By this means the piano can be left in, but defined out of "the worship," and can be talked out instead of taken out. Many good brethren who employ the instrument now affirm they oppose it "in worship" or "as worship." Some take the position you could not put the

instrument in the worship without putting it in the heart.

I am very sorry that instrumental music was ever introduced to trouble our ranks. I am saddened over the division which resulted. I am grieved also by my own attitude in the past toward those brethren who employ it. We gain nothing for the Christ by an attitude of intolerance and partisanship. Tolerance is not unity. It must never be mistaken for unity. It is only the atmosphere in which we can labor and strive toward unity. I do not advocate tolerance for *a thing* which you believe to be wrong; I only plead for tolerance toward *the person* who sincerely believes it to be right. In such a spirit we can continue to explore avenues leading toward a closer walk with God and with each other.

The brethren who use instrumental music are seriously divided over the question. They are not agreed as to the attitude they should manifest toward it, and it is variously defended even in the same school or congregation. Those who do not use it must not conclude that those who do, are inflexibly agreed, and have closed all further discussion among themselves. Many non-instrument brethren grind out the same old grist of argument, and deliver with gusto the same old sermon outlines (generally borrowed), not realizing that they are beating the air and firing at random, without touching the local situation. Of course these outlines have a familiar ring in the ears of members of "The Church of Christ." They have heard them often in every "gospel meeting" so they can sit back and relax, knowing just what is coming next. Yet these arguments, often delivered from a partisan level, do not meet the problem in the heart of many sincere students in the community. Nor do public debates, as generally conducted, meet the problem, for they tend to engender too much party spirit.

Within recent months we have seen an argument in favor of instrumental music which seems to be pleasing to many. I would like for you to read it as stated by Bro. Given O. Blakely,

of Dallas City, Illinois, in his paper “The Salt Shaker.”

I want every one reading this paper to immediately read the 87th psalm. Does this apply to the church of Jesus Christ. If not, why not? Is not ‘Zion’ typical of the church? And is not ‘Jacob’ typical of Israel? If this is admitted, and it certainly should be, read that last verse once again. Are the two groups mentioned here in the body of Christ? Is not this what the psalmist is referring to? Who will deny this? . . . ‘The singers and the players of instruments shall be there,’ said David. He spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! What spirit, I humbly ask, would influence anyone to say that instrumental music is a sin in worship services? What is the sense of having players of instruments if there are no instruments? What is the use of instruments if they shall not be played? And what is the use of playing them if it is not an expression of worship? The Holy Spirit said they would be in the church— Zion. Amen! I take God at His word, ready to relinquish any stand that is not substantiated by God’s word. Are you that sincere, that honest, that desirous to be right with God?

We have a very high regard for the writer of this although we have never met him personally. We have corresponded and I hope to meet him in the future. Very humbly I suggest that he does his own cause harm by this form of interpretation and argument. I want to take God at His word, to be honest, sincere, and right with God, but I do not think the writer of this “Song for the sons of Korah” was giving instruction for the conduct of the public worship of the church of God, any more than I think that Amos was doing so, in his prophecy mentioned above.

Our brother asks, “Does this apply to the church of Jesus Christ?” I quote from *Two Thousand Hours in the Psalms*, by Dr. Marion McH. Hull, Dean of Atlanta Bible Institute, and Professor of Bible Exposition and Prophecy. He says, regarding this psalm, “The heading given in the Authorized Version is wholly misleading. Zion, the city of God, is not the church.” Our

brother says, “I hastily say that I may be wrong, but it does appear rather obvious to me that this Psalm is referring to the church.” Yet, in closing, he writes: “The Holy Spirit said they would be *in the church— Zion.*” The Holy Spirit did not say that. Brother Blakely said that, but yet admits he may be wrong, and it only appears rather obvious that the church is intended. Brethren, regardless of what we seek to justify, we ought not to handle God’s sacred revelation so recklessly and charge the Holy Spirit with our interpretations. There is a vast difference in one thinking that Zion may typify the church, and saying that the Holy Spirit said so!

“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Psalm 87:2). Our brother concludes that Zion is typical of the church; and Jacob is typical of Israel. He says this should certainly be admitted. But I do not agree. I do not think that God is trying to show he will love the church more than he loved Israel. That may, or may not, be true, but this passage has nothing to do with it. “The holy mountains” as the sons of Korah who rendered the psalm would understand, and as the congregation at the temple which heard the song would agree, were the hills upon which Jerusalem was built. “Zion” was Jerusalem; “the dwellings of Jacob” were the other cities of Judah. Jerusalem was superior to all of these, because God had selected it as the place to write his name, it was the location of the temple, and the center of worship. It was the capital city of the theocracy, and its very gates were hallowed unto God.

Since Jerusalem was the dwelling place of God through the Shekinah, the nations of the earth were blessed by contact with this city. Verse 4 mentions Egypt (Rahab) on the south, Babylon on the east, Philistia on the west, Tyre to the northwest, and Ethiopia, representative of the nations afar (Cp. Isa. 18:1, 2). As a result of this, it was a distinct honor to be born in Jerusalem, and verse 6 declares that when God makes a register of the

nations, he will record the names of those who were born there.

Verse 7 says, “As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.” Brother Blakeley, and others, conclude that since “The players on instruments shall be there” that the “there” is the New Testament congregation of the saints assembled for worship. But there are several things these brethren overlook. The marginal rendering in the King James Version, substitutes “the dancers” for “the players on instruments.” The RSV reads, “Singers and dancers alike say, ‘All my springs are in you.’” This seems to be the view of scholars generally. The commentary edited by J. R. Dummelow M.A., with many scholarly contributors, agrees with the Revised Version, “They that sing as well as they that dance, shall say . . .” In view of this, we are inclined to think that the psalm, instead of regulating the worship of the church, records the attitude of those who engaged in triumphal processions, and entered the city through the gates, dancing for joy and shouting, “My springs (fountains of joy) are in thee.”

May we suggest a word of warning to those who would be interpreters of the psalms. The only authorized interpreters are the apostles of Christ. “He opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45), which the context shows included the psalms. Is it not dangerous for us to go back to the law, the psalms and the prophets, *for authority* for worship under the new covenant, in those matters where the apostles have not interpreted these scriptures as applicable? If Psalm 87:7 was intended to install instruments of music in the primitive churches of the saints, the apostles whose minds were opened to understand the psalms, remained blissfully unaware of the fact, for no such instruments were used in the church until it began to borrow from Judaism those items which would contribute to pomp and pageantry, and pamper a growing pride.

James Pierce, an erudite scholar of the Presbyterian faith, who died in 1726, in *A Vindication of the Dissenters*, sums up the

case: “I come now to say somewhat of the antiquity of musical instruments. But that these were not used in the Christian Church in the primitive times is attested by all the ancient writers with one consent . . . From what has been said, it appears no musical instruments were used in the pure times of the church.” Even Thomas Aquinas, the man most responsible for the present day doctrines of the Roman Church, writes, “In the old law, God was praised both with musical instruments and human voices. But the Church does not use musical instruments lest she should seem to Judaize. Nor ought a pipe, nor any other artificial instruments, such as organ, or harp, or the like be brought into use in the Church, but only those things which shall make the hearers better men. Under the Old Testament such instruments were used, partly because the people were harder, and more carnal, and partly because these bodily instruments were typical of something.” How far modern Catholicism has drifted since the days of “The Angelic Doctor” can easily be seen by even a casual observer; and how far many of our brethren are yet from the primitive simplicity of worship, may just as easily be detected.

Bro. Blakely asks the question, concerning the instruments, “What is the use of playing them if it is not an expression of worship?” Many instrumental brethren now deny that it is right or proper to play instruments as an expression of worship. They say it would be wrong to do so, and a violation of the principle of God’s authority. We shall allow them to answer Bro. Blakely on their justification for playing them since they do not do so as an expression of worship, and because this treatise has been extended to such length, that we be not further tedious, we will reserve until next month, our presentation of reasons why we oppose the use of instruments as presently practiced by many of the brethren. You may be sure we will write in love.

Thoughts on Fellowship (7)

Mission Messenger (July 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Dr. Erich Lindemann, while directing clinical work at Massachusetts General Hospital made an epochal discovery. He specialized in research with patients suffering from mental and physical illness induced by grief and sorrow. Many of these developed severe sicknesses or depression years after the loss of a loved one. The researchist uncovered the basic fact that to repress feelings of grief may lead to morbid and abnormal reactions later on. In our modern culture, the idea has obtained that emotional outbursts are to be avoided, and that one should be ashamed of tears and paroxysms of sorrow. Psychiatry has now discovered that expression of grief is a healing process for the soul, while repression of sorrow leaves wounds and scars on the fabric of life. Joshua Loth Liebman, in his book *Peace of Mind*, points out how the Bible long ago taught this elemental truth and cites the open and unashamed expression of sorrow by Abraham, Jacob and David as examples.

This is but one case among many where men have discovered that the real teaching of the Bible is in direct contradiction to the accepted view and common practice. We are glad when men like Dr. Lindemann find the solution to problems of mental stress and depression, so they can help the victims of emotional disturbance to have a happier existence. We believe that the Bible has also long held the answer to a problem which has plagued the disciple brotherhood. The problem is that of

division, strife and factionalism, with all the kindred ills which attend it. It is everywhere manifest and is detrimental to the achievement of the purpose of restoration, the unity of all believers in the Christ. The answer is simple, but it is exactly opposite to the generally accepted position. That the present view is not achieving the proper purpose is evident in the fact that factions are multiplying and the possibility of unity recedes farther into the distance with each passing year.

The discovery we are going to mention can revolutionize our lives, revitalize the restoration movement, recharge our spiritual batteries and change our whole relationship to the religious world. It can make us apostles of world brotherhood in the van of a great movement to lead mankind to a closer walk with God and with each other. But it is so simple you may be inclined to underestimate it and overlook its power-packed vitality. You will need to think about it for a long time before the full potential dawns upon you. You will need to understand what a tremendous change it can work in your own life and practice by transforming your attitude and altering your perspective. The unlimited possibilities it will provide will be in direct contrast to the spiritually restricted life which has been yours. Through grasp of this great truth God will open up for you “a great door and effectual.” Read what follows carefully and thoughtfully!

Fellowship in Christ is not the result of our agreement upon matters of opinion and interpretation; but our agreement upon these things comes as a result of our fellowship.

Do you ask what is so great about that? First, it is the reverse of what most of us have been taught and have taught. It may, therefore, produce unity where our previous attitude has produced division and disunity.

Second, it begins with fellowship and ends with agreement; whereas we have been trying to start with agreement and work

towards fellowship. But it has been impossible to agree because we have had an improper attitude toward each other. We have regarded each other as aliens, enemies and opponents. We have been fearful of each other. In this spirit the area of disagreement has widened and fellowship was thrust farther away. We thought we could not love each other as brethren. This produced an impasse with a new faction given birth almost every year.

Third, this places our fellowship in proper perspective. It makes it infinitely greater than any matter of interpretation or any difference of opinion. In the past even minor opinions have been deemed greater than fellowship. As a result fellowship has been sacrificed at every disagreement. In reality, there is room for differences and disagreements inside the circle of fellowship, provided the royal law of love is not forgotten or forsaken. Love is the spiritual law of gravity which draws us toward a common center. So long as it is operative, we may differ greatly on many things, and still remain in the domain of Christ, even as men may differ in the political world and still remain on earth.

Fourth, fellowship is attained at once through the grace of God, while agreement upon spiritual implications and interpretations may be the work of years, and achieved only through intensive study and mutual intercourse of thought. We are called into fellowship by God. We arrive at understanding through the exercise of our rational faculties. To recognize that fellowship is a state or relationship into which we are brought by divine power, and to conceive of every immersed believing penitent as being in that relationship, will allow our own spirits to expand and the love of God will then be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us.

Fifth, this concept, if understood and taught, will assure that not another division will ever occur among those who sincerely love Christ. Moreover, a number of breaches now existing will be healed. We recognize that “there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among

you may be recognized” (1 Cor. 11:19). In the past, the genuine ones could not be recognized, because they joined up with one or the other of the factions. We take it that if two parties were created in the church, the genuine ones would not be recognized if they aligned themselves with either. The genuine ones are those who refuse to be factional. If a congregation is divided into parties over an interpretation of Revelation 20, and there is a pre-millennial and a post-millennial faction formed, the genuine ones, regardless of their views on the millennial question, would recognize all as brethren, and refuse to become partisans in the matter. Those who are genuine exalt Jesus above any opinion and refuse to divide those who are in Him; those who are factional exalt an opinion above Jesus and refuse to recognize those who differ as being in Him. Our misconception of the New Testament teaching has tended to make more of us factional than genuine!

Fellowship is not a fruit of agreement but agreement is the fruit of fellowship! Does the Bible teach that? Do we come to be in fellowship because we are of one mind, or do we come to be of one mind because we are in the fellowship? Much depends upon the answer you give. If we come into fellowship by agreement upon opinions, then how many things must we agree upon, and which ones, before fellowship commences? If we must agree upon all views and opinions then no fellowship at all exists today for no two persons are wholly agreed. If we need not agree upon all, who is to determine which ones we may eliminate from the area of agreement without impairing fellowship? If we decide which opinions and views we must agree upon to have fellowship, what happens if one learns more on some point and changes his mind? Shall he be put out of the fellowship for “growing in knowledge”? On the basis that fellowship is contingent upon agreement in matters of opinion, no congregation existing a hundred years ago could now be in fellowship, and no congregation now existing would be fellowshiped a hundred years from now if our Lord tarry that long.

No such difficulty is encountered if we regard fellowship in the proper light. Allowance will be made for the ignorance on many points a century ago, and for the increase of knowledge a century in the future. Neither ignorance nor growth affect fellowship unless the first is wilful and the second disregards the law of love. There will be room for minds that are liberal and conservative to work together in love, the first lending fresh outlook and new vision, the latter exercising proper restraint to keep the progress within the pale of God's revelation. But is this concept scriptural. We assert that it is!

Every admonition in the New Testament to be of one mind, to agree among yourselves, or to speak the same thing, was given to those who were in fellowship. In no case were brethren told to achieve peace in order to be in fellowship, but, having been called into fellowship, they were to achieve peace. "And above all these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ dwell in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body" (Col. 3:14-15). It was those who were in the one body who were to put on love, and to allow the peace of Christ to rule.

Paul wrote to the saints *in Christ Jesus* at Philippi with their bishops and deacons and instructed them to "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). His joy began when they entered the fellowship of Christ. As they grew closer to each other in that area and achieved unity of thought and purpose, his joy and theirs abounded. "I shall remain and continue with you all, *for your progress* and joy in the faith" (1:25). On what basis were they told to achieve the same mind, the same love, and full accord? The previous verse hinges its accomplishment upon "encouragement in Christ, the incentive of love, the participation (fellowship) in the Spirit." With such encouragement, incentive and fellowship they were to labor toward unity of thought. But while they were struggling the fellowship was not impaired!

The church of God at Corinth was composed of those who “were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). It was because they were in fellowship, that the apostle said, “I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same judgment.” They were rent into schismatic groups, yet they were in the fellowship. Paul pleads with all of them *as brethren*, regardless of the party names they wore. To them all he recommends love as the answer to their predicament, for “love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things” (13:4-7). Paul rises above all partisanship in this letter. He takes sides with neither group, not even with those who said “We are of Paul.” He addresses them all as brethren, and admonishes them “as my beloved children.” He says, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

Let us again state this revolutionary principle. *Fellowship in Christ is not contingent upon agreement upon matters of interpretation and opinion; but agreement in these is contingent upon fellowship.* What practical changes will be made by recognition and application of this law?

Perhaps we can best illustrate by example. A group of brethren from another section of the country reared in a different traditional background, and in a congregation which is opposed to Bible classes, move to a northern city to find employment. They find a congregation of saints meeting there and attend with them to break bread. The procedure is different than that with which they have been accustomed to and some things are very difficult for them to see. Fortunately, all are sincerely motivated by a deep love for Christ.

They meet together in Christian love to discuss the problem. All agree that they are brethren. All recognize that they are in the fellowship, not because of personal agreement, but because of their relationship to God through the Holy Spirit. All resolve not to tear the fabric of fellowship because it is greater than any personal view relative to teaching the Word of the Lord, however dear that view might be to their hearts. They first decide to list and discuss those things in which they stand together, believing that emphasis upon these will lay a more solid foundation for discussion of differences. They find the area of agreement is much greater than the area of disagreement, and they concede that it would be foolish to give up this ground which has already been gained in their struggle to possess the small remainder in unity.

All are patient and kind. No one is jealous or boastful. No one is arrogant, rude, irritable or resentful. No one insists upon having his own way. (Read 1 Cor. 13:4, 5 again). The brethren who have moved to the city, agree to work with the congregation in every way possible and to allow each one's personal conviction to be the determining factor as to how far he can go in cooperating with the classes for Bible study. As several years pass, their love for each other is deepened through sharing in times of joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, and pain and death. Their children have married and they are bound together by ties of affection. The congregation grows so large it is deemed best to plant another.

The brethren who have opposed the grouping of students ask permission to form a new congregation in which they can conduct a teaching program more in conformity with their views. Consent is given and all labor together in planting the new unit. They continue to meet together once per week for mutual study of the word, they exchange physical labor upon the two meetinghouses, and also exchange talent for the purpose of edification. They recognize that because brethren meet in two different places and hold some varying views does not justify

disfellowship, and frequent association will mean a closer unity as they come nearer to the ideal of Christ.

Would not such a course be better than the procedure generally followed? Would it not be more consistent with the tenor of the sacred revelation? Then, why have we not acted in this fashion? There is just one answer. "For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like ordinary men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). Christians are to be extraordinary men. They are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. Men of the world quarrel, fight, and separate into cliques and parties. When we do the same, we are conformists to the world. We can only be transformed when our minds are renewed by some great overwhelming, powerful thought. We will never achieve unity by devising ingenious human schemes and drawing up formal professions. The very existence of these testifies to a lack of love.

We are today exactly where our thinking has brought us. We will be tomorrow exactly where our thinking takes us. If we will change the tragic picture of divisions, desolation and spiritual destruction, we must alter our thinking. So long as we seek to achieve fellowship by agreement upon propositions we will divide every time someone learns a new truth. Unity will not be achieved by external documents and forms. It must come from within. We must feel that we are one in Him with every other person who has accepted Him as Lord. That feeling will do more to promote peace, and prove to be a surer bond of lasting union than all the pacts, concordats and comity agreements men have written. We are in fellowship! We are one in Christ! We have been raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places! The Holy Spirit dwells within us as a seal of our fellowship with God and with each other. Under the benign influence of that Spirit, let us move closer to having one mind, the same love and full accord. God hasten the day! Peace must be waged, as others wage war and strife.

Instrumental Music (3)

Mission Messenger (July 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

This is the third, and for the present, the concluding article of a series on this subject. In it we will state briefly a few of our several reasons for opposing instrumental music in the public worship of God. We do so without rancor towards those who employ it, and with a sincere prayer that this vexing problem may be resolved by an application of the law of love.

1. Instrumental music in the corporate worship stands athwart our path in the attempt to promote the unity of all believers in the Christ. The most memorable address I ever heard on the topic was delivered at the graduation exercises of the Presbyterian College in Belfast, Ireland, in 1951. The reverend doctor spoke on “Instrumental Music in Public Worship Is a Sin.” I have read more than a score of books on the subject by scholarly men not connected with the movement which grew out of the restoration effort launched by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. These were all vehement in their opposition. Our plea will be nullified in many areas if some persist in use of the instrument. Dare we love that which is not essential more than we do the souls of men?

2. The introduction of the instrument created division. Whether those who introduced it, those who opposed it, or both, were to blame for the division which resulted is not now the question. Before it was brought in, brethren worshiped and did

so acceptably as all admit, and such worship was unified; after it was introduced division came as a result. Regardless of whether worship was thus polluted or corrupted as some charge, we can return to our original status and be acceptable *and be together* if there are no other barriers. It is hardly conceivable that a division can be healed unless we return to the source and remove the original cause.

3. A genuine restoration, complete in details, of the primitive pattern of public worship will find the instrument excluded from use. It is our conviction that no one can show that it was employed in the congregations planted by the apostles, and this conviction has been reached after careful examination of all available material on the subject.

4. The employment of instrumental music in the public worship of God introduces an element unauthorized by our King, and therefore, constitutes will worship, which is condemned by the Holy Spirit.

5. The use of instrumental music in public praise service is actually ritualism, and to that extent, is a departure from the simplicity which should characterize those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly one.

How shall I regard those who disagree with me? They are my brethren if they have been immersed into the Christ. We love them all because He loves them all. We think they are in error in the practice under consideration, but this does not lessen our regard for them. We only yearn to help them and in turn to be helped by them to correct our many errors and mistakes. They are in our fellowship. Such fellowship in the Spirit is not contingent upon perfect agreement but mutual parenthood. We cannot participate in the public praise service where the instrument is used in conjunction. We love to sing but we must answer to God for a violation of honest conviction and sincere conscience. If brethren wish to inject into the service that which

will exclude us on the basis of conscience and make it impossible for us to join with them in praise the responsibility will rest with them. We will not malign them, hate them, nor speak evil of them. If they are content to answer to God for their action which forces some of us to stand on the sidelines in certain aspects of public praise, the matter will be left in His hands, and if they can explain their attitude satisfactorily to Him, so they may enter in through the gates into the City we will rejoice to be with them forever where *all of us may sing together* in an unbroken chorus unhindered and unaffected by human failing or schisms.

A Sound Mind (1)

Mission Messenger (August 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

There are some indications in the Bible that Timothy was subjected to periods of discouragement and despondency. Under such circumstances zeal wanes and fears are multiplied. One reads with interest the advice given by the old soldier Paul to this younger recruit, to stimulate and encourage him. As an example we cite 2 Timothy 1:6, “I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Is there an implication in this that the young evangelist allowed the divine gift to lapse or wane in intensity because of personal fear? Certainly the problems he had to face were sufficient to cause one to shrink back if he was at all moved by timidity.

There are three Greek words translated *fear* in the Authorized Version. The one used here is *deilia*. It refers to fearfulness or cowardice. Archbishop Trench in his work on synonyms, says it is always used in a bad sense. The spirit of cowardice is not from God. It is the triumph of our lower nature over our higher. It is the manifestation of animal nature over the spiritual. The fearful, as well as the unbelieving, will have their part in the lake of fire.

To combat such a failing, God has provided us with three things— power, love, and a sound mind. A recognition of the

fact that we are in Christ, and are strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man will do much toward making us “more than conquerors.” Love also inspires boldness. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:17, 18).

The third factor in the conquest of unreasoning fear is a sound mind. This suggests that there may be minds which are not sound. The mind is that part of our being which thinks and wills, remembers and reasons. We are what our thinking makes us. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” No man can walk straight who thinks crooked. I hold that the chief aim of man is to search for truth, that this is the highest and noblest pursuit to which he can devote those intellectual powers which lift him above the dumb animals. Man was not meant to be enslaved. He was made for freedom. But sin has shackled him. Only truth can make him free, and it can only do so when it is known.

In order for the mind to arrive at proper concepts it must be regulated and disciplined. This suggests that certain principles must be recognized which will properly channel our intellectual faculties and provide necessary restraints. A mind exercised in due regard for these principles is “a sound mind.” It is that kind of mind God would have us possess. Soundness of mind does not refer to breadth or scope of learning, nor even to depth of knowledge in a special field. It has to do with that quality or state of intellect which enables one to think clearly and reason correctly in regard to those propositions which come within the sphere of his personal experience or relationships. A man might possess great knowledge of facts in a wide field and not have a “sound mind,” while another might possess such a mind, although limited by circumstances in his area of investigation.

Since truth alone can make us free, and that only when it is

known and acted upon, and since truth can only be perceived clearly by a well-regulated mind, and since such a quality of mental power must be cultivated and nurtured, it would appear that it is a matter of first importance to consider those factors which will develop in us the ability to think clearly and reason correctly, that we may truly have sound minds. Accordingly, it is our hope, God willing, to supply our readers, especially those who are younger in years, with suggestions of a practical nature which will enable us all to lay foundations for mental progress which will react to personal well being and good of the entire community of saints.

Obviously, what we write in this regard will hold little appeal for those who are light and frivolous, or slothful and neglectful. We need to approach a subject as vital as life in a sober vein, for life is a serious business, and our destiny should be a matter of real concern. We will expect to write in an understandable fashion, but those who read have an obligation to seek for understanding even as the writer has a like obligation to convey his thoughts in understandable fashion. We have been amazed the past several years at the number who have lamented that we sometimes use words outside their vocabulary. One would think there was no such thing in existence as an English dictionary. But it is easier to file a complaint than to look up a word and make it part of a growing vocabulary.

This serves to illustrate the fact that our nation has been victimized by “easy living” and the spirit of “getting by.” Many in school have selected courses, not because they would contribute to real educational attainment, but merely to serve as fillers and secure scholastic credit without mental effort. The masses are not as able to comprehend profound thinking as those of a century ago. One needs but to compare the sermons of Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone delivered to backwoods audiences standing among forest trees, with the frothy utterances of modern preachers made to well dressed audiences sitting in cushioned pews, to see what has transpired

in a world which suffers from “luxury’s vile contagion.” A stomach constantly fed with pre-digested food will soon cease to function, and the same is true of a mind limited only to “digests” containing that which is skimmed off by other minds.

The modern mind is subjected to constant battering by pressure groups and hucksters. The advertising fraternity no longer seeks to set forth the merits of a product, and allow you to make up your mind, but rather by stealth, subtility, and suggestiveness, to captivate that mind and exploit it for personal gain. Radio and television audiences find that every phase of life is thus made to bow to Mammon, patron deity of American business. Athletic events become vehicles for the sale of beer and safety razors; news reports for cigarettes and sedatives. The world is suffering from a monstrous “hang-over” and the aspirin sales climb to staggering figures as the reeling, staggering populace seeks relief from a throbbing headache.

In the midst of such a maelstrom how can the child of God find peace? How can he enlarge and expand his spirit until he can have a consciousness of the abiding Presence? Surely it must be in the cultivation of a “sound mind” which will enable him to find a satisfactory answer to the greatest personal question of all, the reason and purpose of human existence, for the brief span we spend on this material realm. What is the meaning of life? What must we do under the heavens all the days of our life? This question of the wisest human monarch should still challenge our own day and generation.

We are today where our thinking has brought us. We will be tomorrow where our thinking takes us. The antidote to fear and shame is “power, love and a sound mind.” The questions of our Lord, “How think ye?” (Matt. 18:12) and “What think ye?” (Matt. 21:28) are pertinent to life, for your character will be moulded by how you think and what you think. For this reason we offer no apology for devoting some space in a few future issues to matters pertaining to intellectual philosophy. We trust

you will share these articles with serious young people in high school and college who do not subscribe for the paper.

Lord, let me not be too content

With life in trifling service spent —

Make me aspire!

When days with petty cares are filled

Let me with fleeting thoughts be thrilled

Of something higher!

Help me to long for mental grace

To struggle with the commonplace

I daily find.

May little deeds not bring to fruit

A crop of little thought to suit

A shriveled mind.

Thoughts on Fellowship (8)

Mission Messenger (August 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Martin Luther wrote about the “church fathers” in these words, “Though they said nothing decisive about justification by grace, yet at their death they believed in it. These worthy Fathers lived better than they wrote.” That last sentence is applicable to most of our brethren. Their practice is better than their unwritten creeds, and while many of them would like to find fault with our views on fellowship, most of them have wittingly or unwittingly gone far beyond what we have suggested, and would as fiercely resent one questioning their practice, as they personally resent our advocacy of a part of it.

The act of eating and drinking together had great significance in primitive times. Speaking of the sop which Jesus dipped and gave to Judas, A. M. Rihbany says, “At Syrian feasts, especially in the region where Jesus lived . . . in a more significant manner these morsels are exchanged by friends. Choice bits of food are handed to friends by one another, as signs of close intimacy. It is never expected that any person would hand a sop to one for whom he cherishes no friendship” (The Syrian Christ, page 49). As a public demonstration of that fellowship sustained by the community of saints, our Lord ordained a feast at which those who are in Him eat and drink together in proclamation of His death.

The very word, *koinonia*, generally translated “fellowship,”

is used to describe the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (koinonia) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (koinonia) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). You recognize as being in your fellowship every one to whom you pass the bread and fruit of the vine with your permission to eat and drink with you. If I come to the table in your home, and you pass the food to me without informing me that I am not entitled to eat of it, your very act is an invitation to eat. In the case of the Lord's Supper, such an act constitutes a tacit acknowledgement that the person is in the kingdom, a child of God, and a member of the one body. The apostle says, "The very fact that we all share in one Bread makes us all one Body" (Translation by J. B. Phillips).

Jesus said His table was in His kingdom. The disciples were to eat and drink at His table in His Kingdom (Luke 22:30). When you pass the food and drink from that table to a person to allow him the privilege of eating and drinking with you, by that very act you recognize him as a citizen of the kingdom. If not, then there is no significance in your own eating, and you are a mere ritualist. I solemnly charge that almost every segment, fragment and fraction of the disciple brotherhood in the United States, *by practice is guilty of extending fellowship to believers and unbelievers, immersed and unimmersed, alike.* And if these latter do not eat, it is because of their own volition in the matter, and not that of the congregation. And such open communion is actually the first step to open membership. Why should an alien wish to become a member of a fraternity when he can partake of all the rights, privileges and prerogatives thereof in his alien state?

But I may be asked why I employ the restricted term "brotherhood *in the United States*?" I do so because our brethren in Great Britain have not been guilty of such foolish procedure. In general they have had a clear understanding of what is

involved in the term fellowship, and have acted in conformity with that knowledge.

Recently I had occasion to visit a congregation which claims not to “fellowship” brethren who believe it is proper to have classes for Bible study and individual cups in the Lord’s Supper. But they fellowshiped me. They allowed me the privilege of participating in the corporate act of fellowship, the highest expression of the *koinonia*, in the church of God. A short time before that, a young preacher from a Christian Church seminary attended the Lord’s Day service with me. The brethren passed him the bread and the fruit of the vine, thus demonstrating their fellowship of him as a member of the one body. They do not endorse his views on instrumental music in the public praise service, neither do they make those views a test of *fellowship*.

Let us get down to brass tacks! Whatever you set up as a barrier to admission to the Lord’s table is your creed and your test of fellowship. Would you stand at the Lord’s table and say, “We invite all brethren to partake with us except those who believe in Bible classes?” If not, then you fellowship those who believe in classes, regardless of your position on the subject. Would you say, “We invite all brethren to participate with us in this feast except those who hold the opinion it is proper to use instrumental music in worship?” If not, then you fellowship those who hold such opinions. Suppose that a man who was traveling through the country stopped at your place of worship on Lord’s Day, and prior to the service informed you that while he was a member of a congregation using instrumental music, he and his family would like to worship and break bread with you on that day. Would you welcome him and invite him to do so? Then you fellowship him, but that fellowship does not constitute *endorsement* of his position on the point of difference. You differ with many members of the congregation where you hold membership, but you fellowship them. Fellowship is one thing; endorsement of a position or opinion is a wholly different thing.

Occasionally I hear that brethren in some places are disturbed by my articles on fellowship. They think I am “letting down the bars.” How can I, when they have never barred any one? The trouble lies in the fact that the brethren are ignorant of the meaning of the word “fellowship” as used by the Holy Spirit, and because they have it confused with endorsement of some person’s views, when I speak of fellowshipping all sincere believers in Christ who have been immersed into Him, they think I am advocating swallowing hook, bait and sinker, every innovation, speculation, variation and exaggeration. Yet they have been fellowshipping every one indiscriminately at the Lord’s table for years. If a member of another faction comes in, they will run half way across the house to hand him a song book, find the number, and invite him to participate with them in praise to God, but they would not think of calling upon him to pray to God. He can talk to God, teach and admonish, and speak, as long as he has a tune, whether he is in key or not, but he is not allowed to talk to God in a normal tone of voice. That would be “fellowshipping him.” Just how silly can we become?

But what test shall we propose? We have no right to propose any. Only Jesus has a right to tell us who is in Him and who is not. We must receive all whom he receives. “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). What must man believe and what must he do to be admitted to the “breaking of bread” and thus to the fellowship of the Spirit? God has proposed only one fact to be believed, and one act to be obeyed. All who accept that fact with trusting hearts, and obey that act, are inducted into the Christ, become members of the one body, and are in the fellowship of the saints. That one fact is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. That one act is immersion in water prompted by belief of that fact. When a man believes that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son, and acts upon that faith in God’s appointed fashion, he is added to the Lord’s company. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

But someone adds, "Provided that he knew at the time that his baptism was for the remission of sins." The word of God does not make that proviso. That is modern Church-of-Christ-ism. When a man believes in Jesus sincerely, and moved by that faith in Jesus as Saviour, is immersed, that act of immersion, is for the remission of sins, whether the believing penitent knows all about it or not. Remission of sins is a pardoning act with God. It takes place in heaven. We are saved by the grace of God and not by the knowledge of man. It is not faith that baptism is for the remission of sins which qualifies us for baptism, but faith that Jesus is the Christ and God's Son. That should be our only creed.

At the inception of the church of God, they that gladly received his word were immersed, and it was those who were immersed who continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. We know of no questions they were asked about methods of teaching, modes of worship, views on the millennium, etc., before being recognized. They were not catechized about their views, opinions, ideas, or expositions of scripture. They were in fellowship because they were in the Christ; they were in the Christ because they were immersed into Him upon the basis of their faith. Their knowledge was far from perfect, differences soon developed, varieties of views created problems, but they maintained their fellowship in spite of their differences. Perhaps before we can recapture that fellowship we will need first to recapture the spirit of love which was a passion with them. Surely the responsibility to seek to restore that unity which they knew and which was such a potent force in the world, offers the greatest challenge that can come to us in these days.

Reply to Brother Zerr

Mission Messenger (Month 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

Of the many reasons I am glad that Brother Zerr is writing his objections to our plea for restoration, I will mention three. (1) He may point out errors in my thinking so I can correct them; (2) I will have an opportunity to correct any misconception he may hold as to my position; (3) It will provide a demonstration that men may be in fellowship as brethren, yet disagree upon some matters. I learn from those who differ rather than from those who agree with me. The latter but confirm my views, the former cause me to re-study them in the light of new evidence. I love our good brother, but I never did fully agree with all of his interpretations. That fact has never lessened my regard for him.

I have read the article “One Church” a number of times. I cannot see the point our brother seeks to make. He implies that in our plea for restoration we consider the various sectarian bodies “as parts of the ‘one church’ the New Testament recognizes.” This is exactly opposite to my position. I have repeatedly said that the church of God is not a sect. No sect is the church of God. No coalition or aggregation of sects constitutes that church. The various sects exist in opposition to the word of God. They are a manifestation of a work of the flesh. I think our beloved brother is confused because we contend there may be children of God among the sects. That is far from saying that the sects are a part of the one body. There are

citizens of the United States in Russia, but Russia is not a part of the United States. There are citizens of the United States in every foreign country, but these countries do not constitute the United States. There may be citizens of the kingdom of heaven scattered among the denominations, but the denominations do not constitute the kingdom of heaven. The one church is composed now, as it has always been, of all the saved ones. It embraces within its membership every child of God on this earth.

Our brother concurs with the view that we do not have perfect knowledge of all truth. All we plead for is that we recognize and acknowledge truth where we find it. Since it is now granted that “If a group must ‘know all the truth’ in order to be a true church, then the Lord has never had a true church,” the question arises as to *how much truth* a group must know before it is a true church. What truth must it know, and what truth may it not know, and still be a true church? Who is to determine that? This is no problem with our Roman Catholic friends, but who is to assume the papal authority among the various segments of the disciple brotherhood?

If our brother’s reasoning is correct, could a group be a true church in one century, and the same group not be a true church in another century? Could a group be a true church in one part of the world with part of the truth, and another group in another place be a true church at the same time with another part of the truth? If not, just which part of truth must either have to be a true church? My answer to the problem is that it is not so much a question of how much truth a group has at any time which makes it acceptable to God, but *the attitude toward truth as such*. A group having but little truth may be eager to discover and accept all truth, and God will bless them; another may have a great deal of truth, but resent any discovery of new truth, and thus be rejected.

In dealing with fellowship and exclusiveness our good brother chides us for seeking to lead out of sectism those who

have been immersed in the name of our Lord. He asks, “Why wish to lead him out? If he is a child of God, is in a saved condition, and the Lord has already added him to His church, why disturb him?” Because, after the Lord added him to His church, the person added himself to something the Lord does not approve. The party spirit is carnal (1 Cor. 3:3). It is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). God does not want His children to be divided into religious parties and factions. Those children of God who exhibit the party spirit displease the Father. They thwart the divine purpose.

Our brother asks, “What could we offer him that would be any better than what he has?” In many places— nothing! Many brethren would not destroy the party spirit at all. They would merely channel it into defence of another party, perhaps one referred to as “The Church of Christ.” That is what we oppose. It is as wrong to be a Church of Christ sectarian as any other kind. But, in many places, brethren have seen the folly of the partisan spirit, or setting up unwritten creeds and human tests of fellowship. They can offer a man who has been enmeshed in sectarianism the liberty and freedom which are the heritage of all who are in Jesus.

Our good brother poses the problem, “Since we do not know all the truth, this man may know as much of it as we, and hence we just as well ‘leave him alone in his glory.’” Perhaps, measured by quantity, many know as much, or even more truth than we do. But we have learned *the truth about the sin of division* among God’s children. It is *this truth* we must share with our brethren in the toils of sectism. Most of them have not learned it. In turn, they can convey to us the truths they have learned and all of us will profit. We cannot leave a brother “in his glory” if he is enveloped in sectism, for religious division is not a glory, but the greatest scandal of modern Christendom. It is disgraceful and sinful!

It is true I think we should have an open mind for

reception of newly discovered truths, and since our brother admits we do not have all the truth, he would not suggest we close our minds against more of it. Many of the arguments I once made on certain issues have been proven by study to be illogical and unscriptural. I will not make those arguments again. I was sincere when I made them, but I was sincerely wrong! Toleration of others who are honestly striving to learn is not restoration. It is only the atmosphere in which restoration studies can be pursued.

To join *The Christian Church* or *The Methodist Church* would be to ally myself with a human party. This would no more help save humanity than creating another sect called “The Church of Christ.” I love all of those who compose *The Christian Church* and *The Methodist Church*. I acknowledge all truth taught by any of their members, and I fervently pray that God may use me as an humble instrument to show them there is “a more excellent way” than the partisan road. To that end I will go among them, and thankfully welcome any opportunity to plead the Cause I love. By such contacts in charity and sincerity we may all of us come closer to each other as we come closer to Him who died for every one of us.

In our next issue Brother Zerr will present additional objections to our plea. Read them carefully and studiously. I will also reply at length to Brother Loney who is filing his objections to restoration. May God help all of us to be humble followers of His Son, and brethren in the Lord, is my fervent prayer! We need each other very much.

Thoughts on Fellowship (9)

Mission Messenger (September 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

In this series on the *koinonia*, or fellowship, of the disciples of our Lord, it is appropriate that we consider the related term *koinonos*, which designates the sharer or partaker. As William Barclay points out in “A New Testament Wordbook” this term in classical Greek means a companion, a partner, or a joint-owner. In secular usage it was primarily a business term. In Luke 5:10 we are told that James and John were *partners* with Simon in a fishing enterprise. In the same sense Paul informed those who asked about the status of Titus that he was his *partner* (2 Cor. 8:23). When asking Philemon to receive back his runaway slave as a brother, the apostle says, “If you consider me a *partner*, receive him as myself” (verse 17). In the New Testament, therefore, the word is used of partnership in either secular or spiritual pursuits.

The Galilean fishermen who became ambassadors for the Christ would not need an explanation of what it meant to be a *koinonos* in the Lord. They understood its implication from the partnership of the fishing nets. They had been joined together by a common objective, they had mutually toiled and endured hardship, and had shared in prosperity and adversity, depending upon the size of the catch and the vagaries of the market.

When Paul seeks to enforce the point that those who eat

the bread and drink the cup together are in fellowship, he cites an example. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18).

A certain portion of some sacrifices was to be eaten by those qualified under the law. Those who thus ate were partners or sharers in the benefits and blessings derived from attendance upon the whole service centered about the altar. Paul extends his reasoning to show that one cannot be in partnership with the Lord and with demons at the same time (see verse 21). There is nothing in common between God and idols, so there can be nothing in common between ourselves and both at the same time. "You cannot be *partakers* of the Lord's table and the table of demons."

We share with each other in Christ because He has shared His bounty and grace with us. We are not in the fellowship because of our attainments in wealth, power, prestige, wisdom, or knowledge. These do not necessarily debar from entrance into the fellowship, and neither do they enhance it. We are not in the fellowship because we understand everything alike, or because we have reached a certain stage of spiritual development. "The brotherhood" we are told to love (1 Peter 3:17) does not consist merely of those who agree with us upon some controversial point such as Bible classes, colleges, individual cups, the pastor system, contribution baskets, or a manner of breaking the bread. Those who use it in such a fashion are schismatic and sectarian in their outlook. They suffer from restricted vision and spiritual astigmatism. "The brotherhood" of Christ stems from the fatherhood of God. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren because we have the same Father as himself. He said, "Go to my *brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father" (John 20:17).

Every person on this earth who is a child of God is my brother. He is in "the brotherhood." When we talk of the brotherhood in such a manner as to exclude any of God's

children we are sectarian. Such a narrow, partisan usage of the term is quite frequent. It is promoted by factional leaders and editors. I regularly receive a number of journals and read reports of those preachers who contribute news items to them. All speak of “work in the brotherhood” but they do not mean by the term what God’s word implies. To one the brotherhood is limited to those who oppose classes, to another those who use fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper, to another those who break the bread in a certain fashion, to another those who oppose orphan homes, to another those who object to individual cups, to another those who employ instrumental music, to another those who oppose its use.

It is a rather strange phenomenon that all of these various factions have a paper, and generally the editor and certain chosen cohorts in his favor, constitute the ruling hierarchy of each “brotherhood.” Regardless of how you stand in the grace of God, if you do not continue in the good graces of the editor, you will be ruined and hounded out of “the brotherhood.” Pressures are exerted to keep people “in line” and brain-washing methods are employed to stifle individual thinking and to confine men behind the “paper curtain.” It has long been a question with me as to whether the schismatic spirit produces a faction which then creates an editorial mouthpiece, or whether an editor creates a faction “in his own likeness, and in his own image.” But there is no denying that the sectarian spirit is so rife, and there are so many “brotherhoods” in existence, that the one thing which is unique in these days is a wholly unsectarian plea, and when brethren hear it, they say like the ancient Athenians, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears” (Acts 17:19, 20).

Any group which forces you to believe something other than the great fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as condition of admission to their fellowship, has laid another foundation than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. And that

“something else” is the creed of that group, and the group constitutes a sect in the fair import of that term. And any group which establishes admission to brotherhood upon any other basis than the new birth is doing despite to the Spirit of grace, and opposing God’s plan for the ages.

We are participants with God because we share in the divine nature. The very word *koinonos* is used in this connection. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers* of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). Being partners in the divine nature brings us into an intimate relationship with all who share in that nature. It also obligates us to use our faith as a foundation and upon it to build a life structure using as materials the “excellencies” which are enumerated. This indicates that when we are called to glory and virtue we are far from being spiritually perfect or mature. We are one in Him, not because of personal attainment but because of grace.

Due to differences in early training, environment, and temperament, as well as variations in aptitudes, skills, and opportunities of study, there will be many things upon which we will disagree. These differences can be resolved if they need to be. There are some matters on which we may always differ, but they are of such little consequence as to warrant no particular effect upon us; there are others of a graver nature, but upon these we should bestow more abundant study and consultation. The whole problem is one of attitudes— toward God, His word, and each other. A recognition of kindred ties in Jesus will enable us to treat each other as brethren while we draw closer to Him and each other in our efforts.

A Sound Mind (2)

Mission Messenger (September 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Man is a rational being. Physically he is an animal, but he differs from all other animals because he can reason. Jude tells us that irrational animals know by instinct (verse 10) and Peter calls such animals “creatures of instinct” (2 Peter 2:12). Man is not limited to instinct for what he may know. Only a rational being can truly worship, and man was created to glorify God. The creator has always treated man on a rational basis. He has never required man to believe anything without furnishing sufficient evidence as a basis for faith. His appeal is, “Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18).

What is reason? It is sometimes referred to as that exercise of the mind by which we distinguish truth from falsehood. Occasionally it is equated with judgment. I doubt they are synonymous. Reason consists of comparing and weighing facts and considerations, in order to reach a conclusion from them. Judgment is the acceptance of that conclusion with a view to including it as a part of the pattern of personal belief or conduct. One is the tree, the other the fruit. Perhaps you may feel this is “a distinction without a difference.”

There are several functions of the mind. Reason is just one

of them. As related to the exercise of reason, however, a sound mind is one which is regulated or governed by the principles which pertain to investigation and deduction. As in every aspect of life, this demands the application of certain positive factors, and the avoidance of certain negative factors, since these last would interfere with the discovery of truth. In a very humble way we hope to discuss some of the pitfalls to be avoided, and enumerate some of the laws governing our mental processes. Our aim is to help all of us to think clearly and reason correctly. We are what our thinking makes us. Thus we need to know how to think and reason properly.

We have said that reasoning involves the comparing and weighing of facts. In the process we must decide which facts are essential and which are incidental. We must correctly evaluate them. But before we can do that we must collect the facts. The interest we have in the subject to which the facts are related will govern the intensity of our effort. The true scientist working on a project can hardly take time from his laboratory to eat or sleep. You have heard that Thomas Edison limited himself to four hours of sleep daily. There was so much he wanted to discover and so little time in which to achieve it, he begrudged the hours given to sleep. If we had a few researchists in the spiritual realm imbued by that spirit we might be amazed at the discoveries they would make.

We dare not “jump at conclusions” if we would be safe reasoners. To do so is a sure mark of the careless and indifferent thinker. To avoid this we must have sufficient data on a subject before we can reach a conclusion. If we become too hasty we will be superficial. The sound mind proceeds with caution. It is not impulsive or frantic. We are to “test all things, and retain that which is good.” This is the true scientific approach. That it is commanded in the word of God proves that the word is not in conflict with true science. But it requires time to test *all things*. There is a danger one will become tired or bored and reach a conclusion on partial data. This is unwise and dangerous.

How do we know when we have all the facts? We may not know, for which reason we must retain open minds in which our judgment is subject to correction or modification when confronted with new facts. At the same time the sound mind will not be shaken or troubled by trivialities, frivolous objections, carping criticisms, or unrelated matters. Opposed to the sound mind in this regard are two extremes, which start at a common center, yet are poles apart in nature.

Both form hasty conclusions without proper attention to all facts and considerations involved. But their personal reactions are widely divergent. One is shaken in his conclusions by every new thought presented to his attention, as well as by every minor objection or criticism. He becomes unstable and vacillating, shifting ground and altering his stand constantly. He is like a reed shaken by the wind. He is like a restless wave of the sea. The other forms his opinions on the same inadequate basis, but then clings to them with such tenacity as to become impervious to fact or reason. He is right, all else is wrong. He shuts himself inside a bastion of his own construction, from which he refuses to budge regardless of the weight of testimony brought to bear upon him.

Such a person has the utmost confidence in his own opinions, and entertains only contempt for those who differ. It is difficult to assess the origin of such an arbitrary spirit. Is it the result of a natural peculiarity of mental constitution, of a deep seated inferiority complex, of deficient education, or social insensitivity? Whatever the cause, when one indulges this spirit, he becomes a victim of his own pride, so that the motives and evidences which influence other men will not pierce his mental armor.

We should cultivate sound minds, then, by refusing to form an opinion based on insufficient data, by weeding out the trivial from the worthwhile, by firmness of character which will not yield to every whim, and by being open to a review of our

position in the light of additional evidence. When you slam the door of your mind to keep others out, you shut yourself in.

Anew our pledge we make to Thee

To follow where Thy truth shall lead;

Afloat upon its boundless sea,

Who sails with God is safe indeed.

Christian Church Baptism

Mission Messenger (September 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

It is difficult to convince brethren that “The Church of Christ” in many localities has become a narrow and intolerant sect. Yet one only needs to read the periodicals representing the position of much of the membership to see that this charge is true. As an illustration I cite the following from *The Gospel Guardian*, written by Lester Weaver, under the above heading. His sub-head is, “Let’s Face the Facts!”

In recent years some brethren have sought in first one way and then another to justify their friends who are guilty of participating in the errors of the Christian Church. Sometimes these brethren say that Christian Church baptism is alright. The truth, however, is not as lenient as some brethren. Let’s face the facts!

For one’s baptism to be alright it must be the *one* baptism (Eph. 4:5). If Christian Church baptism is the one baptism then the Bible is not true. For the Bible teaches the one baptism puts all who receive it into one and the same body (1 Cor. 12:13, 20; Eph. 3:6)

If Christian Church baptism is *not* the one baptism then all the members thereof are lost being out of Christ. For salvation is in Christ and only one baptism puts us into Him (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:10; Gal. 3:27). Christian Church baptism either is the one baptism or it *is not*. Therefore, either the Bible is not true or all members of

the Christian Church are lost. Yes, at all times we must face the facts. "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 11).

I am not interested in justifying my friends who are guilty of participating in the errors of the Christian Church. Neither am I interested in justifying my friends who are guilty of participating in the errors of "The Church of Christ." I hold no brief for error or sectism regardless of who is guilty. Brethren should not dismiss the above as an isolated instance. Instead, it is representative of the thinking of a great majority, especially in the southland. Brother Weaver is the victim of the sectarian teaching which is prevalent in the colleges, and announced from most of the pulpits. These brethren make the mistake of thinking that "The Church of Christ" with its policy making lectureships (conventions), hireling clergy system, seminaries, congregational missionary societies, and great philanthropic associations, is the one body mentioned in the New Testament scriptures. They have been brain-washed into thinking that until *they cannot face the facts!*

One need not be brilliant to see that acceptable baptism with these brethren is only administered by a clergyman of the "Church of Christ." There is no such thing as "Christian Church baptism." Neither is there any such thing as "Church of Christ baptism." If there were, one would be worth as much as the other. The *one baptism* is the immersion in water of a believing penitent upon the basis of his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When one submits to it he is added to the one body, composed of all the saved of the earth. It does not make any difference who immerses him, or where. Such an individual, through ignorance, may continue in a sectarian environment, and he may, or may not, become a sectarian in that environment. But he was added to the one body, and he is my brother. When I find him in the wrong environment, I shall not deny that he was born again, or that he is my brother. I shall seek to show to him that our Father wants us all to be one in

Him, and that he must therefore discard those sectarian attitudes and practices which divide us.

Those who have been immersed into the Christ are not out of Christ. They may be doing a lot of things “in Christ” that they ought not to be doing. They may, or may not, be lost eternally. We will probably do well to allow God to handle that phase of the situation. One thing we do know, and that is that we will be saved or lost *as individuals*, and not as congregations, regardless of what title we have over the church building. But those who have been immersed in water upon their faith that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son, will not be lost because there was something wrong with their baptism. They may be lost because of the way they regard or treat their brethren, and they may miss heaven because of their self-righteous attitude and sectarian bigotry.

The misapplication of 2 John 11 with which Brother Weaver closes his party-making thesis was handled at length in our June issue. He has missed the teaching of John as far on this subject as he did the teaching of Paul on baptism and the one body. Again, I affirm that every sincere believing penitent who submits to immersion in water on the basis of his faith in Jesus, is added to the one body by the Lord, and that person is my brother. *Let’s really face the facts!*

A Sound Mind (3)

Mission Messenger (Month 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The first essential to a well regulated mind is the cultivation of a habit of undistracted attention. This means that the mind must be concentrated on a subject, so that all the powers of intellect are directed to an investigation of that subject in all of its elements and relations. This is the foundation of all mental growth. Every intellectual process is dependent on it. Moral character is shaped by recognition and practice of this principle.

“The life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn” (James 1:8). Divided loyalty is the ultimate result of misdirection of the mind. In turn, this generally stems from lack of regulating the attention so that there is no proper consideration of any subject in the light of its antecedents and consequences. We need to discipline our minds. A rolling stone gathers no moss, and a wandering mind accumulates little real knowledge. Most adults who are unsettled, vacillating, and unable to make decisions, could trace their failure to youthful indiscretion in pampering their minds, by giving in to every vagary or stray thought.

The world today demands clear thinking persons of conviction. We are subjected to foreign and alien ideologies. These must be met on the field of reason, or their proponents will be faced on the field of battle. We pay in tension,

international distrust, and bloodshed, for our neglect and indifference in the realm of thought. The person who develops a clear rational mind is a real benefactor to the age in which he lives. We should not make the mistake of thinking that we may give way to our inclinations when young, and then suddenly reverse the process when we grow older. Our youthful folly may dog our steps and dampen our hopes to the brink of the grave.

How shall I a habit break?

As you did that habit make.

As you gathered you must lose;

As you yielded, now refuse,

Thread by thread the strands we twist

Till they bind us, neck and wrist;

Thread by thread the patient hand

Must untwine, ere free we stand.

As we builded, stone by stone,

We must toil, unhelped, alone,

Till the wall is overthrown.

To develop a sound mind you should form the habit of attempting but one thing at a time, and giving it your undivided attention. This is not easy in our complex world. There will be a constant temptation to give in. Your resolution will be battered by outside influences which clamor for attention. Many young people are unconsciously laying the foundation of an unstable life. You cannot, for instance, study a lesson and watch a television program at the same time. If you have a mathematics

lesson for tomorrow, and you spread your book on a table while an interesting program is on the screen you are doing an injustice to yourself. Your aim is to derive the advantage from the lesson and the pleasure from the program. You achieve neither objective. The uneasy feeling down inside you that you ought to be studying mars the enjoyment of the program, while your investigation of the lesson is superficial and useless.

The tendency is to shove the mathematics lesson aside and focus attention on the television program. This may be a real crime against your own person. The program may be wholesome entertainment. The wrong is not in the television set, nor in the nature of the program. The sin lies in the injury you do to your will and reasoning faculties. You make a wrong choice. You destroy your sense of values. You give pleasure and entertainment priority in life over duty and responsibility. You plant the seed of indifference toward your purpose in life. The fruit from that seed is always bitter and acrid.

The road to success is paved with sacrifice. Pleasure deferred may bring rich reward. Indulgence of present whims may mean eventual loss of that which is most important. Start now, in high school, to deny yourself that which you crave in order to meet the obligations imposed by the present. The motto of Paul was "This one thing I do!" He was an example of the undivided life. Concentration may be closely akin to consecration.

Dwell deep! Forego the pleasure if it bring

Neglect of duty; consecrate each thought;

Believe thou in the good of everything

**And trust that all unto the wisest end is
wrought.**

Bring thou this comfort unto all who weep:

Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Thoughts on Fellowship (10)

Mission Messenger (October 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The Lord's Supper is a public expression of corporate fellowship. The word "communion" is from *koinonia*. This is the word translated "fellowship." Every person you admit to your communion is in your fellowship. This startles a lot of folk because they realize they have been fellowshiping a lot of people they do not even recognize as brethren. Those who are students have seen the "handwriting on the wall." They must either admit the truth of what we have been saying, or alter their practice. But if they start debarring baptized believers who disagree with them most of them will soon have no one to "fellowship."

Recently I asked a prominent evangelist if he would knowingly pass the bread and fruit of the vine to a member of the Christian Church if such an one visited his meeting. He replied in the negative. When asked why he would not, he said to do so would constitute endorsement of all the errors in the Christian Church. I know a lot of members of that church who do not endorse all of its errors. If the visitor were one of these, the preacher who is not a member of the Christian Church would endorse more errors than the member, according to this method of reasoning.

I have always understood the purpose of the Supper was to show the Lord's death. It is therefore a fellowship of those who

have been baptized into his death. It indicates that all so baptized have been added to the church of God. They are thus made a part of the one body, the family of God. A lot of members in that family have some queer ideas. But my eating with them at the Lord's table does not sanction or endorse all their varied ideas. It does demonstrate that, in spite of those ideas, we are one in recognition and portrayal of the great fact which is the basis of our hope—the death of the Messiah!

According to the reasoning of some of our brethren, the apostle Paul could not have passed the emblems to Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, when they came from Corinth to visit him (1 Cor. 16:17), because in doing so he would have endorsed all the evils in the congregation of which they were members. We need to recall that one of the chief sins at Corinth lay in the fact that members of one faction would not eat with those of another. Paul rebuked such segregation and discrimination. He asks, "What shall I say unto you? Shall I commend you in this?" He concludes, "No, I will not."

God holds no man accountable for what he disavows. I am not responsible for the ideas, opinions, and notions of other brethren. If I share the Lord's Supper with one who does not believe in Bible classes, I do not surrender my position. If I partake with one who believes in extra institutions that does not make me endorse them. Neither do I endorse instrumental music when I pass the emblems to a visiting brother who believes in it. God does not hold me guilty of believing something I do not believe.

The position of some brethren is that of the Pharisees during the earthly sojourn of Jesus. They said, "This man eats with publicans and sinners," and they thought that by so doing, Jesus endorsed the errors of those with whom he ate. Guilt by association, in politics called McCarthyism, has no place in our spiritual thinking. *We have no right to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.* **If we**

are to reject Jesus as our creed and set up other terms of admission to His table, we ought to have the grace to demand agreement to that creed as a requisite to admission to our fellowship. It is deceptive and misleading to teach men that all who believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and who are immersed on the basis of that belief, are thereby introduced to all the privileges of citizenship, then change the rules after they have come in among us.

Are you ready to ask a penitent believer as a requisite to baptism, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and do you here and now promise to oppose Bible classes, individual cups, unfermented wine in the Lord’s Supper, orphan homes, missionary societies, instrumental music, the pre-millennial theory, and any other thing that we may determine in the future to be wrong?” If not, why not? If those things are necessary to your fellowship, why not put them into the creed to which men must subscribe to get into that fellowship?

As for me, I shall make no demands which God has not made. I shall create no tests of fellowship which God has not made conditions to salvation. I shall not debar from His table any whom He has added to His family. I shall recognize as His children all whom He recognizes, but that does not mean I will endorse all they think or teach. Fellowship is not endorsement of a man’s position!

Thoughts on Fellowship (11)

Mission Messenger (November 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

The series of articles on the above topic nears its close. We will present the concluding one, God willing, in our next issue. In these articles we have humbly set forth our convictions. We have not sought to bind them on others. We respect and love those who have disagreed with the thoughts suggested. As we prepare to turn our attention to other matters we trust our readers have been stimulated to think, reason and discuss relative to this important matter. We begin herewith a summary of our views.

1. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are divided and torn into warring sects, and these defeat the purpose of our loving and absent King.

2. His will is that all who believe in Him should be one, and for this he prayed on the night before his death. The thing of paramount importance to Jesus as he faced Gethsemane and Golgotha was the unity of all who accepted him as the Messiah and God's Son.

3. Religious division and sectarian strife is not the normal condition of the body of Christ. Like the cancer in a physical body, it is a malignant growth, and an abnormal state. If medical researchists ever accept cancer as a normal condition they will cease to dedicate themselves to research dealing with its cause and cure, and we will be doomed. Likewise, if we accept

sectarianism as the normal state, declare there is nothing to be done about it, and cease to labor to determine its cause and cure, we will be doomed to incessant warfare amongst believers, and none of us can be wholly guiltless.

4. Moved by a desire to help answer the prayer of our blessed Lord, we have sought to investigate again the subject of fellowship, and we have set forth our own findings in this series of articles. What we have suggested may help only if we do not accept these conclusions as final, but use them as foundations for future exploration and study.

5. The question of sectarian strife is a major one with many roots. There is no simple answer or solution. Casual and careless thinkers frequently demonstrate their immaturity by professing to have a glib answer to every problem. It is possible that over-simplification is one of our chief faults in reasoning. Certainly, it generally ignores the thinking of the other person, and his reasons for so thinking.

6. We have suggested that the issue of fellowship is confused because we now use the term in a sense in which it was not employed by the Holy Spirit. It is frequently equated with endorsement of another's position. But fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the gospel. Our entrance into that relationship which is described as being "in Christ" is contingent upon belief of one fact, and obedience to one act. That one fact is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. The one act is immersion of such a penitent believer in water. This act inducts one into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such an one is added to the Lord's church, and is a member of the one body.

7. Unfortunately, and in opposition to the will of the Father, those who believe in our precious Lord are divided and scattered over the hills of sectarianism. They are kept apart, segregated, and separated by human creeds, interpretations, and

opinions, which have been made tests of fellowship. To alleviate the abnormal condition we must eliminate these factors. We should guard against any future division among believers by resolving never to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. This one principle accepted and adopted now, will guarantee that no other cleavage will ever occur among earnest believers in the Saviour.

8. The problem of offsetting divisions already in existence, some of which are of long standing, will not be so easy. The peacemakers will be called compromisers. Those who plead for unity of all believers, and are devoid of the party spirit, must be prepared to endure misrepresentation, abuse and false accusation. They must steel themselves against retaliation when their motives are judged as evil. They must never allow themselves to cease to love and pray for those who try to undermine and overthrow them. But the healing of schisms and breaches is so important to the work of God that it must be dearer than wealth, prestige, or even life itself. A restoration must be preceded by a reformation— a change in attitude. The work can only go forward in love— an all pervading love which knows no limit so far as humankind is concerned.

9. There must be a willingness to examine past acts which have resulted in division, and a readiness to admit mistakes. There must be a heart yearning for oneness, a fervent desire to see the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven. Division did not come over night. Unity will not be achieved in a day. Patience and forbearance are prime requisites. We must be willing to plant the seed; the increase will be given by God.

10. If it be true that all who have accepted Jesus as God's Son, and have been immersed by his authority, are children of God, and by this fact constitute a brotherhood, we can regard each other as brethren while we discuss our differences in humility, and seek a solution to our problems. We lose nothing by being kind, considerate and courteous toward those who

disagree with us. A recognition of brotherhood is not evil. But we must want unity. We must wage peace as others wage war. Those who prefer to maintain the status quo will never answer the prayer of Jesus. We must be discontent to perpetuate human parties. We must sigh and cry for something better than what we have. We must pray for unity, then toil to achieve it. We must agonize in prayer, and bombard the ramparts of heaven night and day with our petitions.

Above all, we must love every soul for whom Jesus died. The love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts. It must be the motivating principle of our lives. Then, regardless of what men may do unto us, we will triumph over hate and envy. We will serve those who would destroy us, help those who would ruin us, and do good unto all men. And this heaven will work, for it is the heaven of God. It is our only hope for survival. It is the key to future happiness and security. There is no other alternative. We must love all men or perish! We must find the way to oneness or we may miss the way to heaven! One thing essential to offsetting division is fairness and justice. The mind of an editor must not become our criterion of scripturality. Let those who disagree also be heard. Truth has nothing to fear by presenting both sides of an issue so that honest readers may study them side by side. Through equity and kindness we may be able to heal schisms of long standing. Every tendency toward unity of the Spirit should bring rejoicing. Love is the golden key to unlock for us the storehouse of God's grace. Let us make use of that key!

Thoughts on Fellowship (12)

Mission Messenger (December 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

If Christ were to come back and walk the streets of any of our great cities today, the heart that bled for the sin of mankind, would bleed afresh because of the condition existing among those who believe that He is the Son of God. He would behold the party spirit parading under the guise of faithfulness, see hate wearing the livery of love, and selfishness enshrined as sacrifice. In the name of Christianity, he would hear men bear false witness against brethren, and behold the malignant spirit stab character and defame reputation. He would see church buildings rising as temples of pride, and visualize the haughty spirit of the Pharisee in modern dress as men still pray in effect: "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

Sectarian division is the scandal of Christendom. It has raped the church and pillaged God's sanctuary. And because all of us are a part of the Christian realm we are shamed and debased by what has transpired. Because I am a human being I cannot be unaffected by man's inhumanity to man. The tortures and barbarity of Dachau and Buchenwald must rise up to torment my dreams, for all humanity suffered in the gas chambers of these German prisons. The stiff fingers of those dead point at the heart of every human being on earth. In the same way, every division that has ever occurred in the Christian world, every rent in the fabric of brotherhood, cannot leave me untouched, even though I do not consciously acknowledge it, and

though I seek to disavow it.

Every new schism that appears, every sect that is spawned, every faction that is created must affect me, whether remotely or otherwise, for it makes the task of arriving at unity a greater one, it postpones by so much the answer to the prayer of my blessed Lord, it increases the pressure of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I cannot be unmoved or untouched by religious dissension anywhere on earth, for, being a follower of the Nazarene, I am a partaker in the momentous effort which cost His life. When a little congregation in a far away place, kindled by jealousy and inflamed by passion, erupts, until those who walked together now walk apart in their partisan spirit of self-righteousness, this pebble flung into the pool of Christianity, creates ripples which will not only break against the shores of my heart, but will not spend themselves until they foam out their mire upon the beaches of eternity.

No one of us can be utterly free from a sense of shame while bigotry, intolerance and factionism exist in the name of religion. We are Christian, and the rents and tears in the Christian fabric reflect against us all, as surely as injustice, inequality and cruelty to human beings in any part of the earth reflect against us as human beings. We cannot disavow our responsibility by arrogantly enquiring if we are keepers of our brethren. We cannot, like Pilate, wash our hands, and be free of the guilt of the mangled body of Jesus, so long as we have made no attempt to pour in ointment and bind up the wounds.

I am impelled by a sense of urgency, because I believe that our civilization staggers today on the brink of a precipice. I think we are doing a crazed and drunken dance on a narrow ledge above the valley of destruction. Unless we can make the Christian concept work, our children, or our children's children, may become mere statistics in an atomic holocaust, their burned, seared and charred bodies mingled with white hot steel and choking rubble. Time is running out. The sun is setting. Gog and

Magog are gathering for the fray. There is but one thing that can save our world from disintegration. Jesus said that his disciples were the salt of the earth. If that salt loses its strength the earth cannot be preserved. There is no other alternative. We must restore the saving quality to the salt, or we shall perish.

Realizing this, some two years ago I began to plead that we increase our labor in love to heal the breaches in the walls of Zion, that we wage peace as diligently as others wage war. Only the peacemakers will be called the children of God. Happy are the peacemakers, says the prince of peace. We must find the way to unity or our boasted glory will lead to the grave. We must recapture the sense of spiritual kinship with all sincere believers in the Messiah. We dare not compromise truth, we dare not forsake principles. But we must find the solution to the problem of division. We cannot fracture ourselves into strength, nor split ourselves into unity of the Spirit. Unity will not come by accident. We cannot ignore the causes of disunity and restore it. But time is of the essence. The shadows are lengthening. The storm clouds gather. The winds of destiny are moaning and rising. Brethren, do not tarry much longer, or it will be too late.

In coming issues of the little paper, I shall seek to arouse all who love Jesus, to a realization of the danger confronting our world. I shall endeavor to get them to realize that it is no time to nail stray shingles on the barn while the house is on fire. It is possible we will not be able long to send out this call. Our funds are almost expended, our resources are running low. We will do what we can with what we have left. We owe it to Him to be faithful to the end. He does not expect us to do more than we are able. Perhaps others will be raised up with more means and greater ability, to arouse a slumbering church to the threat of what will happen if we do not restore peace on earth to men of good will. We trust that you will pass our subsequent issues to your friends, whatever their faith, for we must gather every grain of salt from the sectarian shakers, if we are to apply it in force to the accomplishment of His will.

A Sound Mind (4)

Mission Messenger (December 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

This series of brief essays is being offered because of the conviction of the author that the Creator, in making man a rational creature, has given him the power to reform his life and the social structure of which he is a part. The potential which is so great for good, can, if misdirected, wreak havoc and destruction. The mere fact that man possesses a mind, or that he uses it, is no guarantee that he will work good. He must cultivate a sound mind and employ it in harmony with the laws of intellect and ethics. These short lessons are calculated to help all, especially the young, to cultivate those qualities of mental soundness, essential to our perpetuity.

In our last article we pointed out the need of giving undistracted attention to the matter at hand, not only to understand the subject of current importance, but also to guide the mind in the formation of stable characteristics. But the habit of inattention and mental fluctuation is not always the result of trying to do two diverse things at the same time. It may just as readily be produced by attempting to do one thing with the mind while it is perplexed with doubt that it ought to be doing another thing.

To eliminate this condition we must understand its causes. It may issue from an impetuous approach to life. Those who do things upon the impulse of the moment are always subject to its

deleterious effects, for our impulses vary and fluctuate. One may sit down to write a letter to a friend, while doubting if he should take the time to do so, when he ought to be studying his science textbook. After writing a few lines, the thought intrudes itself that he must check certain data about which he is not sure. He lays aside the pen and takes up the book, but even while reading, he is thinking he ought to finish the promised letter. By trying to make two “deadlines,” one for the mail collection, and another for the class period, he may miss one, and be ill-prepared for the other. Actually, such doubts are like rust on metal. They have a corrosive effect. They eat away at the solid structure of mental strength.

Of course, the answer to this problem lies in development of system and method, which provide for the maximum good to be derived from the time available. Industry could not exist in our modern world without what is called “time study.” Accordingly, analysts are employed by various firms at high salaries to carry on such research. Each of us, as a created mechanism of God, engaged in building character, should employ self-analysis and time-study, and should modify our habits and alter our procedures to conform to our best interests. Essential in doing this is the faculty of decision.

We have only 24 hours each day. We should mentally decide what use we can make of that time which will pay the greatest dividends now and in the future. This requires determining what is absolutely essential to be done today, what should be given priority after the essentials are accomplished, and what may be safely postponed until a future date. Having made the proper catalogue, we should concentrate on one of the essentials until it is properly disposed of, and pass on to another undistractedly. Afterwards we can give undivided attention, in succession, to other matters. Even the Eternal One began his work with purpose and proceeded with plan.

It is essential to cultivating a sound mind that, having

planned our tasks for today, we not worry about tomorrow's assignments. Trying to live tomorrow while doing your work today is but a short cut to the psychiatric ward. Look at life like an hourglass. Each morning when the glass is inverted there are hundreds of grains of sand in the upper compartment, but these can only pass through the narrow neck one at a time. The tasks of life can only be fulfilled in the same way. The apostle said, "This one thing I do." The Saviour said, "Do not worry about tomorrow. Leave tomorrow to worry about itself. One day's trouble at a time is enough" (Authentic Version).

True worth is in being, not seeming;

In doing, each day that goes by,

Some little good, not in dreaming,

Of great things to do by and by.

For whatever men say in their blindness

And spite of the fancies of youth,

There's nothing so kingly as kindness,

And nothing so royal as truth.

A New Conservation Corps

Mission Messenger (December 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

In the economic depression which began thirty years ago, our nation took drastic steps to aid recovery. One such step was organization of the Civilian Conservation Corps. This enlisted young men who were walking the streets and banded them into a group to help conserve and salvage natural resources. They planted shelter belts across the prairies, replanted thinning forests, and helped on flood control projects. In addition to the good accomplished for the country, they benefitted by working with each other, by the discipline of labor, and development of physical strength. Today, in the midst of economic plenty, we suffer from a *moral depression*. To conserve our spiritual resources, all who are concerned need to constitute a corps of diligent workers. We need to become a spiritual CCC, with the following:

1. *Courage*. We need men with courage to think for themselves. Regimentation is suicide for the spirit; conformity may mean the end of spiritual growth. We need courage to speak and to act. Freedom unused will soon be abused. Liberty requires exercise to stay alive. Transformed lives resulting from reformed hearts will keep us from becoming deformed and dwarfed.

2. *Commitment*. The battle of life is the only one which can be won by absolute and complete surrender. Too many merely

play at being religious. Religion is secondary with them. It is merely one facet of life, and not life itself. Consecration to Christ involves a genuine crucifixion of our old way of existence, and a burial of our previous self never to be resurrected again. The way of the cross leads home. Any other way leads from the home of the soul. The life that counts is the life that is undivided, wholly committed, so that it is lost to us. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

3. *Courtesy.* We live in a complex world. Men differ in ability, understanding and interpretation. We cannot ride roughshod over their hearts. The soldiers of God are not storm troopers or shock troops. We must deal with those who differ kindly, considerately, and in love. Discourtesy, anger and the party spirit will not lead others to the right; they only reveal what is wrong with ourselves. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, patient, apt to teach, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." These things—courage, commitment, courtesy— will make of you a real member of God's conservation corps of the spirit.

Are You Loyal?

Mission Messenger (December 1958)

Volume 20

[Abstract]

It is a common thing to hear men speak of “loyal churches” or “disloyal churches.” The loyalty to which they refer is generally conformity to a partisan or factional position. Each group has its own special measuring rod. In one case a church is loyal if its membership, or at least those in authority, oppose the United Christian Missionary Society; in another if they oppose individual cups; in another if they oppose classes; in another if they oppose the use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord’s Supper; in another if they oppose orphan homes. Thus, a man who is regarded as loyal by one faction, will be branded as disloyal by all others.

There are as many loyalty tests as there are “Churches of Christ.” Most of these are based on negative attitudes. In many cases, it makes little difference what all a man is *for*; what counts is the one thing he is *against*. He may be loyal and be for many things that are wrong; but he must be against *the right thing that is wrong*. Read that again! No one is recognized as loyal by all of the brethren; all of the brethren are recognized as disloyal by someone.

The word of God says, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” This is not sufficient for the factionalist. Proper regard for Jesus, and love for the

brethren, count for nothing unless one is in line with the party. It is not a matter of standing for Christ, but falling for the unwritten creed, that makes the difference. Our experience has been that as love for the party increases, love for the brethren decreases. Brotherly love is supplanted by partisan love for those who agree with us. Others are regarded as dishonest, treated as outsiders, and subjected to coldness and indifference.

As God looks at us, there are probably no “loyal churches.” There are some in each congregation who do the best they know how to do; there are many in each who do not. It is our attitude toward truth that makes the difference. Some may have but little knowledge and do much for Jesus; others have much knowledge and do but little. We will not be saved or lost as congregations, but as individuals. This does not imply that it makes no difference where you belong. It may make a great deal of difference. But wherever you are a member, the congregation is made up of frail humans, and it is just as “loyal” as all of the members who compose it. I pray for the day to come when party names, tests, and creeds, will be discarded, and love for the Master will be the true measure of a man’s spiritual worth and standing.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1959)

Volume 21

Covenants of God

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The Ebbing Tide

Mission Messenger (January 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet. I am a student of history, and I know that history is repetitive. Like causes produce like results. This is the basis for sober contemplation of the fate which awaits our civilization unless there is a startling reversal of attitude and behavior. By “our” civilization, I refer to the culture developed in the western hemisphere. It is not the only state of civilization in existence, but it is of particular interest to me, because by the circumstances of birth I am a white man, and by locality I live in a nation which is a part of, and a contributor to this culture. It is likewise of interest that this is the only civilization extant predicated upon the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and His way of life is the only satisfactory code of conduct, and the source of happiness beyond the grave. I subscribe to that belief.

Every symptom which preceded the downfall of other great previous civilizations is apparent in the western world. We are relying for our continued existence on the very things which proved to be “broken reeds” when others leaned upon them. Like the Macedonian, Roman, and prior world powers, we place our hopes upon our abundance of natural resources and the power of armed might. But the experience of all ages teaches that without single exception, those who placed their hope of survival upon these factors were destroyed. Other peoples who

were regarded as savage and uncultured, as uncouth and ignorant, have surged forward and overwhelmed those who had become soft and effeminate.

It is evident that the western world has long believed it was invulnerable because of a fancied superiority in technical skill and scientific acumen. That very thing may prove to be the Achilles' heel which will provide the avenue of death for all we have cherished. Certainly the adage of Paul, "If a man think that he stands, let him take heed lest he fall," can be projected to a national level, for a nation is but a collection of individuals. No other poison is so toxic as the idea of racial superiority, and the graveyard of nations is filled with the tombstones of those who regarded themselves as a super race. Many of them were engulfed by the very ones they despised.

A short time ago we received a severe jolt when Russia placed a satellite in orbit around the earth. Most Americans had lulled themselves into believing that this vast sprawling area of the earth's surface was peopled by dull, plodding peasants and semi-barbarous kulaks. Had we not read that they lived huddled together in small apartments, that they had few private automobiles, and no tiled baths. It was unthinkable that people who dressed in baggy clothes and walked to their destinations, could out-distance our brilliant scientists working in their gleaming, well-equipped laboratories. So shocking was the revelation of the Russian accomplishment, that our people were temporarily in a state of fear bordering on frenzy. But when our own geniuses hurled a couple of baby moons into space, we relaxed, and resumed our pleasurable existence. We could do it too! Despite the fact that our little satellites compared in size with those of Russia like an apple placed beside a sack of potatoes, we were content. It does not take much to satisfy the ego of those already full of it.

We stand today on the brink of disaster. We are like children toying with a loaded revolver or tossing a live grenade.

We are flirting with death, and gambling with extinction. This is the measured conviction of many serious modern philosophers. It is altogether possible their warnings will fall upon deaf ears. Belshazzar was throwing a drunken party the night the Medes entered mighty Babylon through the channel of the Euphrates. The citizens of Rome still believed it was the "Eternal City" when Alaric and the Visigoths knocked at the gates. Jeremiah urged his people to train women in the art of weeping, so they could take up a wailing, "that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush with waters." He assigned as the reason, "For death is come into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." But the king, sitting in his palace of luxury, took a penknife and cut the message to bits and fed it into the fire on the hearth, and Jeremiah was arrested and thrown into a dungeon filled with muck and mire.

The situation confronting our civilization is serious. We are in the critical ward. Is it hopeless? My reply is that it need not be. In what direction does hope lie? It cannot come from material wealth or expenditure of money. In the United States today we have piled up a national debt of such staggering proportions as to defy all ability to describe. The mind of man is incapable of grasping a picture of the amount of the earth's surface which would be blanketed if this colossal obligation were reduced to ten dollar bills and these were spread out like a quilt. Only recently the chief executive signed into law a bill raising the ceiling on the debt, and it is now predicted that it must be jacked up again by new billions. Much of this mammoth expenditure has gone to underprivileged areas, and many of these people have taken our money and become our bitter enemies. We have saddled our children's children for centuries to come with a yoke of taxation, and have spent money we did not have, but have borrowed from unborn posterity to protect our way of life, although in doing so we may have destroyed theirs. We have gone into debt in a time of greatest prosperity. If we do this in a green tree, what shall we do in the dry?

But does not God bless those who share their bounties with others who are in need? Is it not more blessed to give than to receive? That depends upon the motive for the giving. Our national budget for foreign aid is not an exemplification of Christian charity, nor an altruistic expression of love for the down-trodden. It is born of political necessity, and is a diplomatic expedient engaged in all too often as a policy of appeasement. God has not promised to bless the sacrifice one makes when he flings his purse to a robber to keep him from ransacking his house. We would not imply that no good has been done in filling the starving bellies of the victims of famine, but it must be admitted that all too frequently we have sent shiploads of grain only when we have learned Russia was going to do so. As a people, we are prone to rationalize and to assign ourselves the highest motives for our conduct, like the criminal who feels he is helping to solve the unemployment problem by keeping so many policemen at work.

We cannot trust in armed might for survival. The cracking of the atom marked the end of the myth that any one can win in a future war. All that can be expected is, that like the blind Samson of old, we will pull down the house and perish with our enemies. The few survivors who sought refuge in dens and caves deep enough to escape the fall-out would grope their way back to a blackened, desolated surface covered with the pitiable remains of men, women and children reduced to seared cracklings. Mighty cities would disappear in a blinding flash, rivers would be dried up, and mountains of debris would cover once fertile plains. Our only hope lies in a power greater and mightier than atomic energy. That superior power is the *moral power* of the universe, proceeding from the Creator of the universe. Atomic energy is created force. The Creator is greater than the created. So the moral strength of God is greater than any force which is neutral in moral relationships, such as atomic energy.

Any power to be utilized as a constructive or protective force must be properly channeled. For generations, rivers ran

wild and turbulent, until men flung huge dams across their courses, and directed the flow through water courses which enabled turbines to capture, tame, and harness the horsepower to light our homes and operate our factories. The power was there through the ages, but it was unused. The mere existence of moral power in the world is not enough. It is of such a nature that it must operate through human hearts, transforming them and using them as transforming agents. Those of us who believe that we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, as Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, also believe that God is able to do abundantly above all we ask or think, according to that power which works in us. This is the power of faith!

Why is it, then, that the only civilization based on the Christian concept, is tottering on the brink of the abyss which has swallowed so many previous civilizations? Has Christianity been weighed and found wanting? Is it outworn, outmoded, and helpless to compete with a complex secular modern world? There are those who affirm that this is the case. Certainly, after two thousand years, the majority of the world's population is not even nominally Christian. Millions have never learned the ethical principles of Jesus of Nazareth; millions more are unaffected by what they have heard. Has Christianity by virtue of its contact with the material sphere, and through friction thus engendered, lost its transforming power? If not, why is that power so ineffective?

In a series of articles, of which this is the first, addressed to all who believe that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod, was the Word made flesh, and the only begotten Son of the living God, I want to attempt to establish certain principles which may help to arouse thought and spur action, leading to our survival. These lessons will, it is hoped, commend themselves to the earnest thinkers of all denominations. This writer has long been associated with a non-sectarian fellowship based upon a sincere attempt to restore the primitive community of saints, and

it is but natural that much of what is said will have specific bearing upon the problems confronting those with whom he is affiliated. But recognizing that there are many others who believe in the Messiahship and Sonship of the Nazarene, and are sincerely seeking to understand and implement His will, it is hoped that there will be a sufficient degree of universality in the essays to encourage reading by all who love God and tremble over our impending fate.

Since our contact with our fellowmen depends upon the willingness and activity of others who are serious and sober thinkers, and who are concerned about the conditions outlined, we trust that our readers will share their papers with neighbors and friends who have a passion for truth, regardless of their religious affiliation. If each article could be passed to many hands and its suggestions become the grist for many minds, the resultant accumulative effort might be surprising. It is in the spirit of love that we urge you to read our article next month, entitled, "The Running Sands."

We are convinced that our greatest enemy is the indifference born of smug complacency. We refuse to believe the signs of the times. We are like the condemned man who awaits his fate at the gallows, but allows no thought of impending death to mar his last meal. Not one great world power of the past believed its own prophets. It is a characteristic of all great civilizations that the generation which inherits the blessings carved out of a rude and cruel wilderness by the toil of dedicated ancestors, accepts those blessings as its due, and loses the sense of consecration and renounces the labor essential to perpetuate them. Thus, men grow soft and effeminate as wealth becomes the end to be sought, and not the means to an end. Goldsmith has aptly said

Ill fares the land, to hastening

ills a prey;

**Where wealth accumulates and
men decay.**

The tide is ebbing out for us. The pull and tug of unseen forces is slowly and relentlessly drawing it out toward the deep, leaving great stretches of naked shore covered with the flotsam and jetsam once buried deeply, but now exposed to the gaze of all. Can that tide be stayed? Only a divine hand can hold it back. He who drew a line in the sands and said, "This far, and no further shalt thou come," can restrain the waves. But the reversal of the tide depends upon the reformation of our lives. Our civilization is not so much endangered by nuclear fission as by spiritual deficiency. Our greatest threat is not atomic power in the control of others, but lack of moral power as the controlling factor in our lives. Will you be one of God's "Minute Men" to help warn of the dangers that are clawing at our door?

Address to Sincere Believers

Mission Messenger (January 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

To our respected and beloved friends in every religious sect, who are concerned about the strife and division existing among believers in Jesus Christ, our Lord, we offer the following conclusions reached from a study of Ephesians, chapter two.

1. There was once a gulf of enmity between Jew and Gentile, so that the latter were referred to as being afar off, and, in a sense, were regarded as dead.

2. Jesus, as our peace, made both one, abolishing the enmity by means of death, that is, he killed the enmity by allowing himself to be killed, so that the cross became the rallying standard for those afar off, as well as those nigh.

3. The previously divergent elements were made one new man in Christ. Outside of him, they were segregated from each other, hating and being hated. In him, they are fellow citizens and of the household, or family, of God.

4. Reconciliation has been achieved in one body. That body is his church (Eph. 1:22, 23). Those who are in that body are charged to walk as followers of God, and dear children, that is, to walk in love as Christ has loved us (5:1, 2). Thus is to be guarded and maintained “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3).

These conclusions lead us to observe further that:

1. The church of God had its beginning on earth, on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. It was inaugurated with the proclamation that Jesus, being raised from the dead, has been exalted to the right hand of God, as Lord and Christ.

2. Admission to the fellowship was contingent upon personal faith in his Sonship and Messiahship, no other creed or proposition being offered as a basis for fellowship. All who believed in Jesus as the anointed Son, were accepted as brethren upon validation of their faith by one act of obedience, immersion in water of the believer.

3. Every immersed penitent believer was by the Lord added to his church and enjoyed all the privileges, prerogatives and rights of citizenship and brotherhood.

4. The church of God consisted then, and has always consisted, of every repentant believer who acknowledges the sovereignty of Jesus over his life, and who seals his faith by submission to baptism.

5. Such believers today have become divided and segregated, building up many walls of partition, and allowing barriers of enmity to exist, contrary to the will of God, and in opposition to the purpose of the death of Jesus.

6. All who love him are obligated to work for removal of every partition wall which separates the people of God. To achieve unity, the cross must again be exalted as the rallying point for all who love him. We are divided because we have strayed from the cross. Some may again be nigh, and others afar off. But all must recognize that "he is our peace."

7. Peace cannot be secured through comity agreements, creedal statements or synopses of faith. It will not come through

signed documents. All of these indicate distrust and suspicion. It can only come through humility, crucifixion of self, and complete surrender to Jesus, for “through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

8. We may take comfort in the fact that no chasm between us is as great as that which separated Jew and Gentile. If the cross of Jesus, as a bridge of love, was great enough to reach across the yawning abyss and tie the two sides together, is it so incredible to believe that it can span the gaps between us?

9. I have addressed only the concerned ones, for in any religious organization, it is only these who will study, search, pray, and labor to bring about that peace for which Jesus prayed, and which is so pleasing unto God. When our love for Jesus transcends our party loyalties and sectarian ties, we shall begin to see the dawn break after a night filled with the darkness of hatred, schism and strife.

10. As you pray for the light, please pray for us, that we may be willing to give our all, yea, even life itself, for the advancement of his cause. May we never consider that anything is settled while a cleavage still exists amongst the brethren, may we be ready always to examine anything that will lead to a semblance of peace among the warring factions. Entreat God for us that we may be humble instruments in his hand to promote peace on earth among men of good will, that his will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven!

Facing the Future

Mission Messenger (January 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

For more than twenty years we have regularly sent this little journal forth. We have never taken one cent of subscription money for our personal use. It has been a sacred trust to be used in sharing truth with others. We have never had enough to guarantee publication for more than a few months, yet never allowed an obligation to go unpaid. Somehow there was always enough when needed. Days of toil and long hours at night, have been invested by both Nell and myself to keep the paper coming to you. We have given this time freely and cheerfully.

No religious paper without paid advertising can survive on subscriptions alone. It can only exist when others who believe in the principles for which it contends are willing to share the cost of production to help acquaint the world with those principles. When men lose interest in those principles, or deem them unworthy of support, the paper must cease unless the editor is independently wealthy. Again we are forced to call your attention to our need of assistance, if we are to continue. Here are the facts.

The cost of materials and printing has tripled since we began. Those unacquainted with the printing trades are startled when they learn the truth about the inflationary spiral. The cost of mailing has risen greatly. It is due for additional increases. Many papers have been forced to quit; others have had to

consolidate to continue. It costs five cents to enroll a new subscriber, the actual cost of an address stencil. It costs five cents to notify those whose subscriptions expire. When necessary to send a second printed card, it costs an additional five cents. That is a hundred dollars just to notify each thousand readers their time is up. When you move and do not notify us, the post office charges us five cents to do so. Each month Nell and I must raise \$250 to get the paper to you. That is \$3,000 per year. It actually costs more than a dollar per year for each reader on our list.

Some have advised to raise the price. We have not increased it in twenty years. If we do, some will no longer be able to take the paper. To old age pensioners, boys in school, and large families, a dollar is precious. They scrimp and save to subscribe. Those who tell us they would like to have the paper but cannot afford it, receive it without charge. But some will not tell us. After serious study and meditation we have decided not to raise the price. If there are not enough brethren interested in our plea to help sound out the message, we will conclude our work is unavailing, and suspend operation. That you may properly judge whether our course is worthy we will present a few ideas about our purpose, then suggest what you may do.

This will not be a factional journal. It is not a "brotherhood paper" in the common usage of that term. It does not exist to plead for separation or segregation of disciples of our Lord on the basis of opinions relative to classes, individual cups, baptisteries, orphan homes, colleges, societies, pre-millennialism, or any other thing. Men may divide over these, but this journal will not become a factional mouthpiece for any party, segment, clique or faction. The editor has decided convictions on all these matters and will state them. A majority of writers may hold the same views, but the paper will not degenerate into a party organ. We will not denounce those who differ as pagans or heathen, nor refuse to regard them as children of God and brethren.

We will continue to plead for restoration of the ancient order as the only hope of answering the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers. We will do this in a spirit of firmness and fairness. We will not force our views upon others as terms of fellowship. Those who disagree with us will be regarded as brethren. If they want space to set forth dissenting views it will be granted when available, and if we reply, it will be in love. It is our hope to edit a journal which you may freely pass on to your friends and relatives, but we will not deny brethren who differ, space to express themselves, in order to increase circulation. We would rather have the paper go down in a spirit of fairness and justice, than to thrive as a partisan journal.

Shall we continue? **We have on file material needed in these days of tension, strife and division. But Nell and I cannot do the work, get the subscribers, and finance the project too. We have no surplus funds. We shall go on as long as we can. When we can no longer go on, we will cease with clear consciences and a sense of having done our best. Here are some of the ways you might help.**

- **Send in a list of subscribers from your congregation. Many will subscribe if you will but announce it, or ask them privately. Only a few ever really work to get other readers. Perhaps you would like to send the paper to a number of brethren and friends as an incentive to their study and spiritual growth. Work for it!**

- **If God has blessed you with a good salary, why not use a little of it each month to help promote peace on earth among men of good will? If just a few would share each month in the task, it would help lift the burden. You cannot go among all the factions of the disciple brotherhood personally, but you can help us reach the leaders and labor for better feeling and understanding.**

- **If you cannot do either of the foregoing, when you send in**

your own subscription, add a little to it, and we will use the additional amount to send it to others who cannot afford to subscribe.

• Please pray for our feeble effort to serve Him. If you feel we are presenting truth in a distressed and troubled world pray that it may have free course; if you feel we are not, pray that we may learn the way of truth more perfectly.

We will discontinue announcement of those who send subscriptions or financial aid. None of us are working for glory or honour bestowed by men. We are content to serve Him without thought of personal gain. God knows who our helpers are, and we know. It is enough that we are workers together with Him. This means that you will have to repose confidence in Nell and myself that we will be true to our trust. We pledge ourselves, in fear of the judgment, that we will not abuse that trust. We will not be factious or stubborn. We will not be divisive. We will use what you give to help further the cause of peace. Our sole interest is truth. Will you invest regularly in this campaign for spiritual peace and restoration, and trust heaven, as we do, to reward you with eternal dividends? Our prayers are for all of you!

Our Drawing Power

Mission Messenger (January 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

The church for which our Lord died is a simple, rather than a complex organism. Jesus lived a simple life among humble people. He was looked upon as a peasant carpenter in the region of his home. He knew nothing of luxury, worldly wealth, or ease. The ambassadors he selected and sent forth were unlearned men. They knew hardship and were acquainted with unremitting toil. The members of the one body in the first centuries were mainly slaves. They frequently met for worship before daybreak so they would not intrude upon the master's time, and to be free from the prying gaze of enemy spies. They owned no church property, but gathered in private homes and upper rooms. They were the poor of this world, but rich in faith.

When men are given special honor in the church because of worldly attainment, whether it be in wealth, education, or political prestige, the spiritual life wanes. The greatest enemy we face is pride. The church stifles the Spirit when it thrusts into prominence, as drawing cards, those of its number who are movie stars, outstanding athletes, or who have doctorate degrees. To bask in the reflected glory of great men is to dim the majesty of Jesus in the eyes of our fellowman. The humble saint who sings the songs of Zion with cracked voice may be greater in God's estimation than the crooner whose face is pictured on theatrical magazines. He who runs with patience the race set before him may be more worthy than the crack miler of the

sports pages. The one who knows naught but Jesus and him crucified, may be closer to the spirit of the lowly Nazarene than the lecturer upon ponderous themes.

God's children should not ape the world's tactics, nor employ the world's methods to achieve recognition. We fight a losing battle when we borrow the armor of the enemy. The only attraction we have any right to offer sinful men is the man Christ Jesus. In him the world finds the ideal it needs so much. His power has not weakened. He declares, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." Our task is not to draw men. It is to lift him up!

The erection of mammoth temples of pride, the boastful advertising of elaborate programs, the recounting of earthly attainments of pompous speakers, all of these are far removed from the humility and simplicity which were the strength of primitive saints. It is possible that the apostles of our Lord would not be welcome to speak in many places today where men pay lip service to their writings. Our Lord may be standing outside, unable to find room in the hearts of many who profess to follow him. We need to recapture the ideal of the simple life, so that even the lowliest may feel at home among us. We need to develop the Christian philosophy as our guide through life, so that we shall really believe that the road to greatness is pointed out by the signs of self-denial and service. The table of the Lord should be the gathering place of all his children, rich and poor, great and small, black and white. Caste systems based upon economic status, educational attainment, or racial differences, will be unknown in heaven, and should be foreign to the church on earth.

Fractured Fellowship

Mission Messenger (January 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

In some segments of the disciple brotherhood we hear with increasing frequency such terms as “Men’s Fellowship,” “Youth Fellowship,” etc. This is a straw which indicates how the wind blows, and it is not blowing in the direction of restoration of the ancient order of things. The fellowship in Christ to which we are called by the gospel is universal as to membership of the one body. In him, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, bond or free.” It is true that some attempted at first to fragmentize the fellowship on the basis of nationality. Peter sought to establish a Jewish fellowship at Antioch, and was sternly rebuked by Paul. It remained for “latter day saints” to use sex or age as admission to the charmed circle, and organize something for which there is no more scriptural authority than there is for the United Christian Missionary Society.

This means little to those bitten by the “organizing bug.” They point to the work being done and the amount contributed by the “Men’s Fellowship” as an indication of the spiritual strength of *the church*. It is really a symptom of weakness. In many cases the bulk of the membership just go along, and do little. Because the congregation as a whole is “poor, and weak, and miserable, and blind, and naked,” something else is organized in the hope that it will make enough noise so it will appear like the body is functioning. It is like painting the garage to detract attention from the decrepit condition of the house; or

blowing loud on the bass horn to cover up the dearth of sound from the other instruments in the orchestra.

To hitch any kind of limiting term to the front end of our fellowship in the Christ is to destroy the real sense of that fellowship, which is contingent on being in Christ, not on age, sex, or other consideration. Jesus did not use the term from such an exclusive standpoint. A men's fellowship excludes women. A youth fellowship excludes those of mature age. Such a fellowship is not the one for which Jesus died. The fellowship in Christ is not partitioned off or chopped up. It has no walls, cubicles or cells. "We are all one in Christ Jesus."

We might as well face up to the fact that the idea of restoring the ancient order is not the aim of most of the disciple brotherhood. They are concerned with defending what they have and organizing something else. They do not care to reproduce the church in apostolic simplicity. They have too much money tied up in other things. Bible colleges, seminaries, eleemosynary societies, charitable organizations, missionary societies and benevolent institutions— all of these prove they are as big as other sects, and they will keep them regardless of God's word. And these things have let down the bars. There is no end to how far man will go when he starts organizing things. He will tamper with anything on the basis that he can improve on God's arrangement. Anything God wants done I can do in the fellowship of the whole church; whatever I cannot do in that fellowship He does not want done!

The Running Sands

Mission Messenger (February 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

The civilization of western men, receiving its impetus from the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, has acted as a dike to keep back the frothing waves of the sea of barbarism and cruelty. Behind that dike the nations of the west have elevated the living standard of their citizens to the highest peak yet scaled. Scientific research has eliminated the fear of many diseases, the average length of human life has been greatly increased, new techniques have been discovered in the realm of surgery and medicine which enable practitioners to salvage many who would have been lost a few decades ago. Old age assistance, increased pension funds, and social security benefits have eliminated the thought of dependency in the declining years. Slums are being rooted up, scientific housing projects are going up, and even low income groups can now share in things which would have been counted as luxuries, obtainable only by a few of the wealthiest people, but fifty years ago. It would seem to the casual observer that this is a golden age and that it will continue so until it blends into the eternal.

But the careful investigator, using the measuring reed of history for a guide, detects dangerous cracks in the dike, and sees the water seeping through the crevices, and he is fearful for the future. He hears the ominous beat of the breakers as they foam in fury against the foundation and the sound is a portent of evil days ahead unless the breaches can be cemented and the

walls buttressed. It is as if the hour glass of western culture had been inverted for the last time and the trickling sand is getting low in the upper portion, and time is running out. The cool wind in the face is the harbinger of a storm which will unleash its violent fury in a destructive blast against all that we hold dear.

These are not the pessimistic ravings of a professional precursor of doom. They are the sober conclusions reached from a comparison of our present condition with the condition of every nation of the past which has been ruthlessly overthrown at the height of its power. A careful analysis of the symptoms of corruption which undermined those nations, together with a study of our own situation, will convince any serious thinker that not one symptom is lacking. We can mention but a few.

Our great cities are not only breeding grounds of crime, but crime is no longer an enactment of a weak anti-social individual, or of small groups welded together in a nefarious scheme. Crime is syndicated. It is the product of an organized gang with tentacles reaching into every department of our governmental structure. The master minds are members of the dread "Black Hand" movement, the sinister Mafia, with its hired assassins and imported thugs. Prostitution, gambling and liquor are fertile fields of activity for this underworld coterie, and "Murder, Incorporated," represented the ultimate of its plan to manipulate and control the entire nation for gain. Crooked lawyers are on the alert night and day to thwart the law, and are sustained by the payroll of the gang. With well placed agents in high places, the hoodlum element has rendered local officials and average citizens well-nigh helpless. And the greatest weapon in the gang arsenal is not the blackjack or tommy-gun but the spirit of apathy, indifference, and unconcern of the populace.

The workmen's unions which began as a protective measure to counteract the exploitation of labor by industrial management, have often been infiltrated by communists and gangsters. The thought of great "war chests" composed of

millions of dollars exacted in compulsory dues has attracted the underworld like sugar attracts flies. Men like Dave Beck and his son, of the teamsters' union, have filched and stolen, to live like Oriental pashas in sumptuous luxury on the spoils exacted from the toils of grimy and sweaty men. While denouncing capitalists they have existed in a style which many of those they deride have never known. Worst of all has been the fomenting of hate and class consciousness. The worker has been taught to look upon the employer as an enemy from whom he must exact the last penny regardless of the means employed. In turn, the employer feels a sense of contempt for those with whom he bargains only through a professional agent, who frequently "plays politics" with the welfare of the very workers whom he is engaged to represent.

This is a day when men seek to get all they can, and in many instances where fair means will not avail, foul methods obtain. We are not opposed to the idea of men receiving just compensation for their labor. We are pleased that certain benefits are now accorded them, such as fewer hours of labor per week, and lengthier vacations. But what use is made of increased wages and more leisure? Do these contribute to the strengthening of the social fabric and the moral betterment of our world? On the contrary, there are grave implications the opposite is true.

Each wage increase brings a corresponding rise in commodity prices, which in turn produces a higher cost of living index, and this brings a clamor for increase of the hourly wage scale. An inflationary spiral is created which places manufactured goods on an ever higher price level. But many wages are relatively static, and each time the price is increased, a certain number are eliminated as potential purchasers. The available market will sooner reach the saturation point and unemployment will result. We have already priced ourselves out of the world market, and now must loan other nations the money with which to purchase our finished products. What will happen

when the day of accounting arrives?

But the danger lies not in high wages and price increases, although history attests to the fact that even on a world scale economic conditions run in cycles, but in the spirit that prompts the demand for these things, and the use to which they are put when obtained. Have higher wages generally improved our moral and spiritual status? On the contrary, the demand for increased pay has not been based upon increased effort and service, the just basis for calculation, but upon greed and envy. These recreant twins besmirch everything they contact, and like borers in a tree, will eventually destroy the very social structure upon which they feed.

Greed gives birth to the most dangerous philosophy that can infect a nation. It places an emphasis on things and engenders the view that the more things one possesses, the better he is. It estimates the value of a man by the neighborhood in which he lives, the size of his car, or the cost of his suits. This is in direct opposition to the doctrine of Jesus, who declared, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses." One needs only to stand at the checking counter of a large supermarket to see that better wages do not mean better living. Beer by the case, and cigarettes by the carton, constitute a major part of many weekly purchases. One is tempted to cry out like the ancient prophet, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not?"

Our problem is not the high cost of living, but the cost of high living, or perhaps, the high cost of low living! It is interesting, but frightening, to realize that Russia looks upon cigarette sucking as an indication of weakness and demoralization in the western nations, and warns against it. The increasing incidence of lung cancer in smokers, has convinced me that the tobacco trust is a better agent of the communist world plot than all the secret spy rings in the nation. It is a tragic

truth that while we fear the atomic bomb we may be beaten into submission by a weed. Our people get wrought up at the thought of radioactive fallout which may sear the lungs and eat the body tissues, but at the same time, deliberately pay for the privilege of sucking into their lungs the tars “which will eat as doth a cancer.”

It has been said that you may judge the character of a man by what he does with his leisure time. One cannot always do what he would like during his hours of gainful employment. He works for another and must be subservient to his will. But one makes his own decisions relative to what he calls his “free time.” What is true of judging an individual is also true of a nation which is only a group of individuals living under a common government. Has increase of leisure time and freedom from daily toil been used to strengthen our moral and spiritual resources? Have we used these hours to gain wisdom and intellectual growth, better to serve humanity? Is our recreation truly a re-creation of vital forces sapped by the daily grind?

It is probable that an honest survey would reveal that the opposite again is the case. Our forefathers who hewed their homes out of the wilderness, had to provide their own entertainment. As a result they became excellent conversationalists and inimitable story tellers. Men who could hardly read or write could enjoy mutual exchanges of the spoken word for hours or days. Their little world was circumscribed, but they gained the ultimate from every experience. Today, with the television bringing the whole world into the living room, we are tongue-tied and our speech organs are virtually paralyzed. A local university is giving a course entitled, “How to be a good conversationalist.” We are no longer able to entertain; we have become a nation that must be entertained. We have lost our power of creativeness, spontaneity, and purposeful interest. The sense of humor has given way to the repetition of stale jokes of cheap cigar-smoking comedians, who derive an agonized living out of trying to make us laugh.

Again, our hearty foreparents engaged directly in their athletic events, simple as these were. While waiting their turn at the grist mill, there were foot races, jumping contests, weight lifting tests, or shooting matches. These were participation sports. Now, we are a nation of spectators, sitting in packed grandstands, munching peanuts, devouring wieners, imbibing soft drinks, and watching others exercise. How much has our civilization gained when thousands will jam a great stadium to see two trained gladiators beat each other into insensibility, and yell and scream with delight when gore spurts from a battered nose, or an eye goes shut from brutal blows? Has our leisure improved our family life? Has it made our home ties any stronger? Those who are inclined, in this sophisticated age, to look with a patronizing air upon the simple lives of their grandparents, need to recall the warning in *Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard*:

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.
The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

There are indications that “the inevitable hour” may be much nearer than many think for our famed civilization, and the shadow on God’s dial may be further on its decline than we realize. Those who are students of the rise and fall of empires

stare in grim fascination at the trickling sand in the hourglass of destiny. Those sands are running out. What factors, if any, at this late hour, can hold them back, and retain for our children's children, a world from which hope has not fled, and faith remains a vital force? We propose to state a few principles upon which, God willing, we shall elaborate in future issues. We present them now, merely that you may meditate upon their value, in advance of our application of them.

1. The only force in the universe capable of sustaining any nation indefinitely is moral power.

2. All power is of God, and the principles of his moral power were first revealed to chosen persons, and then exemplified in a person, the Word who was made flesh and dwelled among us.

3. A civilization is truly strong only to the extent that those who compose it exemplify the principles enunciated by Jesus of Nazareth, and it is weak to the extent that they pay lip service to the person of Jesus, and neglect to apply his principles in personal conduct.

4. A nation which is weakened by internal corruption cannot be preserved by the development of natural resources, emphasis upon scientific research, or increase of expenditure to maintain greater armed might. It can only be saved by repentance, which is the first requisite of moral re-armament.

5. The call to reform can effectively come only from those who have been transformed by the power of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus would have been but another ethical philosopher except for the cross, so those who have not personally experienced their own Gethsemane and Golgotha, can never exert a power calculated to transform those whom they touch. It is only the crucified life which can lead to the Crucified One.

6. The world must be preserved by salt. This is God's decree. There is no alternative. "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its strength, how can the earth be preserved?" Before we can salt the earth, we must restore the strength, or preservative power, to the salt. That is our real problem today, and our major consideration.

7. When the preservative power is present, to be effective the salt must work in united effort. As one grain of salt, isolated and alone, would be ineffective to preserve a body, so our strength must be exerted in a fellowship, and such fellowship to be truly efficacious, must include and make use of all the strength of all the salt.

8. The salt must come into contact with that which it is to affect or influence. Just as salt in a shaker may maintain its identity and yet be worthless because it does not accomplish its mission, so disciples of Jesus may remain aloof from the world of mankind. The purpose of salt is to lose itself in service to that which it seeks to preserve. When the church becomes introverted, it is concerned with strengthening *itself* in faith and becoming a respected community organization, and it always ends up by worshiping itself. The world then becomes ignorant of the church, because the church is ignorant of the world. (Please read the forthcoming article in our next issue, entitled, "Sunset in the West.")

Churches of God

Mission Messenger (February 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which . . . are in Christ Jesus” (2 Thess. 2:14). What is the nature of those who become followers of the churches of God which are in Christ Jesus? We submit the following for your study.

1. They are *catholic*. This word means “universal.” The commission of Jesus to his ambassadors was to “go into all the world.” They were to preach the gospel to every creature. I am catholic, but not a member of the *Roman Catholic Church*.

2. They are *baptists*. A baptist is one who baptizes. In current parlance it refers to one who regards immersion as scriptural baptism. I qualify on both counts, so I am a baptist, but I am not a member of *The Baptist Church*.

3. They are *methodists*. The work of God should be carried on systematically and orderly, that is methodically. Paul rejoiced at the “order and steadfastness of faith” (Col. 2:5). I am a methodist, but not a member of *The Methodist Church*.

4. They are *presbyterian*. This indicates rule by a body of elders. Timothy was ordained by a presbytery (1 Tim. 4:14). I am a presbyterian, but not a member of *The Presbyterian Church*.

5. They are *episcopal*. This signifies government by

bishops. The church at Philippi had bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1). I am episcopal, but not a member of *The Episcopal Church*.

6. They are *congregationalists*. This indicates recognition of the autonomy of the local church, as opposed to a central governing board. I am a congregationalist, but not a member of *The Congregational Church*.

7. They are *friends*. Jesus said, “I have called you friends” (John 15:15). I am a friend, but not a member of *The Friends Church*.

8. They are *disciples*. A disciple is a learner. It was the disciples who met on the first day of the week to break bread. I am a disciple, but not a member of *The Disciples Church*.

9. They are *brethren*. Jesus said, “All ye are brethren” (Matt. 23:8). I am one of the brethren, but not a member of *The Church of the Brethren*.

10. They are *christians*. “The disciples were called Christians” (Acts 11:26). I am one of these, but am not a member of *The Christian Church*.

11. They are *united brethren*. They are obligated to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I am united with all of the brethren in Christ, but am not a member of *The United Brethren Church*.

12. They are an *assembly of God*. The word *ekklesia* can be translated “assembly” as justifiably as it can be translated “church” (Cp. Acts 19:32, 39, 41). I am in the assembly of God, but am not a member of *The Assembly of God Church*.

In short, I am not a member of any religious party. I am opposed to the party spirit which appropriates scriptural terms and makes a sectarian usage of them. *The Brethren* are distinguished from *Friends*, and *Disciples* from

Congregationalists. The height of such folly is seen when a partisan group calls itself *United Brethren* to segregate itself from Brethren, Friends, and Disciples. The very name “United Brethren” is employed to signify a division.

I am in the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23), but am not a member of *The Church of the Firstborn*, a modern sect. I am in “the church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2) but am not a member of *The Church of God*, a modern sect. I am in “the churches of God which are in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 2:14), but am not a member of *The Church of God in Christ*, a modern sect. I am in the churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16), but hold no brief for *The Church of Christ*. There are modern parties designating themselves: The Church of God, The Church of the Firstborn, The Church of Christ, and The Church of God in Christ. One such usage is just as scriptural as another, and just as unscriptural when used in a partisan sense. It is wrong to take any scriptural term and elevate it as a party title to exclusion of other terms given by the Holy Spirit of God.

I am a member of *the church*. It is the church of God, the body of Christ, the flock of God, the church of Christ, the kingdom of heaven, the church of the first-born, the temple of God, the church of God in Christ, the family of God, and the assembly of God. It is composed of brethren, saints, disciples, Christians and friends. Every saved person on earth is in it. It is not a party. It is not a conglomeration of parties. There may be, and no doubt are, some in every religious party who are in it. They should leave these parties, and become “followers of the churches of God which are in Christ Jesus.”

Our Position

Mission Messenger (February 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

We are subjected to constant censure because we grant so much space to brethren who are critical of our position. While some have stopped their subscriptions because of what we write, more have quit reading the paper because so much of it is given over to opposing brethren, whose writings, they say, are not edifying. We are unmoved in policy by these demonstrations of party spirit. All sides of an issue must be heard. None of us is perfect, none know all there is to know. We must learn from each other, and we can learn more from those who disagree, than from those who agree with us.

We need to be fair, courteous, kindly affectioned to each other, forbearing one another in love. I have reached that state of spiritual maturity where I can love all of the brethren, even those in radical disagreement with my views. I do not base my love or fellowship upon absolute conformity to my personal ideas, so I shall not seek to harm, undermine, or in any manner hinder any one who does not see things like I do. I will discuss our points of difference, and set forth my position. If he cannot subscribe to it, I shall not hate him because he cannot, but by love, serve him in whatever capacity I may.

We have been victims of the party spirit so long, that when brethren state opposite views, we immediately jump to the conclusion that we must side with one or the other. There is not

a congregation on this earth where all the members see everything alike. Yet they work together! Why not allow those who write to this paper the same leniency which you accord your own congregation? It is not necessary that you “take sides” with any writer, certainly not with the editor. It would be dangerous for you to do so with the latter, because if I learn I am wrong, I will acknowledge it, and adopt the truth, regardless of what others may do or say, so you might be left in the lurch!

I have resolved not to be a religious partisan! This is not a party journal. We are thankful when brethren see things as we do, we love those who do not just as much as ever. We need to grow up in Christ Jesus, get rid of our false standards, and learn that the great principles we hold in common are superior to the things on which we differ. In any event, love will be the only solution to our problems!

Sunset in the West

Mission Messenger (March 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

The Saturday Evening Post is running a series of articles by great contemporary thinkers under the heading “Adventures of the Mind.” Number eleven in the series was written by Miss Edith Hamilton, on “The Lessons of the Past.” The author is 91 years old. She is an outstanding authority on the Graeco-Roman civilization. Her article should be read by every serious American. Think about these statements:

Today we are facing a future more strange and untried than any other generation has faced . . . and the possibilities of destruction are immeasurably greater than ever. . . . We have a great civilization to save— or to lose. The greatest civilization before ours was the Greek. They challenge us and we need the challenge. They, too, lived in a dangerous world. They were a little, highly civilized people, the only civilized people in the west, surrounded by barbarous tribes and with the greatest Asiatic power, Persia, always threatening them. In the end they succumbed, but the reason they did so was not that the enemies outside were so strong, but that their own strength, their spiritual strength, had given away.

Miss Hamilton elaborates upon these ideas in the September 27, 1958 edition of the *Post*, in these words:

A slackness and softness finally came over them to

their ruin. In the end, more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security, a comfortable life, and they lost all—security and comfort and freedom. Is not that a challenge to us? Is it not true that into our education have come a slackness and a softness? Is hard effort prominent? The world of thought can be entered in no other way. Are we not growing slack and soft in our political life? When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to the state, but the state to give to them, when the freedom they wished most for was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free and was never free again. Is not that a challenge?

It is a sobering thought that every factor which aided in the downfall of Greek civilization is present, and predominantly so, in our present civilization. All history points to the fact that we are approaching the sunset of our national existence. The orb of national greatness has passed its meridian and the decline is steady and observable. Will some future Gibbon write, “The Decline and Fall of the American Nation?” Is the approaching darkness inevitable? Can we not stay the sun in its relentless march across the political heavens? There is one ray of hope. When God’s ancient people were engaged in a fierce struggle against an implacable foe, the intrepid Joshua called out for the sun and moon to stand still. The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not go down for a whole day. “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of man: for the Lord fought for Israel” (Josh. 10:14). Perhaps if we would earnestly implore God, he might lengthen the day of our national existence, and stay the declining sun.

On the other hand, our luxurious way of life may have ruined our hearts for a restoration of the saving quality so needful in these days. Bishop Stephen Fielding Bayne, of the Episcopal diocese of Olympia, Washington, said, as quoted in Time, Sept. 29, 1958:

The only trouble with our intellectual habit of likening our times to the decadent Roman Empire and the

challenge of the barbarians is that in the earlier case there was a vital, revolutionary new leaven at work . . . Whether Christianity can once again perform that function remains to be seen. To do so would require a pretty radical rebirth of Christian thought, of which I wish I could see more signs. Perhaps we may find such a rebirth in the remembrance of the Birth, that timeless fact about God which did once turn the world upside down. But we shall have to separate the birth from the Cadillacs and the crystal decanters and the ladies' electric shavers.

The luxuries of life and the desire for ease and security have taken their toll and sapped the strength of our moral fiber. This nation was born of hardship and sacrifice. Our fathers turned their backs upon the easy way of life and faced the wilderness and its terrors unafraid. Their sinews toughened and their muscles hardened as they cleared the forest, hewed the logs, and erected their rude cabins. They knew the burning heat of summer, the biting cold of winter, the lashing of the storm, and the cruelty of drifting snow and blizzard. They had to be men of ingenuity and inventive bent. They learned the need of cooperative effort at husking bees and log raisings. They were forced to adapt themselves to changing fortunes of life, and to accept with stoical calm the suffering which their way of life entailed.

It was these pioneers who, amidst privations we have never known, hammered out on the anvil of history, the principles which made this nation great. They lived close to nature. They gauged time daily by the shadow cast by the sun, they anticipated the changing seasons by the flight of migratory birds, and by the activities of the furry creatures of the forest. They learned to nourish themselves upon the breast of mother earth, and revered the soil, until their bodies were finally planted in it and went back to the elements from which they sprang. Their hands were calloused, their faces tanned like leather, and their step sprightly alert. It was from nature they learned the blessings of contentment and serenity.

The strength of a nation is not often found in cities where vice stalks openly, blighting what it looks upon; and where graft rules as king. In such crowded areas where the poverty stricken huddle in filthy, vermin-infested slums; where children grow up on dirty streets; where all too often clever politicians manipulate the citizens like pawns to achieve their nefarious ends; dishonesty is bred by greed, and cleverness is mistaken for success. Here, where great factories belch out their corrosive smoke, men seem to live always under a cloud of artificiality. Life itself becomes a struggle, the spirit is worn raw by contact with the abrasives of profanity and obscenity. Morality erodes under the constant battering of open temptation. The spiritual background of a nation are its tillers of the soil, whose simple lives and unrelenting toil build stout hearts and stalwart bodies. There can be no adequate substitute for these. Goldsmith aptly states it:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,

Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Princes and lords may flourish or may fade —

A breath can make them as a breath has made;

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,

When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

One thing which hastened the downfall of Rome was the destruction of small farms, and the enforced transfer of their owners to the cities. The extensive foreign conquests brought more than a million slaves into Italy. Some of the patricians owned hundreds of these hapless victims. To furnish employment and to exploit their bodies for gain, they began to purchase whole sections of rural areas. The price of land

increased to such proportions that the small owners could not resist the offers made for their holdings. The result was that the land, which had long been the proud possession of an independent family, passed into the hands of those who farmed an entire district on a mass production basis.

The rural folk, dispossessed by financial pressure, moved into great urban centers. They were not adapted to city life, and soon, having spent what they had received for their farms, they were reduced to living in squalor. Foreign slave labor had absorbed available gainful employment, and those who once labored to wrest a living from the soil, and who had gazed with pride upon green fields, now congregated daily in public parks and forums. Here they drifted about aimlessly, watching jugglers, listening to mountebanks and charlatans. Soon they began to clamor for food, and gathering themselves into mobs they stormed the storehouses. Robbery and pillaging increased in volume, and the ratio of crime began to climb in a dizzy spiral. The government sought to appease the hungry, distraught and unkempt rabble by inaugurating a system of public doles and providing for free entertainment and spectacles.

The dole system destroyed the shreds of independence and self-respect which remained. Those who once labored to feed the nation by honest sweat in the fields, now came to believe that the nation existed to feed them, and on the days when the pittance was dealt out they pushed and shoved in screaming, shouting disarray, seeking to be foremost in receiving the grain allotment. They filled the arena in order to see others present performances, many of which were satirical in tendency, and gradually cynicism and skepticism became the order of the day. The attendant train of immoralities and vicious actions sapped the moral and spiritual stamina of the people, and decay ate like dry rot at the core of national existence. The nation was weighed in the balances and found wanting, and the sun of destiny was eclipsed by the hordes of daring, adventurous, hardy barbarians

who swept down like an engulfing tidal wave from the northern forests.

One would be blind indeed who cannot see the great transformation in our own national character. Technology has provided for the invention of farm machines which now do the work formerly requiring scores of men. But the investment in machinery demands a sufficient acreage to warrant its purchase and maintenance. This means consolidation of farms in a given area. The little farmer is caught between the crushing jaws of a vise. He cannot afford to pay for expensive machines and he cannot continue to meet competition without them. The lure of regular wages in the city acts as a siren to entice him away from his frugal life, and soon he joins the host of those who annually move away from soil to pavement. In many portions of our land, the empty farm houses with the sparrows flitting through their broken windows, stand as mute monuments to the era of change. Great syndicates purchase the land, and the owners live remote from it in the pampered luxury of the city. It is no longer a home. It is now merely another business enterprise, and the pride in green fields is a false pride, for it is but a symbol of wealth.

These transformations in our national life produce changes in the people. The struggle against adversity as well as the perversity of nature, breeds endurance. Facing storm and sleet in winter, toiling in the burning heat of summer, these produce ruggedness. City dwellers often become soft and flabby of body, though they may become hardened in spirit. Divorced from a life of wrestling with the caprices of the elements they lose the true spirit of adventure. It was a recognition of the dangers involved in such a type of life which prompted Theodore Roosevelt, in a speech entitled "The Strenuous Life," delivered in 1891, in Chicago, to say:

Our country calls not for the life of ease, but for the life of strenuous endeavor. The twentieth century looms

before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease, and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by and will win for themselves the domination of the world. Let us therefore boldly face the life of strife, resolute to do our duty well and manfully; resolute to uphold righteousness by deed and by word; resolute to be honest and brave, to serve high ideals, yet to use practical methods.

What can the concerned ones do? We cannot halt the changing pattern. The tide will continue to flow from rural toward urban centers. In 1910, one in every three Americans lived on a farm; in 1950, one in six; in 1958, only one in eight. Our present population is near 175,500,000. Of this number, 20,800,000 are on farms. In 1950, with a population of 151,000,000 the rural dwellers numbered 25,000,000. This is a 17 per cent change in eight years. These are startling figures! They call for complete re-adjustment of approach, if Christianity is to become effective in our culture. Humbly do we offer the following suggestions:

1. We should face the situation unafraid. The Christian religion was revealed to meet the needs of all men, wherever they are. It is not a rural religion, nor a city religion. The apostles went directly to the great commercial marts of their day. The first century after the advent of the Messiah provides a drama of the conquest by the Crucified One in Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch and Rome—mighty centers of polyglot population, seething with idolatry and vice.

2. We should recapture the spirit of cooperation and helpfulness which was the bulwark of the primitive agrarian society in our country. We cannot gather for log raisings or husking bees. But a group can get together on Saturday and help a member paint his house, then repeat the act at the home of

another on the following Saturday. The wives can each furnish a covered dish, and all can eat together. There is a peculiar value in breaking bread together, found in no other mutual act. Although the first community of Christ continued daily in the temple, they broke bread from house to house and “ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart.” To make the leaven work, we must get it out of cathedrals and meetinghouses and into homes.

3. The pioneers were forced to adopt a sharing policy. They shared danger, deprivation and disaster. To survive they also had to work together. If one broke an arm or leg, the neighbors came on an appointed day, and did the plowing or harvested his crop. The concerned ones, who are interested in building a better world, might well gather at the home of a widow, or an elderly couple, clean up the yard, repair the house, and paper the rooms. The act of sharing will reflect in an increased sense of fellowship with God and each other. It is possible that “social security” has brought material security at the expense of real social welfare.

4. Those who live in certain general areas might meet for an evening of scripture reading and prayer each week in the home of one of the concerned ones. Some urban congregations should dispense with “midweek meetings” which are often mere formalities carried out with habitual regularity, and with little genuine warmth, and substitute home meetings in various districts. Members will work all day, face harassing traffic conditions getting home, gulp down a few bites of food, and drive additional miles to get to a church building, passing en route hundreds in the neighborhood of their homes, who are beset with doubts and fears, and who need the comfort of scriptural truth and companionship with others. Home meetings ought not to be elaborate affairs.

They ought to be sharing experiences. They might consist merely of reading the scriptures, with each person participating,

then prayers led by all who feel a burden of heart. These prayers should be offered while kneeling. If discussions of the Bible passages are engaged in, it should be without one recognized as a teacher, while the others constitute an audience, but rather a visiting with each other as neighbors, with the sacred scriptures as the theme.

5. The idea of “leaven consciousness” needs to be recaptured. Primitive saints recognized a personal covenant relationship to God. They had not been urged to “unite with the church” but to accept and recognize Jesus, whom God raised up. As witnesses of His, they were to affect and influence all whom they contacted. Quietly and surely, as leaven works in the dough, they worked in the social structure about them, for its good. Only by this means can a corrupt modern world be once again brought to its knees in obeisance before the King of kings. It can never be done by hiring preachers, holding meetings, putting on advertising campaigns. It is God’s plan that it be done through the ministrations of a priesthood of all believers.

The sun of western civilization is sinking. Already the shadows grow long over the land. The red and purple streamers of the dying orb reach like fiery fingers across the horizon. Darkness is coming. The specters of gloom are awaiting. Watchman, what of the night? Is there a Joshua, who will rise up as God’s leader for this day, and halt the sun in the heavens, and cause the moon to stand still? The skeleton hand of fate reaches out its bony fingers to crush all we hold dear. What are you doing to stay that fate? Are you one of the “concerned ones”? We urge you to read our next article, “The Sword of Damocles.”

Grace and Faith

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

Salvation is by the grace of God. Without such grace salvation would not be obtainable. But that grace has appeared, and the offer of salvation has been made universally.

The grace of God must confer this salvation upon men, either conditionally or unconditionally. If it is conferred unconditionally, all men must be saved, and universalism is true. But if universalism is true, the Bible which reveals the grace of God is in error, for it teaches that some will be damned.

If the Bible is true, salvation is offered conditionally, and to be saved it is required that man determine the conditions specified by grace and comply with them.

That the salvation offered by grace is conditional, is revealed in Ephesians 2:8, 9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Salvation is not of ourselves. If so, it could not be of grace. If a man merited or deserved salvation, to the extent of such merit, it would not, and could not be of grace. But salvation is

predicated upon the unlimited, unrestricted grace of God, therefore, salvation is a gift of God. Being a gift, it cannot be earned, and thus is not of works. There is no merit in works as such to procure salvation. If such merit existed one could boast of his efforts and their results. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom. 4:4). God is not in debt to us, and we cannot do enough works to put him in debt.

There are two sides to salvation— the divine and human. The divine part is expressed by the word *grace*. The human part is expressed by the word *faith*. These are universally inclusive of their respective areas.

Whatever was required on the part of heaven to achieve our salvation, was, therefore, an expression, or manifestation of grace. It was not grace *and something else*, but grace expressed through this means. In Titus 3:5, we read, “According to his *mercy* he saved us.” In Romans 5:9, we learn that we are justified by his *blood*; in Romans 5:10, that we are saved by *his* life. Acts 4:12 informs us that we are saved by the *name* of Christ, while Romans 1:16 informs us the *gospel* is the power of God unto salvation.

These are not separate from, additional to, or opposed to salvation by grace. They are expressions of grace, by which it reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). Since salvation is said to be by grace, whatever was required of God to provide salvation is merely an expression of grace, and cannot be said to be in opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace. On the divine side, we are saved by grace alone, but by grace expressed, manifested and perfected in our behalf through ordained channels.

On the human side, salvation is by faith. Whatever condition, therefore, is required of man to appropriate to himself the blessings of grace, is merely an expression of faith.

Such a condition is not something apart from, additional to, or opposed to faith, but is an expression of faith in harmony with the divine will.

There is only one thing which avails in Christ Jesus. It is faith which works by love. “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). The only thing that avails is faith. But to avail, faith must be properly activated (it must work) and motivated (by love). So any condition imposed by faith, or as a test of faith, is not salvation by works versus faith, but salvation by faith at work. We are saved, not by faith *and works*, but by faith which works!

Is there any condition or test established by grace for salvation from our past sins? If so, compliance therewith is not salvation by works, but salvation by faith— at work! Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16).

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to *all men*. The gospel of God’s grace is to be announced, therefore, to every creature, in all the world. That gospel authorizes baptism as a condition of salvation, by which faith expresses itself. The grand design of baptism, as it pertains to God, is the remission of sins; that is, it is to place man in a position where God’s grace can be applied to the individual in a pardoning act. As pertains to man, the design is to furnish a test of his faith, to see if it is of an availing quality, if it works by love!

Baptism, then, is a condition of salvation, because it is a divinely authorized ordinance by which faith demonstrates or manifests itself. He who is baptized under the gospel seeks not to be saved by works, but by faith which works by love. Paul was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). He declares he was saved by grace, not according to works. “According to the power

of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim. 1:8, 9). To be immersed on this basis is not an attempt to be saved by works, but by faith manifested and perfected. Since salvation is said to be by faith, whatever is required of man to obtain salvation is merely an expression of faith, and cannot be said to be in addition to, or a substitution for faith. In this sense, it may be said man is saved by faith alone, but it is faith expressed, demonstrated and manifested, as well as perfected.

Is this in opposition to James 2:14-26? Not at all. The question under discussion by James is not whether we are saved by works, but if we can be saved by faith which does not work, that is, by faith which is not demonstrated or perfected. Note his proposal. “A man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works.” What is to be shown? Works? No! I will show *my faith*—faith manifested by works.

Consider the example of Abraham. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with works, and by works was faith made perfect?” What was perfected? Was it works? No, it was faith, perfected by works.

Romans 4:2 declares, “For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God.” There is no contradiction. Paul, as the context shows, deals with works as deeds of merit, the performance of which would place God in debt to us. There is no merit in works as such. They cannot save us, but we cannot be saved without them. James deals with works as a demonstration of faith (“I will show my faith by my works”) and as a perfecting agent of faith (“By works was faith made perfect”).

Works sustain the same relationship to faith as my spirit

does to my body. It does not form a separate or additional man. It only animates my body, making it a living something. Without it, the body is helpless, powerless and unavailing. The body of Adam existed before the spirit entered into it, but it was cold, lifeless, inanimate and useless. We are not saved by righteous works, but by faith. Yet this faith must manifest itself in righteous works. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). We are not saved because we work for God; we work for God because we are saved.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Straws in the Wind

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

In *Old Paths Advocate*, J. Ervin Waters reports an intensive study at Wichita Falls, Texas. Brother Waters says, “God has raised up an army of young men of moral worth and high intelligence; young men who are not tradition bound and who are casting off the fears and prejudices of the past; young men who dare to think and who humbly are learning what the Spirit of Religion is.” If this estimate is correct we shall expect to see important changes in attitude among some who are allied with a very dogmatic and arbitrary faction of the disciple brotherhood. We commend those who are rising above the narrow party spirit.

J. D. Phillips, editor of *The Truth*, who also taught in the study, writes, “The purpose of the study was to learn, and not to legislate. . . . Everyone respected everyone else. God’s word was respected above everything else. . . . I think a long step in the right direction has been made; that the study will prove to be an epoch in the restoration of primitive, apostolic Christianity; all were interested in restoration, and restoration is the answer to most of our problems.” It is evident rifts were healed and breaches repaired, and while these brethren differ with me on a lot of things, they are my brethren, and I love them and rejoice with them.

The Word and Work, published by brethren who are pre-

millennial in their views, contains an excellent article in the February issue, by E. L. Jorgenson, on "Division— Causing or Curing It." The same issue announces a lectureship program in which they will participate with brethren from the conservative Christian Churches. J. R. Clark writes, "These meetings . . . will serve as exploratory meetings to help us determine the extent of our differences and how to resolve them."

In the February 14 issue of *Christian Standard* is a notice of the North American Christian Convention, to be held at Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-28, with the theme "Christian Unity— Our Unchanging Plea." Again, I find myself in disagreement with many interpretations, opinions, views and practices, of all these, but they too are my brethren, and I am pleased they are discussing these vital questions.

Once I would have sneered at such meetings. I would have regarded all who participated as hobbyists or sectarians. The meeting would have been a gathering of the forces of Gog and Magog. Even those who attended casually would have been eyed with suspicion. I now know that I was the one who was sectarian in attitude. I was guilty of a work of the flesh, the sin of the party spirit. I was not righteous, but self-righteous. I shall not compromise my convictions, nor stultify my conscience, but I will love my brethren, *all of them*, and no one shall ever again make me afraid to do so. I shall not bow the knee to an unwritten creed. I shall not crucify those humble ones for whom Jesus died.

The party spirit will not expire easily. So long as brethren write about "converting" a brother who alters his views or perspective, it will still thrive. One writes in *Old Paths Advocate*, "We hope to convert some of the Sunday School and cups brethren before the meeting is over." Another southern journal reports, "We wish to recommend Brother Blank as a faithful gospel preacher. He was recently converted from the Christian Church." This is the language of the party. It makes no

allowance for maturing ideas or ideals. It recognizes no one as being in Jesus who is not in the party. It is earthly, sensual, devilish. It is narrow, bigoted, and deplorable. If, through the grace of God, we come closer together, let us not gloat over converting each other to a partisan view, but let us glorify God that all of us are growing up in the Spirit.

The Sword of Damocles

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

About the time that Malachi wrote his prophetic words in Palestine, Dionysius became tyrant of Syracuse. A man of obscure parentage, his public life began as a humble clerk. By sheer energy and indomitable will he elevated himself in successive steps to a place of absolute power. Damocles, a fawning courtier and flatterer, sought to ingratiate himself into greater favor with the ruler, by delivering a speech which contained unrestrained reference to the happiness of being king. He was invited to be guest of honor at a sumptuous banquet, and was seated at the table in royal luxury. But while feasting on the delectable dainties, he was horror-stricken when he cast his eyes upward, and saw a sword suspended by a single hair over his head. Dionysius thus taught him that life is uncertain even at a time of greatest apparent security. The “sword of Damocles” has become a symbol of impending fate or dread tragedy which may strike at any moment.

Western man sits today at a table spread with the luxuries of life. The creative genius and technical skill of modern science have combined to lift his burdens and smooth his pathway through life. Mechanical servants whirl into obedience at the pressing of a button, to heat or cool his house, wash and dry his clothing, gather the dust from his floors, cleanse his dishes, and dispose of his garbage. Life is regulated by gadgets and thermostats, by buttons and automatic switches. He can say, as

the man in the parable, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up.” But the student of history cannot be at ease. He feels the cool breeze in his face, he hears the moaning of the wind, and looks for the gathering storm cloud of fury. There is the faint persistent whisper of impending disaster. The “sword of Damocles” is swaying gently back and forth above our heads.

Every previous civilization has gone down because it contained within itself the seeds of its own dissolution. There is but one power which can preserve a culture— *moral force!* Men tend to trust in scientific intellect, wealth of natural resources, and armed might, to save them. Yet nothing is more apparent than the wrecks of nations bestrewing the paths of history, and without single exception, every one of these believed that it was moulded by a superior race. Even the nation chosen by God to keep alive the concept of monotheism in a pagan and idolatrous world, had to be subjected to brutal treatment and exile, to purge out the dross. No such nation has ever believed its own prophets. A nation intoxicated with pride, is like a drunken man, unable to reason intelligibly. “They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed . . .” (Isa. 29:9-11).

I accept the Bible as a revelation of God’s dealings with man. I am forced, therefore, to recognize that history repeats itself. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be” (Eccl. 1:9). Like causes produce like results. He, who ruled that in the natural realm, the tree should “yield fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind,” has ordained the same order in the moral realm. As a man reaps what he sows, so will a nation reap what it sows. Each successive culture that has been swept away has left the history of its decline and fall, and these accounts make our own responsibility greater. “Now these things were our example, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they

also lusted.”

If “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning,” we must read what is written, and we must learn from it. Only a fool will refuse to read the danger signs along a road he has not traveled before. Let us trace the finger of God as it marked out the destruction of a people. Are we following in the track that ends in cultural oblivion? Will you get your own Bible, and read very carefully, Amos, chapter six? Do it now, and let’s think about it seriously.

Verse 1 implies the life of luxury and social ease. The people had implicit trust in their location, and regarded their position as one of world leadership. They were named “the chief of the nations.” They regarded themselves as racially superior to others and esteemed themselves better than kingdoms which they surveyed. Verse 3 shows that they refused the words of warning and “put far away the evil day.” Their philosophy was, “It can’t happen to us.” It was not possible for them to conceive how destruction could overtake them, seeing their greatness.

Verses 4 through 6 contain a description of “luxury’s vile contagion.” Indolence, banqueting, entertainment, and drinking — these constituted the daily round of life. The furniture which graced their dwellings was of the most expensive kind, rivalling that portrayed in *American Home Magazine* today. They pampered their jaded appetites with gourmet foods, the choicest cuts of lamb, and milk fed veal. Stretched lazily upon downy couches, they sang the popular songs of the day, and listened to their version of stereophonic music. They drank huge goblets of liquor and rubbed their soft, effeminate bodies with cosmetic preparations and fragrant unguents. But “*they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*” The threatened ruin of the nation did not trouble them. They were members of the cult of the unconcerned. They were in a stupor of indifference. They were gorging themselves for God’s butchering day, like oxen in a fattening pen. Verse 14 declares, “Behold, I will raise up against

you a nation . . . saith the Lord God of hosts, and they will afflict you.”

The moral status of a people can be determined by their regard for the person and property of others. In these areas we manifest our integrity or fidelity, or show our lack of it. One is impressed with the number of times the prophets associate stealing, bribery and adultery, as symptoms calling for punishment and overthrow of the social order. These strike at the very roots of national life. And western civilization, especially as exemplified in current American life, is threatened by the dry rot of these things, at its very roots.

Norman Jaspán Associates is an engineering firm in New York which specializes in analysis of “sick businesses.” The president of this firm said recently that American business is being robbed of a billion dollars per year, that four million dollars is taken *each day* by employees, in one form or another.

“Not all of this haul is in the form of cash, of course. Employees, supervisors and executives are stealing thousands upon thousands of dollars a day in the form of time, merchandise, services, bribes, kickbacks, and dishonesties of every description.”

After asserting that women are as guilty as men, although stealing from different motives, the investigator points out the effect of such action upon our economic status.

“The eventual burden of all this dishonesty is borne by the consumer— you and me. If you are one of the millions of Americans who own stock, or whose pension plans or insurance companies own stock, then employee dishonesty cuts into your profits and dividends. Even, as a simple consumer, it is you who has to make up all this swindling by paying higher prices for everything you buy— whether it is a jar of jam, a new car or a winter overcoat. In fact I earnestly believe that if the blight of

dishonesty could be removed from American business, the overall level of prices could be reduced as much as 15 per cent.”

We cannot overlook the factor of price, but I am more deeply concerned about these things as symptoms of a sick world, than about their effect upon pocketbooks and paychecks of consumers. When confidence erodes, and persons regard each other only as potential “meal tickets” or as sources of supply for greedy and covetous hearts, our social fabric will be worn thin. The acquisition of property is not morally wrong of itself. The method of acquiring or the motive for doing so, may be wrong. The revelation of God says, “Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). Here are two methods of acquisition: stealing and laboring. One works evil, the other works good. One takes from another what he needs, the other gives to meet the needs of another. A national existence based upon greed and covetousness must die of its own hands. It is committing suicide! God’s attitude toward unjust acquisition of material things can best be estimated by consideration of other things which he places in the same category. “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery?” (Jer. 7:9). “By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out” (Hosea 4:2).

A prominent feature in the downfall of every previous civilization has been the inordinate emphasis placed upon sex. So general is the recognition of moral responsibility in this realm, that we tend to think of immorality only in connection with sexual abuses. This is a sad and dangerous mistake. The moral life extends far beyond the bounds of sex restraints. Wollastan, in his *Religion of Nature Delineated*, says, “Moral good and evil consist in a conformity or disagreement with truth, in treating every thing as being what it is.” Dr. Paley, in his *Moral and Political Philosophy* writes, “Every duty is a duty towards God, since it is his will which makes it a duty.” It is an indication of faulty reasoning to limit the word “moral” to one

phase of conduct. A man who never violates a law related to sex, may still be immoral.

Chastity, as a way of life, has been generally disregarded in every decadent civilization. It is a question whether the decay of civilization is produced by such rejection, or if the opposite is the case. It is probably nearer the truth to say that sexual corruption is both a result and a cause. It receives impetus from a rotting civilization, then like an active cancer, contributes further to the decay. Why are proper relationships between men and women in this area so vital to civilization? Let me suggest a few reasons. Sexual relationships are directly connected with the source and inception of human life, and thus, with the perpetuity of the race. They constitute the foundation of the home which is the basic unit of our society. They contribute to the enrichment and ennoblement of the arts by which a culture finds aesthetic expression. They make possible the ultimate physical manifestation of unselfishness and love for another, with the consequent recognition of mutual dependency. "It is not good for man that he should be *alone*."

Polluting the fountain of these blessings poisons the stream from which society must drink. That which was ordained to life, thus produces death. Sex, like acquisition of property, is not wrong of itself. Actually, society requires both for its continuance. One fulfills the instinct of preservation, the other satisfies the acquisitive instinct. Both are directly related to our desire to continue life on earth, coupled with the recognition that death makes this personally impossible. We beget children, and accumulate property which we bequeath to them, that our light may not be extinguished by the snuffdish of death. Thus, sex is merely a means to an end. When it becomes the end to be sought, or the goal to be attained, regardless of the means used, man drops to the animal level, and sins— and in this state sex never satisfies!

We do our children a grave injury when we give them an

unhealthy attitude toward sex. That which was ordained by the Creator as an expression of our noblest instinct, should not be regarded as debased, or degrading. Men may degrade it by their abuse, but such abuse serves only to contrast with its pure use. Sex is only one facet of life. It is not a pattern for life, but one thread in the pattern. Without that thread the pattern would not be so beautiful, but made from only that one thread, it would not be a pattern. It is not sex, but the absurd and foolish emphasis upon it which marks the decadence of a civilization. That emphasis is everywhere prevalent in our current society.

The advertisements on our billboards, and in our journals, are subtle in their allurement of the carnal appetite; the pornographic and indecent materials in some magazines and books is more blatant in pandering to the flesh. Even the names given to perfumes and cosmetics are chosen because of their relation to sex appeal. The exposure of the human body in modern dress, or undress, is indicative of the nakedness which was characteristic of Greece before her departure. The sex standard of a nation is not maintained by the men, but by the women. When the women become coarse, immodest, cheap, and indifferent, they are sowing the seed which will some day make their children, or their children's children, the victims of rapists and butchers. Thus it has ever been, thus it ever shall be! "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbor lamentation. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. Speak, Thus saith the Lord, even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them" (Jer. 9:20-22).

In our nation the rise of the divorce rate is a cause for sober concern. When marriage is regarded as a mere experiment or trial, and divorce is looked upon as a convenient way out, we are on our way down. This is not to say that divorce is never

warranted, but certainly it should not be glamorized or glorified. At its best it is a symbol of failure, an open testimony to the world that two people have failed in a sacred relationship to which they were mutually pledged, in the presence of God, to remain true until death separated them. At its worst, it is frequently the doorway to successive failures, and the excuse for polygamy in sequence. Divorce is not a normal termination for marriage, as is death. It is abnormal, and an evil. It is not necessarily a sin in each individual case, but it is an evil, and no evil should be made easy, or treated lightly.

We must face up to the fact, stark and grim with possibilities, that we live in a sick world. We are in the critical ward. No lighthearted joking can eliminate the fact that over our heads, like the “sword of Damocles” hangs the threat of extinction to our way of life. There is rottenness in the marrow of the bones of western civilization. Our hope of survival depends upon those who are “the salt of the earth” that is, upon “the concerned ones.” These are the spiritually minded as opposed to those who are carnally minded. Unfortunately, the “concerned ones” have been separated, segregated, divided and rent into conflicting camps, by partisan creeds. They have dissipated their energies in antagonism against each other, and have been taught to hate, rather than to love each other.

What can these do *now* to offset impending disaster. Certainly the situation in which they find themselves is not ideal. There is suspicion and doubt toward each other. But we must do something, and we cannot wait to begin, until all things are in an ideal state. Very humbly do we propose the following simple steps which will help to restore some of the savour to the salt. God is long-suffering. He will not look with disdain upon the contrite heart.

1. We must develop an unyielding personal code of honesty and integrity. If we shortchange a man a few cents, we should make every effort to get the money back to him, small as the

amount may be. If we are overpaid, we must return the overplus, regardless of the inconvenience to ourselves. We must not allow ourselves to profit because another has unwittingly erred. We must cultivate a sensitive conscience.

2. Young men and women should practice chastity, not because it is a good or safe policy, but because it is the will of God. “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” Sanctification and fornication are at opposite poles in the moral universe. The fact that man has used his scientific ingenuity to devise means of avoiding conception, does not make the sin of fornication less reprehensible, any more than safe-cracking becomes a virtue because the burglar wears gloves to escape detection.

We should rally the forces of “the concerned ones” to sweep the pornography and sensuality from the news stands and book displays. This is a problem which concerns us all as Americans, and on it we should work in unison, regardless of our differences in religious or doctrinal concepts.

3. Those who are married should make their marriage “work.” They are living under solemn pledge to do so. God will hold him accountable who breaks his promise, or who puts a strain on the tie that binds, by his attitude. Marriages are not made in heaven, but marriage is ordained by heaven. Husbands and wives should pray together, and be willing to confess and to forgive shortcomings. We need the example of persons firmly and indissolubly joined in wedlock, who demonstrate there is happiness and joy in the good life. One such example in a community is worth a dozen sermons.

4. Women who are concerned should make a resolution *now* to dress modestly from now on. Christian women should set the fashion, not be blindly led by the fashions of this world. Those who may have unconsciously generated lust in others by their abbreviated attire, should repent, confess privately to God

the sin of their false pride and love for popularity, and go now and dispose of their scanty, form-revealing garments, and not be guilty of wearing such again. We face dangerous times and we need to take drastic means to save our culture.

We must find a solution, or perish! The salt must regain its saving power, or we are doomed. If you have never been concerned before, please become so now, before the keen blade of the sword descends and the blackness of darkness throttles our last hope of survival. Read our article next month titled, “[Red Sky At Morn!](#)”

Acceptable Unto God

Mission Messenger (April 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

One of the tendencies of the mind of man is extremism. Only a remnant of those who think seem capable of exercising their mental faculties upon the varied moral and spiritual aspects in such fashion as to comprehend them in all of their proper relationships. Intellectually, man is a product at education. He is a reflection of what he has been taught. His mind acts upon impressions received from without and these are woven into a pattern of thought. It is difficult to view any subject objectively. We tend to look at everything from a personal slant. As a result our outlook may be biased.

Since all of us have certain prejudices, and none of us, being finite, are wholly free from distorted opinions, it is no cause for wonder that equally sincere people are frequently poles apart in some of their conclusions. This does not justify such conclusions. It only serves to explain their origin. All of the conclusions may be erroneous. Most of us like to feel that our own motives and attitudes are of the highest order. We tend to think disparagingly of all who differ. We credit them with insincerity and lack of integrity. But none of us have perfect knowledge and all of us are inclined to defend what we have always taught, and to question the intelligence of any person who disagrees with us.

In the spiritual realm, for instance, there are those who

disregard the value and authority of positive ordinances, and who elevate the grace of God to such a degree as to make it appear *ungodly* for Him to require obedience of man as a requisite to the personal bestowal of that grace. At the same time, others elevate the positive ordinances to such a place as to render the attribute of mercy a useless facet of God's character. The first become unsafe theorists; the latter unwise legalists. One seeks to loose man from all restraint; the other to bind God with the same law which he gave to bind us. Both are equally dangerous as leaders in the realm of religious thought, but I shall deal with the latter in this article.

In doing so, I am not minimizing any requirement of God. One of the greatest of my discoveries in the sacred scriptures has been the fact that God has chosen in all ages to make His blessings available to man through positive ordinances. Why he chose this manner I do not know, but the fact that He did so, argues that it is superior to every other means, and any other method is, therefore, inferior. To speak slightly of any ordinance of God would be to sit in judgment upon the divine wisdom.

It would be folly for one who reveres God and loves His own soul to seek to soften God's requirements. What would one gain by broadening his personal concept to include other men in a fellowship, if by doing so, he excluded God and Christ? Can any sane man who loves his children and his children's children, deliberately plot a course which would destroy their souls and damn his own? Our only aim should be to seek for truth. It is the *summum bonum* of all research. Having found it, we must be willing to purchase it as "the pearl of great price." Truth is never cheap! "Buy the truth and sell it not," said the wise monarch of Israel. What I say on this subject, as well as what I write on any other, I offer because I believe it is the truth. I may be mistaken in what constitutes truth, but if so, it is a sin of the mind and not the heart, for if I know my heart, I love the truth and want it. I am not one whit concerned about being consistent

with my past teachings, nor of being in agreement with the present teaching of any one else, singly or in a group, if such consistency and agreement comes at the forfeiture of truth and freedom. I am interested in what constitutes truth!

In that vein, let us enquire concerning the basis of God's dealings with man. Are we judged by Him on the amount of our knowledge and understanding, or upon our affection for Him and our attitude toward His will? If upon the first, how much knowledge of His revelation must I have at a given time to be sure I am in His favor? Can I ever have any assurance that I am accepted of Him? Is it not possible that there is one thing more I ought to know today which I do not know, or one more passage I ought to understand which I am not able to explain? If my acceptability depends upon my love for God and my willingness to learn of Him, because I love Him, then I may know very little, and I may be frail, weak and ignorant, and still He will not cast me out. It is a common thing for men to judge others on the basis of knowledge, using their own personal attainment as the standard. You must understand all they understand, in just the way they understand it, and if you do not have the knowledge they possess, they will consign you to condemnation. But is that God's basis of judgment?

Here is one scripture for your serious study. "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him" (1 Cor. 8:2, 3). This teaches us that God's recognition of us is not based upon our degree of knowledge, which is imperfect, but upon our love for Him. A man who loves God a lot, but has little knowledge, is better off than one who knows a lot but loves God but little. You may say that one who loves God a great deal will learn as much as possible about His will. That is true, but learning is a slow and tedious process. All of us have different intellectual capacities. All come from different backgrounds and environments. Many of us have much more to unlearn than others, before we can begin to learn. But it is our love that

counts, and not our present understanding. Perfect knowledge without love would avail nothing! “Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing.” Love with little knowledge may qualify for God’s acceptance when all knowledge with little love would not.

Does God, who knows the heart, credit us with what we would do if we had the opportunity? Jesus said, “I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” This demonstrates there is sin in *spirit* when opportunity for the *act* is lacking. Does love for God produce the same effect of righteousness? “As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1, 2). If lust for a woman can become so intense that one commits adultery in his heart who may never have opportunity to do so in fact, can love for God become so intense that one will obey in heart what he might never have opportunity to do in fact? The only thing which would keep the panting deer from quenching its thirst at the stream would be lack of opportunity. May the thirsty soul be in the same state?

True, Jesus declared, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15), and “If a man loves me, he will keep my word” (verse 23), but even these passages show that love precedes the keeping of the word, and one cannot keep the word until he knows it, and has the opportunity to do it. Does a willing mind count for anything in the realm where man is lacking? Paul sets forth this principle, “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not” (2 Cor. 8:12).

Voluntary ignorance is a sin; involuntary ignorance is not! A man cannot walk in more light than he has, but if he shuts his eyes to the light he has, he shows the disposition which would disregard all light. “For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes have they closed,

lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.” To wilfully disregard any command of God which is known to be His command is to defy the authority of God, but there is a difference in wilful defiance and lack of compliance through imperfect knowledge.

Our readers will be anxious to know how we apply this reasoning to baptism. Can any one on earth be saved who has not been immersed into Christ? That is not for us to judge or determine. We are instructed, under the reign of the Messiah, to enroll students in His school by immersing them; and to announce salvation from past sins on the basis of faith and immersion. Any who have received this announcement and deliberately reject the terms are in rebellion against the King. They will be last. What he will do with those who do not receive the message, or do not have the opportunity to enforce it in their lives, remains in the realm of His mercy. It is my opinion, based upon my feeble understanding of the scriptures, that such will be accepted of Him. Does this not weaken the command? Not at all. If a judge, recognizing mitigating circumstances, tempers judgment with mercy, he does not thereby undermine a sovereign statute. A law or commandment takes its force from the authority which orders it, but that authority is superior to any law which it creates, and may suspend or modify it in any given circumstance. Such suspension or modification in no sense affects the validity of the law or commandment in its general application.

It is the tendency of all who would squeeze and refine God’s grace and mercy through their own legalistic strainers, to make our hope dependent upon knowledge and understanding, almost to the exclusion of love, motive or intent. This is evidenced by those who disregard, flaunt and set aside, the immersion of all who did not *understand* at the time it was to secure a certain blessing. A sincere, conscientious believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is immersed because it is a command of God, later learns that he is attached to a human party, and

hearing of those who claim to be the Lord's people without sectarian affiliation, seeks to identify himself with them. He is told he must be baptized again. He insists that he believed with all his heart that Jesus was God's Son and the Messiah, and was immersed because of that faith. He is told that the human error he was taught negated God's grace, and even though he believed and was immersed, his ignorance cancelled God's promise, rendering it null and void. If he refuses to be immersed again, he is regarded as a heathen or pagan by this modern "undenominational sect."

But does not the word teach that we must repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins? Certainly so! And when a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, repents of his sins, and is immersed on the basis of that faith, *it is unto the remission of sins!* It makes no difference if he has some wrong notions, or if he has received some false impressions, when he complies with God's positive ordinance because of his faith in God's Son, he is inducted into all the blessings and privileges attendant upon the state into which such immersion introduces him, whether he knew what they were or not. But suppose one thinks he is saved before baptism? He is mistaken as to *when* God remits his sins and is in error as to the relationship of immersion to remission, but this ignorance does not invalidate his relationship unto God, for the simple reason that it is based upon faith in Jesus— not faith that baptism is for remission— but faith that Jesus is the Christ and God's Son.

Remission of sins is a judicial act which takes place in the mind of the God of heaven. It becomes effective to a penitent sinner upon belief of *one fact* and obedience of *one act*, conditioned upon that belief. This is the merciful arrangement of God who always conditions his requirements to our state. Since salvation is freely offered to every creature, learned and unlearned, brilliant and ignorant, savage and civilized, bond and free, if it was based upon a complex philosophy, or even a specific degree of intellectual attainment and knowledge,

myriads of earth's number would be condemned to hopelessness and have no possibility of being with the God who loved them.

When the Holy Spirit commanded the Pentecostians to repent and be immersed *unto the remission of sins*, He was not specifying the degree of knowledge essential to the validity of the act, nor assigning a motive for it. Careless and factional reasoners conclude that to be baptized "*for the remission of sins*," is the highest and noblest motive for the performance of the act. That means Jesus was immersed for an inferior motive. Actually, to be immersed, simply to receive remission of sins, as that is taught by many, might well be selfish, for it is the doing of an act purely with the view of receiving something of greater value in return.

Our Lord always acted from the highest motives. He based his submission to immersion upon a desire to "fulfill all righteousness." When any person yields himself to the same act on that basis, he acts from the highest motive, and we have no right to set ourselves up as an inquisition or judicial court, and interrogate him as to the degree of his knowledge or understanding of God's plans, purposes and promises at the time. A lot of folk cannot understand the difference between "baptism unto remission" and "*knowing* that baptism is unto remission." We are commanded to be immersed unto remission of our sins, but we are not told that the validity of the act depends upon our understanding that what we do will enable God to do certain things in our behalf. We need only to act in faith, doing what He told us to do, in order to fulfill His righteousness, and whatever blessings are in store for us, He will grant. His mercy is not made available to us on the basis of our knowledge, nor is His power limited because of our ignorance. It is possible that if all of us admitted our ignorance and cultivated our love we would be better off. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1).

To Think About

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

We are made to wonder how many of the existing parties in religion stem from the vanity and ambition of men. Gifted men may think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (Rom. 12:3). They aspire to prominence and leadership. They develop a “Messiah complex” and court others who bask in their reputed wisdom. These “think of men above what is written” and “are puffed up for one against another” (1 Cor. 4:6). The one they idolize becomes their authoritative interpreter and expositor of God’s word. They surrender their rights for the sense of inner security that comes from belonging to a dogmatic faction, whose members feed their ego with the thought that they occupy a special place in God’s favor, and all others are outside the pale of grace, aliens and foreigners.

Their procedures and explanations become traditional. The scriptures are no longer searched to see what they teach, but for isolated passages which may be wrested in defence of the party position. Champions develop in each fold, and endear themselves to delighted factionists by their cleverness and political maneuvers in the debating arena. The party fortunes rise and the star is on the ascendancy, until someone arises to challenge the interpretation of the recognized leader, generally an editor. The usurper is then attacked with venom and spite and branded as a traitor to God’s word. He is abused, misrepresented and driven forth. Those who have grown weary

of the dictatorial tactics to which they have been subjected also leave to follow this new voice, and produce a new faction built around him, and begin a repetition of the sorry, disgraceful mess.

And all of this is done “in the name of Jesus.” Each new party is started as “the true church of God;” each old party thrusts them forth to keep “the true church” pure. Thus have men acted for centuries, thus do they continue to act, motivated by pride, jealousy, envy and worldly ambition. And the land is filled with the discordant voices of the partisans, all proclaiming that they have found the key of knowledge, and the others are all fakes and counterfeits. Shall we continue to hack and chop sincere hearts to pieces in the vain hope we can thus save the world? What form of insanity possesses us that we suffer from visions of grandeur, and delude ourselves into thinking that the kingdom of heaven is limited by the party boundaries we have drawn? My brethren, these things ought not so to be!

Red Sky at Morning

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[Abstract]

Seldom did the Pharisees and Sadducees combine their efforts. They were antagonistic to each other, but formed an unholy alliance to test Jesus. Acting upon the Jewish superstition that demons can work wonders on earth, but only God can show signs in heaven, they approached him, proposing that he give them such a sign. Jesus replied, “When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” The Jews were students of the weather. They knew the portents of the storms, but they ignored the signs of the times.

Once again men are looking steadfastly up into the heavens. The stars and planets are under constant scrutiny. Scientific genius has unlocked the secrets of space. We have developed a kinship with remote satellites. We can discern the face of the sky. Can we not discern the signs of the times?

Our world is locked in a grim struggle. The most crucial battle of all ages is being relentlessly fought before our very eyes. There is an ever present danger that we shall forget the main area of conflict by diverting our attention solely to those places where it erupts into physical combat. We are made aware of how our world has shrunk as we are forced to discuss in daily

conversation Budapest and Berlin, Matsu and Quemoy. Yet, these are but symptoms of the major war. They are pimples on the face of the world, which betoken the anguished unrest and suffering within. We still feel personally divorced from those places. Other men, speaking strange languages, confront the tanks and guns. But we are directly involved in the titanic struggle which, like a seething volcano, is ever rumbling internally, although it but occasionally bursts through a crevice or thin place in the crust of earth.

The major conflict is not fought over hills and valleys, but on the battlefield of human hearts. Its chief weapons are not guns and planes, but ideas and ideologies. It is a life and death struggle between two philosophies which seek to capture the whole realm of human reason. You are in this battle, whether you choose to be or not. Your children, and your children's children, for generations yet unborn, will be affected by its outcome. They will be free men and women, or they will be slaves. All you hold dear is at stake! Religious freedom, political liberty, all of the gains in the field of human rights, made through centuries of struggle, are risked in this gigantic contest. It is the *first world war*, beside which all previous wars, regardless of how designated, become mere local outbursts on the pages of history.

We face a ruthless foe. Denying the existence of God, the enemy has no regard for the sacredness of a covenant, nor for human rights. It is belief in God, and in accountability to a higher power, which makes men hold themselves to account for their words and deeds. Out of the atheistic concept has grown the philosophy that man exists for the state, and not the reverse. Man is a mere cog in a machine, and like a cog, when worn out, can be tossed aside on the scrapheap. This breeds the tyrannical notion that "might makes right," and "the end justifies the means." You cannot destroy concepts with atomic weapons, nor disintegrate ideas with bullets. You must meet a philosophy on its own ground, or be destroyed by it.

Standing athwart the path of Communism in its bid for world conquest is the only remaining philosophy with even a remote chance of victory. As these two face each other across the "No Man's Land" of human hearts, the deadly seriousness of their impact upon each other becomes apparent. Both were first exemplified in men born of Jewish parentage. This was true of Jesus of Nazareth, who was the son of David, the son of Abraham. It was also true of Karl Marx. But one was the Son of God and the Son of Man, while the other was merely a man's son. Thus, the present struggle is, after all, but one more phase in the age old conflict between the word of God and the philosophy of men.

Both have committed their systems to mankind in a book. *Das Kapital* is the bible of Communism, as certainly as the *New Covenant Scriptures* constitute the rule of faith and practice for the Christian. Both claim to be the truth, both claim to be complete. Nikolai Lenin, chief exponent of Marxism, declared, "The teaching of Marx is all powerful because it is true. It is complete and symmetrical, offering an integrated view of the world." The identical claim is made for Christianity. Both are catholic, or universal, in aim, having as their purpose the reshaping of the entire universe of mankind. Again, Lenin says, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to alter it."

Communism is a religion. It is not merely a theory to which its proponents subscribe. It is a way of life, to which they are wholly committed. To Karl Marx, the historical process was God. It was the creator, the moulder, the controller of the race, shaping mankind for a destiny in a golden age on earth. The destruction of capitalism and the rise to power of the proletariat is viewed with the same drama of expectancy as the Christian views the second coming of Christ. Indeed, the Communist and the pre-millennialist, have in common the hope of a changed world on this earth. As the latter looks for an earthly reign of saints in a universe perfected by the abolition of sin through the

binding of Satan, so the former looks for the reign of the proletariat through the relegation of Capitalism (the great seducer and exploiter of the race) to the bottomless pit of oblivion.

As the Christian regards the revelation of God as being given gradually, and on an ascending scale, leading mankind upward to a more perfect state, so the Communist regards the experience of world philosophy as having done the same. The first believes in a God who works in history; the other believes in History working as a God. The first accepts the concept of a God who sees our needs and reveals himself in compassionate love; the second recognizes only blind force which shapes our destiny, thus has no need for either compassion or love. The achievement of its ends is by *force*. Once again, the power of the Spirit must meet the challenge of the spirit of Power!

You are involved in this world struggle. Its outcome will affect every soul of earth's teeming millions. All that you hold dear hangs in the balance. The hopes and fears of all generations past, and of generations yet to come, linger in the shadows surrounding the battlefield, waiting with wonderment the final clash. The battle is not one, though, to be fought in the future—it is being fought now. The forces are grappling with each other, and a malevolent, treacherous and ruthless opponent moves closer to choke out the life you cherish. You are not a spectator, you are a participant! If you declare that you are too ignorant, or too insignificant, to make a choice, you have already made one. You are giving comfort to the enemy. Once again, as never before, can it be said, "He that is not with me, is against me!" If you weaken the forces of righteousness by your indifference, apathy and unconcern, you are, to the same degree, strengthening the arm which wields a mailed fist to destroy what you cherish.

In its ultimate, the titanic struggle will not be settled by guns, or planes, or satellites, or hydrogen bombs. These are mere

manifestations of force. It is possible for scientific genius to continue to discover new applications of force upon an ascending scale. These discoveries may act as temporary deterrents, while the deadly race continues. An ever present danger is that man will cultivate force to the extent that he holds within his grasp the potential to destroy mankind. The accidental pulling of a central switch, or the activation of the mechanism by a desperate madman, could then hurl the material universe into an orgy of destruction. We can only pray that the orbiting of humanly created satellites will not so unbalance the sidereal realm as to cause a meteor to fall upon Washington or Moscow. Such an eventuality would hurl our world into a maelstrom of nightmarish agony.

There is but one power which is superior to all weapons of force. It is *moral power*! If this erodes and decays while the other is on the ascendancy, we may arrive at the point where it is no longer effective as a controlling agent. This is the power with which Christianity has held in check the brute tendencies of mankind. But there is every evidence that it is on the wane. Sir Richard Livingston, in "The Future in Education," writes

If you allow the spiritual basis of a civilization to perish, you first change and finally destroy it. Christianity and Hellenism are the spiritual bases of our civilization. They are far less powerful today than fifty years ago. Therefore, we are losing that spiritual basis, and our civilization is changing and on the way to destruction, unless we can reverse the process.

Our greatest problem, then, is "the reversal of a process." This is intensified because of the laws of momentum. Those laws are as inflexible in the social structure as in the mechanical realm. Before a car which is going forward can be reversed, it must be stopped. The pause may be but momentary, but it must come. It is for that reason, we have brakes as well as gears. If the automobile is going downgrade, the problem is augmented because the weight of the car adds to the forward thrust. The

great danger in our present social trend is that we are going downhill, and *we have burned out our brakes*. The standards of behavior upon which we once depended to check immorality, have generally been discarded. They are considered old fashioned and unnecessary in our sophisticated contemporary mode of existence. It is as if a car designer decided that forward speed was the only requirement, and left all brakes off his product. The resulting catastrophe in the physical realm would be no greater than that which now threatens the moral and intellectual realm.

Before we can reverse the process, we must first halt the forward progress on a decline. How can this be accomplished? I hold that it can only be done by sheer courage of those who are concerned. If a man saw an automobile without passengers, hurtling toward a precipice, and, powerless to do anything else to stop it, threw his body in its path to deflect its course, he would be branded as a fool. But, if his children, or grandchildren, were in it, and doomed to certain death without his interference, he would be designated a hero of the highest sort, if he risked or lost his life, by such an act. The fate of our loved ones lies in our ability to stop and reverse the social order which makes our civilization so decadent. Someone must rise in the spirit of true adventure, and daring to face the misunderstanding, ridicule and derision of a world become alien to the Christ whom it professes to serve, hurl himself squarely across the pathway, rallying others to the task. If, against such a wall of men and women, our degenerating and deteriorating culture is brought to a halt, we can then turn about, and start upward once again.

But, we are asked if modern Christianity, as it is, cannot overcome the insidious foe. We are told of the increased number of communicants in the various religious bodies. It is pointed out that church attendance is at an all time high! The civilization of western man is based upon the belief that Jesus, born in Bethlehem of Judea, is the Son of God, and that the God of the

universe has revealed himself to mankind as the Living Word, therefore, the life of this sinless one is the ideal for which we must strive in order to find happiness in this world and the one to come. Why is Christianity so powerless? It has been on earth for nineteen hundred years, yet there are millions of people made in the image of God, who have never even heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and millions who have heard and feel no spiritual impact from the hearing. How can we account for this?

First, much of what is designated “Christianity” is not really Christian at all. It is paganism, parading under cover of Christian habiliment; human philosophy which has stolen the livery of heaven, hiding its origin by use of terminology made sacred through tradition. We live in an age when Jesus is honored with the lips, while hearts are far from him. We are victims of the crime of substitution. “While men have slept an enemy has crept in and sowed tares.” These look like wheat, and the unwary are deceived thereby.

We confuse attendance at places of worship with Christianity, and the test of a man’s faith in the Christ is the regularity with which he shows up each week to sit as a spectator in the pew, and listen with stolid resignation to a clergyman air his views. Certainly, we are obligated by heaven to express our worship as a body with our fellow saints, but there are hundreds enrolled on the rosters of modern churches who never miss a meeting, yet never really worship God, nor do they have any life-transforming consciousness of Christianity. They subscribe to it as a good policy, or a satisfying *way of life*, but it is not life itself as it was to the primitive followers of the Nazarene. Increased attendance at the churches is not necessarily an indication of strength in the Christian realm.

We confuse personal ministering to God and humanity, the very essence of real Christianity, with the ministering to us by someone hired for the task by the week or month. In direct opposition to the philosophy of Jesus, we “come not to minister,

but to be ministered unto.” So long have we integrated church buildings, cathedrals, rituals, and a professional clergy with Christianity, that we would not know how to worship without them, yet the infant church had none of these, and the church has lost its real impact on the world ever since it was tricked into adopting them as essential to the preservation of the Christian faith. We have even come to the point where we look upon giving money as “an act of worship” upon par with joint participation of the disciples at the table of the Lord. And many will carry their money to the church building to make “an offering” in conformity with a legalistic code which threatens damnation to those who do not contribute to the maintenance of a pompous clergyman, who would not cross the street in front of their homes to furnish sustenance to a widow who belonged to “another faith.” It is possible that the evil of substitution exists to the greatest degree among those who profess to be the exact reproduction of the original community of the saints.

The Christian world faces its task, harassed and hampered by schism and division. It is an astounding fact that Communism has united divergent elements and welded into cohesive unity those peoples who represented different cultural backgrounds. Regardless of how far apart Gog and Magog may be, they can still *gather together*. But the followers of Jesus are split and fragmented even within the same nation. The bloodiest battles that have been fought were religious wars, waged between opposing camps of those who claimed allegiance to the cross of Christ. It is a conviction of the writer based upon his personal understanding and interpretation of the words of Jesus, that the only hope of world survival is the acceptance, by the world, of Jesus, as the Son of God and the Messiah. This can only be brought about by a unity of all who believe in Him. If all who believe in Jesus were one, the world would be won for Jesus. This is the promise of him who knows the hearts of men!

The trend in Christianity, until recently, has been to divide and separate. Not a generation has passed since the close of the

first century without leaving another cleavage in the ranks. The Christian world could not have become more divided, if it had been commanded to divide by the God of heaven. There are some signs that the tide is turning. Within the past decade some who have been separated have once more decided to unify their efforts. Religious bodies torn asunder by the question of human slavery have, in these more enlightened days, perceived the folly of maintaining division over an issue on which they now agree. Those who brought with them the prejudices engendered in native lands, have risen above those factors in this nation.

We rejoice in all such indications and signs of maturity. True, these coalitions leave much to be desired, and do not represent a return to the ancient order of things, but they do represent a change in attitude which can be to us a source of gratitude. We are not unaware that many within our own fellowship scoff and sneer at such indications, and belittle all such attempts. Yet, it appears to the writer that it ill becomes those who profess to exist to bring about unity in the spiritual realm, to gnash their teeth in frustration when men unite, and give their blessing to those who spill the spiritual gore of others in fratricidal strife. Surely our hope of uniting believers in the Christ is not dependent upon our keeping them divided. Those who follow such a philosophy have borrowed a leaf from the journal of atheistic Communism.

It is our purpose, God willing, to show the futility of a divided Christendom, in attempting to capture for the King of kings, those people who are alienated by geography and cultural backgrounds from western thought. We have acted as if Christianity were a white man's religion, and have sought to impose it as such upon other races, with all of its creedal differences, its subtle arguments, its western symbolism, and its varied disciplines. We have never considered how those things look to the philosophic minds of other races. And we have been so busy trying to plant an *American Church* in other countries, we have had no time to plant the seed of pure Christianity,

untainted with the divergent interpretations of western thought. Most “missionaries” are not so much troubled now by the coming of the Lord, as they are fearful of an inspection visit from a representative of the mission board, or the elders of a sponsoring church!

In a subsequent article we shall study the case history of a mighty nation, whose origin is lost in the dim recesses of the past, but which survives until this day. Here the Christian religion had its greatest opportunity, and here suffered its most abject and tragic failure. Today, in that land, millions are enslaved by Communist overlords, while the representatives of the Christian concept have been driven across the borders. Why was it, with several centuries start, and with such favorable circumstances surrounding its introduction, that Christianity made such a poor showing in China? Shall we repeat the same tragic error elsewhere? What is the answer? Does it lie with the Roman Catholic Church and its authoritarian system? Does it rest with the World Council of Churches? Or, does it rest with the heirs of the Restoration Movement of the nineteenth century? If, with these latter, with which group of heirs? With the Disciples of Christ? With the conservative group which opposes the United Christian Missionary Society? With “The Church of Christ”? If, with the latter, with which segment or faction? Where is the answer to be found? We think it must be found, or we shall perish. And we intend, God willing, to investigate and probe the situation, as relentlessly as the scientist in his laboratory, searches for the virus or microbe, which destroys human life. We are not unaware of the price we shall pay for this seeking after truth! We are fully aware of what the cost will be. But we will not shrink from the consequences. We are committed to this study, and this search for truth, and truth never comes cheaply.

Christianity is the only force which can meet Communism at the last disputed barricade and stem the flow of this onrushing horde. We must make Christianity *work* or our

children's children will be slaves. It is just that simple. It is just that serious. In subsequent issues we shall deal, humbly but sincerely and directly, with the problems of this age, contending for the right "as God gives us to see the right." If you deem there is anything meritorious in these feeble efforts and studies, we solicit your aid to make them available to "the concerned ones" in every denomination. Have you really done anything as yet to measure up to your personal responsibility in this crucial hour? Will you not start today in a small way, by sharing this very article with a neighbor or friend? If you are a Sunday School teacher, will you recommend it to your class? If you are a leader of a civic club— Lions, Rotary, or Kiwanis— will you use some of the material in a speech to your fellow members? Would you mail copies to friends who are affiliated with various religious bodies. Surely the danger we face transcends all partisan lines!

Causing Divisions

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

An Analysis of Romans 16:17

No scripture is safe in the hands of a religious partisan. The reason is obvious. The party spirit is a work of the flesh. It is opposed to the Spirit. It will debar one from inheritance of the kingdom (Gal. 5:17-21). The factious spirit is indicative of immaturity. Those guilty of it can hardly be addressed as spiritual men, but as babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1). However, the partisan jealously seeks to defend his party. To do so, he must warp and bend the scriptures. He must make them apply in a sense which God never intended.

The revelation of heaven was not given to be the private or exclusive possession of any sect or party. It is not a factional handbook. No uninspired man is an official interpreter of revelation. No group of men can advance themselves as the authorized expositors of sacred writ. God's word is authoritative. The interpretations placed upon it, or the opinions of men about it, are not. It is here the party spirit reveals its true nature. It interprets God's word in justification of the partisan position, substitutes the interpretation for revelation, then demands acquiescence in the arbitrary interpretation as the word of God, and disfellowships all who refuse to do obeisance to such tyranny of mind and thought.

The eternal purpose of God was “set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, *to unite all things in him*” (Eph. 1:9, 10). Schism and division are condemned. Disciples are to forbear one another in love. They are to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The saints have been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), and this is the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1) because “by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). But the flesh wars against the Spirit, and the party spirit, being a work of the flesh, is opposed to the unity of the Spirit. Instead of being eager to maintain such, it is zealous to destroy it.

I have watched with amazement as men have taken the word of the Spirit, revealed to secure and maintain unity, and used it to sanction and defend division and disunity. It has been screened to find some scriptural reference to justify perpetuation of a partisan alliance, and erection of human standards and opinions as tests of fellowship. One would think the chief aim of the Christian was to proclaim division and practice disfellowship, and the highest moral attainment is reached when one is the most forward exponent of factionalism. There is not one scripture given by God for the purpose of tearing and rending the body of His Son. But even God could not give a revelation that was safe from maltreatment by partisans.

I propose an examination of one frequently used passage. I shall demonstrate how it has been perverted. I shall show that it has been made to imply exactly opposite to what it says. Attention is called to Romans 16:17. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them.” This is the rallying ground of every faction in the disciple brotherhood. Upon the basis of this passage humble saints have been hounded out and driven forth when they refused to surrender their God-given liberties and freedom to some despotic clique. Honest, sincere, God-fearing men and women,

have been “marked” and branded, stigmatized and calumniated, for no other crime than daring to think for themselves. This is the one “sin” no party can tolerate, for the party spirit thrives on suppression and boycott, on ostracism and exclusion.

What is “the doctrine which you have learned”? In each instance, it is the shibboleth of the party, the password to the inner circle. In one case it is opposition to Bible classes; in another to individual cups; in still others, opposition to instrumental music, colleges, orphan homes, tuning forks, missionary societies, charitable organizations, or pre-millennialism. The *vital doctrine* is different with each party. If you are baptized in Texas and “your hap is to light” in a congregation which uses only fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper, and if you mature in your thinking until you express the opinion that it makes no difference whether the fruit of the vine is fermented or not, such an opinion will be construed as “causing division and offence contrary to the doctrine you have learned” and you will be castigated publicly with no chance for reply, marked and avoided. You are dangerous to the peace and safety of “the fermented wine party.”

If you find yourself in a congregation which makes an opinion about teaching classes a test of fellowship, you should cease to study or reason, for if you come to the conclusion that an opinion about Bible classes is not God’s eternal criterion of acceptability or rejection, and so express yourself, you will be marked and avoided. If you hold a secret notion that instrumental music in public worship is not necessarily a sign of rank apostasy, and that those who use it may be your brethren, you had better keep it secret in a lot of places, for if you state it merely as an opinion, and with no thought of changing the existing practice, that will be all for you, except marking and avoiding you as a moral leper, or a contagious criminal.

Did the apostle have reference to such an unspiritual hodgepodge when he wrote the Romans? Of course not! Then

what did he mean? Read the passage again! “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned.” The doctrine they had learned was to not cause divisions and offences. In chapter 12:5, they had learned they were one body, and members one of another. In 12:10 they had learned to love one another with brotherly affection, and outdo one another in showing honor. In 12:16 they had learned to live in harmony with one another. In 13:13 they had learned to conduct themselves becomingly, and not in quarreling and jealousy.

In 14:1 they had learned they should welcome one who was weak in faith, but not for disputes over opinions. In 14:13 they had learned not to pass judgment on a brother, and never to place a stumblingblock or occasion to fall in a brother’s way. In 14:19 they had learned to follow after peace and things wherewith one might edify another. In the face of all this doctrine, or teaching, about love, unity, forbearance, and mercy, if someone still caused division or offence by refusing to receive a brother, or by intolerance for one whose opinion differed, such a person was to be marked and avoided. It was not the holding of an opinion that was contrary to the doctrine, for the doctrine was, “Welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.” The doctrine they had learned was “One *believes* he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables.” It was not necessary for all to *believe alike*, or to be agreed upon every point, to be welcomed.

It was contrary to the doctrine to cause divisions and offences. Brethren were to be welcomed in spite of opinions, not driven out because of them. Who was to be marked and avoided? It was the schismatic who caused division by refusing to accept as brethren those whose opinions differed, for such division was contrary to the doctrine which said to receive them and not sit in judgment upon their opinions. There are two kinds of schismatics. One injects his opinion about a thing and seeks to build a party around it; the other sets up an unwritten law in

which he makes opposition to such an opinion his test of fellowship. Either of these will cause division contrary to the doctrine which says to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The apostle was not talking about classes, containers for the fruit of the vine, baptisteries, tuning forks, colleges, orphan homes, missionary societies, fermented wine, unleavened bread, a special way of breaking the loaf, instrumental music, the pre-millennial theory, and all that host of things used as the occasion for splitting, shivering and riving the churches of the saints into splinters and fragments. These may, or may not, be wrong, but the apostle has no reference to them here. The doctrine we have learned is that it is sinful to hate, judge, despise and divide the brethren. Without realizing it, every partisan who has used Romans 16:17, to justify his pet division, and condone his unwritten creed, has pronounced his own condemnation by quoting this verse.

“Take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them.” We have lived to see a day in which men bitterly oppose those who plead for unity of all believers in Jesus, and blindly follow party leaders who teach division and schism as if such were a cardinal doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The most popular man in many pulpits is the one who will breathe out venom and spite against those who seek to draw all men unto Him. We are filled with fears and frustrations, bred by the party spirit. We are afraid to call men brethren, lest we forfeit our partisan standing. Our hearts are shriveled and dried up. We build walls because we feel safe behind them. We cannot face the full glare of the sunlight of love. We are dwellers in the shadows. No one is more obnoxious to the partisan forces in Christendom than he who truly seeks to answer the prayer of God’s Son. The person who most disturbs any sectarian is the man who refuses to be one.

Fellowship is not endorsement of another's views. It is not agreement with opinions of another, but love for the person which transcends his views and yours. It is a state or relationship in Jesus. We are called into fellowship by the gospel. Nothing should ever be made a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We do not come into the fellowship by agreement upon opinions; we should not disrupt it because of disagreement over such. If fellowship in Christ was conditioned upon perfect agreement, there would be no place for forbearance, and the instruction to "forbear one another in love" would be useless. Forbearance is never exercised toward those who see everything as you do.

We do not arrive at fellowship because we agree on things, but being in fellowship we seek to arrive at agreement on things. The unity of the Spirit is the oneness produced by the fact that the Spirit dwells in each of us. We are thus linked to each other because we are linked with God. The Spirit is not the word of God. The unity of the Spirit is not based upon perfect understanding of the words of the Spirit. It is not a unity maintained by those who have arrived, but it is God dwelling in those who are striving upward. It is maintained by a love for God and all of His children which transcends any opinion or partisan view.

The Use of Liberty

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[Abstract]

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal 5:13). Freedom involves responsibilities unknown in slavery. The slave is not required to think for himself. He is not permitted to make personal decisions. His relationship to his fellows is marked off in well defined patterns. Thus, his life soon degenerates into stolid, plodding existence little above that of the beasts of burden. Liberty enforces the need to reason, will and decide. Judgment must be exercised.

We are free men in Jesus as the result of heaven’s emancipation proclamation, ratified and sealed by His blood. We are obligated to exercise our liberty in such a manner as to not injure ourselves or our brethren. The greatest danger to self lies in confusing liberty with license. *Spiritual* liberty conveys no right to *fleshly* indulgence. Such use is abuse, and it always provides its own recompence of sorrow. As regards others, liberty is the right to serve, and not the right to demand service. The body does not exist to serve the hand or the eye, but these exist to serve the whole of which they are a part.

Those who demand service rather than render it, lack the one ingredient which lends meaning and purpose to spiritual existence— *love*! He who would enslave his brethren to serve his selfish wants, thereby forfeits his own liberty, for he can never

be free from expectation or desire, and thus, can never know happiness. Love is the regulator of liberty. If I exist to love and serve my brethren, it will not matter how they act towards me, or what they say about me, or do to me. If I allow myself to cease to love, and become hateful and embittered because of their attitude I do not gain them, but I lose my liberty, and life becomes futile and empty.

Love expends itself in service toward its object. It does not depend upon reciprocal action. It is not selfish or self-seeking. He loves most who serves most. He is greatest of all who becomes servant of all. One who serves only those who agree with, compliment or endorse him, is wrapped up in himself. No one so wrapped up is free. I love liberty, but I must use my liberty to love, or lose it. I love all of my brethren, because I love God. I do not love them because they agree with me, but because I agree with God. Fear produces bondage; love produces liberty, for “perfect love casteth out fear.” Learn to love, and be free!

Pattern for Disaster

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[Abstract]

John Dewey, the philosopher, said, "He who fears new truths does not walk the earth freely, for he is obsessed by the need of protecting some private possession of belief and taste." The same may be said of the man who fears to read or interpret history lest he find his position or views in a predicament. We must admit that Christianity will be interpreted by those who dwell in non-Christian regions, in the light of the conduct of those who claim to represent it. The history of those who make the profession is not one to be read with pleasure or pride. For many centuries the Christian way has not appeared upon the world stage in the role of a benevolent conqueror, by love subjecting mankind to a willing captivity by the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, it has often been harassed and driven forth, forced to surrender territory once held, to those enemies who have moved in to dispel it.

What has happened to the vibrant power and glowing vitality of the faith which entered an alien world, transformed it, and toppled the mighty Caesars from their thrones? Perhaps there is no easy answer. Certainly there is no single factor which can be assessed as wholly responsible. But an answer must be sought, and it must be found! The civilization of western man is interlaced with the principles of the Christian religion. It is indisputable that our culture is an outgrowth of the concepts exemplified in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Today that

civilization is challenged as never before in history. Will it survive? Whether it does so or not, depends not so much upon winning an armaments race, as upon a moral re-armament, and this starts with repentance, which is always preceded, if it be genuine, by remorse over our tragic mistakes and abject failures.

It is difficult to stand off and look at ourselves objectively. We have been conditioned by education, environment and training, to rationalize favorably in our own behalf. It is easier to see a speck of dust in the eye of another than to behold a log in our own eye. What is true of an individual is also true of a nation, or of a body of believers in any system. Our faults are projected on a unified scale as well as our virtues. But we must probe our failures, and we must do so relentlessly and unsparingly. If we seek to protect ourselves from pain incurred by our diagnostic thrusts, we may seal our doom by infection, or cancer, in the future. If we shield ourselves it may lead to brutal exposure thereafter. Let us be candid, open, fair and honest.

Fortunately, there exists today a window display in which is portrayed a demonstration of the failure of the Christian concept of life to change and revolutionize a mighty nation of people. I say fortunately, because if we dare look at this display without shirking or cringing, it may provide for us an opportunity to remould our thinking before the sands run out of the upper glass. It provides an excellent opportunity for our research, because it has undergone a tragic alteration in our own generation. Too, where Christianity failed to gain a substantial foothold, atheistic Communism now holds complete dominance and sway. Yet Christianity had a priority as to time. It was on the ground for several centuries in advance of the enemy. The result is one of such startling consequence as to shake us out of our state of apathy and blind indifference.

The mists of antiquity shroud the beginnings of China. The Chinese personally claim a history reaching back more than fifty

centuries, and Confucius begins his record with the career of an emperor who flourished in the days when Abraham was still a resident of Ur of the Chaldees. The problem of piercing the veil is made greater when we consider that in the third century before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the emperor of the Chin dynasty (which gave China its name) destroyed all available literature of the past, and slaughtered hundreds of learned men. This was done to make it appear that his reign marked the beginning of the empire. However, we may be fairly certain of the inception of the Chow dynasty, about the time of the Biblical account of the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, and it was at this time the people changed from a nomadic existence to become tillers of the soil, and a feudal system was introduced which was to shape the future of the country for generations to come, even as did our own feudal system in the days of slavery in America.

It is the considered view of many philosophers that every civilization passes through certain definite stages in its progress from tribal existence to national solidarity, and that these always occur in the same sequence. This being true, China passed through the phase in which we now find ourselves, before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. A failure to recognize this, coupled with an insupportable theory of racial superiority, has always hindered our approach to other peoples. This is as true in the religious, as in any other field. It is impossible for a people to exist for centuries with such a culture as the people of China developed, without creation of a philosophy upon which to build that culture. To assume that such people have discovered no truth, or to ignore the truth that has been discovered is the height of folly. Yet, it was upon that basis that the Christian concept was introduced to China. Instead of acknowledging the truths taught by Confucius, it was considered detrimental to Christianity to admit that some of the principles enunciated by Jesus had previously been inculcated in the minds of those regarded as pagan or heathen.

Confucius lived about the time that Socrates lived in

Greece. He had no intention of founding a religion, and actually did not do so. He was a masterful instructor in ethics and an exponent of political idealism. Bereft of his father at the age of three, he was reared with a deep sense of love for learning by his affectionate, but poverty-stricken mother. He testifies that by the time he was fifteen he had a consuming passion for knowledge, and mastered the recorded wisdom of the sages and wise men of centuries long gone, knowing it was the guidance of these teachers which had made the Chinese a wise and benevolent people. But, beholding the abuses and oppression so prevalent in his day, he began to plead for restoration of the faith and practices of those ancients whose wisdom was being abandoned to the confusion of the nation and the immorality of the people.

He was very poor, but asked no compensation for his teaching. His was a life of utter simplicity and frugality. He rejected the idea that happiness could be obtained from the mere possession of material things, and said, "The scholar who is bent on studying the principles of virtue, yet is ashamed of bad clothes and coarse food, is not yet fit to receive instruction. With coarse food to eat, water to drink, and the bended arm as a pillow, happiness may still exist." It can be seen that he exalted wisdom above earthly possessions, acquisition of knowledge above worldly ease, and virtue above luxury.

His prescription for good government was to have an interested, enlightened and concerned populace, composed of those who put public welfare ahead of any personal consideration, and who would, therefore, select as officials only those who had proven themselves to have a genuine knowledge of public affairs, and were above the taking of bribes and corruption. So diligently did he teach that the true public servant was one who regarded responsibility as of prime importance, and salary as being secondary, that a revolution of thought took place, and a wise and judicious administration lifted the mighty nation to an exalted moral role.

Like many other reformers, Confucius was not appreciated until after his death. He was once given a high governmental position, and so outstanding was his example and so enlightening his rule, that his province excited the wonder and admiration of all who heard about it. The jealousy of a neighboring governor was provoked and Confucius was dismissed, but instead of bearing malice or ill-will, he regarded the event as an opportunity to demonstrate that the human spirit cannot be crushed by adversity and physical rebuff. The ultimate ideal held before the people was one of universal justice and freedom. Confucius expressed it thus, "Within the four seas all are brethren."

Confucius regarded life as being worthwhile only when disciplined. He would have agreed with the assertion of the Puritan, John Milton, that, "The flourishing and decaying of all civil societies, all the movements and turnings of human occasions are moved to and fro upon the axis of discipline." And he regarded the basic laws of life as being four in number. They were respect for parents, study, learning, and love for mankind. An application of these produced a glorious civilization of patriarchal simplicity, in which public service was the most honored of the professions, for it provided the opportunity to serve the greatest number, and the state exists only to minister to, educate and elevate the people. The state was not a queen but a handmaiden of the people.

After centuries of discussion and absorption of this philosophy, which lacked much because it could not deal realistically with the problem of sin and the relation of man to the Creator, the time came to introduce to the Chinese people, the Son of God, whose mission to earth was in behalf of all men. The Roman Church, aggressively missionary in past centuries, impelled by edicts of the popes to extend their sovereignty as the "vicars of Christ," made the first onslaught. And the initial attempt was made by the Jesuits, the shock troops of the pontiff, members of the order established by the military leader,

Ignatius Loyola. A contemporary philosopher has traced the results when other monastic orders moved in, fell out with their predecessors, and gave an exhibition of how professed followers of the Lord Jesus can carve each other to bits before the startled gaze of those whom they came to “save.”

The second and final blow fell when the Jesuit monopoly was broken and Franciscans and Dominicans settled in Fukien and Chekiang. Bitter quarrels soon started between the various orders and the Chinese began to lose patience. Emperor K’ang Hsi had remarked sarcastically to the missionaries that ‘you go to a great deal of trouble, coming from afar to preach contradictory opinions about which you seem anxious to slit each other’s throats.’ The Catholic missions were now slowly collapsing under their own dogmatic weight, torn by inner strife and dissension . . .”¹

It is upon the mission fields, without doubt, that the enormity of the sin of sectarian division is portrayed most graphically. Here are the millions who are alienated from God, in need of the knowledge of a Saviour who died to unite all men in one body or fellowship.

Driven by the party spirit, anxious to win laurels for their sects, impelled by the necessity of making reports which will appeal to the mission boards thousands of miles away, the bearers of the “glad tidings” must resort to the same political maneuvering as at home. Creedal interpretations are insisted upon to the utter confusion of simple minds. The tragedy is even greater when such schismatics so disgust a people as to prepare the ground for acceptance by them of an ideology which will turn them into foes of Christianity, and enlist them under the banner of antichrist. Never was this more in evidence than in the case of China.

Christian missions were to attempt to convert China for another century . . . But it was a hopeless struggle.

Torn between their various Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholics, they presented no united front. Catholics and Protestants could not even agree on the accurate translation of the word of God . . . And all this was not mere squabble over semantics; the very substance of the Christian message was mortally seared through and through by such superficial conflicting translations. If the missionaries were listened to at all, it was largely because they had the financial means which enabled them to be in China in the first place— and because they were, somehow, mysteriously connected with the awesome power of Western technology.”²

For generations another grave mistake has been made by religious representatives of our western world. They have seemingly been unable to distinguish between Christianity in its purity, and what is called Christianity in our day, but which has been moulded, shaped and adapted by our own environment and mode of thought. There is ever the tendency to equate the church of which one is a member with the one planted by the chosen ambassadors of the King in Palestine, twenty centuries ago. Not only do we regard what we now have as an exact reproduction of what was then given, but we regard the rest of the world as a laboratory for reproduction of what we are politically, socially and culturally. Thus, we expect the people in Mongolia, China, Japan, Ethiopia and Gwana, to conform to our patterns and standards. Western man is honest in this. He generally regards his civilization as the only one extant, in which he is gravely mistaken; and he has rationalized that being in a “Christian” nation, his way of life is Christian, and in this, he is even more gravely in error.

But, with such a fallacious idea, the work of the missionary has too often been not an attempt to plant the gospel, but to transplant a little bit of his own familiar way of life to alien soil, and to make the mission compound a recognizable minute portion of Britain or America. This requires the ignoring of the native culture and philosophy, and utter disregard for the forces

which have worked through generations to bring a people to the point where they will even tolerate a foreigner in their midst. So the religion of Jesus, instead of being integrated with life itself, is looked upon as a foreign way of life to be adopted. The humble native may conclude that God began loving him the day the missionary stepped off the ship with his pile of converting tools; and that it was not so much the coming of Jesus to the world, but the arrival of the white man on his soil, that really counted.

The dramatic struggle underlining this whole Jesuit epic was the attempt of Western missionaries to impose not Christianity as such, but the Westernized version of Christ's teachings with all its symbolism and psychological twists suited to the West only and to no other civilization in the world."³

These are days of rapid transportation. The world has shrunk in point of the time required to go from one place to another. Remote regions are accessible at once through the air which would require decades to open up to surface travel. An Eskimo may be familiar with planes who never saw a train. A native may be transported from the depths of a South American jungle to a modern hospital, who never before looked upon an automobile. This freedom and rapidity of travel will make it ever more difficult for the missionary from the Western world. The native peoples think of America as a Christian nation filled with such love for those unseen as to want to share with them that which is good. The missionary paints a glowing picture of the church which sends and sustains him. But when some of the people from faraway lands come and behold the bickering, cavilling, prejudice and littleness which characterize the American churches, they are quick to detect that contributions to missions are too often made to salve the conscience of the giver, and that many will give a hundred dollars to preach the gospel to a Negro in Africa, who would not allow one to sit in the same meeting-house with them in America, and would close down their schools before they would allow their children to sit

with a colored child in the same auditorium. The cant and hypocrisy of professed Christians eats like a deadly cancer at the very heart of our Western civilization. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their lips, and honoreth me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me.”

But worse still, when the leading Chinese went to Europe and America, they saw that many Westerners had nothing but scorn for this same Christian faith which was being exported to them; they listened to the philosophic arguments against the Bible and against Catholic dogmas generously provided by the Westerners themselves. Was it any wonder that the missionary effort ended in complete failure? And that by the middle of the twentieth century, barely one per cent of the Chinese population was converted, most of it made up of ‘rice Christians’ anyway? The failure was tragically evident. Western Christian proselytism failed to reach the vital centers of Chinese thought and emotion, never really touched the nervous system of China at all.”⁴

PRESENT STATUS OF CHINA

China is now under Communist domination. The Christian way of life has been rejected. Every part of the country is regimented and organized into militarized communes. These are super collectives composed of about twenty thousand families each. All of these have been shorn of property, livestock and all personal possessions. Family life has been broken up. The children, separated from their parents, are reared as government wards. Men and women alike live in barracks in a centralized work pool. Each day they are assigned tasks by work leaders. Those who demonstrate a sense of independence are placed in labor categories where they are worn down until the last shred of dignity disappears.

The goal is the complete industrialization of China. In its achievement spiritual values count for nothing. In this great

modern experiment all human, animal and material resources are combined and pooled in the interest of the state. A man, like a mule, is worth only what he can produce. By clever propaganda methods, human beings are brainwashed until their reasoning power is warped and twisted. All day long loud speakers blare forth the party line. The unfortunate victims work, rest, eat and sleep under the subtle influence of this thought infiltration process.

Mao Tse-Tung, who was president of Red China, resigned his post to devote his time and efforts to organizing the communes more completely. This means that the will to rebel will be crushed, and swift death will overtake those who revolt. Under these circumstances the last vestiges of the Christian viewpoint are being eliminated. No missionaries now proclaim the story of God's love, no congregations meet to worship in the name of the crucified Saviour. Before our very eyes we have seen the spread of ruthless power and the loss of a great people to the Christian way.

REASONS FOR FAILURE

Those who revere God cannot be indifferent to the factors which operated to render Christian propaganda ineffective in China. We must learn from our errors, or we shall continue to stagger blindly along, eventually losing upon all fronts. No simple answer can be given, of course, but this writer would like to gaze into the show window and portray what he personally recognizes as contributory to the unfolding drama. In this presentation the term "Christianity" is not used as the dogma of any sect or segment of the divided religious world, but as the way of life based upon acceptance that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and our Lord, which truth shines through all of the obscurations of sectism. It is not that a particular religious organization has been banned from China, or that a specific denomination has failed to reach the Chinese mind. The

abundant life which Jesus came to give, and which transcends all partisan barriers, has been rejected in favor of atheistic communism. Why?

1. We emphasize once more that Christianity was taken to the Orient as an Occidental import. We forget that the Christian religion was first revealed in the Near East, and was proclaimed in Asia long before it was received in Europe. It was not Anglo-Saxons who made Christianity powerful, but the acceptance of the principles of Christianity which has made western civilization so great. It is not a “white man’s religion” to be shared with others; it is a universal religion in which white men are allowed to share— not because they are white, but because they are men! The patronizing air ill becomes the missionary. He takes to others not what is his, but what is theirs. God knows no superior race!

2. It is difficult to separate what is vital to Christianity from the Graeco-Western pattern of thought in which Christianity has thrived. The Chinese philosophy of life is profoundly different than that of Western man, influenced by the Hellenistic heritage. It is sometimes a question as to whether our logic has been formulated by Christianity, or if Christianity has been modified and adapted by the influence upon it of our logic. In our struggle for liberty, we have come to lay great stress upon the rights of the individual, arguing from abstract principles to sustain our views. This viewpoint is utterly alien to the Chinese mind, trained in an atmosphere which, for centuries, had stressed social conformity as the ideal, and where personal salvation was not the goal, but attainment to a place among the honored sages and ancestors was the purpose of all life.

Two hundred years before the birth of our Lord, a great ethical culture had developed in China, shut off from the rest of the world by towering mountains and rolling oceans. It left unsolved many problems as do all human philosophies, but by perception and reason, it had uncovered and discovered many

truths of human existence. As centuries passed the civilization of China petrified, as all civilizations seem to do in time. In this state the West descended with full impact, smashing honored beliefs and customs, in the mad scramble to gain profits from trade with this teeming anthill of the earth.

Under these circumstances, Christianity was introduced, but, unlike the great missionary to the Gentiles who became all things unto all men, if by any means he might win some, the missionaries to China sought to impose a way of life which was based to a large extent upon Western ideas and logic. They never really understood the Chinese, and the Chinese people never really understood them. One wonders now what the result would have been if those who proclaimed Jesus had understood the philosophy of the Chinese and used any truth found therein as a foundation stone, and demonstrated that Christ was but the completion of the pattern and the meaning of human history, the thing for which they had been seeking for centuries. What would it be like today, if the Jew from the Near East who took the good news to Athens, and integrated his message with the unknown factors of their superstitions, had been the first Christian proclaimer to visit the Far East?

3. We must face squarely up to the fact that Christianity failed in China because of sectarianism and schismatic manifestations of those who took the message. The price of such division should make us shudder and tremble. At a time when the fatal blow of Western impact shattered all the Chinese had thought, believed, and practiced for several millenniums, they turned eagerly toward that which made Western civilization great in the earth. They craved that which would unify, strengthen and give them real purpose in life. They sought the answer of history to the problem of human existence. They asked for bread, and we gave them a stone; for fish, and we gave them a serpent. Our philosophers who went to their schools to lecture threw them infidel bones to gnaw on; our business men exploited them with untempered avarice; our statesmen

deceived and deluded them; and the missionaries transplanted to their soil the strife and contentions which had torn and rent the Christian fabric through centuries of bickering, hatred and animosity. They requested unity and we gave them discord; they asked for hope and we furnished them despair.

What has it cost to maintain the party spirit in the Christian realm? Let us look at the cost in China. Thousands of men and women have been shot or beheaded in one of the most tragic blood purges in all history. Human gore has rushed like a mountain torrent down the gutters of some village streets. Almost one-fifth of mankind for whom Jesus died, are enslaved in conditions indescribable even as I sit at my desk writing these words. A deep, abiding and fomenting hatred toward the West, seethes within the Chinese heart today. Indeed, this is the unity we have bequeathed to them, a unity of smouldering hatred, which, we pray God, will never be fanned into flame by the whispering breeze of destiny. It is a recognition of these things which should cause us to re-evaluate our religious divisions and divergencies, and seek to find the solution to them. Time is running out! While we fiddle, the world is aflame and burning. We may not find the answer in our generation, but the fruit of peace can never be gathered while we sow division. If we sow the seeds of peace, our children's children may know better days. This is our only hope. It is not a quick panacea. It is not an easy road to travel. It will be fraught with tears and sorrow and heartache, because of the misconception of purpose and the crucifixion of those whose ideals cause them not to mind earthly things. But someone must start. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace."

LESSONS FROM THE ENEMY

By what means did Communism succeed in China, where Christian propaganda failed? What were the points of attack and what were the methods employed? Where should we

strengthen our wall of defence? Obviously no one can assess all of the factors involved in a complex revolution. We need to guard against over-simplification. But let us suggest a few things.

1. Our greatest enemy today is indifference. Our people belong to the cult of the unconcerned. Like the ancient Hebrews who rejected the testimony of their prophets, these also “put far off the evil day.” There is an underlying conviction that it cannot happen unto us. There is a feeling that we are a chosen people, that God cannot get along without us, so we need not be too worried about getting along without God. We are spiritually weakened by “luxury’s vile contagion.” Crime increases, lust intensifies, while the moral tissue is consumed by cancer. True, there is a revival of church attendance, but much of the membership is nominal, and the transforming power of the indwelling Spirit is not often felt or exhibited.

2. The first bold attack of Communism in China was against the closely knit family life which was proverbial among the people. The appeal was made to the young, and the seeds of irreverence for parents and ancestors were planted and nurtured. Mere children were taught the State was supreme, and relationship to it transcended every other. They were urged to report their own parents and grandparents who sought to teach them the old principles of equity and justice, although the children knew that such reports would mean exile or death for the parents. Young people who made such reports were granted medals in public demonstrations and made to appear heroic. Thus, the family ties were dissolved in an aura of suspicion, distrust and hate. We should take note of this and strengthen the family bonds, already so seriously loosened in our modern age.

3. The next point of attack was against landlords and employers. These were made to appear as enemies of the people, and exploiters of their strength and labor for private gain. Under the feudal system there had been many abuses. The common people had been kept in ignorance and degradation, so

it was not difficult to fan the spark of hatred in the breast of the peasant. Class consciousness was created. One group was arrayed against the other. It was made to appear that by ridding themselves of the landlords a golden day would dawn in which all of the resources would be used for the good of all. Mao Tse-Tung, Chou En-Lai, and Chu-Teh played a full symphony upon the chords of primitive emotions, with their oft-repeated dictum, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Like so many high sounding slogans for public consumption, this was not administered as ideally as it sounded, being regulated by a rule of force and compulsion. We need to learn to cement our national unity and resist those forces which erode it.

CONCLUSION

The writer can lay no claim to being a philosopher or political analyst. As a very humble follower of the Nazarene he has watched the gathering storm clouds and sought to know their portent. More eagerly, a solution has been sought. It is a deep personal conviction that Christianity is again on trial in our modern world. We do not doubt the final triumph of righteousness, nor the ultimate achievement of God's purpose. We are, however, deeply concerned about that purpose for this generation, and of our part in it. Will Western civilization go down before the onslaught of barbaric and primitive forces unleashed upon the earth? If not, what is to prevent such a catastrophe? If it is true that Christianity is the last hope of our survival, how can it be applied? With whom does the answer lie?

The Roman Catholic Church, content in its belief that it is the one true church of Christ on earth, presents itself as the only hope of salvation, and invites the remainder of the Christian world to return to its fold and unite against a common enemy. Is this claim valid? If not, where shall we turn? To the World Council of Churches, representing the strongest bulwark of

Protestantism? Or, to the churches which grew out of the Restoration Movement of the preceding century? If to these, to which one, or ones? Which faction or segment provides the hope which mankind seeks to find? The conservative Christian Churches? The anti-instrument churches? If these latter, which faction among the more than two dozen splinter groups? We are committed to a relentless probing and investigation, regardless of consequences. We are aware of the price one must pay for searching analysis and non-partisan investigation. We think we are willing to pay that price. If we know our hearts, we feel only an urge for discovery of truth and the courage to state it. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

END NOTES

1. *The Soul of China*, by Amaury de Riencourt. Published with the Foreign Policy Research Institute of the University of Pennsylvania, by Coward-McCann, Inc., New York. Copyright 1958. All quotations by special permission of publishers. Page 144.

2. Ibid., 152.

3. Ibid., 145.

4. Ibid., 152.

Making Allowances

Mission Messenger (June 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

“Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other because you love each other.” This is the translation of Ephesians 4:2 by J. B. Phillips. It contains the secret for living together in peace and harmony. Pride and impatience often produce, and certainly perpetuate, frictions in the church. We need to learn how to accept life. We cannot have our way about everything. Even God had to suffer some things which He did not approve until conditions could be altered for the better.

Love is the golden key of fellowship. If we love each other, we will make allowances for each other. We do not thrust out one physically crippled because he cannot walk like we do. We do not exclude one for abnormal physical vision or a visual defect. Then why should we drive out those who are intellectually crippled or who do not look at everything as we do? Should we not try to correct the defect in love? Parents spend their whole lives and all of their substance trying to cure a crippled child. Can we not exert every effort to help a brother with warped vision? Will it assist him to be treated like an outcast or placed in the deep freeze?

I must make allowances for those who grow old, cease to study, and become inflexible in opinion, for I will grow old. I must make allowances for those whose youth and immaturity in judgment leads them to believe they have arrived, for I was once

young and knew all the answers. I must consider the circumstances of birth, early environment, parental training, temperament and disposition, of the brethren, and make allowances for these. One is not necessarily dishonest because he disagrees with me. A man may be sincere and unable to see everything like I see it. Shall I seek to undermine his influence, destroy his effectiveness, ruin his work and do him harm? Not if I love him. I will make allowances for him!

If I had been brought up to believe that Bible classes were a sign of apostasy, or that individual cups constituted a snare of Satan; if I had been taught that instrumental music in the public praise service was pleasing to God and all who opposed it were stubborn “antis,” I might even now be on the other side of certain issues. In view of this, I shall make allowances for my brethren— all of them— because I love them.

The Claims of Rome

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

The world of mankind faces a crisis. The storm clouds are gathering. There is an ominous portent in the air. The forces of atheistic Communism are girded for the fray. The dialectical materialism of Marx is making its bid for universal conquest of the minds of men. The “four horsemen” of the Apocalypse are prepared to ride again, grim and foreboding. To what source shall we turn for strength and power to resist? Surely, in the Christian concept lies our hope to combat naked force with moral power. But how can this force be applied in a divided Christendom?

The Roman church proposes an easy answer. In its claim of universality it contends that it alone can stem the tide, and the only hope of world survival lies in the union of the strength of all believers under the pontiff in the Vatican. To many, beset by fear and tormented by doubt, this claim appears legitimate, and they surrender to it as the only alternative in a distressed world. But the contention of Rome should be critically scrutinized in the light of history, on the same basis as Communism. It is the application of a theory to human eventualities which reveals its real nature. Communism purports to free men from intolerable conditions, but if its history reveals a story of torture, banishment, blood purges, concentration camps, and slave labor, the facts belie the claims. Romanism should be tested by the past.

It is our thesis, herein, that Roman Catholicism offers not an alternative to Communism, but merely the substitution of one authoritarian system for another, and that both of these employ, or have employed, identical methods for exercising tyranny over the minds of men. In the development of my presentation, I shall have no accusation to make against members of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of them are sincere, conscientious and upright in life. They exemplify a religious pattern in which they have been reared. I do not question their integrity, impugn their motives, nor doubt the fidelity of their citizenship. They are answerable to God, not to me, for their religious convictions and practices. My investigation is not in the field of individual conduct of priest or parishioner, but of Romanism as a system, purporting to be the true church, and thus commending itself as the only lawful defender of Christianity.

The Roman Catholic Church offers as the credentials to prove that she is the true church, what she calls her four marks. Of these it is said, “The marks of the Church are external, objective signs by which the Catholic Church can be certainly known as the authentic Church of Christ.” These marks are unity, catholicity, holiness and apostolicity. In our brief examination of these, we shall not enter into debate on the doctrines of the Roman Church. Our concern is whether or not this ponderous religio-politico institution is the church of God, and whether it can meet and withstand the onslaught of an alien ideology, and provide a better atmosphere in which freedom of mind and thought can be exercised.

1. Unity

We live in a world filled with conflict, tensions and disagreements. The soul of man desires unity and harmony. There is an ever present danger that men will grasp at a straw without investigation of its support. The Roman Church claims to have united men in faith, worship and government. This is her

first credential. Is it valid?

1. Faith. It is contended that this is one and unchanging. But history reveals otherwise. A man must believe certain things now to be a Romanist, which men in other centuries did not need to believe. An example is the dogma of papal infallibility. This was defined in 1870, and belief of it is now a condition of communion. Yet in the “Declarations of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland,” issued in 1826, under the signatures of thirty such dignitaries, appears this statement, “It is not an article of the Catholic faith, neither are they thereby required to believe, that the Pope is infallible” (McGhee’s *Laws of the Papacy*, page 317. 1841). The Councils of Constance, Pisa and Basil decreed that a Council was superior to the pope. The Council of Florence and the Fifth Lateran Council declared against that doctrine of the other councils.

The unity of faith in our day, is not as absolute as we would be led to believe. Just a few years ago, The Reverend Leonard J. Feeney, S. J., a noted author, lecturer and poet, was thrown out of the Jesuit order. He had previously been deprived of his priestly functions by Archbishop Richard J. Cushing, head of the Boston diocese, because he upheld the teachings of three Boston College lay professors, that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. The priest issued this statement about his superior, the provincial of the Jesuit order, “Father McEleney, thank God, can not take away my priesthood, nor can any of my priestly faculties be removed by the fraudulent means which I know both he and the Boston chancery have taken in their effort to keep me from annoying them in their inter-faith alliances in the city of Boston.” The dispossessed cleric can take comfort in the fact that the whole Jesuit order was banished by Roman Catholic France in 1762, as being inimical to the welfare of the country, and dissolved by Clement XIV in 1773, although later recalled by Pius VII in 1814 to lead the fight against Protestantism.

It is a known fact that there is a strong undercurrent of opposition by liberal Catholics to the superstitions and paganistic practices which characterize their church. These enlightened intellectuals bring constant pressure to bear on the conforming clergy. News of this revolt is suppressed and the daily press seldom refers to it, but it is fomenting just the same. The present pope, John XXIII, has announced an ecumenical council on Christian unity. The initial statement left an inference that Catholics and Protestants might meet on equal footing to discuss reunion. A further declaration on April 4, this year, dashed all such hopes. The pope said, "The ecumenical council will give a magnificent spectacle on unity. It will show how united is the holy church of God. By its very nature the meeting will serve as an invitation to the separated brethren who call themselves Christians to return to the common fold. The leadership and protection of that fold was given by Christ to blessed Peter by an irrevocable act of the Lord's will."

Without entering into controversy as to the primacy of Peter, we would inject a few observations as to the nature and purpose of the coming council. It is possible that the spectacle is being arranged to convince the Catholics of their unity. In Italy, the Communist party is very strong. It has required threats and pressure by the clergy to keep the environs of the Vatican from falling to the Communists. A great rally may strengthen the feeble knees. If the unity of the Catholic Church was proof that God was with her, as it is claimed, such a demonstration would hardly be required. In any event, there is nothing in such a spectacle to serve as an invitation to Protestants to return to "the common fold." They did not protest because Rome lacked spectacles. Nor can a great modern display of power, pomp, and pelf blot out the previous spectacles of men's bodies burned at the stake because there were those who dared to think for themselves.

2. *Worship.* Romanism is not unchanged in worship. The "communion in one kind" in which the cup is withheld from the

laity is proof of this. There have been grave differences as to the number of sacraments, and early Catholic writers have disagreed with the present regulation that there are seven. Moreover, the popes have recognized the rites of the Eastern (Orthodox) Church as of equal dignity with those of Rome. Leo XIII issued a decree that any priest of Rome who tried to persuade an Orthodox priest to adopt the Latin rite would incur immediate suspension. Yet, in the Eastern Churches, immersion is universally practiced with confirmation following immediately, leavened bread is used, and both bread and cup are given to communicants, while the clergy are not required to be celibates. Since the encyclical, *Orientalium dignitas*, issued by Leo XIII, in 1894, if there is unity in the approved worship, it is a unity of great divergency.

2. Catholicity

The claim for catholicity is generally based upon universality of classes in constituency, numerical strength, and geographical spread. It is argued that the Roman Church is catholic because rich and poor, strong and weak, learned and unlearned are found in its membership, and because it is larger than all Protestant sects combined, and has spread to every region accessible to its missionaries. We believe there is a fallacy in this reasoning, and while it may appeal to the pride of the hierarchy, it does not prove the catholicity of the Roman Church.

The church of God is a spiritual institution and its catholicity must be determined within the realm assigned to it by God. But all of the proofs submitted by Rome are physical and tangible. It is not a question of whether representatives of all secular trades, professions, and degrees of intellectual attainment are in the organization. Nor is it a question of contrast in size with another organization, or a combination of organizations. The church of God was catholic on the day of

Pentecost when it made its advent into the world. It did not develop this characteristic by admitting other nationalities. It was catholic as a part of its divine nature. The church of God is catholic because it embraces every child of God on this earth. Every saved person in the world is a member of it, added to it by God himself. To admit that there are saved persons outside of the church to which one is attached is to deny the catholicity thereof to that extent, and to affirm it is a sect, that is, a segment containing only a portion of the saved.

The church of God was catholic from its very inception. On the occasion of the first presentation of the Good News, all who gladly received the word were baptized, and all who were thus baptized were added to the body. It contained all the saved on earth that day, although there were only Jews in its number. It was universal in the spiritual realm, and has never been otherwise in any generation.

3. Holiness

The Roman Catholic Church lays no claim to special holiness of individuals within it. It offers the holiness of its doctrines as a mark of identity. One modern apologist has written of opposers, "Perhaps they may point to a few bad popes. But they have never discovered any evil doctrines. And the very fact that the Church's teaching has ever remained pure and sublime, despite some bad popes and bishops, is even a greater miracle than if all its rulers were saints." Many are restrained from investigating doctrinal errors in these days of softness and compromise. But Rome bases her contention that she is the one true church of God upon the four marks. It is but fair that we examine her credentials. In doing so we will not refer to the moral conduct of individuals. We are certain there are many upright, clean and pure persons in the Roman Catholic communion. We are concerned with doctrines.

Alphonsus Liguori was canonized May 26, 1839, by Gregory XVI. Before this event his writings were subjected to twenty rigorous examinations by the rules of Urban VIII and Benedict XIV. They were approved with “not one word worthy of censure.” In his *Moral Theology*, Liguori says, “Although it is not lawful to lie, or to feign what is not, however it is lawful to dissemble what is, or to cover the truth with words or other ambiguous and doubtful signs for a just cause” (Vol. 1, page 364). Again he says, “It is lawful to induce a man to commit a less evil, if he has already determined to perpetrate a greater” (Vol. 1, page 420). Once more he writes, “To swear with equivocation (when there is a just cause, and equivocation itself is lawful) is not evil” (Vol. 2, page 118). To teach that it is lawful to do evil that good may come is the basis of immorality, and contravenes the law of God.

4. Apostolicity

The claim to apostolicity centers around origin and doctrine. Neither is correct. The Roman Catholic Church did not originate with Christ or the apostles. There was a church of God in Rome in apostolic days, but it was not the Roman Catholic Church. This latter is a sect, and the mother of all sects. It is a defection from, not a continuation of, the primitive church. It is a combination of Judaism, paganism and Christianity, blended together in an authoritarian system, without scriptural sanction, and anti-scriptural in doctrine and practice.

The argument for “apostolicity of doctrine” in the face of the recognition of tradition as equally binding with the written word, is calculated to mislead only the careless and unconcerned. The doctrine of the mass, transubstantiation, infant sprinkling, papal infallibility, celibacy of the clergy, extreme unction, penance, indulgences, priestly absolution, auricular confession, holy incense, holy water, purgatory,

worship of saints, genuflection before images— all of these and many more, are not apostolic. Rome attempts to make them so by wresting, twisting, and juggling the holy scriptures, but the absurd attempt only makes apparent the dearth of apostolic sanction.

We conclude that the criteria which Rome offers, when fairly measured, destroy her claim to be the true church of God, and reveal that she is rather a great religio-politico creation, spawned by a lust for power, pride and wealth. We turn now to a consideration of the reasons why the Roman Catholic Church can never be the answer to the problem of the world in its search for strength of leadership in the great conflict with atheistic Communism.

NATURE OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church is not the kingdom of heaven, but a replica of the Roman Empire with Christian emphasis. It is a revival of Caesarism with headquarters in the same city where it formerly flourished. The Caesars were conquerors of universal ambition. Under their sway the whole earth became tributary to Rome, the Mistress of the Tiber. Not only the temporal, but also the spiritual dominance of the earth became theirs under the prevailing cult of emperor worship. Their rule was broken and Rome shaken by the assaults of the northern European hordes of Teutonic, or Germanic origin.

Upon the ruins of pagan Rome, the “Holy Roman Empire” was built to recapture the glory that surrounded the previous empire. The splendor and pageantry which once surrounded the Caesarean court were borrowed by the papal representative; and he became the new *pontifex maximus*, adopting the very title once worn by the emperor. Thus, emperor worship was revived, and a royal scepter again wielded in the hand of one who claimed temporal and spiritual sovereignty over the whole earth.

The pagan world was subjugated, and appeased by adoption of their own superstitious rites, amulets, and charms, and the integration of their festal days as occasions of religious significance with a Christian bearing.

But the empire of popedom was also shattered by forces from the very same region as those which attacked the previous empire. In Germany, Switzerland, and Bohemia, there arose men who stormed the spiritual and temporal bastions of papal power, as did the Huns, Goths, and Visigoths, the empire of the Caesars. Their work was enhanced by the growing sense of democracy and human rights, which sought to free men from tyranny of mind and slavery of body. Every gain in the realm of individual conscience was a loss to Roman dominance. In the revolt against tyranny and the inauguration of an "Age of Reason" men went to the other extreme as masses always seem to do when in the process of gaining freedom, but gradually reason prevailed in the Western world and an era of unparalleled progress was ushered in.

But the seeds of Caesarism are hardy. There is reason to believe that the papacy has continued to nourish them, although buried from sight. The dream of world conquest with Rome as the center or hub of the universe has not completely faded. It is for this reason succeeding popes are Italian. Theoretically, it is believed the choice of a pontiff is directed by the Holy Spirit, but if this is true, the Spirit is prejudiced in favor of Italians. No doubt it was this reason which lay behind the endorsement of Benito Mussolini by Pius XI, who alluded to him as "the man sent by Providence," and furnished motivation for Cardinal O'Connell of Boston to refer to the fascist dictator as "A genius in the field of government given to Italy by God." But Mussolini did not prove to be the new Constantine, as he was designated by the Archbishop of Milan.

The Catholic Church poses as a champion of anti-Communism. Its propaganda is intended to create the

impression that there is no other effective medium of opposition — it must be either Catholicism or Communism. This projected role coincides with the fears projected in America, and the hierarchy sensing the timeliness of the claim, works overtime to bolster the contention. It is made to appear that those who challenge these claims are Communist sympathizers, or fellow-travelers. At the risk of being branded, I deny the Catholic propaganda. Here are some of my reasons for doing so.

1. It is possible that Communism gained its strength in Russia as the result of a revolt against a dogmatic, arbitrary and authoritarian church. The Russian Orthodox Church was a branch of the Eastern, not of the Western Church. But it was patterned after Constantinople and Rome in its emphasis upon clerical domination. It was essentially the tool of the czars and aristocrats, or vice versa. The peasants were kept in ignorance, and exploited as a result of their enforced stupidity and superstition. The revolution against their clerical oppressors, as is so often the case, swept the Russian masses into the camp of another dictatorial system which promised a heaven on earth. The oppression and cruelty of the hierarchy laid the groundwork for another fanatical religion in which Khrushchev enacts the role of pope, and the commissars are the priests.

2. The methods employed by Roman Catholicism in the past to enforce conformity are identical with those of the Communist world plot. There is attempted thought control by coercion. Both have their lists of forbidden books, both use threats and boycott to abridge the freedom to speak, write or publish. Freedom of the press, of assembly, and of criticism, are unknown in areas under absolute control of one or the other. Both employ distortion of facts, both prey upon the credulous and uninformed. Reinhold Niebuhr calls them “rival absolutists.” Karl Barth says, “I see some connection between them. Both are totalitarian; both claim man as a whole. Communism uses about the same methods of organization (learned from the Jesuits). Both lay great stress on all that is

visible. But Roman Catholicism is the more dangerous of the two for Protestantism. Communism will pass; Roman Catholicism is lasting.”

3. The blood purges of dissenters by Communism are surpassed by the Inquisition, the slaughter of the Huguenots, and other events in Catholicism. The Inquisition produced a combination of espionage, power and cruelty, which the masters of the Kremlin have never been able to equal. Its fiendish tortures are unrivalled in history. Neither age nor sex were spared by its army of half a million, which included archbishops, bishops, and all orders of the clergy.

Dominick, called “Saint” by the Roman Church, founder of the order of the Dominicans, is generally credited with being the kindling spirit of the Inquisition. It was intended to ferret out and exterminate “heretics,” as Rome designated those who dared to think for themselves. This court of cruelty was presided over by a general inquisitor, called *Il Padre Reverissimo*, the Reverend Father, and associated with him was the ordinary, or local bishop as *conjudex*, or co-judge. Human depravity has reached no deeper state than it did in the hearts of those who devised the rack, the pulley, and the pendulum, to torture and wring confessions from the bleeding, broken specimens whose only crime was that of protesting against a despotic religion.

“Saint” Liguori in his *Moral Theology*, Vol. 4, page 239, deals with the Inquisition, and how to make it an effective agency for extirpation of heresy. He affirms that heresy is a crime of the deepest dye, and urges the necessity of the child denouncing his own father, and the father denouncing the child, to the Inquisition, in case of heresy. This may be where the Kremlin learned how to handle effectively those who disagree with current political philosophy as enunciated by the ruling cult.

Rome makes a lame attempt to wash her hands of guilt by

claiming that the Inquisition was the work of secular government. But those who are students of history know that “the secular arm” was an arm of the church in the countries where this diabolic engine flourished. And Rome cannot expunge the authorizations of her own popes.

Alexander IV issued a bull in A.D. 1254, in which he lamented the rise of heresy in Italy, and established the office of the Inquisition to eliminate the heretics, urging all to aid in this work. Urban IV, in 1262, issued a bull, “That the office of the Inquisition might be more efficaciously fulfilled . . . and the vine of the Lord— the heretics being exterminated— might bear the fruit of Catholic purity.” Clement V, in the Council of Vienna, A.D. 1311, issued the decree, regarding treatment of heretics, “But to deliver them into hard bondage, or close confinement— which pertains rather to punishment than to close custody— or to expose them to tortures, or to proceed to sentence against them, the bishop shall not be able to do without the inquisitor, or the inquisitor without the bishop or his official.”

It was in Spain that the Inquisition reached its true depth of infamy. Here, Roman priestcraft had forcibly subjected Jews, under threat of punishment and death, to what was termed “Christian baptism.” Their infants were snatched from their arms and taken to the cathedrals, where they were sprinkled. Many of the Jews outwardly submitted to “baptism” but secretly kept alive their rites of Judaism. To hunt these down “the hounds of heresy” were given the power of the Inquisition. Torquemada, whose name lives in infamy, was appointed Inquisitor General of Spain, by Pope Sixtus, in 1483, and confirmed to the office by Innocent VIII.

As late as February 20, 1751, Benedict XIV, published a bull relating to heresy, in which he said, “If the crime of heresy is treated of; since, by our predecessor, John XXI, who is called XXII, in his constitution beginning ‘*Ex parte vestra*’ in the *Roman Bullarium*, Vol. 1, it has already been decreed, ‘that

heretics, or those suspected of heresy— also Jews, who, when they have been converted to the Catholic faith, thence fell into apostacy— if they fly to a Church, ought to be immediately dragged out from thence by the inquisitor. . . .”

CONCLUSION

The Roman Catholic religio-politico system offers no adequate defence against Communism. Both are totalitarian, both have employed the same means and taken the same measures to tyrannize human thought. The freedom of mankind will be endangered by one as much as the other. Although the threat against liberty comes from different angles, and with divergent emphases, the ultimate goal will be the same. The alternative then for the lover of truth, is not Communism or Romanism, but opposition to both of these, and for the same basic reasons.

If this article falls into the hands of those who are members of the Roman Catholic communion, and if they should dare to read it, we beg all such to remember that our opposition is not to them as individuals. We love and respect those who are sincere in their honest convictions. We entertain no personal feeling of hatred or animosity toward any of them. Our controversy is with the great system of error to which they have pledged allegiance, but while we are committed to an unrelenting conflict with all forms of error and tyranny, we maintain a deep love for those in error. We represent no anti-Catholic party, steeped in bigotry and dealing in innuendo and spite. Our opposition is not based upon the fact that certain ones are Catholic, but that Catholicism is systematized error, containing a threat to what we hold dear. We oppose it, not because it is Catholicism, but because it is error. The writer is a member of the holy, catholic, and apostolic church of the new covenant scriptures, and of nothing else religiously. The Roman Catholic Church is a deviate from that church, and we earnestly pray that all of our

friends who are members of it will study, investigate, and resolve to become Christians— *and Christians only!* One may do that and be neither Roman Catholic or Protestant!

Facing the Facts

Mission Messenger (July 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

The unity of all believers in Christ challenges the thinking of all segments of our divided world. The pope of Rome has announced a council to consider it. The World Council of Churches, organized in Amsterdam, in 1948, has sparked an ecumenical movement among Protestants. Charles Clayton Morrison writes, "The ecumenical movement for a united church is the resurgence in Protestantism of the same undertaking which inspired the great Reformers, but which they were unable to consummate." The march of events has crystallized into the greatest opportunity in the history of the church for men with a vision and a program to secure attention for their contributions to the religious thought of the age. There is an almost universal acknowledgment that division is a sin of the first magnitude.

In these times, so pregnant with possibilities, what is the role enacted in the great drama, by those congregations which grew out of the Restoration movement which began as a genuine attempt to achieve the unity of all believers? It is not unfair to say that now, while others seek the way of peace, these continue to wage bitter war among themselves. Far from measuring up to the demands of the age, they only contribute to the confusion by multiplying schisms and sowing discord. Motivated by fear and the partisan spirit they have withdrawn from the stream of humanity and secluded themselves inside the walls of their own

castles, where they employ the energy which should be expended against the arch-foe in hacking to pieces their own brethren. Never before has God opened up such a great door and effectual, never has a body of people manifested greater indifference or shown themselves to be more ineffective and childish. Satan has inoculated them with envy, jealousy, wrath, strife, and the party spirit, and has not only successfully destroyed the effectiveness of their witness to an ideal, but has turned the sword of brother against brother, with a cunning that removes them from the arena at the very time when their labors could be most effective for peace.

There are some twenty-five splinter parties which have grown out of the movement for restoration of the primitive order. Each of these regards itself as the one true, holy, apostolic, and catholic church of Christ. The members of each party regard the members of all the others as apostates, traitors, and heretics. Fellowship is extended only to those who parrot the party line. Brotherhood is restricted to a charmed circle, the circumference of which is hounded by unwritten creeds, enforced with bitterness and animosity. Mistaking the restoration movement itself for the church of God, no one is regarded as a child of God who does not, at least pay lip service to Church-of-Christ-ism, the modern substitution for the primitive order announced by the ambassadors of our blessed Lord.

Just as Roman Catholicism exists today as a visible manifestation of the length to which the church of God may go when dominated by the overpowering ambition of men, so “The Church of Christ” in many communities is a living demonstration of what happens to the church of God when it becomes a victim of the corrosive, destructive influence of the party spirit. And, as the former can never unite the Christian world so long as it maintains papal authority, so the latter can never do so while it retains the dogmatic, exclusivist attitude which so often characterizes it, making it part of the problem,

instead of part of the answer to division and strife.

What can be done to restore the spirit of restoration? Is it possible to recapture the ideals and regain the glorious vision of yesteryear? There is no easy answer, no patent solution. Much rubbish has accumulated about the walls. It can be done, but it will require enduring prayer, arduous toil, patient exploration. Those who lead in restoration will be subjected to false accusation, bitter recrimination, and open hostility by those with whom they labored. The party spirit does not easily relinquish its victims. There must be a complete change of attitude, a transformation of thought leading to a reformation of life and heart.

The first great test will come when one faces up to his relationship to God, Christ, and the kingdom of heaven as revealed in the sacred scriptures. He must be humble enough to admit that the segment of the disciple brotherhood to which he belongs, in which he has labored, and to which he has contributed his money and labor, is by its nature *a faction*. This does not mean he is factious. There are those in sects who are not sectarian, those in parties who are not partisan. But so long as one visualizes the segment to which he is attached as the universal church of God, and all others who are not members of it as being out of Christ Jesus, he reveals an ignorance of the true nature of the constituency of the church of God, and of the benefits accruing from the new birth of water and Spirit.

I do not recall having met a member of "The Church of Christ" who was not allied with some party, segment, or faction. Most of these deny that the fragment to which they are attached is a faction inside the restoration movement. They regard all of the others as factions, but the splinter to which they yield allegiance is the church of God on earth, the one kingdom over which the Lord Jesus reigns in power and might. Some believe that the God of the universe spent four thousand years preparing the world for a Christocracy founded upon the great

and abiding principles of opposition to bible classes, individual cups, unfermented wine, pre-millennialism lesson leaves, and a host of other things too numerous to mention. This is the culmination of the purpose of the ages, the *beau ideal* of the plan of heaven, the fruition of the messages of the prophets, that Jesus might sit at the right hand of God, supervising a group of narrow partisans who judge a man's loyalty to the Messiah by how he breaks the loaf, or whether he drinks the fruit of the vine out of a little glass or a big one. Over such matters has the church been split, shivered, and fragmented under the plea of faithfulness.

If a man can truly face up to the real issue, he will have no problem with the lesser ones. This is difficult. It demands a species of humility, and humiliation, foreign to the character of most of the followers of the Nazarene. The difficulty is illustrated in the pitiable pleas of many who hate peacemakers. They cry that they know the church has many things which need correcting, that it suffers from many ills, but they deplore the efforts of those who rise above all party relationships and emotions, and strike at the heart of the trouble, which is the party spirit itself. When they talk of purifying the church, they mean to merely correct the conduct of some in the party.

It is hard for many to admit they have ever been wrong about anything. Those who are the most exacting with and censorious of others, who are harsh and intolerant in their accusations, seem never to be guilty of any error. Seldom does a man of prominence say "I was wrong," or "I have sinned." Like the Catholic priests, when they quote, "Confess your faults one to another," it is always the other one who must do the confessing. But the real truth of it is that with few, if any, exceptions, every member of the disciple brotherhood has been allied with a faction, a segment, a fragment of the church of God. Those who deny this, and disclaim it with the greatest force, are generally the most bitterly partisan of all.

There is no dishonor attached to such past affiliation, for the simple reason there has been no way to avoid it. Those who have obeyed the gospel under any preacher of the twenty-five splinter parties calling themselves “The Church of Christ” have been forthwith adopted into the party represented by the one who baptized them, and have been indoctrinated in its interpretations, unwritten creedalism, and tests of fellowship. We live in a decadent age of Christianity. Most of us have never created a party. These divisions and subdivisions occurred before we were born.

We have inherited them, or been adopted into them, as a result of circumstances of birth, environment or association. But it is a sin to perpetuate them. The party spirit is treason against God.

What shall we do? The first impulse is to get out of the party in which we find ourselves. Those who do usually join another. They “jump from the frying pan into the fire.” We should not abandon our brethren to their fate without doing all we can to help them. Those afflicted with the party spirit are sick. They need help. We will not assist them by sharing in, condoning, or defending the party spirit. One does not need to contract scarlet fever to aid those who have it. At the conclusion of our series of articles on the decline of western civilization, we hope to present several articles which will enable all who love Jesus to come to grips with the situation, and to find a solution. In the meantime, we humbly suggest a few things which will help us to do something practical and effective about the problem.

1. Transform your life through a change of attitude. You can do this through prayer, personal confession to God, and a careful re-study of the teachings of our Lord. Do not read the scriptures through “Church of Christ” lens, but “with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, and being changed into his likeness.” Let love seep into your heart and permeate your whole being, so that your soul can expand and reach out toward others.

2. Do not be hesitant to recognize as brethren, all the children of God. Many are afraid to use the word “brother,” lest someone get the idea they endorse the position of the other. There is nothing in the word that indicates endorsement of another’s views. It signifies only recognition of another’s relationship to you in Christ. In the face of admonitions to “love the brotherhood,” and to “let brotherly love continue,” we should be afraid to not call the children of God our brothers. One has a shriveled soul indeed who equates brotherhood within partisan boundaries and excludes all except those who agree with him on every point. Remember, that if a man is in Christ Jesus, you do him no harm by refusing to call him your brother, but you do yourself inestimable harm. It is an open insult to God to deny that His children are your brothers.

3. Never consider that any case is a closed book so long as the division resulting therefrom is still existent. No case is ever settled as God wants it settled while alienation and schism still exist. Be merciful and compassionate enough to review any situation in meekness and love, and in the light of your maturing concepts and conscience. You might have been mistaken. It may be no sin to be mistaken, but it is a sin to allow your mistakes to go uncorrected. Do not let your adamant and unyielding attitude “cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.” It could be that what you call “faithfulness to the Book” may be stubborn pride in your own judgment.

4. Labor constantly to develop those with whom you are associated into a nonsectarian community of saints. This will require that you keep before them the ideal that we ought never to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Teach the brethren to be willing to listen to others of divergent views, and not to make opinions a basis of union or disunion. It is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends. “Follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” By this means “as grace is extended to more

and more people, it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.”

5. Be ready to admit that we have not yet attained unto the goal of a complete restoration of the ancient order. We must not regard ourselves as those who have arrived, but as those who are on the way. There are many barriers yet to remove, and many obstacles to be surmounted. While we are marching on the road toward a closer walk with God, many others are doing the same. Let us not drive them back because of their lack of knowledge of some things we have learned, but let us rather give them a helping hand. We need not compromise truth to succor those who are trying to find it. Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, because he has himself suffered and been tempted, and thus is “able to help those who are tempted.” He is no less faithful to God, because he is merciful toward men.

6. Be as willing to acknowledge truth wherever you find it, as you are to condemn error. None of us are right on every thing; none are wrong on every point. Any man is right only in so far as he apprehends truth and accepts it; he is in error to the extent that he does not. We are indeed partisan when we hesitate to commend the good done by others, lest by upholding his good, we reflect against our own party.

To those who love the Lord Jesus, and who, by circumstances of birth and training, find themselves in one of the current sects— Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.— we very humbly plead that we can never be truly one in Christ Jesus, by building up these divergent bodies. They only separate and segregate the believers. It is possible for all of us to be one in Him, and none of us ever give up a single truth we have ever held. We need to surrender nothing vital to be united as Christians, and Christians only. Creeds produced by human arrangement have come to mean little to the present religious world. No longer are men held aloof from each other because of strong convictions as to Arminianism, Socinianism, or

Calvinism. Modern divisions are not maintained because of profound theological differences. The average member of a Protestant sect does not know the basic contentions of his group. Would it not be possible, then, in answer to the prayer of Jesus, for us to sink into the depths of oblivion, those things which are distinctive in the various sects, and stand together upon the abiding principles of truth, as revealed in Christ Jesus?

We solicit your letters and comments. We will read them for our good. We can learn from our readers. Conveyance of knowledge is not by a one-way route. Even if your comments are written in a spirit of faultfinding and bitterness, we would like to study them. Because we want truth more than anything else, we shall look beneath the wrapping and seek for the content. We are not so much concerned about the shell as about the kernel. And there is just no way by which you can make us hate you. We receive letters tinctured with animosity, filled with dire predictions and even false accusations. None of these arouse resentment against the writers. We love them, bless them, pray for them, and seek for opportunities to do good unto them.

The editor refuses to be categorized with any party. We are not a spokesman for, nor a champion or representative of, any party. We oppose many things, but not from a partisan standpoint. We recognize as our brethren, in fact and in reality, every sincere and conscientious immersed believer in the Lord Jesus. We are in fellowship with all such; we are in full agreement with none. We endorse all that is right in any one of them; we oppose any thing that is wrong in all of them.

It is our firm conviction that unless we rise above partisan views and procedures we will utterly fail this era of challenge and opportunity. We need to recognize our past associations and affiliations for what they were. We gain nothing by rationalization which leads us to feel that our party is composed of the elect of God to the exclusion of all others on earth. We can make no real impact upon the world from behind self-erected

walls of monastic exclusion. Christianity is not a shrinking, cringing, fearful philosophy, but a virile, powerful force imbued by the Holy Spirit.

We have seen the movement to restore the primitive order go aground and founder upon the rocks of partisanship. The glorious vessel which set sail under such auspicious circumstances now lies helpless, lashed by the waves, battered by the breakers, and disintegrating under the startled gaze of those whom she set forth to rescue, and who are marooned on the windswept islands of sectarianism. Those who walk her decks have mutinied against the Captain, fallen out among themselves, and now rove as predatory bands, preying upon each other.

Is it not time that we heed our advice as given to the rest of the religious world? Shall we not abandon our party enterprises, go back beyond our divisions and schisms, renounce those things which fractured and splintered us, and abandon them to the moles and bats, in behalf of the noblest plea ever made to a divided world? Shall we continue to flatter ourselves that we are the chosen people of God as we fight, split and divide, at the very time when the rest of the religious world is seeking the means of uniting? Do we think more of our divisive possessions than we do of the one body? Will we maintain and revive the feuds bequeathed to us by our fathers, who often mistook zeal for the party, for service to the Lord of all the earth? Shall we perpetuate in our folly, and preserve to our shame, the schisms which grew out of the aroused and unrestrained passions of other generations? Have we learned nothing from history except how to divide?

We make no plea that you come to us. We are not seeking to build “a nonpartisan party.” A Ketcherside party would be as reprehensible as one built around Luther, Calvin, or any other finite, erring and sinful man. We disclaim all partisan ambition, and seek to crucify all partisan spirit. We will not build, nor allow any one else to build a “Mission Messenger faction.” This

little journal is not the mouthpiece of a party. It is not the official organ of any group. It is a means of expression for the thoughts of the editor, and such others as care to write, and for whom space can be found. But it is not “a brotherhood enterprise” and will not become such in spite of the secret and overt attempts of some pressure groups to make it so.

Our statements in this issue will arouse resentment. We will be castigated and maligned, and, as usual, misrepresentation will be rife. We are willing to pay that price, because we labor under the conviction that we live in dangerous times. Someone must risk reputation and personal welfare to stop the plunge toward destruction of all we hold dear. In no sense of heroic sacrifice, but in a sense of humble urgency produced by the feeling that it is later than we think, I have written.

The Protestant Picture

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

We live in a world filled with problems, tensions and fears. Our way of life is challenged as never before. Western civilization is being weighed in the balances of destiny. We are haunted by the grim specter of a godless ideology lurking in the shadows, scheming, planning, waiting, ready to crush out all we hold dear. Against such an implacable foe, the application of raw force in concrete and physical form will eventually prove unavailing. The philosophy of dialectical materialism, formulated by Karl Marx, must be met and vanquished by a philosophy of spiritual strength and power. It is the conviction of this writer that our hope of survival lies in adoption and implementation of the way of life exemplified, expounded and embodied by Jesus of Nazareth. But to whom can we turn for leadership in these times of crisis? Where is the Christian way now exemplified in such a manner as to exert a universal influence of sufficient power to offset the threat to our world?

Last month we examined the claim of Rome to be the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God upon earth, and thus, the only source of hope in the fight against world Communistic domination. We offered certain proofs to demonstrate the fallaciousness of the first contention, and enumerated our reasons for rejecting the second. In this issue we scrutinize the Protestant realm in an endeavor to determine if we may rely upon obtaining help from that direction.

Our task in this instance is more difficult. What is Protestantism? Is it capable of adequate definition? Even the origin of the term as currently used is not understood by the majority, who have a vague notion that it arose from the act of Martin Luther in tacking ninety-five theses upon the church door in Wittemberg. The notion is incorrect. The emperor Charles V. called a diet at Spire, in 1529. He had two purposes in mind. One was to enlist aid from the German princes against the Turks; the other to resolve the fierce disputes over religious matters engendered by Luther's opposition to the Roman Church. In this diet, Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, in company with other papal princes, decreed that no Roman Catholic should be allowed to become a Lutheran, and no reformer should be allowed to speak contrary to the received doctrine of the church. Against this decree a solemn and formal *protest* was registered by six princes: John and George, electors of Saxony and Brandenburg; Ernest and Francis, dukes of Lunenburg; the landgrave of Hesse; and the prince of Anhalt. They were joined in the protest by the deputies of thirteen imperial towns. These were therefore called Protestants.

The term itself has a negative bearing. It indicates a state of opposition to an existing order or condition. Webster defines a Protestant as, "Any Christian not of the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Church." Protestantism is not a church, and has never claimed to be *the church*. Because of the many divergencies and divisions among the various bodies ascribed to Protestantism, it is difficult to write a thesis which will do justice to all and render unfairness to none. It is our desire and intention to be as objective as possible in any appraisal of this nature.

There have been great changes wrought in the Protestant realm in the last century, and tremendous alterations and adjustments are under way in these days. Unfortunately, those for whom we write are generally unaware of such re-alignments. Our readers are chiefly drawn from various segments resulting

from the restoration movement which was promoted by the Campbells, Stone, Scott, et. al., in the first half of the nineteenth century. The splinter parties allied with this movement have insulated and isolated themselves from the great bulk of the religious world which they started out to unite in Jesus the Christ, and have occupied themselves chiefly with fighting among themselves, to the utter abandonment of their original noble ideal and purpose. So far have they drifted from their moorings at this time that one is looked upon with gravest suspicions if he even repeats the plea for the unity of all believers so eloquently voiced by the restoration pioneers.

As a result of their confinement and entombment behind the monastic walls of their own construction, the majority are wholly oblivious of the present position of Protestantism. Notable changes have taken place since the days of Alexander Campbell. How much of this transformation may be traceable, directly or indirectly, to his influence, we have no way of knowing. But to use the same war cries and to make the same accusations as a century ago will only serve to demonstrate the ignorance and date the information of the opponent, and render his testimony futile and ineffective among thinking people.

When Campbell launched his effort, men were contending sharply for their respective creeds, the party spirit was rife and intense, and doctrinal feeling was at high tide. He describes it thus:

While protestant hatred to the Roman pontiff and the papacy continued to increase, a secret lust in the bosoms of protestants for ecclesiastical power and patronage worked in all the members of the protestant states, and ultimately introduced a swarm of protestant popes, who gradually assimilated the new church to the old. . . . The power of religion was soon merged in debates about forms and ceremonies, in speculative strifes of opinion, and in fierce debates about the political and religious right of burning heretics. . . . After the

protestants had debated their own principles with one another till they lost all brotherly affection, and would as soon have ‘communed in the sacrament’ with catholics as with one another; speculative abstracts of christian Platonism, the sublime mysteries of Egyptian theology, became the bond of union and the apple of discord, among the fathers and friends of the reformation.”¹

The state of things described no longer exists. It is useless to rail against creeds, or to take great time and space in analyzing them, with a view to altering the perspective of the average Protestant. A contemporary Catholic scholar says, “Unfortunately, many Protestants do not know exactly what their particular church teaches, nor why it teaches it. They are baffled when anyone asks them what their religion has to offer that any other religion does not have.”

It is just as useless to talk about “warring sects,” for they no longer dispute, debate and belabor each other. It is a source of pathetic amusement to hear some radio speakers denounce wrangling, warring sects in one breath, then in the next condemn their councils, alliances, and cooperative enterprises. There is more bitterness, strife and debate among “The Churches of Christ” than among all of the Protestant sects taken together, for among these last, hostility and hatred have practically vanished. They are still sects, but they are not “warring” upon each other. They are like neighboring tribes who have “buried the hatchet.” Let us glance briefly at the historic changes in Protestantism since inauguration of our century, now more than half completed. At the close of the nineteenth century the theologians were basking in the “peace of their self content.” Influenced more than most of them realized or would admit by the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest and the upward trend of mankind, indoctrinated in the German philosophic idealism of Kant, Schleiermacher, Lotze, Troeltsch, and others, it was believed that man by his inherent goodness and inborn qualities of moral strength, would build a world of social equality and ethical values. The kingdom of heaven would

be attained on earth by application of the philosophic principles of humanism with the aid of science and technology. All that was required to make earth a paradise and to cause “the desert to blossom like a rose,” was the implementation of a social gospel which would establish a true “brotherhood of man” as naturally as day follows night. The very titles of the books of that day reflect the ideal. There was, for example, *Theology and the Social Consciousness*, by Henry Churchill King, released in 1901; and *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, by Gerald Birney Smith, published in 1912.

But the prevailing philosophy, which was styled liberal theology, was given a series of rude shocks which shattered the spirit of complacency and forced a restudy of the accepted formulae. The first of these was the eruption of World War I, which pitted most of the rest of the world against Germany, the very seat of philosophic idealism. Once more “man’s inhumanity to man, made countless thousands mourn.” While the world was still staggering from the impact of this cataclysm of carnage and sorrow, the economic realm was shaken to its very roots by the depression and virtual panic which resulted.

Then came the next World War, and the fine spun theories of human behaviorism tumbled as did the burning buildings under the impact of “Block-buster” bombs. The depth of human depravity in the midst of a great cultural civilization was seen in the gas chambers and lime pits of Dachau and Buchenwald. The groans of the dying, and the agonized screams of the tortured, cried out for a new evaluation of God and man, of life and death, of human rights and responsibilities. Thus, out of the furnace of affliction, Protestantism has had to forge a new approach to the problem of modern man. In some phases, at least, this has amounted to a rediscovery of vital, but forgotten truths.

First in importance is the realization that a united world cannot be achieved by a divided church. Whereas, in the days of Campbell, sectarian division was a cause of glorying and

rejoicing, there has come a complete reversal of thought, and such division is almost universally regarded as sin. Never before in the history of the Christian faith has there been so much written upon the subject of unity as is being written today. Book after book is produced dealing with the ecumenical movement. Sermons are being delivered, forums conducted, symposiums held, class discussions inaugurated, in all of which the goal of a united Protestant world is held out as a hope. It is affirmed that “the ecumenical movement for a united church is the resurgence in Protestantism of the same undertaking which inspired the great Reformers, but which they were unable to consummate.”

The writer of those lines, strikes a note of urgency in the same book, with the following words:

Our civilization is in a state of collapse. The old stabilities are dissolving before our eyes. The old world of America and of historical Protestantism is passing away. Whether a new world will rise from the chaos of the present, and whether, if it does, it will be better or worse than the world we have known, no man can tell. Only faith in the God of history can enable us to ride the tempestuous waves of this universal unrest and uncertainty. . . . The thought of carrying our impotent sectarianism into such a scene as that toward which the forces of history may be taking us, should awaken us to realize that in this world convulsion, the destiny of Protestantism itself is involved. Either it will decay with the decaying significance of its sectarian churches, as some believe that it will, or a new Protestantism will emerge, emancipated from its anarchic sectarianism and competent, under Christ, to gather up the fragments of a shattered civilization and build a new world.”²

We rejoice in the recapture of certain concepts which commend themselves to our hearts as being right and proper according to the scriptures of the new covenant. We mention only a few.

1. The realization of the fact expressed in the prayer of Jesus that the one thing essential to getting the world to believe that God sent Him is to get those who do believe to be one. To state it in other words, the world will be won to belief in Jesus, when those who believe in Jesus are one! In conjunction with this view, it is interesting to read these words from Charles Henry Brent, late American Episcopal Bishop of the Philippines:

It is little short of absurd to try to bring into the Church of Christ the great nations of the Far East unless we can present an undivided front. For purely practical reasons we feel the necessity of the Church's realization of unity. It must be either that or failure in our vocation.

2. The recognition that denominationalism is a hindrance to the realization of God's purpose in one body. Charles Clayton Morrison refers to the true church as being in "bondage to the apostate denominational system," and says that the desired goal can only be possible "by the dissolution of the denominational churches." Archbishop William Temple declared, "In a sense it is required that every existing Christian communion should die in order to rise again into something more splendid than itself." The idea of the incompatibility of denominationalism with God's eternal will is a radical departure from the apologies offered in bygone days. The defender of denominationalism is now behind the times, a relic of the past, and completely out of step with current reasoning.

3. Charles W. Gilkey, one time instructor in homiletics at McCormick Theological Seminary and Garrett Biblical Institute, and member of the board of Union Theological Seminary, writes of one of his friends, who said, as he looked back upon a long career of preaching, "I have rediscovered the church." This is a phenomenon of these days. For years liberal philosophers scoffed at the church and at religious organization. They regarded the church as wholly outmoded and derelict. They spoke of it as a kind of poor and embarrassing relative. But the current literature is filled with what some of us have

known all of the time, that the church is related to Jesus, as a wife is to her husband, and “what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” It is amusing to read of religious doctors and professors who think they have succeeded in bringing the church back home to Jesus, whereas they have never been separated. The professors have just been away from home, and have mistaken their absence for that of the church. It is refreshing to read the encomiums upon the church, so vigorously and eagerly given, by those who used to sidle off so as not to be identified with the “church idea.”

4. There is a new appreciation of fellowship. Once more God’s people are looked upon as a family, or social unit. The purposes of God are not to be fulfilled by “souls, like stars, who dwell apart, in a fellowless firmament.” The judgment of God that “it is not good for man that he should be alone,” is seen to be as applicable in the spiritual and intellectual, as in the physical sphere.

5. Baptism is being given a new emphasis. There is a turning away from infant sprinkling. Under the impact of current investigation, the Christian life is conceived of as one of total commitment, which to be total, must be personal and individual. It cannot, in its very essence, be the commitment of one person by another, but it must be voluntary and spontaneous. In such a recognition sprinkling of infants must go. When Alexander Campbell started his trek from sectarianism he faced his first major test at the birth of his infant son. The infant was not sprinkled. For generations, since the days of Luther, it has seemed that the question of infant sprinkling was settled, and that there would be no attempt to return to the primitive practice. Now the whole matter is again at the forefront of discussion, with such men as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, affirming that infant baptism is wholly out of focus with the biblical concept of the church. Those of us who have read “Studies in the Original Christian Baptism” by Johannes Warns, with the appealing introduction by his brother-in-law,

Erich Sauer, know what great changes are taking place in our days. Truly the Spirit of God is still working!

CONCLUSION

We ask our readers to bear with us a little longer. We have sought to portray for you significant trends in modern Protestantism. We must now express our personal conviction as to the place of Protestantism in the mammoth struggle for the minds of men. We make this statement very humbly, sincerely, and with godly fear. We have a very deep respect for all who sincerely seek to serve the Christ. We love all who are affiliated with the various branches of Protestantism. We do not question that many of them are children of our Father which is in Heaven, and are, by the same token, our brethren, divided and separated though we may be. We acknowledge every truth held by every one of them. We would not discourage any, but prefer to encourage them to greater love for God, greater zeal and study.

However, honesty demands that in all candor, we openly declare that we do not accept the idea that Protestantism, as such, either united or disunited, is the answer to the problem confronting us. We believe that answer lies with the fellowship that is known in the scriptures of the new covenant as the church of God. The church of God was antecedent to Protestantism as it was to Roman Catholicism. To strengthen Protestantism is not, therefore, to build up the church of God. To unite the various sects and factions, of Protestantism, is not, thereby, to restore the church of God. We rejoice and thank God for every tendency upon the part of those in Protestantism to discover anew those principles and precepts which will lead in the direction of the restoration of the church of God, but Protestantism of itself is no more the church of God than is the Restoration Movement.

If I may be allowed an opinion at this juncture, it seems to me that modern Protestantism is sending forth its knights in shining armor, searching for the “holy grail” of an adequate theology, from which all may drink to spiritual satisfaction. But, like Sir Launfal, these may overlook and pass by the Christ, in the intensity of their quest. The Protestant world seems to become enraptured with each new philosophy, and men like Paul Tillich, of Harvard, captivate the American segment, at least, with such words as “theonomy,” and “ontology,” and with such expressions as: “The message of Christianity is not Christianity, but a New Reality. A New State of things has appeared, it still appears; it is hidden and visible, it is there and it is here. Accept it, enter into it, let it grasp you.” Perhaps the best reaction to modern systematic theology is found in the words of Jesus, “And they shall say to you, See here; or see there: go not after them, nor follow them” (Luke 17:23).

We pray that the day may yet come when all sectarianism may be dissolved under the rays of divine love, when the party spirit may be crucified and interred as a part of the old man of sin, when it will no longer be a question of uniting the various denominations in a grand ecumenical movement, but the uniting of all who love the Lord as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. To that end we will work and labor until the sunset claims us, to that task will we dedicate our feeble efforts “with malice toward none and with charity toward all.”

1. *Christianity Restored*, by Alexander Campbell. Published by McVay and Ewing, Bethany, Virginia, 1835, page 4.

2. *The Unfinished Reformation*. Charles Clayton Morrison, D.D., Litt.D., LL.D., Copyright, 1953, by Harper and Brothers, New York. Page 47. By special permission of copyright owners.

What Divides Us?

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

Archbishop William Temple, of the Church of England, uttered a profound statement when, in speaking of the disunity existing in the Protestant realm, he said, “So long as any of us are in schism, all are in schism.” To those of my brethren who restrict the church of God in this age to the heirs of the Restoration movement undertaken by the Campbells and their contemporaries, this statement still strikes home with tremendous impact. I do not equate that movement with the church of God, but most of my brethren do, reluctant as they would be to admit it. The disciple brotherhood is fractured into more than two dozen splinter parties, each with its unwritten creed and its special tests of fellowship. Each one of these claims to be the church, whole and entire, perfect and wanting nothing; each regards the others as factions.

This attitude precludes any possibility of ever achieving unity while it exists, as each separate unit remains fixed and adamant, demanding that all others move toward it. So long as each regards itself as “the faithful church” and all others as disloyal and apostate, we are treated to the ludicrous picture of some twenty-five organizations making an identical claim, at the same time that the very attitude of each makes its claim impossible and ridiculous. Yet, it is only by a common recognition that these bodies can make an approach toward unity and begin to answer the prayer of God’s Son. If each will

recognize itself for what it really is, a party or segment, and not the whole, then all of the parts can begin to move toward each other and come closer together. It is in the very nature of things that if one regards itself as “the faithful church” it will create an ever-widening rift between itself and the others. If each regards itself thus, then all must shrink from the others, and the space will continue to become greater between them all.

The term “schism” means “a rent, or tear, as in a garment.” If a garment is torn into four pieces, neither of these four is the garment in its entirety. And if the garment is rent, and one part is in schism, all are in schism. Even the Roman soldiers at the cross knew that much, and thus cast lots for the garment of the Saviour. Each knew that if it was torn he would not have the garment but a remnant.

Neither of the splinter parties to the Restoration movement is “the faithful church” for all have been guilty of the wrong attitude, and that attitude is the tap root of most of the sins of schism and division. This is an inherited condition. We did not create these parties. They were created by our fathers, but they will be perpetuated by us, unless we conquer the party spirit. It is here the devil will make his last stand in the hearts of most of us. Pride will cause us to rebel against the very thought of admitting that our party is not the one church of God in its entirety, whereas, the members of all the others are not brethren, but outcasts, apostates, heathen and publicans. Preachers of the gospel will have the greatest fight, because they have professed to know the most, and it is more difficult for them to admit an error, seeing they have set themselves up as “instructors of babes, and teachers of the Gentiles.”

Brethren will try every way they can to avoid the showdown. They will plead for sympathy by prejudicial methods, they will try to escape the partisan stigma by creating new parties, they will accuse those who face boldly up to truth as being traitors. None of these things affect the real issue. The

disciple brotherhood is divided. Division is contrary to the will of God. The party spirit is a sin. No single one of these parties is the church of God exclusively. Therefore, every one of us has been in a party or faction! There is no use trying any longer to damn every one else to hell in a vain attempt to save ourselves. We may all be damned together by perpetuating division, none of us can be saved by doing so!

Some brethren impractically think that all we need to do is talk about Jesus, and quit talking about unity, fellowship and restoration, and we will cure all of the ills of the world. Such an approach to the grave problems of our day is childish, immature and pathetic. It is not describing the character, or discussing the attributes of a physician that makes a patient well, but taking the medicine prescribed by that physician, if it is bitter or not! The way to show you love Jesus is to try and answer His prayer. You can write about Him until He comes again, but that will not cure a sick church or a sick world. No one can do a better job of writing about Jesus than the Holy Spirit, but despite His writings which we have had for nineteen centuries, we are in a mess. Why? We have not been humble enough to apply what He said to ourselves!

One sign of maturity is to face up to things as they are. The immature create dream worlds of fantasy into which they can retire. They like to build little walls of presumed perfection about their world. They resent those walls being torn down by the battering ram of fact, they cannot stand the cold hand of truth tumbling them from their cozy nests. But fact is fact, and truth is truth, regardless of what you do to the man who declares it. You can stop your ears, gnash your teeth, refuse to listen— or cancel your subscription— but what you do does not affect truth one whit! Truth does not become false because you refuse to read it, or because you may rant and rage in your helplessness because you cannot destroy it!

Not every congregation in these days is partisan. Under

leadership of godly men some are throwing off the shackles. They have renounced the party spirit, and when that spirit is discarded, littleness, bigotry, hate and factionalism will die. We have had little leadership of a non-partisan character. All of us have been trained to represent a clique, segment, or group. Many cannot do otherwise. They are motivated by fear! They dread the misrepresentation of motive and teaching, the boycott and ostracism, the hostility of those who once regarded them with reverence.

It takes genuine courage to face up to the fact that though we have differed with others on many points of understanding and interpretation, and still do, that in one respect we are all in the same boat. We may have been in an anti-Sunday School faction, a one cup faction, a fermented wine faction, an anti-institutional faction, a premillennial faction, an anti-premillennial faction— we could run the whole gamut of things that have torn, rent, split and shivered us to bits, yet all of us know that none of these divided us. It was not classes, cups or instruments that divided God's people. These are all neutral. They are neither good or evil in themselves. It was the party spirit that divided us. The things enumerated may be a sin, or they may not, as used, but the party spirit is a sin. The Holy Spirit says it is! You could be right about all of these other things and still be a sinner by manifesting the party spirit. I suspect that if we conquer it, most other things will take care of themselves and go to their proper places eventually!

A Dangerous Reply

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[Abstract]

Our brother in the Lord, Roy Loney, favors us with a seven-page mimeographed document of a purely doctrinal nature. It purports to be a reply to questions on the problem of fellowship “sent out by certain brethren out west.” We have not seen their document, and do not know who mailed it out, but Brother Loney says he questions “the wisdom and spiritual understanding the document reveals.” I feel the same way with regard to his lengthy reply. I have read it several times and am convinced it contains many dangerous implications. Despite the fact it contains several grave errors, I shall confine my remarks to but one. It seems the brethren “out west” listed 25 points, and according to Bro. Loney, “the brethren are asked to mark the paper to indicate whether they will or not endorse or fellowship certain practices.” If the brethren “out west” said that, they ought to learn there is a difference between fellowship and endorsement. We do not fellowship practices or things, but *persons*. That’s why the word “fellow” is a part of the term. We can fellowship “a fellow” without endorsing all he says or does. I’m in fellowship with Brother Loney.

The first point concerned the use of tobacco. On this subject, Bro. Loney says, “The use of tobacco in any form is an individual matter that affects only the user and his influence.” In the same paragraph, he says, “Many times I have wished with all my heart that the church of Christ would take the same stand

with reference to tobacco as the Adventists and Mormans (sic). I understand that no one can maintain membership with them and be a tobacco user.” These statements in the same paragraph are absolutely contradictory. The latter one exhibits a type of loose and careless thinking which would destroy the church of God if carried to its culmination.

I am opposed to the tobacco habit. I wish no one had ever contracted it. I wish all who are addicted to it would quit it. But I do not wish the church of Christ would take the same position regarding it as the Adventists and Mormons. Our brother wants the church to take “an individual matter that affects only the user” and create a test of fellowship out of it. Then it would be no longer an individual matter, but “a church matter.” How would the church formulate such legislation?

Should we call a national convention? If so, who will call it? Will each congregation send delegates to represent their viewpoint? Who will introduce the motion? Who will second it? Who will enforce the ruling? What will be done with our brethren now in fellowship who smoke? Will they be in today, and out tomorrow, after the church takes the stand on this new dogma? Or, will we set a deadline and demand that they quit sinning on or before midnight of that date under penalty of excommunication? Will we incorporate this unwritten creed in “the confession” and ask, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and promise not to use tobacco in any form”? Or, will we fool prospective candidates into believing that our only creed is Jesus, then disclose later that there is a “rider” attached in the form of an anti-tobacco clause of eligibility?

These questions are not silly. They are important, not because they relate to tobacco using but because they reveal the dread fallacy of making the church of Christ a legislative institution. This is Romanism in its incipency. It is exactly on this basis Rome forbids eating meat on Friday. The church of

Christ has no right to create any test of fellowship. Only the Lord can do that! Even the Mormons know that he did not make tobacco a test of fellowship, and they do so on the basis of a “revelation” given through Joseph Smith, at Kirtland, Ohio, February 27, 1833. He alleged that God revealed to him the following: “Tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and it is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.” He also said,

“And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.” (See *Doctrines and Covenants* 89:8, 9).

The government and discipline of the church of God is congregational. Each congregation is autonomous. One congregation cannot decide a single thing for another. One congregation cannot punish, penalize or disfellowship another, for it has no jurisdiction over another. Suppose the church of Christ took the same stand with reference to tobacco as the Mormons, and some congregations refused to bow to this latest creed? Would there not be a division? Who would be responsible for it?

The church of Christ has no way of activating a program of universal legislation. God has made no provision for any conclave, convention, synod or conference, to *take a stand*, and demand universal conformity under threat of expulsion. It is ridiculous to ask what *the church* teaches on any subject. The word of God is *our teacher*, not the church. We are the church. If the word of God makes a thing a test of fellowship, we have nothing to say about it; if it does not, we ought to have nothing to say about it as a test. Why does our brother not wish the church would take the same stand as the Bible? Are the Mormons and Adventists better patterns than the word of God? If that word makes tobacco a test of fellowship, why not just point to the scripture? Then, whether the Adventists and Mormons make it a test of *their fellowship* will make no difference. I am deeply concerned about any teaching which

encourages the church to make laws where God made none, and debars men from sitting down at the Lord's table because of human dogmas.

I am opposed to tyranny in any form or guise. I am opposed to any exercise of legislative functions by the church of God. Tobacco using is a bad habit, but it is not nearly so disastrous to the church as the spirit of factionalism which creates its own codes and regulations, then sets these arbitrary interpretations and opinions up on par with divinely ordained statutes as laws of admittance into or exclusion from the fellowship of the saints. I do not condone tobacco using. I am opposed to it. I teach against it, and that with vigor. I advise all who use it to abstain. But I will just as strenuously oppose every attempt of men to bind their opinions, interpretations, and views, as laws upon the kingdom of heaven. It is this attitude which has split, shivered, and splintered the church into fragments, and made its appeal for unity a laughingstock in the face of its practice.

What will I do about brethren who use tobacco? I will feel a sense of compassion for them in their slavery to a habit that is "an individual matter that affects only the user." I will seek to educate them to its harmful effects. I will try to show them how they will be better off if they cease using it. I will do this in love and mercy. Suppose they do not quit using it? I shall make no laws which will drive them forth. I have received no new "revelation" on the matter, so I shall be patient, longsuffering and forbearing. God will adjust a lot of things in the last day which I cannot straighten out on earth. I will let them stand or fall to "their own master." *We have no right to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation!* I sympathize with our good Brother Loney in his desire to see brethren live better lives. But we will not accomplish the purpose of God upon this earth by creating a legislative body of the church and usurping the rights and privileges of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to follow the word of God and not to be so

concerned about taking a stand like Adventists and Mormons.

Turning on the Light

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

In 1844, Alexander Campbell wrote: “Alas, for the times! when Methodism, and every form of Protestantism, of ancient Puritanism, have so soon run down to the dead level of all manner of conformity to the world. Splendid churches, rich saloons, well crimsoned pulpits, superb curtains, sublime organs, elegant preachers, well read sermons, well feasted hearers, and polite audiences, have gained the day, and triumphed over reason, conscience, the law, and the gospel.” Have the churches of the restoration movement also soon run down to the same dead level? We propose to direct the searchlight in their direction and reveal what we find.

For several months we have been dealing with the threat of alien ideologies in a world plot. We have pointed up the danger to western civilization of a diabolic attempt to seduce men’s minds. We have stated our conviction that hope lies not in the use of raw, naked force, but in the adoption and implementation of the Christian philosophy. Our culture is built upon the ethical teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and the source of the power of his doctrine lies in an acceptance of Him as the Son of God. In our search for the means by which the Christian way of life can be made universal in application, we have reached the conclusion that the answer lies not with Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. We have stated the reasons by which we reach that conclusion.

We now examine the claims of a movement purporting to be neither Roman Catholic or Protestant, but a reproduction or re-institution in this age of the church as originally planted by the apostles of Jesus Christ. Our interest is heightened in this phase of our examination by virtue of personal alliance with one segment of this movement. It is difficult to maintain absolute objectivity under such circumstances, but we shall attempt to be fair and just in spite of human frailties and prejudices engendered by background and associations.

The history of the restoration movement sparked by the genius of such noble worthies as Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and others, is of such engrossing interest as to render it almost impossible to forego the thrill of repeating it, but our present task is of another nature. Our problem is to determine if the heirs of that movement in this generation are adequate, under existing circumstances, to the preservation of our world by the universal dissemination of the principles of Jesus in the Christocracy of which they are partakers.

In his prayer, as recorded in John 17, Jesus conditioned the acceptance of Himself by the world upon one factor—the oneness of those who believe in Him. The world can be won to Christ only when those who believe in Him are one in Christ. The world must either be saved through faith in Jesus and acceptance of His way of life, or without it. If it can be saved without it, God made a tragic error in sending His Son. But the entire Christian concept is based upon the philosophy, that, “Without me you can do nothing.” To those of us who accept as factual that He is “the way, the truth, and the life,” there can be no such thing as life outside of its source. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”

If the world can only be saved through belief in Jesus, and if the thing required to produce that belief is the oneness of those

who believe, it stands to reason that the most important responsibility in a world of divided believers is to labor to bring about the unity for which Jesus prayed. It was a recognition of this which gave impetus to the restoration movement. Alexander Campbell wrote:

No mortal need fancy that he shall have the honor of devising either the plan of uniting christians in one holy band of zealous co-operation, or of converting Jews and Gentiles to the faith, that Jesus is that seed, in whom all families of the earth are yet to be blessed. The plan is divine. It is ordained by God; and better still, it is already revealed. Is any one impatient to hear it? Let him again read the intercessions of the Lord Messiah, which we have chosen for our motto. Let him then examine the two following propositions, and say whether these do not express Heaven's own scheme of augmenting and conservating the body of Christ.

First. Nothing is essential to the conversion of the world, but the union and co-operation of christians.

Second. Nothing is essential to the union of christians, but the Apostles' teaching or testimony.

Again, he writes that it is a general concession of all who accept the idea of a universal gospel, that the union of all Christians is essential to producing the effect desired and purposed by God.

These two propositions have been stated, illustrated, developed,— and shall I say proved, in the Christian Baptist, and Millennial Harbinger, to the conviction of thousands. Indeed, one of them is as universally conceded, as it has been proposed, viz., That the union of christians is essential to the conversion of the world: and though, perhaps, some might be found who would question, whether, if all christians were united, the whole world could be converted to God; there is no person, of whom we have heard, who admits a general or universal prevalence

of the gospel— in what is usually called the millennial age of the world— and who admits that moral means will have any thing to do with its introduction, who does not admit that the union of christians is essential to that state of things. Indeed, to suppose that all christians will form one communion in that happy age of the world, and not before it; is to suppose a moral effect without a cause.

But what is the present status of the spiritual descendants of this great effort to achieve the Master's purpose? Candor forces us to admit they are torn by strife, rent by schisms, and even more divided than many of those whom they seek to unite. We believe there are some twenty-five splinter parties existing today among the ranks of "the disciple brotherhood," and we propose in a subsequent article to identify them. Which one of these parties is the ekklesia of God, capable of carrying the banner of Jesus to certain victory over all the forces of evil? With few exceptions each party regards itself as the one holy, apostolic, catholic church of God upon earth. Members of all the others are regarded as apostates and heretics. Which one of these parties is correct in its claim? To which one shall we rally all the forces of righteousness, and to which leaders must we look for safe conduct out of the wilderness and into the promised land?

Since a majority of the readers of this little journal are identified with one or another of these factions, we propose a careful analysis of the claims of many of them. In subsequent issues we shall seek to determine if either of the present parties bearing the title "Christian Church" or "Church of Christ" is, by divine right, the exclusive company of saints on earth, the elect of God, or the company of the redeemed. We are not unaware of the price we shall pay for such relentless research, of the friendships that will be forfeited, and the boycotts which must be suffered. Yet, it is not until we can see our present condition in its true light, that we can properly diagnose it, and then prescribe a wholesome remedy. At the conclusion of this current series we shall offer such a remedy, and, in the

meantime, we can only humbly pray that, in spite of personal feelings toward us, most of our readers will continue with us unto the end.

How did we get this way? That we are divided, no one can deny. The divisions are so many and produced by such complex factors, it is hard to make a proper classification for their consideration. Many, as a matter of convenience, refer to those opposing sides of one major schism as “instrumental” and “non-instrumental” because of the use, or non-use of instruments of music in the corporate public worship. Yet, instrumental music was not originally the cause of divergence. On August 17, 1889, a convention was held at Sand Creek Church, Shelby County, Illinois, for the purpose of signing a statement, “with the view, if possible, of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the churches.” The document, signed by delegates formally selected and sent by a number of congregations, was written and publicly read by Daniel Sommer.

It closed with the words, “We state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all such that are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished, and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we cannot and will not regard them as brethren.” The innovations, corruptions, and abominations, are thus described: “The unlawful methods resorted to in order to raise or get money for religious purposes . . . the select choir to the virtual, if not the real abandonment of congregational singing; likewise the man-made society for missionary work, and the one-man imported preacher-pastor to take the oversight of the church.” Instrumental music was not even mentioned.

There are some things of significance in this document. It was called by its author “An Address and Declaration” in a word switch on the “Declaration and Address” written by

Thomas Campbell at the outset of the restoration movement. But the document written by Campbell was to secure unity among all believers; the Sand Creek Declaration was written to “draw a line of demarkation between the churches of Christ and our innovating brethren,” in the words of its author. Campbell proposed, “All that are enabled to make profession, and to manifest it in their conduct, should consider others in the church of God, and should live together as the children of the heavenly Father.” Sommer proposed with reference to those being admonished who did not renounce the things specified, that “we can not and will not regard them as brethren.” This placed “brotherhood” upon a basis of conformity to certain practices, rather than upon a relationship to each other through acceptance of the blood of Jesus, and this attitude has generally prevailed to the present.

The author has seen documentary evidence in numerous places indicating that local cleavage was not produced by introduction of the instrument. A case in point is Valdosta, Georgia. The congregation now known as “Central Church of Christ” was begun by a group of dissenters who separated from the group now known as “First Christian Church” because of the insistence of some in hiring a regular preacher at a stipulated salary. Since Central Church of Christ now has a preacher hired at a stipulated salary, but does not have the instrument, it is a matter of policy to lead the membership to believe that instrumental music was the cause of the original schism.

In spite of tendencies toward division, and intense feeling, the open break was not manifest to the world until 1906. In that year the “Churches of Christ” were separately listed in the U. S. Religious Census. The Director of the Census in Washington, wrote to David Lipscomb about the matter, and Lipscomb replied:

There is a distinct people taking the word of God as

their only and sufficient rule of faith, calling their churches, ‘churches of Christ,’ or ‘churches of God,’ distinct and separate in name, work, and rule of faith from all other bodies or people. . . . These disciples have separated from the ‘Christian Church’ that grew out of the effort to restore primitive Christianity, by remaining true to the original purpose and the principles needful to develop it, while these churches have departed from this end and have set aside the principles of fidelity to the word of God as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice for Christians.

The instrumental music question has been given the forefront in the division for several reasons. The instrument was something concrete, tangible, and visible. Its voice, like that of the turtledove (Can. 2:12) was “heard in our land.” It presented a local problem calling for definite decision of acceptance or rejection, which was not true of a society with headquarters in a distant city, represented only by an occasional itinerant visitor raising funds. The circumstances of introduction of the instrument aroused passions and intensified feelings. Often an organ was spirited into the meetinghouse by night, locks on the doors were altered, suits for the property were entered in civil courts, and the consequent trials with their aftermath of broken families and communities left indelible scars and marks. The instrument thus became, and still remains, a symbol of an intangible something, to both groups. To one it is a visible token of freedom, and they would as soon see the flag trampled underfoot as to surrender it; to the other it is a mark of apostasy and corruption, the very presence of which so defiles a meetingplace, they could not even sit in it to listen to a man speak under any circumstance. Thus, it appears there are two groups which claim a common heritage, the instrumental and non-instrumental churches. Which of these, as now existent, is the ekklesia of God, capable of leading the army of heaven to conquest of the world for the King Messiah?

Our examination of their credentials would be simplified

greatly, if there were no complications caused by divisions within the two, but unfortunately, such is not the case. We will deal first with those categorized as “instrument churches.” These are in turn divided into two major groups, which for lack of better terms, we will designate “The Disciples Church” and “The Conservative Christian Churches.” Although, not always known by those outside the party, these last are, to all intents and purposes, divided along other lines. A case in point is the Colorado Springs, Colorado, area, where there are at least four distinctive groups of those who use the instrument, among whom there is little, if any, real working harmony.

It is evident that there is widespread uneasiness and unrest over the teaching and attitude of some of the schools, as well as friction between them, and it is held by many, for example, that schools such as Midwest School of Evangelism, in Ottumwa, Iowa, are actually factional in their approach and outlook. It is significant that the non-instrument factions are generally designated by papers, and one may be identified as a member of the Gospel Advocate faction, Gospel Guardian faction, or Old Paths Advocate faction. Among the instrumental brethren the designation is by schools, and one may be judged by the institution he attends. A few weeks ago, a brother seeking to describe the status of a church, wrote me: “I suppose you’d say the congregation was midway between the Ottumwa group and Ozark Bible College.” He was not talking about location. Knowing both schools, I knew what he meant. The instrumental churches do not have as many divisions and parties as the non-instrumental churches, not having majored in that field, as have the latter, many of them being specialists.

What about the Disciples of Christ? Some of my good personal friends are affiliated with this denomination. I doubt not that there are many children of God in the number, and despite pronouncements such as the Sand Creek Declaration, I regard them as brethren, although I do not endorse their ideas on many things, and deplore some of their religious practices.

But, as a body, this group has abandoned the idea of the restoration of the ancient order of things. This was not accomplished in “one fell swoop” but came as the result of many contributing causes. Originally, the congregations growing out of the restoration emphasis were chiefly rural. Churches in urban centers were small. With the changing economic pattern produced by the Industrial Revolution, and the consequent exodus from country to city, churches in metropolitan areas became large and powerful. It might be a fruitful source of investigation to determine the effect of the Machine Age upon the restoration movement. Georges Bernanos, the French philosopher, in his “Tradition of Freedom” says, “One cannot understand the least thing about modern civilization if one does not first and foremost realize that it is a universal conspiracy to destroy the inner life. . . . None of the defenders of the Machine, howsoever brazen he may be, has as yet dared to make out that machinery has a good moral effect.” The changing pattern of life corresponded with the stress placed upon “the social gospel” which supplanted the idea of evangelism and the planting of new congregations. The Disciples Church was caught up in this new program of transforming the world by the good deeds of men, rather than by the regenerating message proclaimed to men from heaven.

This environment provided the setting for the inroads of so-called “Higher Criticism” and many of the younger preachers, supplementing their “ministerial courses” in an undergraduate school, with additional work in theological seminaries connected with great universities, returned home thoroughly saturated with the notion that the Bible was not what it claimed to be, and ready to label many of its narratives as fiction, and to discount the miracles as legendary stories. This is not to imply that all of the preachers connected with the movement were ready to discard the Bible as God’s revelation, but the more prominent ones in large cities frequently cast doubt upon it. The author personally heard one such preacher deny the resurrection of Jesus, and seek to account for the

presentation by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as a vision conjured up in the minds of the disciples as the result of intense longing, coupled with deep grief and sorrow. The official Sunday School literature disseminated the idea that some things related in the Old Testament and acknowledged as factual by Jesus, were incredible, and the damage was done.

The practice of open membership, which is the acceptance of those into fellowship, who have not been immersed into the Lord Jesus Christ, was introduced in many places, and the significance of baptism was thus destroyed. It is not our intention to misrepresent the condition, for which reason we reproduce here the statement of membership policy drawn up for the Christian Church at Florissant, Missouri, the last one of the Disciples of Christ congregations to be planted in the Saint Louis area.

In order that there may be a clear understanding of the method of receiving members into the Christian Church now being formed in Florissant, the Steering Committee of the Disciples of Christ in the Florissant area recommends that the following become the membership policy of this new congregation:

For one who presents himself for membership by confession of faith in Jesus Christ, it shall be the policy of this congregation to follow the practice of the New Testament church of baptizing by immersion, symbolizing the burial and resurrection of our Lord.

For one who desires to transfer his membership from another congregation, he may do so by bringing a letter from the church of which he has been a member, or by stating where his previous membership has been.

Should any person come by transfer, not having been previously baptized by immersion, he shall be offered an explanation of the meaning of the practice of this congregation to baptize by immersion and shall be

requested to be so baptized. However, if he does not find it in his heart to be immersed, membership shall not be denied him.

The congregation shall include him because it recognizes him as a Christian whom it welcomes to its worship, to its communion table, to its fellowship meetings, and, from whom it is willing to receive the benefit of his talents and his treasure. Since this congregation recognizes other churches in addition to itself as being Christian and expects to work interdenominationally with other communions, it believes that it should welcome every Christian who requests the privilege of transferring his membership into this congregation. This church considers itself to be part of the church universal. Consequently, it opens its door to all who desire membership in it as stated above.

At the time this was circulated among the membership, I drew up certain objections to the statement of policy, and these were read publicly, and later printed in *Bible Talk*. We offer them here as expressive of our thinking.

1. It substitutes a Steering Committee composed of uninspired men for the inspired ambassadors of our Lord, who were empowered by Him to reveal the will of the King relative to citizenship in His kingdom.

2. It substitutes a “membership policy” for the new covenant scriptures as a basis for determination of admission to the table of the Lord.

3. It affirms that the practice of the New Testament church was to immerse those who confessed faith in the Lord, and then proposes to accept those who repudiate the practice of the New Testament church, thus forfeiting any right to a claim of seeking to restore said church in faith and practice.

4. It employs misleading and ambiguous language,

such as “It shall be the policy of this congregation to follow the practice of the New Testament church of baptizing by immersion” which is equivalent to saying “baptizing by baptizing” or “immersing by immersion;” and by use of such language implies that there are other means of baptizing.

5. It leaves the terms of admission to fellowship to the will of the individual and not to the will of God, and makes what one finds in his heart the law of obedience, rather than what he finds in the revealed will of God.

6. It recognizes as Christian those who are not in Christ Jesus in the fair import of that term in the revealed oracles of God.

7. It reverses the divine order by expressing willingness to receive talent and treasure from one who has not first given himself to God (2 Cor. 8:5).

8. It confesses that the Florissant Christian Church is merely another denomination, on which basis it forfeits all hope of uniting all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ in a non-sectarian and non-denominational sense, insofar as the Florissant Christian Church is concerned.

9. By confessing that it is a part of the church universal, it commits itself to the admission that it is a party or sect, and thus exists in contravention to the will of God, and not in conformity thereto.

10. In opening its doors on the basis of the membership policy as drawn up by the Steering Committee it has created a human creed, and will only serve to divide believers, rather than to answer the prayer of our Lord.

CONCLUSION

As I view the situation, the Disciples Church is merely

another sect among sects. I say this charitably, with no intention of conveying hate or animosity, for I feel neither. This condition might not be so bad, if it were not by choice. A body of believers, like an individual, might be “overtaken in a fault.” Under such circumstances restoration might be effected by spiritual men working in a spirit of meekness. All of us have manifested some sectarian tendencies in these latter days, but the condition is not irremediable, if, like Nehemiah, we weep, mourn, fast, pray before the God of heaven, and confess, “Both I and my father’s house have sinned.” But these brethren have followed a calculated course, and a deliberate policy, which has led them to deny the restoration principles which called them into being, and the sufficiency of the revelation of God which alone can act as compass and pole star in the turbulent, storm-swept ocean of life.

I do not charge them with insincerity or hypocrisy. I do not question their honesty nor challenge their integrity. I doubt not that many of them feel they are rendering God service in their present course. Nor does my evaluation of the movement cause me to repudiate any truth that is held, or derogate any good work that is accomplished. I simply feel that these brethren have fallen victims to the spirit of this age, unwittingly perhaps, but nonetheless surely and truly so. And for that reason, I do not feel that we can rely upon the philosophy in which they trust as providing hope in these troublous times. I am sorry this is so.

What I have written has not been intended as an attack, but as an examination and expression of my personal convictions relative to a regrettable situation. If I have forgotten my purpose, or have misrepresented, I beg forgiveness, for it has not been intentional. No member of the Disciples of Christ should regard my observations herein as a personal thrust. I love and respect every member among them regardless of the terms upon which they received him. My relationship with all of them, even those in positions of prominence, has always been upon a very high plane. I have never been treated discourteously by any of

them. (Our next treatise will express our views of the conservative groups among the instrumental churches).

Light and Fellowship

Mission Messenger (September 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

A good brother, somewhat disturbed by our writings on fellowship, enquires again about 1 John 1:7, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Our brother writes, “You say you are opposed to the use of instrumental music, and yet you say you are in fellowship with every sincere baptized believer in Jesus Christ, which would include many who use the instrument. If using the instrument is walking in the light, why are you opposed to it; and if it is not, how can you be in fellowship with those who use it and thus walk in darkness?”

This type of reasoning is characteristic of many in these days, and deserves consideration. Our brother faces a problem because he does not know the meaning of either “fellowship” or “walking in the light.” Fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God (1 Cor. 1:9). We come into that state by being immersed into Christ Jesus. We do not enter the fellowship of our Lord by agreement with each other on certain laws regulations, interpretations or practices, but by establishing a covenant relationship with Him. All who are in that covenant relationship are in a partnership of the Spirit, and they are in fellowship because of their relationship to God. Every child of God is my brother.

Some of God's children think they can please our Father by employing instruments of music in his public praise. I think they are mistaken. I think they presume too much. But that mistake does not cancel the relationship which was established by being born into the family. They would not become my brethren by ceasing to use the instrument, they did not cease to become my brethren by beginning to use it. They are my brethren because we have the same spiritual father. This is the basis of brotherhood!

It is evident that fellowship is not endorsement of the position or practice of another. I fellowship many persons who do things I cannot endorse; I endorse many things done by persons with whom I am not in fellowship. I endorse many statements and actions of President Eisenhower, but we are not in a state of spiritual fellowship. I love him and respect him greatly, but I do not consider him as my brother in the Lord. I wish that we were brethren in Christ Jesus.

John conditions our fellowship with one another on "walking in the light as he is in the light." Those who affirm they have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, lie, and do not tell the truth. What is the light here referred to? Whatever it is we can have no fellowship with each other unless we walk in it, and that to the same degree that God is in it, which means *in perfection*, for "God is light, and in him is *no darkness at all*." Darkness is the opposite of light, and whatever the light is in which we must walk to have fellowship with each other, we can make no allowance or apologies for the slightest variation, for we must walk in the light *as he is in it*, and in him is no darkness at all.

Obviously, light is here used as a symbol, as it is throughout the revelation of God. It is so used because of its nature or character, which is invariable, but the application may be to various qualities or things. In Psalm 37:6, it is a symbol of righteousness; in Hosea 6:5, of God's judgments; in Matthew

5:16, of good deeds; in John 5:35, of the work of John the Immerser; in 2 Corinthians 4:4, of the gospel.

It is thought by many that 1 John 1:7 must refer to knowledge of God's will but this cannot be true, for none of us have perfect knowledge. If light, in this instance, is knowledge of the scriptures, and darkness is ignorance of them, then we will never be in fellowship with any one on earth, for none of us will know as much as God, and that is the standard. Neither can light refer to obedience, for that would require perfect obedience without a flaw, as a precedent to fellowship. It is possible that our problem can be resolved if we allow John to tell us what he means by the terms "light" and "darkness."

Before we do so, let us note a few things relative to 1 John 1:5-7. Light and darkness represent states in which men can walk, for we "walk in darkness" or "we walk in the light." It is possible for men to say they are in fellowship with God, while they walk in darkness. To have fellowship with each other we must walk in the light as God is in the light, that is, to a perfect degree. And whatever the light is, God is that state or condition, for *God is light*.

Let us now examine this epistle to determine what states are represented by the terms "light" and "darkness." When we find out what these represent, we will have the true foundation or basis of "fellowship one with another." In 2:9, we read, "He that saith he is in the light, and *hateth his brother*, is in *darkness* even until now." Thus I learn that darkness is a state of hatred for the brethren. If that be true, then, since love is the opposite of hate, as light is of darkness, to be in the light, would be to love the brethren. In 2:10, John says, "He that *loveth his brother* abideth in the *light*, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

Does this mean that one who hates his brother is "walking in darkness"? Read 2:11, "He that *hateth his brother* is in

darkness, and *walketh in darkness*, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness has blinded his eyes.” But, if God is light, and light is love, would it be correct to say that God is love? Read 4:7, 8: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for *God is love*.”

How does this tie in with the statement “If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie”? Does this mean that if a man claims to love God while hating his brother, he is a liar? Read 4:20: “If a man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.” In other words, “He that loveth him that begot, loveth those who are begotten of him.” Our love is based upon a single source of origin. We are all begotten of God!

The objection may be raised that since God is light and there is no darkness in him, and since we are commanded to walk in the light as he is in the light, this would mean that our love for the brethren must be perfect. That is correct. Read 4:12, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and *his love is perfected in us*.” We have not seen God, but we have seen the manifestation of his love in Jesus (4:9). If, through Jesus, we begin to love our brethren (all of them), God will dwell in us, and our love will be perfected. “We will walk in the light as he is in the light” and this light of fraternal love will produce fellowship one with another which will encourage us to seek the good of each other, in spite of differences.

We are now ready to note again the query of our brother. “If using the instrument is walking in the light, why are you opposed to it; and, if it is not, how can you be in fellowship with those who use it?” This verse (1 John 1:7) has nothing to do with using instrumental music. Whether or not it is wrong to do so must be determined from other considerations. So far as this

passage is concerned one who used the instrument would “walk in the light” if he loved the brethren; and one who opposed its use would “walk in darkness” if he hated the brethren. Walking in light or darkness, as here considered, is not determined by use of or opposition to instrumental music, but by our attitude toward the brethren.

A recently circulated treatise on fellowship, postulates salvation by legalism, and the very introduction lays down a premise which is fallacious, when the author says, “We would be safe in saying that perfect fellowship can be found only in perfect unity since any difference would make such a fellowship impossible for differences separate not unite.” We would not be safe in saying any such thing, but we would be dangerously in error. It is not true that *any difference* would make such a fellowship impossible. Neither is it true that differences separate us. They only separate those who do not love each other. My beloved wife and I have differences but we do not separate. I have never been in full agreement upon all points of scripture with a single person in this world, but I do not separate from all of them.

Differences between brethren do not make fellowship impossible! They may make it more difficult to love, but that is a test which love needs to determine its genuineness. There were plenty of differences between brethren in Corinth. Some of them differed so much they went to law against each other. But they constituted the church of God, they were called saints (1 Cor. 1:2); they were in the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9); and they were designated “beloved sons” (1 Cor. 4:14); as well as being repeatedly referred to as “brethren.” The apostle said, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” Though they were addressed as carnal and as babes, they were also addressed as brethren, and they were babes *in Christ!*

Paul did not “withdraw fellowship” from Peter when they

had their differences at Antioch. He withstood him to the face because he was worthy of censure, but their differences did not make fellowship impossible, unless we have “the apostle to the Gentiles” excluding the “apostle to the circumcision” after the latter had given him “the right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 3:9). Brethren do not separate because they have differences, but because they do not love each other enough to stay together. When a husband and wife separates it is not because they have differences, for then there would be no married couples. They separate because they allow their differences to become more important than their mutual love, so that love is choked out by bitterness and animosity. Small wonder that, beginning with such a fallacy, the author of the treatise should condition salvation on perfection of human works, rather than on grace, and by seeking to debar some from fellowship who are brethren, ends up with a system which will damn us all!

But back to our original question. I am opposed to instrumental music in the public praise service of the saints of God. I would to God it had never been thrust in over the protest of humble saints. I wish that all of us were big enough to agree to take it out, go back where we were, and start over from there. Then, in many places it would never become a problem again, for we would conquer it by love, since we now know how to treat each other in Christ Jesus. I trust to God that I may live long enough to see the day when, in many communities, the rift will be healed and the breach repaired; when saints of God who have been sundered and separated for decades may meet together with tears of happiness and mingle their voices once more in joint offerings of praise.

But, whether that day comes in my brief span of life, or whether we are destined to walk the sad and dreary road of suspicion and division unto its bitter end, thus paying the uttermost farthing of shame and sorrow for the heritage of schism received from our fathers, I shall still love my brethren—all of them—not merely in word or in tongue, but in deed and in

truth. I shall go among them in love. I will not compromise my convictions, but I will walk in the light of love, so that it may be said, “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

Living in Fear

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

When the Emancipation Proclamation was read to the slaves of the southland, many of them trembled with fear, and shook with fright. So long had they been in bonds they recoiled from the responsibilities of freedom. They conjured up images of dire distress, and drew back from an uncertain future. Some of them requested their former masters to retain them in their previous status. They wanted the security afforded by dirt-floored log cabins, corn pone and hog jowl meals. They were unwilling to taste the privileges of free men and women. They were lost in liberty.

There is evidence that many who have been reared in the narrow confines of religious partisanship, and who have been shackled by the factional spirit, are motivated by the same fear today. They have grown up in the security afforded by traditional walls. In a little group of exclusivists some of them have been regarded as leaders; their word became law and their decisions went unchallenged. In a world of free men they could not hold their own. They would be lost among those who did not tremble at their every pronouncement. So they would prefer to maintain the status quo, and retain their position of respect among those who regarded them as champions and defenders of the faith.

The fear of loss of financial support holds many a man in

chains to a partisan group. There are those who would like to breathe the pure air of Christian charity, but their jobs depend upon keeping in favor with the powers that be and that control the purse strings. Stark fear for their own wellbeing and that of their families makes the cold sweat pop out on them, for they realize they are selling a glorious birthright for a mess of pottage. But they must choke back the swelling of their hearts, for they dare not face what may be thought of them by those who have blindly followed them; they dread the whisperings, the malignant letters filled with false accusations, the boycott and the ostracism. It is easier to keep still, to go along, to continue to play the game, even while the world is on the brink of destruction.

The fear which is so powerful a deterrent to freedom of spirit is manifested in many of the questions of the day. Is there not danger that the church will lose its identity? This is but another way of enquiring if the party to which we belong can continue to maintain its separate status. What would our fathers say if they returned to earth? Can we not just go along as we are, and ignore those about us, and live right, and go to heaven? How does it happen that we did not learn about the party spirit in days past and gone? Do you mean to infer that we could have been wrong in the application of many of the scriptures we have used over and over?

The party spirit is subtle and tenacious. Satan is cunning! He does not want the children of God to pool their strength and efforts. He is opposed to them even discussing the possibility of unity. He wants them to believe that it is impossible to achieve. It is to his interest to keep brethren divided and warring with each other. "Cursed are the peacemakers," is the motto of Diabolos. But in spite of Satan, the party spirit, and the fear of men, there is a great tidal wave of Christian thinking and love which today is rolling wide and far. Men look up with hope who before were hopeless. The hate and bigotry of yesteryear are seen in their true light. The true meaning of love is driving out fear.

“God is love, and the man whose life is lived in love does, in fact, live in God, and God does, in fact, live in him. So our love for Him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the Day when He will judge all men— for we realize that our life in this world is actually His life lived in us. Love contains no fear— indeed fully-developed love expels every particle of fear, for fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty. This means that the man who lives in fear has not yet had his love perfected” (Translation by J. B. Phillips).

Love fills us with complete confidence! We need to know that we have not the knowledge or ability to devise the means by which God’s purpose on earth will be achieved. All we are required to do is to fill our lives with love, and in that spirit, carry on the task He has assigned us, without doubt as to the future. God holds the future in His hand. He has not retired or abdicated. I am convinced that regardless of opposition or persecution, I need have no fear, if I serve Him in love!

The Conservative Party

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Volume 21

[Abstract]

Recently I read the poetry, prose and sermons of John Donne, a preacher who lived at the time the King James translation of the Bible was published, and who was appointed by James I as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, in 1621. One of the best known quotations from his works is this: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind."

I thought of that as I began this article in which I will deal with one segment of the Restoration movement. There are those who will criticize these articles as a waste of time. Many, wrapped up in their own partisan interests, and disowning relationship to all others, will censure the space devoted to analysis of the problems of the entire disciple brotherhood. But I am a part of that brotherhood. What affects any person in it, also affects me. I cannot be oblivious to any schism in the Christian fabric, remote though it may be from my personal sphere of life. My life, my soul, my very being, is related to every other who is in Christ Jesus. I am involved in mankind. I am an integral part of the totality of God's mercy.

It is not, then, in a spirit of carping criticism that I conduct these investigations. Rude and arrogant attack upon the

members of any party or faction in the disciple brotherhood would, in its ultimate, reflect against me, and react against my hope and purpose. In our last issue we expressed our views of the Disciples of Christ; in this we shall concern ourselves with the conservative Christian Churches, a segment which resulted from a cleavage in the ranks of the churches endorsing instrumental music and societies. As usual, each faction blames the other for the schism, and each accuses the other of departing from the original spirit and purpose of the Restoration movement.

An editorial on page 346, of the June 3, 1950, issue of *Christian Standard* said:

There is one serious indictment of the United Christian Missionary Society, the various state societies, the colleges, in fact, the whole coterie of institutions associated in and with the 'International Convention of Disciples of Christ.' They may have started out to implement the Restoration ideal, but the very nature of their claims forced them to forsake that ideal and settle down to wall-building. Now after many years, they are used, ironically, as instruments to oppose the restoration of New Testament Christianity, both in principle and in practice.

In replication to such charges, Stephen J. Corey writes in *Fifty Years of Attack and Controversy*, on page 242, as follows:

The *Standard* has been instrumental in building up a group of churches and affiliated institutions which has become as exclusive a denomination as could be imagined and in which fellow Christians supporting our cooperative, organized work are unwelcome. What a tragic departure from the days of Thomas Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and the progressive founding editor of the *Christian Standard*, Isaac Errett.

Our intent is not to trace the history of the events which

led to separation among these brethren. We shall only examine the claim of those who profess to be true to the original Restoration plea and who label themselves as “loyal” and “faithful.” Are these brethren sincerely striving for a complete restoration of the primitive church? Are their preachers and congregations free from all institutional domination and pressure groups? Are they committed to a program of evangelism, from a scriptural standpoint? They seek to justify their separation upon these bases, as well as others.

Within the past several years it has been my privilege to examine at close range the position and practices of these brethren. I have read their papers, attended their preaching conventions, visited their schools, discussed with scores of their teachers and preachers, and listened to hours of tape recordings of meetings I could not attend personally. I have a very deep love for all whom I have met; I respect and honor them greatly. But I am convinced that, as a group, they pay lip service to a restoration which they do not propose to implement, and that they generally constitute only an anti-UCMS party in which “loyalty” is measured by adherence to the party line, and a “faithful church” is one that conforms to the one test, regardless of failures and shortcomings in all other respects.

It grieves me to record these things, and in so doing, I do not mean to imply that all of the brethren in the movement are satisfied or content with the situation. Many of them are sick at heart, they are inwardly distressed and disturbed, but they are powerless to correct conditions. They realize that they have escaped the despotism of a universal society, only to be subjected, in many cases, to the tyranny of smaller units or district organizations which exercise compulsory power over those who do not conform. Unless there is a drastic change of perspective these brethren are destined to drift farther from primitive moorings all of the time. I will be thankful to God if I am proven wrong in such predictions, for I am not disposed to rejoice over such a prospect.

I shall very humbly and carefully set forth my views, recognizing that I must give account for every hurtful word, and remembering that all who are involved are my brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three areas to which I will confine my present explorations. All of these are vital because they represent grounds of objection to the Disciples of Christ. All of them contributed to the resultant division.

1. Evangelism

It is my conviction that the average member of the conservative Christian Churches, thinks of evangelism only in terms of a revival meeting, generally conducted by a preacher imported for the occasion. Exhorted by the local pastor, and aroused from a state of lethargy, the congregation puts on a special drive for the length of time allotted, before lapsing once again into routine ways. Such meetings are frequently accompanied by widely advertised entertainment features in the hope of enticing the people in the community to attend. Each service is preceded by a “warm up session” in which the local minister tells a string of jokes, often at the expense of the evangelist, and the audience is encouraged to respond with gales of laughter. This provides a proper introduction so the visiting speaker can retaliate with a recounting of some of the escapades of the local pastor, perhaps while in the seminary which both attended, and the flock howls with glee to learn how human their pastor is.

The simple, unadorned message of the cross, seems no longer to be sufficient to melt the hearts of sinners and reform the lives of the ungodly. It must now be embellished by resorting to all of the gimmicks, gewgaws, and gimcracks, of modern showmanship and hucksterism. I recently attended a meeting in which the preacher had a bunch of inflated balloons of various colors suspended by strings from the ceiling behind him. Each balloon had in it a piece of folded paper containing one of the

points the speaker wished to emphasize. One member of an instrumental quartette, visiting as guest musicians from a seminary, was given a broomstick with a “frog-sticker” in the end of it, and at a signal from the preacher he would stab one of the balloons which would explode with a loud pop and send the paper fluttering through the air with the preacher in hot pursuit while the audience laughed at his antics.

There are “clinics” held in which those in attendance are briefed in all of the latest schemes to attract and hold audiences. During one convention I took occasion to sit in on a class conducted by a member of a successful evangelistic team, who was illustrating the tactics employed. To say the least, his suggestions would have astounded the apostle who wrote to Corinth, “For Christ did not send me out to immerse but to proclaim the News, and not with clever words either, in case Christ’s cross should lose all its potency.”

The emphasis upon sensationalism, the pandering to popular feeling, the excitation of emotionalism, these are filling the congregations with people, many of whom have no real consciousness of personal covenant relationship to God, and thus, no recognition of personal responsibility. Many remain spiritually helpless and uninformed of the word of God. They were “converted” in a time of feverish enthusiasm, and they feel bored and “let down” by the unemotional atmosphere of the regular service. The local minister must “ride herd” to keep the sheep in the corral, and is confronted with petty trivialities which demand his constant attention. There seems to be no knowledge of the primitive pattern in which every member of the body, even when driven from home, went everywhere preaching the word, or “evangelizing.” “Evangelism” is now limited to sporadic efforts of professionals whose greatest task is to arouse the membership for a brief period of time.

2. Restoration

On July 26, 1919, the *Christian Standard* published announcement of a Restoration Congress, dedicated to “the rescue of the Restoration Movement.” An invitation was issued to “all who are resolved to maintain the Restoration plea intact.” One of the objectives as stated, was “to take such action as may be found necessary to reassert the New Testament plea with clearness and increased vigor, and to insure its perpetuation unimpaired.” In the same paper, July 17, 1943, P. H. Welshimer wrote:

While unity is desirable, restoration of the church of the New Testament is more desirable, and in place of spending so much time in talking about unity we had better be about the business of having in every community, the restored church of the New Testament, and when we have that we will have unity, and we will never have without it.

I do not question that many sincere brethren actually long for restoration, but suffer from frustration because it can never be achieved under existing policy and conditions. Actually, after separating from The Disciples to rescue the Restoration, the movement has bogged down and is content to defend what it has. Too much money is invested in institutions unknown to the new covenant scriptures, too much prestige is involved in official positions in various other organizations, for the brethren to be satisfied with the role of the simple *ekklesia* of apostolic days. Like most of the non-instrument factions, the last thing really desired is real restoration in the spirit of early Christianity.

It has long been our belief that the acid test of desire to restore the church of God will be found in an attitude toward ministry among the saints. It was at this juncture the deviations first began which culminated in the great apostasy. To the original concept we must return before we can be called restorationists. This does not mean we can immediately slough off all the accumulated debris of the centuries. The work of restoring may be a lengthy and laborious task. It is a slow and

painful process to remove the rubbish from the walls, but we must know where the walls were located, and we must be able to distinguish between walls and rubbish. We must have a correct view of the prototype.

The development of a professional caste to conduct worship of the saints for hire is a throwback to Judaism. The ideal of a community of saints with bishops and deacons, expressing corporate worship by the contributions of all who have the ability, is no longer retained. As a result a new vocabulary has been developed in which the language of the Spirit has been wrested and abused. The current implications of the terms “minister” and “ministry” furnish an excellent example of what we mean. As a result, there has arisen a distinction between clergy and laity, deny it as much as you please, and so long as this idea obtains there can never be a restoration of any consequence.

The hired minister to act for the saints in things pertaining to God, is no part of God’s arrangement in this dispensation. In that arrangement every child of God is minister and priest. One “enters the ministry” by being immersed into the Lord Jesus. He does not study to become a minister, but because he is one. Such expressions as “hiring a minister,” “firing a minister,” “trial sermons,” “minister’s home,” etc., are as foreign to the sacred scriptures as the idea they connote. Our brethren under review must admit that this is the case. In an article in *Christian Standard*, July 18, 1959, on page 397, Elbert T. Moreland writes:

The modern minister is not found in exact replica in the Bible. Because of changes in our way of life, because of development in church and society, and partly because elders and deacons have not functioned as they ought, we have developed a professional ministry.” This brother further says, “The modern ministry combines functions of the New Testament evangelist and elder.” These are grave admissions. Separation from The Disciples of Christ was justified on the ground that they had scrapped the plea for

restoration of the pattern of doctrine and polity of the church of the New Testament. Now, those who claimed to be loyal to the Restoration plea, have not only created an officer for whom there is no exact replica in the Bible, but have vested in him the functions of two offices created as separate and distinct by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, justification is sought on exactly the same grounds as employed by The Disciples of Christ to defend their deviations. The professional ministry has been developed: (1) because of changes in our way of life; (2) because of development in church and society; (3) because of malfunctioning of the scriptural offices of elder and deacon. The Disciples group has stated its view thus: "Believing that since the New Testament does not provide a completed, hard and fast structural organization, in all of its details, this group asserts that the church is left free to adapt forms of organization and cooperation necessary for the realistic needs and conditions of these times." Again, "The early church was a spiritual movement, this group contends, hardly affording an absolute blueprint in details of church polity." The same principle which will justify the addition of a new function for which there is no replica in the Bible, will justify departures in other areas than that of polity or congregational structure. The "conservative brethren" should abandon the "professional ministry" or apologize to the Disciples of Christ. Certainly, if they retain that for which there is no exact replica in the Bible, they can never restore the New Testament Church, for you cannot restore a thing by adding something that was never in it!

We do not believe these brethren can abandon the "professional ministry" for several reasons, a few of which we enumerate. (1) They have millions of dollars invested in schools and seminaries whose chief purpose is to turn out "professional ministers." It is not likely they will cancel this huge investment and dispense with these human auxiliaries which are turning out functionaries "not found in exact replica in the Bible." There is

something about being president of a college, or being saluted as “Doctor,” which appeals to pride and worldly ambition. Those who are a part of the institutions will fight for them to the bitter end, even though that end may mark the end of the hope of real restoration. (2) These brethren have lost faith in God’s plan for this age. They feel that the simple structure of the primitive congregation, composed of the saints with bishops and deacons, will no longer work or succeed in this complex age. “Because of changes in our way of life” they must develop something for which the Holy Spirit gave no pattern. (3) The congregations have been formed around an admittedly unscriptural system and are nourished by it. The members have no appreciation or understanding of the scriptural program of ministry. They come not to minister, but to be ministered unto. They have hired a man as *their minister*, and he speaks of them as “my people,” “my elders,” and “my church.” They possess him by right of purchase, and are in turn possessed by him.

The situation will grow worse, drifting always farther from “the replica in the Bible.” In the July 18, 1959 issue of *Christian Standard*, page 399, Bro. Marvin E. Brewer writes: “There is definitely a need for more ministers to make themselves available for the pastoral needs of *their* congregations, and it is equally important that the constituents avail themselves of *their* minister’s services.” (Emphasis by editor). He repeatedly refers to the minister as “the pastor.”

I am sorry for many of the preaching brethren involved in this system. Some of them were pressed to “enter the ministry” as a vocation. They have spent several years in an attempt to prepare themselves to serve God by the study of homiletics, hermeneutics, exegetics, and pastoral psychology. They are hired by a congregation upon recommendation of the school, and frequently their dreams are shattered and their ideals deflated. They soon learn there are truths they dare not teach, for those who control the purse strings regulate the pulpit. In some instances they become virtual flunkies, subject to call at the

whim of every eccentric; errand boys who must attend to trivial details lest someone get offended and complain. They are exposed to the ruthlessness of congregational politics and petticoat government. The “parsonage” becomes a virtual charitable motel, because an unconverted congregation having no sense of hospitality, directs all visitors to “our minister” who must arrange lodging and entertainment. After all, he is their servitor and retainer, they own the house in which he resides, they pay him to be their servant, so why not get value received out of the house and preacher both?

The idea of reforming such congregations is soon relinquished, and the preacher, trained only for this task and with a family to support, stays on to walk the weary treadmill for the check he is handed each week. His suggestions for betterment and spiritual growth go unheeded by the ruling clique. Soon his sermons degenerate into ineffective moralizing on generalities, and he is reduced from a crusader for Christ Jesus to a mercenary whose concern is to appease and conform.

This is not true of all, but it is true of many. They break their hearts and dash their hopes in a vain attempt to change the traditional patterns of congregations which have become set in their ways, and are no longer interested in the way of the Lord. And if the preacher demonstrates unconventional adherence to the word of God, or shows signs of singular non-conformity, pressure is brought to bear by his spiritual *alma mater*, as well as by the Men’s Fellowship of the district or county. All must be “kept in line” for the sake of the party. And that brings us to our third point.

3. Freedom

Are the churches and preachers in the conservative party among our instrumental brethren, really free? They broke with The Disciples of Christ to gain independence and liberty, but are

they truly independent? Is congregational autonomy a reality? I grant they are free from the domination of the UCMS, but I believe that there are other forces of control at work which differ only in the degree of the usurpation. In many instances congregations are unduly influenced by seminaries and schools, especially when in proximity to these human institutions. I do not believe that it is possible for such church-supported and church-related institutions to exist long without exerting tremendous power over congregations in the area. They supply the preacher who fills the pulpit, and he is indoctrinated with the idea of “loyalty” to the school. If he does not conform to school policy the heads of the human organization can bring pressure to bear upon the church and fire him.

Alumni groups of some schools often lay down the law, and play first fiddle in some churches or districts. As a result some areas have been disturbed when preachers from other schools are brought in. The cause of Christ has been seriously injured by the “wars and fightings” to gain and maintain the lead. Frequently, this is encouraged by teachers jealous of the fortunes of other schools, and seeking to advance their own. It is generally but a short step from the school spirit to the party spirit. Many brethren have learned through sad experience that when they enrolled in a seminary, some of the professors considered it as a complete surrender to their power, so that they not only had a right to mould, channel and direct, but also to preside over the thinking of the enrollee.

“The Men’s Fellowship” exists as a pressure group in many sections. It is generally composed of a number of men from each congregation in the district, and exerts greater power than any single congregation with its elders. Local congregations must conform or boycott will ensue. The “Fellowship” works hand in hand with the extra organizations in the district, and throws its weight and power behind financial drives and institutional schemes. Often these are decided upon and then announced to the respective congregations who have no actual

voice in the decision, but must simply go along, or be counted out. These groups, larger in scope than the local church, and smaller than the church universal, provide effective means of keeping dissidents in line. The preachers and congregations are not as free and independent as they would like to have. The Disciples of Christ think they are. We have personally seen and experienced too much of the machinations of partisan politics by pressure groups to be mistaken on these matters. We know whereof we speak.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

I have been frank and candid in this presentation. It is not a calculated assault upon any brother or group of brethren. It represents only one man's view of a faction that has grown out of the Restoration movement of the preceding century. I do not believe that faction is the primitive church of God restored to earth. I do not believe that as a unit, it can ever, with its present viewpoint, be transmuted into that body, or restore it. I am not motivated in this feeling by my personal views on the oft-disputed question of the use of instruments of music in the public praise service of the church. I am not a member of, nor a champion for a non-instrument party. I am not an apologist for any party or faction. This I will demonstrate when I write about the factions among us which oppose use of the instrument.

When I conclude that the Conservative Christian Church, as now constituted, is not, in a corporate sense, the one body of Christ, I do not imply that there are no members of the one body in it. They are all my brethren. Many of them are sincere, humble children of God. They, like the rest of us in the disciple brotherhood, have been made victims of the party spirit. Many are restoration-minded. They are hindered and hampered by party ties, traditions and tactics. They are torn by conflicting emotions. Experience has taught them that in many instances the slogan "No creed but Christ," is an empty phrase employed by

those who demand party loyalty and rigid conformity to unwritten creeds, even as they voice these words.

I rejoice in every attempt at restoration and in every spiritual gain achieved by those who attempt it. I recognize the difference between restoration and revolution, yet I wonder if there must not be a revolution before we can seriously work at restoration. Certainly there must first come a reformation, whether it precedes along revolutionary lines, or otherwise. As of the present, our brethren under consideration in these articles are only defending what they have, and are often resentful of criticism and change. Yet these two elements are vital to restoration which in its finality will only be achieved by those who rise above all party considerations, and who dare to examine their own cherished practices and positions in the light of God's revelation, free from all restraints, restrictions, and compulsions of traditional and institutional ties.

Any attempt at restoration is hindered, hampered and postponed, in exact proportion to the extraneous and auxiliary human organizations that are created. The amount of time, money and effort expended in building up any organization except the simple ekklesia of God, is wasted insofar as true restoration of primitive Christianity is concerned. Such things may contribute to party growth, and be the means of gratifying party pride, but regardless of the ideals or motives of those who begin them, they will always stand athwart our real purpose. They will hinder, rather than help. It cannot be denied that when the apostle Paul left any community there was but one thing there which was not present when he came— a simple congregation of humble saints. He made no appeals for money and inaugurated no financial drives, except for the relief of the needs of suffering saints, and for administration of such funds, no board, charter, or special body was created. The money was laid at the feet of the elders of the congregations.

The simple, unadorned worship is no longer appealing.

The ministry of all the saints, dedicated to relieving the burdens of a troubled world, simply because each has entered into a personal covenant relationship with God through Christ will not now suffice. But if we are to be no longer restorationists in tongue and word, and become such in deed and in truth, we will have to completely revise our thinking and renew our faith in God's way and purpose. It will accomplish little for us to defend the revelation of God against "modernists" and then disregard it, and do as we please. We earnestly pray that the things said herein will not be dismissed as the ranting or raving of an intemperate fanatic, but will be examined as the conclusions of a humble brother whose love for all of the brethren is unabated. Your own comments, views and expressions are eagerly solicited, and regardless of how much you may differ with us, your letters will be read and given serious consideration. It is not necessary that you agree with all of our conclusions to be respected and regarded as brethren beloved in the Master.

The accusation has long been made that the religious world can hardly conceive of a person being a Christian and Christian only. They must try and categorize him with some sectarian body. On the same basis, the disciple brotherhood has arrived at the place where it cannot conceive of one being a child of God without being a defender of some party growing out of the Restoration movement. The idea is that he must belong to some faction. But this paper is not the organ of any faction, and its editor refuses to be partisan, to the extent God gives him to see the truth. Truth gains nothing by being made the football of a party to be kicked about on the field of life. It is our intention, God willing, to remain free of partisan alliance.

Schisms and Parties

Mission Messenger (November 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

This article is one of a series. To be fully appreciated it should be read in the context of those which preceded it. Unfortunately, there are no extra copies to provide readers who are just now being introduced to our thinking. It is, therefore, necessary that we briefly review. We began by pointing out the fact that we live in a world of turmoil and tension. Our way of life is threatened by corruption and decay. The tried and true values of yesteryear are being abandoned. At the same time we are subjected to the pressure of a godless ideology in the form of the dialectical materialism of the Marxian theory which contemplates the destruction of what we cherish most, and the universal enslavement of mankind. It is our thesis that we cannot survive through the use of raw force or armament, and our only hope lies in the implementation of the philosophy which can meet the enemy upon a rational battleground and overcome.

It is our contention that the rise of western civilization is the result of acceptance of certain great truths. Among these are the belief in one God as the creator of the universe, of the working and intervention of this Supreme Being in history, of the climax of such intervention in the sending of His Son, who entered our world clothed in human flesh nineteen centuries ago. The acknowledgement of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, entails a recognition of His code of ethics as the only source of happiness in this life and the one hope of blessing in the world to

come.

We began a search to determine what religious organization now extant exemplifies the church of God on earth, in its original purity and power. We have studied the claims of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism and have stated our reasons for rejecting both. We next turned to the churches resulting from the Restoration movement sparked by Alexander Campbell and his contemporaries in the nineteenth century. We pointed out the schism which rent adherents of this movement at the beginning of our own century into the “instrument” and “non-instrument” churches. We investigated *The Disciples of Christ* and the *Conservative Christian Churches*, and expressed the view that these were but parties and factions, content to defend the status quo, and unwilling to rise up and pursue the ideal of true restoration.

We come now to a study of “The Church of Christ” which claims to be the kingdom of heaven on earth, and the one body exclusively for which Jesus gave His blood, and whose chosen champions affirm that the church of which they are members is identical in origin, name, doctrine, and practice, with the church of the New Testament scriptures. By the term “The Church of Christ” as used in this article we refer to the great body of believers, distinct and separate from those who use instrumental music in the public worship. Many congregations of the latter also call themselves “Churches of Christ,” but this review will not directly concern them. Actually, we are talking about those who would make, and do make, the use of instrumental music a test of Christian “fellowship” as they employ that term.

Is “The Church of Christ” as manifested in its strength in Nashville, Tennessee; Dallas, Texas; Lubbock, Texas; etc., the one body of our Lord, restored to earth in this day, and does it include within its confines and membership, all of the saints of God on earth? It makes this claim, identical with that of the Roman Catholic Church, and, like the latter, calls upon all those

who are not affiliated with it to return to it as “the true church.” In my examination of these claims I will be treading upon familiar ground, for, having left the Lutheran communion at an early age, I have long been identified with one segment of the religious fellowship under review.

I shall try to be objective, at the same time admitting the difficulty posed when one looks at a group from the inside, rather than surveying them from a distance, or as a non-member. However, I have been criticized more severely by members of “The Church of Christ” than by others, for they allege that my strictures against them are too severe, and are unjustly strong, that I am not as fair with them as with others. I doubt that these accusations are correct. They stem from several factors. (1) “The Church of Christ” makes a claim generally made by no other group except the Romanists. Both claim to be the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God upon earth. Such a bold contention must be handled in a factual and straightforward fashion. (2) Members of “The Church of Christ” cannot stand criticism. They equate themselves with the elect of God upon earth, and thus can unmercifully castigate all other religious peoples, assailing them both publicly and privately, but they cannot accept criticism with grace, for, as they view it, to criticize them is equivalent to attacking the Bible and the church of our Lord. (3) By its very nature “The Church of Christ,” through an exclusivist attitude, has isolated and insulated its members from contact with the rest of the religious world, and any intimation that they may not be the only children of God upon earth, or that there may be members of God’s family scattered among the sectarian hills, is regarded as a personal insult.

We have no intention of being unnecessarily severe. We seek to be fair, equitable and honest. We do not desire to be prejudiced in favor of, or against anyone on earth. We are aware, that being allied with this segment of the Restoration movement, what we say will, in a sense, involve ourselves. The

editor realizes that members of “The Church of Christ” merely reflect the philosophy and teaching of their leaders. If those leaders are correct “The Church of Christ” is represented by the particular faction they represent, and this faction is composed of the Israel of God, and those outside of its environs are pagans and Gentiles, members of other factions being apostates and heretics.

The first difficulty we face in analysis of “The Church of Christ” is to designate which “Church of Christ” we are talking about. There are more than eighteen separate and distinct groups among the non-instrument churches, and each one of these claims to be “the loyal church” or “the faithful church” with but few exceptions. Each regards all of the others as being in various stages of departure or apostasy. In some cities, such as Dallas, Texas, there are as many as ten different factions, no two of which “fellowship” each other, yet, each one claims to be the church as it was set forth in the New Testament. The tragedy of this century is the rape of the Restoration movement which was inaugurated to promote the unity of all believers, by the party spirit. Satan has again demonstrated his ingenuity by bringing about an adoption of the very status we sought to destroy. In our fervency to rid the world of religious division, we have become one of the worst divided religious movements; in our zeal to overthrow sectism we have become sectarian.

The first defection in the Restoration movement was caused by John Thomas, and the Christadelphians exist today as a result. The introduction of societies and instrumental music coupled with other things, produced a cleavage, and since that time, the brethren who use the instrument have divided into “The Disciples of Christ” and “The Christian Church.” There is disharmony among these latter because of lack of discipline and de-emphasis upon godly living, in many places, and there are at least three parties represented by as many publications: *The Christian Evangelist—Front Rank*; *The Christian Standard*; and *The Voice of Evangelism*. But sad as this condition appears, it is

not nearly so conglomerated as the one facing non-instrument brethren, who have been plagued with divisions, defections and schisms. Time would fail us to enumerate all of the current factions and no good end would be served in doing so. We shall mention a few, and perhaps the best means of identifying them for the average reader is by the papers which, in most cases, are actually official party organs and mouthpieces.

1. *Gospel Advocate*. This is the largest and wealthiest group. It is pro-college, pro-church supported orphanages, pro-Herald of Truth, and for this reason it is described as “liberal” by the next faction, which attacks it in print and on the air in a constant barrage of propaganda.

2. *Gospel Guardian*. This faction is not opposed to extra institutions. It endorses Bible colleges, orphanages, etc., but objects to supporting these from the public treasury of the church. One of its leaders suggested as a compromise, an array of boxes labeled for the various institutions to be placed in the foyer of the church buildings, and into which contributions might be dropped. It opposes “The Herald of Truth” radio and television program because of centralization of support and control.

3. *Firm Foundation*. This paper originated as the mouthpiece of a faction championing the idea of re-baptism of those who came from sectarian bodies and who had previously been immersed, in opposition to the writers of the *Gospel Advocate*, who recognized that there were children of God in the various sectarian bodies. In the present controversy, it champions a “middle of the road” position which has actually resulted in a distinct third party in the institutional war.

4. *Apostolic Review*. This paper traces its origin to the *American Christian Review* published by Benjamin Franklin. The influence of the paper, also called *Octographic Review*, and published by Daniel Sommer, is still felt in many sections.

Originally the official organ of an exclusive party opposing Bible colleges, church orphanages, the hireling ministry system, etc., its scope of impact was principally in the northern states. It was Bro. Sommer who wrote the "Address and Declaration" read at the convention held at Sand Creek, Illinois, which declared that those who persisted in certain practices would not be regarded as *brethren*.

5. *Macedonian Call*. This paper, first started as a mimeographed periodical, well before 1932, by D. Austen Sommer, a son of Daniel Sommer, was used after that date to promote a division in the ranks of those previously adhering to the position of the *Apostolic Review*. Contending that the editors of the latter were guilty of a compromise movement, the editor vigorously opposed members of his own family, including his aged father, and built up a considerable following, swaying many congregations.

6. *Spiritual Call*. This paper, resulting from a change in the name of the *Macedonian Call*, was used by D. Austen Sommer, in what has since proven to be an abortive attempt to further split the movement which he built around his editorship of the *Macedonian Call*. This faction virtually disappeared upon the death of Brother Sommer.

7. *Word and Work*. Published by a segment of the brotherhood who hold to views of the pre-millennial and forthcoming earthly reign of Jesus, not generally acceptable to other factions among the non-instrumental group. The faction is pro-college. The attitude and spirit of the writers is generally less partisan than that of most anti-instrument groups.

8. *Old Paths Advocate*. The official organ of a large faction composed of those who oppose classes for Bible study, women teachers, individual cups, etc. Due to extreme legalistic attitude these brethren suffer from almost constant agitation and turmoil. The question of how to support foreign missionaries

created a recent stir, and they are now torn asunder in many places over the problem of divorce and re-marriage.

9. *The Truth*. The only journal known to us within the Restoration movement whose editor contends that Acts 2:42 constitutes a divine mandate as a specified “order of worship.” Adherents of this segment are generally opposed to classes, individual cups, etc., and while some of the congregations persist in making “the order of worship” an actual test of fellowship, the editor asserts that he does not, and largely through his influence, congregations looking to him for guidance and counsel are divesting themselves of the intense party spirit.

10. *Footprints of Time*. A small monthly publication representing a faction of extreme legalistic views, whose members make a test of fellowship on the subjects of Bible classes, women teachers, colleges, orphan homes, etc., and who also recognize no congregation that uses individual cups, breaks the bread before passing, uses leavened bread or unfermented grape juice. It is possible that this faction is strongest in Texas, as most factions are.

11. *The Church Messenger*. This party is opposed to classes but believes in the use of individual cups. It is very dogmatic and arbitrary, exercising control of the membership to the extent that communicants are forbidden to attend elsewhere under threat of expulsion. This spirit has isolated a considerable segment who are branded as “liberals” because they do not seek to restrict the membership to such a degree as the original party.

12. *The Christian Appeal*. Members of this faction are among the “liberals” mentioned in the preceding group. In general they are in fellowship with those who support *The Gospel Tidings*, a Texas journal.

In addition to these splinter groups there is another which makes a test of fellowship out of the manner of breaking the loaf.

The one presiding at the table must break the bread in pieces and pass it to the assembled communicants before he personally eats of it. Another recent party has appeared among the no-class advocates, the break coming over the idea that there are no evangelists today, although there may still be elders and deacons. A considerable party is being built up among them on the question of whether there is any exception whereby the innocent party in a divorce case may marry again.

That our readers may see the real extremes to which the party spirit will carry men, we reproduce herewith an appeal from "The Warrior," published in the issue of August 1, 1959:

Brethren: We wish to compile and publish a list of LOYAL congregations. We want to make a directory of loyal congregations for the benefit of the traveling brethren who wish to worship with loyal congregations; secondly, for the benefit of brethren who are desirous of moving to a loyal congregation. To compile this directory we need the following information. Describe every act of worship in your assemblies. Describe your position on the Communion. Do you have one or two communions on Sunday? Do you use only one cup and one loaf? Do you fellowship the Sunday School or cups brethren? Do you fellowship the Old Paths Advocate? Or other digressives? Do you advocate any doctrine or act of worship that is called a hobby by most of the brotherhood? If you want to be counted among the honored few, give us correct answers to all of our questions, otherwise you will be left out of our directory. . . . Are you living in a state of division, having pulled off from another congregation? Please answer all questions. Do you contend that the cup must have a handle on it? Do you contend the cup must not have a handle on it?

While it may seem amusing to some of our readers that there are congregations which have divided over drinking the fruit of the vine from a glass, because a cup must have a handle, and Jesus took the cup, this is but a tragic demonstration of the

extent of division. Perhaps members of some of the larger and wealthier factions will look down upon those who go to such extremes, but it is altogether possible that the same root evil has produced them all, great and small, and the difference is merely one of degree, rather than of nature. The fruits of strife, division, and separation are coming to the harvest, but the seed was planted long ago, and not one single group in "The Church of Christ" is innocent in the matter, as we shall some day prove!

Those who study this sordid picture portrayed by those who claim to be the only hope of the world for peace and unity, will enquire concerning *Mission Messenger*, and ask if it is not the journal of a faction. To this we reply that it is not, and we do not propose to allow it to become so. A "Ketcherside party" or a "Mission Messenger party" would be just as wrong and sinful as any other. For that reason, the editor regards as his brethren all immersed believers who belong to the various segments mentioned, whether among the instrumental or non-instrumental congregations. We are in fellowship with them, as the Holy Spirit uses the term "fellowship." They are a part of "the brotherhood" and we are commanded to "love the brotherhood." We propose to make nothing a test of our fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

In these days of decadent Christianity we go even farther. Like Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, David Lipscomb, Tolbert Fanning, Benjamin Franklin, and Daniel Sommer, we believe there are children of God among the various sects. God has a people in Babylon. Every person who has been born of the water and of the Spirit is my brother. We do not equate the Restoration movement with the church of God. There may be hundreds of God's children who never heard of that movement. We do not endorse all of the practices of any of these, but endorsement is one thing, and fellowship is a wholly different thing.

We were reared in one faction of the Restoration

Movement. We grew up believing that faction was the kingdom of God, and that Jesus reigned over it and it alone, to the exclusion of all other people in the universe. We refused to regard as “brethren” those who were not in our party. We believed that the boundary of God’s kingdom was circumscribed by the spiritual lines we had drawn. Now we know that the party spirit is in the same category as adultery, idolatry, and drunkenness (Gal. 5:20, 21), and we would as soon try to excuse and justify one as the other. Any of these will keep one out of heaven. “I forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (verse 21). Whether one can maintain such an ideal as ours in the face of pressure groups and opposition, such as we now experience, only time will tell. Of one thing we are convinced, that the Spirit of God and the party spirit cannot dwell together in the same heart. We also know that no man is a partisan or divisive or factious who recognizes and loves all of God’s children and refuses to allow human lines of demarkation to segregate him from any of them. Satan wants no man to “love the brotherhood.” He will threaten, misrepresent, and malign those who do. But our hope of heaven lies in the direction God has outlined and we must desperately try to reach that goal.

It will be charged that we over-state the case with reference to division, and make it appear worse than it really is. Only the naive and ignorant will so contend. Take, for example, the largest factions among the non-instrument churches, those whose views are expressed through the *Gospel Advocate* and *Gospel Guardian*. These parties are in open combat with each other, and representatives of both sides lash out at each other through the medium of bulletins, papers, and over radio stations, as well as from their respective pulpits. On the front page of *Gospel Guardian*, July 16, 1959, appears the following:

As these lines are written division within the church is becoming more apparent and widespread daily. The line of fellowship has been, and is being, drawn in many places.

Gospel preachers who were once united in the common cause are now engaged in pointed controversy. Men who a decade ago were in demand as gospel preachers throughout the brotherhood are not presently allowed in many pulpits. Sister congregations who have enjoyed the closest fellowship no longer announce each other's meetings. The civil courts have been employed in disputes over church properties. From the pulpit, over the radio, through the papers, on the streets and from house to house, brethren are engaging in sharp controversy. Many things point toward the final formation of a new and additional sect, as well as the eternal loss of innumerable humans.

Of course, the writer who fears the formation of a new sect, does not recognize that, in the sense of the New Testament scriptures, both parties are sects even now. On page 10 of the same issue, another writer declares:

"The Gospel Advocate and company of writers are determined to take the church into apostasy. If the Christian Church followed the "social gospel" route, The Advocate and supporters are on the "social gospel" route for their attitude is identical to the Christian Church."

The bitterness and animosity manifested by these brethren who "bite and devour one another" is revealed in almost every issue of their periodicals. In the July 30, 1959, issue of *Gospel Guardian*, the editor speaks of "the humiliating spectacle of Brother Reuel Lemmons groveling at the feet of the Gospel Advocate hierarchy." Bro. Lemmons edits *Firm Foundation*. In the same issue, a staff writer speaks of abundant "proof that a great host of timeservers and moral cowards will follow Goodpasture down the broad road of popularity regardless of how crummy his logic (?) may be." He further says, "To see turncoats like Earl West, John Cox, Rex Turner, and several others bow down in Goodpasture's 'confessional,' kiss his toe, and confess that such reasoning as displayed in his recent article has caused them to 'change' is more than nauseating."

In an editorial in *Gospel Guardian*, April 2, 1959, an associate editor replies to an article by Guy N. Woods, which appeared in the January 29, 1959, issue of *Gospel Advocate*. He charges that Bro. Woods is “the hired gun of the *Gospel Advocate* editor,” and informs him, “You and your boss are drunk on your own wisdom, power, and popularity.” He charges that Woods has “lied over and over again,” and is guilty of “deceitful hypocrisy,” and “full of conceit.” In the same issue, another associate editor accuses his own brother in the flesh of “monumental gall,” of “disturbing churches and alienating brethren over a theory which has become your hobby,” and of making “an ugly insinuation and a miserable misrepresentation.”

The editor of *Gospel Advocate* has not remained silent under the written and verbal barrage. An illustration is found in an editorial appearing in the July 23, 1959, issue. In this he is replying to a charge by James P. Miller that the *Gospel Advocate* was trying to destroy Florida Christian College. The editorial calls the college “a hotbed of hobbyism,” and says, “The churches generally are afraid of young preachers from FCC. They have heard of what goes on at the college; they have heard of the churches that have been disturbed or split by FCC preachers.” It is also said, “Now throughout the brotherhood is it generally known that the head of the college is pillowed on the uneasy and unsteady lap of the *Guardian*. The names of nearly all the *Guardian* ‘top brass’ from Cogdill down or up, as you care to view the matter, appeared on the FCC lecture program last spring.” The editor says, “We should like to add that some of the Florida churches are getting ‘fed up’ on what they call ‘college domination.’ Some of their leaders have recently so expressed themselves. They do not want the hobbies of the college in question, injected into the churches, either openly or ‘under cover.’” He accuses Charles A. Holt and Yater Tant of having “cast anchor in the murky waters of ‘Sommerism.’”

As to the character of some of his opposers, the editor of

the *Gospel Advocate* asserts:

Sometime ago we cashed a 'cold check' in the amount of \$40.00 for a 'Guardian angel', who was stranded in the 'Athens of the South.' His articles have appeared on the front page of the Guardian. Before long he was jailed for forgery, and soon thereafter another 'Guardian angel' 'skedaddled' with his wife. We have seen no repudiation of these men by their fellow-hobbyriders . . . The same papers which have given much attention to Pat Hardeman's lecture engagements have maintained a tomb-like silence on the delinquencies of these two Guardian henchmen.

Some will be in high dudgeon because of this issue of our paper. They will accuse us of flaunting the problems of the "New Testament Church" before the world. But the "New Testament Church" does not act like these brethren do. It is with no sense of pleasure we must spread these exhibits of the party spirit before our readers. We take no pride in doing so. Our only aim is to show the real spirit manifested toward each other by those who boldly assert they are "the one body of Christ" and "the faithful church." The modern segment of Christendom known by the term "The Church of Christ" is one of the most schismatic, factious, split, and divided movements of a religious nature, in this generation. The only thing in which they will unite is an attempt to crucify those who refuse to be sectarian. This institution, in spite of its great boasts and high claims, can never unite the world in Christ. It will only serve to divide and fragmentize wherever it goes. That this is true in mission fields is evidenced by what happened in Germany. After the second World War, missionaries were sent to that land by churches generally of the Gospel Advocate or Firm Foundation parties. Other men, who were opposed to Bible classes, but imbued with zeal to take the message of Jesus to others, also went, but not with "official sanction" of the predominant clique, who had staked out their exclusive claim on Germany. One of the brethren wrote:

Almost from the first our brethren who were already in Europe began opposing our work. They gave us writeups in their papers (not of commendation); they wrote on our posted signs of the time and place for prayer and praise, ‘Anti Brethren.’ They removed our signs more than once.

Thus was transferred to foreign fields the hatred, bitterness, littleness, animosity, and partisan spirit, of the American factions, which begged support upon the basis that they were going to preach the gospel of love, and “save” the poor benighted German people who had never heard “the truth” declared.

This is not an isolated case. The same condition exists in Africa. Preachers of the *Gospel Advocate* group have been working there for a number of years. This was more than the anti-class, pro-cups brethren connected with *The Christian Appeal* faction could stand, so they sent Bro. C. B. Head to that land to save little heathen children from the terrible blight of being taught the Bible in a class conducted by a sister. This move spurred the *Old Paths Advocate* anti-class, anti-cups group into frenzied effort. After virtually “splitting at the already bursting seams” over how to get the money to the missionaries, they finally devised a measure which enabled them to send two men. Before they went, one of them, Paul O. Nichols, wrote in the paper for August 1, 1958, these words:

Brethren, this is the month that C. B. Head of the ‘cups faction’ leaves for Nyasaland from the states. As far as I know that persuasion does not have a single congregation there, but evidently he believes he can establish some . . . Also next month a whole group of “Sunday School faction” brethren are supposed to leave for Africa— five adults and four children.

Of course, Bro. Nichols was not going to represent a faction. He was a representative of “the faithful church.” But

that is what the others thought they were. Each party branded the others as factions, and in this, they were all correct! What a tragedy! It is conceivable that a community of African aborigines might have lived in the peace of simplicity until “The Church of Christ” came among them. Then, those who as heathen had dwelt in peace and unity, would be split into warring factions, and taught to unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and cleave each other in fratricidal strife. Not only do the factional missionaries refuse to recognize or to applaud the good, vast though it may be, done by those from various other communions, but they seek to undermine and proselyte from each other, and to confound and confuse the minds of the humble folk they came to “save.” Imagine the effect on untutored minds of the variant claims of belligerent factions to be “the one true church.”

What is the underlying cause for this condition? We think it is plainly seen. Each one of the parties in “The Church of Christ” considers itself as having arrived. All have lost the meaning of “restoration.” For them, nothing remains to be restored. Therefore, each is busy trying to bring forth congregations “in its own likeness and after its own image.” This is seen when “missionaries” enter northern cities where congregations have long been in existence, but which may differ in some respects from the “home congregation” which sent them out. Thus they seek to plant a “Southern-style Church of Christ,” modeled either after the Texas or Tennessee faction which supports them. The ideal of planting congregations of the ancient order is completely forgotten. A church must be of the party stripe and wear the brand of the faction which supplies the money for its existence. The only “unity” which is now proclaimed is “partisan unity” based upon conformity with the norm of the unwritten creed. The various factions in the “Church of Christ” are so many miniature sects, in the fair import of that term.

A couple of years ago the editor was invited to address

several hundred preachers and others assembled for a debate between two factions. He announced this theme as the basis of his presentation: "The religious institution commonly called 'The Church of Christ' of which you are members, and of which many are preachers, is not a restoration of the primitive church of God, but is a twentieth century sect growing out of a non-sectarian restoration movement of the previous century, now employing all the means and methods of other sects, and should be regarded in that light." Ten valid points were given to sustain this thesis. Space will not permit a full discussion of all these, but it is our intention, God willing to develop this proposition in our next issue.

A word of caution is necessary. We do not intend to imply that every congregation designating itself "Church of Christ" is sectarian. We know of many that have steadfastly refused to become narrow, intolerant, and partisan. Their struggle to remain non-sectarian is great because of the constant efforts to "line them up" with this party or that. Moreover, we believe that there are brethren in every one of these factions who are not as sectarian as the faction with which they are allied. They hope, work, and pray for better days. They suffer much because of the isolation demanded by the party. They are *bigger* in spirit than the *little* group with which they are allied. There are hundreds whose hearts are galled by the bondage of the party spirit, and who sigh and cry over the fate of spiritual Jerusalem. Our hearts go out to them in their condition.

But it is our firm conviction that most of the ardent laborers in every faction enumerated are striving to build up a narrow, bigoted, exclusive party of conformity, and they have brain-washed themselves into thinking that the party of their allegiance is the kingdom over which our Lord reigns in an exclusive sense. Each of these has its own unwritten creeds, its clerical domination, its coercion and compulsion of membership by threat and mental force. "The Church of Christ" has entangled and enslaved the hearts of men and women in a welter

of hate, and has thereby destroyed the dignity of the individual. There is no real attempt to restore the primitive ekklesia of God founded upon love for all. Representatives of each faction seek to plant a reproduction of their own party wherever they go. The non-sectarian spirit cannot be tolerated. One must be taught to hate, sneer at, ridicule and revile those who differ, regardless of their honesty and sincerity. These are the stock in trade of the party spirit. They are the brand marks and the stigmata of “the holier-than-thou attitude” which God denounced and decried as a smoke in his nostrils.

“The Church of Christ” in order to become the church of Christ must be saved from itself! It must first be seen in its true light, recognized for what it is, and evaluated in its true sense. Then, the humble, sincere, consecrated, and sanctified ones, filled with a spirit of love for the Master, can begin to work as leaven and produce a better world. The false tests of fellowship, the humanly-devised creedal barriers, the spirit of arbitrary dogmatism— these must be cast to the moles and the bats, and delivered from them we can resume our march toward Jerusalem. In the meantime, let no one think that our strictures upon “The Church of Christ” indicate any lack of love for the church of God, for it is only our love for the latter that prompts us to write as we do about the other. Better days can never come so long as men confuse these two!

To those who become angry because we make these matters public, and because the truth of their conduct and policy is exposed to those whom they call “sectarian” and whom they would like to have believe that things are different than they are, we simply point out that they rejoiced with “joy unspeakable and full of glory” when we were reviewing Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and when we were dealing with our brethren in the instrumental music groups. But we propose to let the truth be known! We refuse to conceal our own faults while blasting at others! “The Church of Christ” desperately needs to be saved. It is very difficult to save those who do not know they are lost, and

yet that is the condition of those who persist in a course of partisan spirit, for it is plainly declared that such cannot enter the kingdom of God!

It is our purpose in our next issue to show the deviations from God's purpose of the modern system calling itself "The Church of Christ." We propose to show that it is inexcusable, for in accusing others, it does the same things. Having done this, we propose to spend several issues discussing a remedy for the world situation. It will be our hope to appeal to all who love God in every branch of a divided Christendom. Upon completion of the current series, and starting early in 1960, God willing, we plan to begin an analysis of the basic underlying error which has led the whole Restoration Movement so far afield. We believe there is one great error in thinking which serves as the taproot of digression and which has betrayed us all into a spirit of factionism, nullifying our claim and stultifying our witness in this generation. If this seems to be too bold an undertaking for one whose talents are so meager, and whose scholarship is so limited, we rest in the hope that once more "He has chosen things of little strength and small repute, yes and even things which have no real existence to explode the pretensions of the things that are— that no man may boast in the presence of God." It is our feeling that what we have to say in the forthcoming series of studies, which will run the entire gamut of revelation, will commend itself to every honest heart on earth, regardless of sectarian affiliation. We can promise you that there are greater things ahead. Pray for us as we do for all of you! "May the God of peace make you holy through and through. May you be kept in soul and mind and body in spotless integrity until the coming of our Lord."

Thoughts on Fellowship (13)

Mission Messenger (November 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

In 1833, Alexander Campbell furnished a statement of the history and aims of the *Disciples of Christ* for inclusion in the Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. The following is an interesting extract from that article.

The rise of this society, if we only look back to the drawing of the lines of demarkation between it and other professors, is of recent origin. About the commencement of the present century, the Bible alone, without any human addition in the form of creeds or confessions of faith, began to be plead and preached by many distinguished ministers of different denominations, both in Europe and America.

With various success, and with many of the opinions of the sects imperceptibly carried with them from the denominations to which they once belonged, did the advocates of the Bible cause plead for the union of Christians of every name on the broad basis of the apostles' teaching. But it was not until the year 1823, that a restoration of the *original gospel and order of things* began to be plead in a periodical, edited by Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Virginia, entitled "the Christian Baptist."

He and his father, Thomas Campbell, renounced the Presbyterian system, and were immersed in the year 1812.

They, and the congregations which they formed, united with the Redstone Baptist Association; protesting against all human creeds as bonds of union, and professing subjection to the Bible alone. This union took place in the year 1813. But in pressing upon the attention of that society and the public the all-sufficiency of the sacred scriptures for every thing necessary to the profession of Christian character, whether in the private or social relations of life, in the church or in the world, they began to be opposed by a strong creed-party in that association. After some ten years' debating and contending for the Bible alone and the apostles' doctrine, Alexander Campbell and the church to which he belonged, united with the Mahoning Association, in the Western Reserve of Ohio, that association being more favorable to his views of reform.

In his debates on the subject and action of baptism with Mr. Walker, a seceding minister, in the year 1820, and with Mr. McCalla, a Presbyterian minister, of Kentucky, in the year 1823, his views of reformation began to be developed, and were very generally received by the Baptist society, as far as these works were read.

But in his *Christian Baptist*, which began July 4, 1823, his views of the need of reformation were more fully exposed; and as these gained ground by the pleading of various ministers of the Baptist denomination, a party in opposition began to exert itself, and to oppose the spread of what they were pleased to call heterodoxy. But not until after great numbers began to act upon these principles, was there any attempt toward separation. After the Mahoning Association appointed Mr. Walter Scott an evangelist, in the year 1827, and when great numbers began to be immersed into Christ under his labors, and new churches began to be erected by him and other laborers in the field, did the Baptist associations begin to declare non-fellowship with the brethren of the reformation. Thus by constraint, not by choice, they were obliged to form societies out of those communities that

split upon the ground of adherence to the apostles' doctrine.

The above poses some real questions if we dare face them honestly and fearlessly. Since there was no separate religious group known as "The Church of Christ" when Alexander Campbell commenced his work of reformation, was the church of Christ in existence? If not, why did Daniel say it should never be destroyed nor left to other people (2:44)? If the church was in existence, where was it, what name did it wear, and who composed it?

Did God have any children from the close of the first century to the start of the nineteenth, or was Jerusalem from above sterile and barren for seventeen hundred years? Since there was no separate and distinct organization known as "The Church of Christ" during the Dark Ages, to what did the martyrs belong who were put to death by papal Rome, and who are described as "those who keep the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ?" If those same people were on earth today would you fellowship them as children of God?

Was Alexander Campbell a child of God while in the Redstone and Mahoning Baptist Associations? If not, how did he become one? Was he a sectarian? If not, is it possible that other persons in such Baptist associations today on the same basis, may be non-sectarian? If Campbell was a sectarian then, when did he cease to be one? If it was when he "was obliged to form societies out of those communities that split upon the ground of adherence to the apostles' doctrine," he became non-sectarian against his will, for he says it was by constraint, and not by choice. He did not declare non-fellowship with the Baptist associations, but they "began to declare non-fellowship with the brethren of the reformation."

If Campbell were alive today would he be regarded as a Christian by any group of "The Church of Christ" which exists

as a result of his pioneer efforts? If he preached among the Baptists, and affirmed there were some Christians among them, would not the “Church of Christ” now do as the Baptist Church did then, and “begin to declare non-fellowship with the brethren of the reformation?” If so, does this not indicate that “The Church of Christ” is a sect now, as the Baptist Church was then? It is not necessary to call to our attention that the church of Christ is not a sect. We know that. We believe that church was in existence before Campbell began his reformatory work. We do not think there has ever been a time in the Christian era when the church of Christ ceased to be. Our Lord has never been a head without a body, a ruler without a kingdom, or a shepherd without sheep.

But we are confident that, if those who composed the body of Christ on earth in 1750 A.D., were alive in 1959, they would not be recognized by “The Church of Christ.” Nor would Alexander Campbell find a welcome in any of the two dozen factions which grew out of his efforts to unite all believers in the Lord. What is the basic error in our present thinking? We think that it is very apparent. Until it is removed we will continue to drift toward sectarianism because of the spirit we manifest. We will divide and subdivide every time a brother learns a new truth. Study this statement very closely. *We have confounded the Restoration Movement with the church of the New Testament, and we think of it as identical with the church of Christ!* Perhaps no greater error ever plagued a religious people!

The church of Christ is unchanged and unchangeable. It is the body of God’s dear Son, who is ageless and timeless. In every century that body on earth has included every saved person, every surrendered soul. The Restoration movement is fluid and changeable. It is the attempt of honest and sincere men to recapture the spirit and form of primitive Christianity, believing it is the hope of the survival of truth. Men must alter their thinking and perspective as they learn more about truth. But the greatest and most tragic error in our generation has been calling

that movement “The Church of Christ” and concluding that all who are in it are faithful to the church of Christ, although they may bitterly oppose restoration of that church.

The Revolution

Mission Messenger (November 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

In a noted restaurant in New York there is a mural depicting the famous slumber of Rip Van Winkle. It is in three sections. The first shows a colonial village under the flag of Britain. Van Winkle, with gun and dog, is climbing a hill leading out of the village. The second section shows him asleep in the Catskill Mountains. The third shows him coming down after twenty years into the same village. His hair and beard are long and unkempt, his clothing hangs in tatters. But the biggest change is in the village. It is now a thriving, bustling mart of trade. The flag of the colonies flies from the staff. Rip Van Winkle had slept through the Revolution.

Many brethren and congregations are doing the same thing today. Great changes are taking place in the religious world. Protestantism is being shaken to its foundations. Eminent theologians are rediscovering great truths concerning the church, baptism, the priesthood of all believers, and the ministry of all the saints. There is a tremendous stirring in the hearts of earnest men. What contribution is being made by the heirs of the glorious movement which sought to spark these very changes? Many are wholly oblivious to what is going on. They have shut themselves in and locked the door. They have closed their eyes and stopped their ears.

This is the greatest opportunity in more than a century to

present a constructive program to those who ask for it. But most of the brethren are grinding grist from the same old traditional sermon outlines regardless of their inapplicability to the needs of this hour. Inside of partisan walls they feel secure and undisturbed as did Rip Van Winkle in the mountain forest. They even resent those who go as free men among all peoples, and look with suspicion upon those who move without fear in circles they dare not visit.

But the old days of partisan alignment and factional bitterness are doomed. The era in which the loyalty of men to Jesus was judged by the paper which they read is “gone with the wind.” The handwriting is on the wall. Satan will do all he can to maintain the strife, envy, hatred and bigotry of yesteryear, but God’s people can no longer indulge in the luxury of schism and division over men and parties. There is a revolution in our thinking that is long overdue. The children of the Father are learning the power of love and it is surging through their veins with a new spiritual vitality. They are learning how to treat each other. The tyranny and force once accepted in supine and servile obedience to men will no longer be the means of achieving spiritual ends. We feel sorry for those who are asleep in the Catskills while the battle for freedom is being waged in the valleys. Things will look different when they awaken from their slumber and return to the familiar scenes and find what a wonderful change God hath wrought!

“Like a mighty army moves the church of God! Brethren, we are treading where the saints have trod!” Let our hearts be filled with zeal, our tongues be aflame for God, and our lives a constant witness for truth. Did you enlist to serve or to slumber? Will grumbling and complaining achieve His purpose? The Master is calling! Arise!

Church of Christ Party

Mission Messenger (December 1959)

Volume 21

[Abstract]

At the outset of this article I want to share with you the following statement with which Alexander Campbell introduced the *Christian Baptist*.

It is a rarity, seldom to be witnessed, to see a person boldly opposing either the doctrinal errors or the unscriptural measures of a people with whom he has identified himself, and to whom he looks for approbation and support. If such a person arises in any party, he soon falls under the frowns of those who either think themselves wiser than the reprover, or wish so to appear. Hence it usually happens that such a character must lay his hand upon his mouth, or embrace the privilege of walking out of doors. Although this has usually been the case, we would hope that it would not always continue so to be.

It is generally presumed that a paper will soon fall into disrepute if it dare to oppose the views or practices of the leaders of the people addressed. Editors generally, too sensitive of this, are very cautious what they publish. Some of them are very consciously attentive to avoid giving offence; insomuch, that when an article is presented for insertion, the first objection to it sometimes is, "The people will not like this, and you know a man must please his customers."

All this may do very well when a writer proposes to

please his readers, or when he pledges himself to support the tenets or practices of any people. But when the exhibition of truth and righteousness is proposed, neither the passions nor prejudices of men— neither the reputation nor pecuniary interest of the writer, should be consulted.

In the face of these predictions as to what will happen, I propose to analyze the status of “a people with whom I have chosen to identify myself.” I am affiliated with one segment of the Restoration movement. I am engaging in an investigation of a system which is known as “The Church of Christ.” My thesis is that, generally speaking, it is not a restoration of the primitive church of God, but rather exhibits the nature and characteristics of a party, or sect. My purpose is to arouse those who are members of it to visualize it in its true light, so they may divest themselves of their sectarian tendencies, rise up, and begin anew the restoration program which was abandoned in order to defend the status quo. As it now exists, rent, torn, and divided “The Church of Christ” can never unite the world. It will complicate, rather than solve the problems of a divided Christendom.

The task attempted in this little journal is a difficult one, for the reasons assigned by Alexander Campbell. It is inherent in the party spirit that it seeks to perpetuate itself. To do this it must evict and exclude that which opposes it. Since the party spirit is a work of the flesh, and is evil, that which is driven out must be good. It is characteristic of all sectism that it always drives out the purifying influence. Martin Luther was excommunicated by the corrupt Roman Church; Thomas Campbell was forced from the Presbyterian Church; Alexander Campbell was evicted by the Baptist Associations; and Roger Williams was driven forth in the dead of winter by the Puritan colonies. Those who prefer disunity, strife and party narrowness, will persecute and oppose the non-sectarian attitude, which opposes wrong because it is wrong, and not

because it is done in or by another party.

These writings will never be read by hundreds in “The Church of Christ” because they will be debarred and burned by leaders, preachers, and elders, who control by suppression and boycott. Men who bitterly criticize and condemn others, regardless of their earnestness and sincerity, cannot stand to be condemned. Those who exercise thought control by prohibition and duress, think they are doing God service. They confuse “The Church of Christ” which they have constructed with the new covenant church of God, set up by the apostles of Jesus, and in their partisan zeal they consider themselves the exclusive recipients of God’s mercy and grace. To criticize their profession or practice is, as they view it, to condemn the church for which our Saviour shed His blood. In spite of the penalty one must pay for such daring and boldness, in the interest of truth and righteousness, I shall give my reasons for believing that “The Church of Christ” is a modern sect or party which has grown up out of a non-sectarian attempt to unite all believers in Christ, by a restoration of the primitive order.

This does not mean that every congregation designating itself as a “Church of Christ” is under the stigma of this accusation. There are certainly congregations which are not sectarian in outlook or spirit. What we say will not concern them. Neither does this article imply that all who are members of “The Church of Christ” are sectarian. Thousands are not, although many more thousands have been made the victims of a narrow, bigoted, spiteful and venomous party spirit by indoctrination with the belief that the party has arrived, and the church represented by their particular faction has fully restored the plan and program of the Master. Actually “The Church of Christ” appears in a false role or guise. It has frequently deluded and imposed upon the hearts of men through slogans and manipulations of the scriptures, which serve to conceal the reality of its practice. Such grave and serious charges ought to be carefully weighed and pondered at length before being

committed to writing where all and sundry may view them, and once written or uttered, should be challenged. I write these things in fear of the Judgment of God, and I shall meet the challenge to present the proof.

“The Church of Christ” is under the condemnation of Romans 2:1, 2: “Now if you feel inclined to set yourself up as a judge of those who sin, let me assure you, whoever you are, that you are in no position to do so. For at whatever point you condemn others you automatically condemn yourself, since you, the judge, commit the same sins. God’s Judgment, we know, is utterly impartial in its action against such evil-doers” (Phillips’ Translation). “The Church of Christ” has set itself up as a judge of the sectarian world. It is in no position to do that. It automatically condemns itself by committing the same sins, and engaging in the same practices. Let us calmly investigate some of these points at which this great organization inveighs against others.

1. DIVISION

The sectarian world is condemned as being hopelessly divided. Radio speakers for “The Church of Christ” point out the number of divisions in the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other Protestant sects. But there is no group more torn, rent, divided, and beset by schisms today than the non-instrument heirs of the Restoration movement. They engage in more bitter, acrimonious, and caustic debates among themselves than all the rest of the religious world put together. There are more than twenty distinct factions among them, each of which, with few exceptions, claims to be the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic church of God upon earth, while regarding all of the others as heretics and apostates. In some larger southern cities, there are as many as ten different “loyal” churches, each of which claims to be the “true church” with no two of these recognizing each other. Moreover, while the rest of the religious

world is seeking grounds and means of uniting their efforts, the movement which began to show them how to do it, is preparing to divide even further, and to split, fragmentize, and splinter “that which remains.” Those who doubt this need only to read such journals as *Gospel Advocate* and *Gospel Guardian*. The chickens hatched from the eggs of the party spirit are coming home to roost, and we deplore the chickens and disown the roost.

2. CREEDS

While spokesmen for “The Church of Christ” assail the religious world for their creeds, no group of people now in existence have devised, employed or enforced more unwritten creeds. The word “creed” is from the Latin *credo*, I believe. Whatever a man believes is his creed. Certainly whatever is required by any group as a test of admission to its fellowship is the creed of that group. Not all personal creeds are made authoritative or binding, but whatever is demanded by any group for admissibility to its membership or fellowship, is its creed. All of the factions under consideration claim to have “no creed but the Bible.” A favorite slogan is “We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where it is silent.” This claim is proven to be ridiculous in the light of events. How can there be twenty divergent and non-cooperating factions, if all follow the Bible as their only creed?

The truth is that it is not the Bible, but opinions of it, and interpretations of it, which constitute the real creeds of all the warring factions. Revelation is what God said; interpretation is what men think he meant by what he said. So revelation is an expression of the divine mind; interpretation is the application of human minds to it, to determine in the light of reason, what is required of us. But the exaltation of interpretation to the place of authority, not only supplants the divine revelation, but creates a human basis of belief and worship, and the demanding of

unvarying conformity to such a basis is popery undisguised. There is nothing infallible about human reasoning, or interpretation.

“The Church of Christ” is divided over colleges, orphan homes, old folks homes, benevolent societies, Sunday schools, lesson leaves, quarterlies, women teachers, evangelists, pastors, communion cups, leavened or unleavened bread, breaking the bread, fermented wine or grape juice, the time of serving the Lord’s Supper, the coming of Jesus, whether pre-millennial or post-millennial, marriage and divorce, radio and television programs, the method of support of missionaries, re-baptism, fellowship, order of worship, and a host of other things, including such items as whether the cup for the Lord’s Supper must have a handle on it, or not. Every one of these has at some time or place been made a test of fellowship, and has thus been elevated as the creed of some faction.

3. THE CLERGY

Members of “The Church of Christ” have always castigated “the denominations” for having a special clergy, and for creating a distinction between “clergy” and “laity” which gave impetus to the Great Apostasy. But they also have a special clergy system. “The minister” in “The Church of Christ” is nothing more or less than a clergyman. These take advantage of reduced rates in travel fares and encomiums bestowed by business upon “the clergy.” They use “clergy certificates” on the bus and railroad lines, albeit most of them apply for such as “*Ordained clergymen acting as evangelists,*” in the hope the last word will cancel out the implications of the first. Most of them do not know how an evangelist should act!

“The Church of Christ” seminaries have special classes for “ministerial students,” and they talk of “entering the ministry” as a profession, just as others enter the medical or legal

professions. In *Firm Foundation*, April 8, 1919, under the heading “A First Class College,” appeared this announcement of Abilene Christian College:

In addition to the College of Arts and Sciences we will have a complete, thorough seminary, in which work for preachers and others who desire to become efficient church workers will be given. This work will lead to the B.Th. and Th.M. degrees.

It is no surprise to read, therefore, in *Abilene Christian College Lectures*, under the heading “Our Educational Program,” this statement:

The church today demands and deserves a trained minister. Statistics show that our educated ministers received their early education in Christian colleges. The age calls for great preachers well trained. . . . The small college must train for the church Christian laymen; men who live above narrow prejudices and pettiness of spirit. Another great need of the church today is a large number of trained laymen.

Here is a distinction between “the trained minister” and “the trained layman.” You cannot create a laity out of the many, without creating a clergy out of the few. (See this point fully developed in the author’s book “The Royal Priesthood”).

David Lipscomb saw this in his earlier life, and it prompted him to write these words:

We think the most fatal mistake of Alexander Campbell’s life and one that has done much and we fear will do much to undo his life’s work, was the establishment of a school to train and educate young preachers.

Brother Lipscomb explained why he thought this was a *fatal* mistake:

Brother Campbell in his later life, when his great mind had much failed, was used by those around him to seemingly approve much that he had condemned in his early days of vigor. He probably conceived the idea in his vigor that he could have the Bible taught to men who would teach others also without them becoming a separate order of clergy. If so, the result proves how sadly mistaken the great man was. (*Gospel Advocate*, 1875, page 345).

What David Lipscomb and Alexander Campbell saw in their early years, J. N. Armstrong, president of Harding College, realized in his latter years, as the following indicates:

I feel distressed sometimes over the condition of the church everywhere. For instance I think that our schools are all in line to build up the clergy and that the church in general is tending toward denominationalism. I do not know what can be done, maybe nothing, but I do think there is a need for us to put on the brakes, and warn the brotherhood about the definite trends of these times. I am not pessimistic, but my optimism does not keep me from facing facts. I think, as I said above, that all our schools are set for the training of professional preachers.

4. THE PASTOR SYSTEM

Preachers of “The Church of Christ” once made much ado about “the sectarian pastor system.” For reasons which are quite obvious they do not say so much about it lately. They profess to believe that the elders are God’s pastors, but there is a great gulf fixed between their profession and practice. The one-man hired minister in a congregation with bishops occupies exactly the same position among them as the pastor in other religious organizations. He is hired by contract, often after competition in a trial sermon exhibition, he has an office, a secretary, and the special listing in all advertising. He is morals adviser, counsellor, consultant, business manager, program director, and front man. He has exclusive right to the pulpit. He is a hired specialist in

management, and he does what he is hired to do. Woe unto the careless soul who questions his right to do so!

It was J. N. Armstrong, writing in *The Living Message*, 1924, who said:

It is useless, brethren, to oppose the “pastor system” when we are fast developing it, yea, when we have largely embraced it already.

Guy N. Woods, speaking on a lectureship program at Abilene Christian College, in 1939, affirmed:

It will not be seriously denied that there is an arrangement in operation in the church of Christ which bears a suspicious similarity to the pastor system of the denominations. It is idle to deny this. . . . We believe that the pernicious and church-destroying doctrine of majority rule is the outgrowth of the incipient pastor system now in operation among us. Other evils will result if a halt is not soon called.

In the same series of lectures, Roy Lanier voiced these sentiments:

The fact that these conditions exist is proof that our present trend is definitely toward the one-man pastor system. I do not believe preachers ought to be blamed for being the pastors of the churches. In many places they have found the elders incapable of doing the work, and in other places they were not financially able to take the time to do their work. So rather than see the work go undone, the preachers have done it for the elders. We have tried to justify ourselves in this by saying the elders are having the work done, overseeing it; doing the work by proxy. But the leading part taken by the average preacher silences this quibble.

L. L. Brigance was for years a professor in Freed-Hardeman College. He wrote in the July 24, 1941, *Gospel*

Advocate, these words:

There is no denying the fact that the “pastor system” exists among the churches of Christ today. It is a growing evil. It constitutes a major menace to the cause of Christ. If it continues to develop as rapidly during the next quarter of a century as it has during the last one, the greater part of the church is going to be corrupted by it. “Brethren, we are drifting.”

The seriousness in this particular phase is found in the fact that it was made a basis of division in the church, in conjunction with instrumental music. The two were placed in the same category. In *Attitudes and Consequences*, page 191, Homer Hailey writes:

Although the major wedge which divided the body, as we shall show in the next chapter, was instrumental music, the controversy over the “located preacher” and the titles “reverend” and “pastor” contributed its share of the division.

This poses a few questions. If the located preacher was an issue of such magnitude as to contribute to the division from the Christian Church, and the non-instrumental “Church of Christ” has now adopted and defends the system, should not apology be tendered to the Christian Church, for all the trouble caused over this matter? Regardless of the continued problem relative to the instrument, do not the non-instrument churches stand condemned for promoting division by agitating over a thing which their leading preachers and teachers now admit they have adopted? Would it not be an act of gentlemanly courtesy for the “located preacher” in any community where there is also a Christian Church, to go on the air, and confess that whereas the non-instrument church once raised a ruckus over the pastor system, they are now sorry, and ask for forgiveness? If they once deemed the located minister and instrumental music to be in the same category, and they now use the scriptures to uphold the

located minister, and the same scriptures the Christian Church once used, is it possible they may sometime re-examine the scriptures dealing with music, adopt the instrument as they have the located minister, and defend it on the same basis as those who now use it? The organ in the choir loft and the located minister in the pulpit were once viewed in the same light you know!

5. CONVENTIONS

“The Church of Christ” declares that it has no conferences, synods, or conventions to instigate procedures, or to formulate and influence policy. This is very misleading, for examination will show that it holds annual regional or district conventions which occupy the same place, and perform the same functions as the conventions it derides when held by others. In order to evade criticism these conventions are placed under the sponsorship of humanly-organized church-related institutions. The college “lectureships” have been converted into conventions for the church. There is not one phase of a “sectarian” convention that is not present in such lectureships.

Home and foreign mission statistics are revealed, with the missionaries being summoned from the field personally to make their reports. Special honorary dinners are arranged for the clergymen with extended service. Questions of church extension are discussed and committees appointed to further such. Choirs, glee clubs, and choral groups render special programs. Bands and orchestras give sacred concerts. There are pageants, plays, and junior theatricals for visitors. The faculty wives arrange teas for visiting women. There are exhibits and displays put on by various large and successful congregations, and other exhibits of wares by charitable, eleemosynary, missionary, and educational foundations and organizations. Publishers and suppliers of Sunday School materials have booths to display their latest offerings. There are classes for preachers, elders and women, as

well as panel discussions on the problems and work of the church. Missionaries are selected and special funds raised for missionary and other endeavors.

The reality of the responsibility placed upon us by the great commission was emphasized by many of the speakers in harmony with the emphasis of Harding College class work. . . . On Thursday morning at the close of the service President Benson asked for those who had definitely decided to work in foreign lands to come to the front and eleven young people made their way through a packed auditorium to stand and make their intentions known. . . . One said it was in reality a unity meeting, bringing together so many preachers from so many parts of the brotherhood. Over five hundred dollars was given to the church building fund for Germany and eleven hundred and twenty dollars was given to build a school building in Africa. (Harding College Bulletin, Dec. 15, 1945, page 3).

That you may see that we do not misrepresent when we say that the college "lectureship" has been created to take the place of denominational conventions, we quote from an editorial by Joseph W. White, in *Firm Foundation*, April 14, 1959, page 226.

This is not stated to glorify Pepperdine College. The college is not the church, neither is it trying to do the work of the church. I do not believe that anyone there wants to "run" the church. However, for a people who have no sort of denominational connections, no headquarters on earth, and no conventions, the college lectureships have grown because they fill a need. Here a free, undenominational people can come together in huge numbers to share their joy, their faith, and their ideas.

The subject of this editorial was "The Spirit of California Churches." It is significant that under this heading a college would even be mentioned. It is more significant to learn that among those who have "no conventions" this type of lectureship

has risen to fill a need. It is “Church of Christ” propaganda to refer to itself as undenominational, with no headquarters on earth, and having no conventions. Actually, this movement has been promoted into a huge denomination. Each faction has a headquarters in the United States, a center from which those in control can reach out and regulate congregations and force preachers into line. Most of these have a directory of preachers, a directory of churches, an official journal, and conventions disguised under terms more palatable to the constituency.

In an editorial in *Gospel Guardian*, April 16, 1959, page 772, occurs these statements:

The college lectureship has become a cut-and-dried propaganda forum for “our institutions,” “our colleges,” “our national radio program,” “our national advertising agency,” etc. We have a letter from a brother in Odessa, Texas, about the recent lectureship at Abilene. This man is telling us of the reaction of another brother who attended that affair: “He said there was more ballyhoo for various institutions and promotions than he had ever seen before. Seems like everybody had his own booth and was pushing, promoting, and ballyhooing their pet projects. Some of them had girls plugging their promotions, handing out circulars and pamphlets. He said rather than being what it ought to be it reminded him of a Roman Catholic bingo game.”

OTHER INCONSISTENCIES

“The Church of Christ” is inconsistent in the attacks made upon other religious organizations, and the censure of their practices. We cite a few instances which are undeniable. One of the causes of complaint against those designated “Digressives” was the use of special choirs. “The Church of Christ” contended that the singing must be congregational. Now, however, choruses and glee clubs from colleges and orphan homes regularly tour among the churches, presenting programs of sacred music, such

programs being sponsored, arranged and advertised by the local churches.

In one of the church-related colleges in Arkansas, a certain professor was given free rein to oppose Christians bearing arms in time of war. Through him the school came to be recognized as a center of pacifism. His constant outpouring of printed propaganda strongly intimated that those who wore the uniform and engaged in combat duty were in the category of murderers. Yet the school eagerly enrolled every one of the returning servicemen who could be persuaded to take advantage of the G. I. educational bill which provided government financing for education in compensation for their time spent in the armed services. Consistency is not a virtue of these schools which boast a Christian atmosphere. Although they have made it appear that they have never taken money from the "church treasury" a field agent for one of them, said a few years ago, "They all do it, and they all deny it!"

It is a common thing for "The Church of Christ" to publish statements by Roman Catholics showing that these are enemies of the public schools. One such recent article began with this paragraph:

Since it is a very likely possibility that the Democrats will run a Catholic for the office of President in 1960, we believe that people are entitled to know about the Catholic attitude toward our country and its schools. After we have noticed this attitude, let us decide whether we are willing to accept Roman Catholic appraisal of our public schools. The following antagonism toward the public school system of America evidences the untrustworthiness of Roman Catholicism.

As to our country and its government, it is a well-documented fact that for years "The Church of Christ" in the southland has circulated the thesis of David Lipscomb that civil government originated with the devil in rebellion against God,

the identical position, incidentally, of Jehovah's Witnesses. Thus there are thousands of members of the "Church of Christ" who dare not vote, hold office, or defend the country in time of attack, and whose sole responsibility of citizenship is discharged in the dubious practice of murmuring and complaining about the "powers that be."

The Roman Catholics are not more vociferous in many places than "The Church of Christ" leaders, in open antagonism to the public schools, which are labeled as "hotbeds of infidelity," "creeping cancers on society," and "contaminated fountains of moral putridity." Parents are urged not to send their children to public schools. They are threatened with dire consequences if they do. And, like the Catholics, "The Church of Christ" is now in the process of developing its own parochial schools from kindergarten through college, in order to teach its peculiar doctrine, and segregate its offspring from contact with other American children. Of course, like the Catholics, members of "The Church of Christ" are eager to get employment in the public schools as teachers, being willing to work in these "sink holes of infidelity and evolution" for the salary paid.

If the "antagonism toward the public school system of America evidences the untrustworthiness of Roman Catholicism," it exhibits the same untrustworthiness of Church-of-Christ-ism. We would be in a real predicament if the Democrats were to run a Roman Catholic for President, and the Republicans were to run a member of "The Church of Christ" at the same time. Those who desire to preserve their freedom could not conscientiously vote for either, and for the same reasons. Both favor parochial schools of the denomination to public schools. Both believe in suppression of thought by force. A consecrated brother was thrown into a filthy jail at Henderson, Tennessee, for no greater crime than talking about his convictions of truth with a group of students at Freed-Hardeman College. A clergyman at Paragould, Arkansas, waved a copy of *Bible Talk* before the eyes of his parishioners, and

demanded that they refuse it at the post office. He kept his copies, though. In a congregation in the midwest, the preacher and elders conspired together to excommunicate two humble brethren for no greater crime than passing copies of MISSION MESSENGER to brethren in their homes and places of business. “The Church of Christ” clergymen would deny to others freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of worship without duress. Those who read with indignation what happens to “The Church of Christ” in Italy need to remember what that church does to some of the members who live in the United States.

One seldom sees an article dealing with what is wrong with the “Digressives” as the instrumental factions are designated, that does not contain a scathing indictment of women preachers. It is always pointed out that when Christ called and sent forth the twelve and the seventy, not one of them was a woman. A look at any list of missionaries called and sent by “The Church of Christ” will disclose the names of many women directly supported by congregations. Apparently it is all right to send women as missionaries to the heathen, so if the “Digressives” would ship all of their women preachers to Africa, they could keep all of them. There is an indication of a growing tendency to use women speakers to address special meetings in this country. Perhaps in a few more years the objection to the practice of women preachers will be silenced as was that on “the located ministers,” and for the same reason. Apparently, any practice in which we engage is scriptural! A hobbyist is one who opposes what we have; a sectarian is one who has what we oppose! If we do it, it is right; if others do, it is wrong.

HOW DID IT HAPPEN

The Restoration movement began with wonderful prospects at the outset of the last century. What transpired to sidetrack it from its original purpose and to turn its heirs into

rabid partisans? No simple answer can be given. Certainly any such result is the product of multiple factors. But it has been a case of history repeating itself. Every attempt at reformation or restoration has terminated in formation of another sect. This one is no exception to the general rule.

The first generation of reformers, possessed of vision and courage, make tremendous sacrifices of time and effort to remove barriers and clear away debris. Those who follow them, thinking that the clearing is the goal, settle down and proceed to erect walls and build a fortress about it to protect their gains and discoveries. Opinions are crystallized into tests of fellowship, and interpretations are welded into unwritten creeds. When other reformers arise who challenge the idea that the clearing is the promised land, and who regard it as but a temporary resting place in the wilderness, they are driven out into exile. Those who will not conform to the party norm, but whose eyes are lifted up to the far off hills beyond which lies the realization of our hopes, are considered dangerous, and regarded as mischief makers and seditionists. Unless they are possessed of an uncommon degree of love which transcends all partisan considerations they will form a faction of their own sympathizers, regard them as composing the “true church,” and, in time, proceed to do unto others as it was done unto them. This has happened repeatedly. It is the tragic history of religious reformatory movements.

The greatest error contributing to the sectarianizing of “The Church of Christ” occurred when adherents ceased to regard the Restoration as a *movement* and came to look upon it as *the church*. This marked the culmination of progress toward the ideal, and the beginning of the defense of the status quo. At this juncture men ceased to regard themselves as marching toward the primitive order, but concluded that they, and those who agreed with them, had arrived. From henceforth all truth was judged on the basis of past discovery. There was nothing else to be learned, no new veins or lodes to be uncovered. They

separated, segregated, and isolated themselves from other believers in the Christ, and began to affirm that the church of which they were members was *identical* in name, doctrine, and practice with the New Testament church. This required manipulating and shuffling the scriptures to make it appear that what men had constructed upon the basis of their partial and finite knowledge was the system sanctioned by the New Testament scriptures.

As factions multiplied in the movement, the searching of the scriptures became a fine art of specialists who were rivals in the field of controversy and polemics, and whose purpose was to justify the party. The constant research to find flaws in others and to rationalize the partisan position could only result in self-righteousness and the thwarting of God's purpose among men. The criterion was not the meaning of the Holy Spirit, but the inability of an opponent to reply. Vital distinctions were glossed over and lost, and other distinctions were made where the Spirit made none. It is inherent in any religious party that it forms its own glossary of terms which are made to mean what the party wants them to mean. Each party has its own definitions.

No group is a greater offender in this than "The Church of Christ." These brethren use "loaded terms" calculated to mislead and deceive the unwary and uninitiated. To some of them, the background and context of a passage mean but little, if the passage can be utilized to bludgeon an unsuspecting foe. Of course, hundreds do this sincerely, having been taught the authorized or party-approved application. One can almost tell which school a preacher attended by listening to him on the radio for a little while. He bears the mark of his "alma mater" and the "cut of his jib" indicates where he was in dry dock. The cliches, spurious arguments, and glib replies, have been sanctified by several generations of partisan pulpiteers.

This issue of our little journal will bring down upon our head the anathemas of "the powers that be" in the institution

called “The Church of Christ.” But, like the holy apostle, “We also believe, and therefore speak.” Our love extends to every member of every faction in “The Church of Christ.” It is our conviction that many in their partisan zeal have been betrayed into a false emphasis and are espousing a fallacious position. That does not arouse our hatred or animosity, but it does increase our compassion toward those who have been blind followers of the party.

We love the church of God. It is our conviction that it embraces within its borders every child of God in this world. We do not believe there is a single saved person outside of its environs. We regard it as the one body, of which every person who has been born again, is a living, vital member. The church of Christ is a divine fellowship. It is the holy, apostolic, and catholic church of God upon earth. Every person who is in the church of Christ is my brother and I am bound to him by spiritual ties, invisible and intangible, which have been forged by the cross, and sealed by the blood of the crucified Jesus. It is our desire to labor for a restoration to this earth of the primitive order which characterized that church from its inception. The party spirit is antagonistic to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, through which God dwells in the church. It is for that reason I must oppose every attempt to factionalize the One Body, and must resist every invasion to capture it for the glory and aggrandizement of any party which would prostitute its high calling to further their selfish aims.

I thank God that there are many congregations composed of humble followers of the Christ who are seriously interested in divesting themselves of the sectarian attitude. There are no doubt those in every segment who are groping and climbing toward the light even as we seek to do. All of us, without exception, have been involved in factions. No one of us has been wholly free of the party spirit. It is a matter of encouragement that many are studying and doing research into their own failings and faults. They are not trying to justify sermon outlines

of hoary vintage, or parroting notes copied from others decades ago, but they are stooping to drink directly from the fountain, and not from a cup handed them by their ancestors.

I was once a Lutheran. I left this human party with its creed, its spirit of exclusiveness, and its parochial schools established to perpetuate “the faith” and to regiment the minds of students, so they would “goose-step” in unison with the party music. I was attracted by the Restoration plea in its beauty, glory and freedom. I grew up in a segment of the disciple brotherhood which regarded itself as “the faithful church.” It is composed of wonderful people, humble, unassuming and sincere, except in matters of partisan defence. For years I was regarded as a champion of that party and “its position.” I felt there were no children of God outside of the fence inside which we stayed. We constituted the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus had no other subjects in the entire world. All others in the religious realm were either hobbyists or sectarians. We were neither. We were the elect of God, and besides us there were no other. The fathers of this party, before my birth, had declared that those who viewed things differently would not be regarded as *brethren*. We accepted their interpretation, declaration, dictum, and verdict, and began to fit the sacred scriptures to it, making “brotherhood” contingent upon agreement in opinion and interpretation.

We were inconsistent! There never was a congregation where all agreed. In some places class discussions were forums of dissenting views. But none of these things moved us so long as all had the correct position on the *one thing* that counted. The result of such legalism was that the elders often became legislators, demanding acquiescence to their edicts under threats of excommunication. Love for the erring one was no consideration; one must meekly submit even though intellect rebelled, or be forced out by cold, formal process of law. Preachers who proclaimed to others the autonomy of the local church, ignored their own teaching, and constituted themselves

brotherhood regulators, sometimes ruining one with whom they took issue even before he knew what had happened. These are all symptoms of the party spirit, so in contrast with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

When I became aware of how far we had drifted from the primary ideals of the Restoration movement, and saw how many misused and abused God's Word, explaining passages arbitrarily to justify a cherished position, I became convinced that no faction is the church of God. It is too little, too circumscribed, too exclusive, and too land-locked to confine God's mercy and grace. I was then forced to examine farther, and I reached the conclusion that as no one faction growing out of the Restoration movement is the church of God, so that movement as such, is not now, and never was the church of God. That church has always been in existence. There has never been a time since Jesus sat down at the Father's right hand that he has been a king without a kingdom; a shepherd without sheep; or a head without a body. The church was in existence when Alexander Campbell was born.

We feel that unless there is a complete revolution in attitude we will doom ourselves to become more sectarian. The world cries for leadership out of the gloom created by the foggy thinking of men. We cannot supply the help that is required by a holier-than-thou attitude. We must be ready to go where God opens up a door to testify of our convictions. It will avail little to preach year after year to the same people, and talk about those we never see. We must cease to trust for salvation in slogans, shibboleths, traditional sayings, or walls of our own construction. It is faith in God, and service to humanity coupled with love of mankind, that will keep us from being just a narrow, bigoted twentieth century sect.

It is possible that there may be hundreds of God's children on earth in the church of Christ, who are not in an American-style "Church of Christ." There may be thousands who have

never heard of the Restoration movement. We know that the implication in such statements grates on the ears of many. Those who are more charitable toward us think we are growing soft, compromising, and becoming "liberal;" those less charitable think we are going crazy and losing our mind. So strange a sight is it in this world of sectism to see a non-sectarian; so rare in this era of hate for one to love all men; that such a person is regarded as mad or insane, even as the apostles on Pentecost were thought to be drunken when filled with the Spirit.

I have a very deep regard for those in every faction. In spite of their bitter divisions, fighting, schism, and strife, I do not dislike them. I pray for them. I know what wide divergency there is in the profession and practice of most of them. Many are unhappy, frustrated, discontent, and beset by fears. Their course can only lead to more contention, animosity and separation in the future. Their attitude will spawn other divisions. Each succeeding generation suckling the partisan breast and nourished with the pap of party spirit, will contribute its share of hostilities and rivalry. Every new truth learned will be the signal for an outbreak of internecine warfare. They will continue to stigmatize and recriminate. The world will not be made a better or more peaceful place, but the brethren will contribute more and more to confusion and consternation.

Why do I not abandon them? One does not desert those whom he loves. Does an arm desert the body? Moreover, I am convinced that the principles which gave birth to the Restoration movement were sound, and the premises upon which it proceeded were correct. The movement has run aground because of abandonment of those principles. We must re-affirm those premises. We must re-activate those principles. We must restore the Restoration. To do this, we must correctly evaluate our status in the Christian realm. We should neither over-estimate our importance nor underestimate the task to which we have been called in this decadent age.

The modern system denominated “The Church of Christ” cannot save us from the foes that threaten our civilization. With its emphasis upon big programs, big preachers, big money, and big buildings, it will only serve to obscure the program of God for mankind. In a wishy-washy world its arbitrary, dogmatic assertions made with the assurance of personal conceit, will appeal to the ignorant and unthinking, who seek for security in a creedal basis, but their souls will still be empty, and their spirits remain a vacuum except for disturbing and recurring doubts. It requires more than belief in water baptism and opposition to instrumental music to satisfy the deep hunger of a soul that pants for God as the deer does for the water brooks.

It is our hope in succeeding issues to point the way to better things, to suggest very humbly what we may do to again go forward. It will do us no good to count statistics, to compare the number of converts with those made by other groups. Unless we really grow toward God, numerical growth is of little value. The world will not be made better by a fast growing sect. We shall seek to delve deep into causes and conditions, and to write from the heart, fully aware that it is still true that the essence of our relationship to God is expressed in loving Him with all of our soul, heart, might, and strength, and to love our neighbor as we love ourself. We only ask a careful reading of what we write. Our love for you will not be lessened if you cannot agree with all of our statements and conclusions. We only commend you unto God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. With malice toward none, with charity toward all, we pray that God may help us to help each other to a closer walk with Him.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1960)

Volume 22

Covenants of God

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Searching for the Answer

Mission Messenger (January 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

For all those words, which were written long ago are meant to teach us today; that when we read in the Scriptures of the endurance of men and of all the help that God gave them in those days, we may be encouraged to go on hoping in our time. May the God who inspires men to endure, and gives them a Father's care, give you a mind united towards one another because of your common loyalty to Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:4, 5— Phillips' Translation).

Our world is filled with fear and frustration. We live in an age of tension and worry. The minds of men have become battlefields for conflicting ideologies. Our way of life is under constant threat. The dams which have served to hold back latent savagery are crumbling. In every corner of the globe there is seething unrest. We are reclining upon a rumbling volcano. The bulwarks of western civilization are straining under pressure. To what source can we look for help and succour in these "times which try men's souls."

For some months we have been examining what appears to be a failure of the Christian philosophy to stem the rising tide of paganism. We have analyzed the varied concepts which claim to be Christian, we have sought in unprejudiced fashion to weigh the merits of current religious organizations, and we have found them wanting. We come now to the more difficult task of

suggesting a remedy. It is relatively easy to see the outward symptoms which betray weakness. One need not be skilled in every instance to diagnose an illness. But he who prescribes for the sick will subject himself and his credentials to examination and attack. This is as it should be, for it will cause us to proceed with more care and deliberation. I shall first state my convictions upon which my coming remarks will be based.

Our world is not the result of accident, experimentation, blind chance, or a survival of the fittest. It is a grand design, back of which is an intelligent Designer. The Eternal One who created the universe by divine fiat, has never lost interest in His creation nor retired from concern with its affairs. He made man but a little lower than the angels. He set him over the work of His hands. By the exercise of providence He has directed the affairs of men, until history serves only to mark the footprints of God. After revealing His will directly to the fathers in the childhood era of the world, when the various nations turned from Him to choose their gods, He chose to reveal Himself as the God of a nation. At Mount Sinai He gave that nation a constitution, the basis of which consisted of ten commandments which He personally engraved upon two stone tablets.

But He who made us knows our needs. He recognizes that it is easier for man to follow a personal pattern than to be guided by precepts and statutes. For that reason, nineteen centuries ago, He sent to this earth the Logos, the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." In Him dwelt all the fulness of Deity bodily. This earth, then, is the visited planet. It little matters that men set foot on Jupiter, Mars, or Saturn. These are material. They are a part of the creation over which man was given dominion. But it matters greatly that God visited this planet. Earth can never be the same again since "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

The Son, after being put to death by cruel men, was raised from the dead. He went back to heaven, and is even now seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. The task of reconciling the world unto God is now the responsibility of those who have been reconciled. These must beseech their own generation “on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled unto God.” Their message is the Good News of a *person*. It is the Good News delivered by persons, to persons, about a person! It is not the proclamation of a system, an organization, or an institution. It is not the recitation of a creed, a dissertation, explanation, or exposition of a doctrine. It is simply an announcement of Good News that “while we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” It is the thrilling declaration that “while we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son.” Those who would share in the blessings of this Message are required to believe one fact in order to initiation into the benefits of God’s grace— that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God! The test of this faith is obedience to one act— immersion in water by His authority!

Why has the world not been won to His sovereignty on such a plea? Why are those who respect Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, such a small minority among the teeming millions who swarm over the surface of our planet? We should face up to these questions. We feel that it can be demonstrated that the enemy of righteousness has cleverly and subtly insinuated himself again into the paradise of God, and has sown the seeds of hate where flowers of love should bloom. He has separated and segregated the believers into warring camps. He has inveigled them into measuring loyalty by the ability to smite the sheep of the Great Shepherd and scatter them. He who pleads for unity is regarded as a traitor, while those are hailed as faithful who sow discord and seek to justify division. We put darkness for light, bitter for sweet, and evil for good. This is the work of Satan!

The Son of God, on the night of His betrayal, gave us the clue for benign conquest of the world. He first prayed for those

envoys to whom the Message of reconciliation was entrusted. He said, "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in me through their word." His prayer was that all who so believed in Him might be one. He declared the effect would be "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." We feel the conclusion is inescapable. If the greatest force operating to convert the world is the unity of believers in Christ; conversely, the greatest force contributing to the unbelief and ultimate damnation of the world, is division among the believers. Jesus says, "He who does not believe will be condemned." He says that the world will be made to believe only when those who do believe are all one. Religious division must stand indicted before the world as the chief agent of its condemnation.

What, then, must be the attitude of those believers who are soberly and seriously concerned about the salvation of mankind? Does it not stand to reason that they must hate "enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, and party spirit," which are listed as "works of the flesh," and which will keep those who do such things from inheritance in the kingdom of God? Are they not obligated to study, pray, and work for the repairing of all the breaches in the Christian wall? Must they not wholly and completely dedicate their lives to the eradication of schisms and the conditions which produce them? Is there any crusade in modern times of greater consequence than this? If the world believes that God sent His Son, and recognizes the fulness of the impact of His advent, wars will cease, swords will be beaten into plowshares, and the desert will blossom as a rose. Yet this can only transpire when those who believe are one.

The greatest problem of believers is *unbelief*! Because they cannot see *how* unity of all believers can be achieved they do not believe it can be. They forget that we are to "walk by faith and not by sight." Their fear causes them to settle for something much less than Jesus prayed for. They are content if they can have peace within the party to which they give allegiance. But partisan peace is a chimera, a will-o'-the-wisp, and destructive

of true peace. The party spirit is antagonistic to peace. Like the moth, it perpetuates itself only by consuming the fabric in which it hides. If every party in the Christian realm had perfect peace within itself, that would not be the unity for which Jesus prayed, and under such a condition men would be content, and true unity would never be attained.

It is when men are dissatisfied with the narrow confines and unwritten creeds of the party that they lift up their eyes and look beyond. Parties should not be allowed to be at peace, but should be stirred up, agitated, and aroused. When a man is in a blinding snowstorm, his body becomes numbed, and he loses all sense of direction. He wants to slump down and give in to the unutterable weariness which takes possession of him and promises peace. He must be slapped into consciousness and forced to stagger on, else he will never reach home. So it is with those who are wandering befogged in the party spirit. They must be rudely jolted from their complacency or they will never inherit the kingdom. They may bitterly resent the one who jolts them, but he is their best friend on earth. We need men who will cuff our intellectual processes into activity and stimulate us to arouse and be on our way. Already "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

I believe that our only hope rests with the church of God, the one body of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the envoy of Christ exhorted the saints to "be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," he immediately declared, "There is one body" as the first item in a catalog of seven essentials to that unity for which we are pleading. The church of Christ is composed of all the saved on this earth. There is not one saved person outside of it, because to its number the Lord adds all the saved. The church of God is not an organization, but a divine organism composed of living, vital members.

It is not merely an association made up of those who voluntarily band together because of kindred interests. It is a

company of redeemed persons who are “members one of another,” because they are in another person— Christ Jesus—in whom they lose their identity to the extent that they are neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female. They are all one in Him. They are so related to each other only because they are related to Him. It is not that one member is attached to another member who in turn is attached to the head, or that one is joined to someone who is joined to Jesus. Instead, all “hold fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col. 2:19). “We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (Eph. 4:15, 16).

Each member of the body sustains a direct relationship to Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Each one is attached to the head. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” Not all members are at the same stage of spiritual development. Some are weak, others strong; some are ignorant, others learned; some are conservative, others liberal in tendency. They vary in temperament, knowledge, and degree of maturity. They are held together by mutual love, not because they all agree on every point, but because their love for Jesus is greater than their differences with each other.

In our present state of decadent Christianity, which organization is the divine organism? Which party or faction embraces within its fold all the children of God on this earth? Which one is the body of Christ exclusive of all others? My answer, which will infuriate all partisans, is that no party now in existence can claim exclusive right as the church of God. The believers in our Lord have been shattered into splinter groups, and scattered over the hills Of sectarianism. It is a tragic error

to think that all who are separated from us are severed from Jesus.

What shall we do to remedy the situation? It will do no good to create other parties. It will only aggravate the situation to further divide and leave a heritage of hate and animosity to damn the souls of our children and our children's children. The first thing we must do is to rid ourselves of the sectarian attitude. We must see sectism as God looks at it. We must recognize it as a grievous sin in the Christian domain. Why is that so? Here are a few reasons.

1. It fragmentizes that, which by its very nature, should be one, thus is subversive of the divine purpose and will.

2. It arrays against each other in partisan conflict those who should expend all of their joint energy and resources in opposition to the wicked one.

3. It arouses and stimulates the baser passions of covetousness, envy, jealousy and pride.

4. It elevates men to positions of eminence and rank in the spiritual realm, as party leaders, and thus provides for glorying in men.

5. It contains within itself the seed principle which carried to its fruition would destroy fellowship and thus make the eternal purpose of God of none effect.

It will not be easy to rid our hearts of the party spirit. We have been conditioned by past teaching and environment to regard the party as the church of God. This is true of all. Some have been less partisan than others, but none are wholly free from the taint. No party or faction *as it now exists* can accomplish God's full purpose on earth. There must be a revolution, a transformation, a metamorphosis. No transfusion of spirituality into the party, no artificial respiration of any

party will meet the needs of the present crisis. The party must sink into oblivion that the church of God may replace it in our lives. Old things must pass away; all things must become new.

This does not mean we must relinquish any truth we have discovered, nor compromise any verity we have held. To do this would be to lose all and to banish hope of our salvation. But truth must cease to be regarded as a partisan possession or be defended as a private monopoly. We must recognize that those in Christ are at different stages in their acquisition of knowledge of truth. Those who are fortunate enough to have a superior knowledge of truth should not browbeat and assail the less fortunate. Those who have climbed higher should not kick those on a lower level. Those who have much need not feel obligated to deny the little that is possessed by another.

We should begin to manifest a philanthropic spirit, and create an atmosphere of love. The table of the Lord should be set in our meetings for all baptized believers whose lives are orderly and decorous. We should make it clear that we make nothing a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition of salvation. Jesus declares that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. If one can be saved from all the sins of his past on that basis, and is thus added to the one body, we ought not to demand more of him to be welcomed into our hearts. The objection is made that on this basis we would be forced to welcome those who are allied with sectarian bodies in some instances. That is true, and we should welcome all of God's children who come among us, regardless of present affiliation. We should not be sectarian in our opposition to sectarianism.

We are confronted with a problem! It cannot be solved easily. There is no panacea which will fit every place or condition. But let us not bury our heads in the sand like ostriches. We should courageously face up to the issue, and be long-suffering, patient, and forbearing, as we try to work it out. It will serve no good purpose to become angry, exasperated, and

filled with bitter resentment. We have observed with sadness the manifestation of irritation and passion even upon the part of some elders as we have sought to explore the possibilities of answering the prayer of our dear Lord. They have taken it as a personal affront that a brother in the Lord should have the audacity to question any practice of ours which has been sanctified by tradition. But we must not have the attitude of ancient royalty, "The king can do no wrong!" We have been wrong about many things! God still works in history and the chafing and choler of men will not prevent truth from triumphing. To Him be praise and glory!

Sectarianism is the order of our day. It exists without divine sanction and in contravention of the best interests and more advanced knowledge of mankind. But it embraces within its folds some of the most sincere and humble characters. Those who recognize sectism for what it is, a malignant growth upon the body spiritual, must exert every effort to offset its deleterious effects and to check its growth, at the same time giving care not to destroy the sound tissue. We must not root up the wheat with the tares! Not everyone in a sect is sectarian. Some of God's children are a dispersed, displaced, and exiled people.

The fleshly Israelites, in covenant relationship with God, were called his people. They were still his people when misled. "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray" (Jer. 50:6). They were still his people while in Babylonian exile, and the children born to them in Babylon were also God's people. In these days of spiritual Israel God has a people in Babylon. We have brethren who are scattered among the various sects.

The very thought of this infuriates some! The very suggestion that it may be true calls down upon the head of one who makes the suggestion the wrath of those who feel that their participation in the grace of God is dependent upon denying a share in it by others. It is labeled a "new doctrine." It is

designated “liberalism” and “modernism,” by narrow exclusivists who would smite truth with a slogan and flail fact with fiction. If their evaluation is correct, then Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, David Lipscomb, Moses E. Lard, Benjamin Franklin, Daniel Sommer, et. al., were the rankest of liberals and the most pronounced modernists. Our brethren “garnish the tombs of the prophets” of restoration and denounce those who stand on the same ground they occupied.

Thomas Campbell addressed his Declaration and Address to the Christians in all sectarian bodies. Years later he wrote:

We speak to all our Christian brethren, however diversified by professional epithets, those accidental distinctions which have unhappily and unscripturally diversified the professing world. By our Christian brethren, then, we mean the very same description of character addressed in our Declaration published at Washington, Pa., in the year 1809— namely, ‘All that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, throughout the churches.’ If there were none such at that time throughout the churches, then Christianity was dead and gone. And if there be none such at present within the same limits, it still continues extinct.

Alexander Campbell, who did more than any other in his day to plead for a return to the ancient order of things, wrote thus:

A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolations and joys— the holiness and happiness of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union— upon having a ‘*thus saith the Lord,*’ either in express terms or approved precedent ‘for every article of faith, and item

of religious practice.’

Moses E. Lard, writing in his quarterly for March, 1864, on the topic “Have We Become a Sect?” has this to say of those who are in sectarian bodies:

Against the individual members of these parties we cannot have even one unkind feeling. Many of them we regard as true Christians, and love them sincerely. But as long as they occupy a place in bodies holding traditional and other unsanctioned tenets; holding practices unknown to the Bible, and supporting humanly imposed names, we must tell them plainly that they stand on apostate ground.

Two years prior to this statement, Benjamin Franklin, in 1862, wrote in the *American Christian Review*, of which he was editor:

There are individuals among the sects who are not sectarians, or who are more than sectarians— they are *Christians*; or persons who have believed the gospel, submitted to it, and in spite of the leaders, been constituted Christians according to the Scriptures.

In the same year, Brother Franklin made the following statement in his paper:

That there are Christians among the sects, a people of God in Babylon, we have believed and admitted, and committed to print many years ago, and we believe the same now. That these have a right to commune, and, enjoy in common with all Christians, all the blessings of the house of the Lord, we presume is not doubted by any brother.

David Lipscomb, writing in the book, *Questions Answered*, page 582, expresses his views in this statement:

There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which they

find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.

Daniel Sommer deposes as follows in his booklet entitled *Religious Sectism Defined, Analyzed and Exposed*:

What shall we say of those preachers who denounce all persons who happen to hold membership in a sectarian denomination with a sentence of sweeping impeachment, as though they were all under the influence of sectism? We should say that they are probably more sectarian than some whom they denounce. Their manner shows that they are unscripturally exclusive, and this is one of the elements of sectarianism.

Do these quotations prove there are Christians in sectarian bodies? Certainly not! Their authors are fallible men and uninspired. We have not cited them as authorities on that point. But they do prove the position I hold is not a “new doctrine.” Will our critics affirm that Campbell, Lard, Franklin, Lipscomb, and Sommer were “liberals” and “radicals” and “modernists”? Will they brand them as apostates? The truth is that all of the leading minds in the restoration movement were at a unit on this point. Benjamin Franklin labored under the presumption that the position we hold was “not doubted by any brother.” It was not doubted either, until the factions which grew out of the restoration crystallized into so many small sects, motivated by the narrow and intolerant spirit which is the mark of sectarianism.

Are you prepared for the logical conclusion? Since the position we advocate is the one held by all of the brethren from the inception of the restoration movement, then the opposite

position is a “new doctrine.” Indeed, it is a modern doctrine that honest misunderstanding or error in interpretation of a scriptural teaching, nullifies and negates the spiritual relationship into which one enters by the new birth. Upon such a premise we can never gather the scattered flock of God, and all we can offer them is an opportunity to leave one sect and be initiated into another by submitting to baptism at the hands of a “Church of Christ preacher.” This is the new, novel and modern doctrine that is today called “gospel” by so many of our brethren.

Let there be no misunderstanding of my position. I believe that every sincere penitent believer in the fact that Jesus is God’s Son, who is immersed in water upon the basis of that faith, is God’s child, and my brother. He may not, at the time of his immersion, know all of the blessings accruing from the act or connected with it, but his standing with God is not determined by knowledge of such matters, but by faith in Jesus as God’s Son and the Messiah. I believe that sectarianism is sinful. It is condemned by God and must not be condoned by men. But many of God’s children have been ensnared and enslaved within its toils. I want to assist them to freedom. I am dedicated to unrelenting opposition to any form of tyranny over their hearts, regardless of the name under which it operates. The fight for unity of all believers is really a battle for freedom.

We live in an age of demonstration. Millions of dollars are spent for advertising with recognition that the best form of publicity consists of showing what a product will do. In the spiritual realm we must move from the theoretical to the practical. We need concrete manifestation of the unsectarian spirit. We cannot rely on mere discussion in the abstract. It is not the law in a code book or even discussed in forums which will make a nation better, but the spirit of the law exemplified in the daily conduct of the citizens which will make the difference. A few congregations of saints scattered throughout the world dwelling together in love, creating no test of fellowship which

God has not made, recognizing the rights and privileges of all, whose bishops govern in affection, will do more to usher in a better day than all of the writing and discussing can ever do. For that reason we submit the following to the concerned ones among us, as a basis upon which we can commence to operate in hope of transforming the world in which we live through love.

1. We should confess our sins, and the sins of our fathers, in respect to the factionalism and partisan spirit so widely manifest in our day. Let each intreat for forgiveness and all ask for divine aid that we may avoid the blighting effects of the party spirit in the years that lie ahead.

2. Let the “fellowship of the concerned ones” meet often and study the sacred truths, and strengthen each other in the Lord. “They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.”

3. Avoid the idea that those who honestly differ with us are *apostates* or *heretics*. These two words are seldom used today as the Holy Spirit used them. A man is not an apostate because he thinks instrumental music is acceptable in corporate worship; neither is one a heretic because he sincerely believes that water baptism is not essential. All of us need to correct our language and cultivate a pure speech. It is not sound speech to brand men and women with terms that have been twisted or distorted from their true meaning. One may be wrong about a lot of things and not be either a heretic or an apostate.

4. Let us set the table of the Lord for all of His children, and make it clear that every immersed believer whose conduct is orderly and approved of God is invited to sit down with us in fellowship or communion. Let us make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not.

5. Banish the idea that you can win men to greater knowledge of the truth by giving them the “cold shoulder,” or by treating them as pariahs or spiritual lepers. One does not sanction or endorse every item of a person’s thinking when he calls on him to word a prayer to God. You do not agree with everything that is advocated by the members of your own party whom you call on to pray.

6. Do not be afraid to listen to anyone. Truth has nothing to fear. It cannot be banned by error. It shines better when seen in contrast with error. It is yourself you cannot trust, when moved by fear. Develop personal conviction based upon your own study of the revelation of heaven. Thousands in these days merely parrot a party line. They think a certain way because others— parents, relatives, or a favorite preacher— think that way. Their hope of reaching heaven is based upon the idea that someone else is bound to be right.

7. Study the word of God for yourself. Let every person who loves the Lord feed upon His word daily. Do not differ with others merely for the sake of differing. Do not be contentious, quarrelsome or argumentative. But learn to question and to doubt what men say until it is proven to you. It is a healthful sign when a group can differ and discuss their differences in an atmosphere of calmness and with mutual respect. It is not a sin to differ honestly and to say so. Differences, in and of themselves, do not create divisions. It is when men cease to love each other and allow their differences to become the rallying point of parties that they divide.

8. Let the bishops rule by love and example, and let the flock show due reverence for those who watch over and guide them. A community of saints, free from the party spirit, welcoming with open hearts, all the children of God who come among them, working in peace and harmony, not because of threats or fear, but because of affection for each other in the Lord, will do more to usher in a better world than all of the

articles written in this, or any other journal.

If we are to contribute anything vital to the religious thought of our generation, if we are to point the way to peace and unity in Christ Jesus our Lord, if we are to be the humble instruments to help those who are struggling and groping their way out of the darkness of sectarianism today, we have no time to lose. The day is spent, the night is at hand. Dr. Elton Trueblood has said it in this way:

If faith is to be effective in undergirding civilized society, it must be given some concrete embodiment. Civilization will not be saved because there are men and women who make the mere affirmation that God exists. Life is not raised to new levels by the mere fact that we have been intellectually convinced by the cosmological argument. Our predicament is too great and too serious for our salvation to come in so academic a manner. What is needed is something that can set men's souls on fire. What is required is a vision of man's life under God's Providence which so thrills us to the centre of our beings that we are willing to commit ourselves, soul and body, to the incarnation of that vision.

Harvest of Peace

Mission Messenger (January 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

Men who expect peace to prevail by accident, expect what never was and never will be in a world of sinful beings. One could as logically expect a crop of corn without planting the seed. Peace is a result, and it must be preceded by a cause. It is created or made, and those who make it are called peacemakers. Peace must be waged, even as others wage war. It demands a campaign, a crusade of dedicated hearts. Those who propagandize for peace are working with God. They are companions of the angels who used peace as their theme in announcing the advent of Jesus to Judean shepherds. They are enlisted under the banner of that leader who is known as "Prince of peace." Peace comes by prayer, purpose and persistence. It is achieved by crucified ones who trust for strength in the Crucified One. "The harvest uprightness yields must be sown in peace by peacemakers" (James 5:18). More than anything else is needed in these days a genuine longing for peace, which will cause us to "sow by all waters."

Facing the New Year

Mission Messenger (January 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

Another milestone in the march of the ages has been passed. A new calendar hangs on the wall. We have survived another twelve months. The past year has been one of ardent study, deep meditation, and personal soul-searching. Our writings have jolted and jarred many from their complacency. Those who congratulated themselves that they had all of the answers have suddenly found life re-complexified. Some have deeply resented it, and while there have been many readers added, a few who read the paper from its inception have ordered us to stop sending it. They regard us as betrayers of God's Son, because we are humbly striving to answer his prayer for the unity of all believers!

It is a great surprise to some that we are still here! One good Kansas brother sent in his dollar last year, saying he merely wanted to see how far we would go, and predicting the paper would die before the year was up. From many sources we have received word of attempts by brethren to thwart our efforts and to kill our influence. "Out of all these the Lord has delivered us, and will deliver."

Our task has not been easy. We have had to hang on precariously from month to month. Nell and I must now raise \$250.00 or more each month to put out this little journal. The subscriptions do not pay for its publication. Any journal like this

one has to depend upon the heartfelt concern of those who believe in its mission. And there have been a few who sent each month to help. Without them we could not have carried on. They have held up our hands. May our God reward them richly according to His grace!

Our paper is not a factional mouthpiece! No party promotes it, or backs it as an official organ. Many who concur with us dare not mention it lest they be put out of the synagogue. The preaching brethren who secretly pray for us, cannot openly solicit readers for fear of reprisal. We must depend upon those in every faction who love truth more than the party. Thus far there has been just enough of them, with none to spare. We have always had just about enough to keep going for two months, but always, somehow, someone helped us through!

In our March issue we begin a new series of articles. These will represent our deepest thinking to be committed to print. We shall try to plumb the depths of the scriptures, exploring God's purpose for those of us who live in this day. Free from partisan bias, and liberated at last from any obligation to defend factional decrees, we can "with unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord." We will acknowledge truth wherever we find it, not as a party possession, but as a divine gift to all men. It is our hope that we may be able to produce a paper which you can commend to the sincere and concerned ones in all segments of the Christian realm.

We will be searching for the divine basis of unity. This will require diligent examination of our past views and interpretations. The Christian world is divided! Why? Have our ideas of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, been correct? If so, why have they not worked through us more effectively to achieve the divine purpose in our generation? Have we understood fully our relationship with the Deity, and if so, why are not all of God's children walking together in love? All we ask of you is a careful, prayerful reading of what we write. If it commends itself

to your heart as being correct, and you can in good conscience accept it, do so; but, if after weighing it sincerely, you cannot agree, we will still love you, respect and cherish you. “Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.”

We need your help and assistance, but we would not want you to violate conscience. If you cannot share our writings with others, but feel safe in reading them yourself, do that; if you do not care or dare to read them, then pray for us as we shall for you. For whatever degree of interest you manifest we shall be grateful to Him “whom having not seen we love.” It is in that attitude we enter the portals of a new year, and our twenty-second year of publication!

Clergy and Laity

Mission Messenger (January 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

It is significant that modern religious leaders are beginning to lay great stress upon the importance of “the laity.” There seems to be a spontaneous and universal re-discovery of the ideal of “the priesthood of all believers.” Perhaps the moral and spiritual decadence which is so prevalent points up the futility of trying to save the world by the ministrations of a top level echelon of professionals who are paid to assume the responsibility which belongs to all. The clergy system has been with us for centuries but has made little impact upon the world at large for the simple reason that it has been apart from the world of mankind, speaking its own theological jargon which is not understandable to the man in the street.

The real strength of the primitive church of God lay in the total commitment of the whole membership. Every member was a priest. Every member was a minister. Each one, in imitation of the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and if need be, to give his life. Every one had enlisted as a soldier. All were active fighters. There were no gold bricks or mess hall loungers. There were no side line coaches whose only duty was to call out information to those who agonized in the heat of the day. They encouraged and strengthened one another, but they did that while running. There were no spectators among the saints. True, there were those who watched them, but these were in the world, and thus

were in the bleachers and the grandstand. The church was the arena, and in the race course there were no stopping places. When one of the world, moved by the sacrifices of the Christians, left his place and joined the runners, he did not again retire to be seated in luxury or to bask in ease. He forsook all and followed Jesus. He looked unto Him, and not back at the place which he had left.

It was the taunt of the enemies of the faith once delivered, that there were no philosophers or learned men to propagate it. They spoke in derision of the shoe cobblers, tentmakers, and skin-dressers, who carried the Good News to distant climes. When the holy ones met for edification, plain men in plain garb, stood up among their fellows to exhort and comfort. The lessons taught were drawn from the field, the vineyard, the marketplace, or the shop. The hands lifted up in simple gesture were stained and blackened from daily toil, blistered and calloused by hard labor at an honest trade. There was no thought of speaking for gain, or of exploiting the many for the financial profit of the few.

Every home, even a lowly hut or a slave's hovel, was a "minister's home." Every such humble dwelling was a "minister's study" for here a servant of God sought the means by which he might instruct his brethren or share with them a nugget of knowledge. The whole realm of nature constituted a library from which the untutored mind could draw lessons of life, and these lessons, delivered in homely language, destitute of the embellishments of oratorical phraseology struck home to the hearts of the listeners and inspired them to imitation.

But a great change was wrought with the creation of the clergy. Now the majority no longer actually worshipped, but a ritual was performed in their behalf. The speaker's stand became a stage upon which a polished performer gave a declamation. The bulk of God's people became an audience. They were seated as spectators in a theater. They no longer gathered about a table as a family, they sat before a pulpit as

observers and auditors. Their chief contribution became one of money. The scriptures were twisted and wrested to make a public donation a corporate “act of worship.” The threat of damnation hovered over those who would not conform.

The clergy stands as a monument of decaying spirituality and abandonment of the purity of the faith. It could never have arisen if men had not lost their first love. It can never be retained when they regain it. The system to which many point with pride is a testimony of shame. The body of Christ enveloped in the clergy system is like the body of man wrapped in clothing, indicating that once man sinned and now must hide his nakedness. God made the first clothes for man, but man developed the clergy system to cover up his spiritual defection and disgrace.

That which was started to strengthen the church of God has weakened it. Men can no more worship without a clergyman present in most places than an amputee can walk without a crutch. The body has become dependent, helpless and servile. Thousands of enlisted soldiers mill about aimlessly, in utter ignorance of their duty or of the proper use of their weapons. Thousands who have been called to the vineyard of the Lord sit on the fence and pay another to gather the fruit. The Ship of Zion has more paying passengers than crewmen. The majority did not come aboard to serve but to take a conducted tour or summer cruise to heaven. The church has more spectators than servants. The slaves now sit on cushioned seats and demand service.

It will not be easy for modern religion to remove the gulf between clergy and laity. The system appeals to the pride and ambition of the few, and pampers the spirit of indolence and indifference of the masses. It is easier to hire a skilled professional to do a job than by painstaking effort develop yourself to where you can do it. But there is an irony about doing this in the domain of the spirit, for the one who takes your

money also gets the benefit. He grows while you shrink and shrivel through disuse.

The story is told of a stone aqueduct built centuries ago to bring water from the mountains into an Italian city. The inhabitants decided it should be retired from use and serve as a monument to the skill and artisanship of the ancients. An iron pipe was laid beside it and the water diverted to run through it. Soon the aqueduct began to crack from the heat of the sun. Widening breaches appeared in the masonry and the rocks fell apart. The structure was finally in a state of complete deterioration. When it ceased to serve it fell. Unless you personally carry the water of life to others you will also perish from disuse.

We need to make clergymen out of all the laity. The word “laity” is from *laos*, the people. The word “clergy” is from *kleros*, a lot, portion, or heritage. All of *the people* in Jesus are God’s portion, thus all are His *clergy*. Let us all serve in whatever capacity we can. Let us not do it for hire, but for love. “Freely you have received, freely give.” If some are able to bear the message to the world, and have no other means of support, let us share with them according to our means and their needs, but let us restore the ideal of a self-edifying, self-perpetuating church. God’s plan is person to person— *not parson to persons!* It is not necessary that we reduce the clergy to the status of the laity. Let us elevate the laity to the status of clergymen. That will free preachers to go into all the world, for there are few clergymen who would hire another preacher to preach to them!

Developing Our Aim

Mission Messenger (February 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

“Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other, because you love each other. Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another” (Eph. 4:2, 3— Phillips’ Translation).

In previous issues we have pointed out the shame and sin of sectarianism. We believe that those who love the Lord can no longer indulge in the dubious luxury of factionalism and the party spirit. But how to free ourselves and our brethren from the labyrinth created by several generations of partisan indoctrination and traditionalism is a matter of no small concern. It is one thing to say that “The Church of Christ” must be transformed and become the church of Christ; it is an entirely different thing to suggest the means by which the change can be wrought. The problem is augmented by the fact that man is resistant to change. He clings by nature to the familiar and habitual, he resists alteration or conversion.

All of us in this generation have been affected and conditioned by circumstances we did not create. Our fathers divided and separated and bequeathed to us a perplexing and embarrassing legacy of animosity and dissension. We have been reared in factional fraternities which isolated and insulated us from contact with other believers. We sought security behind walls of human construction and judged faithfulness to God by

conformity to the clan. It would be easier to dwell apart “in the peace of our self content,” but it is not safe to do so, since we must give account to God for the responsibilities we refuse to face. We have a definite and positive responsibility to wage peace among the discordant elements of God’s children. “Blessed are the peacemakers!”

One of our greatest difficulties is created by a false sense of loyalty to the party! Many whose deep sensibilities recoil from perpetuation of the narrow concept of a religious clique among believers, are deterred from any overt declaration, and continue to pay lip service long after they are convinced of the utter futility of converting the world to a partisan position. They are restrained by fear that those with whom they have always been associated will regard them as traitors and castaways. They cannot stand the thought of proscription and ostracism. It was this same spirit which kept alive the senseless feuds in the mountain areas, with each succeeding generation convinced that it must uphold the family honor by shooting down those whose only error was in being born to another family.

In such feuds it was frequently true that those who prolonged the conflict were regarded as heroes by the ignorant and unthinking, and there were always some who sought notoriety as leaders of the clan. The same spirit obtains in religious strife, and those who pose as champions of orthodoxy and guardians of the status quo, are praised as faithful and loyal. It is little wonder that so few have the courage to rise above the partisan connection when one considers the price so frequently exacted.

We need congregations today whose members will pioneer in exploring avenues of Christian unity! Pioneers are generally courageous and daring. They are but a small minority in any society. They are frequently dissatisfied with their present lot, and willing to risk everything to better it. Yet it is these trailblazers whose sacrifices make it easy for others to follow.

We should not regard the disunity existing in the Christian realm as normal or desirable. It is abnormal and deplorable. But it will not get better by sighing, wishing, talking, or writing about it. There must be those who are willing to do something tangible and positive toward ending the situation. So long have we taught unity and practiced division that it will be a new experience and a thrilling adventure to share with others in experiments leading to closer cooperation in the Spirit.

If a few congregations become truly non-sectarian in practice, as most of them claim to be in profession, we will then have living examples of the practicality of God's design for those who love Him. We must get it off the lips and into the lives of men and women, so we will have a vital demonstration that is visual. What is required of such a congregation of saints? What must the members think? What must be their attitude? We venture to suggest a minimum basis upon which such an effort must be undertaken.

1. There must be a thorough conviction that the party spirit and factionalism are sinful. There must be an abhorrence of that disposition which divides, separates, and segregates God's people!

2. There must be a recognition that all of us have been allied with a party or faction, and that not one of the congregations in such a party is "the faithful church," nor, are all of the congregations composing such a party, when taken in the aggregate, "the faithful church." So long as we defend, apologize for, and rationalize that our group is the church of our Lord, to the exclusion of all other persons, and that our brotherhood is the one body, no one else being a member thereof, we will only continue our own brand of sectism.

3. We must humbly and freely confess to God our sin and the sin of our fathers; their sin in cleaving the body into splinter groups, our sin in perpetuating the schism and division which

they bequeathed to us. When Nehemiah learned of the trouble and shame of the survivors of Jerusalem who escaped from exile, and when he was apprised of the broken walls, he wept and mourned for days, and continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. He said, "Yea, I and my father's house have sinned." It was his broken and contrite heart which prompted God to use him as his instrument in rebuilding the walls.

4. There must be a firm resolution to make the congregation a haven of rest for all of God's children regardless of color, nationality, economic status, or previous condition of sectarian servitude. To that end it must be made known that no test of fellowship will be made which God has not made a condition of salvation. Love for each other in Christ will be the cementing principle and will transcend and overshadow all differences of opinion. Unity will not be achieved as a program, but obeyed as a command.

5. The doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers" will be made a living reality, not a mere theoretical goal. Every Christian will be regarded as a minister, and when the saints assemble for edification, each will be allowed to contribute from his fund of knowledge and experience for the upbuilding of his fellows, as each will be expected to contribute from his funds for the relief of the needy. There will be no clergyman hired to "preach to the church," and to "lay down the law," but the brethren will be "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14).

This picture is not regarded as sufficiently practicable by most of the brethren. We are continually requested to "get down to cases" and to be specific. Concrete examples are demanded. But it must be remembered that no two congregations or communities are identical. What may work in one place may not in another. A great deal of patience and forbearance is required. We are seeking the way out of a condition of long standing. Brethren are at different stages of education and interest. What

may be regarded as a mere charitable gesture in some places would be labeled as a symptom of “apostasy” in others. We must work together toward the goal of unity. Little will be accomplished by causing one division in an attempt to eliminate another. We must love all of our brethren, pray for them, and wait for them.

It has been my lot recently to work with several congregations where most of the brethren feel a deep sense of responsibility on these issues. They now realize that the church of God is a much greater and more majestic entity than the segment to which we have belonged, and they are seeking to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” They recognize that it is one thing to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the chief cornerstone, but it is quite another thing for “the whole structure to *grow into a holy temple* in the Lord.” They regard growth as a continuing and continuous process, so they can never claim to have “arrived” or to be perfect.

These saints regard every sincere immersed believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as a child of God. They invite all such who come among them to sit at the Lord’s table and share with them in sweet communion, or fellowship. If an immersed believer is currently in the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, or some other religious organization, they do not debar him from the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, but regard him as a brother unfortunate enough to be in a human party. They invite him as a brother, not as a Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian, to break bread with them. They recognize that God receives us as individuals when we are immersed upon our faith, and they receive others as God has received us. They believe that the new birth transcends all party lines, and while they regard it as a tragedy of the deepest dye that men who love Jesus should be separated into such parties, they do not consider that they would relieve the situation by creating another party under the title “The Church of Christ.”

We ought to be positive and plain, and not evasive, in an expression of our convictions. We will gain nothing for Christ by concealing our views in order to be popular with a particular segment or group. “We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:2). Perhaps I can best make my own position clear by direct answer to a few of the multitude of questions which we receive in an ever increasing volume of mail. These opinions represent only my individual and personal views. I do not speak as the representative of any faction or splinter party. You do not need to accept or concur with my expressed views for me to love and respect you. My affection for you will not be lessened one bit if you cannot, in good conscience, agree with my answers.

As a prelude I may state that most of my readers know that I hold very firm convictions against the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship of the church of God. I even refrain from singing where it is employed because of my conscience. I am also opposed to every human organization created to do the work of the ekklesia of God. I feel that all such exist as a reflection against the wisdom of God, and are hindrances to the fulfillment of His work and purpose on earth. This brief statement will help our new readers to grasp the significance of the following questions which we have winnowed from the grain of many communications.

1. *How do you regard members of the Christian Church?* They are my brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, as is every other person who has been immersed into Him upon the basis of faith, thus being born again.

2. *Do you fellowship them?* The word of God does not use the word “fellowship” in this manner. Fellowship is a state or condition which we have or hold in common with others. The

fellowship in Christ is a state into which we are called by the Good News. All who are born again are in that state, and I am in that fellowship with them, having been called out of the world.

3. *If a member of the Christian Church came to your meeting would you call upon him to pray, or otherwise participate?* Certainly so, if it did not prove embarrassing unto him. I would not do so simply to make a show or demonstration of fellowship, for it seems to me that our worship of God should be on a higher plane than a mere public exhibition of our charity. But I do not have any half-brothers in the Lord. Abraham said of Sarah, “She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother,” but those who are children of God are born of my Father, and Jerusalem which is above, is the mother of us all. I would not call upon such a person *because* he is a member of the Christian Church, any more than I would call on a person *because* he was affiliated with one of the many factions bearing the title “The Church of Christ,” but I would call upon either of them because they are brothers in the Lord, in spite of the various parties with which they are unfortunately affiliated.

4. *Does this not constitute endorsement of what you deem to be an error in their position and practice?* Not at all. Endorsement means sanction. No one sanctions what he disavows or disapproves. If I only recognized and called on those to pray whom I considered to be free from all error, I could not call upon any one that I now think of, and would have to quit praying myself.

5. *Would you teach in a Christian Church if invited to do so?* Indeed I would, and I do. Further, I will teach in a Jewish synagogue, a Roman Catholic cathedral, or anywhere else that God opens up a door for me to go. I would prefer teaching in such a place as to teaching among those with whom I am affiliated, because there are many among the brethren who are teaching these latter, but the others have no one setting forth the things we believe to be important. I will not go breathing fire like

a twentieth century dragon, but remembering that “the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness.”

6. *Does not such association actually constitute approbation of error?* Of course not. Our questioner is like the scribes and Pharisees who made the mistake of thinking that Jesus endorsed the lives and practices of the publicans and sinners by associating with them, and even eating with them. No man can be charged with sanctioning what he does not approve. Paul did not sanction all the Jews taught in some of their synagogues, nor condone all of the practices of the philosophers at Areopagus, but he associated with them, and stated his convictions to them. One does not become a sinner merely because he teaches sinners.

7. *Suppose that a small Christian Church and a small Church of Christ exist in the same village. The former decides to forego the use of the instrument for the sake of peace and to join forces with the latter for more effective witness in the community. What would they have to acknowledge?* Nothing, except a desire to labor together for the sake of our blessed Lord, and both groups should acknowledge this. Such an arrangement would be the uniting of two groups of brethren, not the acceptance of aliens by one group, nor the converting of one group by another. Both groups would have to be very charitable until they became welded together in one cohesive unit!

8. *Should not those who have used the instrument be required to acknowledge it is a sin, before being received?* If so, the “Church of Christ” is guilty of making a test of fellowship where God has made none. No one should ever be asked to acknowledge a thing is a sin when he does not believe it to be such. A group who would willingly give up instrumental music in public corporate worship for the sake of unity demonstrates a greater degree of love for the brethren and for the unity of all believers than if they became convinced that the use of the instrument was sin. It ought to be easy to quit sinning, and there

should be no other motive for doing so than the fact that one loves God, and recognizes that sin is an offense against His majesty and authority. But for brethren to give up a practice of long standing and traditional association which they do not see is a sin, and simply because they love the unity of all believers more than they love their practice is a demonstration of love in the first magnitude. We ought not to be little enough to reject those who are big enough to do such things!

9. *Under such circumstances, will we not have some in our congregations who do not think instrumental music is wrong?* We will no doubt have many such brethren, and in Saint Louis where I live, we do have a number of them.

10. *Do they not cause you anxiety or trouble?* No, because we love each other, and are happy to be able to work and worship together as one in Christ Jesus our Lord. We have not received them because they believe instrumental music is right, and they have not received us because we believe it is wrong, so the right or wrong of instrumental music is not, therefore, the ground of acceptance, and cannot constitute the ground of rejection. We have received them as the Lord has received us. We do not regard ourselves as either “The Church of Christ” or “The Christian Church” in the modern sectarian sense in which those terms are used by two rival parties, but we are the church of God, composed of saints, all of whom are weak, imperfect, and struggling to help each other overcome their imperfections.

11. *Isn't this a kind of cheap and easy way to achieve unity?* Really, that is a three-fold question. Unity is not something to be achieved, but is a command to be obeyed. We are under a divine injunction to “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace.” One does not achieve baptism, nor formulate a program of baptism. He is commanded to be baptized, and he either obeys the command or he does not. We have not achieved unity, or formulated a program of unity, but are just obeying the command to “agree with one another and

live in peace.” We are doing so because of respect for the authority of Jesus who told us to do it. It is not at all easy, but requires more forbearance, restraint, and patience, than to be separated and divided. The reason many husbands and wives separate is because it is easier to live apart than together. But the alternative to spiritual peace in our world is so frightful that we feel we must work in unity regardless of how hard or difficult the task. It is not *cheap*. We are misrepresented and falsely accused by many, including preachers who once partook freely of our hospitality, but who are resentful that we refuse to be partisan spokesmen and champions any longer. Anyone who seeks to rise above party politics will pay a fearful price. No, it is not cheap!

12. *Do all among whom you go reciprocate your feelings?* Not at all. I visit many congregations, some of which use instrumental music, most of which do not. Many of these seem uncomfortable by my presence. They would not think of calling upon me to address the Father in their audience. But I feel nothing except a deep sense of compassion for them, and I can pray for them as did Hannah who “was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard.” I know from experience what factionalism and the party spirit do to the heart, and while I am far from being free of all its residue, I am, at last, at the place where I can rejoice when truth is proclaimed regardless of the proclaimer or his motives. It was a long, hard struggle to arrive at that juncture, and required much meditation, prayer, and confession.

13. *Do some with whom you have labored think you have become soft and compromising?* Only the more charitable ones feel that way; others think I have lost my mind, gone insane, and betrayed the cause. One brother told me that he knew how the rest of the twelve must have felt when Judas Iscariot sold his Lord. He naturally felt that he was one of the rest of the twelve. A preaching brother in Colorado told me in the presence of a number of other brethren that if he had learned he was wrong

on as many things in attitude and teaching, as I had admitted, he would retire from all public service in the church and never attempt to preach or teach again. He recommended I do that, but not being amenable to his discipline, I will continue in my weak way to advocate the unity of all believers as the sole basis for bringing the world under the benign government of our Lord and King.

14. *The previous questions deal primarily with division in the disciple brotherhood, but is this view of the problem too limited? I think so. We must never forget that the Restoration Movement was launched by persons in the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist parties, with a view to uniting all Christians, and when it began there was no “disciple brotherhood.” If we restore the Restoration, we will need to go back beyond the formation of the “disciple brotherhood” and take up where the movement was sidetracked, or derailed, and recapture the original spirit and purpose.*

15. *Do you honestly feel that God has children in the various sects today? If He does not, He probably never had, and if He never had, there was no church of God for centuries until Alexander Campbell arrived. It is inconceivable to me that for the greater majority of the time since He ascended to heaven, Jesus has been a shepherd without a single sheep, a king without a subject, a head without a body, or a Saviour who saved no one for seventeen hundred years. Yes, I think there may be many children of God scattered among the various sects.*

16. *If someone who had been immersed, but had been associated with a sect, presented himself for membership with the congregation where you worship, would you accept him? Indeed we would, and thus heed the divine injunction to “Receive one another, therefore, as Christ has received you, for the glory of God.” We would not demand that such a person be immersed again, even though at the time of his immersion he did not fully understand all of the blessings which accrued from the act.*

Baptism is not a test of knowledge but of faith, and the faith which it tests is faith that Jesus is the Son of God, not faith in baptism.

17. Suppose an entire congregation of Baptists decided to divest themselves of their partisan tendencies, and join forces with you. What would you require of them? I would accept their decision in good faith and welcome them without further ado. I wish all of them would decide to become Christians only, and I wish my brethren would all allow them to do so, without constructing human barriers in their pathway. It is as wrong to make “Church of Christ” Christians as it is to make Baptist Christians, or any other brand. We need to let those who are called of God by the gospel be what God called them to be. “There let them remain with God” (1 Cor. 7:24).

18. Is not such a course revolutionary in the Restoration Movement? Indeed not! In 1804, Barton W. Stone made a trip to Meigs County, Ohio, for the purpose of immersing William Caldwell, a Presbyterian minister. He was invited to preach to the Separate Baptist Association. He reported, “The result was that they agreed to cast away their formularies and creeds, and take the Bible alone for their rule of faith and practice; to throw away their name ‘Baptist’ and take the name ‘Christian’; and to bury their Association and become one with us in the great work of Christian union. They then marched to the stand where we were preaching, shouting the praise of God and proclaiming aloud what they had done. We met them, and embraced each other in Christian love.”

In 1826, Sidney Rigdon was minister of a Baptist church in Mentor, Ohio. He read *Christian Baptist* and adopted its teaching on restoration. In the spring of 1828, he visited Walter Scott, at Warren. Upon his return nearly the whole church accepted cordially the doctrine of the Lord, exchanged their “articles” for the new covenant as the only divine basis for Christ’s church, and abandoned unscriptural titles and church names, choosing

to be known simply as disciples of Christ.

19. *Do you see any favorable indications leading you to hope for better conditions?* **Yes, I do see a great many!** The whole religious world is being made acutely conscious of the sin of division. What was once condoned as an indication of spiritual strength is now vociferously condemned as a symptom of weakness. A very auspicious and encouraging atmosphere has been created for discussion. One who advocates the unity of all believers and the realization of the divine purpose in one body is no longer regarded as an agitator or a disturber. It has been my privilege to discuss the problem with some of the eminent clergymen in our area, and all of these interviews have been on a very high level. Even though we may disagree with the means proposed for implementing the ecumenical movement, we can thank God for the spirit of concern which gave it birth and we can utilize the opportunities afforded by it for mutual discussion of the tragedy of division, and also for suggesting some things which we hope will lead to better days.

20. *Are you aware of the criticism leveled at you because of your emphasis upon these problems?* **Yes, I probably know more about that than anyone else!** A few months ago a preaching brother wrote me that he had heard from one of “the most talented and dependable evangelists among us” who is alleged to have said about me, “He has ridden the fellowship hobby so long he has probably forgotten how to convert a soul to Christ.” The preaching brother who wrote me accused me of offering nothing spiritual, but only “long winded theses on philosophy, politics, and history.”

I discount such intemperate utterances, realizing that they are spoken in intensity of feeling. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” These brethren are good men. They want to do right, but they are victims of the party spirit, which always places in the worst light one who will not conform. They are acting toward me exactly as I once acted toward others. I am

merely being paid back in my own coin for the years of partisan littleness which characterized my life. They are frightened and fearful that if we succeed in restoring unity the faction with which we have always been allied will sink into oblivion in the greatness and majesty of the kingdom of heaven. They regard this as the church losing its identity. I regard it as the church regaining her homogeneity, and would gladly see every faction disappear to regain the oneness for which Jesus prayed. Indeed, I know of no other way to secure it.

With many brethren, nothing is spiritual unless produced under the party label. The apostle wrote, "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will . . . the former proclaim Christ out of partisanship" (Phil. 1:15, 17). The attitude and purpose of proclaiming Christ needs to be considered. I know of no better way to show my love for our blessed Lord than to labor diligently to try in my feeble way to help answer his prayer for the unity of all believers. I shall not be deterred from this serious calling by reckless and unfounded statements, "for it is all for your sake, so that as grace is extended to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God."

21. *What can those who love the Lord do to help in this great effort to restore the spirit of the Restoration movement?* They can cultivate a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence toward all men; they can study their Bibles daily with unveiled faces; they can pray God to raise up men to help rebuild the walls of Zion and to repair the breaches; they can make available the plea for restoration to all of the honest hearts in the communities where they reside, by mailing them proper reading matter which will challenge their thinking and arouse them from sectarian complacency. The child of God need not be afraid to go anywhere that men talk about Jesus, or to read any thing, or discuss with any one. Indeed, he will seek opportunities to broaden his influence and extend his contacts. Salt and leaven can only work effectively when they directly encounter that

which they are to effect. Neither can accomplish its purpose by remote control or through isolation. "Conduct yourself wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one."

In closing, let me again state that these answers represent only my own thinking with reference to some of the problems we face. It may be that I do not fully comprehend the nature of the problems, and my proposals may not conform to the ideas of the readers. You need not agree with what I have written in order to be loved and respected. You will be my brethren in the Lord even though you may feel that I am mistaken about all of these matters under discussion. I do not have all of the answers, I know, and some that I think are correct may prove to be otherwise. But while I cannot plead infallibility or unerring judgment, I have resolved that I will be second to no one in my love for the brotherhood of those for whom Jesus died and who have acknowledged His sovereignty over their lives. Pray for me as I do for all of you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

Pride and Shame

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

In his epistle to the saints of Philippi, the apostle Paul referred to some of whom he had spoken previously, and of whom he again wrote while weeping over their state. One characteristic of these people lay in the fact that their glory was in their shame. J. B. Phillips translates the passage, “Their pride is in what they should be ashamed of.”

It seems very difficult to continue to glory in the cross, that symbol of suffering and sacrifice. Those who begin in humility and poverty, seek to forget or disguise their beginning when they climb to heights of respectability and worldly recognition. Their set of values is altered. Their faith in God is supplanted by their trust in organizers. In a desire to lend glamor to the party they discard the raiment washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and substitute for it the stolen livery of Satan. The simple story of the cross is embellished and adorned with all of the trappings of the stage and theater. The “Good News” is presented in full color and rotogravure.

The modern party known as “The Church of Christ” is a good illustration of what we mean. It is one of several groups resulting from a restoration movement begun a century and a half ago. This movement was inaugurated by consecrated men in the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist communions to promote the unity of the Christians in all sects by pleading for a

restoration of the primitive order of things. It is a tragedy of this age that this noble experiment ran aground upon the rocks of human passion and was battered into fragments and splintered by the breakers of partisanship and animosity. As is ever the case "The Church of Christ" has now crystallized into a competitive sect, vying with other parties in a decadent Christianity for popular favor, membership and money.

This is a grave charge, but the proof is evident. It is observable in the publicity accorded movie stars, athletes and prominent figures in the political or business world. It would appear that one becomes the subject of spiritual growth by the ability to drive a golf ball, run a fast mile, or croon a love song. The huckstering of such talents, and the basking in the reflected glory of the world, is a symptom of deep seated spiritual illness.

The charge is sustained by the eagerness to get newspaper space for accounts of sumptuous banquets held in luxury hotels, at which prominent figures in church life are given special citations, and have plaques presented to them by church-related institutions. At such meetings political big-wigs are present, governors, senators and lesser lights, all speaking in commendatory fashion and lauding the attainments of the clergyman. There has been a recent rash of honorary degrees. Men are now accorded the title "Doctor of Laws," so they can hold up their heads among the theologians, although they know no more the day after they are marked as men of distinction than they did the day before. But "The Church of Christ" once regarded as a little insignificant group of dissenters, unlearned except in the Word of God, dare no longer play second fiddle in the mad race for modern recognition.

Once upon a time these congregations emphasized the spirituality, zeal and Biblical knowledge of the whole membership. In those days David Lipscomb wrote of a congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, in this fashion:

A church that has to send to others for help to conduct its services in worship or work is not a self-supporting and self-edifying church. This is true, no matter how great the number, the talent, or the wealth of the congregation. . . . We have scarcely a male member who will not lead in the worship if desired. . . . Such a hand of earnest, working Christians is much more effective for converting the world than a rich church of a thousand wealthy, fashionable members supporting one of the most learned and eloquent preachers in the land to study, teach, pray, exhort, and admonish for them, while they live at ease and support him. . . . The congregation is the school for educating and preparing men for any and all the work God has commanded to his church.

A great change has been wrought since the days of Lipscomb. The emphasis is now on the clergyman who occupies the pulpit. His name appears in all of the advertising on the church page of the newspaper. It is the only one on the sign in front of the meetinghouse. He alone of all the members has a house— a parsonage or manse— provided at the expense of others. He receives a salary with allowances for car and utilities. The day of “the pastor” has arrived and members who approved a candidate in a trial sermon or oratorical contest, speak loving and glowingly of “our new minister.” “The Church of Christ” has moved uptown. It is now on Main Street. It has wall-to-wall carpeting, cushioned pews, floral offerings and an educational plant with a fellowship hall. In short, it has at last “arrived.”

But there is an uneasy feeling. The speaker must use loaded terms such as “The Lord’s people” and “The Lord’s church” over and over, as if trying to convince himself and his auditors. Faithfulness is no longer equated with holiness or freedom from worldliness. The deacons who pass the emblems of the body and blood of the crucified Jesus may have yelled themselves hoarse at the boxing ring the night previous. Richly gowned women with gaudy jewels may have arranged a theater party on Saturday afternoon. Those who sit in the pews go

where the world goes, talk like the world talks, act like the world acts. They are joint participators with the world in everything except matters of doctrine. Ah, there is the difference! That is what makes one “sound.” That is the criterion of faithfulness. They are loyal to the party. They will not compromise one “item of worship.” They have a form of doctrine and they will defend it come what may.

The members now approve themselves as ministers of God by flailing the sects, by bitterly lashing out at those who use instrumental music or seek to promote the spread of the gospel by societies. But still there is the uncomfortable feeling that the apostles of Jesus might not feel at home with them. The ambassadors of heaven might seem out of place, for this method of approving one as a minister of God would appear strange to them. It was one of those apostles who wrote:

I prove myself at all points a true minister of God, by my great endurance, by suffering, by troubles, by calamities, by lashes, by imprisonment; mobbed, toiling, sleepless, starving . . . amid honour and dishonour, amid evil report and good report, an “impostor” but honest, “unknown” but well-known, dying but here I am alive, chastened but not killed, grieved but always glad, a “pauper” but the means of wealth to many, without a penny but possessed of everything.

“The Church of Christ” should face up to the facts of life. It is not a reproduction of the primitive ekklesia of God. The things the brethren boast about are symptoms of their weakness. Orphan homes operated for profit and gain are living monuments to a lack of love in the homes of those whose hearts have grown smaller as their houses grew larger. Colleges to train servants for the local churches testify to a breakdown of congregational strength and function. Men must be sent away, out of the community, out from under the local eldership, to be reared by a handmaid, a foster mother, an alma mater. The hired clergymen, professional pulpiteers coming for a salary and

departing when it is cut off, are eloquent witnesses to the infirmity and inferiority of the members who can no longer stand or walk by themselves and who must be spoon fed by another acting as a qualified baby sitter. Kermit Eby, a member of the *Church of the Brethren*, puts it this way:

Professionals are those we hire and pay to give religious expression, when we no longer believe anything enough to give expression to it ourselves. It is impossible for me to conceive of an individual believing something and not wishing to share it.

If the day ever comes that members become ashamed of their human organizations and professional clergymen; if they apologize for them and weepingly confess that they are crutches contrived because of weakness and inability there will be hope. If they regard these as stays and supports for a period of invalidism and sickness and have an urgent desire to walk without them and dispense with them as soon as possible, recovery may come. But so long as they brag about these symbols of spiritual deficiency and decadence, they will grow farther from God's ideal, *for their pride is in what they ought to be ashamed of!*

Size and Importance

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[Abstract]

The scientists and philosophers of an earlier day regarded the earth as the center of the universe. In that remote age it was thought that all the other planets revolved around this terrestrial sphere. We now know the earth is but a flyspeck on the face of infinity. The space probes of this generation have demonstrated how cosmically insignificant is our dwelling place. This provides another point of attack for the learned skeptic. The probability of the Incarnation of the Word is held up to doubt, if not to ridicule. It is argued that it is inconceivable that a diminutive planet such as this could have been the scene of such a unique and divine demonstration or visitation. That Deity would single out such a microscopic orb of whirling matter and make it the object of special purpose is conceived to be a triviality unworthy of a divine intellect.

That such thinking may undermine, and even destroy the faith of some, must be admitted. We must recognize that there is a personal bias against the doctrine of Incarnation. If it be true that God personally visited this earth, the responsibility of man in the moral and spiritual realm is great indeed. Those who confuse liberty with license cannot stifle conscience until they suppress the cross. The argument of our relative unimportance based upon a comparison of the size of our temporal abode with that of stars and moons is mere wishful thinking, slanted toward self-deception.

The fallacy in such rationalization should be immediately apparent. It makes material magnitude the sole measuring reed or criterion of worth. This is the equivalent of concluding that a man who lives in a one room house in an area surrounded by large dwellings (not even known to be occupied), should be regarded as an inferior and unworthy person. It is a good thing that Abraham Lincoln was not exposed to such imaginative speculation. It is not the size of the dwelling but the character and potential of the man who lives there that makes for moral stature. The Incarnation was not for the purpose of enabling divine inspection of the largest created area, but to redeem man!

By the very explorations upon which the skeptic bases his doubts, man demonstrates that his thoughts can reach beyond the limits of space. Too, it is a recognized fact that the love of man can outlast time. It would appear that man is, therefore, a creature destined to a life which is illimitable and unconfined by time and space. Otherwise the noblest of his attributes would never reach fruition or fulfillment. This being true, it is but natural that God would visit His creation to prepare them for such a life beyond the material realm and its confines. Man's aspirations are not confined alone to the planet toward which gravity constantly draws his material frame. He seeks to free himself from the power which clasps him to the bosom of mother earth. Gravity exerts no influence over the spirit. Shall that spirit never really be free from material limitations?

We regard it as absurd for the modern researchist who employs the scientific method in every other field to abandon it in an attempt to rid himself of the idea of personal responsibility to God. There is ample testimony that Jesus of Nazareth lived among men. He claimed to be the Son of God. His life was without reproach. His ethical standards were such as to show superiority to those of the wisest men of his earthly stay. But to substantiate his claim, he offered the only proof capable of demonstrating his divinity to man. He performed supernatural acts of such magnitude as to convince the distrustful and convict

the unbelieving.

Men saw these signs, and motivated by them, acknowledged the claim of Jesus. So certain were they of the validity and truth of what they saw, that they suffered death by torture rather than deny it. It is now impossible, twenty centuries later, to examine or criticize the evidence. It was of such a nature that it would have to be seen to be evaluated. Visible demonstrations of power can be conclusive only to those who behold them. The modern skeptic cannot deny the evidence. He cannot successfully evade it. His only recourse is to shut his eyes to it, and this is the resort of the dishonest and prejudiced.

To argue that the Incarnation could not have taken place because of the relative insignificance as to bulk and size of this planet in the cosmos, is to ignore all the facts which testify and prove that it did occur. As the mind of man is greater than the material modes of calculation which he employs to express his own creativity, so these methods of measurement can never suffice to reckon value of the human creative personality. That God regarded it of such transcendent worth as to justify His being in Christ to reconcile the world unto Himself, should cause us all to ponder upon the fact that man may conquer space and lose his soul. It is only when the spirit of man is a satellite of Jesus that man is in his true orbit.

We believe that Pascal (*Pensees* 2-10-1) stated a fact worth remembering when he said, "If the entire physical universe conspired to crush a man, the man would still be nobler than the entire physical universe, for he would know that he was being crushed."

A Spiritual Adventure

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[Abstract]

We invite you to a new series of studies. In months to come, God willing, we shall walk with you through the aisles of divine revelation, stopping only to pluck the fruit of grace and knowledge. We shall act as guide on these strolls, not because of any extraordinary ability, but because of intense eagerness which will not allow us to postpone the journey any longer. It is our fervent hope that those who accompany us will point out salient features which we overlook as a result of personal shortcomings. As we share our observations we can strengthen and sustain each other. No one will be debarred from accompanying us on these adventures of faith. You are urged to solicit your friends and dear ones to go along, regardless of religious affiliation. Our prime objective will be a search for truth. This is the noblest pursuit to which rational beings may consecrate their lives. It pre-supposes an admission that there are still truths which we have not discovered, that there are vital areas unexplored. There are two classes who will not benefit by further reading: those who think they know all there is to know; and those who do not, but are unwilling to learn more. The first are blinded by conceit and egotism, the others are doomed by a spirit of unconcern and indifference.

As is true with all explorers equipping themselves for an adventure, there are certain things of which we must divest ourselves, and others which we must take along, to assure

ourselves of a reasonable hope of success. We cannot afford to be impeded in our progress by dragging along excess baggage. We must “lay aside every weight.” As the leader in this current expedition which we are arranging, we suggest a few items which we will need to discard. Since this expedition is in the mental or intellectual realm, the hindering factors will be primarily in the category of attitudes.

We should leave behind our partisan spirit as it will warp our vision and cause us to view things in a false light. Truth is not a party possession. It is not a sectarian monopoly. It is the breath of the spirit as the atmosphere is of the physical body, given to all as the source of life by a beneficent creator. As the air becomes polluted by noxious gases so truth can be corrupted when mixed with sectarian bias. All prejudice and traditional allegiance should be deposited before we start, since these are encumbrances which will soon discourage our further progress, so burdensome do they become.

We will need to include a great degree of humility so that we not over-estimate either our ability or importance. An extraordinary amount of faith will be required to keep us from faltering when the going becomes hard. We must recognize ourselves as men and women of destiny, and must be content to allow our motives and findings to be questioned, misunderstood and attacked, while we await the judgment and verdict of history to vindicate us. The stones hurled at original thinkers and pioneers while they live are often made into a monument for them after they die. There will be required a good measure of fortitude and bravery for it is not easy to accept new ideas which run counter to our previous views.

I have long been affiliated with one segment of the Restoration Movement, a noble enterprise inaugurated one hundred fifty years ago with a view to uniting the Christians in all sects by restoration of the ancient order of things in the Christian domain. The disintegration of that effort into a

multiplicity of antagonistic parties is a matter of grave concern, for while these expend their resources and energies in prosecuting war against each other, the Christians in other sects continue separated and segregated from each other with no one seeming to care. What happened to the idea of the Restoration Movement? Was its ideal false and impractical from its inception? If not, should we seek to reactivate it in our own generation?

It is the conviction of the writer that no more worthy crusade can engage the energies of the sons of God than to attempt to restore peace where chaos now reigns. Indeed it is the peacemakers who are blessed by being called the children of God. It may be urged that the pursuit of unity is a futile quest and impossible of realization. To all who decry our efforts we simply affirm that it is the will of God, and it is better to die fighting for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven than to live useless lives in which there is no real endeavor to answer the prayer of Jesus.

We propose to examine for ourselves the reason for the distortion and dismemberment of the Restoration movement. Our analysis will be for the purpose of avoiding the pitfalls in the future. We should seek to elude the traps set by Satan for the unwary. The enemy of souls does not want believers in Jesus to unite. He will employ every stratagem to keep them alienated from each other. So long as he can enlist those who will thwart the divine purpose under the guise of loyalty or faithfulness, he can rest at ease. It must be a festal occasion in the nether regions when one of the demons can invade the precincts of the sanctuary and get someone to urge dividing over a plea for unity.

Believers in Jesus are divided and separated. They are a displaced and dispersed people. We must face up to this fact. We should not try to conceal it under finespun theories. We should not rationalize ourselves into believing that we have herded all

the sheep into one earthly corral. Why does this sad and sorry state of things prevail? We could hardly be more divided if God had commanded it. It is evident that we are where our thinking has brought us. To continue in that type of thinking will lead us farther astray. If we are to be better off tomorrow, we must begin to think differently today.

It is not God's thinking that has produced our present predicament. "God is not the author of confusion but of peace." It is our own reasoning that is responsible. If we change our status we must think as God thinks. This demands a re-study of His revelation. Such an investigation must be made with unveiled face. We must not bend God's word to suit our theories, but abandon our ideas to accept His word. In the research which we now commence we will cut across the thinking of many of our readers. Some of what we say will be diametrically opposed to what you have previously thought.

Shallow reasoners will condemn us, preferring to remain in mental stagnation than to have the waters troubled. Only little minds and shrivelled souls cry out like the demons in the days when Jesus was upon earth, "Let us alone." We need the constant challenge of investigation. Truth does not fear the light of research. It welcomes the full glare of publicity. It has nothing to hide and knows no dread. It does not quail before the examiner nor shrink from the inquisitor. That we not prolong our introduction unduly, let us briefly state some of the principles which we propose to establish in our forthcoming issues. By enunciating them now you will have opportunity to examine and scrutinize them in advance and to formulate personal convictions relative to them before we proceed to establish them by inspired testimony.

1. The thirty-nine books from Genesis to Malachi do not constitute the *old testament*, or covenant of God. They contain in brief compass a statement of the covenant, but the greater part of these books were written to or about a covenant people. The

covenant which established relationship was one thing, the scriptures or writings which grew out of it a totally different thing.

2. The twenty-seven books or letters from Matthew to Revelation, do not constitute the *new testament*. The new covenant which God declared he would make was not written with pen and ink at all, was never addressed to a church, or to the church, and thousands entered into covenant relationship with God years before one word of the new covenant scriptures was penned. The new covenant is one thing, the scriptures or writings which grew out of it a totally different thing.

3. The message of heaven calculated to enroll aliens under the sovereignty of Jesus was referred to as “the Good News (gospel) of Jesus Christ.” It was never addressed to citizens of the kingdom of God. It was good *news*, not a course of instruction. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, etc., are not a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are not a part of the new covenant, but are letters written to a covenant people when circumstances warranted it.

4. A proper response to the Good News demanded belief of but one fact, that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son. The man who reformed his life because of the implications of this proclamation, and was immersed to fulfill the righteousness of God was thereby inducted into the Reign of heaven.

5. The church of God on earth is composed of all who sustain a covenant relationship with God, having had their sins washed away by the blood of Jesus, and enjoying the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The church of God, as the family of God, is a fellowship of the elect, or called saints. Every one who has been born again is a member of that family, and is a brother to every other person who is in it. The church of God is a covenantal community of saints.

We believe there are breath-taking potentials and possibilities in these premises. A lack of understanding of these is responsible for many of the sectarian cleavages in our world today. It is ignorance of these truths which has caused the Restoration movement to flounder and fall upon the rocks to be lashed and battered by the waves of doubt and suspicion. A dogmatic demand for conformity in areas where God has never required it, combined with a disregard for the fundamental and essential truths of the first magnitude, has made of the sacred scriptures a partisan battering ram to buffet and browbeat honest hearts and wreak havoc upon the unity of the Spirit as well as severing the bond of peace.

We are certain that the casual reader will not recognize any tremendous significance in these statements, for such a reader sees little significance in anything he peruses, even the word of God. Some will bitterly resent the implications and will doubt the sanity of one who is so rash as to question that the thirty-nine books are the old testament of God. There may be those who labor under the delusion that the sacred oracles declare that the new covenant of God consists of twenty-seven books or letters. All such are in for a great surprise and a shock treatment if they do not cancel their subscriptions prematurely.

But what difference does it make? The greatest difference is truth as opposed to error. But on a practical basis the entire structure of “fellowship” will be altered if the suggestions we make can be proven. If the new covenant with God is a personal and individual relationship into which one enters as a result of his conviction of sinfulness and of utter dependence upon Jesus for salvation, and if this brings him into a state of fellowship with God and Christ prior to, and independent of his knowledge of citizenship requirements of the new testament scriptures, then it is not knowledge of or obedience to a certain proportion of these scriptures at any given time, but his attitude toward them, that determines acceptability with God.

That you may clearly understand what we mean let us use an illustration of current interest. A cleavage exists today over a pre-millennial interpretation of the sacred writings. There are those who conclude from a study of the Apocalypse, chapter 20, in conjunction with other scriptures, that Jesus will return to this earth and reign here a thousand years. These brethren are sincere and honest. So are many of those who differ with their exposition. But a millennial view of any kind is not essential to covenant relationship with God, and should never be made a test or basis of fellowship. The thousands on Pentecost entered into covenant relationship with God and had no position on the millennium unless they brought it with them from Judaism. There is every reason to believe that many of them held mistaken ideas about the imminence of the appearing of Jesus, and there are indications that some in the primitive church of God expected Jesus to return to earth. But these opinions did not create a division, and they continued in unity in spite of their differences. To them the redemption in Christ Jesus was greater than their personal views regarding his future arrangements. The test was not how he would come in the future, but that he had come in the flesh. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2, 3).

Those who are in covenant relationship with God do not all hold the same opinions. They do not believe alike about all things. But this does not necessarily affect their covenant relationship for it is not based upon their perfect knowledge of the apostles' doctrine but upon their firm conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son. We are told, "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions." None of us has yet "arrived." We are all at different stages of knowledge. "If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him" (1 Cor. 8:2, 3). Our acceptability to God does not depend upon our knowledge of all

the fine points of doctrine, but upon our love for him.

We are to welcome each other in spite of shortcomings, mistaken opinions and varied views. And we are not to welcome one who differs with us simply to maneuver him into a place where we can debate his opinions. We can differ in belief on many things and still be together if our love for each other is greater than our differences. “One *believes* he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables” (Rom. 14:2). To divide the church of God into pre-millennial and post-millennial parties is as sinful as to divide it into carnivorous and herbivorous parties. All such divisions are a symptom of carnality. All result from rationalization that is earthly, sensual and devilish.

But is not one of these opinions wrong? Let us grant that it is! Can we remain in fellowship with such wrong opinion? We are not in fellowship with opinions at all, whether they are right or wrong. We are in fellowship with persons, with *fellows*. Can we remain in fellowship with a person who holds a wrong opinion? If not, we cannot be in fellowship with anyone, not even ourselves. Could the man whose conscience compelled him to eat only vegetables remain in fellowship with the one who *believed* he could eat anything, and vice versa? Certainly so! Why? “Because the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” By the same token the kingdom does not mean pre-millennialism, post-millennialism, or a-millennialism. Neither is it a theory as to the nature of Deity. Nor is it leavened bread, unleavened bread; fermented wine, unfermented wine; one container or multiple containers for distribution of the fruit of the vine. Let brethren believe whichever of these they honestly esteem as proper, but let them emphasize, all of them, “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” “He who *thus serves Christ* is acceptable to God and approved by men.” He who pushes, drives and forces his brethren into a partisan position, who divides and rends the body of our Lord, is not acceptable to God. Such a course is not

even approved by men who are thinking persons!

Is it humanly possible for a congregation of saints to continue as one when part of them hold a pre-millennial view and the rest do not so interpret the Scriptures? Not *humanly possible*, for it is the human tendency to be selfish, to bite and devour one another. But true children of God are not ordinary men. They are extraordinary men. They have something that ordinary men do not have—the indwelling Spirit of God. Thus they are not *merely men*. It is the unity of the Spirit which must be guarded in the bond of peace. Those who divide must first quench the Spirit, for division is an act of the flesh. It stems from men who are fleshly and immature. “For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like *ordinary men*? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos, are you not merely men?’” (1 Cor. 3:3, 4).

We have sought to base a superstructure of religion upon attainment to knowledge and wisdom. We have predicated the idea that unity is based upon conformity. But conformity in the absolute demands equal ability of perception, simultaneous arrival at perfection in knowledge, and universality of wisdom. If we begin retrenchment from plenary conformity we surrender the whole system and acknowledge that it is fallacious. For if conformity must not be absolute, then who is to determine in how many things we must conform, in how many leniency may be shown, and which things fall in each category? The one who attempted such legislation would usurp the room of God. Indeed that is exactly what has happened for the system has bred fallible beings possessed of a theocratic complex. For this reason the envoy of Jesus writes, “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld for the Master is able to make him stand.” A lot of us need to be brought up short by the pointed query, “*Who are you?*”

It will be our thesis in the months ahead that since Jesus was “put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification,” we now personally and individually enter into covenant relationship with God in response to the Good News, and that such relationship is not created by conformity to a legalistic system, either human or divine, but that we ourselves become “letters about Christ, written not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God.” We will expect to show that the new covenant is not written upon paper nor engraved in stone, but is inscribed on human hearts, and that the apostles were “qualified to be ministers of a new covenant *not in a written code, but in the Spirit.*”

Do we then overthrow the apostolic writings by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the apostolic writings. We put them in the place which God has assigned them. They were written to a covenant people, to strengthen, encourage, warn and correct them. The new covenant is entered by birth, not by a legalistic arrangement, not by performance of good deeds or acts of righteousness. “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).

But even though we were dead in sins God was so rich in mercy that He gave us the very life of Christ (for it is, remember, by grace and not by achievement that you are saved), and has lifted us right out of the old life to take our place with Him in Christ in the heavens. Thus he shows for all time the tremendous generosity of the grace and kindness He has expressed toward us in Christ Jesus. It was nothing you could or did achieve—it was God’s gift to you. No one can pride himself that he earned the love of God. The fact is that what we are we owe to the Hand of God upon us. We are born afresh in Christ, and born to do

those good deeds which God planned for us to do (Eph. 2:4-10 —Phillips).

For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

We do not enter into covenant relationship with the God of all grace by agreeing with our fellowmen upon the meaning of a code of laws, or by conforming to a set of opinions, nor yet upon the knowledge of the import and implications of a series of letters, but by faith in a fact— in one supreme fact. A much more able and talented writer than the author has phrased it thus:

When the Messiah appeared as the founder of a new religion, systems of religion consisting of opinions and speculations upon matter and mind, upon God and nature, upon virtue and vice, had been adopted, improved, reformed, and exploded time after time. That there was always something superfluous, something defective, something wrong, something that could be improved, in every system of religion and morality, was generally felt, and at last was universally acknowledged. But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this— that *the belief of one fact*, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, so far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this *one fact* and submission to *one institution* expressive of it is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church (Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, page 130).

In elucidating further, Mr. Campbell says:

A Christian, as defined, not by Dr. Johnson, nor any creed-maker, but by one taught from Heaven, is one that believes in this *one fact*, and has submitted to *one institution*, and whose deportment accords with the morality and virtue of the great Prophet. The one fact is expressed in a single proposition *that Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah . . . The one institution is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. Every such person is a disciple in the fullest sense of the word, the moment he has believed this one fact . . . and has submitted to the above-mentioned institution; and whether he believes the five points condemned, or the five points approved by the Synod of Dort, is not so much as to be asked of him; whether he holds any of the views of the Calvinists or Arminians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, or Quakers, is never once to be asked of such persons, in order to admission into the Christian community, called the church.

Our entrance into the fellowship of the saints is not contingent upon a knowledge of, or a position on, the material composing the apostolic injunctions to the churches of God. The new covenant is a personal agreement with God based upon faith that Jesus is His Son come in the flesh, and ratified by our submission to the ordinance of immersion. Certainly when we thus enlist as disciples, we obligate ourselves to become familiar with our increasing responsibility and informed as to our duties, but this is to be done as a covenant person, as one who is in Christ Jesus. The responsibility of no two persons is identical at any given moment for no two have identical ability or opportunity. To set up a system by which fellowship is conditioned upon equality of knowledge and opportunity is to create a state in which strife, division, confusion and every evil work will inevitably result, and in which no one dares to express an original thought, until everyone else has automatically discovered it for himself, in which case it is no longer original,

and does not need stating at all.

Experience should teach us that unity can never be achieved by coercion or forced conformity. The multiplicity of schisms, factions, sects, and parties, witness to the futility of that course pursued in the past. But if unity is not to be secured upon the basis of common opinion and understanding of all revelation, how can it be brought about? My reply is that it can only result from a mutual love for each other based upon a common relationship to Jesus. Unity is a command which we obey in love because of what has been done for us. We are not one in opinion, we are one in Christ! It is not that we are reconciled to all the views of each other, but that all of us have been reconciled to God that makes us one body. “And might reconcile us both to God in one body by the cross, thereby bringing hostility to an end” (Eph. 2:16). Our peace is not the result of mutual understanding of every scriptural passage. Our peace is personal. He is our peace! It is our agreement with God, our covenant, that brings us into relationship!

It is not our study, acquisition of knowledge, learning of the law, or ability as teachers or expounders, which makes us children of God. We become children by procreation, not education. We are God’s offspring because of what He has done for us, not because of what we have done for Him. Nothing creates itself. We could no more become a new creation spontaneously than we could have become men by that method. The very term “creation” indicates an action by a Creator who preceded that which was called into being. Creation implies transformation. Malice, envy, and hate belong to the carnal man. “We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). If we are no longer in this state or condition to what do we attribute the change?

The writer specifically says it did not result from “deeds

done by us in righteousness.” He credits it to “the goodness and loving kindness of God,” to “the virtue of his own mercy,” and to “the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” He affirms that as a result we are justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. We cease to hate and be hated because we are heirs in common. We share in the same hope. We no longer pass our days in malice and envy, but in love and service. We avoid those things which are divisive and dangerous, for we know how stupid and unprofitable it is to engage in contention and useless controversy.

I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned (Titus 3:8-11).

A factious man is one who is contentious, seditious, and party-spirited. He will sacrifice the peace and harmony of the body to have his way. He builds a clique about himself. He is the spearhead of a splinter party, the sachem of a segment, the chief of a confederation. He does not love the brotherhood, for to him no one is a brother who disagrees with him. No one is right with God who is not in good with him. No one is in the favor of God who falls under his disfavor. It is this spirit which has shivered, severed, and segregated God’s people into warring tribes.

If we can catch the true spirit of Christianity we will see that all of us who have come into Christ Jesus are members one of another by virtue of our covenant with God. This will not guarantee that we will see every point of sacred scripture alike, but it will at least put our disagreements in proper perspective.

It will emphasize the centrality of Jesus as the hope of our salvation. The emphasis will be upon Him. He will be the source of our strength and will become our peace. Heretofore, every viewpoint and opinion has been greater than Jesus in our thinking. In our pride and stubbornness we have not hesitated to fracture His body when we disagreed with others. This amounts to a virtual dethronement of Jesus and an exaltation of ourselves which is opposed to the very genius of the Christian way. It is not our varied concepts which have divided us but our attitude toward Jesus and each other. There will always be divergencies of viewpoint. We must choose whether we shall emphasize these, or Jesus. Every generation must make this choice. The tragic history of the choice in the past is all too obvious.

There are good brethren who are bitterly critical of our thesis. We urge them to think soberly, sanely, and seriously. Has our position in the Christian realm answered the prayer of Jesus for peace and unity? Will not God bless those efforts which are truly an exemplification of His purpose? Is it not true that our past theory and its implementation have only resulted in heartache, division and despair? Is there any reason to believe it will not continue to breed dissension and strife in the future? We do not hesitate to sit in judgment upon great Protestant bodies and affirm that they are in error in their concepts. If we were to sit in impartial judgment upon ourselves, is it possible that we would find that, being human, we who are heirs of the Restoration movement, have sought to make fellowship contingent upon that which was never intended to be its spiritual foundation? Can it be that the resultant confusion is the product of our own false concept?

It will not do to retreat behind partisan walls and blast all others as fickle, insincere and apostate. There are humble, God-fearing men in every party. They love God and they seek Him daily. They are not motivated by callous disregard for truth. They reverence the name of Jesus and bow their knees to Him as their king. It is among such men division seems to be most

pronounced. Camp followers and casual hangers-on seem to maintain a fellowship of the unconcerned. But mere love for truth and knowledge of the sacred writings will not provide a buttress against disintegration. Have we misunderstood the whole basic philosophy of the Christian way?

We propose very humbly to investigate the nature of God as manifested unto man by revelation, and to attempt to fathom the reason for the decadent state of Christianity. If He sees fit to spare us, and to grant us the power of intellect in the months ahead, we shall address ourselves to the task which seems to us to be the most important to our generation. We solicit your prayers, your comments and your criticisms. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Road to Gaza

Mission Messenger (March 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

While Philip, the evangelist, was engaged in a successful mission in the city of Samaria, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and instructed him to go toward the south, unto the way that led from Jerusalem unto Gaza “*which is desert.*” He obeyed the celestial messenger with the result that he was brought into contact with the Secretary of the Treasury, in the realm of Queen Candace, regnant in the wealthy land of Ethiopia. By preaching to him Jesus, Philip led the man to say, as they went on their way, “See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

For generations, those who scoff at this sacred rite, manifesting more brashness than sense, have sneered at the idea of finding enough water “in the desert” to immerse a man. And, with the irreverence characteristic of all who seek to detract from the truth which they cannot overthrow, these critics of God’s word have slightly referred to baptizing “in a camel’s track.” To thus speak demonstrates an unholy motive to keep men from submitting to God’s will at any cost.

The eunuch who was present, said, “See, here is water!” The inspired historian says, “They came unto a certain water.” We are told they went down both into the water. We are informed they came up out of the water. Certainly he would be a rash spirit, who flying in the face of testimony of eyewitnesses,

and the inspired historian, derides what they saw or recorded. Will we accept the reasoning of prejudiced men who live twenty centuries this side of an event, and thousands of miles from its locale, or shall we believe those who being present at the time, relied upon their senses of sight and touch?

But an even greater ignorance is revealed concerning the expression “which is desert.” When the angel used the expression he was not talking about the road, nor about the country traversed by that road. He was not talking about the condition of the soil, but the condition of the city of Gaza. And in his words, there is given an incidental, and therefore, an authentic testimony to the fulfillment of an obscure prophecy.

Gaza was the capital of ancient Philistia, and one of her five principal cities, of which the other four were Gath, Ekron, Askelon and Ashdod (1 Sam. 6:17). Because of the inhuman persecution of Israel in her affliction, God decreed the downfall and desolation of these places. Ezekiel records, “Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; therefore, thus saith the Lord, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines . . . and destroy the remnant of the sea coast” (25:15, 16).

Jeremiah predicted that baldness would come upon Gaza (47:5). Amos declared, “Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof . . . but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palace thereof” (Zech. 1:6, 7). Zechariah said that the king would depart from Gaza (9:5).

When these prophecies were uttered the city had flourished for centuries. It still had its palace, its walls and its king. Nevertheless, these men of God confidently predicted that because of their conspiracy to sell God’s afflicted captives to Edom (Cp. Amos 1:6) the doom of the inhabitants was sealed.

Did this come to pass?

Alexander the Great in the first flush of victory attacked Gaza. For two months it resisted all the force of the Macedonian siege. The great Alexander was twice wounded, and in his rage, when the city fell, he dragged the defending general twice around the walls at his chariot wheels, meantime boasting that he was a second Achilles (Quintius Curtius, Bk. 4, Chap. 26). By the beginning of our Christian era, Strabo, the geographer, declared, “Afterwards is the port of Gaza, and at a distance of seven furlongs of the city, formerly illustrious, which was destroyed by Alexander, *and remaining desert*” (Bk. 2, page 1080, Ed. Pd.).

Alexander Keith in his book “Evidence of Prophecy” says, “The writer, after having unconsciously rested a night on the site of ancient Gaza, as the smoothest place that could be chosen whereon to pitch a tent, was for the first time aware of the literal interpretation of the prophecy when he saw it on the spot . . . Before approaching Gaza, unconscious where the ancient city stood, it might be well asked what is meant by baldness coming upon it. But having traversed the place on which it stood, and beholding it as it rises naked and bare above the plain, its perfect baldness shows how truly the word of the Lord rests upon it” (pp. 254, 255). He adds, “Desert and desolate, as it has long been and still lies, not tenanted by either man or beast, *Gaza is forsaken*” (Ibid., page 256).

Thus does a casual reference by an angelic messenger to Philip, as recorded by the Greek historian, Luke, confirm the prophetic utterance of many of the ancient men of God, who with a prescience born of a closer walk with God, “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

One Man's Faith

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[Abstract]

The influence of a single consecrated individual is often undervalued. In Savannah, Georgia, in the first part of the nineteenth century, lived a singular man, S. C. Dunning. He was born in Connecticut, and reared in the Episcopal faith. Even as a youth he became an avid reader of the Bible. As a result he became dissatisfied with his religious upbringing, and convinced that he had not been baptized as the Lord required. There was not an immersed believer in Savannah, but he singled out a person of holy life and prevailed upon him to immerse him in the ever blessed Name. Then, with a large New Testament under his arm he “went everywhere preaching the Word.” In his own counting house, on the streets, in the stores of his business associates, “he ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.” For a long time he labored alone.

Thirty miles north of Savannah, was the community of Ebenezer, made up of a colony of Salzburger immigrants, all German Lutherans. Among these was Christian Dasher, an independent thinker who read the Bible for himself. He, too became convinced that he had not been baptized according to the divine requirement. Repeatedly he besought his pastor to immerse him, only to meet with stubborn and steadfast refusal. Having heard of the odd Mr. Dunning, he rode his horse to Savannah, located him and asked to be immersed. An elderly colored woman had also heeded the gospel call, and these three

met every Lord's Day in the parlor of the Dunning home. The table of the Lord was spread, and they, with any others who chose to join them, sat about it and sang praises, studied the scriptures, exhorting and edifying one another in all soberness and solemnity.

It is interesting that the two men, eagerly searching for truth, and earnestly desiring to please God, would become fearful and disturbed as to the validity of their immersion each time they discovered another design. When they found that baptism was for the remission of sins, they questioned if they had fully understood this purpose, and lest they fail of God's grace, Dunning immersed Dasher, then Dasher immersed Dunning. When they found that baptism was to fulfill all righteousness, it required another trip to the canal, as it did when they observed that it was to "return the answer of a good conscience unto God." They had not learned that an inductive act, transferring a proper subject from one state into another, introduces such a person into all of the blessings, rights and privileges of that state, whether he had knowledge of them at the time, or not.

Christian Dasher returned to Ebenezer, and in the homes of his Lutheran neighbors, "taught them the way of the Lord more perfectly." "The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." He led a colony of more than thirty to the fertile wiregrass lands in Lowndes County, where they constituted a congregation of saints at Valdosta. The Salzburger brethren, left behind at Ebenezer, made their way to Guyton, a nearby town on the railroad, planted the gospel flag, and began to spread the good tidings there. It is true that "large oaks from little acorns grow."

(The editor has relied for the historical facts above on records kept by J. S. Lamar, who was born in Gwinnett County, Georgia, May 18, 1829. He was admitted to the bar in 1850, but three years later, having been immersed into our Lord by a

Baptist preacher, he entered Bethany College, from which he graduated in 1854, thereupon returning to Augusta. Bro. Lamar was author of “The Organon of Scripture, or, The Inductive Method of Biblical Interpretation.”)

The Covenant with Noah

Mission Messenger (April 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

The thought of our responsibility to God is one of the greatest ideas which can invade the conscious human intellect. That responsibility grows out of our relationship to the creative Deity, and stems from the very nature of God as manifested toward His creation. “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). This indicates divine origin, divine agency, and divine purpose. We not only are creatures of the design and power of Deity, but we exist for God. We are *to him* as well as from and through him. “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and *for whom we exist*, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:6).

It is one thing to accept the fact that we have been created by God, and to defend that concept against the subtle and materialistic insinuations that we are creatures of chance; it is totally different to accept the implications contained in the notion that we exist to God and for him. The first entails only an acknowledgment sustained by the axiomatic law of cause and effect, the other requires research into the divine-human relationship to determine how it should affect and govern my individual life on earth. It is inconceivable that I exist for God merely as a cog in the machine of mass humanity. Such a thing would violate the testimony of my own personal consciousness as well as the witness of the Son of God. He taught that a thing so

insignificant as a sparrow could not fall to the ground unnoticed by God. He declared that the very hairs of the head are numbered, by which oriental imagery he enunciated the comforting, yet startling truth that not one aspect of the individual life escapes the scrutiny or knowledge of God.

I am obligated to know God, and not merely to know about him. One may believe in the existence of a person and yet not know that person. The fact that I am a product of the creative energy of God, that I am made for him, and must sometime give account to him for my use of the time he allots to me, provides a powerful motivation to me to ascertain all that I can about my relationship unto him. Being a creature I am subject to limitations, not only of time and space, but of imagination and perception. My mind is finite. God is infinite. His ways and thoughts are not those of men (Isa. 55:8). I cannot by sheer use of reason attain unto the mind of God, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). “No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways!”

I am dependent for my knowledge of God upon what he has seen fit to vouchsafe or reveal unto me. My scope of attainment in this regard will be circumscribed by his disclosures. He is the father of lights, and the mental eye, like the physical, can only respond to the light he affords. There are three sources of information available to me— creation, revelation, and incarnation. In a sense all of these constitute revelation, and all are associated with the word of God. Creation resulted from the spoken word, revelation embraced the spoken word, and incarnation embodied the living Word. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Creation not only attests to the existence of God, but reveals some of his attributes. “The heavens are telling the glory

of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge” (Psalm 19:1, 2). There is a constant telling, a proclamation, a daily pouring forth of speech, a nightly declaration of knowledge. The planetary system and the firmament are constant witnesses of eternal power and deity to men. “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). They are without excuse because the witness of the heavens is universal. “Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:4).

Not all we need to know about God can be learned from the volume of nature. But “what can be known is plain.” It is “clearly perceived in the things that are made.” By the use of our reasoning faculties we can determine that there is a creative intelligence, that it is an expression of Deity, and that this intelligence possesses power, and such power is eternal. This inspires within us a sense of reverence and awe, but it does not necessarily establish the degree of personal relationship existing between the intelligent Creator and the rational creature. Since this cannot be learned by mere application of logical processes, and since it is essential to one who exists for God, it was necessary that God reveal his divine mind in such a manner as to make man comprehend. The history of mankind demonstrates that reason can be relied upon to prove the existence of God, but it is not a reliable guide to form correct concepts of the nature of God. This is understandable when we recognize that the unknown can only be understood in the light of the known. Man is sinful, weak and addicted to prejudices. He tends to rationalize in favor of what he wants to do. Accordingly, if left to reason unaided, he creates gods in his own image, then justifies his actions by regarding them as characteristic of the gods. The wish is father to the thought!

God has spoken! He has spoken in time past to the fathers by the prophets. He has spoken to us by his Son. Fortunate indeed are we to have an account of what he said. It provides for us a genuine source of life. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” The sacred scriptures are not so much an account of man’s discovery of God, as of God’s uncovering of his divine nature to man. This is the story of God seeking for man, rather than of man searching for God. In that story we have pictured for us the manner and method by which God and man came into agreement and sustain fellowship with each other. Two great principles are recognizable by every consecrated student of the sacred oracles.

1. In his dealings with mankind God reveals himself as a covenant making personality.

2. He has arranged that those blessings and privileges bestowed upon men shall be enjoyed by them in conjunction with ordinances of his own appointment. Why this is so we do not know! However, we are sure that God always reveals himself in the way best adapted to man’s need and state. His grace always operates for our best interest. The covenants which have been made in the various ages of history have all contributed to our elevation and ultimate glory. In this is seen the beneficence and undeserved kindness of heaven in demonstration. It is enough that we have a record of these and can study them for our own spiritual growth. Let us continue our theme.

THE COVENANT WITH NOAH

The ante-diluvian world became saturated with iniquity. There were two strains of mankind then in existence. The descendants of Seth called themselves by the name of the Lord. They were sons of God. The progeny of Cain were loose and dissolute men. These became intermingled in marriage.

Wickedness became great in the earth. Every imagination of the thoughts of human hearts was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry he had made man. It grieved him in his heart. He declared, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

There was one man who merited God’s favor. Noah was a just man and walked with God. A direct descendant of Seth, he had kept his association pure, he was “blameless in his generation.” God disclosed to Noah that he was determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth was filled with violence through them. Probation was extended for a hundred and twenty years, and during this time Noah was to construct an ark. It should be remembered that at this time Noah, had no children. His oldest son was not born until twenty years after God’s decree, for “after Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth” (Gen. 5:32).

The means chosen to purge the earth was a cleansing bath of water. Since every nation of antiquity has its tradition of the flood, this may account for the almost universal ritual employment of water as a symbol for purification. After more than a year, Noah and his family stepped forth into a new world. His first act was to construct an altar. In the role of patriarchal priest he offered sacrifices of every clean beast and bird. The sacrificial odor pleased the Lord, who vowed never again to destroy every living creature as he had done. The lifetime of the earth would be an undisturbed continuity. In the march of the centuries, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, would not cease.

Noah and his sons now constituted God’s sole representatives for the population of the new world. Accordingly, they were given the identical responsibility conferred originally upon Adam, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth.” Since their tenure upon earth demanded that they

subdue it, and take dominion over the animal kingdom, it was next declared, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, and upon everything that creeps on the ground and all fish of the sea; into your hand are they delivered." The success of men in exercise of this dominion is attested to in James 3:7.

For 1657 years, man had been a vegetarian in accord with God's arrangement in Genesis 1:29. Now the ban on eating flesh was lifted, and man became carnivorous as well as herbivorous. With the permission to eat flesh, however, there was one restriction which has prevailed in all ages. Blood, as the life of the flesh, was not to be eaten. It was never to be an article of human diet. In view of the fact that this was one of the prohibitions placed upon the Gentiles, in the letter sent from the apostles, elders, and congregation at Jerusalem (Acts 15), I shall digress from my principal theme, and say a few words with reference thereto.

The admission of Gentiles into the fellowship created by belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, created some grave problems in the primitive community of saints, which was composed at first of Jews. When the question of circumcision had to be resolved, and appeal was made to the brethren in Jerusalem, James stated the decision thus: "That we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles have turned unto God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." These four prohibitions constituted what were known as "The Precepts of Noah." Some of the Talmudists (e.g., *Aboda Zara* 64b, *Sanhedrin* 56b) regarded these principles as seven in number. It was conceded by others that there were four. *The Book of Jubilee* is witness to the fact that the rabbis regarded God's covenant with Noah as including all the laws of humanity. It was considered that those outside of the family of Abraham fulfilled God's requirements by observation of these four universal regulations. It is not strange, then, that the Jewish

brethren in Jerusalem resolved not to bind upon Gentiles any other than “these necessary things” and to that decision, the Holy Spirit gave consent.

Capital punishment for wilful murder was announced by God to Noah and his sons, as a means of preventing return of the reign of violence which characterized the ante-diluvian era. The basis of the decree was centered in the fact that man was made in the image of God. The sanction of judicial taking of human life for murder, germinated the seed of civil government, inherent in man’s social nature, for the multiplication of men on the earth would complexify the problem of assessing guilt and exacting the penalty. Man is a social being, and no society can exist without government. Civil government is an outgrowth of man’s need, and has been provided by a beneficent God to protect the good and execute his wrath on the wrongdoer (Rom. 13:1); appointed by God (Rom. 13:2); and is God’s servant (Rom. 13:4). The authorities are “ministers of God” (Rom. 13:6).

After these preliminary disclosures, God informed Noah and his sons, that he would establish his covenant with them and their descendants, and with the birds, cattle, and every beast of the earth, that had come out of the ark. The terms of the covenant were plainly announced. “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” The duration of the covenant was fixed for “all future generations.” For this reason it was designated “an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 9:16).

The Hebrew word translated “everlasting” is *olam*. It is one of several terms signifying duration. Its Greek equivalent is *aionios*. The basic meaning is “age—lasting.” To determine the extent of the duration one must study the limitations appearing in the context. In this instance they are clearly given. The covenant is to stand while the earth remains, or while the descendants of Noah for all future generations, remain upon the

earth. The termination of the earthly age would mark the end of the covenant.

A visible sign of the covenant was given which would be observable for its duration. God said, "I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." It is noteworthy that God nowhere says that the bow is to bring to man's remembrance a flood will never again destroy the earth. Instead, God said, "When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant." Again he says, "When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant." Thus the bow is not so much a reminder to us of the agreement, but is a sign of God's covenant faithfulness. As such a symbol we may expect it to recur in any circumstances where that divine fidelity is to be displayed. For this reason the rainbow is used in conjunction with the throne of God (e.g., Revelation 4:3).

Inasmuch as this is the first covenant God made with man, we should study it carefully for any indication of the manner of his dealings on a covenant basis.

We can readily see that God arranged no prior consultation with man as to the content or terms of the covenant. The proposal was not, therefore, an outgrowth of reasoning between the divine and human minds. The covenant was an arrangement conceived by God in His infinite and infallible mind, and revealed or disclosed to man. This is important since we tend to think of a covenant as growing out of mutual arbitration or consultation.

The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith*. Every time the word "covenant" appears in our Authorized Version of the old covenant scriptures, it is a translation of this word. The Greek *diatheke* is the equivalent term. When the seventy learned Alexandrian Jews, under the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus, began their translation, B.C. 285, of the Hebrew

scriptures into the Greek language, they universally employed *diatheke* as the translation of *berith*, with two exceptions. In Deut. 9:15, they employed *marturion*, testimony. However, our English version has “covenant.” In I Kings 11:11, the LXX has *entole*, commandment, but again our English version has “covenant.”

Robert Baker Girdlestone, M.A., in his “Synonyms of the Old Testament— Their Bearing on Christian Doctrine,” has this to say:

Translators have found much difficulty in giving a uniform rendering to the word *berith*, even in the O. T. Expressions answering to the words alliance, bond, compact, covenant, disposition, treaty, have been resorted to, but none of them are perfectly satisfactory, and for this reason, that while they represent the nature of the covenant between man and man, none of them are adequate for the purpose of setting forth the nature of God’s gracious dealings with man. The translators of the LXX evidently felt the difficulty, and instead of using *suntheke*, which would be the natural word for covenant, used *diatheke*, which means a legal Disposition, and hence a Testament.

Since the purpose of this series of articles is to elicit and expose truth to the consecrated and concerned student, rather than to write for the popular mind or the casual reader, we inject at this point, in which we are dealing with the definition of our central terms, a rather lengthy statement from the pen of Alexander Campbell:

Amongst men we have covenants. In these there are parties. One may sometimes be the covenanter— the other the covenantee. The former propounds— the latter accepts the stipulation. These terms are, however, seldom used. Both parties are most generally covenanters and covenantees. They both stipulate and re-stipulate. Such covenants are agreements or bonds entered into between two or more parties on certain terms. Such the Greeks

called a *sunthekee*— the Latins a *foedus*— we a *covenant*, because that word literally means *a coming together— an agreement*. With us, indeed a constitution, or a form of government, because an agreement on certain principles between the government and the citizens, is, to all intents and purposes, a covenant.

The Hebrew term *berith*, derived from *barar*, to purify, indicating a purification, usually by sacrifice, is that used to represent these transactions in the book of Genesis and throughout the Jewish Scriptures. This word is represented in the Septuagint, or Greek version, by the term *diathekee*, and never by *sunthekee*. In a *sunthekee*, or covenant between man and man, the parties are or may be equal. They are always human beings. But in a *diathekee* one of the parties may be so far above the other in rank and nature, as to propound all the items of the institution or covenant to the other party; to which that party must accede in order to the participation of the blessings or benefits proposed in the institution. Hence, precepts as well as promises are called covenants when they emanate from God, and have any benefits annexed to them. When any service is exacted, or any duty commanded, by an offended party, and made the condition of friendship or agreement with the offending party, it may be called a *diathekee* in the Jewish acceptation. Divine covenants having always been founded upon sacrifice is indeed the best reason for their having been called *berith*. It is very obvious that without sacrifice to purify the party taken into covenant with God, no transaction of this sort was ever valid, or regarded as ratified.

If God disposes of His grace to mankind upon a covenant basis, it is to our spiritual interest to understand the nature of his covenant with us. We hold that one of the best sources of information available is in the things which were written aforetime. These are distinctly declared to be written for our learning. The revelation of God has been on an ascendant basis. All education and instruction must be presented according to the

ability of the student to assimilate it. The very nature of the learning process demands progress from the lower to the higher, step by step. This is as true in the spiritual as in the social realm. Alexander Campbell wrote:

Everyone then who would accurately understand the Christian institution must approach it through the Mosaic, and he that would be proficient in the Jewish, must make Paul his commentator. While the mere politician, moralist, or religionist contemplates the one without the other, though he may find much to admire in both, he will never understand either. A veil thick as that which concealed the glory of the face of Moses from the Israelites, will hide the glory of the Jewish and Christian institution from his view.

There is another important reason why, in pursuit of our object, we should carefully and meticulously consider God's covenantal relationships of the past. Since Campbell was far more qualified to state that reason, than the present writer we introduce his words once more.

A third object of the Jewish institution, of paramount importance to the world, was the furnishing of a new alphabet and language (the elements of heavenly science) without which it would appear to have been almost, if not altogether, impossible to learn the spiritual things, or to make any proficiency in the knowledge of those relations which Christianity unfolds. The language of the new institution is therefore explained by that of the old. No one can understand the dialect of the kingdom of heaven who has not studied the dialect of the antecedent administrations of heaven over the patriarchs and Jews.

To these statements of truth we give our assent, and upon this basis we shall proceed. But what do we expect to prove by this research? We shall show that the thirty-nine books do not constitute the old testament or covenant. They are not the *diatheke* of God with Israel. They contain the history of a covenant people, the song book and sacred literature of a

covenant people, and the words of warning and instruction to a covenant people. But the covenant is one thing, and these books of history, poetry and prophecy, written at various times and under various circumstances are a wholly different thing.

We shall prove that the twenty-seven books do not constitute the new testament, or covenant, of which God speaks. They contain letters written to individuals and groups among the covenant people, and one contains the history of the struggle of the covenant people to free the Message from the prejudices of their day. Still another contains the divine prophecy of the future of the covenant people given to reassure them amidst the problems of an alien world. But the new covenant was not inscribed upon stone, neither was it written with pen and ink, as were these epistles. It was written upon human hearts with the Spirit of God. We will demonstrate that not one of the books from Matthew to Revelation is actually a part of the new testament or covenant. Thousands had entered into the new covenant with God before a single word of these was ever written. In truth, the only books the new covenant people had at first, were the books of the old covenant.

What is the purpose of such a study? The prime objective is to arrive at truth and establish it in our generation as far as we can see and understand it, for the benefit of mankind. The secondary purpose is, through a recognition of the responsibility accruing from a knowledge of that truth, to save ourselves and them that hear us. The tertiary purpose is to eliminate false concepts and errors of opinion as to the basis of our covenantal relationship with God, so we may regain and defend the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It can readily be seen that if man postulates fellowship on a basis of covenant relationship, and at the same time regards the covenant with God as embracing the entire gamut of revelation, and if he conceives of a prior correct knowledge of all revelation based upon an infallible interpretation of such revelation in its entirety as essential to fellowship; whereas, covenant relationship with God is an

individual surrender based upon the belief of *but one fact* and that only, the religious realm will be thrown into utter confusion, chaos and division!

Under such circumstances those who claim to be most ardent workers for the Lord will instead be the promoters of dissension and strife. We believe that in this series we will be striking at the very taproot of our abnormal and deplorable condition in these days. That condition is the result of our thinking. We are exactly where our thinking has brought us. If God's purpose in sending His Son was to achieve unity, and our thinking has produced division, there is something wrong with our thinking. The overwhelming result demonstrates that it is not a mere deviation of trifling import, nor a minor defect. The whole philosophy is wrong! It will do no permanent good to tinker around with this little part or that, in the hope that we may stumble upon the secret of success. Polishing the finger nails will not save the body when the "whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." The Christian world is sick! The divisions which exist prove the carnality of the professed believers. It is time to face up to facts and do something! It is later than you think!

We dare not be deterred by the idea that some are not ready for the teaching. We must face up to the solemn realization that many will never be ready for the truth. They do not want it. They prefer error. They heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. They want to be stabilized in partisan seclusion. Time is passing! We are getting no younger! There is no need to let the patient die while getting ready for the operation. It is no time to nail shingles on the garage when the house is on fire. Let the truth be known! Truth is unaffected by emotion. It is no less truth because some wring their hands in morbid fear and others shed tears and grit their teeth in frustrated anger. Truth is not contingent upon past teaching, former ideas of what was good or bad, or traditional viewpoints of fallible men. If truth dashes my idols to the earth, let them

fall, and let truth have the victory. If the pursuit of truth brings persecution and crucifixion let them come. The price is not so great as the blessing to be sought.

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth:

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must Pilgrims be,

Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

In our next issue we will advance to consideration of the covenant made with Abram and confirmed unto his posterity. In the meantime, may the grace of God abide with you all. Pray for us!

A Law of Life

Mission Messenger (April 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

The study of biology has revealed an axiomatic rule of life that “what does not function dies.” Living organisms are created with a purpose and unless they fulfill that purpose death is inevitable. Because all forms of life are products of the same divine Creator, and all are related to an orderly universe, lessons for higher forms of life may be drawn from the lower. On this basis, Agur, the son of Jakeh, in his discussions with Ithiel and Ucal, made reference to four things which he affirmed to be wise in spite of miniature size. The ants teach the value of preparedness for future needs; the conies demonstrate the advantage of defensive positions; the locusts the power of cooperative effort and unity; and the spider the results accruing from habits of industry in the proper places (Proverbs 30:24-28).

The wise monarch, Solomon, who was universally famous as a naturalist in his day, also used the ant as an exemplar for his subjects, in order to arouse them from lethargy, and thus avoid their becoming public charges and poverty-ridden through laziness and neglect. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise, which having no guide, overseer or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest.” The implication is that the ant works diligently and does so without the prompting or prodding of an overseer or ruler, and furthermore, her labors are not postponed, put off, or delayed until the time of distress. Having

no guide, she instinctively fulfills her role in life. She is not conscious of the rule that “what does not function dies,” but the result would be the same whether she knew the facts or not.

Recently, certain companies have been producing small containers with a glass on one side, each of which contains an ant colony. These are filled with dirt and arranged so the subterranean tunnels are exposed. They are not advertised as mere toys but as educational projects. A tiny door permits the observer to drop small bits of food inside, and then watch the efforts of the ants to gather it, and store it for use in special chambers which they have provided as granaries. The developers of these instructive media are only proving once again that the Bible is not out of date, and those who purchase them out of interest are but heeding the ancient word of wisdom, “Go to the ant, consider her ways and be wise.”

Another excellent example of community activity with preservation of life at stake is the bee colony. Not only is it necessary that nectar be gathered, wax storage bins built, and bread made for the young, but heat is required to keep from freezing in weather extremes. Accordingly, all of the inhabitants of the multiple dwelling, called a hive, must exercise themselves diligently in wing vibration in unison. This serves a dual purpose. The activity protects against creeping cold, and the air generated and circulated by hundreds of wings beating in rhythmic pattern reduces the chance of accumulation of deadly frost. “That which does not function dies.”

Recent laboratory experiments have been made with small kittens. The right eye of each of these was blindfolded or bandaged until no light could filter through. After a number of weeks in this condition, the animals were sacrificed to research science, and the optical nerves were carefully examined. It was determined that in every instance the nerves regulating the right eye were greatly weakened or atrophied. A similar experiment was performed on rats, all of which were reared in complete

darkness. Upon being released in the light, they were helpless, nor did they ever regain the ability to see where they were going. The optical nerves had been rendered useless because they were not used. "That which does not function dies."

What is true in the natural realm also obtains in the spiritual. God never bestowed a useless gift. Jesus likens his disciples to the salt of the earth. In his day among men, this was the only known preservative. If meat was not salted, it deteriorated rapidly. If the world is not salted, it will perish. It tends always to decay and disintegrate when righteous lives are not brought to bear upon its tissues. Most great past civilizations were not destroyed from without. They fell apart at the seams. The only hope of survival lies in the disciples of Jesus. What happens when they lose their saltiness, when the strength-giving qualities are lost in world conformity? The world is consumed by its own rottenness. And the salt is good for nothing. It is discarded, thrown out with the garbage. It has failed to achieve that for which it was created.

Make no mistake about it, we face grim eventualities in these days. All we hold dear hangs precariously in the balance. Lurking in the shadows are sinister forces of evil waiting for the right moment to slink in upon us. The dialectical materialism of Marx and Lenin is slowly but surely engulfing within its gaping and insatiable maw, millions of men and women for whom Jesus died, but who know it not. Secularism, like a dark and foreboding cloud, issues its poisonous fumes to choke out the power which has made our nation great under God. What is being done by those who profess to be disciples of the Nazarene?

Their lives are weak, inspirationless and powerless! They have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Beguiled by the tempter into making bread of the golden stones dug from the hillside; lured into worshiping him by promises of the kingdoms of this world; busily employed in proving that they are sons of God by high-flying tactics, having cast themselves away from the

temple, they are conformists with, and not transformers of the world. Ritual is substituted for worship, programs for power, the spirit of the world for the Holy Spirit of God. No longer does the salt seek to preserve. It must now be preserved. No longer does it try to minister. It must now be ministered unto! God's royal priesthood has abdicated its function. And that which does not function cannot live!

The community of saints is no longer an army of well-equipped soldiers. It is an organized mass of humanity sitting in the grandstand watching trained gladiators do battle in the arena. The church buildings are now theaters with ushers, carpeted aisles, cushioned seats, printed programs, and trick lighting arrangements for varied effects. The pulpit is a stage where a polished professional exhibits his dramatic talents. God's children no longer gather to sit around the family table; they are spectators gathering for entertainment. If the performer is not up to expectations, they drift off, float about, going here and there until they find one who has the flair they want.

Do not be deluded! Do not be misled by supposedly optimistic reports in partisan journals. Christianity is not gaining ground in the world. It is losing, losing, losing! And it is losing out precisely because of the existence of what most of its adherents think is its greatest strength. The salvation of men—and the preservation of the world—lies not with majestic programs, huge physical plants, a well trained and polished professional class. It is a great question whether, in the final analysis, these things will not be in the other pan of the balance, weighing against the plan and purpose of God. The only real hope is that there may still be a sufficient remnant of the humble, poor, hardworking, but committed and dedicated souls, whom God can use in this age of luxury and vice “to shame the wise” and “to bring to nothing the things that are!”

It is not how well men function for us when hired to do so

that will determine our right to enter heaven. It is not how beautiful the program designed by the leaders, how luxurious the temple where we attend, or how much is sent by the group to fields foreign and domestic, that means life for us. Men can die amidst the luxuries and in the downy bed of a palace. We are created spiritually, as we are physically, for a function, and we must either function or die! We cannot grow strong on what another eats; we will not be preserved by the mental attainment or accomplishment of someone else. The apostle said that he who would not work, should not eat! If one does not eat he will die. But it was not the apostle who decreed such death; it was the man who chose not to work who sealed his own death warrant. That which does not function must die.

Any system created by men which militates against every man utilizing the gifts God has bestowed upon him, is detrimental and harmful. It is useless to point to the success of such a system as the world estimates success. It will, in its ultimate, destroy those whom it proposes to save, and damn those whom it purports to rescue. We must give account for what God has given us. Whether we possess one talent or five, the Lord must be faced and an account rendered! He who does not function will die!

The New Humanity

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

“As, therefore, God’s picked representatives of the new humanity, purified and beloved of God himself, be merciful in action, kindly in heart, humble in mind” (Colossians 3:12— Phillips’ Translation).

The new humanity is made up of humans. Neither angels nor demons can enter this fraternity. The new humanity is composed of the same persons who were once part of the old humanity. The transformation was wrought by divinity. In order to effect it, divinity had to be clothed with humanity. “It is plain that for this purpose he did not become an angel; he became a *man*, in actual fact a descendant of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). There have been angels who sinned, but for them there was no redemption. The Saviour only “tasted death for every *man*.” The transformation wrought is so complete that it is called a new creation. It is not a mere continuation of previous life on a higher moral plane. It is a beginning of life. The old humanity has been crucified. It is dead. Old things have passed away. *All things* have become new.

Those who are a part of the new humanity are in the world, but not of it. “As far as this world is concerned, you are already dead, and your true life is a hidden one with God in Christ.” The picked representatives are sent into the world by Christ as he was sent into the world by the Holy Father. Just as

he came into a new state when he was united with humanity, so these have come into a new state by being united with divinity. They are translated from a carnal to a spiritual state. "But you are not carnal but spiritual if the Spirit of God finds a home within you." The indwelling Spirit is the secret of the new humanity. "Once the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives within you he will, by that same Spirit, bring to your whole being new strength and vitality."

There is an awe-inspiring sense of responsibility connected with being "God's picked representatives of the new humanity." When divinity became clothed with humanity, the apostle testifies, "It is in him that God gives a full and complete expression of himself (within the physical limits that he set himself in Christ). Moreover, your own completeness is only realized in him." Christ came as God's picked representative of divinity. Being in him, we are now his picked representatives of the new humanity. He said, "I do not live to please myself but to do the will of him that sent me." We, too, must make the choice as to whether we will live to please self, or do the Father's will. This is the very essence of the new creation!

Thousands are practicing self-deception. They are guilty of misdirected faith and trust. They are placing their confidence in intellectual attainment and ability to quote passages from the Bible, in the observance of certain formalities and rituals, in a specific title that poses over the church door or on the sign in front, in the scrupulous adherence to modes of breaking the bread, or distributing the fruit of the vine. On any of these subjects they are profuse and verbose. Often they are self-righteous, dogmatic, intolerant, filled with the bitterness of party spirit.

They are the Israel of God because of what they do not have— Bible classes, instrumental music, orphan homes, individual cups, or a host of other things that are criteria of "faithfulness" and "loyalty." They are the elect, not because they

have the Spirit of God, but because of what they do not have in their service. Many know little about the Holy Spirit. Some even deny his personal indwelling. They have debated and fussed and wrangled, searching the scriptures to find passages to sustain their partisan positions, until they have forgotten that Jesus said, "These are they which testify of *me*." Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have been gone over with a fine tooth comb by adherents of various factions created over how to serve the bread and fruit of the vine. Each purports to find his own practice clearly set forth, and each belabors and clubs the other, as if these accounts were designed by heaven to be the searching ground for lawyers and legalists, although the beloved John said, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that by believing, you might have life through his name." But, as it was said of the law, so it may be said of the biography of our Lord, "That which promised life proved to be death unto me."

One may be wrong about many things, as all of us are, but if he is right about Jesus, the grace of God can be exercised in his behalf. On the other hand, one may be right about many things, but if he is wrong about Jesus, nothing avails. This does not justify our wilful and deliberate error about anything, but it places our trust for salvation where it can only be effective, not upon our own attainments or goodness, but in Him. Our life, in its final analysis, can never consist of what we have or do not have in this world. Our life is personal and centered in a person. He is our life!

The new humanity is not created to hate brethren but to help them. Hatred of brethren belongs to the old humanity. Our purpose is not to debate with brethren but to develop them; not to ridicule but to relieve them; not to scoff at them, but to share with them; to regard them as mutual heirs of the grace of God. In this spirit, and motivated by the Holy Spirit, we can work out the problems created by our varied backgrounds and enhanced by our shortcomings in knowledge and attainment.

The characteristics of the representatives of the new humanity are given in the translation under review. They are three in number, dealing with mind, heart and action. This is but another way of saying “in thought and in deed,” or “in will and in work.” We are to be humble in mind. This is the fundamental or foundational attitude for all spiritual achievement. We are to be kindly in heart. The grace of God is simply the undeserved kindness of God activated in our behalf and manifested through Jesus. As recipients of that grace, we are to bestow it upon others.

In the third place, we are to be merciful in action. Mercy is not justice. Justice, in the absolute, is opposed to mercy. Mercy implies compassion of such degree as to enable one to forbear punishing even when justice demands it. One who is merciful recognizes mitigating circumstances. He regulates his decisions by consideration of every contributory factor. He does not pass mass judgment but respects the rights and temperament of each individual. Free from prejudice, interested only in the welfare of those about him and not in personal vindication or vengeance, he acts toward others as God has acted toward him.

We need to develop a consciousness of what it means to be “God’s picked representatives of the new humanity” in order to enable us to rise above the narrow bigotry and the stifling influence of the party spirit. The world needs the impact, the force and power generated by the lives of those who are “purified and beloved of God himself.” Here is the greatest challenge to confront us in this age of decadence and demoralization.

The Covenant with Abraham

Mission Messenger (May 1960)

Volume 22

[[Abstract](#)]

In preface to this and succeeding articles in this series, let me explain that we are writing for serious students of the word of God. We recognize that these things will not commend themselves to the attention of the average nominal churchmember of our modern world, and that the casual reader who belongs to the fellowship of the unconcerned will cast them aside with hardly a glance, but we are impelled to write soberly with the hope that those who are the true leaven will be inspired to drink deeper of the water of life and affect for good the society in which we are forced to move while on our earthly pilgrimage. If you are reading this material for the first time, we urge you to secure copies of the initial articles.

History is a record of the footprints of God in the life of humanity. The two most outstanding events of divine interposition in the affairs of this world were the flood and the Incarnation. Of such significance was the first that it stands as a constant rebuke to those skeptics who deny the possibility of a termination of the present world order based upon a false assumption of continuity in the natural realm since creation (2 Peter 3:3, 4). The second made such an impact that it changed the calendar, as if time itself stood still, then resumed with an utterly new meaning. The first recorded covenant of God began with the cessation of the deluge; the last was made in conjunction with the advent of the Messiah.

In the flood God demonstrated his wrath; in the coming of Jesus he manifested his love. “Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell severity; but toward thee, goodness” (Rom. 11:22). The first event was a visitation of destruction; the second of salvation. The one was to terminate life; the other that it might be granted more abundantly.

Both covenants were given in and through a comforter; the first through Noah, whose name means “comforter” (Gen. 5:29); the second through the Holy Spirit as a Comforter from the Father. Because of the original covenant we need never fear the destruction of all flesh by water; because of the last we need never fear the second death. The covenant with Noah produced the rainbow spanning the clouds of heaven; the covenant of grace has its rainbow round about the throne of Him who cometh in the clouds of heaven (Rev. 4:3). The God of the universe is revealed as a covenant making God. Our relationship with him is on the basis of a covenant. As finite creatures seeking to please him, we must investigate and become aware of the implications growing out of this fact. It is for that reason we continue our research in covenantal revelation after the flood.

The divine injunction to Noah and his sons was to populate the earth. “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). In the oldest ethnological chart in existence (Genesis 10) the origin of nations is attributed to the posterity of the sons of Noah. Here it will be observed that those generally designated Gentiles are Japhetic in ancestry (10:5). The Semitic peoples trace their beginning to Elam, Asshur, Arpachsad, Lud, and Arameans. The sons of Ham were Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan — the ancestors of the Ethiopians, Egyptians, and Canaanites. There was a population explosion in those primitive times, but it posed no problem of “lebensraum” for the earth was new and everywhere men looked they saw unbroken vistas beckoning them to settlement.

BEGINNING OF BEBEL

Man is a gregarious creature. He tends to congregate, to flock together with others of his kind. This is especially true when there are no language barriers and communication is without difficulty. "Now the whole earth had one language and few words" (Gen. 11:1). Accordingly, "as men migrated in the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there." There is some evidence that they were motivated to do this by a great leader, a grandson of Ham, whose name was Nimrod. Of him, it is said, "He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord'" (10:8, 9).

Since the settling in one locality was in direct contravention of the design of heaven for universal occupancy of the earth, and in view of the fact that this was done at a place which is specifically declared to be the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod in the land of Shinar, the statement with reference to his character and qualities deserves some attention. What is meant by the expression, "he was the first on earth to be a mighty man"? It was said of the period before the flood, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were *the mighty men* that were of old, the men of renown." There is reasonable ground for supposing that the term *Nephilim* is not so much one denoting physical stature as it is a description of state or character. It literally means "the fallers," that is *apostates*. It would refer to those who fall away from God and fall upon their fellowmen with ferocity and lust. If this be correct, the antediluvians were giants of wickedness, renowned for the enormity of their profligacy, rather than their size. This would serve to explain the qualifying verse, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In any event, these were called "mighty men" and if the expression denotes size, degree of

iniquity, or both, Nimrod was not “the first on earth to be a mighty man” in the sense in which the Nephilim were called mighty.

Once more, we may derive some assistance from a qualifying phrase. “He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord.” This last was so outstanding that it became proverbial among the ancients who said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord.” Can this refer to special skill in pursuing animals with the type of weapons of bronze and iron long before forged by Tubal-cain? We doubt it. It would seem rather incongruous to inject such an item of information in a catalog of nations. Surely the expression must in some manner be related to the subject at hand.

The word “Nimrod” is from the root *marad*, to rebel, and is supposed to be equivalent to “son of rebellion.” It may not have been bestowed by his parents but by succeeding generations, as a means of designating his nature. The words “mighty man” are not in this case from the same form as Nephilim, but from the Hebrew *gibbor*, a giant. Is this a term of size, or character? It is here the term “mighty hunter” will serve to enlighten. The Arabic translation is “a terrible tyrant.” The Syriac is “a warlike giant.” This seems to correspond with the usage of the original elsewhere in the sacred scriptures. It is not generally applied to pursuit of game, but to violence applied to men. In reference to the iniquity of his people, God says, “I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks” (Jer. 16:16). The same original is used in Lamentations 3:52, “Mine enemies *chased me sore.*”

It appears that Nimrod was a “hunter of souls” or one who pursued, and slaughtered not animals, but persons. Josephus writes, “He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were

happy, but to believe it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his own power.” The Targum of Onkelos says, “He began to be a mighty man in sin, a murderer of innocent men, and a rebel before the Lord.”

If this be the case, Nimrod was the first man to seek to become great by prosecution of war, and his kingdom was founded by force and brutality, by compulsion and threat. Through him Satan introduced on earth the cruel doctrine that “Might makes right.” In view of the fact that the term “might” is later applied to armed aggression, it may be that we are here informed that Nimrod was the first man on earth to seek universal dominion by force, and Babel (Babylon) which was the beginning of his kingdom was from its inception an enslaving power. Of course, this Babylon of Nimrod in Shinar, was the early Babylon, but it was the site of the later Babylon which was constructed by Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel 1:2).

These facts lend interest to the attempt to thwart God’s intention by building up a huge concentration of mankind in a central location. The announced purpose was two-fold. The design was to gratify pride— “let us make a name for ourselves”— and to prevent dispersion and consequent world settlement. The method was to build a huge tower, or citadel, which could serve as a rallying point, and to construct a city in which housing would be provided for all of the inhabitants of the earth, who could thus better be kept under surveillance and domination. It is strange indeed that God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to succeed in the world dominion which his predecessor, Nimrod, attempted, but only to demonstrate the superior power of heaven. “You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and

the birds of the air, making you rule over them all— you are the head of gold” (Daniel 2:37, 38).

The primitive migrants proposed to make bricks of fired clay, and to cement them with bitumen, or asphalt. The Lord recognized that because of their unity in relationship and language they would accomplish their design if left to themselves. He said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and *nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.*” Is there not here the secret to success? If the God of heaven had to confuse the language and thus scatter the people to keep them from acting in opposition to His will, does it not stand to reason that if those who love Him are one people, and speak the same thing, they will be able to accomplish His present will? Will anything be impossible for those who are united and speak the same thing?

Certainly God employed the most effective way of scattering mankind. Nothing else is quite so potent a factor to accomplish this as a confusion of language. God said, “Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” Inability to communicate, failure to understand one another, brought about a universal dispersal of the people. It is not too much to say that all real unity depends upon our ability to communicate and to understand one another. Because of the confusion of tongues, the incomplete city was called *Babel*, confusion. And because this occurred in the days when a son was born to Eber, a descendant of Shem, he called the name of that son *Peleg*, division. *Babel and Peleg*— these names may well be descriptive of our religious world today.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

The descendants of Arpachsad and Eber, journeying from

Shinar, settled in that area along the Euphrates which came to be designated “the land of the Chaldeans.” Soon the tribes of mankind degenerated into idolatry, worshiping natural and artificial gods. The idea of one God, as creator of heaven and earth, was fast disappearing beneath the weight of superstition and tradition. It became apparent that, if the concept of monotheism was to survive, it would have to be made the sacred trust of a particular nation, around which such safeguards could be constructed as to segregate it from the rest of humanity, with its contaminating influence. So when every nation had chosen gods for itself, the God of heaven chose for himself a nation. To sire this select people, he selected an Arpachsadean from the city of Ur, whose name was Abram. The word *ab* is the Hebrew for “father” and *ram* is the word for “high, or chief.” The very name signifies that its bearer was a man of destiny, one who was to be an outstanding progenitor.

Abram was the son of Terah, an idol worshipper, whose father Nahor, before him had also served other gods (Josh. 24:2). Abram was instructed to go from his country, his kindred, and his father’s house. While he obeyed with alacrity the command to go, he did not, at first, fully comply with the conditions. He and Sarai his wife, accompanied his father and nephew, “and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran, they settled there.” This delayed Abram until after the decease of his father. Then, “Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go into the land of Canaan.” Entering Palestine from the north, the band of nomads wandered southward, with Abram building an altar unto the Lord at every principal stop. Driven into Egypt by famine, they sojourned until sustenance was again found in Canaan. “So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.”

A quarrel between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, was settled by an agreement to go their several ways. Lot chose the verdant plains of Jordan, and removed to Sodom. This divested Abram of the last of his relatives, and he was now separated from his kindred. It is significant to note the words of the Lord immediately forthcoming. "The Lord said to Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, 'Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.'" It is now time for us to think about the covenants made with Abram.

Why did the Lord select this one from the multitude of men upon the earth, to be the progenitor of his mighty nation? Every nation began with one man, whose offspring became a clan, then a tribe, and eventually a nation. What was the outstanding characteristic of Abram which made him the subject of God's choice? Concerning this choice it is affirmed that God "callesh those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). James declares, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). It appears that God knew that Abram, of all men on earth in his day, possessed that one quality which commended him to the Lord, as the progenitor of a covenant people, whose relationship would be established upon the principle of faith.

But in order to bring mankind unto the state of maturity where a covenant based upon faith could be effective, it became necessary to make another covenant with Abram, which would provide the background and setting for the last and greatest agreement to be made with man. Thus, there were two covenants made with Abram. One was fleshly and temporal. Its token was a sign in the flesh, its promises were carnal. The other was spiritual and lasting. Its promises were of a better and more enduring nature. One of these was not a continuation of the other, although the first provided a frame of reference for the second. But they were addressed to different persons, for

different purposes. A confusion of these is the basis for a false philosophy which underlies most of the major sects in Protestant Christendom, and has introduced practices and ordinances unknown to the sacred scriptures, but valiantly defended by those who wrest the scriptures to sustain their theories.

COVENANT AFTER THE FLESH

In his beautiful allegory to the vacillating Galatians, the apostle says, “For there are two covenants” (4:24). He distinguishes the subjects of the two by the expressions “born after the flesh,” and “by promise.” It is true that he was dealing with the covenants made at Mount Sinai and Mount Sion, but the covenant at Sinai was a national one conferred upon the physical seed of Abram, and was merely a ratification on a national basis of the original one given at a time when Abram had not one child. Before the Lord could make “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exo. 19:6) he had first to provide seed for the primal covenantee. This was a remarkable arrangement in itself considering that Abram was “about an hundred years old,” and reproductively his body was “now dead,” and also “Sarah’s womb was dead” (Rom. 4:19).

When God called Abram, he assured him, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Here, at the very outset, we have the germ of both covenants, and it will be noted that both are to be realized through the seed of Abraham. National greatness and universal blessing— these are the achievements to be attained. The apostle declares “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ” For this reason he calls this “the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ.”

To those who are of the opinion that these words were spoken in Haran, we merely remark that Stephen says, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran." The same speaker also says relative to Canaan, "He promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, *when as yet he had no child*" (Acts 7:5). This last fact presented a concern to both Sarah and Abram, although their reactions were different.

Sarah devised an expedient, suggesting that Abram have sexual congress with Hagar, an Egyptian maidservant, saying, "It may be that I may obtain children by her." Hagar bore a son to Abraham, who was named Ishmael, and who became the illustrious head of twelve tribes, now represented by the Arabs. Almost from the time of the birth of Sarah's own son, enmity existed between these two, and still makes the headlines of our metropolitan newspapers almost weekly.

Abram had concluded that his trusted homeborn servant, Eliezer of Damascus, would be adopted and become his heir, in lieu of natural seed, and he so informed the Lord (Gen. 15:2, 3). But the Lord assured him that was not the case, but his heir would be an offspring of his own body. Then Abram was taken outside his tent before dawn, and directed to look toward heaven. He was told that his progeny would be as innumerable as the stars. It was at this juncture the record declares, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." To this important fact we shall again make allusion.

The Lord said to Abram, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." When Abram asked by what means he could be certain of the inheritance, the Lord told him to provide a heifer, a she-goat and a ram, each three years old, and also a turtle-dove and young pigeon. It will be recognized that these constitute the representative categories of sacrificial animals and birds. Abram

killed all of these and split the animals in two, laying each half over against the other with a passage way between. In Jeremiah 24:18 we are informed that this was a solemn way of ratifying a covenant. The parties to the covenant killed an animal, dividing the carcase lengthwise, then placed the pieces opposite each other, and walked between them to meet in the middle where they took the ritual oath. In effect the oath was a plea for the one who broke the covenant to meet the same fate as the slain animal.

Abram kept the birds of prey off the slain beasts all day. At sunset he fell into a supernatural trance. He heard the voice of God speaking, and saw a smoking furnace and burning lamp pass between the pieces of animals, symbolizing that God was entering into a covenant. The record says, "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land." A description of the boundaries, and the names of the nations inhabiting the territory, is then given. This closed a memorable day which began before dawn and lasted until after dark. Abram had learned that his heir would be personally begotten, and that his seed would be granted the whole land of Canaan. All history after this was affected by this arrangement.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE

It would be well for us to study God's purpose in the covenant related to fleshly seed and land inheritance. The divine intent was to constitute a nation for the preservation of the great truth of the existence of one God. To accomplish this it was essential to establish that nation in a territory of their own, and to segregate them by law, custom, practice and geography from other nations, steeped in polytheism. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a strong central power out of nomadic wanderers and herdsmen, whose tendency is to be ever on the move. Accordingly, God ordained for these people to become slaves in the most enlightened nation of that day. Here the

wanderlust was burned out of them. They were taught by compulsion to make bricks. They learned to construct great cities such as Pithom and Raamses. So effective was the attempt to make them a settled people, that, when they were finally led forth into the wilderness, they longingly sought to return to the land of serfdom.

Since every nation was idolatrous, during the period of slavery the seed of Abraham were exposed to idolatrous practices, but these were made abhorrent by virtue of an edict of the Pharaoh that all of their male children should be sacrificed to the maw of the chief god, the Nile River. Moreover, when the time of deliverance came, great catastrophes fell upon both the inhabitants and their gods of lower animal life. The superiority of the God of Israel was clearly demonstrated. God promised, “For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and *on all the gods of Egypt* I will execute judgments: I am the Lord” (Exodus 12:12). Deliverance began with fearful judgment from the Lord wreaked upon the helpless gods of mighty Egypt. This night which was memorialized for all future generations by a feast, served as a constant rebuke against idolatry.

The land of Canaan was peculiarly adapted to fulfillment of the divine purpose. It was selected from the lands of the earth, as Israel was selected from the nations. As the seed of Abraham became the people of God, so Palestine became the land of the Lord (Psa. 85:1; Isa. 8:8). The land could not even be sold on a permanent basis, for it did not belong to man to convey. As Israel became a holy people, so this became “the holy land” (Zech. 2:12). This territory was situated in a strategic position to accomplish the will of God. Bounded on the north by the towering Lebanon Mountains; on the east by the Jordan River, and more remotely sealed in by the Arabian Desert; on the west by the Mediterranean Sea; and on the south by the wilderness of Zin; it provided for compact dwelling of a people around the center of their worship. Yet it was also on the main trade routes,

which constituted the arteries along which flowed the commerce of the ancient world.

Jerusalem, whose mother was a Hittite, and whose father was an Amorite, was virtually at the geographic center of the known world. “His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:2). “Jerusalem, built as a city which is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord” (Psalm 122:3, 4).

The purpose of God with regard to the seed of Abraham was to keep intact the notion of one God. The *Shema* became the very foundation of all Jewish worship, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one, and beside him there is no other.” The ultimate design was to bring all nations to acknowledgment of this truth by the coming of the Son of God, and through him to extend salvation unto all the earth. By the time Jesus was born among the chosen people, Palestine had been made in turn a pawn of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. This very fact made it possible for truth to be circulated to the ends of the earth, and although these successive cultures had left their mark on the Jewish homeland, there was no idolatry among the Jews when Jesus was born.

Of all the sins for which he condemned the people this was not one of them. In the Babylonian furnace of affliction idolatry had been burned out of their consciousness until they fanatically piled their bodies up in death, rather than allow the Roman eagle carried by a standard bearer of the legion, to be planted in the sacred temple precincts. And this same temple whose courtyard had been the scene of idolatrous orgies, was defended by a mob which threatened to tear a Cilician Jew limb from limb, because they thought he had corrupted the temple by spiriting a Gentile into it. For all their prior deviations and defections, it must be admitted that when he came who was “the

end of the law for justification,” the descendants of Abraham had preserved inviolate the sacred oracles and the elemental truth which was the foundation of Judaism.

The relationship of the covenant of promise made with Abraham, as it especially relates to ourselves will be noted in our next issue. Until that time, we commend our readers unto God and the word of His grace, with the hope that our continued meditation upon that word may strengthen us for our own responsibility to the God of Abraham, for “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Let us not forget these two great truths concerning God, as derived from his revelation to man:

1. God, in his association with mankind, has revealed himself to be a covenant making God, and our relationship to him is created by adherence to such covenant as obtains in the generation in which we live.

2. God has revealed that the blessings which he confers are bestowed in conjunction with ordinances enjoined, therefore, a share in such blessings must be obtained through conformity with such ordinances as the grace of God has provided in any given age.

God's Two Books

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Man is a dual being. But he is not so much a body with a soul, as he is a spirit with a body. He is physical because he exists in a physical universe, but this phase of existence is only temporary. Those who are motivated by faith acknowledge that they are strangers and exiles on the earth. "Those who thus speak make it clear that they are seeking a homeland." Man is both worldly and otherworldly. The flesh is nourished by bread, but man shall not live by bread alone. He must, if he would truly be man and not mere animal, feed upon every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

For the guidance of man, God has written two great volumes. One is the book of nature; the other that of revelation. One is to nurture creation, the other to instruct the new creation. The book of nature reveals what God has done. It demonstrates his wisdom, power, and majesty. The book of revelation contains an account of what God has said and done. It transmits the thoughts of the divine mind in human language. It conveys the thoughts of the infinite One to finite minds.

The book of nature has its own dialect. The poet expresses it thus

To him who, in the love of Nature, holds

Communion with her visible forms, she speaks

A various language . . .

Go forth under the open sky, and list

To Nature's teachings, while from all around —

Earth and her waters, and the depths of air —

Comes a still voice.

**The inspired psalmist, recognizing the voice and hearing
the words whispered by the created universe, wrote**

The heavens are telling the glory of God;

and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,

and night to night declares knowledge . . .

Their voice goes out through all the earth

and their words to the end of the world.

The harmony of the planets, the singing of the spheres, the murmur of the pines and the hemlocks, the whisper of gentle zephyrs, the roar of thunder, the hum of bees, the songs of the birds— all of these are parts of the “various language.” God speaks to us by the babbling brook as well as in the sacred book! The scientists, explorers, and researchists, are all interpreters, constantly providing for us revised versions of the lore collected from a study of nature. They are not creators. They are discoverers. They publish their findings, but one cannot find

something that was not already there. There is no indication that a single atom is now in existence which was not present when God finished His creation and rested on the seventh day. Matter is indestructible by man. He can rearrange it, change its form and alter its appearance, but he can neither create nor destroy in its ultimate sense.

Nature is adapted to man's needs. He requires water and the earth contains water in almost the same proportion as man's body. He requires food, and seed-time and harvest combine to produce it. But it is not just the belly that must be filled. Man is a rational animal. He must have food for thought as well as for the body. A wise creator has ordained that Nature relinquish her secrets gradually, and then only to those who diligently pry, probe and dig. There is no reason to question that the brain of Adam was equal in size to that of Einstein, but the latter had the accumulated knowledge of the ages to assist him, whereas the first had to learn by direct revelation and personal experience.

The mind of Abram was as capacious as that of Medaris or von Braun, our missile experts, but when God told him to look into the heavens and count the stars, he knew nothing of the galaxies beyond the Milky Way. Each person learns from birth on an ascending scale. The experience of yesterday becomes the foundation of today. What is true of the individual is also true of the race. Each generation uses the collected wisdom of the past as its own stepping-stone to climb to further heights. If God had arranged for nature to yield all her bounties to one generation, there would have been no further development. Progress would have stopped, the incentive to live would have vanished, humanity would have retrogressed and sunken into oblivion. The body cannot live long on the food it has already assimilated. There must be a constant replenishment with new food or death is inevitable. What is true of the tissues is also true of the thoughts.

In the natural realm there seems always to be a conflict

between reactionary and progressive elements. The former are sometimes moved by fear, the latter often motivated by mere love of change. The first want to have nothing to do with the future; the second to be wholly divorced from the past. Both are wrong in attitude. The true scientific mind will retain all truth that has been uncovered in the past, and be ready to accept all additional truth as it is discovered. Such a mind will resent and resist categorization as either reactionary or progressive, in so far as these terms designate parties or groups. One needs to love truth for truth's sake, and be willing to acknowledge it regardless of cost or personal consequences. He needs to *react* against every attempt to offset truth; he needs to *progress* in acceptance of every newly discovered truth.

When Nicholas Copernicus discovered that the sun is the center of our system, he was reluctant to announce it for fear he would meet the hostility of the Roman Church. Previous astronomers all held the Ptolemaic idea that the earth was the center of the universe. It was believed that the Bible taught this, since man was the highest order of creation and the earth was his dwelling place. Copernicus dedicated his published works to the pope, but he only incurred wrath for daring to question the teachings of the past.

Galileo, a great student of medicine and philosophy at Pisa, discovered the law that all falling bodies, regardless of weight, travel through the air at the same rate of speed. He demonstrated it by dropping balls of different weight from the Leaning Tower. But his success brought him into disrepute with the followers of Aristotle. They would have had to reject their past contentions and acknowledge their errors. Rather than do this, they contented themselves with circulating the story that Galileo had lost his reason, and was a dangerous man.

When Galileo published a treatise on the sun's spots in which he announced his concurrence with the theory of Copernicus, that the earth revolves around the sun, he was

hailed before the Inquisition. After a long and weary trial in which he was hounded and harassed, being accused of denying God's Word, he was ordered to renounce his theory, and sentenced to an indefinite term in prison. This is the inevitable fate of all independent and original thinkers who dare to challenge the perfection of the past, and to question the traditions of the fathers— *any fathers!*

The book of Revelation is like the book of Nature. It is so written that it relinquishes its great truths on an ascending scale. Revelation was thus given and it will be thus unravelled. The studies and probes of the past constitute only a foundation for present studies. If this were not true we would no longer need reasoning power at all. The faculty of retentiveness, or memory, would serve our every need. We could but parrot the lore of yesteryear. But as God has hidden in the book of nature those elements which will challenge the thought of mankind as long as the earth remains; so he has concealed in the book of Revelation the infinite wisdom which will still be an object of research “when time shall be no more,” or until faith is lost in sight.

Men make the serious mistake of thinking that because God perfected the revelation, man's knowledge of it has been perfected. This has been the refuge of shallow reasoners in every generation. They think that by deriding a thing as “new truth” they can scoff it out of existence, or that truth can be thwarted by ridicule. No truth is new to God, but it may be newly discovered by man. In the natural creation, God made every atom that now exists. But man is still discovering truths about the atomic theory, and they are new to him. In the new creation, God revealed His divine mind in the book of Revelation, but there are still unexplored depths of it. Those who face backward would slam the door in the faces of those who search for greater things. The spirit that persecuted Copernicus and Galileo is still rampant in the twentieth century, although its cruelty is more refined, and its claws are now sheathed in velvet. It still operates on the basis that faithfulness to God is conditioned only upon

loyalty to past traditions!

The followers of Luther, assuming he had gathered all the gems of God's wisdom, embodied them in a creedal world of their own and sought to palm it off as the spiritual universe, so that from then on all research to be done with their sanction must be done only through their telescope. Thus did also the adherents of King Henry the Eighth, Calvin and Wesley. And thus also would act many of the present day heirs of Campbell, Scott, Stone, Lipscomb and Sommer, and other more recent worthies. Loyalty to God, faithfulness to His word, these are conditioned upon viewing everything through orthodox spectacles. God made the universe, but man invented spectacles, and spectacles are only for those who have defective vision. He is twice blessed who can read either the book of nature or of revelation without them.

In the domain of nature, our scientists are indebted to discoverers of truth in all generations. No less is this true of those who would do research in the realm of the spirit. We owe much to men like Jerome, Augustine, Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell, and many others. But if we pitch our tents about their shrines we are unworthy recipients of their heritage. It is absurd for us to search the heavens through the perspective of Luther or Lipscomb, Stone or Sommer. Space probes do not scan the sky through the telescope of Galileo. Let us retain every truth these men discovered, and thank God for their enrichment of our existence. But let no skeleton hand reach from the sepulcher to hold us to a partisan concept of truth. It is better to stand upon the shoulders of those who preceded us than we may widen our horizon, than to allow them to stand upon our necks.

No one nation owns the natural universe. The Russian scientist as well as the American, can search for answers to age-old riddles, and each must learn from the other or both may perish. No sect, denomination, faction, party, or segment, has

any copyright on spiritual truth. All may learn from each; each must learn from all. And, as in the international arena, peace will come, if come it does, from those in every nation who love peace and their fellowmen, so it will be in our divided, distressed, and distracted religious world. Let men of good will share their discoveries while rising above all partisan alliance and prejudice. We need not engage in the heated rivalry of a mad arms race in either the natural or spiritual realm. In each of these we have something tremendous which we hold in common. In the first, we are all products of Gods creation, for He made of one blood all nations. In the second we all share in divine grace, for He has made us possible citizens of one nation through blood!

None of us know it all. All of us have much to learn. We are frail, feeble, and ignorant of much of divine truth. There are depths in its ocean that have never been explored. There are mountain peaks of revelation still unchallenged by human thought. We cannot create mountains, but we can climb them. Let us not be either Liberals, Conservatives, Reactionaries or Progressives. Let us belong to no party whose exclusive tenets we must defend. Let us be merely humble seekers after truth, holding on to any truth already found, grasping for every new truth to be uncovered. A party man is a partial man, even as a sect is only a section, and a fragment is but a portion. It is enough to belong to God and thus be added by Him to the one body of our blessed Lord.

False Tests

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[Abstract]

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The church of God was filled with the party spirit. It suffered from schisms and cleavages. The members could not be addressed as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. They were puffed up for one against another. The carnal spirit was prevalent. It is characteristic of all who are in such a state that they judge others continuously. The test employed is party allegiance. No one is considered to be in Christ Jesus who is not allied with the particular faction, or who is not approved by headquarters.

Here was a congregation which actually carried their party prejudices to the extent that they judged the apostle who begot them through the gospel as being unworthy. Motivated by their narrow, legalistic, egotistic, self-righteous attitude, they actually concluded the apostle Paul was not “faithful” or “loyal.” He wrote, “Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ’s, let him remind himself that as he is Christ’s, so are we.” Paul would not align himself with any party at Corinth. To him, they were “called saints,” they were all “brethren,” they had all been called by God “into the fellowship of his Son.” In spite of their carnal nature, the jealousy and

strife among them, he never once doubted that they composed “the church of God which is at Corinth.”

However, such magnanimity of spirit, such wideness of mercy, such breadth of love, can never be tolerated by the conceit and exclusiveness of the party. So Paul was accused of instability and compromise. He wrote, “Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once?” The party spirit is proud of a man’s position. It is not always concerned too much about his heart. If he *lines up with the faction* it is not required that he *live up to the standard of Jesus*. That is not the measuring reed. So Paul writes again, “What we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man’s position and not on his heart” (2 Cor. 5:11, 12).

We have many “Corinthian congregations” today. The Corinthian epistle was written to a church of Christ, a church of God. It stands as a constant warning of the tragic aftermath of the party spirit. It proves that a congregation planted by the gospel can become filled with such bitterness and animosity, such a spirit of judging and testing of others, that it will not recognize anyone as being in Christ Jesus who does not condone its narrowness. Even the apostle Paul was concluded to be out of Christ, because he refused to countenance any party. His heart-rending plea is the cry of the reformers of all ages, “Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.” But such a plea stirs only a hollow echo in the closed hearts of those who dare not receive men upon the basis of purity of life and motive, but who must measure loyalty to Jesus, by faithfulness to the party!

The party spirit has not altered. It will never change. It conceals itself under new masks. It devises new yardsticks. It invents more modern tests. But if Paul were alive today, “The

Church of Christ” would again disown him if he regarded the members of every splinter party his brethren as he did at Corinth. Once more he would be forced to write, “For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.” I challenge my brethren to name a single one of these not prominent in “The Church of Christ” in this age.

Let every true laborer for unity of all believers take courage. Paul’s life is a testimonial to the fact that men can read you out of their parties, but they cannot separate you from Christ. Only you can do that, and a very effective means of doing it is to start disowning and hating your brethren— *any of them!* Remember, the party spirit, being evil always purges out that which is pure!

Flesh and Faith

Mission Messenger (June 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

Abram was summoned from Ur, in the land of the Chaldees, to be the progenitor of God's elect nation. It was essential to keep alive the concept of one God, until the Logos, who was in the beginning with God, could be made flesh and dwell among men. The nations had embraced many gods, when the one true God decided to embrace a nation. One man was selected from the multitudes then dwelling upon the earth, and with him God made a covenant. This covenant was dual in nature. It was both national and universal in import. It proposed to bless the seed of Abram by making them a nation, and then bless all of the nations by the seed of Abram. The covenant was both fleshly and spiritual. The first conveyed a blessing *to* his seed; and the second *through* his seed.

This complex covenant eventually produced and merged into two great social institutions, partaking of the nature of the embryonic arrangement with Abram. One of these was introduced at Mount Sinai, where the leader and deliverer from physical bondage, Moses, acted as mediator. The other was announced at Mount Sion, and its mediator was the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, Christ Jesus, who delivered the people of God from spiritual captivity. Thus, Abraham became the father of two families, one born of the flesh, the other of faith.

These two families were separate and distinct from each

other. They entered the relationship of Abram and God by different processes. Their promised patrimony or inheritance was not the same. They were made participants of divergent covenants, and the token of covenant relationship was not the same. The covenant in the flesh had its fleshly mark; that of faith had its spiritual token. One was imprinted on the body, the other written in the heart.

In Genesis 17, is recorded the establishment of the physical covenant. Abram was now ninety-nine years old: More than two decades had elapsed since he forsook the land of the Chaldeans. Previously the Lord had appeared under the title of Jehovah. He now introduces himself as El Shaddai, God Almighty. This was assurance that whatever He promised He had the power to perform. In view of this majestic name, he began by instructing Abram, "Walk before me, and be thou blameless." The Lord said, "As for me, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations."

Frequently in history God memorialized an event of great significance by bestowing a new name, or by altering a previously existing one. In this instance the name of Abram was changed to Abraham. We have previously mentioned that Abram is formed by combining *Ab*, father; and *ram*, chief. To this was now added the word *hamon*, multitude; so that the abbreviated form of Abramhamon, or Abraham, means "chief father of a multitude," in line with the promise, "for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee." The change of the form of address was accompanied by the words, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." It was for this reason Simon Peter referred to him as "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers" (Acts 3:13).

In conjunction with the foregoing, the land where Abraham had sojourned as an exile from his homeland was

promised to his seed after him, for an age-lasting possession. It was then enjoined upon Abraham and his posterity to keep the covenant inviolable. "This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised." The seed by which the ova is fertilized, thus causing conception, is manufactured within the body of the male. It is deposited in the body of the female through the external organ of procreation. Thus, this was regarded as the very instrument of life, the channel of physical seed. It was provided that the foreskin of this organ would be clipped or cut off, leaving a permanent indication of covenant relationship directly connected with the begetting of offspring, who were, in turn, to be brought into covenant relationship. The operation was to be performed when the male child was eight days old.

A SACRED COVENANT

The Lord declared, "My covenant shall be *in your flesh* for an everlasting covenant." So sacred did the mark of circumcision become that when one took a solemn oath affecting future seed, he was required to place his hand on the procreative organ, exactly as one taking oath of office today may place his hand on a copy of the holy Bible. Thus when Abraham was preparing to dispatch his faithful servant to secure a wife for Isaac, he said, "Put, I pray thee, *thy hand under my thigh*: and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

It was furthermore declared, "And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." It is evident that the blessings of the covenant applied to the individual only when he had obeyed the ordinance of

circumcision. The ordinance was not the covenant, but it was essential to bring one into the privileges and prerogatives of the covenant. It was not enough simply to be born into the physical family of Abram. If one so born, either through neglect or irreverence, was not circumcised, he was cut off, because he had broken the covenant. God made choice that those who would share the benefits and blessings of a covenant people would do so in conjunction with an ordinance. It was not the ordinance, nor physical obedience to it, which conferred the blessings, but compliance with the ordinance brought the subject into such a state or condition that the blessings of the covenant became available unto him.

When the seed of Abraham had multiplied in the land of Egypt until the reigning tyrant feared they would revolt and escape in time of war, the Lord decided the time had come to liberate them and give them national status in the land of promise. Accordingly these serfs were given an emancipation proclamation sealed with the blood of the firstborn in every home in Egypt. The motley group of former slaves was led to the foot of Sinai, which God used as a rostrum from which to announce a covenant, which was intended to make of them “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6) As a sign of the covenant, abstinence from work on the seventh day was commanded, and it was decreed as a holy day unto them: “Verily ye shall keep my sabbath: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever” (Exo. 31:13-17). This sign, which was a constant test of faith, and proof of a life free from greed, love of material things, and indifference, was adapted to a social institution such as the state of Israel.

But since the covenant which created this state merely augmented on a national level the one given to Abraham, it did not militate against circumcision which was the external attestation of that filial relationship. Thus the rite was enjoined

in the code of laws and statutes given to the covenant people (Cp. Lev. 12:3). But when the original covenant sign came into conflict with the sign of the social economy, the former took precedence. This is evident by the words of Jesus when condemned for healing a man on the sabbath. “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?” (John 7:22, 23). The full import of this statement will be seen when one realizes that the Jews regarded circumcision as a means of curing a man from the taint of uncleanness which they associated with the uncircumcised non-Jews. It was as if Jesus had said, “If on the sabbath day you cut off a little bit of flesh to make a man conform to the law, why are ye angry at me when I completely restore a man’s fleshly vigor who has been a cripple for thirty-eight years?”

Since we propose later on to deal at length with the nature of the covenant at Sinai, we merely summarize at this juncture and pass on to more important matters.

1. God made a covenant with Abraham, relating to his posterity, which was dual in nature, and intended to expand into two separate covenants, one with his fleshly seed, the other with his seed generated by faith.

2. To the fleshly seed were given fleshly promises involving physical health, increase of cattle, fruits, and worldly possessions, as well as victory over attacking enemies.

3. To these also were granted a physical territory, a geographical location, surveyed and marked out by natural boundaries.

4. They were given a visible and external mark or sign in

the flesh, attesting to their right to share or participate in the blessings accruing to the fleshly descendants of their illustrious ancestor.

5. When they had sufficiently multiplied and matured to be granted national status among the idolatrous peoples of the earth, they were given a covenant intended to set them apart, sanctify and segregate them for the implementation of God's purpose with reference to them.

THE SPIRITUAL COVENANT

The covenant of the flesh of which we have spoken above was not intended to be a covenant of freedom. It was exemplified by a law given to restrict and restrain the people of God during a time of spiritual adolescence. The apostle regards it as in the same category with guardians and stewards appointed by a father to supervise his offspring until the age of maturity is reached. He says, "We were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith that should afterward be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). The exercise of liberty requires certain capabilities and entails responsibility. Those not qualified for it must be kept in ward and shut up.

All true freedom is spiritual in its essence. It is a liberty of heart and conscience. Without this, those who are physically unconfined are still in servile bondage. "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son . . . that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." It was through Jesus, as the seed of Abraham, that all nations were to be blessed. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ"

(Gal. 3:16). "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

If the promise in its fulness could have been reaped through the fleshly covenant, the record would have declared, "If ye are Abraham's seed, then ye are Christ's," but it is the reverse. Christ was the seed through whom the blessing would be bestowed. One must come into covenant relationship with Christ to be made the seed of Abraham by promise, and not come into the physical covenant to be made one with Christ. It is at this juncture that many of the Jews in the primitive congregation of disciples went astray. For this reason they demanded that those who came into spiritual affinity with God through Christ, be circumcised. In refutation of this error which grew out of confusion concerning the promises of God, the apostle pointed out that Abraham was justified, and his faith reckoned for righteousness, prior to his circumcision.

Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision: and he sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision; that he might be *the father of all them that believe*, though they be in uncircumcision; that righteousness might be reckoned unto them; and the father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but *who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision* (Rom. 4:9-12).

Flesh and faith! These are the distinguishing characteristics of the two covenants. One was ordained by angels in the hands of the mediator Moses. The other was established by the mediatorship of the Lord from heaven. The first was ratified by the blood of bulls and goats, inferior animals. The second was validated by the shed blood of the Son of God. The mark of one is in the flesh, the token of the other is in the heart. To a covenant predicated upon faith residing in the heart, an

external brand is of no avail. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." "Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God."

"If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed." The Israel of God is a new creation. "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The Jew of old bore a mark in his flesh which men could see. This was appropriate to distinguish a physical relationship. But, as is so often the case, men came to revere the symbol more than the relationship of which it was the visible attestation. When this happens, the symbol is exalted and becomes an object of superstitious reverence. Those who bear it look upon it as the hope of their salvation. They trust in it, glory in it, and feel that it alone makes them superior to others. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised." "They desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh."

The mark of the new covenant is invisible to men. Accordingly it does not receive the praise of men. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Under the regime of the fleshly covenant, men could determine the number of those in covenant relationship by inspection of the outer man. When Thermuthis, daughter of Pharaoh, looked upon the circumcised infant whom she later named Moses, she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Men no longer can take a census of the Lord's people, for they cannot inspect the mark upon the heart. "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth,

having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*: and, Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.” It was no doubt a surprise to Paul at Corinth when God told him, “I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:10).

But is baptism not a circumcision, or, is it not given in the place of circumcision? My answer is in the negative. Spiritual circumcision is of the heart. It is not made with hands. It is purely a divine procedure. It is conditioned upon faith, for the simple reason that this is the basis of our heritage through Abraham. “For this cause *it is of faith*, that it may be of grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed . . . to that also which is of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all before him whom he believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were.” Our relationship by grace must be conditioned upon faith. *It is of faith that it may be of grace*. If it were conditioned upon anything else it could not be by grace. The corollary of grace from the divine, is faith in the human. That which is offered through grace, must be accepted through faith. That which may be attained through any other means is not of grace.

Faith is personal. One can no more believe for another than he can eat for another. The religious world generally, mistaking the implications of the two covenants, has either ignored the fact that there are two and regarded one as a mere continuation or extension of the other; or, if they make a distinction, conclude that baptism has been given in the room of circumcision. There is a great difference! A covenant based upon the mere circumstances of physical birth, thus independent of any choice or volition upon the part of the subject, may be ratified in the individual by the father who begot him. Indeed, such a covenant must be so ratified, for the responsibility belongs to the parent and not to the offspring.

Not so a covenant based upon faith. We can have a baby

circumcised but we cannot have our children baptized. Baptism is an expression of faith, not of our parents, but of ourselves. We are no longer children under tutors and governors. We are treated as mature persons under the covenant of grace. Since faith is the deciding element, we do not contend for *adult* baptism as opposed to *infant* baptism, but for *believer's* baptism as opposed to baptism of those incapable of belief. This eliminates the necessity of setting an arbitrary age boundary for determination of adulthood, and places the matter where God left it, in the realm of faith. The question is not then, "Do you not *think* you should be baptized, seeing that you are old enough?" but, "Do you *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?"

"In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:11, 12). The circumcision of the heart is not by human agency. The expression "not made with hands" always indicates a divine operation. "Circumcision" literally means, "a cutting around," thus "a cutting off." In the fleshly covenant a small piece of the flesh was cut off and discarded. In the spiritual covenant, the entire "body of flesh" is excised. The body of sin is done away, so we should be no longer in bondage to sin (Rom. 6:6).

Baptism is not circumcision. It is performed by hands. It is the knife by which God has chosen to perform the operation. All of God's blessings are made available to man in conjunction with divine ordinances. This is true in both the natural and spiritual realms. It is not faith in baptism, but faith in the working of God that makes us undergo the operation. When we prepare for physical surgery, it is not faith in the knife but in the surgeon, that prompts us to submit. If the surgeon has given previous demonstrations of his skill, we are all the more assured in heart. God has demonstrated his power by the greatest feat of all, the raising of Jesus from the dead. Accordingly I need have

no fear about allowing my “old man to be crucified,” knowing I also will be “raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.” We exhort all who believe in the Lord Jesus, and in the working of God, to delay no longer, but to be buried with him in baptism, thus entering into covenant relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Having written at length, we now commend our readers to the grace of God and ask all to read our next issue in which, God willing, we shall analyze the “old covenant” made at Sinai, in preparation for future investigation of the more glorious new covenant which was based upon better promises. We thank God and take courage that our hope is based upon the covenant relationship through faith in a blessed Redeemer. Let us exalt and praise His name that, like the cripple of old, through faith in his name, we can stand before God whole! Please pray for us as we do for all of you who love Him. Feel free to write your criticisms, for we want truth. If you have it and we do not, please share it with us, that through such willingness upon your part we, too, may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. May God be with you all!

Our Special Mission

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Everyone who accepts the new covenant scriptures as containing the revelation of the will of God, must admit the following:

1. That sects and schisms are contrary to the divine purpose, that factions are works of the flesh, and the party spirit is a sin of such magnitude as to debar one who is guilty of it from entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

2. Those who separate themselves from other believers unjustifiably and create parties, are sensual, and stand condemned for thwarting the intent of God.

It is my conviction that the only basis upon which any group in the realm of modern Christendom can justify a separate existence is by doing a necessary work which is not being done by any other. By “necessary work” in this area, I refer to work approved of God, work in fulfillment of his purpose, not mere sectarian activity which is intended to exalt the party or gain prestige for it.

If this utilitarian criterion were the measuring reed to determine the right of religious denominations to continue, the number would soon be greatly diminished. Specific titles, names, rituals and forms can never constitute a sufficient reason for

separate existence. This is conceded by those who employ human names or titles, for they affirm “there is nothing in a name.” This being true, then to maintain a separate party to preserve a particular name is to divide believers over *nothing*. The primitive church had no specific name as a title. It is possible that the very basis of the desire for such is an exhibition of exclusiveness which is a symptom of sectism.

If it be admitted that rituals and forms are but means of expressing or demonstrating worship, and are not worship in and of themselves, it is folly to sever the body of our blessed Lord over these. Yet these are the means of distinction for countless sects, and a discarding of them would make it virtually impossible to tell one from the other. Many denominations are perpetuated to propound certain doctrines. These constitute their only claim to distinction. The parties espousing them seem to feel they are called of God to propagate and propagandize these doctrines far and wide. They live for that purpose. To this end most of their finance is employed, and to this vocation the whole of their talent is devoted. But this does not constitute a justifiable basis for maintaining a separate party. No doctrine that is the peculiar property of any one sect is the truth, or scriptural. This does not say it may not be *true*, for a doctrine may be true, and not a part of *the* truth which makes men free.

Divided as the Christian realm is in our day, it is nonetheless a fact that *the truth* is not the exclusive monopoly or private possession of any sect, denomination, or party. Any doctrine that is such is unworthy of our consideration. Only that is *the truth* today which was *the truth* in the beginning. There is a difference between *the truth* as revealed by God, and speculations, interpretations, ideas and inferences drawn from it by men. Revelation is divine, interpretation is human. Revelation is what God said, interpretation is what men think he meant. It is incongruous for those who contend that we enter relationship with God on the basis of *faith* (and this embraces the great majority of Christendom) to then sever relationship with

each other on a wholly different basis of opinion, speculation, or doctrinal interpretation.

The only justification, then, for the existence of a distinct group, in the face of the warning against the sin of division and separation, is that such a group of believers is carrying on a work which is not being done by any others. Such a work must not be merely a sectarian program, worthy as it might be and good as its result may prove. A careful study of the various segments of our contemporary religious scene will reveal that they do not have a great deal that is distinctive which is part of the truth. If you were to divest them all of that which was distinctive to each it would only be removing the chaff from the grain.

Suppose that we could remove from the Roman Catholic Church all that was peculiar to it; and do the same with the Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Reformed and Baptist churches. What would be lost? It would not be as much as you might think, and would consist only of that which is sectarian and divisive in nature. What would you have left? What remained would be the truth, the revelation of God, that which has been held in common by believers in our Lord Jesus Christ in all generations since the apostle went forth to sow the seed of the kingdom. Nothing that is vital to the Christian faith is the exclusive possession of any sect. Destroy that which is essential to sectism and you do not harm Christianity one bit. Admittedly, you abolish that which is essential to sectarianism, but sectarianism is a sin, and you thus only remove that which feeds and nurtures sin. If you destroy what is peculiar to Roman Catholicism you do not harm Christianity, for what remains is all that is vital to Christianity. If you remove the foundation from under Roman Catholicism, Christianity will not topple. Neither will it fall if you cut the foundation from under Calvinism, Lutheranism, Unitarianism, or any other partisan philosophy that has taken shape in the realm of Christendom. Christianity is older than any of these, existed independent of all

of them, and can still exist when all are removed.

The Methodist Church holds much that is *the truth* and not Methodistic; the Roman Catholic Church holds much that is *the truth* and not Roman; the Episcopal Church holds much that is *the truth* and not “Episcopal.” But it is not the truth each holds that distinguishes it. If each adhered just to *the truth* there would be no partisan differentiations. All sects are distinguished by party principles. Their peculiarities are not found in *the truth*, for to this all claim to accede. Not a single one of these is doing a distinctive work. Each one is merely trying to build up a human party, and in spite of pious platitudes and general expressions of mutual good will, each composes its own set of statistics for comparative purposes and lauds its partisan gains.

Thus, the work that is being done is actually opposed to the very genius of Christianity. Candor forces us to say that it is in actual defiance of the expressed will of God, and in direct contravention to the prayer of Jesus. We do not question the motive nor challenge the sincerity of those who engage in it. Many of them are noble characters. They are without doubt fully convinced that they are doing God service. But the extension of religious sectism is not the same as the advancing of the Christian way, and in its ultimate is opposed to it. We do not overlook the works of charity that are done, the care of the sick and distressed, the feeding of the hungry and clothing of the naked. We rejoice in all such. We thank God for every sacrifice made to share with the distressed and unfortunate, whether such sacrifice be made by Roman Catholic or Protestant. But these are not distinctive. It is not the giving of alms that makes one a Roman Catholic, a Methodist, or an Episcopalian. These things done for the helpless are not opposed to God’s will. They are part of *the truth*. They are not the exclusive deeds of any party. But the things that create the parties themselves are not God’s will. The party spirit is condemned of God. It is a work of the flesh. It is carnality in action.

This is not to suggest that none of those allied with human parties are children of God. We do not question but what many are, and this is the tragedy of division. If only the children of the wicked one were rent and splintered, we should not be surprised. Satan is the author of confusion. But when God's spiritual offspring are torn asunder and constitute bickering sects, pitting brother against brother in unholy civil war, it is enough to make angels weep and strong men bow themselves in grief. It is not division among aliens from God, but sectarian rivalry among the sons of God, which is one of the great problems of this age.

I am asked if I am allied with a body of believers in the Christian realm. I freely confess that it is so. On what ground can we defend a separate existence? In the midst of all the denominations now so prevalent, are we doing a distinctive work? Are we prosecuting an endeavor not being carried on by any of the various denominations? If so, is it a work of God? If not, we have no right to exist as a separate body. If we are merely trying to accomplish that which is the goal of a denomination, or which all denominations in the aggregate are seeking to do, we should fade out and merge with them, for we will be but another sect among sects, and exist simply to duplicate the aims and functions of others. It is no excuse to urge that we are seeking to do in better fashion what they are doing, for if we united our efforts with theirs more could be accomplished.

Unless we recognize a mission that is not being accomplished by any denomination, or by all denominations *in toto*, we should not clutter up the religious landscape with another party. That many of those who are affiliated with the movement in which I labor are sectarian, can be easily proven. They are motivated by a spirit of rivalry, they profess an exclusivism in areas where such is sinful, they make boastful and arrogant claims that are products only of their own wishful thinking. Such members who proclaim the loudest that they are

the only chosen ones of God would perhaps be as well off in any sect, for they are motivated by the sectarian spirit. Converted especially to some ordinance, form, or religious title, and resting their hope of glory in it, they have no real distinctive mission. They are content to build up another sect, believing that if they call it “The Church of Christ” it will not be a sect. Theirs is the same naivete which causes one to think that if he labels a malignancy by the word “tumor” instead of calling it “cancer” it will not consume the flesh.

But on what ground can a sincere student of God’s holy word, free from partisan bias and prejudice, and longing for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, justify allegiance to a distinctive body? The movement of which I have the honor to be a very humble part is a reformatory movement. This is not distinctive for there have been many reform movements. Its unique character lies in the fact that it was born of a spirit of Christian unity. It was not inaugurated to reform, purge, or purify any sect, or coalition of sects, but to unite the Christians of all sects, thus decreeing the ultimate death of sectarianism by purifying the hearts of all God’s children from the blighting, chilling, stifling effects of the party spirit, and inaugurating a reign of *agape*, love, in their hearts.

All sectism is a manifestation of the party spirit. That spirit prompts men to labor diligently to build up the sect. Regardless of what doctrinal, formal, or creedal basis may be offered as an excuse for the existence of any sect, the root of it is the party spirit, and this spirit invariably strives to perpetuate the sect which stems from it. No sect, as such, would legislate itself out of existence. Any such legislation would come as a result of triumph over the party spirit. But the movement to which I refer has as its goal, not the uniting of sects, but the uniting of all God’s children in the bond of peace.

Is this the work of God? Nothing is more clearly affirmed in the new covenant scriptures than the evil and carnality of

factionism and sectism. It is the eternal purpose of God to gather together all things in one in Christ. It is his will that his people be united in the same mind and judgment. Was any denomination accomplishing this work? The history of the nineteenth century will show that instead of such being the case, the various parties were bitterly opposed to the attempt to unite all Christians in the several sects, and sought to consolidate them more firmly in their respective organizations. Calling the attempts of those who pleaded for restoration of the primitive order unorthodox, labelling what they propounded as “new doctrine,” branding those who advocated it as Campbellites, the only unity manifested by the sects was their concerted attempts to defend and maintain their disunity. So the task of pleading for unity of all Christians in the numerous sects upon a return to the primitive order, while it was the work of God, was not being done by any existing party.

What have been the results? Many of the currently existing sects have come to see the folly of allowing Satan to wage a war of attrition by the familiar tactic of “divide and conquer.” There are now genuine attempts to re-evaluate sectism in the light of God’s purpose. Many of those principles which were enunciated by leaders of the restoration movement are now being accepted and adopted. In the meantime, those who are the more direct heirs of the restoration movement, have crystallized into numerous factions and parties, and have adopted unwritten creeds. Forgetting their original purpose they have forfeited their right to exist, for they are now but adding others to the already heavy burden of sects. It is necessary that there be a restoration of restoration ideals.

It is my conviction that any separate and distinct group existing in the Christian world to plead for a unity of all believers in Christ, that is in one body, must, in the very nature of things, have but a temporary existence in that state. If it accomplishes its own purpose it must eventually blend into the growing unity of the body of Christ which it promotes, and lose

its own identity in the recaptured homogeneity of the one body which has been so seriously fractured and fragmentized. Unfortunately, history attests to the fact that this seldom happens. Instead the partisan spirit captivates the hearts of those who claim to oppose all sectism, and they build up a super-organization to perpetuate and prolong their exclusive existence. The church of our Lord is not an organization at all. It is a divine organism. It is possible that “organized religion” is the greatest foe to the real purpose of God for this age. Certainly, it is now the persecuting force which has supplanted pagan and papal Rome, conspiring to defeat the return of apostolic purity and simplicity.

The ideal for which we strive will only be kept alive by hardy souls who dare to think for themselves. For this they will be misrepresented, maligned, and harassed, but the history of the struggle for the freedom of the Message, will chronicle their feeble efforts when the machinations of the party spirit will have been relegated to oblivion. It is in the strength of conviction that he who works with God, and for God, motivated by universal love, by love for all mankind, and mortifying the party spirit in a crucified heart, will be blessed of God, that we work inside our present frame of reference while we look for a more glorious day. God’s children will not always be divided. There will not always be civil war inside the walls of the kingdom of heaven! So “with malice toward none, with charity toward all, and with faith in the right as God gives us to see the right,” we press forward with Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Note: On a snowy afternoon in March 1951, while working with the consecrated saints in Belfast, North Ireland, I went to the humble meetinghouse on Berlin Street, to read, meditate, and pray alone. In a dingy back room I discovered a small volume, bound copies of “The Old Paths,” edited in the previous century by that British stalwart in the faith, David King. A brief article “Our Distinctive Mission” set me to thinking of how very sectarian in attitude I had become, and

how far afield I had gone from the original purpose of the Restoration Movement. I jotted down brief notes, intending to write on the topic, and to confess my own shortcomings, inadequacies, and previous partisan tendencies. But years kept passing, and now on another snowy day in March 1960, thousands of miles from the little meeting place off Shankill Road in Belfast, and almost a decade later, my thoughts have sufficiently crystallized as to be presented to our serious readers in this article. Streams from many places converge to form the surging river of human thought, which must sometime burst into expression.

You will not need to agree with the above for me to love you sincerely in Christ Jesus. You are dear unto me because you are dear unto Him, and not because you concur in my own reasoning. So whether you agree with what has been written or not, may the grace of God sustain you, may you love Him, serve Him to the best of your ability, and may all of us meet some day where the question of unity will have been finally resolved in the light of his countenance, and the coldness of heart that has kept us apart be melted through the impact of the Sun of righteousness who has arisen with healing His wings).

A Muddled Movement

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

It was my good fortune recently to conduct a study in Odessa, Texas. This is a thriving city in the rich Permian Oil Basin. A few years ago it was a small western ranch town, but in two decades it has had a mushroom growth. It is just now becoming somewhat adjusted after a period of “growing pains.” My purpose, however, is not to describe the region, but to point up a condition among those who are heirs of the nineteenth century restoration movement. Odessa presents a sad picture that is becoming typical of many regions. It illustrates graphically what happens when the party spirit invades the hearts of those who are the religious descendants of a movement inaugurated to unite all believers in our Lord Jesus, upon a common ground.

The disciple brotherhood is represented in Odessa by two groups, one of the instrumental, and the other the non-instrumental segment. Those who use the instrument in their public praise service, are in turn divided into three congregations, neither of which has any real fraternization with the others. The First Christian Church is allied with “The Disciples of Christ.” It is accused by the others of being a Liberal group. The other two, for want of better descriptive terms, and for purpose of distinction, could probably be labeled as Conservative and conservative Conservative, the degree being somewhat greater in the latter. I deplore labels among brethren,

but it is difficult to write about such a situation without employing them.

There is no recognition of common ground or heritage upon the part of the non-instrument groups toward the aforementioned. One minister of the Christian Church told me he immersed a young man who later married a “Church of Christ girl.” Since the bride could not conscientiously attend with the husband, his preacher suggested to the latter to go with her. The husband was informed that “The Church of Christ” did not recognize “Christian Church baptism” so the man was forced to come forward and confess in the presence of “The Church of Christ” that he believed Jesus was the Christ, and God’s Son, whereupon he was immersed with “Church of Christ baptism.”

Another Christian Church preacher informed me of a consecrated young wife whom he immersed, but who later moved with her family to a nearby town, where she began to attend “The Church of Christ.” The minister of this congregation visited her and convinced her that since the Christian Church was a sect, they could not baptize for the remission of sins, so she made the confession once more and was immersed “according to the Bible.”

A preacher for “The Church of Christ” volunteered to me that he had a great burden upon his heart for the Conservative Christian Church preachers, and felt the time might come when many of them could be “converted.” I asked him if he regarded them as brethren, and he hastened to assure me he did not, and would as soon call on a Methodist or Baptist preacher to lead prayer, as to call upon one of them. I asked why, and he said it was because of the practice of instrumental music. Since brotherhood is the result of birth and common parentage, I concluded that to be a brother to these men, one would need to be “born of the water and of the Spirit and of opposition to instrumental music.” And, while I am opposed to the latter, I

have not been able to see how it negates brotherhood which is not based upon it, but upon a common Fatherhood.

However, it is among the non-instrument churches that the blighting influence of the party spirit is really rife. In Odessa there are at least five different segments or factions, most of which regard the others as *apostates*. Each looks upon its own party as being the one holy, catholic church, and apostolic church of God on earth. There is a division into what is known as “Sunday School” and “anti-Sunday School” churches. These are again divided into “one cup” and “cups” churches. One is opposed to Bible classes but uses individual containers to distribute the fruit of the vine to the communicants; the other opposes both classes and cups. Neither regards the other as in its “fellowship;” both brand and stigmatize each other as “unfaithful” and “disloyal,” each using its party prejudices as the criterion of faith and loyalty to the Lord Jesus.

As is usually the case, the “Sunday School churches” are the largest and most flourishing. They are in position to show some contempt for the “antis” as they label those who oppose classes. Each of the larger congregations has hired a pastor to minister to the flock, and in one instance, at least, there is an assistant minister, so that the “servant” in the first degree, has in turn a servant of the second degree, to assist him. Since these occupy a position identical with that held by the Christian Church pastors, except that the ones in “The Church of Christ” usually draw bigger salaries, the differences on that subject have been dropped by adoption, and the primary emphasis is on instrumental music.

A growing divergence is manifest among the non-instrument, individual cup, Sunday School, anti-missionary society churches, however. To all intents and purposes, another split is imminent, and in some places has already occurred with such vehemence as to fracture them into splinters, and rock “the brotherhood.” The occasion of the latest schism is the Herald of

Truth radio and television program, and orphan homes existing as charitable societies. These diverse factions use as their principal propaganda organs the *Gospel Advocate* and *Gospel Guardian*, with those who claim to *advocate* the gospel also advocating these other things and those who claim to *guard* it, opposing them. The outstanding defender of Herald of Truth at Abilene, told me they did not “fellowship” the Guardian group at all!

Adherents of the *Guardian* position denominate the others as “Liberals” and are, in turn, denominated “Antis.” In conversation with two preachers of the latter faction, we learned there were three groups in this period of transition. These can be described as sound, shaky, and seditious. Both factions acknowledge the existence of the three, but each reverses the constituency. It is interesting to note that every party, instrumental and non-instrumental, has its “Liberals” and “Antis” depending upon the party test.

Among the instrumental groups, those who oppose the United Christian Missionary Society are “antis.” Among those who oppose it, those who decry the use of instruments are “antis.” In the *Gospel Advocate* faction those who oppose the orphan homes are “antis.” Among these, those who oppose Bible classes are “antis.” These regard those who oppose individual cups as “antis.” This chain reaction continues down to the final count, where no doubt the last person is “anti-Anti.”

The bigger fleas upon the dog,

Have smaller fleas that bite ‘em;

And these, in turn, have lesser fleas,

And so on, *ad infinitum*!

Even the casual reader must recognize the fearful plight of those who are “the New Testament Church.” There is no prospect of improvement. The future holds out for these factions more strife, division, and multiplication of self-righteous partisanship. This is the fruit of carnality and spiritual immaturity, of legalism and unwritten creedalism, of pride and the party spirit. How can they unite the world in Christ, while carving His body into bits? It is time for those who can do so to rise above this wicked spirit and demonstrate a love that transcends all human walls and barriers, so its warmth may dispel the chilling frost of hate.

I taught in Odessa by invitation of a little group which, by choice and conviction, does not have classes or individual cups. They do possess a freedom which they extend to others in a manner which proves them to be true restorationists at heart. They recognize every consecrated immersed believer in the Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth as a brother in Him. They are capable of distinguishing between fellowship and endorsement, so they place brotherhood above “party lines.” Our studies together were unmarred by any untoward incident. We labored together in mutual love! My home was with J. T. Brose and wife. He is a gospel preacher of ability. I feel very close to him and the little group of saints meeting at 30th and Golder Streets. I trust that all who love the Lord will pray that the twentieth century sectarian movement denominated “The Church of Christ” which grew out of a glorious nineteenth century restoration attempt, will return to its former purpose and intent.

Teacher and Disciple

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[Abstract]

We are disciples of Christ. He is our teacher. This state of things can never be reversed. We cannot teach him; we can only learn from him. Nor do we ever arrive at the place where we know it all. There are no graduates from his school. We never cease to be disciples while on this earth. We are also servants. He is our master. This relationship must ever be sustained. We can never arrive at the place where we tell him what to do, or tell him what we prefer to do. “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Matt. 10:24).

Because we are all disciples and servants we should share with each other.

We are all frail, fallible, and liable to err. No one of us is immune to mistakes. With an eagerness to know the truth, we earnestly solicit your analysis and criticism of the views we express. We urge you to write and point out where you think we are in error. We read carefully, prayerfully and studiously every letter or article of disagreement. We prefer that you write in love, free from rancor and the party spirit. But if you cannot so write, and if your criticisms must be submitted even in a spirit of hatred, send them to us, and with love for you, we shall endeavor to separate what you say from the spirit in which you convey it. We are interested in and concerned about principles, and we are not so vain as to reason that only those friendly to ourselves have

correct principles.

It is not necessary that you agree with us to be loved and respected by us. Our heart reaches out to embrace many who do not see all things as we do, but who love the same Jesus we try to serve. It is dangerous for any fallible man to set up his reasoning as a criterion by which to judge the worthiness of any of his fellows. We do not stand or fall to our fellow slaves. "To his own master he standeth or falleth." But since we are disciples, you may help us to learn, and since we are servants you may help us to serve. Feel free to question, to doubt, to disagree with, and to censure what we write. You may be right, and if so, we wish to know it. There is nothing to be gained by continuing in error when one can learn better. While all of us sit at the feet of the same great teacher let us share what we glean from a study of his words.

The First Testament

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[Abstract]

It was God's original intent when he called Abram, to make of his seed a great nation. To accomplish His purpose he allowed the descendants of Abram to be cradled and conditioned in the most advanced culture of that day. In Egypt they were confined in slave status until the seventy souls who went down to that country with Jacob had multiplied in number until they probably exceeded two million. When the proper time came, they were freed from bondage and started on the way to the land which was to be peculiarly theirs, according to promise.

God reveals himself in a manner adapted to the state of things existing when the revelation is given. Since the cardinal purpose was to make a nation which would keep alive the idea of the existence of the one true God, it was necessary to impress upon all nations the significance of His selection of Israel as a nation separate and apart from others. At that time when "every nation made gods of its own" (Cp. 2 Kings 17:29), the feeling was universal that the power of a god could be determined by the state of the people over whose fate he was alleged to preside, and by works of wonder performed in their behalf. If a nation prospered materially, was strong in battle, and triumphed over others, it was conceded that the god of such a nation was a powerful deity.

To gain a proper degree of respect and reverence for

Himself and the chosen people, God accepted this criterion, and proceeded to demonstrate His superiority. Since His people were slaves in Egypt, the first manifestation of power was against that nation and its gods. Selecting as an ambassador one who had been reared and educated in the king's palace, but who had become a political exile under charge of homicide, He sent him to the royal court with a positive ultimatum to let His people go. When the haughty monarch denied any knowledge of the God of Israel it became necessary to show His divinity. Now any proof of divine power to be effective to mankind, must be supernatural, and capable of being fully perceived and apprehended by the senses.

Ten different demonstrations were manifested in Egypt. The first three were simply to prove that Jehovah was the Lord. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt" (Exo. 7:5). The next three were to demonstrate that he was also God in Egypt and the deities of that land were impotent before Him. To this end He drew a line of demarcation between Goshen, the province where Israel dwelt, and the rest of Egypt. Goshen was unaffected by the succeeding disasters which paralyzed the remainder of the country. "But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there; that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. By tomorrow shall this sign be" (Exo. 8:22, 23).

The third series of three catastrophic events went one step more. They proved that there was none like Him in all the earth. "For this time I will send all my plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants and your people, that you may know there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth; but for this purpose have I let you live, to show you my power, so that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exo. 9:14-16).

The final blow was destined to prove at the very birth of the nation, that this God was a master of all gods. He proposed to deliver these bond slaves without revolt, clash of arms, or loss of a single life among them. At this time Egypt was the mightiest nation on earth. The Pharaoh was feared above every other earthly monarch. On the night appointed, the slaves demanded of their masters jewelry of silver and gold. At midnight the death angel passed through the land with terrible execution, and smote all of the first-born, “from the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle” (Exo. 12:29). Yet “against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, not a dog growled” (11:7). There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. The agonized Pharaoh did not wait until morning. He summoned Moses and Aaron by night, and said, “Rise up, go forth from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also.”

When the full realization of what he had done dawned on Pharaoh, he changed his mind, and decided to pursue the Israelites and return them to bondage. The Israelites trembled when they saw the approaching Egyptians, but Moses said, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still.” Lifting his rod over the waters of the Red Sea, he caused them to part by the power of God. The people of Israel marched through on dry ground, and the Egyptian cavalry attempting to follow were all drowned.

So mighty was this feat that many years later Moses asked, “Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown that you

might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him” (Deut. 4:34, 35). The expression “take a nation for himself” is a key one in any study of the relationship of God to Israel. In fulfilling His design God showed His superiority to the gods of the most prosperous and flourishing nation of the day.

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

But it is one thing to lead a group of serfs from the land of bondage, and a wholly different thing to weld them into a nation. To accomplish the latter, the first thing required is a constitution. Such a constitution in a theocracy would certainly be in the nature of an announced covenant. Accordingly, after God had freed them, He did not allow them to take the direct route to Canaan which led by the way of the Philistines, but turned them southward toward Mount Sinai, around which they established their camp. Here God made known His intention to submit to the people en masse the question of whether or not they would be willing to enter into covenant relationship with Him, accepting such responsibility as would be entailed. Thus, the Creator preserved the dignity and respected the will of the creature, although under no obligation to do so.

The mediator was summoned to come up into the mountain in the presence of the people. The proposal of God was committed unto him to convey to the entire multitude. It was conditioned upon one great act of deliverance in which the Egyptians had suffered frightful retribution and Israel had been miraculously reclaimed. Moses was told, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” This was deemed of sufficient power to make Israel recognize an indebtedness unto God and to inspire them to trust in His might for the future.

For that reason the proposal was made, “Now therefore, if

you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” Since there was no central means of communication available, and no mass media through which one person might speak to more than two million souls, Moses summoned the elders, relayed to them the message of God, asked them to ascertain the will of the people and report back the results of their poll.

The people unanimously agreed, saying, “All that the Lord has spoken will we do.” Moses reported their decision to God, who then informed him he would personally address the people on the third day in a manner they could not forget. As a preliminary for the occasion, the mountain was to be regarded as sacred, with a boundary line drawn, across which the people were not to set foot. The death sentence was decreed for any man or beast crossing the line. During the three days the people were to wash their garments and abstain from all sexual commerce. The blast of a heavenly trumpet would signal the beginning of the public announcement of the covenant.

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast upon the trumpet. Sinai was enveloped in smoke, and the entire mountain shook and trembled. The startled people were brought forth to stand gazing at the awesome spectacle and wondering what the future held for them. Moses spoke, and God answered in the rumbling of thunder. “So terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear’” (Heb. 12:21). He never forgot the inauguration ceremony for the covenant, and shortly before his death addressed the people as follows, “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or ever was heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of fire, and still live?

. . . Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you; and on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire” (Deut. 4:32, 33, 36).

ANALYSIS OF THE COVENANT

Because men have labeled the thirty-nine books constituting the Jewish scriptures, as “the old testament,” virtually the whole world has been led to believe that this entire compilation constituted the covenant with God. No idea could be more incorrect, none is fraught with greater possibilities for error in understanding the unfolding of God’s purpose. Laboring under this delusion, many have completely missed the purpose of God which is expressed in the new covenant, and have merely substituted one legalistic code for another as the basis of their service to God and communion with each other, in spite of the fact that the inspired prophet wrote, “The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant . . . *not like the covenant I made with their fathers.*”

In view of this, we humbly submit that any understanding of the new covenant must be approached through a proper concept of the old. If the second is not like the first, a correct survey of the first will prepare for a rational investigation of the second. What was the nature of the old covenant? Why was it given? What did it embrace? What were its bounds and limitations? A proper evaluation of these matters will make it possible for us to place the Jacob’s staff of our spiritual survey at the exact spot from which to look at the better covenant based upon better promises. Because this has generally been ignored, the world is filled with religious teachers talking about the old and new testaments, “who know not what they speak or whereof they affirm.”

At the very outset, let us remember that nowhere in all of the sacred writings does God ever suggest that all of the holy

scriptures from Moses to Malachi constitute the “old testament.” No inspired writer ever hinted that the old testament contained thirty-nine books. Some of these recount the history and chronicles of a covenant people, some are the literature and song books of the covenant people, some the prophetic warnings and promises to the covenant people. But the history of such a covenant people is no more a part of their constitution than a book on American history is part of the Constitution of the United States. Such a history may refer to our constitution, detail our departures from its principles, and urge our return to its original spirit, but it is not “the Constitution” or national covenant.

A nation is a social unit created when a number of clans or tribes associate themselves together for mutual progress and protection. In the very nature of things, the first requirement is a compact, or agreement. Such an agreement is called a covenant, or constitution. When God calls a nation out for himself, it is evident that such a nation must constitute a theocracy. Being such, and not a democracy, God must announce the terms of the relationship involved. As soon, therefore, as God separated his people from the enslaving power, he led them to a mountain of sufficient height, about which they could congregate, and from which he could address them as from a divine rostrum. He first proclaimed the testament orally, then wrote its provisions on two tables of stone with his own hand, these in turn being deposited by angels with his chosen ambassador acting as mediator.

The preamble of the constitution was a proclamation of what God had done for them. God never enjoins a covenant upon the human family except upon the basis of prior deeds in their behalf. In this instance, the preface would serve for all ages to identify the people involved and the God whom they were to serve. In solemn tones, the words were uttered, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” There followed ten commandments, which, with the preamble, constituted what the inspired writers call

“the old covenant” or “the first testament.” Since a nation is a social unit, its people sustain a dual relationship— to God and one another. The ten commands are divided into two classes. The first four pertain to the responsibility to God; the last six to the responsibility to man.

PERTAINING TO GOD

The initial commandment was the keystone in the arch of national purpose. It struck at the very heart of polytheism, and forever made monotheism the foundation of covenant relationship on the part of Israel. “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” This made the worship of idols an act of treason, a revolt against the sovereign power, and an overt manifestation of conspiracy to overthrow the nation, by subverting it from its original purpose and intent. By statute it was made a capital offense.

The second and third statements were directed against treasonable intent. Knowing the tendency of man to worship what he creates, it was forbidden to make any graven image or likeness of any creature in the universe. To bow down before the work of the sculptor or graver, or to give any homage or reverence thereto was also a capital offence. The third command was designed to forbid any lessening of respect or awe for the name of Jehovah. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” To “take the name of God” meant to call upon him to witness to a promise or vow. This was generally done by saying, “As the Lord liveth I will do this or that.” To do so in vain, meant to take such an oath in the name of God to perform an act, which the one thus vowing had no intention of performing. “Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation” (Heb. 6:16). Since this was the final appeal for confirmation, reverence for the name of God would soon disappear if he was called upon to sanction a falsehood or empty promise.

The fourth command stipulated the percentage of time to be accorded the Lawgiver and King. One day in seven was to be assigned to him in honor of two great events. His creative work ended and he rested on the seventh day. On that same day he brought the people out of Egypt. The creation of the earth and the creation of the nation to honor the God of the universe, were to be commemorated by hallowing the seventh day, and the method of consecration was the same which God himself originally employed, absolute cessation from creativity, and rest, or relaxation.

PERTAINING TO OTHERS

Before we mention the fifth commandment, a few words are in order about the method of perpetuating the knowledge of the covenant. There was no provision made for propagandizing people of other nations, and no recruiting program was inaugurated. If one who dwelt among the people desired voluntarily to enroll with them, he could do so by allowing himself and other males in his family to be circumcised. There was no solicitation for him to do so. True, in a decadent age, and after they had been scattered among all nations, the descendants of Abram, having burdened their law with cumbersome traditions, crossed land and sea to enlist Gentile philosophers whom they transformed into fanatical zealots worse than themselves, but this was not the original intent.

Carrying forward the patriarchal procedure, the fathers were directly charged with the responsibility of instructing their children. The solemn duty was enjoined immediately following the Shema, the watchword of Israel, for after pronouncing it, Moses said, "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Each home was to be a school, upon whose gates

and doorposts these things were written.

This implies that the Torah was simple enough in essence for the fathers to expound, and for the children to understand. It was only when professional teachers arose, and eventually divided into representatives and defenders of various schools of thought, or sects, that the word became obscured by vain janglings. Inasmuch as the parents were ordained as the sacred teachers, it is not surprising that the next command following those relating to the proper attitude toward God, enjoined reverence for them. "Honor thy father and mother." The parent stood in the room of God to the offspring, giving them the Torah as God gave it originally.

The remainder of the ten commandments constituted the great moral or ethical code intended to set the people apart from the degenerate worshipers of other gods. Taken together, they compose "the old testament" or covenant. All other laws, statutes, and judgments, grew out of a relationship to these. While other laws carried a penalty for violation, the national existence was not necessarily impaired or destroyed by disregard for them. But the ten commandments constituted the national covenant, the constitution, and upon this the nation had been formed, and by it would continue to exist. A disregard for the covenant would bring about the dissolution of national sovereignty unless the breach were repaired firmly and decisively.

The ten commandments and their preamble are "old testament." The books of history, poetry, and prophecy, are not a part of the covenant. They are scriptures, or writings, which grew out of the relationship created by the covenant, but they are not "the first testament" as God employs that term. That which established covenant relationship was one thing, the sacred books written to the covenant people constituted a wholly different thing. Because we have familiarly and unthoughtedly spoken of the thirty-nine books as composing "the old

testament,” and have subscribed to this popular error as we have to so many other traditional views, it is necessary to reexamine the scriptures related to this matter.

One may ask what difference it will make. This is the refuge of those who prefer to continue in error than to discover truth. Does it not make a difference whether we have a correct or an incorrect view of what constitutes a covenant of God, seeing that we have already established that God’s entire relationship with man has been revealed as being on a covenantal basis? Can any professed preacher of the gospel be respected who ridicules, derides or scoffs at a matter so grave that it strikes at the root of our very approach to the Deity? Is one deserving of reverence as an instructor in holy things who deliberately chooses to ignore truth and continue to teach error? Such may be worthy of those who place the sect above all else, but surely it has no place in the life or thought of truth-loving men and women.

There is an even more serious and sobering aspect. The covenantal relationship of old was the school of instruction for those who live under the new. If we mistake the nature of the old covenant, its scope and breadth, we can as easily be wrong about the new. I am prepared to prove, if God spares my life, that as a people, we have done this, and in doing so, we have merely substituted one system of legality for another, as the ground of justification, and are again binding a yoke upon men which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. As a result, we have developed a Pharisaical attitude. Conditioning our relationship unto God upon the basis of knowledge of a compilation of sacred writings, and not upon faith in Jesus, we have actually in many cases made the Bible our God. As a result, we are of all men most inconsistent. Every interpretation, exegesis, or opinion produces a new division, sect, or party, because we have made an agreement with men, not a covenant with God, the basis of our hope. When the apostle of liberty wrote about the two covenants, he declared, “To this day when

they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.” What was true of them with regard to the old covenant has been true with us as regards the new. We have been looking at the matter through a veil. It is time that the veil be lifted! Only through exaltation of Christ can that be done.

The lifting of veils is a thankless task. One who thus writes will experience the hatred and animosity of every partisan who prefers to maintain the status quo and who would resent even an angel “troubling the waters.” Even now I am feeling personally the brunt of opposition of many whom I love in the Lord, but reverence for truth impels me to speak for I know that “the night is coming.” I must give account to the Judge of all the earth if I deliberately condone error and stifle truth. I dare not face Him, if I enter into a conspiracy to strike truth down in the streets.

I am reminded that a short time ago, while discoursing on the difference between the covenant by which we enter into relationship with the Eternal One, and the writings which were necessitated by the failures and errors of the covenant people, a preacher publicly remarked that I relegated the scriptures to a secondary place, yet quoted from them to establish my position relative to the covenant. I realize it will be more difficult for preachers to acknowledge the truth of what we say or write on this topic, than for others to do so. So many sermon outlines will be wrecked, so many scriptural passages will be seen to have been misapplied. It is harder for one who has been the idol of some segment or splinter party to admit error. Having taught the word of God for years, having come to the realization of how many mistakes I have made, having been humbled before God by confession and penitent prayer for forgiveness and greater light, I know the bitterness and gall one tastes before he has the courage to admit, “I have been wrong all my life about this matter or that.” They are fortunate whose influence may not have been so widespread, or who were never exalted as party

champions. When one is the leader of a great party there will always be more people to hate him, and to count him as a traitor, when he can no longer conscientiously defend the narrow, intolerant party line.

I can thus sympathize with such a preacher as the one mentioned, even while deploring his lack of understanding. We do not at all relegate the sacred scriptures to an inferior position. Only a spiritually blinded man could so conclude. Every sacred scripture is inspired of God. The prophets, holy men of God, spoke as they were motivated by the Holy Spirit. But they spoke to a covenant people. What they spoke was not the covenant, neither is it now the covenant. The covenant by which man comes into relationship with Deity, and thus into fellowship with all others who are *joint partakers* of that same relationship is one thing; the scriptures written to such a people a wholly different thing. This is not the first time a man has been accused of overthrowing the law. My defence is the same as another and far greater than myself. “Do we overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (Romans 3:31).

The “old covenant” was contained in the sacred writings; the “new covenant” is revealed in the sacred writings. Certainly we must appeal to the record for any knowledge of what God has said in relationship to the covenants. But a reference to them to discover the nature of our relationship to God, no more concedes that all of these writings are “the covenant” than to argue that a knowledge of family history is essential to becoming a child of your parents. One does not need to read all of the letters written to his family before he can be born. An examination of my “family tree” may reveal the extent of my relationship, but it does not create that relationship.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Having digressed so far, in order to demonstrate the

importance of our theme, I now propose to prove that “the old testament” or “old covenant” was written on two tablets of stone, and on the basis of that covenant, the chosen people were constituted a nation. All prior and subsequent writings were no part of the testament itself, although all sustained a relationship to it. Moses is our first and best witness, having received the original draft of the constitution. “And he was there with the Lord forty days and nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (Exo. 34:27, 28).

Thirty eight years later, in the plains of Moab, Moses rehearsed in the ears of the surviving children of the original covenantees, the things that transpired. “And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deut. 4:11-13).

More explicit yet is the account in Deuteronomy 5. “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day.” Certainly then, the first sixty-nine chapters of the Bible are not a part of “that first covenant” mentioned in Hebrews 8:7, for they deal with the fathers before Sinai. But, just as Moses eliminates the sacred writings dealing with prior history from the covenant, so he also eliminates all future writings from it. He repeats the ten commandments as the covenant, then concludes, “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the deep gloom, with a loud voice; *and he added no more*. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone and gave them to me.” Although God “added no more,” men have added some thirty-seven books, of history, chronicles, poetry, songs,

wise sayings, prophecies and apocalyptic writings to the covenant made at Horeb. When my brethren speak of the “old testament” they include all of these in their concept. Worst of all, they carry that same concept over to the new covenant, and make our very relationship to God and each other dependent upon their idea, and even upon their interpretations and speculations about the meaning of certain portions of the sacred writings, denying that any one can be in covenant with God who disagrees with them in any particular.

A consideration of the following points will help us to realize that “the first testament” did not include all of the scriptures now called “old testament.”

1. The two tables of stone, are distinctly said to be the tables of the covenant (Deut. 9:11). They are called “the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you” (verse 9).

2. The sacred chest, or coffer, containing the tablets of stone was called “the ark of the covenant” (Num. 10:33; Deut. 10:8). When Solomon erected the temple, he said, “There have I set the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord which he made with the people of Israel” (2 Chron. 6:11). The ark had disappeared before many of the books of prophecy were even written.

3. The covenant was distinctly said to have been made and given in Horeb (Deut. 5:2). The apostle Paul identifies this as Mount Sinai in Arabia (Gal. 4:25). But the rest of the old covenant scriptures were all written in Palestine, in Babylon, or in Persia, during the exile.

4. The covenant was said to have been made when God “took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt” (Jer. 31:32). The scriptures were written much later and in many other places.

5. Certainly the prophecy of Jeremiah was no part of “the first testament” for by the time Jeremiah wrote, the people had already broken the covenant of God, and the prophet predicted a new one would be made (Jer. 31:32).

It is our intention to examine the new covenant and its nature as carefully as we have the old testament. We will be asked the question whether or not the scriptures, when written, constitute a law by which we must be governed, and if so, why all the furore about the exact identification of the covenant? It is our intention to deal with this fairly and conclusively, but in the interim, we affirm that it makes a great deal of difference upon what basis we predicate our relationship with God, for this will determine what constitutes fellowship and brotherhood. It may yet be that the great battle over justification by law or by faith in Christ Jesus must be fought over again, to secure once more the liberty from legalism which is our only hope in Christ Jesus. To that task we humbly and sincerely dedicate our feeble talent.

The Bed of Procrustes

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Procrustes was the ancient champion of enforced conformity. In Greek antiquity he was a legendary highwayman who lived in Attica. He had an iron bed which he regarded as the standard of length. Because it just fit him, he concluded that every one should fit it. He stopped every traveler and tied him to the bed. If the person happened to be too short, Procrustes stretched him until he attained the correct length; if he happened to be too long, his legs were cut off until he met the proper requirement. Thus was everyone made identical in size.

The iron bed on the highway of Attica has been supplanted by one on “the highway of holiness.” It operates now in the field of religion, rather than in the physical realm. It is used to measure spiritual attainment, and is the test of partisan fellowship. Every faction has its own bed, and all who would sojourn among them must be expanded or contracted, distended or diminished, enlarged or compressed, according to the unwritten creed which forms the bond of union for the particular group. Each of these claims to be the one holy, apostolic, and catholic church of God on earth, a contention they make in common with the Roman Church. Yet each has a different criterion of “faithfulness” or “loyalty” than all the others, and “the root of bitterness” in each case is the standard around which the partisans rally.

It is a figment of imagination that we must all think alike on every point of interpretation, or that we must be united in all our opinions and differences, before we can be one in Christ. Our minds differ even as do our faces. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. No two of us have identical abilities, capabilities, or responsibilities. Any system of religion based upon uniformity of knowledge, or conformity in opinion, at any given time, is doomed to division and failure. It is a humanly devised, not a divine system. The very ones who demand absolute agreement in order to fellowship disagree with each other. There are no two people in the church of God today, or in any faction which arrogantly assumes it is the church, who see everything exactly alike, so if fellowship is conditioned upon agreement or endorsement, there will be no fellowship. Recognition of this very thing causes each party to settle on some point of doctrine, and arbitrarily demand conformity on that particular. It is as if these modern Procrustians have agreed to accept all whose noses measure exactly three inches in length, regardless of their many deviations otherwise.

Take eight members of the same family, and feed them upon exactly the same food, and there will be variations among them. One will be fair, another dark; one light, another heavy; one short, another tall. What produces these variations? It cannot be their parentage for all have the same father and mother. It cannot be their diet, for all eat the same thing. In the physical realm we are not worried about such differences. We regard them as natural and normal. We would think it odd if we could not tell the eight apart. In spite of their differences in appearance all have much in common. They are all part of one family. We would not think of dispossessing one who had a physical defect.

The same God who made our bodies created our intellects. His revelation constantly emphasizes we are not alike. This is the very essence of the parable of the sower, of the talents, and of the pounds. We not only have “gifts differing” but we have mental

capacities differing as well. We have the same spiritual father and mother, we feed upon the same spiritual food, but we do not all think alike. The inner man has its individuality the same as the outer man. We are not an indeterminate, indistinguishable mass in the spirit. If men thought alike in all matters there would be no inventions, industries, discoveries, progress, development, or even life. Why do we think it a matter of worry and concern when God's children do not all agree in opinion? Why must we devise Procrustean beds to elongate or abbreviate them to conform to our partisan norms? This is the basis of all sectism! Much of our present predicament stems from ignorance of the real teaching of God's word. It is thought that fellowship and unity are contingent upon perfect knowledge and conformity of thought. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We are in fellowship with God, but surely we do not know as much as God knows, nor are our lives as perfect as His existence. If God deigns to fellowship us in our imperfections and shortcomings, who are we to set up a different standard for our fellows? Are we not like the unjust debtor who, having been forgiven so great an amount, try to throttle one of our fellowservants and make him pay us a negligible amount?

But does not the apostle command that we "all speak the same thing"? Certainly he does. But an examination of the context will show that he was dealing with the schisms in Corinth. One was saying, "I am of Paul;" another, "I am of Apollos;" another, "I am of Cephas;" another, "I am of Christ." That is what *they were saying*. Paul told them to speak the same thing, that is, to stop their party cries. He did not mean for them to parrot the same words! They were not all to be like the tape recordings which start when you dial the wrong number on your telephone. Men are not recorded robots. The only way all could speak the same thing about all things at the same time, would be for all to know all things about the same things at the same time. Not even the preachers who postulate fellowship on absolute conformity will affirm that such is now the case, for they are constantly traveling about trying to teach all about some things,

and they know there will always be some who will not know all things— including themselves!

God has not established the divine fellowship on the basis of the amount of acquired knowledge of his revelation, nor upon reasoning, opinion, or interpretation, *but upon faith*. This is the majesty and glory of the Christian system. It takes sinful men who need a Saviour and brings them into proper relationship with God in spite of varied degrees of knowledge, divergencies of opinion or interpretation, or vagaries of reason. It employs none of these as the foundation of the Christian hope. It substitutes facts for opinions, and demands faith in the testimony of credible witnesses as to these facts. And because there are many frail, ignorant helpless victims of sin, denied the opportunities for intellectual training, but still loved by God, He conditions His requirements to their state. He makes salvation and entrance into fellowship contingent upon the belief of just one fact, validated by obedience to just one act. Faith and obedience! These are the requirements in all ages. And because of the simplicity of the Christian system, the most erudite philosopher must enter the fellowship on the same basis as the jungle pygmy.

Every sincere believer in the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is God's Messiah and Son, who is immersed in water upon the basis of that faith, is God's child, and my brother. He is in my fellowship, because fellowship is the state or condition into which we are introduced by the new birth. There are variations among God's children as there are among mine. We should cease to regard such as abnormal. A person is not necessarily a freak because he does not look like me; and by the same token he is not a freak if he does not think as I do on all things.

Wherein we differ, let us reason together as brethren, not cleave the skulls of each other as enemies. Unity of opinion is a goal to strive for, not an essential to fellowship. We come into fellowship first and then study to see things alike; we dare not reverse the divine process and insist that we all see everything

alike before we can come into fellowship! If we come closer to each other it will only be because of a mutual regard for Jesus as a perfect model for us all. We will gain nothing by setting up our iron bedsteads on the highway.

A Good Question

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

A good brother in the southland writes:

I am troubled by your statement in the last issue in the article “Our Special Mission,” to the effect that if the church accomplishes its purpose it must eventually lose its identity. How can that be possible?

We deeply appreciate the interest which prompted the query. We wish the writer had noted a little more carefully what we actually said. Here it is:

It is my conviction that any separate and distinct group existing in the Christian world to plead for a unity of all believers in Christ, that is in one body, must, in the very nature of things, have but a temporary existence in that state. If it accomplishes its own purpose it must eventually blend into the growing unity of the body of Christ which it promotes, and lose its own identity in the recaptured homogeneity of the one body which has been so seriously fractured and fragmentized.

Our brother confuses “The Church of Christ” as he knows it, with the church set forth in the new covenant scriptures. They are not necessarily the same. The first exists as the abused offspring of a great restoration movement inaugurated more than a century ago to unite the Christians in all sects. It is no

longer a movement. It has crystallized into an organized party, which has been splintered into some two dozen warring segments, separated and segregated from each other by various unwritten creedal tests of fellowship.

The church of God contains within it every saved person on earth. Every one who has entered into covenant relationship with God is a member of the one body, added to it by the power of God. Not all of these are identified with one of the factions of "The Church of Christ." The flock of God is scattered over the sectarian hills. The church has been in existence since the good news was first proclaimed at Pentecost. Jesus has never been a shepherd without a sheep, a head without a body, or a king without subjects. The church was here before Alexander Campbell was born, although there was no religious party then in existence designated "The Church of Christ." It was not the intention of the reformers to start a separate and distinct party under that, or any other, title. Their heirs have forgotten the original design of restoration and now contribute more to disunity among themselves than to unity of all the believers.

But let me answer the question of my brother. I will give an example. In a small community, three religious organizations, each having about fifty members, meet for worship. They are known as The Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, and The Church of Christ. The sincere and scholarly men among the first two are deeply troubled by the sectarian division which exists in the world and begin a study of the sacred writings to see what they can do in a small way to eliminate such. After several years of mutual exchange of thought they resolve to sink into oblivion their local units, and come together to constitute a single congregation. They covenant together to accept the scriptures as their only rule of faith, and to create no barriers or tests of fellowship which God has not authorized. Those who were previously sprinkled among the Methodist party are immersed in conformity with the original meaning of baptism. All resolve to meet each Lord's Day to gather about the table of fellowship.

They decide to accept no particular designation, but to simply employ any descriptive term found in the divine oracles for the people of God.

In their initial meeting, they draft the following resolution:

Resolved, that the undersigned, having previously been members of several diverse parties in the Christian domain, but having concluded that the party spirit is a sin, and having decided to constitute ourselves a church of God in this community, wearing no distinctive title, but welcoming every immersed believer whose character is in harmony with the moral standard of Jesus, shall continue to study together to grow in grace and knowledge of the truth, and to help make it possible for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and to this end we mutually pledge ourselves in the grace of God.

Now, what should “The Church of Christ” in that community do? Should it remain aloof, and demand that these others come and “make acknowledgements” unto them? Should they insist the only scriptural name is “The Church of Christ” and attack these godly, consecrated neighbors who refuse to sectarianize any term or title? My reply is that if they do so they will be a “sect” in that area, as they are now in so many places.

Since our purpose is the unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus, by a restoration of the primitive order of things, we should lose our identity as a distinct group and blend into the growing unity we claim to promote. We need not worry about the church losing its identity. It cannot do so, for there is but one church, and never has been but one. The church was created by God according to an eternal purpose. It is impossible for the church to cease, die, or be lost. You might as well fear that Jesus will pass away as to worry about his body dying. Most of my brethren confuse a faction with the church. They fear the dissolution of the party will be the end of the church. That is why we need a restoration of the Restoration.

Indiana Trip

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Recently I journeyed to Sullivan, Indiana, where I spoke four times by invitation of a little group of consecrated brethren meeting on North Court Street. I was privileged to meet at least ten preachers, and members of some eighteen congregations, representing various segments of the disciple brotherhood. I discussed in their hearing mutual ministry, individual responsibility, fellowship and the unity of all believers. The interest and attention were all that could be desired. There are three divergent groups in Sullivan among the brethren who do not use instrumental music, and all favored us with their presence, and were kind and forbearing toward our presentation. During our brief series, Bro. Norman Wilkey immersed his eldest son, Carl, into the ever blessed name.

When I boarded the train to go to Sullivan, there was but one vacant seat. I introduced myself to my seat companion, only to learn he was a Lutheran missionary to India, home for a year of study at Concordia Seminary, before returning to his distant post. For three hours we discussed the problem of reaching the peoples of the Far East with the message of God's Son. My friend readily agreed that one of the greatest barriers was that of sectarian division in all of its confusing aspects. He conceded to my contention that most of us regard the Christian faith as a product of the western world, to be imported to the East. We forget that Jesus and the apostles were all from the Middle East,

and the message was exported to us. Those who go out as missionaries now, seek not to reproduce the new covenant *ekklesia* of God, but to plant a replica of the congregation in their own home towns. Such a westernized version of the church of God may not be adapted to the people of an alien country, for it stresses theological disputes which are American in their origin, and not a part of the primitive church at all.

Upon boarding the train to return to Saint Louis, there was again but one vacant seat, and this time I found myself seated beside a Negro clergymen from Virginia, the newly elected bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. He was en route to inspect and hold conferences in his newly assigned territory, and being thrown together for three hours, I sought to redeem the time by discussion of problems kindred to all who are concerned about the Christian faith. We explored the problems of school and church integration of the races, of the recent uprisings in Africa and their effects upon missionary endeavors in that land, of the divided state of Christendom, and canvassed our various approaches to the attempt to solve the question of disunity. I suggested to the Negro bishop, who was a man of considerable learning, that we have probably weakened Christianity by our careless use of such terms as the word "church." We speak of the Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, The Lutheran Church, etc. The word "church" was employed by the Holy Spirit to designate the called out ones, the covenantal community of God. As such, it could never rightly apply to anything except the one body of which our precious Lord is the head. To call any and every human sect or party a *church*, serves only to disturb the minds of simple, primitive peoples. There is a difference in "a church" or "the church" and parties created by men on the basis of their philosophies.

I have been musing over why it happened that on this one brief trip I should twice be thrown into the presence of men interested in the subject of the religion of Jesus Christ, from whom I learned a great many things of value, and with whom I

shared some of my own thoughts and ideas. Is it possible that in ways which we do not know, God opens up for us doors of opportunity to make known our witness as to the necessity for restoration of the primitive order, or are these things mere accidents and unrelated incidents? We may not know, but I am thankful to Him whom I love for such contacts as I go through life.

Analysis of Legalism

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[Abstract]

In the land of Moab, with the sentence of death resting upon him, Moses spoke to all Israel. Forty years had elapsed since the exodus from Egypt. Those who were rebellious at Kadesh-barnea had all died in the great and terrible wilderness. This farewell address was delivered to their children, now mature men and women. Reminding them of the day they stood before the Lord at Horeb, Moses said, “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deut. 4:13). The covenant consisted of the “words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the deep gloom, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone and gave them to me.”

This is a significant declaration. From it we learn four things: (1) The covenant consisted of that which was announced orally to all Israel; (2) It embraced the ten commandments with their preamble; (3) It was written upon two stone tablets; (4) It was limited to the content of the oral message which was subsequently engraved upon the two tablets, for *the Lord added no more*. When they had heard the words of God the people were so frightened that the heads of the tribes approached Moses and besought him, “Go near, and hear all that the Lord our God will say; and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you;

and we will hear and do it.”

The Lord agreed to this, and instructed Moses to go and tell the people to return to their tents. However, he told Moses, “You stand here by me, and I will tell you all the commandments, and the statutes and ordinances which you shall teach them.” There was a difference between the covenant which established their relationship as the elect of God; and the statutes, commandments and ordinances, which regulated them within that relationship. The apostle recognized this when he wrote, “They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” (Romans 9:4).

The covenant made at Sinai, by which national theocratic status was conferred, was of such a nature, and to fulfill such purposes, as to require a definite written legal code to accomplish its design. The law is personified as a child conductor or custodian (Gal. 3:24), and as a guardian or trustee (Gal. 4:2). Those who were under its jurisdiction were regarded as children, or minors, and thus possessed of no more freedom or independence than slaves (Gal. 4:1). Now, just as one would not intrust children to the care of another who was immature, so the law had to be complete from the inception of the nation. Accordingly, the Lord revealed the law in its fullness— precepts, commandments, statutes and judgments— to the initial mediator. “For the law was given through Moses” (John 1:17).

AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE

In this is found a great divergency as respects the Christian economy. The first covenant was based upon justification by law; the second upon justification by faith in a person. “At the present time . . . he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Since the “new covenant is not in a written code but in the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:6), no law was given at

the creation of the covenantal community on Pentecost in Jerusalem. Men simply heard an announcement of good news and accepted its implication in their lives. Those who were thus inaugurated as priests unto God had no distinctive writings of their own for many years. It was two decades before the first apostolic epistle, the one to the Thessalonians, was penned.

The epistles addressed to the followers of Jesus were written to individuals or communities as circumstances arose which called for them. Some were letters of thanks for favors received; others were letters of correction, admonition, and warning. One was written as a baptismal certificate for a runaway slave and to make a room reservation. In others occur personal notes as to the health and status of the writer, a prescription to correct stomach distress in the recipient, a request to pick up and return an overcoat, or to bring along books and writing materials. These letters do not always contain all the writers wished to say. "Though I had much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you, and talk face to face" (2 John 12; 3 John 13). "About the other things I will give directions when I come" (1 Cor. 11:34). This is not the language of legalism.

No congregation had access to all of these epistles for more than a hundred years. There was a considerable dispute as to which ones should be included in the sacred canon, and they were not collected, collated and compiled until a century after the royal priesthood was instituted. The primitive community of God had nothing to weld and cement it together but the fellowship of the Spirit. It was not a community based upon a written code; it was a community composed of believers in the Living Word. Its rule of action was a personal faith in a personal Lord; its motivating force was love. The governing message of ancient Israel consisted of the words of the law written in a book by the hand of Moses (Deut. 31:24). Not so, with us, "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that *we should love one another.*" Such a message befits a covenant

graven not upon tablets of stone but upon tablets of the heart.

AN ECONOMY OF LAW

We must not digress further from our study of the first covenant. It was a legalistic arrangement to keep in confinement and under restraint those who were its subjects. Thus the covenant itself was legalistic. It consisted of law. The covenant given through Moses was law, but not all law given through Moses was part of the covenant. This will explain such statements as that of Paul, “Yet if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7). It is obvious that this statement is a part of the covenant. And because of this, other portions of the scriptures are referred to as law, being a part of a legal system.

It is important that we understand the nature of a system of law as opposed to a system of faith for justification. Failing to do so, we will but substitute one law for another, and this is a fatal error. Any person who seeks to be justified by law must keep such law to perfection. The slightest deviation from it brings condemnation. One cannot set up in his heart a system of justification by law and then expect God’s grace to rescue him in his failures, for grace operates through faith, and not through law. If we are now under a law, any law, for justification, our only hope, if hope it can be called, is to live in constant fear and dread and to keep its every provision and condition without fail. Few of us realize the full import of the hope inspiring statement, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom. 3:21, 22). Please observe that in this dispensation the righteousness, or justification, of God is manifested apart from law. Not “the law” but *law*!

The question naturally arises, “Why then the law?” It is not a new query, being first propounded in Galatians 3:19. The inspired answer is found at the same place. “It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made.” But justification did not come by the law, “for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose” (Gal. 2:21). It is plainly said, “By works of the law shall no one be justified” (Gal. 2:16), and again, “Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law” (Gal. 3:11). The law was powerless to make alive. It could only, in its ultimate, produce death. Since justification by law demands absolute conformity to the minutest degree, and since no man could to this extent fulfill the law’s demands, “the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10). “For if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law” (Gal. 4:21).

THE WEAKNESS OF LAW

What is true of the law given by Moses is true of any law as a basis for justification. The law given by Moses was of divine origin. “He received living oracles to give to us” (Acts 7:38). “It was ordained by angels through an intermediary” (Gal. 3:19). It was not unholy or unjust. “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). It was not an unhallowed or unspiritual arrangement for “we know that the law is spiritual” (Rom. 7:14). How could that which came from God, was furnished by angels, and was holy, just, good and spiritual, fail to produce life? The answer is that it failed, not because of its origin, means of transmission, or character, but simply because man being what he is, it is impossible for him to be justified by law. The very essence of such justification is absolute and unvarying conformity. This requires perfect knowledge and understanding from the very moment one comes under the law. If he makes one mistake he

becomes guilty under the law, and all of his good deeds in the future can never purge that guilt.

The law arouses carnal desires or passions. We must deal with man as he is. Filled with curiosity, the urge to experiment, and the ambition to learn by experience, that which is forbidden often lures him toward destruction. The very commandment intended to restrain all too often incites. The law identifies sin, points it out, and locates it as surely as a “Wet Paint” sign on a park bench warns the passerby. The apostle says, “If it had not been for the law I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, *finding opportunity in the commandment*, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness.” The tragic feature is that the penalty is death, for there is no mercy in law— only justice! “For sin, *finding opportunity in the commandment*, deceived me, and *by it killed me*” (Rom. 7:11). This is the inexorable fate of the legalist. He cannot escape it. His own testimony as to his imperfection will condemn him.

It would do all of us good to prayerfully, thankfully, and tearfully ponder the tremendous force in the following. “While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, *aroused by the law*, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (Rom. 7:6). I take it that the “old written code” was the law given through Moses. But I am just as convinced we do not serve under any written code. “We are not under law, but under grace.” Certainly the “new life of the Spirit” did not include the book of Romans, for Paul was just writing it, and those whom he addressed had already been serving in the new life of the Spirit, before he wrote them. They would have been doing so if he had never written them. “The new life of the Spirit” is contrasted with “the old written code.” We are discharged from the latter which held us captive. We serve under the other regime!

It is here that the legalist, motivated by fear and trepidation, childishly depending upon fences and barriers to mark the bounds beyond which he dare not walk, timidly enquires, “But will we not lose a lot of brethren if they become convinced they are not under law?” Such a question only reveals the emptiness of his own soul. He is not so much afraid of what will happen to others. He dare not trust himself. In reality, he is affirming that Jesus is inferior to law; that the magnetic power of the divine example is weaker than a code of jurisprudence. The sad feature of it all is that such a person turns back in theory to the former dispensation and voluntarily seeks to place himself again under “guardians and trustees.” Of such the apostle wrote, “Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3).

ATTITUDE TOWARD SCRIPTURES

But what will be the attitude of one who shares “the new life of the Spirit” toward the book of Romans, and the other writings of the apostles? If he does not regard them as “a written code” how will he consider them? He will certainly not worship them. It would be as wrong to worship the Bible as to worship nature. God reveals Himself in both. Bibliolatry and pantheism are both in error. We must worship the God whom the book reveals, and not the book which reveals God. Nor will one whose heart is attuned to the personality of God, a partaker of the divine nature, confuse the Source of life, with that which is provided to nourish and sustain him. One is not born by eating bread, either in the realm of nature or of grace. God had children under the new covenant long before one word of the new covenant scriptures was written down.

One will continue in the apostolic teaching as he learns it. He will study and do research therein all his life. He will alter and amend his life as he finds truths he had not discovered. He will not approach the scriptures as a lawyer goes to his statute

books, but as an eager disciple to a school taught by a loving Master. Nor will he beat and belabor other students who are not so far advanced as himself. He will regard all who seek to learn from the great teacher as his fellow-disciples.

He will search what is written that he may approach closer to the ideals of Jesus, not to castigate others. Thus it can be said, “And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Is it too much to say that “the new life of the Spirit” is intended and designed to “change us into his likeness” and that, as we walk and live with him, we rise from one degree of glory to another? Many a man who boasts of his knowledge of the Bible, and his ability to quote whole chapters, reveals by his life that he has never really found Jesus. Many an attorney pleading law before the bar is inferior in moral integrity. It is not “a new law” but “*a new life of the Spirit*” that makes men really free.

We will do no good to turn over a new leaf. We must turn over to a new life. And “this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

The law could not give life. It could and did bring knowledge of sin. “For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law since through the law comes knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20) The law could and did bring wrath. “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). It made nothing complete or perfect. “On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect)” (Heb. 7:18, 19). These features did not militate against the law fulfilling its assigned role. “Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 4:23, 24).

BASIS OF DIVISION

It is a misconception of our relationship to God under grace, and a lack of comprehension of the role of the new covenant scriptures in that relationship which is the basis of much of our grievous condition in the religious world of today. My heart reaches out in sadness to those brethren who have convinced themselves that they best serve God by brutally castigating and verbally stoning their fellows. Humble men who cannot violate their own consciences, nor pay lip service to that which their hearts do not condone, are driven forth by those whose passions are aroused by the thought that they do the will of Him who died for all by attack upon some for whom He died. The body of believers is splintered and fragmented in the very name of Him who is “our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.” We have lived to see the day when an appeal for unity of believers is branded as heresy!

I am personally exercised in this matter because of my own culpability. Many who now regard themselves as administrators of divine law have been influenced by my own past teaching and example. For years I regarded no one as God’s child, or my brother, “who walked not with us.” Faithfulness to God was measured by loyalty to the party. The milk of human kindness curdled in our hearts, humanitarian love was squeezed into a narrow compress embracing only those affiliated with the party. “The brotherhood” was composed of those who took the right paper, or could obtain clearance from the right key man. All others were outside, regarded as apostates, pagans, and unbelievers. They were treated, or mistreated, as pariahs and untouchables. We were the church, the kingdom of heaven, the elect of God. Such was the bitter caste system of our factional creation.

All of this proceeded from a false philosophy, a rationalization which was Judaistic in concept, a belief that God

had merely switched to a new law for justification in this age. Convinced that we were still under law I sought to be “educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day.” There is a sense of pride in being right, in knowing that all who disagree are either sectarians or hobbyists; in realizing that those who dare oppose you are fighting against God because they oppose you. It brings an inward glow of satisfaction to realize that you are sound in the faith, a defender of the truth, while all others are dishonest, insincere, disloyal and unworthy of notice. “My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation, is known by all. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.” There are Pharisees among the spiritual seed of Abraham, as there were among his fleshly seed. I know whereof I speak!

But I now know that Jesus did not die for a party in the realm of Christendom. No faction is the one body. The members of no exclusive fragment constitute “the brotherhood.” No splinter party is “the loyal church.” This is a figment of minds distorted by ignorance of God’s purpose.

The one body is a covenantal community composed of all the saved. It is a fellowship, a communion of immersed believers in the Lord Jesus, whose lives are attuned to the harmony of the divine nature. Every person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is my brother. To all such, by the same Spirit abiding in me, and ever seeking its own, I am drawn by a love which having embraced Him, reaches out to embrace all of His. The answer to the problem of division is the indwelling Spirit of God. Those who possess the Spirit, or rather, are possessed by the Spirit, “endeavor to guard the unity of the Spirit.” All who separate from their brethren, who seek to segregate, isolate and divide them do so because they do not possess the Spirit. “These be they which separate themselves, sensual, *having not the Spirit*” (Jude 19. AV). “It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, *devoid*

of the Spirit” (Jude 19. RSV). “These are the men who split communities, for they are led by human emotions and never by the Spirit of God” (Jude 19. Phillips).

FUTILITY OF LAW

No law can possibly bring men together in heart. It is not within the power of law to do so. Law may provide for men being in proximity and its enforcement may maintain a degree of physical contiguity, but beyond this law cannot go. Our prisons are illustrations of this fact. The ineffectuality of law to accomplish the greater ideal is demonstrated in the turmoil in our own nation over integration. A Supreme Court decision can place white and colored children in the same classrooms, and soldiers may stand guard to see that the decision is heeded and obeyed, but the law of the land, and no interpretation of that law, can ever produce that quickening of conscience which alone can cause a re-evaluation of the rights and dignity of our fellow-citizens.

Even the divine law, ordained by angels in the hands of an intermediary, was “weak through the flesh.” And all law, either human or divine, must fall into that same category. The only hope of the fulfillment of the divine purpose, is for fleshly men, through some great transforming experience, to rise above the pale of law, to transcend the very domain of law, that is to be on a purely spiritual plane, and not in the flesh. How can this be possible? “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9)

Fellowship and unity present no problems to the Spirit of God. They are problems only to those who seek to solve them by law. There is one Spirit. If that Spirit dwells in me, He will seek out all others in whom He dwells, and being thus united in one Spirit, we can work out the knotty problems of interpretation.

The legalist disdains and discards the divine helper. To him the holy Spirit is the written word, and his only approach to unity is through debate and argument. But what saith the word? “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:1, 2). Note that agreement and full accord do not come by laying down the law to each other, but by encouragement in Christ, the incentive of love, fellowship in the Spirit, affection and sympathy. *Fellowship in the Spirit is not a fruit of agreement, but precedes and produces it.* The legalist always reverses this process. He demands that we be of the same mind and in full accord (with his position) as a prelude to fellowship, but God establishes a fellowship or participation in the Spirit first, and in that atmosphere we labor to complete or grow toward a unity of mind and heart. We have been training lawyers, instead of developing disciples!

MAN AND LAW

Jesus has revealed to us that man is superior to law. Man is made in the image of God. He was made but a little lower than God. He was not made for law, nor fashioned to be under it, and some day will be free from its restraints. Law was given because of the fleshy propensities. “Yet we all know that the Law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles nor self-control, for the man who is really wicked, who has neither scruples nor reverence” (1 Tim. 1:9). Our relationship with Jesus and each other on earth is designed to prepare us for the fellowship in heaven. In the glorified realm there will be no law, for the characters of those who are there will not require it. Under the beneficent rule of the Messiah, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, we are being fitted for the eternal abode. If we have principles, self-control, scruples, and reverence, we require no law, for the law is given for those who have neither. But to turn the dispensation of grace

into one of law, and appoint ourselves as judge, court, interpreter, bailiff and executor, to hound and harass those who cannot honestly agree with our every interpretation is to do evil and not good, regardless of how high our purpose, or how glorious and exalted our motives.

That we be not misunderstood, let us give a clearcut case of how the legalistic spirit operates in defiance of the intent of heaven. Remember that this spirit always first places an interpretation upon some portion of revelation, then exalts the interpretation to the status of revelation. Our blessed Lord, upon the night of his betrayal, instituted the Lord's Supper. Since the act of eating and drinking together was considered a visible manifestation of fellowship by the world of mankind; in conformity with that view, he took bread, blessed it, gave it to his disciples and told them to eat it. In like manner he took the cup, and having given thanks, told them to drink of it. A supper required two acts, eating and drinking. These require two ingredients, a solid and a liquid. The solid selected was bread, the liquid was the fruit of the vine. The divine requirement was to eat bread and drink the fruit of the vine in communion or fellowship, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come."

It was not the eating and drinking which made them members of one body, but because they were members of one body, the covenantal community, they ate and drank together. This did not create fellowship or establish them in the fellowship. It demonstrated that they were in the fellowship because they jointly participated in the body and blood of Jesus. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf." One purpose of Jesus in giving the Supper was to guard the fellowship against disintegration, by making it possible for his disciples to come together, or assemble as a church (1 Cor.

11:17, 18). Is it not peculiar that men have taken the very ordinance given to exemplify our fellowship and used it to destroy the communion it was intended to preserve? What an appalling and tragic picture it is to see the disciples of Jesus quarrelling over how to eat and drink, driving each other forth, creating factions and multiplying schisms, in defiance of the very purpose of the Supper!

Jesus gave no orders as to what kind of bread must be used, or how it should be broken or served. He gave no law as to the state of the fruit of the vine, or how it should be distributed. His only commands respected action— they were to eat the bread, drink the fruit of the vine, and do so in remembrance of Him. But men are not content to allow it to remain so. Those who depend upon law for justification must make laws where God has not made them. To them, the only way to serve acceptably is to serve legally. They must thus prescribe in every minute detail. Those who do not conform are not “loyal” nor “faithful” to God. These brethren are not, by nature, mean, uncharitable, or illiberal. They are not so much vindictive as they are victimized by their philosophy of salvation by law through partisan conformity, rather than by grace through faith. But this does not negate the terrible butchery in which they indulge on the body of Jesus. Those who first killed our Lord, said, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die.” The law they referred to was the one given by God. Thus the Son of God was condemned to die by an interpretation of the law of God; and His spiritual body is now mangled by exactly the same procedure.

There are those who make the law that the bread must be unleavened. They would actually refuse to eat with children of the Father who use leavened bread. They reason that Jesus *chose* unleavened bread, then make this a law. But Jesus did not choose unleavened bread. He had no choice. Being a Jew, he simply took the kind of bread in common use in every Jewish home at that particular time, the bread which was their staple

fare for seven days. And the reason the Jews ate it was to remind them of the haste in which their fathers fled from Egypt, their speedy exit allowing no time for the yeast to rise. Not once does the sacred scripture use the word *azumos*, unleavened bread, in connection with the Lord's Supper. It is always *ortos*, a loaf, whether leavened or not. Then to draw apart from those who use leavened bread, to refuse to eat with them, and to count them as unfaithful to God, is to create "an unleavened bread party" on the basis of a man-made law! "Who made thee a judge and a lawgiver?" "These are they which set up divisions, worldly, having not the Spirit."

But this is merely "the beginning of sorrows." Congregations of believers have been riven into splinters even over the method of breaking the bread. Leaders have meticulously searched and scrutinized their "law" to determine the exact technical procedure to be followed. Like the scribes of old they have searched the scriptures, and built up traditions out of their interpretations. Some have concluded that the one who presides at the table must break the loaf in two parts before it is distributed. Others have contended fiercely that each participant must break off his own portion as it is passed to him. Parties have been formed, challenges issued, and debates held. A sin-sick world has been treated to the sorry and sordid spectacle of a house filled with bitter partisans, separated physically by the center aisle, and in heart by their legalistic interpretations, fighting over how to break off a piece of bread representing the unity of believers in one body. In my library at this time is a book containing propositions for public debate, offered to the world as if salvation depended upon the settling of such technical and labored questions. Read these.

1. For a church to be Scriptural in its Communion service, the one serving at the table should, after thanks, break off a small portion of the loaf and eat it, before the other disciples partake. *We affirm.*

2. For a church to be Scriptural in its Communion Service, the one serving at the table should, after thanks, break the loaf in two at (or near) the middle and both pieces should be passed to other disciples. *We deny.*

In such a discussion both disputants use identically the same scriptures. They quote the same passages. Each claims his own interpretation is the only correct one. Each demands that his interpretation be accepted as the holy will of God. All who do not concur with this canon and subscribe to this rubric are branded, labeled and laughed out of court in scornful derision. They are driven out into the cold, unwept, unhonored, and unsung. This is the frightful length to which men will go under the guise of orthodoxy. They call such action “contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.” This is the effect of legalism, carried to its logical culmination, used to destroy and not to save!

In some cities there are “fermented wine” and “unfermented wine” parties. These have nothing in common except their zeal to fight and destroy each other. Childishly they call each other “fermented wine brethren” or “grape juice brethren.” But the term “brethren” is drowned either in the wine or the juice. Both search the scriptures diligently with the supreme purpose of bolstering their partisan positions. Men who know nothing of Greek and who could not tell a Hebrew character from a chicken track in the mud, learnedly sound off about the originals for wine. They batter and attack each other with such venom as to make it appear the purpose of God in sending His Son to suffer on the cross was to make our hope of entering heaven dependent upon how long the grape juice had been made before being used to participate in the communion of His blood.

Others are variously designated as “cups brethren” or “one-cuppers” depending upon whether the assembled saints drink in memory of the Lord from one container for all, or one

for each. Again the partisan champions all quote the same passages. All force the entire gamut of holy writings to pay tribute to their respective views and the positions they uphold. From the figurative “cups” mentioned by the prophets, to the incidental reference of the Samaritan woman regarding drinking from the well of Jacob, there is a great furore created, and the fellowship of the saints is hinged upon metonymical usages, with a goodly number of those present in debate, neither knowing or caring what the term means, since they have already chosen up sides, and are backing “our preacher.” All of this is the result of a false concept of our relationship to God, a failure to recognize the people of God as a covenantal community of believers, and an attempt to convert it into a regimented combine in which original thinking is treason and a divergent opinion is the unpardonable sin.

MY POSITION

To me, this covenantal community is not a product of law, but of faith, hope, and love, the abiding and enduring factors. Our faith in Jesus has led us together. Only unbelief or lack of faith can separate us. At the table of the Lord I do not examine the bread, to see if it is leavened or unleavened. I do not examine the cup to see if it is fermented or unfermented. I do not examine the mode of breaking the bread, or of passing the cup. *I examine myself.* I can discern the Lord’s body whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, or whether the fruit of the vine is passed in a goblet or on a tray. In so doing I do not eat and drink judgment upon myself, and I am not to be judged by my brethren! I do not love leavened bread or unleavened bread. I do not love grape juice or fermented wine. I do not love any particular method of breaking bread. I do not love one container or multiple cups. I love Jesus, and I love my brethren— *all of them!* And I do not propose to allow any of them to shove me into a party where I shall have to hate the rest of them. I do not belong to a leavened bread party or an unleavened bread party.

I do not belong to a grape juice party or a fermented wine party. I do not belong to a cup party or an individual cup party. I am not a lawmaker or a judge. *I belong to Jesus.* He alone has my allegiance. He ransomed me, delivered me, and saved me. “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

I can eat the bread and drink the cup with my brethren regardless of their modes or methods, means or manners, because my approach to God is through Christ Jesus, not through law! I will not disown a single one of God’s children because of my personal opinion or interpretation. If one group sets me at naught because I love all the rest and regard them as brethren, I shall not be tempted to hate those who thus judge. I will still love them in spite of their action, kindled though it may be by the narrow spirit of partisanship. My evaluation of brotherhood is upon the basis of common Fatherhood. I shall not allow myself to put it upon any other basis.

It is in this spirit I now propose to examine the new covenant which establishes our relationship in this dispensation. It is my conviction, that the new covenant is no more written with pen and ink than it is upon two tablets of stone. It is written on fleshy tables of the heart with the Spirit of the living God. All whose hearts are so inscribed are a part of the covenantal community which God purchased with the blood of His Son. There is not a saved person on earth outside of this community. It is the one body. Besides it, there is no other. Every honest believer in the fact of the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth who has been immersed on the basis of that faith, has been inducted into that community. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” That those who have been brought into this majestic relationship with Deity have allowed themselves to be divided into factions and sects is one of the most regrettable features of this age. But I cannot be of

service to them by being the spokesman for another faction. I must keep myself free in heart and mind, to love them all, to serve the best interests of every one of them, for all of them are my brethren in Him, regardless of the unfortunate circumstances which hold them aloof from each other.

Cause for Concern

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[Abstract]

By invitation of a consecrated little band of believers, I recently spent three nights in a rural area of our state, during which I addressed respectable audiences assembled in a modest meeting house located at a crossroads. On every side spread fertile fields. The drone of tractors plying back and forth between rows of corn could be heard throughout the day. The community was composed of genial, hospitable and friendly people. They shared with their hard working neighbors, exchanging labor in critical times, and visits when crop conditions would permit. It was a privilege to be among them.

There was one disturbing feature which troubled my heart. Within a very small radius, three congregations maintained their separate buildings, and carried on their worship services, isolated and aloof from each other. They could all participate in the same social and community affairs. All belonged to the same farmers association; all sponsored the same 4-H Club, all were members of the same Parent-Teacher Association. In the realms of physical, moral and mental development, they could combine their efforts and their varied talents. It was only in the spiritual domain they went their several ways, with even families divided and rent asunder religiously.

The situation was worsened in my view, by the fact that all three of these small groups were descended from the great

restoration movement of the previous century which had as its goal the uniting of the Christians in all sects. For years now they have been rivals, and although the harshness of the past has been partially dissipated, they still have no combined witness in the community, testifying to the power of the Spirit as a unifying force in their lives. I sought to ascertain the history of their division. It revealed the same tragic picture still found in so many localities.

Sixty years ago there was one congregation of disciples. Each Lord's Day the hitching rack outside the meetinghouse was lined with the teams and vehicles which transported happy neighbors to worship together in the Lord Jesus. Aged elders taught the word to the flock. Freedom to exhort was extended to all of the qualified brethren. Each Lord's Day night the whole community gathered again to sing the hymns of praise in unison, except when the time was given over to a visiting preacher to address them.

However, this peaceful condition was not to obtain always. "The instrumental music question" which had begun to disturb the tranquillity of congregations in the larger urban centers was introduced by one or two families. It became the sole topic of conversation in many homes and at private gatherings, as the pros and cons were voiced. The elders, regarding the instrument as a human novelty and innovation, requested that it not be agitated any further to the disruption of the harmony which had prevailed. One of the chief advocates of the instrument regarded this as an attempt of reactionaries and old fogies to stem the tide of spiritual progress. He made a personal canvass of the membership to put the leaders out and the instrument in. Feeling that he had sufficient backing to accomplish his purpose, he went to the home of one of the aged protestants, and losing his temper, shook his fist and announced they would have the instrument if they had to sue in the courts for possession of the property.

The same man claimed the floor on a certain Lord's Day and made the announcement publicly, telling those who did not propose to worship with the organ that it would be an opportune time to leave. The great majority arose, to the surprise of all, and followed one of the aged brethren to his home. There it was agreed to meet in a schoolhouse temporarily. Meantime the other brethren put the organ in, and continued to meet for several months, but lacking spiritual instructors, their services gradually dwindled away, and six months later the building which once resounded to hymns of love and praise was becoming the haunt of bats and pigeons.

Those who left, amalgamated their efforts with those of another small band, and soon began to grow, as peace and harmony prevailed. Then, once more, "a root of bitterness springing up" created dissension. A nearby congregation received into their membership one who came from the Baptist party. Hearing of this, a couple of brethren made mention of it to an elder, who replied that he would have done the same thing, being perfectly willing to recognize as valid, immersion in water of a believing penitent, even though such a person might be mistaken about the time when the judicial act of heaven took place in the remission of sins in connection with such immersion. The two immediately began an assault, in public and in private, denouncing the leader as unsound and disloyal. He requested that the matter be allowed to drop as the congregation might never be confronted with the problem, and, if so, it would be the time for resolving the question. He was informed that he would have to make public acknowledgment of his wrong in holding such an opinion, and renounce what was termed "sect baptism." This he declined to do, inasmuch as he could not renounce his personal conscience and conviction. Charges were formally filed against him and he was driven out. Once more a goodly number went with him, and another congregation was formed.

Today, there are three small groups meeting in the area. One bears the name "Christian Church," the other two the

name "Church of Christ." All are good people of high moral integrity, but there is little fraternization between them. I am convinced that God wants us all to be disturbed and troubled about such conditions and to do something about them. Such division exists in contravention of the divine will and of the prayer of Jesus. It weakens our testimony to the world. We live in a world of division and distortion. If the Holy Spirit cannot draw us closer to an adjustment of our difficulties and a settlement of our differences, we may doom our children and our children's children to a fate worse than death. We can never achieve unity by talking about our brethren who differ with us—we must talk with them and to them. We must have the breadth of vision, the love for God, the zeal for the cause of Christ, which will not rest or be quiet until God sends forth judgment unto victory.

Our problem is not so much one of our differences, great as they may appear, but of indifference, of unconcern, of love for the status quo. That is what makes men froth and fume when someone proposes to do something about unity instead of merely preaching sermons on the subject. I do not agree that these issues were settled in finality fifty years ago, and that all we can do is continue to go our separate ways. Nothing is settled until it is settled in harmony with God's will, and it is not His will that we be divided. Nothing is settled so far as I am concerned while I am cut off, alienated, separated, and segregated, from any of God's children and my dear brethren in the Lord. Building a wall higher does not solve the problem when the wall had no right to exist in the first place.

We have inherited conditions we did not create. We were not present when they were created. But we need not perpetuate the feuds of our fathers. We need not reproduce the passions which produced them. We need not rekindle the animosities which aggravated them. So long as the present state of division continues in the disciple brotherhood, none of us can be guiltless, none can be wholly free from blame. While one is in schism all

are in schism! A schism is a rent or a tear, as in a garment. When a rip exists in a coat, no one can jealously clutch the part he holds and regard it as the whole garment. No party is “the faithful church.” No faction or segment is “the loyal church.” There are some in each group who are as faithful as they know how to be; there are many in all who disgrace our calling!

But what can be done to alleviate the condition handed over to us by those who have gone before? What practical steps may be taken in such a community as the one to which we have alluded? No one can give an answer that is universal in application. The problem differs in each locality. The method used effectively in one place might not work in another. Men differ in their manners, modes and methods of tackling a problem. We must be free to labor as best we can in a spirit of love. We must adapt ourselves to varying situations. We must become all things to all men, so that we may win some. But there are certain things that are essential and basic. We humbly suggest a few of them.

1. We must cultivate a deep love for all of God’s children, not merely for those who are members of our party or group. We must yearn for the presence and fellowship of all who have made a covenant with God. Our love must not be a narrow, confined and regimented affection for those who see things as we do, but a demonstration of the divine *agape*, reaching forth in an unquenchable philanthropy to embrace all who have come to regard Jesus as King.

2. We must cease to regard ourselves as “the loyal brethren” to the exclusion of all others. The prophet declares that the “holier-than-thou” attitude is a smoke in the nostrils of God. Self-righteousness is not the key which unlocks the door to heaven. Let us then evaluate men as God judges them, allowing each individual to stand on his own merits.

3. We must pray for open doors through which we can

catch a greater vision and through which spiritual enlightenment will stream in a continuous flood of light. What might be accomplished if two groups of estranged brethren were to meet for an hour, just to pray together on bended knee! What could be lost by any one in such a season at the throne of mercy?

4. We must no longer consider and regard as apostates those who differ with our interpretations and opinions. Let us credit others with being sincere and honest, even though they may be in error. None of us are perfect, so we can afford to meet as equals in the presence of God.

5. We should cultivate the wisdom to discern between things of primary and lesser importance. We emphasize some things far beyond their value and importance. Jesus said that there were “weightier matters of the law.” To him, mercy was greater than sacrifice, even though the latter was commanded. It is difficult to elevate the trivial and incidental features of life, without relegating the weightier matters to a secondary place.

6. We must be content to labor and to wait. Many of us will die long before our feeble efforts bear fruit. The situation in which we find ourselves is one of long standing. It is complicated by ancestor worship, and tribal taboos. Tradition hallows things, whether they be right or wrong, good or bad. So we can only sow the seed and pluck up an occasional thorn or thistle. The Holy Spirit must produce the fruit of peace, joy and unity. It must be enough for most of us that we merely plant the shrubs along the highway, so that our children can pluck the blossoms and breathe the perfume.

7. We must not regard all those who differ with us as *causing* division. It is a common thing to apply such passages as “Mark them which cause divisions and offences . . . and avoid them” in wholesale fashion. I suspect that the passage is generally misapplied to start with, but not all who are in factions with which we are not allied have caused division. Many of

them, like the rest of us, grew up in conditions they did not create. There is a difference between one in the driver's seat who causes an automobile wreck and the innocent victims who are passengers in the vehicle he is guiding.

8. We must guard against confusing the world pattern by new areas of division. There will arise among us prophets of dissension and apostles of schism. They will do their best, under guise of orthodoxy, to sow discord. They will misapply what we say, attack us behind our backs, seek to turn brethren against us. This is the real test of our thesis on fellowship and brotherhood. Can we make it work in our lives? Can we still pray for and labor to help those brethren who, in misguided zeal, try to poison and envenom the minds of others? Let us firmly resolve that we will never encourage another division among God's people in any manner, and that we will labor incessantly to do something of a positive and definite nature to lessen the tensions created by past divisions. "Let us follow after peace and things wherewith one may edify another."

The above suggestions are simple. No doubt they appear trite statements. They may seem too humble to accomplish a great deal. But God will work with those whose attitudes change to conform with his love. Our hearts will throb with joy through the love shed abroad in them by the Holy Spirit. Remember that those who work for peace work with God. The angels in the annunciation to the shepherds, proclaimed peace on earth to men of good will. Those who take up that refrain and herald it to the divided realm of Christendom today will be the companions of the angels. The Spirit can accomplish what the flesh fails to do!

Crossing the Frontier

Mission Messenger (August 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

All of us have read the personal stories of those in our day who are refugees from the tyranny of Communism. One of the sternest and most eloquent indictments of this evil system which conceives of man as a mere cog in the Machine of State, is found in the number of people who plan and plot to escape into the protection of the free world. Literally thousands have asked for asylum in neighboring countries where the sanctity of individual rights is a cardinal feature of political concepts.

Many of the escapees gain their freedom only after enduring almost intolerable suffering. To such there can be, on this earth, no greater relief than that which comes when, perhaps in the darkness of the night, they suddenly realize they have crossed the frontier. Behind them lies a world of persecution and privation, ahead there looms up a future of freedom and opportunity.

The Christian is also one who has escaped from enslavement and terror. His life was once haunted by fear and failure. The heavy links of the fetters of sin chafed his spirit, until every movement became a dread, and existence became an agony within itself. Guarded by the watchdogs of Satan, surrounded by the barbed wire of sin, his state seemed hopeless. But then came the Good News that one could escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. How can such a

person be sure when he has crossed the line into friendly territory? How can he be certain that he is in that area where spiritual asylum awaits his jaded soul?

J. B. Phillips, in his translation, has a happy rendering of 1 John 3:14. "We know that we have crossed the frontier from death to life because we do love the brothers." The other side of the frontier is the death side. It is filled with desolate swamps of selfishness, giving off a miasma of hate. Here each man seeks his own welfare, oblivious to and unconcerned about the needs of others. It is a black belt of greed. It is a region of death. "The man without love for his brother is living in death already."

When the heart overflows with love for the brethren one has crossed the frontier. Some settle down too close to the border and are again captured and returned to slavery. We beg of you who have escaped to go on unto perfection. Do not camp too close to the frontier.

Stop, Look, Listen!

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

A good brother, whom I love in the Lord, and who is greatly distressed by my plea for the unity of all believers in Christ, writes thus:

I would to God you would stop, look and listen before it is too late . . . If you continue on the course you are on you will do more damage to the brotherhood than anyone has ever done before. I would to God you had never started a paper.

I have a deep sympathy for brethren who thus write. Through the years we build up a traditional pattern of thought. We erect walls and barricades about it, and hedge ourselves in. We feel secure on the inside with those who conform and who thus constitute “the brotherhood.” We worship as our heroes those who are aggressive champions of the partisan position. We honor an editor who creates a journal which can be used as a mouthpiece to defend our views. We are happy, content, and sometimes smug, in our little realm. Eventually we come to regard it as the kingdom of heaven. It is the one body. The sovereignty of Jesus extends only as far as its walls.

All goes well until someone scales the wall, and rising above partisan views, glimpses the fields beyond, and realizes that truth can no more be contained within walls of our

construction, than sunlight can be caught in cans, or the atmosphere confined to bottles. When such a person advocates that fellowship is brotherhood in Jesus, that it is the result, not of agreement or endorsement, but of a common spiritual parentage, he is regarded by the party as a traitor, and the truth he proclaims is branded as heresy. But, brethren beloved, we ought to realize that the walls we build cannot keep truth out. They merely keep us shut up and shut in.

God's purpose will be accomplished on this earth. His will must be done. If this little journal had never been started, or if it ceases to exist now, God will raise up other and nobler men than this editor to send forth greater and better papers. "The brotherhoods" we have constructed need to be shaken. The walls we have erected need to fall down. The party spirit is sinful. Sectarianism is wrong. We need to awaken to our sense of destiny. Let us stop only where God tells us to stop. Let us look on the fields where he has told us to look. Let us listen to His voice, regardless of cost. Let us crusade for unity with Christ our Lord!

The New Covenant

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

In previous articles in this series we have shown that God has revealed himself to be a covenant-making person in dealing with intelligent creatures. The sacred history is simply the story of the covenants made with mankind, and the relationships growing out of them. In this essay we begin the study of the new covenant ratified by the blood of Jesus. No more important topic can engage the attention of this, or any other generation. We approach the investigation in a spirit of humility and reverence. And we begin with a prediction made by Jeremiah, recorded in chapter 31 of his prophetic scriptures.

The background of this utterance was a time of crisis. Jerusalem had been attacked by the Babylonians who were fast developing into world conquerors. Prophets, priests and people had been carried into exile. The king and the queen mother had been seized and deported. As if this were not enough, the forces of the superstitious Nebuchadnezzar were again knocking at the gates of Judah. I doubt not that the words of Jeremiah had a primary meaning related to the return from exile, but the Holy Spirit used them in a far more extended sense with which we are especially concerned.

Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with

their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor, and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage from Jeremiah and identifies the new covenant as the one which Jesus mediates. In view of the fact that his priesthood is confirmed by divine oath, it is affirmed that “This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant.” Since this covenant was sealed “by his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption,” it should be carefully examined by those of us who seek a covenantal relationship with God. For this reason we propose a careful investigation of the words of the inspired prophet.

1. The covenant was to be new. It was not a continuation or perpetuation of a previous covenant. It was not a revised or amended version of a former one. In nature, purpose, method and results, it was to be distinctive.

2. It was to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. At the time when Jeremiah spoke, the people of God were divided. The ten tribe kingdom of Israel, with its capital at Samaria, had actually long since been carried away by Assyria. But the new covenant was not to be made with one segment of God’s people. It was to embrace all of them. It would destroy the spirit of hostility which had persisted and constitute a unifying force. Every one of the called ones would be a part of the same covenantal community.

3. The new covenant was to be different than the one made at Sinai. It was to have a different mediator, a different purpose, and be validated by different blood. The first covenant was national. It was engraved upon two tablets of stone, and the central location where these were kept was holy. It was the sanctuary. The new covenant was individual. It was written upon human hearts. Wherever a child of God chanced to be, with the Deity dwelling in his heart through the Spirit, that was consecrated territory. The human heart, the repository of the new covenant, was to be the only sanctuary on earth. Men who seek to consecrate buildings, or certain portions of earthly edifices, reveal that their lives are regulated, not by the new covenant but by the old. Such men are Judaistic, seeking to be perfected by the flesh.

4. The people of God violated the first covenant and trampled its specifications underfoot. In this, no blame was attached to God. He was a faithful husband. He sustained an intimate and pure relationship through the centuries. The deviations were the devising of the people. While the covenant was being written they forsook the first two requirements, and set up a golden calf. This stubborn and speedy disobedience was characteristic of the nation throughout its career.

5. The great difference in the covenants is pointed out. The first was written on tablets of stone. The statutes, judgments and laws growing out of it were written in a book by the mediator. It was a legalistic program and all the laws were given at the very inception of national status. The new covenant was not to be a written code. It was not engraved upon tablets of stone. It was not written with pen and ink. It was engraved upon the hearts of the chosen ones. The mediator of the new covenant wrote not one word, except what he traced in the dirt upon one occasion (John 8:6). The covenantal community had no sacred writings for many years. The message they heard from the beginning was to love one another (1 John 3:11). With such love they needed no laws, statutes, or commands, for "he who loves his neighbor has

fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). “The commandments . . . are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom. 13:9). “And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us” (1 John 3:23). The epistles were not written to establish covenant relationship, or to constitute the testament, or agreement. They were written to those in covenantal relationship, so they would “know how life ought to be lived in the house of God, which is the Community of the Living God, the prop and stay of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15 *Authentic Version*).

6. Under the former covenant, those who were born of the fleshly seed of Abraham, were circumcised at the age of eight days. This brought them under the covenant, but, of course, they knew nothing of their relationship. They had to be taught to know the Lord as they grew up. The entire nation was in covenant relationship by fleshly birth and a physical mark, not as a matter of volition, but simply by virtue of the circumstances of birth. However, under the new covenant, justification is based upon personal faith. This requires a knowledge of the identity of the Lord prior to making the decision to commit one’s self unto him. Thus it is no longer required that those in the covenantal community teach each other to know the Lord, for all, from least to greatest, must know him, as a requisite to admission to the community of the holy ones.

7. Those who constitute the covenantal community are those whose iniquity has been forgiven, and whose sins will be no longer remembered. Since “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin,” it is obvious that those are a part of the covenant whose hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and whose bodies have been washed with pure water. That this is correct is evident from the quotation by the writer of Hebrews of this part of the prophecy of Jeremiah in the very context of the statement we have transcribed (Cp. Heb. 10:16-22).

Since the new covenant consists of the writing of God's law upon the hearts of those who know him, and since this involves forgiveness of iniquity and blotting out of sin from the divine memory, it is obvious that whatever is essential to forgiveness of sins, is essential to entering the covenant relationship. All therefore, who obtain remission of sins under the economy of the new testament, are thereby brought into covenant relationship with God, and are entitled to all of the rights, privileges and prerogatives accruing from such relationship.

The covenantal community at Corinth consisted of "those sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called saints*." This implies the issuance of a call and a response to it. The call of heaven is motivated by love. What motivates the human response to it by sinful men? All religion derives from a sense of need. This creates a recognition of dependency upon a power or force outside of self, but interested in and concerned about the individual and his ultimate attainment to the fullest expression of his personality. Each of us must realize a feeling of helplessness and the utter futility of our own efforts through the flesh to attain our ideal. This is exactly what happens when the soul has an encounter with the Christ and his own sinlessness compared with the divine estimate of our sin, is borne into our consciousness.

"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." The enormity of sin is thus demonstrated by the greatest act in the drama of the ages. The malignity of sin is manifested by the fact that Deity had to interpose in human affairs by assuming the likeness of human flesh. The death of Jesus for sin, and its condemnation in the flesh, forever impresses upon the heart the guilt of sin until it is removed by an experience so great, it can only be called *a death*, and the recovery from it a resurrection. That experience brings us into covenant relationship with God. It makes possible that agreement through divine grace which is called *the new*

testament. We speak of one owning, or having, a testament, referring to a volume originally consisting of letters written with pen and ink. Actually, we are a part of the new testament. It is written upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is the result of a personal and individual encounter of the human spirit with the Son of God. We conceive that there are four related aspects by which we enter into the Great Agreement with God. No one can really reach that state where God “has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:22) until he passes through these phases of soul response to God’s call.

1. Conviction of Sin

Only one who faces the stark reality that he is lost can ever know the real crying need of a Saviour. He must correctly evaluate sin in all of its hideous magnitude. He must see it as a cancer devouring his spiritual life and producing death. “It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and . . . might become sinful beyond measure.” There must come the recognition that such a person is “carnal, sold under sin.”

The covenant with God is based upon unreserved trust in the power of God, and utter negation of human ability to rescue self from sin. The apostle states it thus, “For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.” The Authentic Version renders this, “The intention is there, but the capacity to carry out what is right is not.” With this feeling of futility comes a realization of the inevitability of death, in a spirit of slavery and fear. There is the feeling of being hopelessly trapped with death awaiting at every turn. The helpless victim cries out in anguish, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this death?”

(Rom. 7:24). Now it was precisely at the time when the

world was in a state of helpless agony that Christ brought hope through his death. “And we can see that it was while we were powerless to help ourselves that Christ died for sinful men.” What was true of the universe of mankind is true of every individual in it, for we are saved as individuals. It is only when we touch bottom that we can begin the upward climb. With pride and arrogance crucified, and emptied of all thought of ambition, grandeur and power— there is then no other way to go but up!

2. Consciousness of Grace

It is those who sit in darkness who appreciate the light. The wanderer who knows he is lost appreciates the call of the searching party. When the hapless soul, languishing in his own guilt, trembling in the presence of a just God from whom he is alienated, hears the Good News that “while we were his enemies, Christ reconciled us to God by dying for us,” he then realizes the value which heaven attaches to his soul. He is drawn by grace, the undeserved kindness of God, toward the Christ, as if by a powerful magnet. He dare not minimize the enormity of sin which has enslaved him, but now, for the first time he is aware that there is something more potent than sin. “Though sin is shown to be wide and deep, thank God his grace is wider and deeper still! The whole outlook changes— sin used to be the master of men and in the end handed them over to death: now grace is the ruling factor, with righteousness as its purpose and its end the bringing of men to the eternal life of God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20, 21).

The sense of being unwanted, resulting from a guilt complex, fades away in the glorious revelation that grace operates through love for the best interest of every man on earth. “For while as a result of one man’s sin, death by natural consequence became the common lot of men, it was by the generosity of God, the free giving of the grace of one man Jesus

Christ, that the love of God overflowed for the benefit of all men.”

The troubled soul, now conscious of God’s love, and stimulated by it to love, eagerly reaches out to appropriate to itself the benefit accruing from grace. The testimony relating to the “one man Jesus Christ,” who was the very embodiment of divine grace, accomplished what no law could ever do. God put him forward to be received by faith, for in the receiving of him we become sharers of the promise of the ages. “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace, and be guaranteed to all his descendants” (Rom. 4:16). “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe . . . they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

The wonderful thing about God’s grace is that it places everything in proper perspective. It admits that sin is deep and wide. It acknowledges the weakness of law which can never give life. It recognizes man’s inability to save himself by sheer will power. It asserts the futility of human effort and works to earn or to achieve justification. It is axiomatic that justification cannot be obtained as payment for duties performed. It must be a gift, and a divine one. “Now if a man works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as a fair reward. But if a man, irrespective of his work, has faith in him who justifies the sinful, then the man’s faith is counted as righteousness and that is the gift of God. This is the happy state of the man whom God accounts righteous, apart from his achievements” (Rom. 4:4, 5). This in no wise affirms that those who are justified need not serve God, nor does it suggest they are not required to work. The key is found in the expressions “irrespective of his work,” and “apart from his achievements.” There is work and there are achievements, but justification is not based upon these.

The Holy Spirit conditions our hope on the rich mercy, great love, and tremendous generosity of God's grace "expressed toward us in Christ Jesus." This lifts salvation out of the domain of wage or reward and places it in the realm of divine kindness, where it is available through faith in the Lord Jesus. "But even though we were dead in sins God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, gave us life together with Christ — it is, remember, by grace and not by achievement that you are saved. . . . Thus he shows for all time the tremendous generosity of the grace and kindness he has expressed toward us in Christ Jesus. It was nothing you could or did achieve— it was God's gift to you. No one can pride himself upon earning the love of God. The fact is that what we are we owe to the hand of God upon us. We are born afresh in Christ, and born to do those good deeds which God planned for us to do" (Eph. 2:4-9).

3. Crucifixion of Self

A consciousness of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the majesty and holiness of God, emphasizes the great barrier between God and man living in the flesh. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). It is evident that the flesh must be disposed of with such finality that we no longer live according to it "for if you live according to the flesh you will die" (Rom. 8:13). But the sinful body will resist destruction. Sin will not easily relinquish its captives. Jesus demonstrated that the only possible answer to sinful flesh is the cross. While he was crucified for all, it is true that all who would live must be crucified with him. Two crosses are essential to our deliverance, his cross and ours.

Crucifixion was cruel, agonizing, shameful and debasing. Every moment on the cross was one of torture and torment. It is essential that we remember that those enslaved by sin cannot choose some polite, respectable and easy way to rid themselves of the sinful passions which produce fruit unto death. There can

be no new life without a resurrection, no resurrection without death— and that death must be crucifixion. The old man of sin must be nailed to the tree that a new creation, all that counts for anything, may result. “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal. 6:14, 15). “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24).

The new creation is the work of the Spirit of God. Man can no more create himself anew than he could create himself originally. We put the body of sin to death by the Spirit. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Rom. 8:13). To be truly in covenant relationship with God, one must destroy his wicked self. The corpse must be removed from the tenement, so that a new tenant can move in and abide. So long as we toy with the idea of having both we deceive ourselves and are of all men most miserable. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). “It is no longer I who live.” “The life I now live.” What does this paradox imply? Simply that faith in the Son of God is so powerful that it actually causes the complete personality to be merged into and identified with its object, until the believer no longer lives except as the object of his faith, Christ Jesus, lives in him. That is why the new covenant is not at all based upon faith in a system of doctrine, a theological concept, or a series of creedal interpretations— but upon faith in a person, the transforming person of the Son of God.

We must be united with Jesus. Fellowship is a sharing. It is a joint participation. It is not merely a sharing of good things. It is the sharing of *a life* with all that life entails. “We are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in

order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17). But Jesus died and his death was by crucifixion. To be united with him we must experience a like death. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:5-7). “For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

4. Culmination of Compact

All relationship to God is upon a covenant basis. The new testament, or covenant, is not a compilation of epistles. It is not a law, or written code. “Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). The new testament is a personal, individual compact or agreement entered into with God. The human heart is now the holy of holies where the tablets of the covenant are kept. It is the sanctuary. It is now the dwelling place of Deity. It is inscribed by the Spirit. “You show that you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3). Each man is his own priest daily ministering in the sanctuary of his own heart. This is holy ground where no other man has any right to intrude.

We have learned that in all ages God has made his blessings available to mankind upon the basis of ordinances. This is true in both the domains of nature and of grace. The ordinances of God are always designed to accomplish His purpose. They are always adapted to the needs and conditions of those to whom given. Separated from the divine enabling power the ordinances would be useless, empty and futile, and would appear merely superstitious. It is the investment with divine

authority which makes the ordinance meaningful, the fact that it is an ordinance of God.

Since the relationship of the new covenant is established by grace through faith, any ordinance of God in conjunction therewith must act as a test or measure of the quality of faith. The conditioning of blessings upon such a test does not imply that they are granted on a basis other than faith, but upon the basis of faith perfected, that is, demonstrated and proven to be effective. Religion involves both the will of God and the will of man. The authority of the first and the freedom of the second must be preserved in order that the proper relationship be unimpaired. Any subjection of man to God must be voluntary, a willing surrender, rather than a forceful capture. This surrender must be a commitment to Jesus, the result of sincere faith or wholehearted confidence in Him as the revelation of God.

God proposes and man accepts through faith. This necessitates the providing of proper motives to induce man to act. Such motives must be worthy of the dignity of Him who offers them, and commensurate with the blessings to be bestowed. Inasmuch as the conferring of divine blessings or benefits is the result of God's grace through man's faith, it is but reasonable that such faith be tested to determine its worth or merit.

The fairness and impartiality of this procedure is indicated in the fact that God authorizes man's faith as a test of his own integrity. He promised Israel abundant material blessings, conditioned upon their willingness to surrender unto him a tenth of such blessings as they already possessed. This could be nothing less than a test of faith. One does not surrender what he now has in order to secure something greater upon the basis of a promise, unless he has confidence in the one who promises. God said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, *and prove me now herewith*, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour

you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10). Man tests God's promises by his faith; God tests man's faith through his promises.

In every dispensation God has *tested* the faith of man. In every instance such a test has obviously been made by a positive, rather than a moral ordinance. In no case could man see the connection between the requirement and the result. If he had been able to do so, his obedience would not have been a matter of faith, but of rationalization from the law of cause and effect. God tested Adam with a command not to eat a certain fruit; Abraham with the command to offer the son of promise upon an altar; Israel with orders to march around a walled city thirteen times before sounding a blast on trumpets of ram's horn and raising a shout.

The greatest need of man is freedom from sin and reconciliation with God. It is only when the guilt and penalty of sin are borne away that we can enjoy covenant relationship with him who is holy. Our whole being cries out for cleansing from the guilt of sin; justification from the nature of sin; and remission of the penalty of sin. God has proposed a universal proclamation of good tidings as a basis of salvation from sin for every person who believes. That proclamation, by its very nature, must concern facts. These facts, in order to be believed, must be well-defined and attested to by credible witnesses. The belief of those facts places man in position where the amnesty of heaven can be granted unto him.

Reconciliation implies restoration of peace with God. This peace is the result of justification, the declaring of the sinner free from guilt, and justification is by faith (Rom. 5:1). "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:24, 25). "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we

might be justified by the faith of Christ” (Gal. 2:16). “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26).

In view of the enormity of sin and the magnitude of the blessings to be conferred by justification and reconciliation, what type of test could be proposed and arranged in harmony with the divine purpose and majesty, which would provide adequate proof of man’s faith and thus his worthiness to be recipient of the promises? We very humbly submit that such a test in connection with the new covenant should possess the following characteristics.

Nature of the Test

1. It should consist of a single, simple overt act, so no complex relationship of a series of acts, can create any question or confusion as to when obedience is completed and the result obtained. This is very essential because of the varied states of those who need reconciliation.

2. It should be revealed in language, the meaning of which is easily ascertainable according to accepted rules of interpretation, that no doubt be entertained as to the exact nature of the requirement.

3. It should be a public act, easily discernible by others. This we predicate upon the fact that such an act of obedience must initiate the one submitting thereto into the community of the sanctified ones, and for the perpetuity and preservation of the rights and privileges of that covenantal community, all must know who are the members thereof, and when such membership became valid.

4. Any material element employed in the fulfillment of such test must be universally distributed, that no man on earth be required to submit to that which is impossible by virtue of lack

of an essential natural element.

5. In view of the fact that a man must die to his previous life, the act which tests his faith must be one in which the subject enacts the role of the dead, that is, it must be one of passive submission to an action performed in his behalf by another.

6. Since it is for induction into the fellowship of those who have humbled themselves by complete commitment and unreserved surrender to the will of another, it should be personally humiliating from the standpoint of the unbeliever, and destructive of all pride.

7. It should also be universally recognized as a symbol of cleansing, to be appropriate to its relationship to sin.

8. So that its connection with the facts of the good tidings which must be believed may be clearly perceived it ought to be a re-enactment of those facts, so that the subject may experience a sense of personal participation in those facts, and all others may be made aware of the impact of those facts upon his heart.

9. It must be an act in which the doer can see no connection between the thing done and the blessing to be received as a result.

Identifying the Ordinance

What test does God propose under the economy of the new covenant, to determine if our faith is of the quality which deserves a bestowal of the magnificent blessings of forgiveness of transgressions, the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal life? The simplest way to answer this is to determine what the inspired apostles required of those who believed, in order that remission of sins might be granted. No better occasion could be afforded than the first proclamation of the glad tidings

which constitute the power of salvation. This proclamation of facts must take place after the acts which constitute its content. Since those acts involve the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we must come this side of his resurrection from the dead. On the first Pentecost following that event, the first public proclamation of the Good News was made by Simon Peter at Jerusalem.

Those who heard, were convicted of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and that he had been elevated to the right hand of God, having been made both Lord and Christ. This conviction caused them to cry out and ask what to do. Theirs was a plain question. It demanded an unmistakable reply. That reply is positive and incisive. “Reform, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Note that they were to be baptized in the name, that is, by the authority of Jesus Christ. Here was a genuine test of their faith in that authority. There are certain things recorded by Luke which cannot be denied as relating to this occasion. Men may, in order to justify certain creeds and opinions, quibble about the meaning and applications of these things, but the facts are unalterable and undeniable. Consider these things. The people asked what to do. They were told to reform and be immersed. They were told to do this by the authority of Jesus Christ. They were instructed to do so by an ambassador of the absent King. That ambassador was under the direct influence, yea, was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of what may be entailed in baptism as here commanded, and irrespective of its antecedents, consequences, or relationships to the new covenant, sinners were told by divine authority to be baptized and this applied to Jews, their posterity, Gentiles—that is, all who were subjects of the call of the Good News. This is the test of faith proposed by divine authority. The scholarship of the whole world is in agreement that the word “baptism” in its original import meant “immersion, submersion, burial, dipping, overwhelming.” This is substantiated by the

universal practice of the primitive church when closest to the time when the command was given. That this was immersion in water is evidenced by Peter himself in Acts 10:47.

Does immersion of the believing penitent in water constitute a proper and valid test of the faith of such a person? Let us examine the suggestions previously enunciated and consider them as numbered, so that you may make proper comparison.

Examining the Ordinance

1. Immersion in water is a single, simple open act, to which one can submit purely upon the basis of faith in the authority and Lordship of Jesus, and without being possessed of great philosophic ability.

2. Baptism can be misunderstood only by those who want to do something other than what God has authorized, and by the very act of beclouding the meaning of the term, show that they lack the first essential— faith! The same rules of interpretation applied to any human document written in the same age as the account of Luke, will establish beyond any doubt what baptism involves.

3. Immersion in water is not a secret, personal, private or internal act, but is an open act which may be witnessed by many, and must always be witnessed by at least one other, the person who performs it, thus constituting an initiation ceremony into the covenantal community, which can be established in the mouth of two or more witnesses.

4. The material element is universally obtainable. Man's body is three-fourths liquid, and water covers the globe in approximately the same proportion. This one item alone goes far toward establishing immersion in water as a test reflecting

divine mercy, and when considered in conjunction with the other attributes of such a test will conclusively demonstrate it.

5. The role of the one being immersed is passive. The one who immerses acts in the role of a mortician, merely burying one who is dead. One could no more scripturally immerse himself than he could physically bury himself after his decease. All divine communication relative to the action of baptism is given to the one performing the act, never to the one submitting to it. What other arrangement could the divine intelligence have commanded which so aptly fits this requirement?

6. Only humble souls can be recipients of God's blessing. Any test, therefore, which would admit the ones who are worthy, by the same token must bar entrance to those who are not. Rebellion and pride are the twin evils of the human heart. Faith dethrones the first; humility destroys the second. Baptism is proof of our triumph over these. In baptism one submits to authority simply because it is authority. No reasoning process known to man can figure any relationship between what he is required to do and what he seeks to obtain. Rebellion is crushed in baptism. And what could be more humbling than for one who has exhibited pride in dress and grooming, to be led into a pool, and there be plunged beneath its waters, to be lifted up with wet garments clinging and water dripping from the whole person?

7. The immersion of the body or any part thereof in water has been recognized as a means of cleansing, and is universally practiced for that purpose. So true is this, that special instruction had to be given, that in the performance of the act as a test of faith, it was not for "the putting away of the filth of the flesh."

8. Baptism is a re-enactment of the facts of the glad tidings which constitute the power of God unto salvation. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by

baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:3-5).

9. It is here that baptism proves its worthiness as a real test of faith. Remission of sins takes place in heaven. It is a judicial act of God, and not of man. But baptism is performed on earth by man and for man. No one can see any connection between one man immersing another in water on earth, and the remitting of the sins of that person in heaven. There is but one reason why any accountable being on earth would submit to baptism of his person in water as a religious act, and that is because of faith in the authority of God.

Baptism and the Covenant

Baptism is not the covenant we make with God. It is not a work of merit by which the covenant is secured. It is an expression of faith, an open manifestation to the world of our complete surrender unto Him in our hearts. The new covenant is embodied in Christ Jesus. It is in him and through him that we sustain a relationship and have communion with God. “He is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). Our covenant of peace is not a law or legal arrangement, it is not a series of documents, dogmas, or decretals. It is not a creed, confession or constitution. Our creed is Christ. Of him the Lord spoke thus, “I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; *I have given you as a covenant unto the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness*” (Isa. 42:6, 7).

The riches of the glory of the mystery hidden from ages, but now revealed is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col.

1:27). The blood of the new covenant was his own blood. Our covenant is personal. Our covenant is a person. He is engraved upon our hearts as our signet. He dwells in our hearts by faith. Faith is always active. It seeks expression. Divine wisdom has made it possible for us to prove our faith in the Son of God at the very entrance to our relationship as new creatures. Baptism in water of a believing, penitent is merely that faith expressed. So the apostle affirms, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27).

The divine design of baptism is a test of faith. Does someone immediately affirm that the design is remission of sins? In our view this is incorrect, and has been the cause of developing a creedal system which has crystallized those who so affirm into a narrow and bigoted sect. Baptism is unto the remission of sins, and such forgiveness is one of the fruits of baptism, as is the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the one forgiven, and the hope of eternal life. These are consequents resulting to the one immersed.

There is nothing in water which has the power to remit sins. There is nothing in the act of being submerged which can remit sins. Forgiveness is an act of the divine mind operating in behalf of man. It is conditioned upon the faith of man. We are justified, that is, declared to be guiltless, by faith. Forgiveness of our iniquities is an act of undeserved kindness bestowed upon the basis of belief in a person or in the supreme fact that the person was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Baptism is a test of that faith. By submitting to that test man places himself in the position where the grace of God can become operative in his behalf.

God has not eliminated the will of man in redemption. He only tests the willingness of man to bow unto his authority. Can a man have remission of sins if he refuses to be baptized? Certainly not! When God proposes a test of faith as a condition

to reception of certain blessings, it is an act of unbelief and rebellion to ask him to grant those blessings while deliberately ignoring or intentionally refusing to submit to the test.

Any person who becomes convicted of his sin, who earnestly desires to appropriate the grace of God unto his salvation, who crucifies the old man of sin, and who then is immersed in water upon the basis of his faith and trust in Jesus as the Son of God, receives the remission of sins, and is adopted into the family of God as an heir. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." These are the words of him who is our covenant. But some man adds, "That is, if he understands at the time that baptism is for remission of sins." But God does not say that. That is a human rider attached to divine revelation. It is an unwritten creed.

It proposes to allow men to sit in judgment upon earth and determine who of those who believe and are baptized shall be admitted to God's grace. When there is a believing penitent and the proper action, it is beyond the power of any man to affect the design, whether the subject fully comprehend the design or not. The design of baptism has to do with God's part. When man does what God demands, God will do what he has promised. The falsehoods of men will not frustrate the grace of God. It may surprise many to know who all have misunderstood the design of baptism.

In any ordinance of induction or translation, a proper subject complying with the ordinance is inducted into that state to which the ordinance is intended to induct, whether he understands the design or not. A slave who is ignorant of the design of the papers intended to secure his freedom, will be just as free when he makes his mark in lieu of a signature, as one who fully understands all that is involved in the whole legal procedure. The sacred scriptures nowhere teach that the design of baptism is contingent for its fulfillment upon a knowledge of that design by the subject of baptism. Such a requirement

cannot be a matter of faith. It is arbitrary, dogmatic, and a mere creedal opinion. Men have confused a fruit of baptism with a knowledge of the design. Thus they make remission of sins dependent not upon obedience to the act that God authorizes, but upon the degree of human knowledge of the divine purpose. That which God ordains as a test of faith, men have changed into a criterion of knowledge at a given time, and have supplanted the divine requirement of faith perfected, with perfect knowledge! This is legalism in its worst form, and makes of those who are its practitioners, judges of the hearts of men!

There is but one question I have any right to ask of one who has been immersed, and that is, "Were you prompted to be baptized by faith in Jesus?" Every person who believes that Jesus is the Son on God, and who was immersed in water in conformity with and motivated by that faith is God's child and my brother. He may have a lot of mistaken ideas, and may be in error on many points of sacred writ. He may be in the Babylon of religious confusion, but God's people did not cease to be such when carried into Babylon, else Daniel and the three Hebrew children became pagans under the compulsion of Nebuchadnezzar. It is my task to plead with all to forsake Babylon that we may unite our efforts to restore the ekklesia of God in this age in its purity. But our call to baptized believers is not a call to aliens and pagans, but a call to children of God, separated and segregated from each other by the party spirit which has prevailed through the instrumentality of Satan over our lives.

Conclusion

A great many sincere and consecrated persons, as they grow older and thus mature in their concept of our covenantal relationship with God, become greatly exercised in mind as to their spiritual standing. They are aware that, at the time when they were immersed, they realized but little about the

tremendous import of entering into partnership with God and Christ. Now that they have learned what it means to be led by the Spirit of God, they react with fear that they may never have “received the spirit of sonship” (Rom. 8:15). Some conclude that now, having learned more, they ought to be “baptized over” as they frequently express it.

In many instances this stems from a false view of baptism and what it was intended to accomplish. It predicates our relationship upon our degree of human knowledge of the divine purpose, rather than upon faith in God and His promises. Frequently those who torment themselves inwardly about this matter do so because of an idea that we are justified by conformity to a purely legal system and they want to be sure they have done everything right, so they are baptized “to remove all doubt.” This is a negative approach to a positive ordinance. Doubt is the opposite of faith. We are not to be baptized to remove doubt, but because we have no doubt we are to be immersed.

One of the things which contributes to the problem is a misunderstanding of conversion. Many have thought that this was an instantaneous effect resulting from our encounter with Christ when we first became convicted of sin, and heard the Good News of promised deliverance. Not having been able to detect any great change in life or thought, and having been plagued by temptation and failure, in spite of sincere efforts to live a good life, such persons feel there must have been something wrong about their initial response to the Spirit’s call.

We need to distinguish between being begotten by the word and conversion. The last is a continual and never-ending process in the lives of those who are led by the Spirit. Conversion is a change, and we must be transformed daily by renewal of our mind. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord

who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). A sculptor who has an image in his mind may purchase a piece of marble in a few minutes, but may require years of patient and painstaking toil to bring out the likeness. The process of converting the rough stone into the beautiful figure is one that requires time and labor.

Those who were conscious of their sins, and who felt the need of a Saviour and Deliverer, who also trusted in him as demonstrated by their obedience in baptism, should not be immersed again, when, in later years, they once more respond more anxiously to the Spirit’s urging and prompting, under the hallowed influence of their maturing thought. Instead, let all who believed in Jesus and who were immersed into him on the basis of that faith, trust in him fully and completely. God loves us and cherishes us. Let us serve him more seriously and soberly. Let us love him and all of our fellowmen. Let us help all who need him and hinder none.

In our next issue we propose, God sparing us, to discuss with you the designations of the covenantal community. What should God’s people in the aggregate be called? Is there a specific title given by the Holy Spirit which must invariably be used to refer to the church of God which is in Christ Jesus, and if so by what means can that title be kept free from encroachment of others in this day of sectarian strife and partisan division? You will want to read the next issue over and over and study it carefully, if you love truth and seek it. If you do not, you will want to cast it aside, where it will not trouble your conscience. In any event, we trust that you will reserve your judgment until you have seen the article.

The Title of the Church

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[Abstract]

Have you entered into a covenant with God? Are you “a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts?” Are you a participant in “a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit?” realizing that “the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.” If your answer is in the affirmative, you can truly say, “For the love of Christ controls us because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” And it can be said of you, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship.”

Those who have received the spirit of sonship are thereby proven to be the children of God. “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Those who have the same paternal origin are brothers. “For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” We are not brethren because we agree on all matters of opinion or interpretation, but because we are born of the same parents. Brotherhood is the result of a common fatherhood. Fellowship is the result of sonship.

Every person on this earth who has entered into a covenant relationship with God is my brother. All such have been “chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling by his blood.” Of them it can truly be said, “He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” This is the criterion by which the covenant relationship is determined. Those who sustain that unity with Deity are indwelt of the Spirit. Those who have not the Spirit are not his. “By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.” “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”

The children of God constitute a fraternity of those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. Every person in whom the Spirit abides is in that brotherhood. It is obvious that we can no more choose our spiritual brethren than we can those of our physical families! We enter that relationship irrespective of previous national or social differences, through agency of the Spirit. “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” We are kept together in that one body by that one Spirit. Our unity is the unity of the Spirit. “Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit . . .”

We come now to study the designation of this one body, composed of all those on earth who “were made to drink of one Spirit.” We approach the subject with mingled emotions. There is the thrill of probing God’s revelation for truth, and searching with unveiled face, knowing that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” But there is reluctance to grieve the brethren whom we love. Experience has shown that no teaching is calculated to arouse more unbridled resentment and unjust accusation than that which we now propose. Were it not for the

far-reaching spiritual implications involved one might be tempted to stifle his own conscience and be persuaded to allow the brethren to go their inconsistent and illogical way. But the consequences of the sectarian spirit are so frightful to contemplate, and the damage to the one body is so terrible, that we must speak, with faith that the Lord will again say, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.”

That there may be no misunderstanding of the views we hold, let us summarize them at the very outset. Briefly stated they are as follows. The covenant people in the aggregate have no official name or title. The terms used by the Holy Spirit to describe them, are merely common nouns. To select one of these as the exclusive title, discarding all others given by the same authority, and to elevate that one as the recognized designation of a group is to sectarianize that term. To denominate simply means to name. To choose a title such as “The Church of Christ” makes of those doing so a denomination as certainly as such terms as “The Baptist Church” or “The Methodist Church” designate denominations. Any religious group wearing a specific name is a denomination in the true meaning of that term.

Reason for Concern

There would be little concern about this matter were it not for the party spirit which invades the hearts of many who want to maintain that exclusivism which shuts out other children of God. Satan is clever and calculating. Every attempt at restoration of God’s original order has ended in the formation of another sect, or group of sects, generally more hateful and intolerant than those which preceded them, and which they proposed to reform. By sowing the seeds of partisanship in any movement, the arch-enemy knows the fruit will eventually be used in his service to divide and confuse. It is his strategy to keep God’s children separated and alienated from each other, and encourage them to bite and devour one another. So insidious is

the party spirit that once it begins to flourish it continues to divide and fragmentize those who were members of the same brotherhood until all semblance of unity is destroyed and they become implacable enemies of each other.

The very multiplicity of sects in the modern Christian domain intensifies the problem of remaining unsectarian. Many who claim to be so, only deceive themselves and seek to decoy others by claims which are easily proven to be absurd in the light of profession and practice. The intensity with which men rise in defence of a special name or designation shows how very “denominational” they are in their thinking. It is easy to become so in the midst of the complexities of our current religious scene. I speak from my own experience.

A good many years ago, while working in Nebraska, with a beloved younger brother in the Lord, I succumbed to the urge to show the fallacies of “the sects” by producing a folder entitled “Whose Name Shall The Bride Wear?” Some twenty thousand of these were eventually printed and given wide distribution. As a result of subsequent study and maturing judgment I am thoroughly convinced that my venture was about as sectarian in nature as were the actions of those in other groups whom I sought to “smite hip and thigh.” In these latter days I have come to analyze my former errors, and I seek to determine the background factors which contributed to them, so that I may not only correct my thinking, but also eliminate the basic elements which produced the fallacies. I list herewith a few of the items which seem to me to have prompted my mistaken ideas.

1. A false concept of the elect of God which led me to defend the segment of which I was a member as the kingdom of God on earth to the exclusion of all other immersed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. A partisan or factional spirit engendered and sustained by sincere and consecrated men in the group with which I was

allied, men who mistook loyalty to the group for loyalty to Jesus, and who imbued me with that philosophy.

3. Reliance upon sermon outlines handed down through several generations of those who had hallowed certain views and interpretations and invested their errors in reasoning with the sanctity of tradition.

4. Study of God's word from a slanted viewpoint. I can readily see how I once investigated the sacred oracles to prove what I believed, rather than to believe what I could prove. The result was a misuse and misapplication of many scripture texts wholly unrelated to the application I made of them. Of course, I did this sincerely believing that it was "contending for the faith once delivered to the saints." I just did not know it all, and I was mistaken.

5. Insufficient data on which to base conclusions on matters of such grave import. One needs to pursue to the end every avenue of research and be certain he has all the facts before he passes judgment.

6. An attitude of dogmatism which generally accompanies the belief that one is a spokesman for "the loyal brethren" as opposed to all others who are regarded as unfaithful and unworthy. While one feels a sense of personal shame because of his own past ignorance, and the littleness and factional tendencies produced by it, he can rise above these, and serve God with greater humility. He can be more charitable and tolerant toward those who pursue the same course in which he once walked. I have only the deepest sympathy for any who put their trust in "church names" and titles, for salvation. I know exactly how they feel. I am fully aware of the interests which motivate their reasoning.

The restoration movement begun by noble men who were members of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist parties, a century and a half ago, is already advanced far on the road to sectism. It has broken from its original moorings and is adrift on a sea of controversy. There are now more than two dozen separate and distinct factions wearing the name "Church of Christ." With few exceptions each of these feels that it alone is the kingdom of God, the one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only hope of salvation for mankind, and the sole possessor and guardian of the truth of heaven. Each is "the loyal church" and its membership constitutes "the faithful brotherhood." All others are apostates, sectarians, hobbyists and heretics.

Not only has this movement completely forsaken its original intent, but it adds to the confusing and confounding tendencies of the sectarian world about it. We have long been of the opinion that the root of our difficulty lies in confusing the restoration movement sparked by the Campbells and their contemporaries, with the church of our Blessed Lord. They are not the same, and by the same token there is a difference between "The Church of Christ" and the church of God referred to in the new covenant scriptures. At the risk of being repetitious, we wish to note some things we have said before, but which need to be recalled by all of us who love the Lord.

The church existed before Alexander Campbell was born. It lived in the days of John Wycliffe, John Huss, John Calvin and John Wesley. There was no separate party in their day known as "The Church of Christ" but the church of Christ was on earth. There has never been a time when Jesus was a shepherd without a sheep, a king without a subject, or a head without a body. When the dragon persecuted the woman until she was forced to flee into the wilderness where God nourished her for twelve hundred and sixty years, he was "angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus." Yet there is not one line of history that even

suggests there was a separate party known as “The Church of Christ” to which these belonged.

When papal Rome, described as the great harlot, arrayed in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, jewels and pearls, was seen by John, he declared, “And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” To what church did these saints and martyrs belong? There was no group calling themselves “The Church of Christ” such as we have today in Nashville, Dallas and Lubbock. The truth is that members of the modern “Church of Christ” would not recognize these saints and martyrs as brethren. They would have to be re-baptized by a “Church of Christ preacher” before they could even “take membership” with this twentieth century party which grew out of the nineteenth century restoration movement. But if God had saints and martyrs in the tenth century scattered among the various sects of Christendom, on what ground can we conclude that he does not have such in the twentieth century? If some of the saints in the tenth century had adopted the exclusive title “The Church of Christ” would that have automatically removed the others from the church of God? If not, how can we reason that it does so in the twentieth century? Has God altered his purpose in the last ten centuries?

Alexander Campbell did not think so, for he wrote:

A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolations and joys— the holiness and happiness— of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the Christians in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union . . .

Today the heirs of restoration have created their own party or parties. They deny that there are even Christians among the sects. They have all the Christians united in “The Church of Christ” but have split these whom they have gathered

into twenty-five splinter parties. This is the sad and deplorable state to which the narrow, exclusive party spirit has brought us. There are those who think that the name “Church of Christ” has been the one proven and approved designation of God’s people ever since Pentecost. Candor and honesty forces us to admit that as an exclusive party title, as now used and defended, it stems from 1906, when, in a letter to the Director of the Census Bureau, David Lipscomb called for a special listing under this heading. There was a considerable discussion between leaders of the restoration movement in an earlier day as to how they should designate themselves and their co-laborers.

The Church and the Name

“What name shall the church wear?” This forms a sermon subject on many occasions as men labor to establish a partisan position. We shall exercise our right to examine the topic, believing we have the same freedom to do so as others. Let us begin by looking at the word “church.” It purports to be a translation of the Greek *ekklesia*. Of this word, Thayer says, “**prop.** *a gathering of citizens called out from their homes, into some public place; an assembly.*” In the Christian usage, for at first it had a civil implication, he says, “*an assembly of Christians gathered for worship,*” and again, “the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth.”

It is noteworthy that in the Septuagint Version of the old covenant scriptures, the term is generally used as the Greek equivalent of *kahal*, and the King James translators render this by *congregation* or *assembly*. Not once do they use the word “church” in the old covenant scriptures. It would appear that if the Greek *ekklesia* was a proper rendering of the Hebrew *kahal*, and if *ekklesia* was rendered “church” in the new covenant scriptures, its equivalent would be so rendered in the old, where, instead, the rendering is uniformly “congregation” or “assembly.” The student becomes suspicious of the translators

when they show such decided disparity, and that suspicion is justified when the following truths are known.

The King James Version was a revised version, diligently compared with previous translations. Among the earlier translations was that of William Tyndal, who translated the word *ekklesia*, by “congregation,” a non-ecclesiastical term. This brought down upon his head the wrath of the clergy. The reason is given by Campbell:

It was with these old ecclesiastical words that the clergy succeeded in preserving the fascination of priestcraft. When Tyndal issued his translation of the Bible, because in it he had disregarded the words which the clergy esteemed sacred, they condemned it. He had for instance, changed charity into love; church into congregation; priest into senior; grace into favor; confession into knowledge; penance into repentance; and a contrite heart into a troubled heart.

Now the king of England is titular head of *the church* as the Established Church in Great Britain views it. There is an unholy combination of royalty and clergy as the ruling power. If the clergy “preserves the fascination of priestcraft” it must do so with a vocabulary of its own. In the eyes of commoners it means much more to say that the king is the only supreme head on earth of the church, than to say he is the head of the congregation, for the word “church” has certain connotations not shared by the latter word. Therefore, when the translators were commissioned to bring out a new version, King James actually forbade them to translate certain terms. He specified fourteen points to be scrupulously observed, number three of which reads:

The old ecclesiastical words are to be kept; as the word church, not to be translated congregation, etc.

However, the word church is not a translation of *ekklesia* at

all. There is nothing in it which signifies a being called out and called together. It is an abbreviation of a wholly different expression, *kuriou oikos*, the house of the Lord. A realization of this fact caused Campbell in his translation called "Living Oracles" to use the word "congregation" consistently. He says, in a note:

Wherever the word *church* is found in the common version, *congregation* will be found in this. We shall let Doctors Campbell and Doddridge defend this preference: for, although they have not always so rendered it, they give the best reasons why it should always be so translated.

The passage relied upon to sustain a party title, Romans 16:16, appears as, "The congregations of Christ salute you." We have no doubt that if Alexander Campbell were alive today, he would be dubbed a heretic and accused of "denying the name of the church." This accusation would be made by the very ones who owe so much to his untiring labors for restoration of a pure speech.

But it was not only men like Philip Doddridge, James Macknight, and George Campbell of Great Britain, and Alexander Campbell of the United States, who made such careful distinctions in terms. In 1955 *The Authentic New Testament* by Hugh I. Schonfield, was published. Dr. Schonfield is the only Jew ever to bring out a version of the new covenant scriptures. In his most interesting preface occurs the following:

Perhaps it should be stated again with every possible emphasis that his is a nonecclesiastical version, the work of an historian and man of letters, not of a theologian, and is not therefore binding on anyone's conscience. The translator has felt it to be important for his purpose not to employ in his rendering familiar ecclesiastical terms where they should be avoided, since the use of them would give the impression that they were peculiarly Christian in origin and association. This relates to such words as

baptism (immersion), church (community), apostle (envoy), bishop (supervisor), and deacon (administrator), but also sometimes to words like 'salvation', 'righteousness', 'faith', and 'grace', which occasionally do not accurately represent the sense of the original.

I am certain that many of the brethren would rejoice with the *Authentic Version* rendering of Acts 2:38. "Repent," Peter told them, "and let each of you be immersed for the forgiveness of your sins in the name of Jesus Christ, and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit."

I am just as certain that some who rejoiced would turn to scoffing when they read Romans 16:16, "All the Christian communities send their regards." or Matthew 16:18; "Upon that rock I will found my Community, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It would destroy the significance of many outdoor signs and indoor pulpit drapes if they were changed to read "The Christian communities send their regards"—Romans 16:16; instead of "The Churches of Christ salute you"—Romans 16:16. And it is that very significance attached to the title and quotation which is sectarian.

There is a grave doubt that much impact will be made upon the thinking of this generation with regard to the matter at hand. Most of us are so accustomed to borrowed expositions of scriptural passages, and so steeped in tradition, that we feel secure behind the fences and barriers that have marked our sectarian boundaries of the past. Too, a great many view this matter from a purely emotional, rather than a rational standpoint. They feel safe behind a sign board that has the proper words on it, or in a house with the right slogan over the door. They would feel out of place and insecure if the sign read "The Church of God."

For example, I know an aged sister whose gossiping and meddling ways had kept the community of saints in turmoil for years, and the members of whose family were frequently a

source of difficulty to the brethren, who declared, almost in hysteria, “If they take down the sign, Church of Christ, they can take my name off the record. I joined the Church of Christ and I’m going to die in the Church of Christ.” Such irresponsible outbreaks show that many have not even begun to grasp the impact of what is being said. They are aided by preachers whose sermon outlines would have to be abandoned if they caught the significance of what we urge and conformed their teaching to the revelation of God instead of to the party standard.

Since so many prefer the King James Version and its language, let us employ it for our purpose. What is the title of the ekklesia of God? What one name is used as the exclusive designation of the covenant community? Is the body of believers known as “The Church of Christ”? The answer is obvious to all who can read English. Nowhere did the translators capitalize the word “church.” It is simply a common noun. It is never used in any combination of words as a proper title. The saints, in a corporate sense, are most frequently designated simply “the church.”

1. From the standpoint of ownership the church is called the church of God (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Gal. 1:13, etc.). He purchased it. *The Authentic Version* renders Acts 20:28, “See to it that you tend God’s community, which he has acquired with the blood of his own Son.” I am persuaded that this is correct, although for years I just about left God out of the church. The Lamb “didst ransom men for God . . . and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev. 5:9, 10).

2. From the standpoint of constituency it is a church of saints (1 Cor. 14:33). It is composed of the holy ones, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

3. From the standpoint of heirship, it is the church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23).

4. From the standpoint of divine relationship, it is the church of God in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 2:14).

5. From the standpoint of its head, it is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Gal. 1:22).

6. From the standpoint of government it is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19). We remind our readers that it is called the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of man, and the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Is it not strange that someone has not settled upon one of these as the name for the kingdom and sought to establish it to the exclusion of all the others?

7. From the standpoint of organization and unity it is called the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27).

The church, church of God, churches of the saints, church of the firstborn, churches of God in Christ Jesus, churches of Christ, kingdom of heaven, body of Christ— which one of these is the official designation or title? Who will dare to choose the one and say “This is it” and defend that one as the *name* of the church? Who will be so rash as to capitalize one of these as the scriptural designation to be used on all the road signs, and in all advertising mediums? Do you realize that one of these has become the stereotyped trademark of a modern party to the extent that if a congregation made no change in doctrine, practice or worship, but simply erected a sign reading, “A church of God meets here,” they would be avoided like the plague and assailed as “unfaithful”? Yet the expression “church of God” is found in the scriptures, whereas the term “the church of Christ” appears not once in that form. In spite of this, the latter is “the scriptural name of the church” in the contention of modern party defenders.

But you may ask what I propose to call the church, and how I would refer to it. My reply is that, like the Holy Spirit, I

would use the term that described the phase I had in mind at the time. If I refer to its nature, I call it the church; if to its owner, the church of God; if to its constituency, church of the saints; if to its government, the kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God; if to its head, the church of Christ.

The ekklesia of God has no special name. The only designation given to it was in the form of a simple noun. It is the church, the congregation, the assembly, the community, composed of all those who have been called by the grace of God. To give it a special title for the purpose of separating, segregating, and dividing it off from other believers is to make of that portion so titled a sect, and nothing else! The expression “The Church of Christ” is used by its adherents today exactly as others talk of The Baptist Church, The Presbyterian Church, The Lutheran Church, or the Methodist Church, and for the same reason.

We should notice the objections made to my position and discuss them fully, freely and frankly. The first is that the church is the bride of Christ and the bride should wear the husband’s name. This argument breaks down on several counts as do most arguments arranged to defend a pre-conceived notion. First, the church is now betrothed unto Jesus. The apostle says, “I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband” (2 Cor. 11:2). The marriage of the Lamb, when his bride has made herself ready is yet to come (Cp. Rev. 19:7).

The idea that the bride wears her husband’s name is part of our western culture, and of recent origin. In the times when the Bible was being written in the Near East, such was not the case. We read of Sarah, the wife of Abraham; Rebekah, the wife of Isaac; and Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth. In every instance the wife wore her own name. The relationship was signified by the term wife. The word “church” is not a proper name at all, but a common noun. We say “The church is the bride of Jesus

Christ,” exactly as we say, “The church is the body of Jesus Christ.” It would surely be improper to follow our modern method of designation and call the church, “Mrs. Jesus Christ,” which we would have to do if the name of the husband, as it is commonly regarded were applied.

Actually those who propose to call the covenantal community “The Church of Christ” do not use the name of the bridegroom. His name is Jesus. “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). “He called his name Jesus” (Matt. 1:25). “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:10). The word “Christ” actually is *ho Christos*, the Christ. Jesus is *the Christ*. The word *Christ*, anointed, signifies his office. “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified” (Acts 2:36). If brethren wish to be consistent in their argument, even to a slight degree, let them call the saints in the aggregate, “the church of Jesus.” This would still only show possession, but if they wish to create a name to match their argument, this must be it. You would not call the wife of John Doe, a mechanic, Mrs. Mechanic; nor the wife of Richard Roe, a janitor, Mrs. Janitor. It would be as logical to say “Church of Lord” as “Church of Christ” because Jesus was made both Lord and Christ. The truth is that a certain designation has been created and invested with such authority, that if some people drove by a meeting-house with the label “Church of Jesus Christ,” they would not go in, for it would not have “the right name.” They would be suspicious of it. My own reasoning in the folder I mentioned earlier has proven to be childish, absurd and without scriptural warrant. I had to prove something, and in my ignorance, I forced the sacred scriptures into a false pattern. I am sorry and ashamed of my reasoning, but at the time I just did not know any better.

The words of our Lord in Matthew 16:18, “Upon this rock I will build my church” are frequently cited. These words merely indicate possession. They do not create a title by which

the church must be called. If that were the case, the apostles should have invariably used the designation. Actually they never once used the term “the church of Christ” in that form. If I say “Upon this lot I will park my car,” it signifies to whom the car belongs, but does not give the name of the car. You do not know if it is a Dodge, Chevrolet, or Ford. Manufacturers of automobiles give their products names as means of distinction. Others are engaged in producing cars. But there is only one church, never was more than one, and never will be. The church contains all of the saved upon this earth. There can no more be another church than there can be another God, another Lord, or another Spirit. The argument that the church must have a name to distinguish it from other churches is an admission that there are others. This is not true! The people of God need only to be distinguished from those who are not his people. For this the noun “church” is sufficient, since it designates all of the called out ones.

But do we not have The Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, The Christian Church, The Presbyterian Church, etc., and must we not be distinguished from these? In its essence, this question literally means, shall we not create another party with its special brand name as these have done? To do so is to defeat our announced purpose of attempting to unite the Christians in all sects, by merely becoming another sect. The term “church” is misused when applied to sects. It is impossible to have more than one church as the Holy Spirit employs that term. The Methodist people do not constitute a church, but a party in Christendom crystallized around the views of John and Charles Wesley; as the Presbyterians constitute a party that has crystallized around the theological speculations of John Calvin; and the Friends Church a party crystallized about the teachings of George Fox.

The party spirit is a sin. It is subversive of the divine purpose. The church of God is not a sect. No combination or coalition of sects constitutes the church of God. There may be many now in the various sects, who have entered into covenant

relationship with God, and have been added to the church, but are now involved in the human parties with which they are currently allied. All such need to heed the appeal to be just Christians and Christians only, instead of some brand or special party of believers. We need to create congregations where all of God's dear children can meet together about his table without being subjected to creeds, written or unwritten, as the basis or test of fellowship. It is just as sinful to create a party wearing the title "The Church of Christ" as any other. It is the party spirit that is a sin. Giving it a scriptural label does not sanctify it. Let all who are members of the body of Christ receive and respect all others who are members of the body of Christ, and we can begin to restore the concept of the one body for which Jesus died and the apostles labored.

But did Peter not say, "There is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"? Certainly so, but he was not talking about a title of the church. When Peter healed the lame man he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). When the multitude convened he said, "And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know." When arrested, he said to the Jewish rulers, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well . . . And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10, 12).

We are not saved by the church. It is the community of saved ones, those who have heeded the call, and thus constitute the *ekklesia*, the called out. The church, or body, must be saved. It is not a Saviour. "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour" (Eph. 5:23). You cannot be saved by a name adopted by the called out ones, but the called out ones must be saved by faith in the name of Jesus. The miracle of healing was performed in Jerusalem. The apostle Paul referred to the congregations in

that region as “the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea.” This demonstrates that Peter was not holding out salvation upon the basis of a specific church title.

Those who are hard pressed to preserve their sermon outlines sometimes resort for comfort to Ephesians 3:14, 15, which, in the King James Version, reads, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Because they find “Christ” and “named” in the same context, they eagerly seize upon this as proof of their thesis. In doing so, they manifest their ignorance of the text and the weakness of their position. Actually, the expression “of our Lord Jesus Christ” is not in the best manuscripts at all. The word “Father” is from *pater*, the word “family” from *patria*. The thought is that every family is derived from the Father.

Unquestionably, the translation should be “every family” rather than “the whole family.” The apostle has been showing that principalities and powers, i.e., the various ranks and gradations of angels in heaven, as well as the Jews and Gentiles on earth, all have a common origin. All came from one creative source. All have the same Father.

The *Revised Standard Version* reads, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.”

J. B. Phillips renders it, “When I think of the greatness of this great plan I fall on my knees before God the Father (from whom all fatherhood, earthly and heavenly, derives its name).”

James Moffatt has it, “For this reason, then, I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name and nature.”

My personal view of the situation created by the multiplication of the sects in our day can be summarized in three

simple sentences.

1. It is scriptural to designate the community of saints by any term employed by the Holy Spirit in the sacred writings.

2. It is unscriptural to designate the community of saints by any term not employed by the Holy Spirit in the sacred writings.

3. It is anti-scriptural to seize upon one term and make it the designation of a community of saints, to the exclusion of all other terms used by the Holy Spirit.

A few comments are in order on each of these. It is scriptural to refer to the communities of saints as “churches of Christ.” I have never said that it was not. I only say that it is not scriptural to do so in the attitude and for the purpose for which it is commonly done among those with whom I am associated, for their attitude and purpose are born of partisanship.

As to the second point, a term may be unscriptural and not be anti-scriptural. Because a specific word is not found in some version of the scripture is no indication that such English term is opposed to the scriptures. We tend to confuse the word “scriptural” with the King James Version of the scriptures. If one quotes from another version, there are some who think his language is not “scriptural.”

As to number three, it is certainly opposed to the tenor of the sacred scriptures for men to arbitrarily select and settle upon one term to the exclusion of all other terms given by the same divine authority, and attempt to justify partisan status by exaltation of that one term or title.

It is very difficult for a community of believers to remain non-sectarian. None of us are wholly free from the blight of the party spirit. The very complexity of the present Protestant situation militates against us. Satan continually strives to drive

congregations into exclusivism and narrow partisanship. The pressures from brethren within are great. Few men can withstand the temptation to conform, to keep silent, and just go along with the current drift and trend. It is my personal conviction that the following points will help us to furnish leadership to a confused and distressed religious world which seeks for guidance.

1. A proper evaluation of our own status. The work of restoration has not been completed. We have not yet “arrived.” As a covenantal community we are striving to recapture the nature and spirit of the ancient order. This will necessitate changes in life and thought as we learn more of the will of God.

2. A recognition that God has children scattered over the hills of sectarianism. We have not yet gathered all of the scattered sheep into one corral. That is an ideal for which we should strive. We have brethren in the Lord who have not yet seen the wrong or error of the party spirit. We must prayerfully and patiently teach them.

3. A rejection of the idea that the restoration movement is identical with the church of God, and resistance to the attempt to create a new sect under the label “Church of Christ.” We should be content to be simply Christians, members of the one body. We need not wear a sectarian label of distinction, for we should not be sectarian. There is only one church. There cannot be more than one. The church consists of the called of God— all of them. There are none left over to be in anything else. If there are those who are not in the body of Christ they are not the called out, and therefore, not “a church.”

4. Communities of saints may be designated by the location of their meeting-houses, as was done in primitive times. There was the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila; the church at Cenchrea; the church in the lecture hall of Tyrannus; the church in the upper room at Troas. Today we may have the church

which meets in Oak Hill Chapel; the Manchester Avenue church; the Broadway Avenue church. In all congregations of the saints the table of the Lord should be set for all immersed believers whose moral behavior is in harmony with the code of ethics pronounced by Jesus of Nazareth. All such should be welcomed and received to the table. True, some of them may, by accident or unfortunate circumstance of environment or previous instruction, be allied with a human party or sect, but we will not unite them by our own partisan or sectarian tests of fellowship. We should all seek to be Christians only and persuade others to be. We should not try to make Baptist Christians, Christian Church Christians or Church of Christ Christians— or any other type, kind, brand, or condition.

We dare not compromise the will of God, or water down his sacred requirements, to achieve a greater degree of oneness. Such union would be worthless. We can only be firm in our convictions, faithful to the revelation of God, and labor in love and kindness, for a better day. We must uphold the truth, as God gives us to see the truth, and we must plead for the authority of Jesus to be respected and regarded. In the midst of a sectarian world we must keep ourselves free from the sectarian spirit. Then the Holy Spirit can use us as powerful instruments of God to achieve the divine purpose.

The Indwelling Spirit

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[Abstract]

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells within you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies live by his indwelling Spirit in your lives” (Romans 8:11— James Moffatt).

Our kinship with each other in the Lord is achieved through Christ. We are joined together only because we are joined unto Him. Our relationship is not one of man to man, but of men to Him. It is not the result of our agreement upon certain propositions, or of concurrence on interpretation of certain issues, but of faith in Him as God’s Son. If we attempt to maintain union based upon uniformity of degree in knowledge, division is inevitable as soon as one learns more than another. If we attempt it based upon conformity in opinion, it is impossible. Not only is spiritual unity that is based upon faith in a person the best way, *it is the only way*. Jesus does not force us together. He draws us unto Himself. We are together only because we are with Him. “He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.”

Our problem is not really whom we shall recognize as brethren, or with whom we shall be in fellowship. That is not for us to determine. We can no more choose our spiritual brethren than we could select our physical brethren. Each of us who

would be saved has the personal responsibility of gaining access to the Father. Fatherhood establishes brotherhood. Fellowship is the result of mutual sonship. It is unthinkable that children of God would deny their paternity, but if they admit it, they acknowledge all others who have been born again as brethren. Access to the Father is through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

The church of God is simply the covenantal community composed of all in whom the Spirit resides. There is not a child of God who has not been made such by the Spirit, no one in whom the Spirit does not dwell can be a child of God. "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." In a sense, then, God's children are united. They constitute but one body. The Holy Spirit does not recognize the validity of many of the barriers and walls we have erected. There is one Spirit and all in whom that Spirit dwells constitute the one body. They all drink of that one Spirit. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

Actually we are not commanded to strive for, arrive at, or achieve unity. We are told to maintain or keep it. To do this is to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." We manifest such worthiness by being "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The indwelling Spirit witnesses to the sonship of every child of God. "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Every person in whom the Spirit dwells is a child of God. There is but one Spirit, so all of God's children are members of one body, regardless of the unfortunate accidents which now separate them into various segments and groups.

These partisan alignments were caused and created by men devoid of the Spirit, but not every one in them is in such a state, else all of us would be lost. “It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”

Since it is the indwelling Spirit in our hearts, who is our seal and guarantee, it behooves us to study and determine all we can about this holy guest. There is no better place with which to begin than with the words of Jesus which he publicly announced on the eighth day of the feast of tabernacles in Jerusalem. Jewish tradition required the high priest to fill a golden vessel with water from the pool of Siloam which was carried to the temple with much ritual and ceremony. Here it was mingled with wine and poured out upon the altar. Perhaps it was in conjunction with this ceremony that we have the event described in John 7:37-39.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Some truths of tremendous importance may be deduced from this statement. We mention a few of them.

1. The thirsty soul, unable even to supply its own need, when it comes to Jesus will be transformed into a rich source of blessing for others. He who had not enough water to quench his own thirst will become an instrument from whose heart rivers of living water will be dispersed abroad.

2. The source of this life-giving power to be diffused from the heart is the Spirit. It is apparent that those who do not receive the Spirit are thirsty and distressed.

3. The Spirit was to be received by those who came to Jesus to drink. He was promised to those who believe in the Lord Jesus.

4. In the sense here considered the Spirit had not been previously bestowed, nor would he be until Jesus was glorified. We can expect that the Spirit will be bestowed subsequent to this statement, when Jesus attains his state of glorification.

The apostle declares that “he who was manifest in the flesh” was “received up into glory.” Peter declared on the first Pentecost after his ascension that he is “exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.” To those whose hearts were touched he said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you . . .” A short time later Peter said, “And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

If we are to recapture the power and purpose of the early disciples we must begin by re-affirming the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers. Nothing short of this can make us the agents or channels for the diffusion of universal blessing. Rivers of water cannot flow from the arid heart of one who is so devoid of the water of life that he still thirsts. We must understand the nature of the Spirit if we are to partake of the divine nature and be “sanctified by the Spirit.”

IDENTITY OF THE SPIRIT

I. The Holy Spirit is not a vague influence, an abstract principle, nor an indescribable force.

II. The Holy Spirit is not the word of God.

The Spirit is not the *living* word (1 John 5:7). He is not the *spoken* word, but a teacher who employs words. “And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit is not the *written* word but that word is the sword or instrument by which the Spirit accomplishes his purpose (Eph. 6:17). There is as much difference between the Spirit and the word as there is between a soldier and his weapon.

III. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, or personality.

We base this conclusion upon five cardinal factors, which we herewith submit for your study and investigation.

A. The Spirit possesses characteristics which definitely belong only to persons.

1. *The Holy Spirit is intelligent.* “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11). Only a person is capable of knowing or comprehending thought. There is a difference between the thoughts of man and those of God. The former may be understood by a human intellect. The latter can be comprehended only by a divine intellect. The Holy Spirit is a divine intelligent being.

2. *The Holy Spirit has a mind.* “And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit” (Romans 8:27). In the previous quotation we learned that the Spirit knows the mind of God; in this we learn that God knows the mind of the Spirit. God searches the hearts of men, but there is a difference in knowing the spirit of one’s mind, and knowing the mind of the Spirit.

3. *The Holy Spirit is capable of doing research into the divine purpose.* “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10).

4. *The Holy Spirit is able to reveal the divine purpose.* “You can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed . . . by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:5).

5. *The Holy Spirit is subject to grief.* “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). Grief and sorrow are emotions which can be felt only by a person.

6. *The Holy Spirit can be lied to.* Peter asked Ananias, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3).

B. The Holy Spirit engages in functions which can only be carried out by an intelligent person.

1. *The Holy Spirit speaks.* “The Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David” (Acts 1:16). “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly” (1 Tim. 4:1). “Whatever he hears he will speak” (John 16:13).

2. *The Holy Spirit instructs or teaches.* “He will teach you all things” (John 14:26).

3. *The Holy Spirit testifies to facts or bears witness.* “He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26, 27). “When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:15, 16). This is proof that the Holy Spirit is not merely our own spirit made holy, but a separate entity.

4. *The Holy Spirit gives life.* “If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). It is axiomatic that life proceeds only from life. The Holy Spirit must be alive.

5. *The Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints.* “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

C. The language used to refer to the Holy Spirit is such as can be used appropriately only when speaking of a person.

In John 14:15-17 Jesus refers to the Spirit as a Comforter (AV), or Counselor (RSV). He declares the world cannot receive him because it neither sees him or knows him. But the disciples know him because he dwells in them.

In John 16:13, 14 it is affirmed that the Spirit will guide them into all truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak. He will declare things to come. He will glorify Jesus by taking what is his and declaring it to the human witnesses. We submit that an unbiased reader must conclude that such things can be affirmed only of a personal being.

D. The purpose for which the Holy Spirit came was such as could be carried out only by a person.

1. He was promised as another Comforter to the sorrowing disciples during the absence of Jesus from the earth, and with the aid of this Counselor they could accomplish what could not be done if Jesus personally remained. “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I go not away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

2. The Spirit was sent that the disciples of Jesus might not be orphans during his absence, and thus feel a sense of desertion or desolation. “I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you” (John 14:18). The original for “desolate” is *orphanos*. Jesus did not say that he would not leave them orphans, but would give them a book, or have a series of letters written to them. The ones

to whom he spoke were the very ones who wrote the new covenant scriptures. He promised another Helper like himself who would remain with them during his absence.

3. The indwelling Spirit was to be a constant assurance that Jesus was in the Father, the disciples were in Jesus, and Jesus was in them, thus maintaining a direct association with the Godhood (John 14:20).

4. The word translated “Comforter” or “Counselor” is *parakletos*. Its proper meaning is to call one to aid another. From that it came to mean, “One who stands beside another,” that is, to aid, advise, assist or comfort him. Greek writers apply it to an attorney or advocate in court who pleads the case of another; and to a teacher, assistant, or helper. It is used five times in the new covenant scriptures. Once it refers to Jesus (1 John 2:1). The other four times it is used of the Spirit.

E. The association of the Holy Spirit with divine personages, and with no qualifying explanation or distinction being made, is indicative that he is a divine personality.

1. Those who are made disciples among the nations are to be immersed into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

2. In the bestowal of spiritual gifts, and in the regulation of their function and service, the Spirit is joined with God and Christ. “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.”

3. The Spirit is united in apostolic benediction, providing fellowship in conjunction with grace and love. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

4. The Spirit is identified in the seven planks of God's platform for maintenance of unity in the bond of peace, and is distinguished from the one Lord and one God (Eph. 4:4-6).

5. In a disputed passage (1 John 5:7) it is said, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one."

I conclude that the Godhood (a better rendering than Godhead) consists of three persons, perfectly united in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. While Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those on earth who are his. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Our reasons for so thinking are now given.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

1. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be given to those who believed in him, and that they would receive the Spirit after he had been glorified (John 7:37-39).

2. On the occasion of the first proclamation of the good news after the glorification of Jesus, Peter told those who were willing to reform and be immersed, that they would receive the Spirit as a gift (Acts 2:38).

3. Peter informed the Jewish Sanhedrin that God had given the Holy Spirit to those who obeyed him (Acts 5:32).

4. Paul told the Corinthians that the body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit "which is in you, which you have of God" (1 Cor. 6:19).

5. He told the Romans that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

6. He took it for granted that the Galatians would admit having received the Spirit. “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?” (Gal. 3:2).

7. He declared that God has “given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:22).

8. He affirms that “you are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9).

9. He twice asserts in one verse that the Spirit dwells in the believers, and identifies the dwelling place as “your mortal bodies” (Rom. 8:11).

10. Once more, Paul testifies that “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal. 4:6). The context shows that this is the divine method of recognition of our own sonship. When we become children of God, and are introduced into a spirit of sonship God sends the Spirit of his Son as a guarantee and witness of that sonship. That is why “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Let us summarize the plain teaching of God’s revelation, and see what we have discovered under this heading. The Holy Spirit is received by believers. He is a gift bestowed upon them by God. He dwells in the physical or mortal bodies of the saints as his temple. His abiding place is in the hearts of God’s children. He is a seal and a guarantee given by a loving Father to his offspring.

CONDITIONS OF RECEPTION

It is obvious that not all men on earth have the Spirit, for some create divisions, and of these it is affirmed that they are “sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). It is essential that we learn the conditions upon which the Spirit is bestowed, and ascertain the nature of those who receive him.

1. Our introductory passage (John 7:37-39) informs us that the blessing afforded by the Spirit will be realized by those who come to Christ, and this is explained by the term, “he who believes in me.” Reception of the Spirit, then, is limited to those who believe in Jesus.

2. But what is meant by believing in him? The same writer (John 20:30, 31) supplies the information “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” This is the foundation of our covenantal relationship with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The promise of the Spirit is, therefore, received through faith. “In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14). “Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?” (Gal. 3:2).

4. However, the Spirit is not bestowed upon one who gives mere intellectual assent to Christ as a historical figure, nor to one who passively acknowledges his divine Sonship. It is faith manifested or perfected that lays hold on the Spirit. Paul declared “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all nations” (Romans 1:5). Short of this, grace and apostleship are ineffectual. Thus, to receive the Spirit through faith, is to receive him by the obedience of faith, since this was the aim of both grace and apostleship. This concurs with the statement of the first apostle to announce the Good News. “So is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32).

5. The obedience of faith requisite to reception of the Holy Spirit is submission to immersion by the authority of the Lord Jesus. “Reform and be immersed every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

6. The Holy Spirit is not bestowed upon a believer to make him a child of God, but because he is a son. “Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). The sons of God are those who are in Christ by faith, that is, all who have put on Christ. “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26, 27).

We conclude that every person on this earth who sincerely believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and who is immersed upon that foundation of faith, receives forgiveness of his sins, and the Spirit of God moves into his heart where Christ dwells by faith. Every such person is a member of the one body, regardless of nationality, social standing, or other natural or acquired differences. He may be wrong about a great many things, but one does not come into covenant relationship with God through a knowledge of, or interpretation of, things, but by faith in a person, even the Lord Jesus Christ. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

We live in an age of crisis and decadence. Believers in our Lord are rent, torn and divided. The children of God are scattered among the sects, as God’s people were once scattered by the Assyrian power. The hearts of many are filled with heaviness. It is time to blow the trumpet and summon the congregation from afar. The longing in the hearts of the scattered believers is the yearning tug of the Spirit, often grieved, and saddened and hurt, but still moving us toward each other in spite of our own littleness, narrowness and hate.

Slowly but surely walls are beginning to crumble, barriers are being moved, and fences are being torn down. God has not forgotten. The Spirit has not deserted the body. Weakened, despondent, filled with fears and trepidation though we may be, there is nonetheless a surging of the Spirit within. The will of God must be done on earth as it is in heaven. Time is running

out for many of us. The hour is growing late. The night is coming. The chill wind from the river is felt on our faces. The fog settles in our throats. We must work while it is called today. “The unity of the Spirit” must be affirmed again, and recaptured in our longing hearts. It must be maintained in the bond of peace. No man walks worthy of his high calling who forgets this truth.

In our next issue, God willing, we shall demonstrate what the Holy Spirit does for the indwelt child of God. We solicit your interest in this theme. Pray for us. “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work.”

No Creed But Christ

Mission Messenger (November 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

The power of a slogan has often been demonstrated. A pithy statement, easily remembered, and frequently repeated may become the watchword of a political or religious party. But it is often true that “familiarity breeds contempt.” Rabid partisans may shout words which they cannot define, and the implications of which they reject by their own actions. Circumstances alter cases. It is one thing for a patriot opposing foreign tyranny to cry, “Give me liberty or give me death.” It is wholly different thing for a criminal incarcerated behind penitentiary bars to shout these words, punctuated by the angry shaking of his cell door.

It is no uncommon thing for me to receive letters with our title used at the top of the page as a printed slogan. It should be pointed out, however, that these words may mean different things to different persons. Some, confusing Jesus with the entire gamut of new covenant writings, hide behind the statement to impose their peculiar interpretations upon all and sundry, and demand rigid conformity to their legalistic code as a means of sharing in their “fellowship.” Others, who reject the view that the apostles were inspired of God and were divine revelators of His will, employ the same words to assert their utter freedom from any regulation by divine fiat. Indeed, the so-called ultra conservative and the so-called ultra liberal have this in common, that both make the claim of having “no creed but Christ.”

The truth is, however, that both of these operate under false pretence. Strangely enough, though they are poles apart in their philosophies, they are both guilty of the same error, they dethrone the very One whom they profess to place at the apex of their respective systems, and both assume the prerogatives which they contend belong only to Him. The first accomplishes this unenviable end by exalting human interpretation to the level of divine revelation; the second by denying that the divine mind has been revealed unto men by men who were chosen for the task. The first achieves by dilution what the other does by denial. Both are destructive forces in the religious domain, because, in essence, both assume the prerogatives of Jesus, one by becoming a law unto all, the other by becoming a law unto himself.

The legalist falsifies when he contends he has “no creed but Christ,” and the modernist falsifies when he affirms he has “no creed but Christ.” The legalist does have another creed; the modernist does not have Christ. Lest we be falsely accused with reference to this last, we hasten to say there is a difference between acknowledging the historicity of Jesus, and the recognition of the Nazarene as the Messiah, or Christ. This latter entails an acceptance of the fact that “what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). The modernist dare not give acquiescence to this in simple faith, so he attempts to explain it away, really explaining himself away from the Christ.

However, it is toward the other group we propose to direct the burden of this brief essay. Many of our brethren fall into this category, most of them unwittingly. This causes them to deny vehemently the justice of our charge as relates to them. In no sense do we wish to become unduly censorious. Our strictures upon our present state are made with full appreciation of the difficulty of adhering to a non-sectarian policy amidst the complexities of our current divisions and schisms. The great majority of the brethren are sincere in their anxiety to please the Lord. They have been betrayed by the party spirit. They are

victims of inherited feuds which they did not start. But reliance for salvation upon a slogan which we mouth but do not mind, will produce nothing but trouble and despair.

I do not argue against the validity of the slogan. If by “creed” we mean a basis, or foundation, for unity, then surely we should have no creed but Christ. The apostle says, “For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The setting, or context, of this majestic principle should be noted. It is contained in that section of First Corinthians in which the holy ambassador is dealing with “the dissensions among you.” It represents the answer to the problem of schisms. Paul and Apollos are servants. He who plants and he who waters are equal. They are merely fellow workmen for God. Jesus Christ is the foundation. He is not divided. There is no other basis of unity.

Jesus Christ is a person. He is a *who* not a *what*. We are divided. All must admit this is so. Yet all of us steadfastly claim to be building upon this foundation. There is not a party among us, even the most exclusive and uncharitable, but the adherents will contend that they are building upon this one foundation. All make this boast, yet the more than two dozen warring factions which have grown out of the restoration movement bear eloquent witness to the fallacy of our claims. If we are sincere in asserting that we are building upon this one foundation which was laid for unity, yet we are torn by strife and disunity, it is evident that we are confused as to the identity of the foundation. Here lies the crux of our difficulty. We cannot identify Christ!

We are not divided over a person. We are divided over *things*. This is apparent to the most casual thinker. The restoration movement heirs are divided over societies, institutions, instrumental music, individual cups, the state of the fruit of the vine, the nature of the bread, the method of breaking it, classes, literature, and a host of other *things*. All upon every side of these divisive issues claim to be building upon Christ. But

it is not belief in Christ that is the basis of their fellowship at all. It is a position on one or more of the above list of things.

Regardless of what you believe about Jesus Christ, you must agree with them upon these things, or you are not regarded as a brother. “The brotherhood” in each case is limited to the conformists on the partisan test. Thus we must have as many “brotherhoods” as we have parties. The reason is that we have substituted orthodoxy as to things, for belief in Jesus, as our foundation. We have elevated the *what* above the *who*, and by doing so we create a new party and add to the confusion in the religious world every time an honest dissenter arises among us. No one is regarded more of a heretic by the various parties than he who dares to build on the one foundation, Jesus Christ, and upon him alone. Such a man is not “sound” for he will not parrot the party line.

Whatever is required as a term of admission to your fellowship, or to recognition as a member of your “brotherhood” constitutes your creed. It makes no difference whether it is written down in formal terminology, or if it is simply understood and enforced by mutual consent, it is a creed if a man must subscribe to it to be in good standing with the party. For example, if you refuse to regard and love as your brethren those who have been immersed into the Lord Jesus, but who condone the use of instrumental music in their public worship, then you have another creed than Jesus Christ. One must not only be right about Jesus—the only foundation—but he must concur with you on this other matter. Conversely, if you refuse to regard and love as your brethren those who oppose the use of the instrument, that is, if you hate the “antis” as you may slightly refer to them, then you have another creed than Jesus Christ.

If you refuse to regard as your brethren those who have classes, and if you un-Christianize all who do not conform to your view on this matter, you have another creed than Jesus. If

you have classes but sneer at those who cannot conscientiously have them, if you eliminate them from your “brotherhood” you are laying another foundation. You have another creed than Jesus. You constitute a sect. If you do not regard as a part of “the brotherhood” those earnest children of God who worship where individual cups are used in the Lord’s Supper; or if you use such cups and disenfranchise those who feel they must use but one container, then you have another creed than Jesus Christ, and you are an exclusive sect.

A candid examination of our profession and practice in the past, and a true evaluation of it, would reveal that the expression “No creed but Christ” has become an empty slogan, and those who use it are sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. We have used the phrase to decoy a creed-bound, weary and tired religious world into a state where they merely substitute a formal creed for an informal one, a written one for an oral one, established and sanctified by partisan tradition. There is a basic error in our present course of thinking. Unless it is corrected we are doomed to continue on the sordid street of strife, and perpetuate contention and confusion.

We have confused the new covenant writings with the Living Word. We have substituted interpretation of scripture for faith in Jesus. We have made opinions about things, not belief in Him, our foundation of hope and unity. Revelation is divine in origin. It is what God said. Interpretation is human. It is what men think God meant by what He said. The first is an uncovering of the thoughts of the infinite mind. The second is an application of the finite mind to what is revealed, to determine its requirements for ourselves.

Revelation is infallible, but we have no infallible interpretation. When any man, or any group of men in collaboration, set up their views, opinions or interpretations as the basis of fellowship, they create a human creed. It is useless to condemn the Roman Catholics for claiming to have an infallible

interpreter, then proceed as if we have an infallible interpretation. The Roman Catholic believes that when the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, he *cannot* err; many of our brethren believe that when they speak they *do not* err. Editors are no more infallible than the pope. Being in America does not make the difference!

We should be grateful that God has not made our salvation from sin contingent upon orthodoxy, nor upon conformity to any set of opinions announced as essential by well-meaning, but partisan men. Our salvation is hinged upon faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. This is the foundation that has been laid. Other foundation can no man lay as a basis of Christian unity. The folly of attempting it is evidenced by the factions and sects which men have created while making a vain plea for unity. Few indeed can live up to the majestic implications and the tremendous responsibilities entailed in the statement, "No creed but Christ." To do so, one must crucify every inclination toward the party spirit, and must rise above every humanly conceived limiting factor which retards or restricts fellowship in the Spirit. More of us should lift this motto from our letterheads, and transfer it to our hearts.

It is here that the fearful will ask the inevitable question. Does this mean that one must swallow everything or anything, to secure peace at any price? And it is here the partisan, unable to grasp the significance of the plea we make, will utter such vain charges. But does this mean, for example, that the man whose conscience forces him to oppose individual cups and classes, should stifle his convictions, and as a display of charity, attend worship services and participate in that which violates his scruples? Certainly not! Those who affirm this is what we mean or imply, have a veil over their hearts when they read what I write. We are obligated to be true to conscience and conviction. Not for anything would I encourage the humblest one of God's servants to go against his conscience. Then what is meant by my thesis?

It is just this. Regardless of personal views, opinions and interpretations as to *the things* which divide us, we shall allow none of these to be greater than our relationship in the Son of God. The unifying power of his blood must be superior to the walls men have erected. We must differ as brethren, not as enemies. We must love each other as kindred, not regard each other as aliens. Others are not separated from us, but we are separated from each other. But not one thing which divides is as great as the One who died to unite! Let us really have “no creed but Christ!”

Opinions and Unity

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[Abstract]

We believe it will be conceded by most of our readers that many who are of a factious spirit feel they are true defenders of the faith. Some are deluded by a Messiah-complex into thinking the salvation of mankind is dependent upon universal adoption of their personal views. Others consider themselves as indispensable to preservation of truth, therefore issue proclamations with such dogmatic fervor as to make their hearers shudder and tremble. Perhaps the majority are simply confused and ignorant of the true basis of the Christian relationship, and deceived into building their hope of divine approbation upon a foundation of the sand of opinions.

This is the root of most sectarianism in our age. It is the bane of every restoration movement. It is a noxious weed which, once planted, spreads with such rapidity that it soon chokes out all spiritual life. Every written creed we have examined, which has resulted in the creation of a party or sect, is nothing more nor less than the crystallization into a formal pattern of the opinions of great thinkers and consecrated men. When such a formula is announced as the foundation for fellowship for all who come after, it has started on its route of destruction and disintegration. Seldom will a generation pass without a new division arising in the ranks.

The reason why schisms always occur in the wake of

propagation of opinions as bases for religious unity, is easily determined by the rational student. Such unity must be predicated upon moral and spiritual values. Opinions are neither. An opinion is the result of a purely intellectual process. It is the fruit produced by human and finite rationalization. All human reasoning must be based upon experience, and since the experiences, environments, and backgrounds of men are variant and divergent, their modes of reasoning will differ. We can only reason from the known to the unknown, and since no two persons on earth have exactly the same degree of knowledge in all fields, the inferences drawn or conclusions reached, will be as different from each other as the persons themselves are different. We can no more think alike than we can look alike. Therefore, any arbitrary pronouncement of an opinion, or set of opinions, as a basis of fellowship, will only destroy that state it was intended to create.

We dare not predicate our hope of eternal life upon opinion, for if it should prove at the judgment that the opinion is in error, it will be too late to rectify our mistake. One of the essentials to happiness and joy is the certainty of our salvation. Without this, man gravitates from exalted rejoicing to utmost despair and dejection. He is on top of the mountains one day and groping in the lowest valley the next. But certainty is not possible on the basis of opinion, for opinion is but speculation erected on probable evidence. He, who on the basis of such evidence, exalts his conclusions to the realm of dogma, and demands conformity by his fellows in order to enjoy spiritual privileges, is unsafe as a religious leader, and detrimental to the peace and harmony of the spiritual domain. It is just this procedure which has created the segments and splinters which presently exist as a shame and disgrace to the Christian way. It can produce nothing else, for disruption must follow the propagation of opinion as a test of fellowship as certainly as the night follows the day.

Men will have opinions and they will differ in them. There

is no way to offset such, nor should one be sought. Such differences are not dangerous in themselves. They provide the stimuli for all research and are responsible for all progress. It is only when men, through pride, exalt their conjectures to the realm of law, and seek to bind them upon others, that harm results. The danger, then, is not in having an opinion, nor in holding one, nor even in expressing it as such. No rational being can keep from having opinions, for it would be ridiculous to suppose that the intellect would be interminably employed in the reasoning process, and never reach a conclusion based on the probability of such reasoning. A problem is created only when an opinion is pressed or forced upon another, who recognizes an equal right to have his own. John Wesley stated this in a unique way.

I have no more right to object to a man holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible.

In addition to speculation, or opinion, man moves in two other mental realms. These are the realms of knowledge and faith. In each of these a state of certainty may be attained, for the evidence upon which these two are postulated is not probable. Knowledge has to do with personal experience, faith with the experience of others. Both of these are arrived at through testimony. Knowledge is produced by the evidence submitted by one's own sense. He knows that fire produces a sensation called heat, and ice a sensation designated cold. He knows certain roses are possessed of a color called red, and violets a tint called blue. Knowledge is, in its very nature, accumulative. The experiences of the past constitute a foundation upon which to build in the future. No two people have the same degree of knowledge, for no two have had identical experiences, nor are possessed of equal perceptive and

retentive faculties. Those who are brought into contact with the world about them, do not have the same ability to grasp the significance of what they hear, see or touch, nor the same power of memory as a basis for future interpretations.

Any system purposing to secure unity based upon conformity in opinion or equal attainment of knowledge is doomed at its inception. It proposes to accomplish what is, by nature, impossible. Yet it is upon these two postulates virtually every attempt at unity has been made in the past. The wreckage and disunity left in the wake of all such schemes is ample proof of their unreliability. Is unity, then, unobtainable? Not so! Certainly in the realms of knowledge and opinion it must be a unity of diversity, but in the cohesive element which God has ordained as the divine basis for unity of believers, there can be unanimity, for it is *faith*.

Faith is the certainty of the experience of others. It is the result of the mind acting upon the evidence presented to it by such witnesses. If one is fully convinced of the credibility of the witnesses, if he has no reason to doubt that they know what they testify, and testify what they know, he must believe. On no other basis can rational men proceed. Since reliable witnesses testify to facts, and since facts are things done and said, the only knowledge required is of the facts to which the witnesses testify. Since no amount of speculation or opinion can alter facts, it is possible to be united on the basis of faith. The richest provision of grace is a system of religion based upon faith. No other is adapted to man in his present state. We will never recapture the unity of the primitive community of saints until we first understand the basis of that unity. All who *believed* were together.

A Sincere Offer

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

In the January, 1958, MISSION MESSENGER, I published the first of a series of articles entitled “Thoughts On Fellowship.” In the following months I showed that the *koinonia*, fellowship, was not equivalent to endorsement of the views of others, that it was not contingent upon conformity of opinion, unanimity of interpretation, or simultaneous arrival at a specific degree of knowledge. I demonstrated that it was a state or condition to which men were called by God through the gospel, and that every sincere and consecrated immersed believer was in the fellowship. Fellowship was achieved by faith and the only test of admission to fellowship, should be the divine test of faith in Jesus, submission to immersion in water in His name.

This led to the conclusion that the parties, or factions, growing out of the early nineteenth century restoration movement, sparked by the Campbells and their contemporaries, had become sectarian and exclusivist in profession and practice, and that a revival or rejuvenation of the spirit of the original restoration movement was now in order.

The only real assailants and defenders of the partisan status quo, have been those who either could not or would not understand what we wrote, and found it more to their liking to create a straw man and belabor this scarecrow with diligence, under the guise that they were smiting my position “hip and

thigh.” Such one-sided tactics may be calculated to please rabid party followers who constitute “the loyal church,” but they hardly satisfy less emotional, and more rational searchers after truth. Nothing of value is to be gained from such maneuvers unless the crystallization of the party spirit is no longer a work of the flesh, but a spiritual desideratum.

It is admitted that the views I have voiced run counter to those which have generally motivated “The Church of Christ” and “The Christian Church” for many decades, although individuals in both of these, and some in neither of them, have cherished the same ideas. We have no desire to protect our convictions from investigation, nor conceal them from examination. Rather we invite inquisition. By such means we can eliminate any fallacy in our reasoning and correct our errors. Our desire is to attain to the truth on these matters. He is a friend indeed who will help us in that endeavor. We feel that this spirit characterizes the majority of our brethren in the Lord, and that they wish to be fair, honorable and just.

We, therefore, make the following proposal. At the invitation of any interested congregation in this country or Canada, we will appear before them, and present our views on the subject of fellowship and unity of the Spirit. In order to guarantee adequate investigation of our plea, we suggest three meetings, each of at least one and one-half hour duration. In the first, we will present our position. In the second, we will submit to questions by a panel of three informed men, to be selected by the congregation. In the final session, we will answer questions submitted from the audience. The three meetings may be held on consecutive nights, or all in one day, at the discretion of the local congregation.

For the second session, the panel of querists need not consist of adherents or representatives of any one faction, but may be drawn from divergent groups. For example, two may be from the “Church of Christ” and two from the “Christian

Church.” In the case of congregations affiliated with the more exclusive segments, the questioners may all be drawn from those having endorsement of the party. All such meetings must be advertised in advance and open to people of all faiths. This proposal is not limited to the groups mentioned above, but is open to all other respectable religious organizations and denominations composed of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For his part the editor promises to present his views in a clear and lucid manner, but not in a dogmatic or arbitrary fashion, and with the understanding that no person except himself shall be bound by them, and that no person in attending shall be considered as indorsing either the views of the speaker or the congregation making the arrangements. It will be made clear that the views of the speaker do not necessarily represent those of the inviting congregation, but that the meetings are arranged as a forum in the interest of research for truth. The speaker covenants to be gentlemanly, polite and kindly in manner to all questioners, and to exercise forbearance in love to those who express disagreement. Those who are eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and who feel that such meetings will contribute to better understanding, are asked to communicate with W. Carl Ketcherside, 2360 Gardner Drive, Saint Louis 36, Missouri.

The Helping Spirit

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Rom. 8:26). When Jesus was preparing to return to the Father, he told his disciples that he would not leave them orphans (John 14:18). He promised to send them another *Comforter*. The word thus translated in the Authorized Version is *parakletos*. It is rendered “Counselor” in the Revised Standard Version, and “Helper” by James Moffatt. Perhaps this last is best. The word refers to one who comes to the side of another to help or assist him in pleading his case. The life of the child of God is lived by and through the indwelling Spirit. “If *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Rom. 8:13). “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also *through His Spirit* which dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

Our opening quotation affirms our weakness. It implies our need of help or assistance. We have a divine helper who will abide with us and dwell in us as long as Jesus is absent from the earth. We are not left as orphans since he has gone away. Lack of recognition of this great truth fills our lives with fears and frustrations, doubts and discouragements. Modern philosophers talk about “the lonely crowd.” Many are unhappy, and feel forlorn and forsaken while surrounded by a sea of people. Not so the saint. He is never alone. He can say, “So we do not lose heart” (2 Cor. 4:16). Or, he can affirm, “God has given us the

Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage” (2 Cor. 5:5, 6).

It little matters what happens without when the Spirit is within. “Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Note the expression “every day.” Ours is a daily renewal of strength and courage, not a temporary or spasmodic revival. The secret of the life of power is the unseen guest. “We are strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). We are constantly exposed to the grinding effect of temptation. Our spirits become raw and bleeding from the strain and struggle. But each day the divine Helper renews us, not by making a scar, but by rebuilding healthy spiritual tissue sensitive and alive to the needs of those about us.

The covenantal community of saints, as a corporate body, suffers seriously today from ignorance of the work of the Spirit. This causes the Helper to be ignored and grieved. The body without the Spirit is dead. The saints and members of the household of God constitute a structure which “is joined together and grows into an holy temple in the Lord.” We who love the Lord “are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” But many are tied together simply by the party spirit. They exist only to oppose others of God’s children. They are fed upon a diet of criticism and hate. The services are occasions for diatribes and accusations. Strife, jealousy, contention and division are the order of the day. The very bishops who should guide the flock fall out among themselves and destroy the work of God. They “hold the form of religion but deny the power of it” (2 Tim. 2:5). Jude says, “It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.” The answer to the problem of division is a restoration of the concept of the indwelling Spirit.

In Acts 4:31, we read, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” The very next words are, “Now the company of those who believed were

of one heart and soul.” Such unity is known only by a company of believers, all of whom are filled with the Holy Spirit. It is “the unity of the Spirit” we must be eager to maintain in the bond of peace. One might as well expect a corpse to function as a congregation devoid of the Spirit to further the real purpose of God. We will never secure the unity of all believers until we convince them that love, joy and peace are the fruit of the Spirit, and it is only those who are led by the Spirit who can know this fruit. Others are doomed to “strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, and envy.” These are works of the flesh.

What does the divine Helper do for us? What plain, practical benefits are derived from his indwelling in the heart? It is to these questions we now address our attention. We shall catalogue for you the blessings bestowed upon the saints by the Holy Spirit.

1. Pours Out God's Love

In Romans 5:1-5 there occurs a beautiful chain of thought, in which the question of the reason for suffering is partially explained. The entire passage is a culmination of Paul's reasoning in the preceding chapters. That it represents his conclusion is evidenced by the first word, “therefore.” As a result of being justified by faith, we obtain certain things through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace with God, access to grace, and we rejoice in our hope.

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings.” This is a state to which only God's children can attain. The unbeliever questions the purpose of suffering. He murmurs and complains in bitterness and anguish. He regards suffering as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. He does not recognize the dark threads as but a part of the pattern of life; to him all is blackness and despair. The believer looks beyond the veil and sees the divine weaver working at the loom. He rejoices to see

that shadow and sunshine are woven together to make a better and purer existence. It is knowledge of the divine purpose that makes the difference. “We rejoice in our sufferings, *knowing . . .*”

What do we know? First, that suffering produces endurance. This sterling quality, so much admired, is forged in us at the furnace of affliction. “Endurance produces character.” It is true that character is the sum total of all the facets which combine to make personality, but as used here, that character is meant which receives divine approval. Of such a person it was written, “Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God” (Heb. 11:5). “Character produces hope.” “Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” Hope is here seen in proper perspective. It is a fruit of character, which is a fruit of endurance, which is a fruit of suffering. Hope is related to suffering, it is a great-grandchild of suffering. One might as well seek to enter life without ancestry as to have hope without suffering.

But many of our cherished hopes prove to be illusions, and leave us broken, despondent and despairing in the end. Not so this hope. “Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” The hearts of the saints are full of God’s love. That sacred ingredient has been poured into these ready receptacles, as the servants filled the waterpots at the wedding feast in Cana. There is no room left for doubt or despair. Not even suffering can daunt the love-filled heart. All is rejoicing. “When they called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left . . . rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” The answer to the problem of suffering in the flesh is a consciousness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

2. Kills Deeds of Body

The heart of each one of us is a great battlefield. Here the shock troops of sin and righteousness clash daily in an unrelenting conflict. “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other” (Gal. 5:17). The word “opposed” is a military term. The original has to do with digging trenches. But trenches are constructed only for sustained warfare in a given area. The Spirit and the flesh have dug in for a long battle. It is useless for us to seek for victory over the flesh purely by our own initiative and will. We cannot conquer by good resolutions or sheer will power. The fleshly desire we bury today crops up in new guise tomorrow. “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom. 7:15).

It is all very well for advisers to recommend conquering this or that desire by firm resolve, but even those who so advise have areas of personal weakness where their own resolutions have proven powerless. The apostle puts his finger on the problem, with these words, “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it” (Rom. 7:18). The truth is that we gain the victory, not by affirming our own power, but by admitting our utter weakness. The victory that overcomes the world is faith— not faith in our own ability, but faith in the triumphant power of the Spirit.

So long as a man seeks to deliver himself, by merely wanting or willing to do better or be better, he is lost, for “when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand” (Rom. 7:21). When he admits and confesses his own failure, futility and inability to deliver himself, and cries out, “Wretched man that I am! *Who will deliver me* from the body of this death?” he places deliverance in the hands of another, a specialist in spiritual warfare. It is a matter of good generalship when you are surrounded by the enemy to call for reinforcements and superior power. God wants us to gain the victory and has supplied the indwelling Spirit as the source of power. “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to

death the deeds of the body you will live.” The Helper is on your side to put to death the deeds of the body.

Our life is one of surrender. We either surrender to the flesh or to the Spirit. The conquest of the flesh is made by the Spirit. We do not lead our forces in the battle, we are “led by the Spirit of God” (Rom. 8:14). This is the distinguishing characteristic of the sons of God. They do not set their minds on their desires, or on the struggles, but on the Spirit. “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). Here is the secret of life! Here is the secret of peace! It is the set of the mind, the surrender of the heart that makes the difference.

One ship sails east, another west,

With the selfsame winds that blow;

’Tis the set of the sail, and not the gale,

That determines the way we go!

3. Testifies to Sonship

Slaves or sons! What a difference in these two words. In one of the most pregnant passages in the new covenant scriptures (Gal. 4:1-7), the apostle paints a glowing picture of the transformation from slavery to sonship. In verse 1, he shows that the Jews, under the law were “no better than slaves.” In verse 3, he declares, “we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe.” However, when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, to redeem those under the law, in order that they might receive adoption as sons. Redeemed slaves were adopted into the divine family. “So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir” (verse 7).

It is a long step from bondage and slavery to freedom and

sonship. The natural tendency upon the part of the adopted would be one of fear that the condition would again reverse, and he find himself reverting to his former abject state. To make a real prince out of a pauper requires more than a mere legal procedure. It would be difficult for one to call God “Father” who had previously cringed in fear of the August presence. Here it is that the Spirit becomes a true Helper. “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’” The Holy Spirit is here called “the Spirit of his Son” because of the problems involved in sonship.

Because of the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is no reticence between them. The Holy Spirit in my heart enables me to come boldly to the throne of grace. He takes over from my feeble, halting, stumbling approach, and cries out “Abba! Father!” My stammering tongue is thus encouraged to proceed. The word “Abba” is Aramaic for “father” The term “Father” is a translation of the Greek term for the same. This implies that former slaves, whether Jew or Greek, can call upon God who has adopted them, in their own language. They have truly “come to know God, or rather to be known by God” (Gal. 4:9).

But there is another constant fear of a transformed slave, and that is that his credentials to sonship may be challenged by another, and that he may not be able to prove his adoptive rights, or sonship. In this event, the Spirit of God acts as a witness to substantiate the testimony of one’s own spirit, for “in the mouth of two or three witnesses must every word be established.” The Holy Spirit cannot cry “Abba! Father!” in one who is not a child of God, for he does not dwell in those who are not sons. “Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Thus, this very cry of the Spirit is proof of our sonship.

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we

cry, ‘Abba! Father’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:15-17). I must confess that for many years I did not grasp the beauty and meaning of this passage. Growing up as I did, in a religious environment which regarded one with suspicion and as a little queer, who talked very much of the Holy Spirit, I gave the traditional explanation of it, and let it go at that. I knew little, if anything about the Roman method of purchasing a slave or adopting a son, but now a whole new vista of the Spirit’s work has been opened to my heart. Inasmuch as the best summary of this topic known to me is found under the article “Adoption” in *The Local Colour of the Bible*, Vol. 3, pages 275-277, I ask indulgence of our readers for quoting at length.

St. Paul is the only one of the New Testament writers to use the term “adoption!” This is not surprising, because adoption was not a custom among the Jews, and, in a legal sense, was absolutely unknown. On the other hand, the custom was a common one among the Greeks and Romans and as a Roman citizen Paul was familiar with it and with the legal ceremonies which belonged to it.

Under Roman law an entire stranger by blood might be adopted into a family and become a member of that family, holding the same position in it as a son born in marriage. According to Dr. Ball, he even became a member of the family in a higher sense than some who had the family blood in their veins, than emancipated sons of descendants through females. He assumed the family name, and took part in the mystic sacrificial rites. He could no more marry in the family of his adoption within the prohibited degrees than those related by blood. He severed his connection completely with his former family, and in the eyes of the law he became so entirely a new personality that even his debts were cancelled.

Let us look at the process. In the presence of five witnesses and the *libripens* (one who held the balance as if

to weigh out money, at nominal sales), the son about to be adopted was sold three times by his father. According to the law of the Twelve Tables, if a father sold his son thrice he lost his paternal rights over him (*patria potestas*). A fictitious law-suit then followed, by which the person to be transferred was surrendered to the adopter, and the act was ratified in a set form of words.

As the form of adoption and that of sale into slavery were very similar, the presence of witnesses was essential to testify to the real nature of the ceremony. That is why the Apostle says, “Ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). Suppose that the adopter had died and that the adopted son lays claim to the inheritance. His claim is refused; his status as a son is denied; it is declared that he was sold as a slave and that he has no legal right to the inheritance. So the son seeks the aid of the law-court. “No,” he pleads, “the ceremony was that of adoption, the deceased claimed me by the name of son. He took me to his home. I called him father and he allowed it. I sat at his table where the slaves never sat. He told me the inheritance was mine.” But the law requires corroborative evidence. One of the witnesses is called. “I was present,” he says, “at the ceremony. It was I who held the scales and struck them with the ingot of brass. The transaction was not a sale into slavery. It was an adoption. I heard the words of vindication, and I say this person was claimed by the deceased not as a slave, but as a son.”

And who is the witness to that spiritual adoption which makes us sons of God? It is the Third Person in the Trinity. “The Spirit himself beareth witness (along) with our spirit, that we are children of God.” (*The Local Colour of the Bible*, by Charles W. Budden, M.D., and Edward Hastings, M.A. Published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.)

4. Strengthens Inner Man

In Ephesians 3:10, the apostle writes, “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” The principalities and powers are celestial beings, orders of angels. Until the death of Jesus, the plan of the mystery had been hidden for ages. Angels desired to look into God’s intentions but were unable to do so. With the planting of the covenantal community made up of reconciled persons of every nation and tongue, it suddenly became apparent to the angels how the plan was to be implemented in the universe. All of the revelations previously given, and which appeared so complex, now fitted properly into place, so that the many-sided (manifold) wisdom of God was seen in a clear demonstration.

In verse 11, it is pointed out that this was not an accidental result, but “was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The role, or function, of the church was not an afterthought of God, but was included in a deliberate and unvarying plan, which came to fruition in Jesus. This fact provides ground for real hope. “In whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.”

However, there is a difficulty presented. It can be stated in the following sequence. God had an eternal purpose. This involved a plan which was hidden for ages. It was now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. How did it happen, then, that the apostles were required to suffer such persecution for making known the plan? Could not God have foreseen and forestalled such tragic suffering? Anticipating the problem, Paul writes, “So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” This placed the suffering of the ambassadors in proper perspective. It was a matter of glory, not of giving up. But it is a difficult thing in the Christian life “not to lose heart.” Moments of doubt and despair do rush in. Questions arise, fear takes hold, and a feeling of futility and frustration besets us.

It is precisely because of this we need “a Helper.” So Paul assures the disciples, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). The inner man is the “inmost self” of Romans 8:21. The apostle asks, “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?” (1 Cor. 2:11). The inner man is the spirit in contrast to the body, or flesh. Luther says of the spirit, that it is “the highest and noblest part of man, which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things; in short, it is the house where God’s word and Faith are at home.”

The lexicons define the spirit as, “the rational part of man, the power of perceiving and grasping divine and eternal things, and upon which the Spirit of God exerts its influence.” Therefore, to be strengthened in the inner man is to be given the ability to perceive and grasp the divine plan and purpose. The apostle, in this context describes it as having “power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.” He calls it “being filled with all the fulness of God.” This does not mean simply the aptitude to grasp the meaning of terms in the scriptures, nor to simply envision the divine plan for the world.

Rather, it is the ability to understand the design and purpose of God for you as an individual, to grasp the relationship of your existence to the eternal purpose. It is unthinkable that God does not have a design for each of us, or to conjecture that the spirit which dwells in us was bestowed by accident or chance. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without God’s knowledge. I am of more value than many sparrows. If I live on a purely animal plane, I will have no concept of the part that is played by suffering, frustration and sorrow in my life. If I am wholly committed to Jesus, I will be able to see the finger of God tracing the pattern of my destiny. This is a gift of God

which the animal man can never enjoy. “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Ponder upon the expressions “the gifts of the Spirit” and “he is not able to understand.”

There are thousands today whose lives are bounded by fears and circumscribed by failure, because they deny in practice, if not in word, the indwelling of the Spirit. All such must rely for strength purely upon natural or human resources. These might provide power enough if our foes were only human. But we must also face the wiles of Satan. “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” One reason why we do not feel the need of divine inner power is that we have been conditioned to think we are not personally and actually at war. We have an idealistic sense of a universal struggle but we feel remote from the field of battle. If we have any part to play in the struggle it is in “paying our taxes,” that is, giving of our means, to send someone else into battle.

Accordingly, the strength or power in the inner man is not required. We feel quite capable of carrying on with our own resources. Our worship becomes a mere observance of formal rituals, our prayers mere recitations. We read about the Holy Spirit in the sacred writings, we talk about him, but we do not personally experience his presence. He is not real. He is an indescribable, indefinable, intangible thing. He is not a strength-giving, power bestowing person. But it is a proven fact that no fleshly man has sufficient strength in and of himself to triumph over the infernal trinity—the world, the flesh, and the devil. “Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph. . . . Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 2:14; 3:5).

Twice in 2 Corinthians 4 (verses 1 and 16) Paul declares, “So we do not lose heart.” Between these two statements of courage, he declares, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.” He then gives a catalog of things endured by the earthen vessel, and shows how the divine power within buoys and sustains. “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” The climax of his account is one of the most comforting passages in all literature. “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.”

This is the secret of growing old gracefully. It places the body and spirit in proper perspective. The loss of natural powers may coincide with the increase of spiritual power. “We are strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man.” The word “might” is from *dunamis*, power. The Holy Spirit is a fountain of youth for the human spirit. “They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). When one recuperates from physical illness he freely announces that he is getting stronger every day. Will not one who ceases to quench the Spirit, but commits himself wholly to God, feel the surging strength flowing through the inner man until he can run and not be weary? Will he not grow stronger every day?

We need to recognize the part which discipline of suffering plays in our earth life. Affliction is part of a preparatory process. It is not at all to bring us to death. Death is not an end but a means to an end. It is not the closing of a door but the opening of one. “For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” Of what did this “slight momentary affliction” consist? The apostle speaks of perplexity, persecution, and being struck down. Perplexity is mental anguish; persecution is physical suffering. Paul said,

“For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake.” How could such affliction be regarded as either slight or momentary? The answer is that it is so in comparison with the eternal weight of glory.

If the Christian can regard his affliction as “carrying in the body the death of Jesus?” and recognize that commitment to God is not so much the adoption of *a way of life*, but the actual assumption of the life of Jesus, it will enable him to endure the earthly pilgrimage cheerfully, despite external reverses. “You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one” (Heb. 10:34). This philosophy allows a vision of the unseen. One does not look at the bruises, scars and marks of the lash. His eye pierces the veil. “We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” Faith permits one to see the unseen and to view the invisible. “By faith . . . he endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27).

We now live in a tent as befits strangers and wanderers. It is destined to be destroyed. It cannot always resist the battering of the storms of life. It is temporary and transitory. But when we leave it, we have a house not made with hands. It is eternal and enduring. A Christian who dies does not leave home; he goes home! Our goal is to reach that state where “what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.” The record assures us that “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” The Holy Spirit is a helper and comforter, a consolation and a strength for tent-dwellers, as all of us are, while awaiting our great transformation. The holy guest shares our lot and gives us power to endure and to conquer. “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

The Spirit-Filled Life

The indwelling Spirit is the secret to the satisfactory life. The things that trouble and distress us are works of the flesh. These include not only immorality, impurity, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, and envy (Gal. 5:19). "The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh." A lack of recognition of the Spirit, deadens and destroys the fruit of the Spirit. Men fight, divide and destroy one another because they seek justification by cold legalistic means. They have a zeal but not according to knowledge. Being ignorant of God's system of justification, they set up their own system, and demand rigid conformity to it. They act toward each other, not as brothers, but as antagonistic lawyers. To them the new covenant scriptures do not constitute a love letter to the family of God, but a code of jurisprudence with which to batter humble servants into submission. In almost every case the bitter factionalist seeks to explain away the teaching of God's word about the indwelling Spirit. He must get rid of the Spirit to justify his bitter, hateful attitude toward those whom God loves.

But the man who is conscious of the Spirit, who lives with the Spirit, and is led by the Spirit, conquers the flesh. He is not affected by any external force. He lives in a constant glow of inner sunlight despite the dark clouds on the outside. He is "sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." He does not set his compass by what men desire or expect of him. He is not interested in conforming to the standards of men, but in reforming to be more like God. Men cast him out but he receives them in his own heart. "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things" (1 Cor. 4:13). The Holy Spirit abides in

those who are “fools for Christ’s sake.”

How can we attain this glorious state where we are even unaffected when we “become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men”? We must recognize that the Spirit of God is a gift. The divine Helper is given of God. But a gift must be accepted before it can be appropriated to personal use. One may offer his car to help me accomplish my work, but if I am oblivious of the offer, or if I rationalize that he does not mean it, so that I never accept and use it, it will benefit me not at all. It is at this juncture that prayer comes in. First, I must be grateful and thankful that Jesus promised the Helper, and I must rest upon that promise. I must not doubt it, question it, or seek to explain it away, but accept it as true and valid, and expect its fulfillment in my life. Then I must pray God for the Spirit and his work and fruit in my life. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11:13). Have you ever really asked and besought God for the Spirit? It will surprise you at the change that will be wrought within when you do.

We must also cultivate the attitude which will cause us to intreat that others may be strengthened within by the Spirit. The apostle sets for us this example. “I bow my knees before the Father— that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man.” We should ask others to pray in our behalf. But above all, we must be wholly committed or fully surrendered unto God. To the extent we hold back we hinder the Spirit. The difference in the fruitful life and the sterile, barren life is the set of the mind. “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

Setting the mind is an act of the will. It is the result of volition, the deliberate implementation of the right to choose the course one will pursue. It is enthusiastic and unreserved commitment to the way of the Spirit, a complete surrender of

personality which allows one to lose his life in Christ, so that he no longer lives, but it is Jesus who lives in him. The result of this positive direction of the mind will be life and peace. This is not the lot of the fearful and unbelieving, the frightened and faithless. It is fruit gathered only by the courageous and faithful. It is the reward of those who trust the Spirit in childlike simplicity.

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,

my eyes are not raised too high;

I do not occupy myself with things

too great and marvelous for me.

But I have calmed and quieted my soul,

like a child quieted at it's mothers' breast;

like a child that is quieted is my soul.

Psalm 131.

Old John

Mission Messenger (December 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

Many of our readers saw in their newspapers the story of “Old John” Toten, who died in the state prison at Moundsville, West Virginia, October 15, 1960. The account said, “The 83-year-old convicted slayer, spent 44 years behind the walls which he chose as his home rather than ‘the outside world.’” He was paroled on January 27, 1948, but several months later returned and asked to be re-admitted. When told he must first violate his parole, he absconded to his former home in Pennsylvania where he welcomed arrest and returned to prison happy. He told a fellow inmate that life in “the outside world” had become too swift for him.

While it seems incredible that one would prefer prison to freedom, there are many like “Old John” in the spiritual realm. Unable to cope with the responsibilities entailed in a life of liberty, they erect partisan walls around themselves and feel a sense of security behind them. Fear may be the greatest single factor contributing to the perpetuity of sectism in our land. One does not really need to study, think, or engage in spiritual research to be a member of a sect. Indeed, he will be more popular if he does neither. If he can continue to parrot the party plea, and conform to the creedal basis of his society, he will be regarded as “sound” and “loyal.”

It is of the essence of sectism that it measures everything

by the knowledge accumulated and crystallized in the past. The interpretations, explanations, and opinions, arrived at by godly, consecrated, but fallible men, in yesteryear, become the criterion by which the worth of all contemporary reasoning must be judged. With each generation the encircling wall of tradition grows higher. Ancestor worship becomes a part of the prejudicial pattern. Original thinking is stifled on the ground that it is a reflection against those who were our fathers in the faith. Dissenters, although honest, are labelled and harassed, and eventually hounded out as heretics. This has been the tragic history of sectism in all ages.

Eventually, with passing generations, the scales of justice are finally balanced by the weight of enlightened opinion, and the maligned culprit is enshrined as a martyr of righteousness. Most of the religious heroes of today were driven forth as heretics in the long past yesterday. But mankind seems never to learn that, while you can confine men behind walls, you cannot imprison truth. Those who scurry to the inner shadow of their protective walls to preserve truth always end by losing it. Truth was never given to be the exclusive personal property of any sect or segment. It was given to mankind for universal sustenance of the spirit, as the atmosphere was given to perpetuate the physical life, not of one group or nation, but of all men everywhere. It is as absurd to attempt to confine truth to human creeds and formulae as to try and bottle or can the air we breathe.

Just as I never pass a prison without feeling compassion for those who are deprived of their freedom, so I never contemplate sectism with its high walls and barred doors, without a tinge of sadness for those who surrender liberty for security. Peace is not so sweet as to be purchased by shackles. Life is not so precious that we should maintain it at the cost of all that makes it worth living. But prison makes a man unfit to compete in a world of freedom. Sectism deprives man of the will to be free. It wraps him in a mummy-like shroud which renders

him helpless. He cannot move upward and onward for he dare not move at all. As the marching prisoners halt when they reach the stone wall, so the marching saints must stop at their creedal barrier. "Thus far, and no farther shalt thou come," is the watchword of every sect.

Sectism always begins with honest, sincere men, but it is motivated by fear. Those who fear the loss of what little has been gained, build a fence around it, and end by losing all— that which has been attained by stagnation and atrophy; that which could have been attained by complacency and lack of effort. The attempt to define the extent and scope of the kingdom of heaven, by drawing our own lines of demarkation, and concluding that those outside of our walls are outside of God's grace, only reveals the incipient spirit of pride and haughtiness in the hearts of many.

Freedom is a blessing of such magnitude as to be inestimable in value, but it carries with it such responsibility as to frighten many, and drive them cringing and slinking within the safety of prison walls. "Old John" deliberately chose to die in prison, rather than to live in a world of freedom outside. We are saddened by such manifestations of the degradation of human character and will, but our hearts are even more deeply stirred by the voluntary submission to confinement of those who dare not face "the outside world" in the spirit. May He who came to "set the captives free" give us liberty in thought, word and action, and may we be not entangled again within the yoke of bondage.

The Sacred Quest

Mission Messenger (December 1960)

Volume 22

[Abstract]

It has long been a favorite theme of ours that the noblest purpose of man on earth is the pursuit of truth. From this, however, many shrink back, moved by fear, and hampered by the fetters of tradition. The party spirit, which is classed with the works of the flesh, by the apostle Paul, is always opposed to free investigation and unhampered research. The Romanist, for instance, dares not select his reading matter without permission from other men. The power of censorship is exercised by the hierarchy. The mother of all sects seeks to perpetuate her tyranny over the intellect through suppression and boycott.

The same charge can be leveled against religious partyism in general. It may be a veritable hallmark of the sectarian attitude. Indeed, the slanted propaganda, the twisted testimony, and the one-sided presentation are the chief weapons in the party arsenal. On what grounds do men who are thrust into prominence by force of circumstances, arrogate to themselves the right to think for others, and to enforce conformity by threat of excommunication and boycott? Does the mere assumption of leadership convey to him who exercises it the right to dominate thought, and to deny its freedom to others?

We face today the sad spectacle of the closed mind. Even worse, this attitude has its public defenders. These assert that one should make up his mind as to the truth of a matter and

then close it against the encroachment of any other idea. The philosophy of such rationalization is that the open mind can arrive at truth, but cannot retain it; that it can sort truth out from error originally, but cannot preserve it against error in the future. In its final analysis this simply means that one possessed of truth is more helpless than before he arrived at it, for if one without truth has power to attain to it, then loses his ability to retain it, he is weaker with truth than without it.

It would astonish many of our readers to know how many of those in current factions are cautioned against reading anything not written by a member of "the faithful brotherhood." The leaders exercise their right to read what they wish, and often borrow ideas which they use freely, but these must be filtered to the "common people" who are discouraged from doing their own thinking, lest they be led away from "the truth." This is Romanistic censorship on a small scale, and conducted by wholly unqualified and inadequate regulators.

Actually, such enslaved partisans can never really come to an appreciation of universal truth, because their outlook is too provincial and parochial. It would be like a dweller in a remote mountain who judged the geography of the whole world by what he could see from his cabin door. In ancient times, Heraclitus assigned the lack of wisdom to the fact that, "Men sought truth in their own little worlds, and not in the great and common world." No man is God, and no party is the Deity. None of us possess universal knowledge or infallible wisdom. It is only through the free exchange of thought that we can strive toward either.

He who closes his mind, generally does so, not because he fears to learn truths new to him, but because he fears that what he already has may prove to be not the truth. He does not want it placed in the crucible of investigation, for fear that it will not stand the test. By throwing up walls about himself, he can forego the searchlight of investigation and consider himself fortunate to

continue unhampered in pursuit of his traditional pattern. It is fear which causes men to refuse to examine anew those practices which, in the past, have created division. To assume that when brethren have once severed relations with each other, the case is forever settled, because one side has all the truth and the other has none, and that future generations have no recourse but to perpetuate the feud and widen the gap, is the tragic conclusion of little minds and warped spirits. Such a philosophy would render reconciliation forever an impossibility, and brand a peacemaker as a traitor and reprobate, instead of a child of God.

George Bernanos, in his book, *Tradition of Freedom*, makes this apt observation, "The man who defends freedom of thought only for himself is, indeed, already on the point of betraying it." This statement deserves long and careful meditation. I am convinced that all who misrepresent, ridicule and persecute those who are sincere non-conformists, do so because of a genuine lack of personal faith. It is not the desire to defend the truth which prompts their castigation of others, but the attempt to force misguided zeal to atone for their empty hearts. Those who love truth for truth's sake, and who love mankind for God's sake, are neither egotistical nor cruel.

The first step toward acquisition of truth is the acknowledgment of truth regardless of where it may be and who holds it. So long as it is regarded as a partisan possession, we must be limited only to the discoveries of the coterie of partisans with whom we are directly affiliated. When truth is regarded as a universal blessing bestowed upon the intelligent creation by a benevolent Creator, we can join with anyone in honest research for greater knowledge of truth without sacrificing either past acquirements or present convictions.

The open Bible, the open mind, and the open hand— these are characteristics of spiritual greatness. When the sacred volume is kept open for unbiased and objective study, when the open mind is freed from the fetters of traditionalism and creedal

tyranny, when the open hand is extended to welcome all lovers of truth and to receive their contributions of discovered truth—then we are safe! But the Bible is a closed book to many. They have mined a few of its treasures and these they jealously clutch, the while they bar the entrance against those who would dig deeper and explore those veins of precious ore not yet brought to the surface.

It is frequently those who know the least who make such frantic objection to learning more. Their minds have “waxed gross” lest they discover truths which would make their sermon notes obsolete, and force them to acknowledge mistakes of the past. The closed mind is barred by fear and locked by pride. No man is free who is shackled by inner dread. It is the closed mind which so often resorts to the closed fist, thinking by brute force to compel where reason is lacking. Such tactics only shift the ground of our problems, they never solve them!

The apostle, in a startling sentence, shows the utter futility of any attempt to suppress the truth. One must either acknowledge truth or eventually be crushed by it. In 2 Corinthians 13:8 we are informed, “For, after all, we can make no progress against the truth; we can only work for the truth.” He who denies the truth, who shrinks from it and refuses to acknowledge it, will make no progress. He will lose his soul and be banished from the light. We need bold adventurers who dare to set sail with their only goal being discovery of *the truth*! The truth makes men free!

The Horses of Glaucus

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Volume 22

[Abstract]

Have you ever read the translation by J. B. Phillips, of Galatians 5:15? It is a rich gem, which contains a stern rebuke to the attitude of many who profess to be followers of the Prince of peace. I like it because it shows what freedom does not include. It also contains a grim warning of the consequences resulting from a misconception of freedom. Here it is: “But if freedom means merely that you are free to attack and tear one another to pieces, be careful that it doesn’t mean that between you, you destroy your fellowship altogether!”

Recently, in a southern city, I tuned-in to several radio broadcasts. Feeling was running high over certain disputed issues. Congregations had purchased time on the air for the purpose of blasting away at those opposed to them. The aerial waves were filled with vitriolic charges. Accusations and counter-accusations were hurled in successive programs. Challenges to debate were flung out by blatant partisans. The listening world, if listening at all, was treated to the sordid spectacle of men who claimed to plead for unity, clawing at the spiritual vitals of each other, and rending to shreds the characters of those who opposed them. This is called “preaching the gospel.” What a travesty upon a term meaning *good news*!

Such fratricidal strife always works its own rebuke. He who hates his brother consumes that brother from without and

himself from within. No one can kindle the fire of passion and not be burnt. Only the arch-fiend who sowed distrust and suspicion in the world gains from such unholy tactics. What a shame that brotherhood must be stifled while a world stands aghast at the gory sight of the children of the same Father, locked in mortal combat, each seeking to thrust his sword into the heart of the other, each smeared with the blood of his companion.

In ancient mythology, King Glaucus fed his horses upon human flesh to make them fierce. One day, in a mad dash, they upset his chariot, and devoured him before he could rise from the ground. The man who plants the seed of animosity, must partake of the fruit of his harvest. One cannot sow hate and reap peace; he cannot sow to the wind without being caught in the whirlwind he creates. Division is not accidental. Neither is peace. Division is caused; peace is made. “And now I implore you, my brothers, to keep a watchful eye on those who cause trouble and make difficulties among you, in plain opposition to the teaching you have been given, and steer clear of them” (Rom. 16:17). “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”

The spirit of factionalism is never satiated. It is raised in every generation to devour and destroy. Hephaestus chained Prometheus to a crag in the Caucasus Mountains. Each day a vulture came and ate out the liver of the imprisoned victim. Each night the organ grew back to furnish a bloody feast for the carrion bird the next day. So it appears the church of God lies bound on the mountain peaks of faith, exposed to the rending and tearing of those who do not preach peace, but dedicate their efforts to the partisan conflict.

We cannot divide ourselves into unity! We cannot unite the world by dividing among ourselves! Where has God provided division as a remedy for the spiritual ills in his family? Can purity be achieved by segregating the leaven from the lump?

Can the balm of Gilead heal while kept in a bottle on the shelf? Can salt exert its influence while kept in the shaker? Is it not time to cease listening to prophets of disaster who seek to lock us inside our own shells? Shall we not make the Christian concept the activating, energizing influence it was intended to be? Shall we admit that the Christian way is so weak and powerless that it must succumb to every foe upon contact, and dare not be risked in open combat in the arena?

It is high time for real men to rise above their petty prejudices, trivial traditions, and frightened feelings, and enter the lists boldly in the crusade for peace, the most challenging cause to confront a sick, weary, disappointed and frustrated religious world. Let us have done with murmuring and meandering, with fears and futility. In the spirit of true adventure let us face up to the greatest foe of our age, the lumbering giant of religious schism.

Surely our freedom has a greater design than to make us free to attack and tear one another to pieces. Let those who differ be big and brave enough to meet face to face and settle their differences in an atmosphere of love. Let them respect each other as brethren while they work together to solve their problems of conflict. I pledge myself, herewith, to meet any of my brethren who differ with me, and to do so at any time or place which they suggest and I can arrange. I will pray with them, converse with them, and study with them, in an honest attempt to lessen any tensions, and to narrow the gap that exists between us. I will meet with brethren under any arrangement commensurate with fairness and justice, and I will respect their dignity and rights in our conversations together. I am obligated to "follow after peace and the things wherewith one may edify another." We must find the way to peace or we will all perish!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1961)

Volume 23

The Path of Peace

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The Divine Guarantee

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

It is a manifestation of divine grace that God always accommodates his revelation to man's nature and need. And man, being a creature inclined to doubts and fears, requires assurance in spiritual, as well as in other matters. It was upon this basis that men, in executing contracts and making promises to each other, demanded an oath witnessed by some person or thing greater than themselves. Accordingly, although it was not necessary, God confirmed his promises by an oath. "Among men it is customary to swear by something greater than themselves. And if a statement is confirmed by an oath, that is the end of all quibbling. So in this matter, God, wishing to show beyond doubt that his plan was unchangeable, confirmed it with an oath."

Our eternal hope is conditioned upon our sustaining a proper relationship to God. Surely here, if in any field, for our happiness and peace of mind, we must have a guarantee. We must know that God dwells in us and we in God. This assurance is given by the indwelling Spirit, as John twice affirms in his first epistle. "The man who does obey God's commands lives in God and God lives in him, and the guarantee of his presence within us is the Spirit he has given us" (1 John 3:24). "And as I wrote above, the guarantee of our living in him and his living in us is the share of his own Spirit which he gives us" (1 John 4:13).

It is lack of recognition of the power of the indwelling

Spirit which causes so much distress and disillusionment among members of the community of saints today. Those who regard revelation of God in Christ Jesus as a legalistic arrangement, and who seek to be justified by law can never be certain of their spiritual standing. When asked if they are saved they reply that they hope so, or they are trying to be. There is ever the fear that they do not know as much as they should at the time, or that they are not as good as they ought to be, so they are tormented because of their own frailties and shortcomings. They do not really trust in God but must rely on their own knowledge and strength. They seek to be saved by exercise of their own will power, and not by the power of God's will. Actually, they are trying to earn salvation, and have no way of knowing whether they are paid up to date.

Such a philosophy breeds envy, hatred and strife. Those who embrace it become jealous of each other and when they cannot attain the heights reached by others, they seek to pull them down to their own level. One of the prevalent symptoms of the legalistic heart is an attempt to explain away the indwelling Spirit. Every passage referring to this gracious promise must be glossed over, or made to conform to the cold ritual of "do and don't." It is unthinkable that those who have reduced the hope of salvation to a long, arduous, toilsome climb up a ladder, with the frightened climber holding on by sheer force of will, could ever concede that a Helper has been provided to soothe and sustain from within. Jesus comforted the sorrowing, fearful disciples by promising, "I shall ask the Father to give you someone else to stand by you, to be with you always" (John 14:16 — *J. B. Phillips Translation*). We can only conclude that those who are still sad and frightened do not recognize the "someone else," standing by. So the church is filled with the bickering, backbiting, contention, and strife created by the shriveled spirits of the scared and lonely.

The only way to counteract the sordid condition now existing among the scattered people of God is to recapture the

consciousness of the nearness of the Spirit. The unity we are told to guard and maintain in the bond of peace is “the unity of the Spirit.” Until we regain and employ this vital concept, whatever we achieve will be merely superficial, and the festering wounds healed over will burst forth again in other areas of the body. The appeals to partisan pride and external influence to manifest a semblance of agreement avail nothing except to postpone the day of division. The works of the flesh can only be killed by the Spirit. “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live,” or, as Phillips translates it, “you are on the way to real living.” What are some of the ways in which the Helper assists us to enjoy real living? Let us consider a few of them.

1. Encourages Our Hope

It is neither incidental nor accidental that we have in the midst of the most profound treatise on the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8), an insertion of the topic of hope. The apostle mentions the universal travail of created life, and points out that even those who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, while awaiting that great event when we shall come into the fulness of sonship, and the culmination of the divine adoptive purpose. He says, “We were saved by this hope, but in our moments of impatience let us remember that hope always means waiting for something we haven’t yet got. But if we hope for something we cannot see, then we must settle down to wait for it in patience” (verses 24, 25).

It is a sad commentary upon the quality of our faith that we no longer grow impatient for the culmination of God’s purpose in ourselves. This is not because we have learned patience but because we have become content with our present state. We look upon death as a tragedy. We talk about it in frightened tones. It is regarded as the end, not the means to an end. We think of those who die, not as going home, but as leaving home. Hope is devitalized and weak. We have

substituted stolid endurance for patient waiting.

We have cut the nerve that responds to the call of the beyond. We do not desire to depart and be with Christ. We prefer to remain where we are. The glad expectancy, the vibrant hope, these are no longer characteristic of the Christian, because the Christian character has been altered, affected and amended by contact with the world. "Character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5, 6). The love-filled heart is a product of the Spirit, and the hope which cheers and sustains without disappointment is the result of outpoured love. The Holy Spirit is the funnel through which empty hearts become abundantly enriched, the channel through which hope is kept supplied.

It was, however, to the vacillating Galatians, that Paul wrote a memorable statement in which he connected faith, hope, and the Spirit, and pointed out the significance of each and the relationship of the three. That statement came as the culmination of one of his most poignant arguments, in which he used the two sons of Abraham and their respective mothers, in an allegorical presentation, reaching the conclusion, "So, brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman." He admonishes them to remain free, having been thus born. "Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let your feet be caught again in the shackles of slavery."

He then reasons that those who consent to be circumcised are bound to obey all the rest of the law, and says, "If you try to be justified by the law you automatically cut yourself off from the power of Christ; you put yourself outside the range of his grace." It is at this juncture, the statement occurs, "For through the Spirit by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5). Our hope of righteousness, or justification, is based upon faith which works through love. It is accomplished through the

Spirit. So the apostle asks the question, “Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” (Gal. 2:3) This proves it is possible for man to start with the Spirit and then lapse into dependence upon the flesh. The Galatians did so by reverting to works of the law, and their hope died within them. The same tragedy is being reenacted in our times, and the Holy Spirit is our only hope of renewing our hope!

2. Acts as Intercessor

In the art of communication man is woefully weak. He finds it difficult to transmute abstract ideas into such oral or manual signs as will convey the real significance of his innermost feelings. Many of the gravest problems of our society stem from this inadequacy. We constantly misunderstand each other. Frequently the one who is not understood, only complicates matters when he tries to explain or simplify them. Our literature is rife with accounts of ludicrous, and even tragic situations, which have risen because of such shortcomings.

It is no surprise, then, to realize that there are grave problems in transmission of our inner yearnings to God. We cannot dismiss the matter by glibly quoting, “For your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” It is true that Jesus said this, but he did so in condemnation of the practice of “heaping up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words.” And, in contrast he told the apostles how to pray. It is evident that God wants us to pray, it is just as plain that he does not want our petitions to consist of empty phrases and a meaningless jumble of words. This very fact makes prayer a serious matter, for there is a right and a wrong way for the creature to approach the majestic Creator of the universe.

We do not know the language by which communication is

carried on in heaven, a purely spiritual realm. We do know there is such a language, and that it is not the same as the language spoken by mortals, for Paul conjectures about speaking “in the tongues of men and of angels.” We may be certain in the domain of the infinite there will be no barriers to expression such as we find among finite beings. With all of our growth and development, in communication, there are still deep feelings which are inexpressible. Frequently, it is just such feelings about which we must talk to God.

Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. The Father not only knows what we need before we ask, but also how difficult it is for us to ask for what we need. It is here that the Holy Spirit proves to be our real Helper, by actually becoming an intercessor in our behalf. A word of caution is necessary. We must not confuse an intercessor with a mediator. There is only one mediator, and to become such, he gave himself as a ransom for all. “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). In this same context, however, Paul urges all of us to be intercessors for all men, especially mentioning “kings and all who are in high positions.”

Jesus is both a mediator and an intercessor. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34). We have two divine intercessors— one at the right hand of God in heaven, the other at our own right hand on earth. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26, 27). A study of this pregnant passage will be especially rewarding to the eager analyst. We suggest the following points.

1. It is admitted that we ought to pray, but we do not know how to do so in acceptable fashion and this is to be regarded as a

human weakness.

2. To offset this weakness created by our limited and finite knowledge, a divine Helper has been provided who is not weak or helpless.

3. The human spirit is capable of longings, desires and aspirations, for which social intercourse has not developed adequate vehicles of expression, and thus man is rendered incapable of transmitting these in words. However, “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”

4. God searches the hearts of men. His word is a discernor of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. “And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12, 13). The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts and sustains an intimate personal relationship to the will, reason and conscience of man. God knows the mind of the Spirit, just as the Spirit knows the mind of God. As the Spirit comprehends the thoughts of God and reveals them to men (1 Cor. 2:11), so he also comprehends the thoughts of men and relays (not reveals) them to God.

5. This intercession of the Spirit is only for the saints, the sons of God, since the Spirit dwells only in the hearts of those who are sons (Gal. 4:6).

6. The intercession in behalf of the saints is in conformity with the will of God. There are two phrases in this context which should humble us and make us rejoice. “For we do not know how” and “the Spirit intercedes according to the will of God.”

We do not know it all. We are weak and helpless. We cannot even express our own deep longings. We need help to approach God as we ought. The Holy Spirit is the invisible living link between the heart of man and the mind of God. “We do not know.” “He knows what is the mind of the Spirit.” If any consideration on earth would motivate one to be a saint, surely

this would do so. How pitiable and poverty-stricken are the hearts in which the Spirit has not made his home.

3. Guarantee of Inheritance

Our present status is that of heirs. As children of God, we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. An heir must live in hope. His is an attitude of expectancy. Since we cannot realize our heritage in its fulness so long as we dwell in clay tabernacles, God has given us a guarantee that He will eventually fulfill all of His promises respecting sonship in its fulness. This is evident in a thrilling passage filled with a wealth of meditative material, contained in Ephesians 1:13, 14. After speaking of those who first trusted in Christ, he continues.

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

1. The sequence of events cited is interesting. First, the gospel of salvation was proclaimed, for it is stated that they heard it. The gospel is identified as the word of truth. The gospel is the good news concerning a person, Jesus Christ, and it is affirmed that after hearing this good news they trusted in Christ.

2. The holy Spirit was not given to make believers of them. The good news was proclaimed to achieve that result. After they believed they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.

3. The holy Spirit was given as an earnest, or guarantee, of the inheritance. An earnest is not a down payment. When one engaged in a real estate transaction puts up earnest money, that is not of itself a down payment, although it may be so applied when the contract is fully executed. But an earnest is a pledge or

guarantee of good faith or sincerity of intention. The holy Spirit is not a down payment on eternal life. He is given as a guarantee that God will fulfill His promise or covenant.

4. We cannot receive the inheritance “until the redemption of the purchased possession.” There is something which God has purchased, and now possesses, but it has not yet been redeemed, and the inheritance cannot be realized until it is redeemed. By the death of Jesus, our spirits were redeemed and our bodies were purchased. That these latter were not redeemed is proved by the fact that we must all die. It is still appointed unto men once to die. Because our spirits have been redeemed we need not experience the second death. “He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. 2:11). But because our bodies have not been redeemed we must experience physical death.

That our bodies have been bought and are now possessed as a dwelling place of Deity is established by 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his.”

5. The redemption of the purchased possession will be “unto the praise of his glory.” This expression occurs three times in the chapter, in verses 6, 12, 14. In the last instance it indicates the result when the work of God is consummated by our arrival at the fulness of sonship. God’s purpose as it relates to us will have been realized in its ultimate degree.

6. How do we know that the redemption of the purchased possession is the redemption of the body by its arrival at a state of incorruption and immortality? The answer is found in Romans 8:22, 23, which we here quote from J. B. Phillips’ translation. “It is plain to anyone with eyes to see that at the present time all created life groans in a sort of universal travail. And it is plain, too, that we who have a foretaste of the Spirit are

in a state of painful tension, while we wait for that redemption of our bodies which will mean that at last we have realized our sonship in him.”

The body, while unredeemed, is flesh and blood. Such a body is not adapted to an eternal state, therefore, is incapable of receiving the inheritance until it is changed, or redeemed from death. “For I assure you, my brothers, it is utterly impossible for flesh and blood to possess the kingdom of God. The transitory could never possess the everlasting” (1 Cor. 15:50). The redemption of the body will result in a great change or transformation. “For this perishable nature of ours must be wrapped in imperishability; these bodies which are mortal must be wrapped in immortality. So when the perishable is lost in the imperishable, the mortal lost in the immortal, this saying will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory.”

After we demonstrate our belief and trust in Jesus, through response to the gospel, the Spirit is given us as a guarantee that eternal life will be inherited when our bodies are redeemed from the clutch of death. “He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:22). “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 5:5). “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

4. Produces Fruit of Holiness

In the wonderful Galatian letter which contains a gripping description of the conflict which rages between the flesh and Spirit, the apostle presents in one brief compass a catalogue of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. He asserts in positive language that the works of the flesh debar from kingdom inheritance. As he had previously warned, he continues to warn against indulgence in immorality, “idolatry, sorcery,

enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like.”

When he turns to the fruits of the Spirit, he asserts that no law exists against these. Neither God nor man ever had to enact legislation to curb them. It is noteworthy, that these things are products of the Holy Spirit. They are not merely the result of our own resolution, determination or will power. They come about, not so much because of what is in us, as they do because of who is in us. These fruits are produced in and through us, rather than by us. Our responsibility requires full commitment unto God, that is, an unreserved surrender of our personality. The Spirit is then able through such an agent to produce the fruits of righteousness.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Study this list carefully. It contains all of those qualities so essential to the congregation of saints, and yet so frequently lacking. Many groups of believers have compiled an unenviable history of continued bickering and contention. Each new generation has been bequeathed a heritage of animosity, and peace never reigns. Is this not indicative of a quenching of the Spirit? Where hate, anger and strife have taken the place of love, joy, and peace, is it not evident that flesh has triumphed over the aggrieved Spirit? Does not the existence in many areas of two or more congregations, each professing to be the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and each assailing the others in open combat, bear eloquent testimony that the Holy Spirit is not in control of the hearts of men?

We should realize now that we are not going to be saved eternally by having the “right name” over the door of a meetinghouse, but by making our hearts the dwelling place of the Spirit. What good will it do us on earth to add to the heavy freight of division and strife under which the burdened world groans, if we lose our right to heaven? Ask yourself what the

congregation of which you are a member has ever contributed to alleviation of universal misery? What has really been accomplished towards a transformation of the sin-cursed earth? Many congregations, proud and arrogant in their own self-righteousness, and mistaking their narrow exclusivism for loyalty to God, are not even known outside their own environs, and even there have earned the disrespect of those who know them best because of their attitude toward others. This is the result of the legalistic philosophy which has been palmed off on the ignorant and indifferent as “the faith once delivered to the saints.” It is the fruition of the party spirit which chokes out like tares the effect of the Holy Spirit.

More than anything else, the members of the church of God today need to repent. They need to view with remorse the wreckage with which they have bestrewn the path of their existence; they need to humble themselves, and upon bended knee confess their sin of division and that of their fathers. They need to implore the Holy Spirit to once again fill chastened and trembling hearts, and in this new attitude to go forth conquering, and to conquer. Perhaps we need once more to hold such a prayer gathering as characterized the young church in Jerusalem. “When they had prayed their meeting-place was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God fearlessly.” The Spirit is the key to our problems.

Unity in Diversity

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

John, the apostle of love, was present at Golgotha, when Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. He tells of the disposition of the meager effects of the condemned man by the soldiers. "When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier. But his tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said one to another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.'" This selfish solicitude of the enemies of Jesus in behalf of a physical garment, is in contrast with the attitude of his friends toward the robe of love intended to enfold his spiritual body. The fabric of charity has been rent and torn by the rude hands of those who claim to love him.

So long have we advocated division, in the mistaken view that by such a means could purity be achieved, we have allowed our consciences to become seared and our hearts to become insensitive and numbed, until a plea for unity and brotherhood falls upon deaf ears. Our Lord has delayed his coming, and we have arisen and begun to smite our fellowservants. Many are so cold and calloused that they look with jaundiced eye and prejudiced mind upon any attempt at peacemaking. They have been conditioned to think in terms of suspicion and hate. They resent those who would pluck up the thorns and briers of partisan animosity. I have long wondered how the seed of our contemporary schismatic thought took such firm root in our

hearts at first. Believers in Christ could hardly be more divided if they had been commanded to do so.

As our longing hearts turn toward thoughts of “fellowship in the Spirit” we find it necessary to completely restudy the question of unity. That unity is a desirable goal is universally admitted. That it is superior to schism no one even questions. But the nature of the unity toward which we should strive, and the means of attaining it when its nature has been established; these present grave issues to the concerned ones.

It should probably be recognized that there are some who are not interested in working toward unity. Many of these are discouraged and see no prospect of ever bettering the complex situation, so have resigned themselves to defence of the status quo. Others are partisan and fear that the faction, which they equate with the body of Christ, will lose its identity if they develop a wider vision, so they circumscribe the narrow confine beyond which they refuse to look. By closing their ears to any divergent expression they bask in the security created by the walls they have erected, forgetting that while they shut others out, by the same action they shut themselves in.

But there are growing signs of spiritual awakening. Many who were bitter, even a few months ago, under the gentle influence of the Spirit, are beginning to see the purpose of God with new eyes. Hearts are being warmed and tendered. Men are being made ready for the great crusade which lies ahead of us. They are losing their fear of reprisals from shortsighted men and declaring the good news of peace on earth with aroused fervor. All such must sooner or later confront personally the question of the nature of the unity for which we labor. At intervals, in the months past, we have been suggesting that “the unity of the Spirit” is not agreement on matters of opinion or interpretation, but is a “unity of diversity.”

DETECTING A FALLACY

Some of those who have jumped on this phrase with an alacrity which they do not exhibit in other phases of spiritual activity, have accused us of compromise, surrender to the enemy, fraternization with the forces of evil, and traitorous conduct in the army of our absent King. We are persuaded that these brethren who would rejoice to see our pen silenced forever, if it cannot be used for party promotion, do not know whereof they speak, nor what they affirm. The truth is that there is just no other unity obtainable by free men, and, as far as I am personally concerned, no other that is desirable, since any other would demand a surrender of liberty and make us mere pawns of a system, or of the men who control such systems.

It is unwisely objected by some that there can be no such thing as “unity of diversity.” They argue that if there is unity there can be no diversity, and to the extent that diversity exists there is no unity. Of course, the fallacy in this lies in their confusing unity with conformity. Even Francis Bacon, who died as far back as 1626, knew better, for he wrote: “These be two things— unity and conformity.” It is a tragic error to try and make them the same. Actually, unity in practically any area, is a state of oneness achieved by varied and divergent elements. Let us consider a few examples to illustrate this point.

COMMON EXAMPLES

1. *Music.* Harmony is from the Greek *harmonia*, proportion, concord. This came from *harmos*, a fitting. It is easy to see how this came to refer to the adaptation of musical tones to each other, resulting in agreement of those parts in a composition. In vocal music we speak of those who sing *different parts*. Not all voices are alike, nor, in order to produce harmony is it necessary for all to even speak the same words at the same time. The harmonious arrangement lies in adapting the diverse

parts in such a manner as to produce unity of effect.

This is no less true in instrumental music. The word “symphony” is from the Greek *syn*, with; to which is added the word *phone*, a sound. A symphony orchestra is not composed of people who all play on the same instrument. They do not all strike the same note on their diverse instruments. They achieve harmony by playing in concert the notes which complement each other. The Greek writers like Plato and Aristotle used the word *Symphoneo* to express the idea of sounding together. It referred to being in accord, as opposed to discord. A symphony orchestra is an example of unity in diversity as regards players, instruments and tones.

2. *Planetary system.* Our scientific explorations and discoveries of recent years have revealed unto us the great differences in size, shape, speed and power of attraction in the celestial bodies. The Milky Way we see represents a galaxy containing millions of planets majestically rotating through space. Beyond the field of unaided vision are countless other galaxies. In spite of all the variations, these maintain such uniformity of movement that Aristotle referred to “the music of the spheres,” using the word *symphonia* for “music.” The heavens declare the glory of God and a part of that glory is revealed in a demonstration of unity in diversity.

3. *Human body.* This is a figure used by the apostle to illustrate the church of God. Its appropriateness for his purpose lies in the very thing we are discussing. It is precisely because “all members have not the same function” that they are exhorted to labor in unity for the good of all. The foot is not the hand, the eye is not the ear. They do not conform to each other and if they did it would be ruinous. “If all were a single organ, where would the body be?” (1 Cor. 12:19). It is admitted that some parts of the body are weaker (1 Cor. 12:22), less honorable and unpresentable (verse 23), and inferior (verse 24). Their unity lies in an adjustment which eliminates discord. “But God has so

adjusted the body . . . that there may be no discord in the body” (verses 24, 25). All who saw the electronic computers which hastened news of election trends realize what unity there is in the harmonious functioning of diverse parts. This was true “machine-like precision.”

4. *Spiritual gifts.* The congregation at Corinth was not “lacking in any spiritual gift” (1 Cor. 1:7). But there was “jealousy and strife among them” (1 Cor. 3:3) and the apostle has to write them regulating the employment of these gifts. His whole purpose was to achieve unity, and his thesis was “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). He recognized the diversity of gifts. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of servings but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but the same God who inspires them all in every one.” There was diversity in gifts, service and working, but there was unity in origin—the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God! Here is the basis and source of all unity. We have tried to secure the same gifts, service and working, but there is a variety in these. They are divergent! Just as there were varieties of spiritual gifts then, there are varieties of natural gifts now, but we expect every one to have the gift of knowledge, and in the exact proportion as we have it. Those who do not, and who cannot see every point as we do are ostracized and excommunicated! It was this very spirit Paul condemned at Corinth. His plea was for unity in diversity — not for abject and rigid conformity!

5. *The body of Christ.* There is one body. It is composed of many members. These are to synchronize their efforts. They are to work together for the common good. They differ in many respects. They are divergent in degree of knowledge, intellectual ability, talent, skill and function. In the spiritual family, as in the earthly, there are babies, children, young men and fathers. All have not attained the same growth. These entertain varied opinions. If they did not, the fourteenth chapter of Romans would be useless. It begins with the admonition, “As for the man

who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.” We dispute over matters about which we disagree, but such disputes are forbidden in the realm of opinion. Here tolerance and forbearance are enjoined. This is positive proof that the unity which Paul enjoins does not entail agreement in matters of opinion. The unity lies in the fact that although we entertain different views about eating meats, observing days, etc., “we are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:8).

We are not to demand conformity to our opinions upon the part of others, but, “The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God” (verse 22). It is not required that we all believe alike about everything, for it is plainly stated, “One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables” (verse 2). But it is required that we all love each other in spite of our variety of views, and that we esteem brotherhood more highly than our personal preferences. “If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love” (verse 15). “Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ” (1 Cor. 8:12).

THE PARTY SPIRIT

Our critics, by their own practice, bear witness to the truth of our contention. They do not agree with each other upon every matter; they violently disagree upon some things, even how to treat us! The degree of unity they do possess is one of diversity. It is not a question of whether they must agree upon all points, for they do not. The only question is which matters they will arbitrarily decide upon as grounds for division between themselves and other brethren. It is here the party spirit is manifested. Each faction is segregated from the others because of emphasis upon some specific issue, or a multiple of issues. This becomes the criterion of faithfulness or loyalty. A faithful church is one which is “lined up” on the divisive issue. It is the

rallying ground for bitter partisans. It is the measuring reed by which all must be judged.

The party may oppose individual cups and Bible classes. If so, there must be conformity upon these two matters. Those who oppose cups and classes may disagree about a hundred other things, but they will not divide over them. They are not elevated to a test of fellowship. They do not constitute valid articles in the unwritten creed. On the other hand, if a man is vociferous in opposition to cups and classes, he can do practically anything and be retained in the party as a member in good standing. His speech, attitude and behavior may be intemperate and unbecoming. His personal habits may be revolting and his conduct be boorish and insulting, but he will be recognized and accepted because he passes the test. He can be called upon to lead in prayer, while one who honestly holds a different view about cups and classes will be given the “deep freeze” treatment, although his life may be a credit to the lives of some of those who refuse to regard him as a brother. The unity of the party is one of diversity in every avenue except the party creed. Here conformity is enforced, or the non-conformist is considered to be out of Christ, because he is not allowed in the faction.

All who profess to believe in any unity except that which respects diversity in opinion, are inconsistent. They violate their own announced position “at sundry times and in divers manners.” Any other unity would demand perfect knowledge of all who participate. Yet, none of these claim to possess infallible judgment. All of them oppose the pope because he makes such a claim. It is amazing how men who possess rational ability can allow themselves to be so “brain washed” as to ignore even the factors in their own lives which demonstrate the fallacies in their contention. There is not one congregation on this earth where all of the members agree upon every point of interpretation. There are no two preachers in the world who see everything alike. What unity they have is one of diversity, and there will never be any other kind where human beings are involved. Those who

contend for any other are actually sowing the seed of strife and discord. They are apostles of division and disciples of schism!

In the pursuit of that unity which should be the goal of every saint of God, we must first lay a foundation. We believe that such a foundation must possess two parts. It must be based upon the supreme, absolute and sole authority of the word of God, and upon the inalienable right of private and individual judgment. Any union or association of believers which ignores or negates either of these factors is doomed to failure before it starts. To draw up any compact or agreement, regardless of how sincere the intentions of those who produce it, or how well written it may be, if it sets aside these two considerations, it can only generate dissension while it is in force, and culminate in eventual dissolution.

The Bible contains a revelation from God. It is the repository of the living oracles, and these are divine in origin. The authority of this revelation must be supreme in every area which it covers. It is the right and duty of every human being who is a subject of that revelation to read and study it, and thus to familiarize himself with its content. It is equally his duty to read with a view of understanding and grasping the significance of what God has spoken, and to follow his convictions of the requirements contained in it. This obligation, stemming as it does from our relationship to God, cannot be legislated out of existence by human power, nor transferred to others by any individual.

We are responsible before God as individuals. Thus do we die, and thus we shall be judged. God will open up the books and each of us will be “judged out of the things written in the books.” We will not be held accountable for the ideas, interpretations, or opinions of others as to the implication of what is written. We will not be answerable for the conclusions reached by any other person. No one will be held accountable for that which he disavows. Our views of the will of God, and our

implementation of it in our lives, must be the result of personal convictions derived from the Bible. If we act solely upon the basis of what others have discovered, and mechanically conform to their findings, our service is mere formalism, or impious deception and hypocrisy.

God demands no other worship from us than that which commends itself to our heart and conscience as being His will. We dare not act contrary to conviction, nor proceed in such a manner as to violate conscience. We are responsible for the nature of our obedience, as well as for our disobedience. Our worship must be an expression of our personal love for God, and this love requires us to search the scriptures to ascertain the will of God, and to implement it in our lives in such a manner that our heart condemn us not.

Any attempt to secure unity based upon any other authority than the revelation of God is absurd. What good would be achieved by uniting with others, if in the process, we severed ourselves from God? But, by the same token, any proposal for unity which denies the sovereign and inalienable right of each accountable being to approach God's truth for himself without the intervention of human priest or intermediary, will serve only to enslave conscience and divide men into warring camps. Such coercion of thought and compulsion of conscience is the first step toward Rome. It is a denial of the basic tenet of the Reformation.

But any unity which preserves these sacred and inherent rights must be one of diversity, not of uniformity or conformity. It cannot be the unity of Rome which abrogates the right of individual conscience and reduces man to subservience to an earthly cult of priestcraft. It must not be the unity of the strait jacket or of the stocks, for this is degrading and demoralizing to the human spirit. When we substitute submission to human authority for personal investigation of truth, and prevent difference of opinion by allowing no opinion at all, we take a leaf

from the book of atheistic Communism, and make of the church of God a collection of puerile pawns and performing puppets.

We believe that unity which is revealed in the Bible is based on “the common faith,” the belief held by all of us that God revealed Himself in Christ, and that it is only in Christ we can implement the divine purpose on earth. Having been baptized into Christ and having thus put on Christ, we are united, being knit together in love. This unity allows for diversity in knowledge, ability, service and conviction. It recognizes that there will be divergent opinions and provides restraint from imposing these upon others. In Christ, one may believe one thing, another who is weak may dissent. Neither may judge the other, neither may set at nought his brother. We do not seek to iron out our differences in order to become brethren, but, being brethren, we seek to eliminate our differences in love and respect for each other.

There can be no unity which does not allow for diversity of opinion. This was the nature of the unity of the early church. The saints of that age had many problems of greater significance than those which now trouble and disturb us, but they welcomed each other as Christ had welcomed them. Our opposers are living proof of the correctness of our thesis, for while denying that there can be unity in diversity, they practice it. It is only by tolerance of their divergent views and variant ideas that they are able to unite long enough to oppose us.

We need once again to recapture the meaning of the sovereign authority of the word of God in our lives, and to restore the inalienable right of every man to approach the Book and sincerely to formulate convictions based upon an understanding of its demands upon individual life. Then, if we will discuss our divergent views in love, respecting those who dissent as children of God, and not seek to enforce upon them our conclusions, we will at last be demonstrating that degree of spiritual maturity essential to enable us to solve the problem of

disunity, which is actually rooted in immaturity. “But, I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but . . . as babes in Christ . . . For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh?” (1 Cor. 3:1, 3).

Members of One Body

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

“Sound speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 1:8). “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me” (2 Tim. 1:13).

Speech is the highest, although not the only form of communication between rational beings. Man is a gregarious creature; that is, he flocks together with his kind. Because, by nature, he is social, he requires a medium of exchange on the intellectual level. Speech provides that medium and words constitute its currency. But, as in the economic realm the value of currency fluctuates, so it is with the significance of words. They may suffer from inflation, or undue discount.

God adapts his revelation to the needs of mankind and presents it in a form calculated to appeal to a rational being. Thus he employs human language which, in its inception was a divine gift, as the vehicle for conveying divine thoughts. Recognizing the value of a sound currency, he enjoins that sound speech or sound words be maintained. A sound dollar is one that is valued according to the original standard of accepted bullion on which it was issued. Sound spiritual words are those which convey the same values as when originally minted by the Holy Spirit. The value of a word is reckoned by the impression made upon the mind of one with whom it is deposited.

The currency of a nation can be corrupted. This may be done by counterfeiting or by inflation. In the former there is a substitute of the spurious for the genuine. In the latter, the specie is not altered or amended, but loses its power for purchase. Thus, one may have a dollar issued by proper authority which will not be sound. The same holds true with the words of the Spirit. One can substitute other terms for them, or he can inflate them until they are worthless. In either case, he no longer has “sound words.” A word maintains its value when its significance is equal to its original intent; that is, when there is a harmonious relation between it and the truth it is intended to express or convey.

This will serve to introduce a theme worthy of examination and note by the earnest student of the sacred oracles. It is a rule of the Spirit that when God’s people are designated in the aggregate, or en masse, the terms used to describe the individuals must correspond in relationship to those used to designate them in their totality. If they are called a flock, the individuals are called sheep; if a house, they are called stones; if an army, they are called soldiers; if a kingdom, they are called citizens. God never indulges in such incongruity as to speak of a flock of soldiers, an army of stones, or a house composed of citizens. The family is composed of children, or sons, because of this congruity of language.

So apparent is this fact that many will consider it a waste of time and space to mention it at all, and indeed it would be except for the fact that in one important analogy the rule is completely ignored, as if the Holy Spirit, in this instance, had scrapped the appropriateness of language. I refer to the word “church.” This is a common noun used in a collective sense. Ask the average person what designation is given individually to those who compose it, and he will invariably reply “members.” So habitual is the expression “members of the church,” so sanctified is it by traditional usage, it will come as a distinct shock to many brethren to realize that it is never so used by the

Spirit, and for the very good reason that it is not sound speech.

To call such matters to the attention of the average careless student in these days will earn for him who does so the scorn and ridicule employed by shallow thinkers to mask their ignorance. Yet, there are many who are eager and sincere in their desire to know the will of God more perfectly, and it is to such we address our remarks. It is hopeless to reason with the indifferent and the callous. If this were a mere quibble about words we would not waste precious space to mention it, but a serious principle is involved which has shaded the thinking of many as to the nature of the church of God.

Organization or Organism

Men regard the church as an organization. They speak of “membership” in it in the same sense as they do a farm bureau, lodge, or social welfare agency. Just as one joins one or more of these organizations by performing certain initiatory requirements, it is believed that he becomes a “member of the church” in such fashion. “A church member,” then, is one who belongs to a religious institution, called the church. He feels obligated to pay his dues and to furnish his just share of the finance to sustain the organization. In turn, he expects, and may demand, certain benefits as a result of his membership. If he becomes disgruntled with the local management, he can quit, and he resents any of the other “members” telling him that he cannot. He has no particular sense of responsibility to them. He cannot see why his personal choice should be any of their business. He is content to allow affairs to be run by certain ones whom he calls “the officers,” and feels that he has discharged his duty when he attends the stated meetings of the organization and contributes his share of the finance. He looks at “membership in the church” as he would membership in a mutual insurance company. He is to receive certain benefits or dividends from belonging, and be assured of protection at death.

Perhaps no other philosophy in our day has done so much to render the church ineffective and sterile. So long as men are governed by this kind of thinking, they will miss the very spirit of the community of saints. This fuzzy, wooly rationalization strikes at the heart of “the fellowship of the Spirit.” It is detrimental and deceptive. It is noteworthy that every time the Holy Spirit uses the word “member” it is in connection with the term “body.” It is never employed in conjunction with any other noun expressing the totality of the saved ones. The body of Christ is not an organization. It is an organism. It is a living, growing, vital entity, pulsating and throbbing with the life of the Spirit. By that Spirit all who are members were immersed into the one body; of that Spirit all the members freely drink or imbibe (1 Cor. 12:13). They are both introduced into the body, and sustained in it, by the Spirit. What are the implications of this great truth?

Reasons for the Figure

To answer this question, we must know why the apostle uses the human body as a figure of the covenantal community of saints. A study of his reasoning will reveal the following salient facts:

1. The human body is a living organism depending upon its head for guidance and direction in every phase of existence.
2. It is a divine creation in which all of the members are specially adapted to perform certain functions contributing to the wellbeing of the whole. God set the members in the body as it pleased him.
3. It is the best illustration known to man of the harmonious relationship of divergent functions; thus, is a portrayal of unity in diversity.

4. It is an exemplification of complete inter-dependence and mutuality of service on the part of many members, each ministering to the needs of all the others.

5. It is an apt demonstration of the reciprocal attitude in joy and suffering essential to the cultivation of a proper relationship in the spiritual body to offset schisms.

Areas of Difference

The lesser can never adequately represent the greater, nor the inferior fully correspond to the superior. The physical must, by nature, fall short of the spiritual. Thus, there are aspects of the body of Christ which cannot be illustrated by the body of man. To attempt to stretch an analogy to cover all phases of a subject is to be guilty of a fallacy which is all too common. Consider these facts:

1. In the physical body many of its members are remotely and indirectly joined to the head. They sustain a relationship to the head only through other members. A toe is joined to the foot, which is joined to the leg, which is joined to the trunk, which is joined to the neck, which is connected with the head. In the spiritual body, each member is directly in contact with the head, with no intermediary between. In the physical body many members are joined to the head only because they are united with other members; in the spiritual body all of the members are joined to each other because they are united with the head.

2. In the human body, all of the members are present at birth, or inception, These grow and develop in size and skill, but no new organs, or members, are added. The body is static as regards the number of members, and progressive only as pertains to their increasing functional ability. In the spiritual body perfection in membership is an ideal, never to be fully attained until the Lord comes. New members are constantly

being added, so the spiritual body is static as regards the number and variety of functions, but progressive as respects the number of members. New members were added daily after the inception of the body of Christ.

3. In the physical body, when the members die, the body suffers dissolution, but in the body of Christ the functions are maintained from one generation to another by continuous replacement of members with diversified natural gifts. The body is self-perpetuating by addition of members, or organic functionaries.

Member Relationships

Members of the body sustain two spiritual relationships, a primary and a secondary, with the latter growing out of the former. The primary relationship is established by covenant. It is individual and personal. It is created by proper response to the divine call and is the result of unreserved surrender and complete commitment of the entire personality to Jesus the Christ. This acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus establishes him as head in all things in the life of the person, thus transferring such person from the status of sinner to that of saint. It must be observed that it is not sufficient to accept Jesus as Saviour, a divine function related to sin and its forgiveness; but there must be an acknowledgment of lordship, or headship, a submission to divine rule related to righteousness and service. To regard Jesus merely as a Saviour is a selfish appropriation of divine grace; to regard him as Lord is an unselfish dedication to divine service. In the first, one merely accepts what heaven offers to him; in the second he offers to heaven all that he has and is. One is no good without the other. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He made him *both* Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). By his function as a Saviour he created the body; by his function as head he regulates and governs it in the accomplishment of the eternal purpose.

The primary relationship is, therefore, one of the member to the head. The life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). It is not the member who lives, but it is Christ who lives in him (Gal. 2:20). Life is sustained only through contact with the source of life. It is attachment to the head, not to the other members, that makes spiritual existence possible and real. The body is not the Saviour. "He is the head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the body." But while the body cannot save, one cannot be saved outside the body. It is the body that will be saved and one who is detached from it has no promise of salvation. There is no provision for a "lone wolf" philosophy in God's program. The apostolic message was declared to establish a fellowship of the redeemed person with God and Christ, but also assures that "we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7).

This introduces the secondary relationship, that of the members to each other. It is expressed in the phrase "members one of another" (Romans 12:5). This is not a mere reciprocal feeling of the members of a local congregation to each other. Neither is it an inter-relationship of local congregations. The constituents of the body of Christ are not congregations at all. One of the gravest misconceptions of our age is that the body is made up of congregations, that it is the sum total of all the congregations of a given faith and order. This leads to the mistaken idea that no one is a member of the body unless he is attached to a local congregation receiving our endorsement or support. One is a member of the body before he is attached to a local congregation. No one is immersed into a local congregation, but "by one Spirit are we all immersed into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). One becomes a member of the body by an act of God; he becomes an affiliate of a local congregation by his own act. The members of a local congregation can receive or reject one who applies for association with them; only God can add or sever a member as relates to the body.

Congregations are not so much essential to the being, as to the wellbeing of the body. The congregational system is a

provision of divine wisdom for the government, discipline and development of the members of the body in a given locality. It provides for orderly training and equipping the children of God. The very word “congregation” signifies a gathering. But when persecution, or some other catastrophe, disrupts and destroys the local unit, those who are scattered abroad are no less members of the body than when they congregated in orderly procedure.

This in no sense minimizes the worth and value of the congregation. He who does that impugns the divine wisdom and impeaches the arrangement of heaven. But the body is not composed of congregations. It is composed of members! Congregations are organizations of disciples for implementation of God’s purpose. The divine organism is made up of many members, set in the body as it pleases God. The Ethiopian eunuch was a member of the body when he was immersed, although the Holy Spirit immediately caught away the only other member of the body whom he knew. Whether he was ever affiliated with a local congregation, we have no way of knowing. Certainly as a sheep of God, he would join the flock, if one existed in his area.

The relationship of members of the body is as universal as discipleship. It is unaffected by geographical lines, differences in race, color, social status, or degrees in educational or intellectual attainment. It is not a horizontal, but a vertical relationship. The tie that binds does not run on a line from one heart to another, but from each heart up to Christ. Our relationship is established through Him. We were not drawn together, but we came together because we were drawn unto Him. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” No fellowship can long be maintained on a horizontal basis, for the divergent backgrounds, experiences, attitudes, temperaments and dispositions will create frictions which burn through and dissolve the bond of unison. Only a vertical fellowship can be sustained, for if each is joined to Jesus directly, and through

Jesus to his brethren, he must first sever himself from Jesus in order to be divided from any other member of the body. No one under the motivation of the Holy Spirit can ever tolerate the thought of being separated from any other member of the body. “These are they which set up divisions, worldly men, devoid of the Spirit.” Those who create or condone division are carnal and walk as ordinary men. Those who defend and apologize for schisms among brethren do despise to the Spirit of God.

I am an integral part of a society of the redeemed. Every person on earth who has been reconciled unto God is a participant. Everyone who has been received of God is a part of the brotherhood. None of these has been received on the basis of perfection in knowledge, conduct, or character. All are frail, weak, and erring mortals. Their claim to membership in the body is a response to the call of God, and commitment to the divine ideal. They have not yet attained, they are merely striving toward the mark. With their sins remitted by God and their lives committed to God, they are partners in the furtherance of the divine purpose on earth, and are inter-related with every other such consecrated and sanctified human instrument. It will help us to realize that none of us has “arrived.” The body is made up of those who are on the way because they are in Him who is “the way.”

Forgetting The Head

We are not in Christ because we belong to the church; we are in the church because we belong to Christ. “Ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” We are not dues paying members of an organization, but vital, integral parts of an organism. The church is composed of the people of God. These constitute the body of Christ. It is because we are organically connected with him as the head that we are, in the aggregate, his body. “Now you are together the body of Christ, and individually are members of him” (1 Cor. 12:27). Every saved person on this

earth is a member of the divine organism, attached to it by the indwelling Spirit. Such membership is not the result of being received by other members, but of being received by Christ. He does not promise to accept those whom we receive, but we are admonished to receive those whom he accepts. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

Many of our problems arise from the pride and ambition of men who seek unwittingly to displace the head, and snatch the prerogatives which are his. In every age there are those who would "lord it over the heritage of God." These elevate their opinions, views, and interpretations into a legalistic code and seek to bind that code upon the remainder of the body. All such persons would do well to analyze their behavior in the light of the remarkable disclosures in Colossians, chapter two. This portion of sacred scripture has a definite protective purpose. "I write like this to prevent you from being led astray by someone or other's attractive arguments" (verse 4).

The apostle continues. "Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense. Such stuff is at best founded on men's ideas of the nature of the world, and disregards Christ; . . . your own completeness is only realized in him, who is the authority over all authorities, and the supreme power over all powers" (verses 8-10). After showing the majestic accomplishments of Jesus in our behalf, he says, "In view of these tremendous facts, don't let anyone worry you by criticizing what you eat or drink, or what holy days you ought to observe, or bothering you over new moons or Sabbaths. All these have at most only a symbolical value: the solid fact is Christ" (verses 16, 17). How often the body has been worried and bothered by criticism of those who would elevate their personal scruples to the realm of dogma. The spiritual domain has frequently been made the arena for fierce disputes over food and days, until it would appear that Jesus died for a diet kitchen or vitamin dispensary, and the good news to be heralded was about

food supplements.

There are ever among us those who would rob us of the vitality of the Christian way by advocating the ascetic life. They feel that a long face denotes a pure heart; and that he who frowns is faithful. These purveyors of gloom who think that the flower of spiritual existence thrives best in the dark interior of a monastery, encourage what they describe as humility. They actually take a fierce pride in being humble. The apostle writes, “Nor let any man cheat you of your joy in Christ by persuading you to make yourself ‘humble’ and fall down and worship angels” (verse 18). He then describes the real reason for such critics and troublers.

“Such a man, inflated by an unspiritual imagination, is pushing his way into matters he knows nothing about, and in his cleverness forgetting the head. It is from the head alone that the body, by natural channels, is nourished and built up and grows according to God’s laws of growth.” Troubles are caused often by those who push their way into things about which they know nothing. In many instances, it is not essential to know about such things. They contribute not one whit to spiritual betterment. But, it is significant that those who intrude into such disturbing and controversial fields do so because they “forget the head.” They cease to take directions, and begin giving them. They do not obey laws, they make them! They want not to be led, but to be leaders. They know the body is one, and they propose to be *the one!*

“The head alone.” God has a law of spiritual growth. He who created nature and established natural laws of development and reproduction has not left the spiritual body to grow in haphazard fashion. Growth is according to divine formula. The body is nourished, grows up, and is strengthened from “the head alone.” It is not my relationship to other men and women which provides for growth, but my relationship to the head. Others may help me, or they may discourage me. But my development

is the result of my connection with the head. Before my foot can function the message must be relayed through other members of my body. If there is a nerve block in another member, my foot, although perfectly sound in itself, is paralyzed. But the message of heaven need not pass through another member to reach me. I am joined to the head, as directly as any other member. There is no human intermediary between me and my God. The Holy Spirit does not link me with God through someone else. If, therefore, I do not grow, I cannot blame the body nor any other member. The only reason I do not grow is because I have personally neglected or violated God's laws.

Men sometime become so clever they "forget the head." It is a common saying that a person noted for lack of memory would forget his head "if it were not fastened on him." This is true in the spiritual domain. Men become so engrossed in their theories, ideas and programs for expansion, that they "forget the head." This is a day of promotion and propaganda. Religion takes its cue from "Big Business." If a huckstering program will sell soap chips or automobiles, it is reasoned that it will sell the gospel. "Church membership" can be built up by the hard sell. If we can get a clever television program, an attention-arresting display advertisement in a national magazine, or a hot-shot radio appeal, we will grow and increase.

We overlook the fact that the body "increaseth with the increase of God." It may be one thing to increase "church membership" figures, and a wholly different thing to make "increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." The word of God knows nothing about persuading men and women to join the church, or enroll as members of it! This is what transpires when men in their cleverness forget the head. We have clever men in these days! *Their stuff is at best founded on men's ideas of the world.* The body of Christ does not grow like an insurance company. It is not increased like the sale of deodorant or cough syrup!

Total Commitment

To be in Christ is to be a member of his body. All who are in him are members of the body; all the members of the body are in him. This means more than having one's name on the roster or register, or being a mere statistic in a card file. It means, in a very real and genuine sense, that one is an organ or limb in the body of Christ. Whatever else this relationship implies, we may be certain it includes three things. Let us think about them soberly and seriously.

1. *Dependence upon Christ.* All religion grows out of a sense of dependence. Man realizes the futility of his own life and recognizes a void or emptiness that cannot be satisfied by any material blessing. The Christian religion answers the longing of the human heart and supplies its need through Jesus. Man does not find God, but God finds man. We cannot come to Him unless he first comes to us. The greatest fact of history is that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." In Jesus dwelt the fulness of Godhood, or Deity, in a body. Of that fulness we have received and are, therefore, complete in Him. He is our atonement, our reconciliation, our mediator and intercessor. He is our peace. He is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

To be cut off from Christ is to be severed from the source of life. Just as an arm when amputated must die and cannot live of itself, so a person who does not sustain an organic connection with Jesus is dead. The life is not in the arm. If it were, the arm could live as well after surgical removal as before. The life is in the union or fellowship inherent in the body where the source of life is contacted. Any theory of spiritual existence which does not proceed upon the principle of personal and vital relationship to Jesus is false and misleading. "In him was life and the life was the light of men." He rightly declares, "For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

2. *Subjection to his will.* The great passage which asserts the headship of Jesus over all things to the church, which is his body, is but the climax of a majestic power-packed paragraph, a portion of which we shall note in Ephesians 1:19-23. The first of these verses employs such expressions as “immeasurable greatness,” “power,” and “great might.” These are descriptive of divine energy. They refer to a force working in us who believe. The child of God is, therefore, a veritable dynamo, motivated and charged by heaven. It is affirmed that by this great might God raised Jesus from the dead, then elevated him to his own right hand in heavenly places. This exaltation was so supreme that it lifted him not only above, but *far above*, “all rule and authority and power and dominion.” It involves supremacy over “every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.”

It includes the subjection of all things under his feet. Jesus is upon the throne of majesty. Under him, as a footstool, are all the created beings of the universe. The climax of this catalog of triumphs is found in the expression, “He has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body.” The word “over” implies that everyone and everything else is “under” Jesus. The master-servant relationship can never be dissolved by those who love Jesus sincerely. We are free to serve him, not free to do as we please, but at liberty to do as he wills. There is no thought of an organ in the physical body disobeying a directive from the head. Such an organ has no will of its own. It is motivated and regulated by the head. Its response is made automatically because of its vital connection with the source of authority.

3. *Dedicated to his ends.* If it had been best for the accomplishment of the divine purpose for those in Christ to go their separate ways, God would have thus arranged it. But as it was impossible for God to fully reveal himself to the world except through the physical body of Jesus, it is likewise impossible for Jesus to continue to manifest himself to the world

except through his spiritual body. The church makes known the manifold wisdom of God to angelic and demonic powers. This was in conformity with the divine purpose (Eph. 3:10, 11). This means that, as these principalities and powers look at the church, they behold in it the outworking of the plan of the ages.

In like manner, Jesus holds converse with the world through his body. It is through the members His will is accomplished. He needs eyes to look upon the fields, hands to pluck the ripened grain, feet to run on errands of mercy, and hearts to throb with compassion. The fellowship of kindred minds is the greatest force for righteousness upon earth. The body should represent the combined force and strength of all the redeemed ones applied in unified effort to the achievement of the eternal aim. When we work against each other we work against God. When we undermine each other we sabotage the purpose of God. "Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:12).

The divine end will be achieved when all of the ransomed ones of earth gather in a grand fellowship of heaven. This is called "the festal gathering" in Hebrews 12:22. To fit and prepare us for participation in that magnificent event we are made to be sharers in a fellowship on earth. In this we actually and actively join with Christ in furthering his mission. This is the highest honor that can come to sinful man, yet it is bestowed upon the humblest and poorest who are willing to commit themselves wholly unto God.

Unfortunately, many of us have learned to labor but not to wait. In the postponement of our Lord's coming, we either fall asleep, or fall out with our brethren. Engaged in disputes and involved in quarrels, there is ever the danger that his coming will find us unprepared. "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to

him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes” (Luke 12:35-37). More than anything else today we need to recapture the sense of closeness and inter-relationship which is characteristic of a body, and be just the *one body*. This is our major task in this generation.

A Mistaken Emphasis

Our emphasis has been wrong. It has betrayed us into tragic error. The church is the community of saints. It is the composite group of the called out ones. We have been taught that we should live for the church, and if need be, that we should die for it. No suffering martyr in the primitive community of saints believed this. The early Christians were not beheaded or burned at the stake for the community, but for the Christ. It was not for the body of which they were members, but for Him whose body it was. Their loyalty was to Him. It was through Him their love for each other was manifested. There is the ever present danger that one may be loyal to a community or “church” and in the very act be disloyal to Jesus. But no one who is loyal to Christ can ever be disloyal to, or unfaithful in, His body.

Being members of a body always presents grave problems. A body composed of men and women constitutes a social unit, whether that body be political, fraternal or spiritual. This very fact produces tension in thinking. There arises the conflict between the idea of the individual and his right to freedom and self-determination; and the idea of the group, or the social unit, with its communal ends overriding and sublimating those of any individual.

We have been made aware, in these days, of those societies grounded in a belief of the supremacy of the state. In these the individual lives only to serve the commune. The emphasis placed

upon the society is so strong that the significance of the individual person as a moral unit is denied. His whole energy is directed by and toward the state. Even his expression of affection for another, consummated in a union of bodies, must be as a breeder for the state. Nothing can be sacred to him as a person, not even a belief in a personal God. The state is god! To this god must be consecrated everything. The individual presents both mind and body as a living sacrifice to the god of the commune. Yet, in tending to swerve from this ideology, man violently reasserts the rights of the individual as opposed to the state and thus wrecks his bark upon the rocks of anarchy as the other is battered to pieces by the lashing breakers of tyranny.

The truth is that no community or society which is entered voluntarily, or by choice, has an absolute claim on the individual except the body of Christ, and that only because it is Christ's. He has purchased us. We belong to Him in body and spirit. We are slaves of Christ in the totality of our being. So the community of saints can make total demands upon those who compose it without being totalitarian, because it never claims to be a sovereign power. The body is entirely subordinate and wholly dedicated to a task beyond its own power, the ends of Jesus Christ.

Let us again emphasize that a member of the body is not one who has joined an organization or who merely belongs to a society. He is a vital organ in a divine organism. As such he is directly related to and connected with every other member on earth. He is obligated to prevent and eliminate discord in the body by concern for every other. "But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25).

Personal Considerations

Some of the things in this article may appear revolutionary. We believe they are true. They have not been written impulsively, but have been hammered out of the white hot metal of thought upon the anvil of deep meditation. We are convinced that God wants these things expressed, and that we are doing His will when we summon the brethren to rise up and examine anew their traditional positions in the full glare of divine revelation. We invite and implore criticism. We will read carefully everything you write. We want to be right. We do not want to be “weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

No one realizes, as he advances in research, where his increasing knowledge of truth will lead him. He cannot foresee the consequences nor predict the results. It is enough that he be honest enough to admit truth as he discovers it, and humble enough to walk in its brightening light. But, if what we have affirmed in this issue be correct, there are certain implications which can be determined, and these will demand alteration of some of our previous views if we are to adjust to truth. With no intention of arousing ire or provoking controversy, and only with a desire to stimulate wholesome thought I suggest a few items which grow out of our reasoning.

1. No local congregation, or coalition of congregations, in existence today constitutes the body of Christ. The body is composed of members, individual saints. There were seven congregations in Asia in the days of John, but there was only one body in the whole world. Many of those in these congregations were in the body, some of them were not. They associated with these congregations by choice and because of geographical location. They were attached to the one body by an act of God.

2. Men are neither judged, saved, nor damned as congregations, but as individuals. We should cease to regard them as a mass, or group, and treat them as God does. Those who protest against evil in a congregation should not be charged with it. No one should be held responsible for what he disavows.

We need to renounce the doctrine of “guilt by association” and let every man plead his own cause and stand upon his own convictions.

3. We should recognize our limitations. We may help in the regulation of the affairs of a congregation, but we have no authority over the body. Of it, all of us are merely members, and it has but one head. An elder is not a bishop of the one body, but of a congregation of saints. God has placed the members in the body as it pleased him; we can neither place or displace a member in the body.

4. Since there is no such thing as a useless or non-functioning member, each of us should determine in what realm God has qualified him to serve and diligently pursue his responsibility. God has no more ordained a useless organ in the one body than in the physical body. We should synchronize our efforts with those of all the other members, seeking to avoid discord, in order that the body may function smoothly and efficiently.

5. One congregation cannot “withdraw fellowship” from another congregation. The expression is unscriptural to begin with. We can neither extend nor withdraw fellowship. The term “withdraw fellowship” is not in the new covenant scriptures. We can sever ourselves from those who walk disorderly; we can put away from among ourselves those who are immoral. This is individual and congregational discipline. Beyond it we cannot go! No congregation of saints has any authority over any other congregation, and can exercise no regulatory or restraining power over another. Many who pay lip service to local autonomy seek to run and rule all the congregations in the country by remote control.

6. One can be in the body and be saved even though in a congregation which is unworthy of Christ as a whole. He can be alive by sustaining his relationship to Jesus as the source of life

even if the congregation is dead. Jesus wrote to the messenger of the congregation at Sardis, “I know what you have done, that you have a reputation for being alive, but that in fact you are dead. Now wake up! Strengthen what you still have before it dies. For I have not found any of your deeds complete in the sight of my God . . . Yet you still have a few names in Sardis of people who have not soiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white, for they have deserved to do so.”

This writing is in direct contradiction to the teaching of those who advocate splitting and dividing the congregation in an attempt to secure purity and diligent service. Nowhere in all of God’s word are brethren ever told to divide from their brethren. Both schism and division are deplored and condemned. If it be asked how members at Sardis could live and walk with Jesus while in a congregation that was pronounced dead, the answer is simple. We do not derive life from the congregation, but from Jesus. The congregation is simply a group of persons who may or may not be attached to Jesus. But those who abide in Him, and who are deserving, will be saved regardless of the fate of the others.

Against this it is urged that the church at Ephesus was threatened that if it did not reform, it would have its lampstand removed. We need to note the reason! It is important! Many good things were said about the congregation at Ephesus. “I know what you have done; I know how hard you have worked and what you have endured. I know that you will not tolerate wicked men, that you have put to the test self-styled ‘apostles’ who are nothing of the sort, and have found them to be liars. I know your powers of endurance, how you have suffered for the sake of my name and have not grown weary.” I submit that this is a pretty fair recommendation. Many of the “loyal churches” of today could not deserve such plaudits.

Then why was the lampstand of such a place to be removed? Here it is! “But I hold this against you, that you do

not love as you did at first. Remember then how far you have fallen . . . Otherwise, if your heart remains unchanged, I shall come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” Thayer indicates that “love” in this place is affection for the brethren. No one falls so far as he who ceases to love. Without brotherly love we are still in darkness, we are murderers and have not God. One who does not love his brother whom he sees cannot possibly love God whom he has not seen. “If your heart remains unchanged.” A congregation must either change its heart or Jesus will change its status. Is there not an indication in these letters that a congregation may survive almost anything except a decay of love? The over-tolerant congregation at Pergamos, the compromising church at Thyatira, the sleeping church in Sardis — these were not threatened with extinction, though criticized and warned.

It is not enough to work hard and endure, to refuse to endorse wicked men and deceivers, or to suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus and not grow weary. All of these were characteristic of Ephesus, yet the lampstand was to be removed because of dearth of love. How important it is to love one another! Yet amidst all of our doctrinal disputes, our wranglings and debates, this is the one quality that is lost. Indeed one is thought to be a weakling or compromiser who dares to urge it as the last great hope of a dying movement.

In closing, I plead with all of my readers to help us recapture the value and significance of the individual soul. Let us allow men to remain where God attached them, and not seek to make them “members” of something else. It is enough that we be welded to Jesus, that we be members of one body. Let us destroy sectarianism by destroying that spirit which gave it rise. Let us begin such a noble work of destruction in our own lives. We need to purge our hearts of littleness. All of us have been too much affected by the party spirit. All of us have been too factional, exclusive and circumscribed. The will of God can only be done when we recognize as members of the body all whom he

has received, whether they be affiliated with our small splinter or segment, or not. Let us, while we defend those truths we have been fortunate enough to discover, not un-Christianize those sincere brethren who have not yet found them. Then we shall truly be one body and walk in love. God, please hasten that day!

Will you who read resolve to share this message with others in a world so sick of strife and division? You can aid very practically by sending this issue of the paper to others. Is there not some preacher, teacher, friend or neighbor who ought to be allowed to think through on these points? Can you be content to selfishly read and forget? If you'll send the names and addresses of those who should see a copy of this edition we will mail it at our own expense and with a fervent prayer that it may strengthen and help. Please be a worker for Christ during 1961. Do not just absorb this teaching, but share it! Let us help you while you help others. God has called us to serve! "We are your servants for Jesus' sake."

Queries to the Editor (No. 1)

Mission Messenger (March 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

I have found it practical and helpful at periodic intervals to present an issue of the paper in which I answer questions gleaned from several sources. Some of these queries are propounded in the forums I conduct, others are asked by visitors in our home, while most of them are taken from letters. I personally reply to more than five hundred letters each month. A few of these are bitterly critical and censorious, but the great majority are written by earnest, consecrated seekers after truth. I read them all carefully, regardless of the tone of the writer. I am particularly interested in those which disagree, because they aid me to properly evaluate my thinking and to sift out the flaws in my reasoning.

One of the rewarding experiences of maturation is the realization that one does not have all of the answers, and that the knowledge of the best of us is still very limited in scope. The term “expert” is a relative one in any field. When one arrives at the place where he can say “I do not know,” and where he will admit, “I have always been wrong about that,” he is in a position where his real knowledge will rapidly increase. If, at the same time, he makes discovery of truth his prime quest in life, so that he can look at truth objectively and admit it wherever he finds it irrespective of who holds it, his sphere of usefulness to God and man will be greatly enlarged. God sends none away empty except those who are full of themselves.

This attitude will enable us to use even our avowed enemies for spiritual enrichment. By forgetting the man and his bitter spirit, one can salvage nuggets of truth which can be added to his storehouse of knowledge, and by thanking God for such gain and asking Him to bless the giver regardless of his attitude, he may even save his former foe. Love is a powerful force. It works effectively, although unseen. If one refuses to allow hate to exist for those who would destroy him, but actively sends out love from the dynamo of his heart, amazing things can happen. “Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails” (1 Cor. 13:5, 6).

It is in that spirit I reply to the questions which follow. The answers are not given dogmatically or arbitrarily. They simply represent my present views. I express them quite humbly, realizing my shortcomings and frailties: They are not intended to be accepted as authority. Those who cannot conscientiously concur with the views expressed will be loved and respected every whit as much as those who agree. I have neither time nor inclination to indulge in the luxury of hate or contempt. I refuse to allow the cancer of animosity to consume my own soul. My interpretation of the sacred scripture is my own, therefore, is human and fallible. No one else on earth will give account for my answers. No one else should be held responsible for them.

1. Can you state briefly your real purpose in publishing and sending forth Mission Messenger?

Our major purpose at present is to plead for the unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, thus working toward an answer to the touching prayer which he offered on the night of his betrayal into the hands of his enemies (John 17:20, 21). We seek to be truly identified with that prayer and its purpose. We believe that by actively cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this great endeavor, we can help bring about that state in which the

will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is our conviction that God works through human agency as well as divine. Before the believers can be united, someone must be so wholly and unreservedly committed to this task that God can use him as an instrument or tool to effect the divine purpose. In our weak way and with the limited facilities at our disposal, we hope to arouse men to think, so they can become such instruments of peace. Peace is not an accident. It must be waged, like others wage war. "And the wise are peacemakers who go on quietly sowing the seed for a harvest of righteousness, in other people and themselves" (James 3:18). It is our aim to present a strategy of peace!

2. Would you say then that your ultimate aim is to achieve peace among God's children?

No, for peace and unity must never be our goal. They are not the end we seek. They are means to an end. Jesus expresses the ultimate aim, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." God's children are agents of reconciliation. God loved the world. He sent His Son to die for it. He wants the world to believe, for "whosoever believeth in the Son hath everlasting life." But the world can only be won to belief in Christ, when those who believe in Christ are one. This is the essence of his prayer. The one thing essential to the universal belief in Jesus is the unity of all who believe in him. It is just that simple. But those who do believe are torn asunder by strife and division. Therefore, our major task at present is to repair the breaches and bind up the wounds. This is presently essential that our ultimate goal, if it is the same as that of heaven, may be reached. We are engaged in our current task, not because it is our final aim, but because it must come first.

3. Has this always been the plea made in Mission Messenger?

Not at all! A paper merely reflects the thinking of an editor. If he grows and matures in thought, his writings will

manifest that growth. I have been editing this little paper for more than twenty years. By dint of hard study and years of research, I have learned a great deal I did not know when I began. My hardest task has been to “unlearn” some of what I thought I knew. I have discovered that I was wrong upon many interpretations, and I have had to alter many of my views in the light of growing knowledge.

I grew up in one segment of the disciple brotherhood and was quite convinced that it was “the loyal church” to the exclusion of all who were members of other splinters, factions, and parties. Imbued with such a spirit, the paper was originally quite a partisan journal, designed to be the mouthpiece of “the brotherhood,” which, in my unwarranted arrogance and self-righteous assumption, was limited only to those who agreed with us on the party tests which formed our criteria. I was reared in an atmosphere where the editor of a partisan journal could control thought and wield power even at great distance. Those who did not conform were excommunicated. Such a condition is sinful and wicked. I am sincerely ashamed of my littleness and factional spirit. I give thanks to God for having opened my eyes to a vision, dim though it may yet be, of his majestic purpose for mankind. No faction, as such, will ever accomplish that purpose. It can only be furthered by the united effort of all believers in the fact that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.”

4. What are some of the things you have learned which have helped to formulate your present convictions?

Of course, in two decades, one learns a great many things which have a profound influence on his thinking, but I will cite only three at this juncture, which have meant a great deal to me.

A. The consciousness that the restoration movement, inaugurated by the Campbells and others, who were tired of sectarian feuds, is not identical with the church of God. The

church has always existed since the advent of the Spirit on Pentecost. God's sheep were scattered among the sectarian hills. Many of them still are. The rallying of them in an attempt to restore the ancient order to the church, did not thereby automatically remove all of the others from God's covenantal grace.

B. A realization that fellowship is not to be equated with endorsement, nor is it contingent upon another's views, interpretations, or opinions. The *koinonia* is a state or condition. We are called into it by the Good News concerning Jesus Christ our Lord. Every sincere person who believes that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son, who is immersed in water in the implementation of that faith, is God's child. He is my brother. He is in the fellowship, the same fellowship into which I have been called. Brotherhood, in the spiritual as in the natural realm, is not based upon common views, but upon a common Fatherhood. Men may conceive ideas but they are not conceived by them. Fellowship is conditioned upon sonship. We are not in fellowship because we agree upon everything, but being in fellowship we strive toward agreement upon things. Agreement is the goal of those in fellowship.

C. A recognition that the party spirit is a sin, just as is fornication, adultery, idolatry and drunkenness (Gal. 5:19-21). One who is guilty of it cannot enter heaven. A factual and unbiased study of most of the divisions which have occurred will reveal that the party spirit has been prevalent in the cleavages, frequently augmented and intensified by debates engaged in by partisan champions. The truth is that God has not granted us division among brethren as a possible solution to our problems at all. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. We are to love the brethren, not leave them; edify them, not divide from them. It is contrary to the doctrine we have learned of the apostles to divide. He who causes divisions should not be followed but marked and avoided. God never once commanded brethren to divide, he repeatedly condemns division, and

commands them to unite.

5. You frequently speak about “restoration movement.” What do you mean by that expression?

In the beginning of the previous century a movement began almost simultaneously among sincere students of the word of God in various sectarian groups, but especially among those of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist parties, to unite believers in our Lord by a restoration of the primitive order as taught by the apostles. This great reformation eventually lost its impetus. Its adherents degenerated into a state of war among themselves. At present, the heirs of the restoration movement constitute one of the most divided segments of Christendom. There are two great bodies resulting from a rent over the use of instrumental music in the public praise service (coupled with other matters); and these in turn are fractured among themselves into some twenty-five parties or factions, which have little to do with each other. It is my conviction that, if a restoration movement was the only answer to the divided condition of the religious world in the beginning of the nineteenth century, it should be the answer to our own sectarian divisions in the middle of the twentieth century. The conditions which existed to call forth the original restoration are now duplicated among us. These cry out for the original remedy. More than anything else we need now to recapture that spirit which motivated the Campbells, Stone, Scott, and others of their contemporaries, and which prompted them to labor unceasingly for unity among the Christians in all sects. That spirit is needed to produce unity among the sects which have grown up around the restoration movement.

6. What is your personal approach to the problems created by divisions in the restoration movement?

I simply refuse to recognize the validity of those things which have been allowed to divide us. I will not let things

invalidate brotherhood. It would be foolish to deny that walls have been erected, but I look through them and see my brethren on both sides of them. Love makes walls transparent which seem opaque when viewed through eyes of hatred. No wall means as much to me as a brother. Walls are products of men; my brethren are a creation of God. My attitude toward our walls is that of Jesus toward the wall which separated Jew and Gentile. His love was great enough to reach beyond the wall and encompass those on both sides of it. By the love exemplified in the cross he battered down the partition. "He has made a unity of the conflicting elements of Jew and Gentile, by breaking down the barrier which lay between us." Only love for those on both sides could do that. The Jews and Gentiles had tried every other means prescribed by human wisdom. They merely pushed the wall of hostility to greater heights. I refuse to allow the barricades men have erected to become a spite wall in my heart.

Men are not my brethren because they have Bible classes or oppose them; because they use individual cups or oppose them; because they believe in Bible colleges or oppose them; because they endorse orphan homes or oppose them; or defend and use instrumental music in worship or oppose it. They are my brothers because they have the same Father as myself. They were not born of endorsement or opposition to the great host of things which now divide us, but of the water and of the Spirit. I do not love them because of their position on these matters, but because I love the Father. "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child" (1 John 5:1).

7. Is this not a kind of weak, compromising position which leads to endorsement of just about any thing?

Indeed not! He who so assumes is ignorant of that for which we contend. The position we occupy does not necessitate one compromising his conviction on anything. It only places persons and things in proper relation to each other. It creates a

proper sense of values, and allows you to view brotherhood in a right perspective. One must have a frame of reference in which to visualize fellowship in its varied aspects, else he will be at sea without a compass, when winds of doubt and waves of division arise. It is our contention that Jesus provides the answer. During his entire earthly sojourn he was confronted with those who attached greater value to things than they did to persons. In Matthew 10:31 he taught that a man is of more value than many sparrows; in Matthew 6:26 that he was much better than the fowls of the air; in Matthew 12:12 that he was much better than a sheep; and in Luke 13:15 that he was better than an ox or an ass. He also taught that the life is greater than food, and the body than raiment. The reason for such instruction was its need among those who were unable to view man in proper relation to things.

Jesus taught that due regard for a brother was of greater value than a public act of religious service. "So that if, while you are offering your gift at the altar, you should remember that your brother has something against you, you must leave your gift there before the altar and go away. Make your peace with *your brother first*, then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23, 24). Our Lord did not compromise his views on the service of God, the altar, or gifts, but he did show that proper relationship with a brother is of prime importance. We need to think a long time on the phrase "your brother first."

We have inherited a sad state of affairs from our fathers. The family of God is divided over missionary societies, instrumental music, orphans homes, cups, colleges, and a host of other things. All of these may be important, for the significance of anything which divides God's people must never be overlooked. But not one of these, nor all of them together, is equal to the value of a brother. If I allow my position on any of them to blot out, erase, and nullify my relationship with my brothers, I endanger my soul. It is the spirit of evil which separates and segregates the children of the Father into warring

camps. It was acceptance of Jesus as God's Son which brought us into relationship and I refuse to allow anything short of irreverence for His majesty and rule, to separate me from my brethren in Him. It is the weak man who seeks to solve the problem by dividing and running away. The strong one remains, faces up to the issue, and continues to labor and to wait for the Spirit operating through love, to bring things into focus.

8. *How can you retain your convictions on these issues that divide, and fraternize with those of the opposition?*

That is easy when one gets through "playing God" and holding every one else accountable to himself. When I am with brethren who differ with me on some thing (and that is the only kind I am ever with), I set forth my views, and listen to theirs. If given an opportunity, I reason with them in a spirit of meekness and love, but I do not seek to bind my views on them as a requisite to fellowship or brotherhood. My brethren do not belong to me. They are servants of another. If they can justify their conduct with their Master, it is not necessary for them to clear it with me. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."

I do not have to give account for the views of any person on earth except my own. I cannot force others to see everything as I do. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." If a brother cannot agree with my views on cups, classes, or colleges, I shall not allow that to cancel my love for him, nor destroy my relationship as a brother. If I thought all who differed with my views were as "sick" as some seem to think they are, and if I felt that I had the remedy I would be where the sick are. Most of the "physicians" who have all the answers are around collecting money off those whom they flatter as being "well." What would the world think if all the physicians got a monopoly on healing drugs and shut themselves up in a club house, and threatened to throw one out of the "charmed circle" who visited the sick. Must we conclude that a physician *endorses* illness because he visits

among and seeks to help the sick? And must a physician always be talking about the patient's illness while with him, or might he not occasionally discuss other and more agreeable things? The problem of many of my brethren is the same as that of the scribes and Pharisees who could not understand how Jesus could fraternize with publicans and sinners and yet not endorse sin.

9. If you oppose the use of instrumental music in the public praise service how can you recognize those who use it as brethren?

It is good to deal frankly with this question. I hear it over and over. It seems to be the acid test. I think it has been elevated to a position hardly commensurate with its real value. As a result it has been made a criterion by both sides to the controversy. I have found many who use the instrument and who defend it with such blind fury that they look upon any relaxation in its use as a compromise with the "antis" and this they regard almost an unpardonable sin. I have been in meetings where members arose and stalked from the house when it was announced that in deference to my conviction, the instrument would not be played.

On the other hand, many of those who use the instrument, but who adopt the title "Church of Christ," have experienced the embarrassing act of visitors arising and stamping out of the building, when the piano or organ begins to play. Such protests do little good except to show the rudeness and intemperance of those who engage in them, and to demonstrate that the use of the instrument has now created an emotional problem, the most difficult type with which to deal. The instrument has become a symbol of intangibles. To one group it is an emblem of freedom and independency; to the other, a sign of degeneration and apostasy. Those who use it would as soon see "Old Glory" stripped from the mast and trampled underfoot as to give it up; those who oppose it would as soon see Satan declaiming from the pulpit as to see the piano on it.

The folly of elevating such a visible thing as a criterion for measurement of invisible things is realized when you stop to consider that many who use the instrument are not free, but enslaved; and many who oppose it lead immoral lives. But in such an atmosphere it is difficult to examine a matter objectively, and both sides fear and question the motives of the other. However, the very emphasis upon this subject provides a real test of our thesis on brotherhood and fellowship. If it will bridge so great a chasm we need not be concerned about lesser gaps.

But why has this issue assumed such importance? A number of factors, no doubt, contribute to it. One is the violence with which it was introduced, frequently with utter disregard for the feelings of brethren. I have known congregations in which the instrument was spirited in at night and the lock changed on the door. I have also known places where some who opposed it, also went at night, climbed in through a window, took a pole-ax and smashed the offending organ to smithereens. In northern Missouri there is a community where the church split, and the non-instrument forces were driven out in the dead of winter. They forthwith built a meeting-house with a door so narrow that no organ could ever be brought in. One rather portly brother had a time even getting in to the worship service.

Too, the congregations frequently resorted to the civil law to resolve their suits for the buildings. These court tests with their resultant bad feelings crystallized the party spirit for several generations. Regardless of who won, the winning party always acclaimed it as a victory for truth, and hailed the judge as a wise brilliant jurist. The other side generally appealed to a higher court, in the mistaken view that truth would fare better in a more elevated judiciary. Frequently one side won the meetinghouse and lost the respect of their neighbors.

Another reason for the intensity of feeling on this matter is the tangible nature of the instrument. It is visible to the eye, and

is not, therefore, like the reasoning on some abstract theory or point of doctrine. A man who knew little or no scripture, and who was unlearned in the Bible, knew an organ when he saw one and could be lined up on one side or the other, and thus made to join in a dispute where he frequently made up in noise what he lacked in knowledge and judgment. And his vote counted as much as that of a gifted saint. Because of all these things and the reams of paper that have been written on the subject pro and con, and because of the prejudice and party spirit which has grown out of the controversy, it is a real test.

However, and this is very important to remember, it does not actually affect the subject of *fellowship* when that word is used in its scriptural connotation. Unfortunately the term has acquired in “Church of Christ” circles a meaning which the Spirit never gave it. I note that those who oppose me so vigorously do not even know what I mean when I talk about fellowship. In spite of all my writing on the subject they have not yet grasped the import of what I am saying. They are thinking of a wholly different thing when they ask if I fellowship those who use instrumental music, than I am when I reply that I am *in fellowship* with many who use it. They have been conditioned to think in a certain channel when “fellowship” and “instrumental music” are mentioned in conjunction with each other.

I am in the fellowship with those who use instrumental music in exactly the same way I am in the fellowship with those who do not. My being in the fellowship with the former is not *because* they use it; my being in fellowship with the latter is not *because* they *oppose* it. We do not come into fellowship because of either position on the subject, but because we are born again. One is not born of a position of endorsement or opposition to instrumental music, but of the water and the Spirit.

Before the instrument was introduced it is admitted by both groups that we were all God’s children and brethren. Putting in the instrument did not change our family

relationship. Suppose that one Lord's Day a congregation gathered and sat down as brethren at the Lord's table in spite of tension over the music question. During the week an instrument is brought in, and the brethren who oppose it feel obligated to worship where the offending instrument is absent. Does this fact alter the family status? It is my contention that it does not, but in such a community we will have some brethren who insist on having the instrument regardless of the feeling of others of the brethren. But they are still brethren, and for me that simplifies the matter. I am told to love the brethren, and to let brotherly love continue. I propose to love all of my brethren, for I must do so to have eternal life. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death."

I am not obligated to love instrumental music, missionary societies, institutional homes, one container, individual cups, leavened bread, unleavened bread, fermented wine, unfermented grape juice, etc. I violate no requirement of God when I do not. But I am obligated to love the brethren, and with me that is all of them. I have no half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. "And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also." I am, therefore, forced to conclude either that endorsement of instrumental music cancels out the relationship created by the new birth, or I am obligated to love, respect and exhibit brotherly kindness to those of my brethren who use it. As ridiculous as the first alternative appears, it is the very position adopted by our ancestors a century ago, and which has now led to such extremes on both sides.

I simply refuse to allow one camp of brethren to capture me and place me in their corral where I must deny brotherhood to others who have been born into God's family. I have no right to choose who my brethren shall be. God determines that. It is out of my hands. But I must love my brethren or I will be damned. Admittedly, it is more difficult to love some than others,

but I have resolved that difficulty. I love them through Jesus. The tie that binds me to them does not run directly from my heart to theirs, so their views and opinions do not create a short circuit and are no impediment. It runs to Jesus, and because I am bound to him, I am bound through him to all whom he has received. If I can just love Jesus enough to encompass all whom he loves, then my love flowing through him will embrace my brethren— all of them!

It is absurd to talk about fellowshiping cups, classes, leavened bread, orphan homes, instrumental music and such things, simply because they are *things*! We are not in fellowship with things, but with people. The word “fellow” shows that. I do not endorse instrumental music, or a host of other things which divide the brethren, but I am in fellowship with all of my brethren, for fellowship, as the Spirit regards it, is brotherhood. Now, in answer to my querist, it is no real problem for me to recognize as brethren those who use instrumental music, even though I am opposed to it. The truth is that the only kind of persons with whom I am in fellowship, are those with whom I disagree. There are no other kind as far as I am concerned.

10. *Was not the question of how to regard members of the Christian Church settled seventy years ago? Why resurrect it and disturb us?*

My concern is not about how to treat members of “The Christian Church” or any other party among us. I am concerned with how to treat God’s children, and my brothers, regardless of where they may be. There is only one church now. There never was but one, and never can be another. If the word “church” is to be retained as a translation of *ekklesia*, it must refer to the whole assembly of the saved throughout this earth. If there is one body, there must be one church, and only one. “He is the head of the body, the church.” The church embraces every saved person on this earth. Every child of God is a member of it; every member of it is a child of God. But no faction can be that one

body, and the one body is no faction!

No question is ever settled, so far as God is concerned, until it is settled properly. If our fathers, in the midst of the feud occasioned by instrumental music and societies, decided not to regard members of “The Christian Church” as brethren, then their decision was wrong. The prerogative of deciding who are children of the Father, belongs unto Him, not to the other children, and those who arrogate to themselves such a right are presumptuous. Their decision constitutes a human creed, and they are guilty of the sectarian attitude. Such decisions need to be reversed. A thousand years of maintaining the status quo will not sanctify evil. The tradition of our elders should not be allowed to make void the law of God.

But where does this leave questions such as that pertaining to the use of instrumental music? It leaves them where they should always have been, matters of discussion among brethren — not questions of strife between enemies and aliens! What about those who, because of conscience and conviction, cannot worship where the instruments are used? Let them worship elsewhere, but not in an aura of hate and animosity toward those who disagree with them. Not all members of the same family can live amicably under the same roof, but they need not deny or renounce the family relationship because they occupy separate quarters. They can constantly seek through love to improve the situation. It is not so much geographical, as spiritual, affinity for which we labor.

As to disturbing the brethren over these matters which they have put to sleep, and about which they have gone to sleep, perhaps nothing is more essential to our future wellbeing. The stagnant pools covered with the green scum of partisan security need to be agitated. The freshets of God’s love need to purge and purify our relationships. Too long have we perpetuated the spiritual feuds of yesterday. It is time to re-think our position as to relationship in Jesus, to rise above the altercations and

embroilments which have made a laughing-stock out of our plea to the dissident religious syndicates about us. There is nothing sacred about the mere human judgments of seventy years ago. There are now no laws made by men which are as unalterable as those of the Medes and Persians.

Let us discuss the issues which divide us, with a view to lessening, and not increasing the distance between us. When we rise from the common council table, if we are no closer to each other, let us not have worsened our state. If we continue as we are, we will embalm our divergencies and bequeath to our own posterity a condition much worse than that which was passed on to us. Let me make it clear that my interest is not in how to regard a faction, sect or party, but in what attitude I should manifest toward my brethren who are scattered among the various sects men have created. God does not love sects, but he does love men.

11. Does not the fact that you oppose instrumental music make you a member of an anti-instrument party?

Not at all. It would if I allowed that to become a test of fellowship. If one declares that he does not consider as being in his fellowship any person who believes in the use of instrumental music in public worship, he then separates and segregates himself from such brethren, and is a member of an anti-instrument party, or faction. I strive to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. I am not a spokesman for, nor a champion of, a non-instrument party or faction. I do not propose to be factional about the host of other things which separate my brethren.

Holding the personal convictions which are mine, I think the brethren who introduced the instrument into the corporate worship were mistaken, and in error. But they are my brethren. If I equated fellowship with perfection in knowledge, and waited until I could be in fellowship only with those who were right on

everything I would wait a long time. Come to think of it, I could not qualify for such fellowship myself!

With the kind indulgence of our readers, we shall continue to reply to questions we have received, in our next issue also. Please remember that you need not agree with our answers for us to love and respect you as brethren in the Lord. We do not commend you to our views and opinions as your hope of life, but to the word of God. We humbly seek to follow it, and recognize your divine right to go to it for yourself. Unity is not conformity. In truth, there can be no unity among men, except the unity of diversity. This is no new thought. Lord Bacon, who was born on January 22, 1561, four hundred years ago, declared, “They be two things, unity and conformity.” Most of our difficulties have arisen because we thought they were the same. Until our next issue, we commend you unto God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up. “Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.”

Abuse of Scripture

Mission Messenger (March 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

In these days of division among the people of God, party prejudice and a desire to defend that exclusiveness which is so much a part of the sectarian spirit often cause brethren to make forced applications of the sacred writings which completely distort the divine revelation by ignoring the context. We do not think there is always deliberate intent to “handle the word of God deceitfully” but innocency of motive is no guarantee against a harmful result from such unfair manipulation of the word of God. It is no honor to scholarship when one who poses as a teacher reveals his utter lack of knowledge of the most obvious implications of a passage.

As an example we cite a common usage of Ephesians 5:11. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” In their zeal to destroy unity among God’s children and to dissolve relationship with them, rabid factionists have branded every item of disagreement as an “unfruitful work of darkness.” The party champions draw a circle which they label “Darkness” and inside of this they inscribe a catalog of things such as instrumental music, missionary societies, orphan homes, colleges, pastor system, Bible classes, uninspired literature, tuning forks, individual cups, leavened bread, unleavened bread, fermented wine, unfermented grape juice, etc., and proceed to proscribe all who do not subscribe to their unwritten creeds.

No two factions will list exactly the same things under “light” or “darkness.” Each party has its own copyrighted category. What is “light” in one is “darkness” in another. The confusion caused by this hodgepodge parading under the name “The Church of Christ” is as appalling as it is senseless. The chief aim of each faction seems to be to locate a scriptural basis for having no fellowship with the rest of God’s children. This passage which says “Have no fellowship” is a godsend to their partisan purpose. To them nothing can be “light” which contravenes the partisan creed. They can see *darkness* everywhere except in the narrowness of their own hearts.

The truth is that the apostle was not talking about anything even remotely connected with the above list of items. The “works of darkness” are identified as practices connected with immorality, covetousness and idolatry. Under consideration especially are these things as related to the heathen mystery religions with their clandestine sexual orgies. They are identified as “those things which are done of them in secret” (verse 12) . This certainly has no application to the use of instrumental music in *public* worship. It cannot apply to cups which are passed to a whole congregation in the open, nor to Bible classes to which all are invited. To try and palm off such an interpretation of this passage is to reveal a shameful ignorance of the entire Ephesian letter.

Mind you, the above things may or may not be wrong. But they are not “works of darkness” such as this passage condemns. And if fellowship is to be withheld on the basis of this passage, then it cannot be applied to the things to which the passage has no remote relationship. The sad fact is that men who have a partisan axe to grind will go to almost any length to find a grindstone that suits their purpose. It is time that honest men and women begin to study for themselves and cease to be followers of those who would lead them down blind alleys for gain! Truth does not need to resort to twisting and wresting of the sacred scriptures for its defence. No man has a right to get

out of the scriptures what God did not put into them!

We commend to you the translation of this passage as given by J. B. Phillips, in *The New Testament in Modern English*. “Steer clear of the activities of darkness, let your lives show by contrast how dreary and futile these things are. (You know the sort of things I mean— to detail their secret doings is really too shameful).” We think it is significant that those who do not want to have fellowship with others of God’s children have to write a Bible of their own in order to justify their factional actions. They cannot find comfort for their party spirit in the word of God correctly interpreted for it specifically calls the party spirit a “work of the flesh.”

Joint Participation

Mission Messenger (April 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

The original word for fellowship is majestic in its implications. It serves as an illustration of the divine assertion, “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” Only the mind of God could have conceived of a community composed of ransomed slaves in which the dignity of each individual is preserved while each esteems others better than himself. Such a society whose members are together not because they are bound to like one another, but are bound together because they all mutually love another person, never entered the most fanciful dreams of the philosophers of ancient Greece or Rome. It could not have been the creation of sinful man. It stands as a monument to the new creation wrought by the Spirit of God.

But it is a sad commentary on man that he tends to corrupt what he touches. This is as true in the spiritual as in any other realm. The thoughts of God are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Even when they are revealed we frequently find it easier to drag those thoughts down to our level than to exert the effort to attain unto them. It is not that we lack inspiration but we are victims of frustration. Our heads may be in the clouds but our feet still stumble over clods. We admire the beauty of heaven but we are caught in the mire of the earth. “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” In our human littleness we reduce that which is sublime to the realm of pettiness. We turn beauty into ashes. In no case is this more

obvious than in the current views of many on fellowship.

Fellowship is the English word used to translate the Greek *koinonia*, but it is not equivalent to the original. The two are not exact synonyms. The truth is that *koinonia* is manifested in so many different aspects that no single English word or phrase is adequate to express them. The translators working under the authority of King James faced this difficulty and it accounts for the different words they employed for the original. In the light of this fact it is tragic to see men in our day who pose as scholars and teachers fasten upon some facet of definition and reduce everything to this common denominator in order to justify a traditional position of partisan exclusiveness. Few others are as guilty in this respect as those who are connected with the various segments growing out of the Restoration Movement sparked by the Campbells and their co-laborers. That movement which was begun to unite the Christians in all sects has ended up the most divided one in all the realm of Christendom. This shameful condition is largely the result of a misconception of the glory and greatness of the *koinonia*.

It is useless to our purpose to rehearse in detail the sordid catalog of things which are credited with rending the fabric of brotherhood. The heart recoils and the blood chills when we consider the insignificance of some of those things which have been allowed to turn the dwelling place of the saints into an armed camp. The saddest feature of all is that those who have split and splintered the body have done so in the belief that they thus serve the purpose of God. They have deceived themselves into thinking that they are contending earnestly for the one faith by sinking a dagger into the one body. How far misguided zeal can lead men is witnessed by the words of Jesus to the apostles, "The time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing religious service to God" (John 16:2). It is significant that the next sentence is, "They will do this because they know not the Father or me." Thus it is possible for men to go to an extreme in the thought that they are worshipping God, when

they know not God or Jesus. They know about them, but there is a great difference in knowing a person until you are identified with him, and knowing about him.

Fellowship is the *togetherness* of the saints with God and each other. As relates to God it is based upon sonship, as relates to the community of saved ones it is brotherhood. Basically, it is a sharing experience, a joint participation. And it is at this juncture that many are unconsciously betrayed by the partisan spirit. Fastening upon this definition and regarding it through factional eyes they actually use their interpretation of fellowship to destroy fellowship. *Any interpretation of a principle which is so restricted and limited as to destroy the functioning of that principle is subversive of the authority from which the principle originates.* Any definition of brotherhood which will ultimately make brotherhood impossible is dangerous indeed.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Some of our brethren believe it is not in harmony with the will of God to have Bible classes for teaching of the sacred scriptures. Others think it is perfectly consistent with the will of God to employ such a method. Those who oppose classes and cannot conscientiously participate in a study so conducted are led to the conclusion that those who have classes are not in the fellowship. They do not regard them as being in “the brotherhood” for that term includes only those who do not *participate* in the class method of teaching. Those who draw such a line of exclusivism are honest but they are deceived by a false concept of fellowship. They conclude that because the word means “joint participation” it cannot exist where there is any difference in thought or practice.

The same thing holds true in various other areas. Many brethren in the congregations of the saints adopted the use of instrumental music in their corporate worship; others could not conscientiously participate in such a service. The latter concluded that they could no longer regard the former as *brethren*. They did not consider them as being in the fellowship

because they could not participate with them in the practice which they introduced. Since those who used the instruments were considered as no longer in “the brotherhood” they could not be called upon or recognized to lead a prayer or to perform any other function when they came among those who opposed instrumental music. They were looked upon as being in the same category with heathen and publicans. Actually this state exists because of a wrong view of the nature of the fellowship.

Our English word “fellow” comes to us through the Anglo-Saxon tongue from the Old Norse *felagi*, comrade. This is from the root *felag*, partnership. Since partnership is a relation between persons the nature and extent of such relation has to be determined and understood or the partnership may be dissolved over a basis utterly foreign to that upon which it was established. Two men enter into a partnership to operate a filling station for the purpose of servicing cars and thus making a livelihood. One believes that a certain type of jack is best adapted to elevating cars while the other believes that another is best. They need not dissolve partnership because of their disagreement over method, for the partnership was not founded specifically to exemplify one method or another. If they had entered into partnership to demonstrate the superiority of one type of jack and to promote the sale of that type exclusively, then there would be ground for dissolution over their difference.

What is the nature of the *koinonia* of the new covenant? What is it that is shared? Of what are we partakers? Paul states that the divine secret which was not disclosed to previous generations was made known to him by revelation. The purpose of this revelation was “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). The Good News as a universal proclamation made possible the sharing by men of all nations in the promise made to Abraham and his seed. The magnitude of this disclosure is not yet fully grasped by most of us. It involves the gathering together of all the forces of righteousness and *the*

joint participation in this gathering constitutes the koinonia. “So richly has God lavished upon us his grace, granting us complete insight and understanding of the open secret of his will, showing us how it was the purpose of his design so to order it in the fulness of the ages that all things in heaven and earth alike should be gathered up in Christ—in the Christ in whom we have had our heritage allotted us” (Eph. 1:9-11).

In view of the tremendous significance of the “open secret” how childish and trivial are the things over which we have striven and disrupted our relationship. It was never the purpose of the *koinonia* to create rigid conformists. God did not demand that a Jew become a Gentile, nor a Gentile become a Jew, in order to be fellowheirs. He allowed each of these to retain his own individuality. The Jews were still circumcised; the Gentiles remained uncircumcised. It was simply declared that there was no importance attached to circumcision *in Christ*. In the new relationship it was not important that everyone think alike about circumcision. “For neither circumcision nor the want of it is of any importance, but only a new creation” (Gal. 6:15).

Obviously there are problems presented in maintaining *koinonia* where differences are tolerated and permitted. There is ever a tendency for one to attempt to make his fellows over “after his own image.” The apostle recognized that there would be conflict of conscience because one who was in the “joint participation” of the Good News might feel that this implied he was a partaker of every divergent view or practice of those within the fellowship. Such a mistaken or warped idea would in its ultimate make partnership impossible. The difficulty was resolved by pointing out that we seek not conformity but community, and the desired union is one of diversity.

Different ages and cultures produce variations of the same problem. In the days of the apostles the question of eating meats was a major one and akin to it was that of observing days. We are liable to undervalue the seriousness of these matters because

they do not trouble us. All of us think our own difficulties are greater than those of others. Actually these things more seriously disturbed many of the primitive saints than those modern issues which have caused us such grave concern. Paul begins his treatise of “unity in diversity” by a clear statement that brotherhood is not based upon agreement in opinion or interpretation. “Treat people who are overscrupulous in their faith like brothers; do not criticize their views” (Goodspeed). “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions” (RSV).

No man is a partaker in that which he disavows or does not sanction. The one who opposed eating meats was not a participant in eating meat simply because he was in the fellowship with those who ate it. The fellowship of the gospel was not conditioned upon eating meats or observing days. Brotherhood is not based upon such matters. “The kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). By the same token the kingdom of God does not mean cups, classes, colleges, etc., for these are not righteousness or peace or joy. If a man is allied with a congregation of saints which has Bible classes he is not in “fellowship” with classes if he does not participate in them. But he is guilty of the party spirit if he presses his scruples to the place that he builds an anti-class party. The same thing is true in reverse. All parties in the religious domain are sinful because they build men around something other than Jesus. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

Differences in opinion among brethren create problems for those who are nonpartisan and whose love for the brethren is universal. It is possible for one to be free from all men, that is, to be a free man in Christ Jesus. But such a person is obligated by his love to be a slave to all. The minute he allows himself to become a partisan or factional representative he limits his love and the party standard becomes his rallying ground instead of

the love of God. One does not compromise his convictions when he freely moves among all and adjusts himself to them. It is only the unbending sectarian or rigid partisan who falsely equates fellowship with endorsement and who cannot be free.

“Though I am free from anyone’s control, I have made myself everyone’s slave, so as to win over all the more. To the Jews I have become like a Jew, to win Jews over; to men under the law I have become like a man under the law, though I am not myself under the law, so as to win over those who are under the law. To those who have no law I have become a man without any law— though I am not without the law of God, but under the law of Christ— so as to win over those who are without any law. To the overscrupulous I have become overscrupulous, so as to win the overscrupulous; I have become everything to everybody, so as by all means to save some of them. And I do it all for the sake of the good news, so that I may share (*koinonos*) in its blessings along with the rest” (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Our joint participation is in “the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” It is in the “blessings” of the gospel. Notice the expression “along with the rest.” The hope of the gospel is not based upon the things we have allowed to separate, segregate and splinter us. We can share in the promise “along with the rest” even though they entertain ideas which we cannot endorse because of conscientious scruples. We will not be judged by their views. We need to cease to pass judgment upon brethren; we need to cease to despise them. They are brethren and we are obligated to love them. We are not obligated to agree with them but to respect them. “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom. 14:10).

It is astounding how little we value our mutual relationship in Christ Jesus. We regard the tie that binds as being so frail and unimportant that it may be severed by the slightest whim of difference. We do not hesitate to “set at nought a brother.” We

will upon the slightest provocation “destroy the work of God” (Rom. 14:20). By our boasted knowledge and our vaunted faithfulness we trample underfoot those who do not possess such knowledge. We base our joint participation upon equality in knowledge. The humble child of God who does not see everything as we do is driven forth without mercy. “And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, *the brother for whom Christ died*” (1 Cor. 8:11). Jesus thought enough of him to die for him as he is. Jesus received him in spite of his limited knowledge, wrong concepts and mistaken views. We will not retain him until he is right on “all the essential points of doctrine.” And we propose to be the sole judges of what is essential! We set up a standard for fellowship with ourselves which will make it impossible for us to have fellowship with God. If fellowship is based upon equality in understanding and perfection in interpretation how can we be in fellowship with God until we know as much as God? We sign our own death warrant and create our own commitment into hell when we condition fellowship upon such bases. “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Matt. 7:2).

Ours is a fellowship (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1). It is a participation in the Spirit. Despite our differences nationally, socially, or otherwise we were made one by the Spirit. Despite those differences we all partake of one Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). The differences were not erased but the state was changed by the Spirit. Men were still Jews and Gentiles after they were baptized, but they were Jews and Gentiles *in Christ*. They were still slaves or freemen, but they were slaves or freemen *in Christ*. They were in one body not because they were all alike but because they were all baptized. They remained in one body not because they agreed upon everything but because they all drank of the same Spirit. It was “the unity of the Spirit” they were

commanded to guard in the bond of peace.

In the body there were those who were “more feeble” (1 Cor. 12:22), “less honorable” (verse 23), and there were parts “that lacked” (verse 24). But God tempered the body together so that there should be no schism in the body (verse 25). What God tempers together intemperate men rend asunder. God regards all of the members as necessary. Factionalists recognize no one as necessary who will not subscribe to their unwritten creeds. Men may keep the unity of the Spirit and differ on many things, they may agree on many things and not keep the unity of the Spirit. The Spirit values men above things and regards a man as more important than his ideas. It is only those who regard things as more valuable than men who create division by such carnal standards of measurement. “These are the men who split communities, for they are led by human emotions and never by the Spirit of God” (Jude 19— J. B. Phillips).

Brotherhood is not conditioned on agreement on classes, cups, colleges, and such like things. Men may disagree upon these and remain in the fellowship of the Spirit. No one in that fellowship is a joint participant in every idea, notion, interpretation or opinion of the others in it, unless he personally avows and espouses such a position. Even then it is not a part of fellowship. The tie that binds is not one of human reasoning or of conformity. It is the love that reaches out to engulf and enfold those who are different from ourselves because “God has set them in the body as it has pleased him.”

The man who would destroy the fellowship of the Spirit by teaching that to be in that fellowship is to endorse or sanction every thing that every other person in it says or does, reveals his ignorance of the koinonia of the Spirit. He is ensnared by his fallacy, enslaved by his own pettiness, and indicted by his own admission. His position is obnoxious to reason, offensive to the fraternal heart, and obsessed with pride. Let us turn from such divisive teaching and “follow after the things which make for

peace and things wherewith one may edify another.”

Queries to the Editor (No. 2)

Mission Messenger (April 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

In our previous issue we presented answers to some of the questions frequently raised by our correspondents and hearers. Perhaps there is no better way for one to clarify his position than to submit to grilling by those who are concerned especially when they are inclined to opposition. Solomon declared, “He who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17). If truth, not partisan victory, is the object of our search we should not resent the searchlight being turned on in full power to scrutinize our position. If you did not receive a copy of the paper last month we suggest that you write for one immediately. The questions and answers found therein will be helpful in these days. You should study them before reading those which follow.

1. Which one of the groups calling themselves “Church of Christ” do you regard as the loyal church?

In the divided state now existing among the heirs of the Restoration Movement there is no such thing as “the loyal church.” There are brethren in all of the groups who seek to do God’s will sincerely. There are many in all of them whose lives and attitudes are a disgrace to the cause we profess. No one of these parties is the church of God to the exclusion of all others. They are all factions, existing because of emphasis upon one point or another which has been pressed to the extent of creating

division or separation. So long as one is in schism all are in schism. It is a figment of the imagination to idealize any of the two dozen splinters of the disciple brotherhood as “the faithful church.”

2. Should not one who is a member of a faction get out and leave it?

Where would he go— to another faction? It is this philosophy which is the root of all our current difficulty. It has created all of our existing factions. When a man learns something his brethren do not know, he concludes that they are no longer his brethren because they do not know all that he knows. He immediately abandons them to attach himself to another group more favorable to his newly formed views. If one discovers truth he should remain and share it with his brethren. He seldom betters himself by going to another faction, and contributes nothing worthwhile by creating one of his own.

We need to distinguish between being in a faction and possessing a factional spirit. One can be in a sect and not be sectarian. He can be in a faction and not be factional. The cure for our present sadly divided condition is not for all of “the faithful” to leave the various factions and come out and form a “loyal church.” That would only complicate the matter further. Those who are no longer factional and, thank God, the number of such is growing, should work as leaven where they are. They should exhibit a spirit of patience and love which will influence those whom they contact until eventually all of us will flow together again. We cannot divide ourselves into a faithful church. We cannot secure loyalty to the one body by fracturing it. We have tried long enough to divide ourselves into unity. It is time to find a common denominator and reduce our fractions. It is that for which we plead. Let those who have crucified the party spirit, a work of the flesh, remain where they are and help their brethren achieve the same attitude. Thus will factionalism be killed among us!

Of course conditions may become intolerable where one is allied and he can best serve God elsewhere. Every man is obligated to go where he can best fulfill his responsibility. But if he does go, he should not conclude that those whom he leaves are not his brethren. He should love them, pray for them, and continue to help them in those areas where they can mutually labor. Merely going from one faction to another for personal satisfaction is the resort of a weakling. It is easier to leave than to stay and face up to problems. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

3. How can a congregation take steps to grow out of the factional attitude?

The first thing is to resolve to regard nothing as a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Whatever is required to bring one into the Christ should bring him into partnership with us. Nothing else should be devised to drive him forth. The belief of one fact and the obedience to one act constitute the terms of entrance into our Lord. The one fact is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The act required to validate that faith is immersion in water of the penitent believer. No immersed believer should be subjected to question relative to his opinion or view of anything else as a requisite to enjoyment of the fellowship. Whether he believes in the pre-millennial or post-millennial coming of our Lord, or in colleges, institutional homes, missionary societies or instrumental music; whether he holds to some opinion regarding sinless perfection or perseverance of the saints, he is not to be grilled about these as a test of fellowship.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." To set up other foundations or bases of fellowship is to originate creedalism with all of its sad aftermath of strife and division. Let the congregation of saints which desires to be non-sectarian reject all grounds of fellowship except Jesus Christ. Let the Lord's table be set for all immersed

believers whose lives are in harmony with the moral and ethical code of Jesus. Let announcement be made that all such are invited to participate in the communion (fellowship) of the body and blood of the Lord. By no other means can a congregation grow out of the factional spirit. When all of the congregations so teach and act, and not before, we will have restored the body intact with all of the breaches repaired.

4. Are there any indications of congregations practicing this non-partisan attitude?

Yes, there are. Of course any progress in this direction will be slow. It represents a reversal of attitude in most places. The drift has been toward the sectarian spirit and it is difficult for most places to alter their course. There is something about the narrow partisan viewpoint which provides a sense of security. Men feel safer behind walls of their own construction. They fear to submit their position to open combat in the field. So long as they convince themselves that they are the only children of God and all others are apostates and pagans they have a natural sense of pride in their organization.

Obviously many will prefer their own structure. They believe that it is the church. They feel called upon to defend it until death. Many preachers will find it especially difficult to cultivate a nonsectarian view. Some of these are regarded as party champions. They will not want to relinquish their reputations. Economic interests will keep others from asserting a conviction on these issues even after they conclude their former stand is untenable. Too, we must recognize that there are differences in temperament and ability. All men are not equally adept at grasping original thinking. We must be patient, kind and charitable toward all, never forgetting that all of us have been tainted with the party spirit in the past.

It is gratifying to know that in some areas brethren are awakening to a greater sense of destiny. These are manifesting a

degree of knowledge which they did not have five years ago. We have been reared in factional backgrounds. All of us are averse and resistant to change. We must be cautious, for many in the past, have veered from the word of God. None of us want to make shipwreck of the faith. In our zeal to leave Babylon we should not run past Jerusalem and down into Egypt. While being thankful to see brethren adopt a more loving and cheerful disposition in some areas we must not allow ourselves to think or speak evil of those in other sections who do not yet agree with us in our ideas. Love will answer our problems!

5. How do those brethren with whom you have always labored regard your present writings?

I was fortunate when I left the Lutheran party and espoused the restoration plea that I grew up in a segment of the disciple brotherhood where brethren had a fair outlook on some of these issues. In many respects we constituted a restricted and exclusive party and were no doubt arrogant toward others, but in a few respects there was a charitable viewpoint toward the sectarian world about us. I suspect we treated those who were nearest to us worse than we did others. This is generally the case.

Since I no longer allow myself to be regarded as a party defender or champion, the brethren react as all brethren do under such circumstances. Some have investigated and agree that my position is more in harmony with the will of God. Others regard me as a traitor and would do all they could to ruin my influence and wreck my opportunities of answering our Saviour's prayer. They feel that I am dangerous to the peace and safety of what they regard as "the brotherhood." A few have attacked me openly and personally from the pulpit when I was hundreds of miles away. Some have used the *Mission Messenger* as a text.

None of these things move me. I do not grow discouraged because of them. I anticipated such reaction and prepared

myself with months of prayer and meditation before I began to write my thoughts on fellowship. I have arrived at the place where I can truly love and pray for those who disagree with me. I am resolved that when any man presents what commends itself to my heart to be the truth I will accept it and will amend my thinking to conform to it. I have an earnest desire to reach heaven and I know that I must be honest with truth in order to do so. If I know my own heart I am willing to make any sacrifice for truth. But I cannot afford to indulge in hate for any of the brethren. I do not want to pay the price exacted for such indulgence.

6. How have your present writings affected the circulation of the paper?

Strangely enough, the circulation figure has not varied a great deal. It does not fluctuate appreciably, but has been on the upgrade recently. It has altered in constituency. A goodly number who formerly read it no longer do so. A few have cancelled their subscriptions. But others who have been attracted by the tenor of our plea and who are sickened by the symptoms of the partisan attitude about them have subscribed for, and sent the paper to, other interested students until there are more readers than before. There is one difference in our readership. The majority of those who now receive the paper are students of restoration. They tend to think for themselves and are not frightened by challenges to their minds. Many former subscribers took the paper out of a sense of party loyalty. They regarded it as a sort of factional mouthpiece. They felt that they could depend upon it to parrot the party line and deny all others access to its columns. We should not judge them harshly for this. They merely reflect the conditioning that all of us have received through the years.

I am not so vain as to think that the purpose of God, in this time of crisis, is dependent upon the continuance of this little journal. I have no Messiah complex. So long as we can hold our

heads above water we shall make the plea which we think God wants us to make as our testimony to this generation. But if my tongue is silenced by death or my fingers paralyzed by affliction, or if the paper ceases through economic necessity, others with greater ability and more ample means will rise up and carry on. The cry for peace on earth to men of good will and for unity among brethren is in harmony with the will of Him who notes even the fall of a sparrow. And when He who watches over our destiny sees fit to culminate our appeal we will submit without murmur. If we can face the sunset glow in the glad knowledge that we have plucked up but a few thorns of hate and planted the fragrant blossoms of fraternal love we will be content.

7. Do you think you went about presenting what appears to be revolutionary teaching in the proper manner?

Apparently many feel that I did not. This question is asked repeatedly. I am not sure how I would proceed if I were suddenly set back ten years in time. I might approach the problem of restoration from an entirely different angle. I am fallible and finite. My judgment is far from perfect. I have made a lot of mistakes and still make many. My presentation may have been faulty in many respects. No doubt it still is. I have to do the best I can at any given time and hold myself in readiness to admit my errors and to amend my thinking as I learn more.

I was reared in a strictly factional background as most of us have been. I beheld the inconsistencies of those who call themselves "The Church of Christ," and saw how, while they made an appeal for unity to the divided religious world, they were themselves fractured into more than two dozen parties. This caused me to review the history of the movement to see at what point we forsook the original purpose of restoration and what factors contributed to our arrival at our present divided state.

Examination revealed that neither of the current factions

could lay exclusive claim to being the one body of our Lord. From that I went on to discover that the restoration movement had crystallized into a new party (or parties) in Christendom, and that this movement in its totality does not now, nor did it ever, constitute the church of God on earth exclusively. I became convinced it was merely another exhibition of the sectarian spirit to contend that it did.

It was while I was away from the United States in 1951 laboring with the devoted saints in North Ireland that I had time to catch up with my own thoughts. At the time I was quite popular in the partisan alliance in which I had been groomed and my meetings were planned for many years in advance. The *Mission Messenger* was regarded as a “safe and sound” party organ which could be trusted to echo what we had traditionally taught, and to exclude from its pages any thing which might be contrary to the partisan tests.

When I came face to face with myself and was convinced that I was actually laboring against God’s purpose, rather than for it, an inner struggle began. I did not want to hurt those with whom I had always labored and whom I loved but I could not ignore the tug of the Spirit on my heart. I fought a personal battle all the way across the Atlantic. By the time the ship docked in New York the die was cast. I had crossed my personal Rubicon. Before going home I was scheduled to speak at a gathering of brethren in New Castle, Indiana. I selected as my theme “The Name of the Church” and proved from the scriptures that the *ekklesia* of God had no official title and we had sectarianized the expression “Church of Christ.” Those present, not realizing at the time where the non-sectarian attitude would take them, were highly commendatory in their comments on my discourse.

For four years I plunged into study and research. With every discovery of truth I saw how far we had drifted from our original moorings and how deeply we had imbibed the sectarian

spirit. I asked permission of the brethren in my home congregation to conduct Saturday night forums. I proposed to speak for an hour and then submit to open questioning from the audience. All brethren in the Saint Louis area were invited to attend. The reaction from the first was characteristic of all such gatherings. Brethren were divided in their opinions. This was good because it provided opportunity to show that fellowship in Jesus is not contingent upon uniformity of opinion. It served to stimulate serious and sincere questioning of my position and thus provide for me an opportunity to re-evaluate my own thinking and to eliminate the flaws from it. It also demonstrated the power of love and patience in our striving toward harmony.

Having a desire to share our views on a wider scale I began to write "Thoughts on Fellowship" after first giving several months advance notice of intention. I resolved to open up our columns to those who dissented. I did so, publishing freely their critical examinations of my position and my replies to these. Not being possessed of prophetic insight I have had to do the best I could to encourage the thinking of the brethren. I have not been too concerned as to whether or not my viewpoint was accepted. Not having a desire to enroll partisan followers I am content to plant what I believe is the seed furnished by the Spirit. Any increase will have to be given by the Creator.

Other brethren convicted of the futility of the course they had been pursuing and finding themselves in the grip of the same great moral compulsion I experience, might go about their presentation in another manner. I do not say my approach is the only correct one, nor even that it is the best one. It seemed to be the only one open to me with my limited ability and I pursued it because I owed it to God to do what I could to alleviate the sad and tragic state into which the heirs of the restoration movement had fallen.

I readily concede that I may have been guilty of the mistake of proceeding too rapidly. I am also convinced that for

some who ask this question, the right way would have been to say nothing and do nothing except to maintain the party status. They do not so much resent the manner of my procedure as they do the fact that I proceeded at all. One must pay a price for rising above partisan littleness. He must expect to be sniped at and shot at by those who aim their shafts at any one who does not conform. One who is not willing to endure misrepresentation and even maligning of his motives should not attempt reformation, for there can be no reformation without change. The very word "reformation" betokens alteration.

8. Are there any specific indications that the factional spirit is being quenched?

Yes, indeed! Brethren are recognizing a spiritual kinship in many places where an attitude of hate and exclusiveness formerly flourished. Those who differ with the interpretations and views of a congregation are frequently given recognition and called upon to lead songs or direct prayer when they visit meetings. In some areas where opposition to Mission Messenger is very bitter the brethren are actually practicing what we advocate. In some instances they go even farther than we would be disposed to go.

It is also observable that in some congregations which would not think of calling upon the editor to speak, other brethren present virtually the same teaching and are accepted. This is good because the problem is not one of recognizing or honoring the persons of men but of receiving the teaching which will lift us out of the doldrums into which partisan thinking has led us. It is to be expected that those who first break with tradition must bear the brunt of reprisal. Some day when clouds of doubt have been dispelled by the sunlight of a greater love men will see more clearly. We need not be distressed now if we are rejected and refused for this is the expected lot of those who blaze the trail. We seek not sympathy but study; not acclamation but reformation.

Many in the past have felt uncomfortable because of the inconsistency into which they have been betrayed by their partisan alliance. They do not wish to appear unmerciful or inconsiderate. It has been difficult for them to justify to their inner selves the recognition of those in the party whose lives have been out of harmony with their profession, and the utter rejection of those whose moral conduct is spotless although their opinions do not agree with the party position. Now that we can see that brotherhood is not, and cannot be, based on absolute conformity in opinion, a more charitable attitude is being shown. We thank God and take courage because of this fact. Better days are in the offing and will be hastened by those who are committed vessels of the Spirit, meet for the Master's use.

9. What can we do to help in the crusade for unity of all believers in Christ?

There are many things for all of us to do. Community circumstances differ so widely and our personal talents and abilities are so divergent that it would be unwise and presumptuous to dogmatically set forth an approach which must be followed. This would be impractical because the same approach will not be equally effective in every region. We need to allow freedom for brethren to work in the way best suited to local needs and conditions. God can use us all, but not always in the same way. We need to be less critical and more understanding of each other. Too often we confuse motives and methods.

We should pray for the accomplishment of God's purpose and for all who are interested in and concerned about the problem of disunity and division. We should petition God to grant leaders who will not be swayed from truth by love of money, ease or popularity. We must extend the outreach of our plea. We must not selfishly hug it to our bosoms and conclude that we fulfill our responsibility if we cherish but refuse to share it. Nothing is more needful for winning the world to belief in

Jesus than the unity of those who believe in Him. This message must be heralded far and wide. The blessed and joyous day when all of God's people are one will not come merely by singing about it. Someone must first envision it as an attainable reality, then strive for it with labor and sacrifice.

We hold that every child of God is an agent of reconciliation. You are personally charged with responsibility to help bring to fruition the prayer of Jesus. If you deem our own meager effort worthy of support, we urge you to implement your thinking. Practice what you profess. We need your help to send forth this message. We labor under the constant handicap of restricted material resources. Many would hear who do not if you could help a little bit. Here are some practical ways to aid.

1. Pass the MISSION MESSENGER to your friends, relatives and brethren in Christ. Ask them to read portions of it which you feel will help them.

2. Send in a list of subscriptions from your area. Do not think that unity will come by wishful thinking. Peace must be waged by peacemakers.

3. Many of you are earning the most money you have ever received in your lives. How much of this is really being invested in a better world for your children and your children's children? If you would allot but a small amount each month to help, new names could be added from our mailing list.

Not one cent of subscription money or of that which is sent to help circulate the paper is used for personal need or gain. Every penny goes into the ministry of the printed word. We invite you to become a sharer in this service. Why not include the crusade for unity and fellowship in your personal budget for the months ahead? Let us labor together to usher in the peace for which Jesus prayed. Are you satisfied with what you are doing to promote His cause?

10. What plans do you have for future issues of the paper?

The issue for next month will contain a re-statement of our purpose and position in simple language. In June we will have a challenging article entitled, “Only One Church;” and in July a very important and timely presentation on the topic, “Analysis of Heresy.” At present we are doing research on *Agape*, the only power which can ever unite us all and hold us together. We expect to present the material on it before the year is out, and follow with a thrilling, thought-provoking series of studies on “The Rise of Factionalism.” In this last we shall attempt to show just where we detoured from the path of restoration and we predict that it will cause a great deal of comment and study. There are many good things ahead for all of us!

Unity and Identity

Mission Messenger (April 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

Will our plea for unity of all believers in Christ cause the church to lose its identity? This is an objection frequently heard. Like many other accusations it proves to be absurd when examined in the light of reason. Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers. He also planted the church. Would he pray for that which, if it came to pass, would destroy the identity of the church?

How can the church lose its identity? It is the body of Christ. He is the head of the body and the Saviour of the church. As a head, Jesus would have no significance without the body, just as the body would have no significance without Jesus. If the church should cease to be, Jesus would cease to exist as a head. That which makes him a head is his relationship to the body. So long as the head lives the body cannot die; and so long as the body lives it can be identified. That which identifies the church is its connection with Jesus. It cannot lose its identity unless it is severed from Jesus. But if it is severed from Jesus it is not the church and he is not a head.

Unconsciously, those who voice a fear the church will lose its identity under the impact of our discussions on fellowship, reveal that they are really members of a sect. It is plainly stated by Jesus that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. In plain language this means that the church which he

planted can never lose its identity. Now, if the church of our Lord cannot lose its identity and the institution to which our objectors belong can lose its identity it is evident that there is a difference between the former and latter.

The truth is that our brethren have confused the party to which they are attached with the church of God. They are frightened by the thought that all of God's children may become one, and thus put an end to their party as well as all other factions. Since they look upon their faction as the church that would be equivalent to the church losing its identity. One of the fruits of the party spirit is fear— blind, unreasoning fear. Men build walls about themselves and feel secure within their narrow confines. They lose their love for freedom. With their wings kept closely cropped by tradition and penned up inside their interpretative fences they are no longer adapted to the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

They surrender love of truth for dogmatism and barter hope of grace for legalism. Removed from the main channel of religious thought where the current flows freely they drift into bayous and sloughs where they mistake stagnation for faithfulness and placidity for loyalty. In time they come to believe that the marsh is the stream and that to dry it up would be to destroy the river. But just as a swiftly flowing stream cannot be kept within the narrow banks of a pond so truth cannot be harnessed within the limited confines of a party. When it is directed in its force against the dams men have constructed they must give way before it but this only means the merging again of the waters in the main channel.

Truth is dangerous to any party or faction. It is well for factious men to keep it out if they would keep their partisans in. They will need to apply threat and boycott if they are to survive. Every party is built on reverence for the traditions of the fathers, therefore, has its own creed. The party exists on the basis that it has discovered, embraced and enclosed all truth.

John Milton in his famous *Areopagitica*, published in 1644, points out that truth in our age is but dimly seen and imperfectly known. Those who would seek to rule with an infallible authority would confine our knowledge to this present circumference. But man has not been made to endure this tyranny. The Puritan poet writes, “The light which we have gained was given us not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge.” This statement is worthy of our consideration.

Every factional leader has the dream of “converting” all the members of every other faction to his own party. It is his aim and intention by persuasion if possible, and otherwise by coercion, to bring all into his own fold. This will never be done. The purpose of God is not served by partisan clashes or debates. All religious sectism is wrong. That includes our own. It can never be reconciled with the divine plan. It is only as the parties lose their identity and Christians divest themselves of their special brands that we will draw closer to God.

This does not require the sacrifice of a single truth by any person. We are not divided because each holds some truth but because no one of us holds it all. It is not by giving up any truth but by entering more deeply into truth that we shall find greater unity. The church will never lose its identity by searching for truth. The party which ceases to do so merely cumbars the ground. It produces no real fruit for good. It is time for all of us to realize that it is not in the defense or maintenance of parties that we serve God, but in rising above the spirit which creates such parties and gives them birth.

The church of God cannot lose its identity. This is the vain fear of those who trust in an organization rather than in the divine organism. It is an indication that men walk by sight and not by faith. Can a body lose its identity while the head still lives? Can a kingdom lose its identity while its king is seated on the throne and reigns unchallenged? Can a flock lose its identity

while the shepherd watches over it? Can a house lose its identity while it is recognized by its owner? Can a temple lose its identity while the Deity dwells within it?

If the exaltation of the name of Jesus as our rallying point means death to factionalism *let it die!* If the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus for unity spells the doom of the party *let it die!* If the advocacy of the brotherhood of all the sons of God removes the barriers, dissolves the hate and renders the sectarian spirit helpless and useless— *let it die!* Too long have men kept the family of God apart by proclaiming that the family would lose its identity if all the children came together. Too long have they predicted that the city of God would lose its identity if the breaches in the walls were repaired.

Men created parties and men can destroy them. God created the church and men are powerless to destroy it. The grave could not retain the physical body of Jesus; it can never receive his spiritual body. Will he who notes the fall of the sparrow allow the church to perish? But we are asked if our recognition of persons in other churches as brethren will not eventually cause the church to lose its identity. There are no persons in *other churches*. There is only one church. You might as well talk of belonging to other Christs or other Gods as to talk of belonging to “other churches.” If others are in a church at all they are members of the one body; if they are not members of it they are not in the church. There are many parties but there is only one church. A man can no more start a church than he can make another God or create another Spirit. There is only one body just as there is but one Lord.

It is precisely by our formation of parties that we have obscured the church. Men “see through a glass darkly” because of our sectarian conflicts. This does not mean the church has lost its identity. It is still true that “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” It is not the man who seeks to dispel the partisan fog who beclouds the church but he who confuses factionalism with

faithfulness. The church has no better friend on earth than the one who strips from its face the creedal shrouds with which men have swathed it and allows it to shine forth in the radiant and undimmed glow of spiritual oneness. No man who really believes in the purpose of God will ever entertain the thought that the bridegroom will be unable to identify his bride. Those who harbor such fears are not made perfect in love for perfect love casts out fear. Men cannot see far even on a clear day with clouded spectacles.

The Plea for Unity

Mission Messenger (May 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

This article contains a re-statement in simple language of our desire and aim. We dedicate it to all who have experienced “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” We beg of all the saints that they read it carefully and thoughtfully. Our earnest prayer is that it may serve the interests of Him “whom having not seen we love.”

For several years we have devoted a major part of this paper to a plea for unity among those who acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God. Our reason for this is the personal conviction that division among the believers is the greatest hindering factor in our attempt to convert the world to Christ. With the shadow of the cross falling over his path Jesus prayed “for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.” He stated as the purpose of such unity, “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

In view of this it would seem that any effort to lead the world to Christ which ignores the problem of disunity among the believers is doomed to failure. It will avail us little to expend partisan efforts to preach the gospel if we encourage a spirit of rivalry and sectarian bitterness. *The world will be won for Christ when all who believe are one in Christ.* It was a realization of this great fact which caused us to transform this little journal from a party organ or mouthpiece, into a crusader for peace and unity.

In thus altering our status, we incurred the wrath of some of our brethren who feel that we have deserted and betrayed them.

We love all of the brethren who oppose us. We do not question their honesty nor doubt their sincerity. We know just how they feel, for we once felt exactly the same way. They regard that segment of the disciple brotherhood of which we are members as the kingdom of heaven. None outside of it are children of God, as they view the matter. It is treason to talk about anyone being a Christian who is not in the party. Now I no longer concur in such reasoning. I think that the sheep of God are scattered over the sectarian hills. I believe that God still has a people in Babylon. I am driven by a deep yearning to help lead them to a better future, not by denying that they are brethren, but by loving them as brethren. I am sincere in this conviction. I have reached it after years of study and meditation!

I am saddened because when I extend my love to others, some are thereby motivated to hate and attack me. I cannot quit loving, lest I quit living, for life in the Spirit is love. I refuse to indulge in hate even for those who seek to undermine and destroy my influence. I prefer to pray for them and help them in any manner within my power. Most of them have never understood our plea. They have imagined a great many things.

They have predicted dire results. We trust that God will permit us to live and prove how vain and empty are these speculations.

It was never our intention to hurt any of our brethren, but rather to help all of them. We have sought to share with them our maturing ideas as we grew in grace and knowledge of the truth, and that for their good. Most of us are sincerely striving to reach heaven. We are not religious gangsters bent upon destroying that for which Jesus died. Even when we differ it is because of an earnest desire to cling more closely unto Him who died for us. We are all human, frail, weak, and even sinful. All of

us have been too factional and exclusive in attitude. We have been taught to be so, and conditioned for that kind of life. We are all victims of the party spirit in a greater or lesser degree. I have sought to find the way by which I could conquer this evil tendency in my life.

Unfortunately, and for this we express regret and tender our apologies, we are not always able to communicate unto others our innermost feelings. We cannot bring ourselves to believe that any of God's children would deliberately choose to misunderstand a brother who loves them. We prefer to think that we have somehow failed to present the message in a way they can grasp. Because of an urgency to enlist all in the noble work of peace and unity, we are thus prompted to repeat a great deal. While this may make our regular readers impatient we feel it is justified because of those who have recently been introduced to the paper, and to further help those who, in the past, have sought to understand our position but without success.

We must lead gently. All of us are on the way out of an undesirable state, yet we are filled with fears for our safety. We did not create the condition in which we have been reared, but we inherited it. All of us are what we have been taught to be. We love and respect our fathers. We do not easily cast off any of their influence in our lives. From childhood we have revered certain preachers. Their arguments and explanations are almost sacred unto us. To admit that they were in error in any of these things appears like questioning the very revelation of God, since we've heard them say so often, "This is what the Bible teaches." It is not always easy to separate their interpretation from what God spoke, for they have been our interpreters. Many of us have almost felt that we had an infallible interpretation. Yet there have always been differences among us.

Needed Changes

What approach are we making to the problem? How does it differ from what we used to think and say? These are good questions. I should like to face up to them once more. We pray that those who have read after us regularly will not be discouraged by our need to repeat so frequently. Certainly we have made some changes. It is unthinkable that one would not grow in twenty years. But growth means change. How often do we say of a growing boy, "He has changed until I hardly knew him." It is not always wrong to change. It is wrong not to change if you learn better. Actually, there never can be unity among a divided people unless there are changes made. All of us rejoice when others change and come closer to our views. Resentment comes only when one with whom we are associated alters in any respect. If others change and approach our position, they are sincere seekers after truth; if one of our number changes, he is unstable and a traitor.

It is hard for us to be fair and just. When someone is forced, through anguish of mind and deep study, to amend his views, we cannot give him personal credit for honesty. We look about for some exterior influence. We conclude that he came under the power of some other person who possessed great ability, and through love for that other person was led astray. We infer that he would have remained "sound" and "faithful" if another had not woven a spell about him. Actually, we just cannot understand how a person can be honest and not see everything just as we have always seen it. We assume that one who does not is either ignorant or insincere. We constantly seek to influence as many others as possible, and when we are successful, the one who lines up with us is always a person of deep conviction. If one defects from our party it is because of an unworthy motive, such as love of money or prestige.

We make no allowance for spiritual growth or progress. We conclude that all progression in the faith is digression from it. Thus we build our party walls higher with each generation, and petrify the hearts of those who dwell inside them. Religion

becomes a kind of soul-chilling performance of ritual, observed by those who are suspicious of each other. Faithfulness to God is measured by the number of services attended each week, and the amount of money contributed. No real impact is made upon the world. Division is rife among the saints. I doubt that any of us would deny this state of affairs exists, nor would we defend it. We continue in it because we have been trained to believe that stolid endurance of such a condition is being faithful to God and loyal to the cause!

I do not believe that! When a condition is out of harmony with God's plan, it is not the one who continues in it, but the one who changes it, who is faithful to God. Division among brethren is wrong. It is sinful! To continue in a wrong state does not make us either right or faithful. But what can we do about it? Here is the crux of the situation. The problem is so big and complex it makes the average person feel powerless and futile. He resigns himself to doing nothing, for fear that he will make things worse. He resolves to sit down in his party and be faithful and trust to God to save him, even if all the rest are damned. I know how he feels, for I am an average person. And I felt that way for years.

I now know that such an attitude will not save me at all. It is a surrender to Satan. Jesus prayed for all believers to be one. He died on the cross to make it possible. He did all within his power to answer his prayer. If I am to work with Jesus I must labor for unity. I must pray for it and do something about it. I can never be content for God's children to be separated from each other. So long as they are, the will of God cannot be done on earth as it is in heaven. Peace is never an accident. Peace is made. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

Thinking Unity

As I view it, we have been lulled into thinking we are

helpless to offset the existing state of division. So long as we thus think, we will do nothing about it. This is actually working against God's great design. Someone must restore the vision of a united people. Everything in the universe began with an idea. There can be no accomplishment without an idea, or an ideal. So long as we think in terms of division, we must expect divisions to occur. We are what we are today because of what we thought yesterday. We are just where our thinking has brought us now; we will be where our thinking takes us tomorrow. If we would better conditions we must alter our thinking. We have division because we thought in terms of division; we can only have unity when we think in terms of unity.

We should admit the greatness of our problem, and we should be aware of our own weakness. But we should never be so weak that we do not tackle the problem. Much of what passes for weakness may be either indifference or cowardice. Things will not be made better by one big man working at the top, but by a lot of little folk like ourselves digging away at the bottom. There is a mountain of debris which has accumulated. It has been piled high by tradition and teaching. It must be removed before we can really rebuild the walls of Zion. Every shovel full, every basket full, that is carted away, shortens the task just that much for those who follow us. Besides that, God will work with us, for we will be doing His will. It is not the will of God that His children engage in strife and division. He is not the author of confusion, but of peace. He will help the peacemakers who are called His children.

Of course, we must always be careful. We must guard against the tendency to allow anxiety for unity with God's children to cause us to go too far. We must not become more charitable than God. In these days many tremble with fear about the future. They are afraid that when restraints and restrictions are cast aside, we will be swept away by a flood. The party lines are looked upon as dikes to hold back an angry ocean. If such were the case, we should constantly labor to

heighten and strengthen the barrier. But the walls we seek to remove are not those which sever us from an alien and sinful world, but the ones we've erected inside against brethren. Some of these are spite fences kept up by those who forget why they were originally constructed. Let us maintain the fortress against sin and Satan, but work to remove the walls that separate brethren from each other.

We are asked what will happen when we let the bars down. My answer is that many of these bars should not have been put up in the first place. There has been a great deal of senseless and needless division which has produced an aftermath of bitterness. The bars we seek to remove are not those erected against evils, but the ones which keep brethren apart. The reason we are separated in many cases is because some have been forced out. They are in other parties, or segments, because we have driven them from us. Our interest is not to let down the bars to things, but to remove them from between brethren, so that we can again sit down as equals and examine our differences. It is not our intention to have any person compromise or weaken his conviction on any point, but while holding to that point, to regard those who differ as brethren beloved in the Lord.

Our Present Purpose

Our hope is not so much that we can eliminate all of the divisive factors, as that we may offset the divisive spirit. We are seeking to create a proper atmosphere for discussion. In the past our discussions have often encouraged prejudice and partisan bitterness. They have been carried on in a highly charged emotional state. We feel that we need to approach our grave differences in calmness. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." We cannot argue ourselves into unity nor debate ourselves into peace. If we can once see that our differences do not destroy brotherhood, we can then examine them in mutual regard for each other as children of the same

Father. In such a state of affairs we will not widen gaps even if we do not lessen tensions. In the past we have often faced each other as enemies and every encounter has pushed us farther apart. We believe that if we meet with love and respect for each other, the very act of meeting will bring us closer to each other.

We are often asked if we have any right to open up anew those matters which have long ago been settled. Our answer is that nothing is ever settled in the spiritual realm until it is settled in harmony with God's will. It is not God's will that we be divided, and to reach a stalemate where we agree to maintain division without again trying to remedy the situation is not to settle, but to unsettle the saints of God. No Christian can ever regard our present divided state with an easy conscience. He must be troubled at heart, he must be disturbed in mind. And he must be constantly at work to bring about the conditions for which Jesus prayed. We are not re-opening that which is a closed book, for God does not close the book while His family is apart and alienated from one another.

We hold that to reverse the situation which confronts us we must start with those things which we hold in common, and use them as a foundation for approach to our differences. If we do not, we have no solid ground upon which to stand. We do not suggest that we merely forget our differences and act as if they were of no consequence, or that we simply shake hands and agree to disagree. We believe that differences should be recognized, brought into the open, and discussed freely, but the discussions should be carried on as becomes brethren in the Lord. We should never slam the door shut. We should always be ready and willing to meet and review any matter, even though such a meeting seems doomed to failure in advance.

What Is Fellowship?

Under no circumstance should we allow honest differences

of interpretation or opinion to affect our view of fellowship. It is here we have all made a tragic error in the past. We were taught that fellowship was equivalent to endorsement, and that to be in fellowship with one was to be in complete agreement with him. It is true that we were inconsistent but we rationalized in such a manner as to satisfy ourselves and stifle conscience. Such a view of fellowship is in error, and we need to alter our position so we can be in harmony with the word of God. To be in the fellowship with a man does not mean you endorse all of his ideas or actions. It does not mean that you share all of his views and opinions.

Fellowship is a state or condition which we enter in response to the call of God (1 Cor. 1:9). It is a relationship we enjoy as “fellows” or brothers. Every person who is in Christ is in the fellowship. Not all who are in the fellowship agree upon every matter. Perhaps no two of them do so. But they did not enter the fellowship through mutual agreement or understanding on all points. They entered it through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and an expressed obedience to that faith in baptism. Every sincere baptized believer is in the fellowship. This has been true since the planting of the church of God on earth.

It is important to remember that the word “fellowship” is a noun. It is never used as a verb. We should not belittle such truths, because it is necessary that we employ sound speech. We do not want to confuse others, and to avoid doing so, we must not only use the language of the Spirit, but must do it in the same manner in which the Spirit has used it. Thus, we should not say that we fellowship a certain person. We are in the fellowship with certain persons. We never ask, “Do you partnership him?” or “Do you companionship him”? By the same token we should not ask, “Do you fellowship him”? To do so, removes fellowship from a state or condition and reduces it to an act. It then becomes something which we may extend or withdraw, when, in reality, it is a state into which we enter. That is why the expression “withdraw fellowship” is not in the

scriptures.

We do not “fellowship” things, or ideas, or doctrines. Fellowship is a relation between persons, like brotherhood or partnership. The word “fellow” shows this. It is from a word meaning “a companion” or “one who shares.” We do not fellowship societies, instrumental music, Bible classes, individual cups, etc. I mention this because of the common error of many of my good brethren who have been conditioned by long practice to misuse the word in such a manner. We need to purify our speech if we would please God.

The implication of what we have said is simply this. Fellowship is not a state that is entered because of a position on the things that have been allowed to divide us. We come into the fellowship by response to the call of God. Anyone who makes the proper response to that call enters the fellowship. He may not even know there has been division created by an attitude toward certain things. He may be unaware that God’s family is rent or divided. Just as the fellowship is not entered by a view of these issues, and because of that, it is our contention that it is not broken or destroyed by an opinion on these matters. Fellowship is brotherhood. Brotherhood is the result of common Fatherhood. Disagreements with each other about certain things do not remove us from the family. The term used to describe the family relationship of God’s children is “fellowship.”

It is at this juncture I have been most often misunderstood. I can see why it is difficult for good brethren to grasp what I am saying. They have been taught for several generations that fellowship is something extended or withdrawn by a congregation and that it is an attitude toward certain things over which we are divided. I sympathize with the problems posed for them by my writings because I once felt just as they do. I taught many of them the very things they now quote to me. But I was wrong, seriously wrong, and I am sorry. I did the best I knew as I still do but I had a mistaken idea about fellowship which I had

inherited. I am now trying to correct it and it is not easy for those to accept who sat under my teaching in an earlier day.

Source of Division

I now know that my former view was divisive in its tendency. Most of our divisions in these days probably stem directly, or indirectly, from a mistaken view about fellowship. I do not want to be a party to division among my brethren. I want only to be a humble instrument to plead for peace and unity. This means that I must regard fellowship in a different light. It is to offset division and strife that I have written so much about fellowship in recent years. I do not feel that we can do a great deal toward leading the world to believe in Jesus until we can bring the children of God together.

I have thus far been unable to convey my thoughts in such a manner as to convince the brethren that there is a difference between fellowship and endorsement. That is why many of them in their anger because of my personal plea accuse me of endorsing all of the things I once opposed. Actually, I have not changed at all on any of the things I opposed. For example, take the question of instrumental music. I consider myself more strongly opposed to its use in the corporate worship of the saints than ever before. But fellowship is a relation to persons and not to things. The change I have made is not in reference to the things that have divided, but to those who are divided. Once I did not regard them as brethren. Now I have a deep and abiding love for them. I have no half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord so I move among all of my brethren with love and compassion. Like Paul, I commend what I can and what I cannot commend I do not. But, like the apostle, I do not measure fellowship in terms of what I can or cannot commend.

I am not so unrealistic as to think that we'll settle such problems as the use of instrumental music in my lifetime, nor do

I feel that I have either the wisdom or the power to do so. I am not sure the time would be ripe for any radical adjustment one way or another. I do know that my previous attitude only made the rift greater and encouraged the party spirit with its train of prejudice and I am sorry for the years in which I was working against God's purpose instead of for it. My present approach is not to engage in debate over the divisive issues but to establish a proper atmosphere for calm reasoning in love. It appears that factional debates have only cemented partisan prejudices and have contributed little real good. As conducted in the past they have left a trail of bitterness and passion in their wake which was not good.

I have used instrumental music to illustrate my point, not because I wish to emphasize it unduly nor make it appear that it is any worse than the host of other things which divide us from each other. But it does seem to be the criterion of "fellowship" for many and if my position will span this rift and allow me to regard as my brethren those on both sides of such a wide chasm it will certainly be effective in lesser areas. As I see it I am not commanded or obligated by God's revelation to love the instrument. I am under the orders of heaven to love my brethren. If I allow anything to influence me not to love them, that thing will destroy me even if I oppose it. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

The point at issue with me is not so much whether instrumental music in worship is of God or the devil. I have some brethren who affirm it is of God, others that it is of the devil, others who do not know, and still others who do not care. Those who are interested on both sides quote scriptural passages to sustain their views. Frequently they use the same passages—one to prove it is of God, the other to show it is of the devil. What concerns me primarily as of the present is whether those who use it are brethren. If they are and I refuse to regard them as brethren, or if I do not love them as such, then I am of the devil regardless of where instrumental music originated. "By

this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

Light and Darkness

It is a favorite blackboard exercise of a lot of my brethren to put two circles on the board, one bearing the label “light” and the other “darkness.” In the first of these they put a list of things approved of God; in the second a list of things which God (or themselves) will not sanction. No two factions will place exactly the same list of things in either circle. Every group has its own party catalogue of things designated “darkness.” It will be generally admitted that few of these are actually named in the word of God. They are included because the party thinks that God implied them in certain passages. They oppose them and feel that God must do the same.

However it is the motive which these brethren have in mind that should cause us to tremble. Their purpose in listing under “darkness” the various and sundry matters over which we are divided is to “draw the line” against sincere brethren who disagree with them. They then quote and misapply the statement. “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.” This becomes the ground for un-Christianizing men over instrumental music, missionary societies, colleges, orphan homes, individual cups, leavened bread, fermented wine, unfermented wine, Bible classes, etc. On this basis they deny brotherhood to all those who cannot pronounce their “shibboleth.” Now the strange thing is that God has drawn no circles into which He has placed the things named. He has said little, if anything, about most of them. But he did draw a circle called darkness and put someone in it. “He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still.”

This positively demonstrates that one may place himself in

the circle of light and be in the other circle. I have never known one of my brethren to draw these circles in order to put themselves in the one titled “darkness.” They are always in the one called “light” and just about everyone else outside of the faction is in the one designated “darkness.” It is interesting to note that in most of this blackboard art the circles are made the same size. This indicates an improper sense of proportion. It would not take a very big circle to envelop all who are admittedly in the factional “light” but the other circle would need to be large indeed.

In God’s circles of “light” and “darkness” there are, of course, two categories. “He who loves his brother abides in the light” (1 John 2:10). “He who hates his brother is in the darkness” (verse 11). It will be admitted that one can oppose instrumental music and hate his brother. Such a person is in darkness, not because of his position on instrumental music but because of his attitude toward his brother. It will also be admitted that one may endorse instrumental music and love his brother fervently. Is he in the light? If not, have we set up a double standard? I rather suspect that we are in dangerous business legislating on matters of light and darkness for the express purpose of excluding good and sincere brethren, even when they are mistaken about a lot of things. This is a demonstration of the carnal spirit and a work of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are plain . . . selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy . . .” (Gal. 5:19, 20). In short, to draw a circle of darkness for the purpose of excluding your brethren is the surest way to place yourself in that circle.

A Practical Approach

Because of my inability to make myself clear in print a lot of fine brethren have concluded that I was advocating a general mixing and mingling of everyone regardless of personal conviction or conscience. Nothing could be farther from the

truth. I would not compromise my conviction nor even suggest that one should violate his conscience. But we do have a divided state of affairs. None of us like it, all of us are saddened by it. We must, however, be practical and realize that it is of long standing. It will not be corrected over night, nor for several generations. It may never be fully corrected in the ideal sense. God had to suffer and tolerate many things with which he was not pleased until the time was ripe for their correction. We must be like God, and exercise patience. But God was always working toward an inevitable solution, and we must also do that.

There are many areas in which we can work together even though we cannot do so in all areas. We should not allow the few points of difference to offset the many points of agreement. If we do unity will never be possible because even one minor point of divergency will keep us apart. It seems to me that the essential thing right now is to respect and treat each other as brethren. If one comes to my meeting who is allied with another faction I will be courteous unto him. I will have no hesitancy to call upon him to direct the prayer. This does not mean that I endorse all he believes or does, or that I consider him as being right on everything. I never did call upon one to lead in prayer to whom I would give a blanket endorsement. And if one must be right on everything before he can pray I will have to cease praying. It is precisely because of my failures and shortcomings that I want to pray, and need to do so.

Where to Begin

I feel we can do much toward ushering in a better day if we actually practice non-sectarian Christianity. This means setting the table of the Lord where we worship for all immersed believers whose lives are in harmony with the ethics of Jesus. It should be made clear that we receive and recognize, to sit at the feast with us, all whom the Lord receives and invites. No tests of fellowship should be made which are not specifically designated

as such by our Lord himself. This is merely another way of saying that we should make nothing a test of fellowship which He has not made a condition of salvation.

We have been accused of advocating a policy which will lead to endorsement and recognition of the sects. The brethren who make such an assertion wholly misunderstand our aim and intent. We regard all sectism as a work of the flesh. The very spirit which gave rise to the sects is evil and sinful. It is carnal. We are opposed to the creation and maintenance of any sect. We contend that all sects should be uprooted and abolished. We are set for the destruction of the sectarian attitude. It is because of that very thing that we want to see all of God's children rescued from its tyranny. We propose to be not only non-sectarian but also anti-sectarian. Yet while we deplore and hate sectism we love our brethren who have been ensnared in it.

We want to see them free from the blighting, chilling effect of all sectism. To that end we dedicate our efforts and our thoughts. We cannot lead others from sectism by becoming sectarian.

In closing we implore all of our brethren to be patient and loving. Let us not indulge in false accusations against each other. If we have differences let us meet like men and resolve them in discussions across the table, under the warming influence of brotherly affection. None of us want to be lost. We are not dishonest nor malicious. Life is hard enough for all of us without adding to our problems. Let us find the way to peace and walk in it! What good can possibly come by bitterly attacking each other and indulging in personal thrusts? What is to be gained for the cause we love by speaking evil of those who are hundreds of miles away? Let us deal with issues, and not attack men. The issues will still live on when our bones have crumbled into dust.

I am ready and willing to go at my own expense, as long as I am able and God permits, and meet with any who sincerely

differ with my position. I will pray with them, converse with them, and reason with them in love in the hope that the Spirit may work in and through us to achieve greater things. If we cannot come to agreement I will not widen the gap between us. When I leave I will love those who cannot agree with me as much as I do those who concur in my views. We can undo the strife of the past, we can conquer the party spirit of the present, we can promote peace on earth among men of good will in the future! Let us thus serve our generation before we fall asleep and our children will rise up to call us blessed!

Preaching Christ

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

The problems created by schism and strife in our contemporary religious scene are many and varied. Faced with such complexity the reaction of some is to ignore the condition and “just preach Christ.” This is like a doctor who spends his time lecturing on good health while an epidemic sweeps the land. It is like a man who tries to sell his neighbor insurance while his own house is on fire. Few there are in our land who have not heard of Jesus. Millions believe that he is the Messiah and God’s Son. His name is magnified in thousands of pulpits every week. His gracious attributes are daily described on hundreds of radios.

The believers are rent and torn because of the party spirit. They do not know that sectism is a work of the flesh. They have grown up in circumstances they have never investigated. They are victims of inherited conditions they have never questioned. They are not conscious of the fact that the very existence of divergent denominations is in opposition to the essence of the Christian way. We will not change this status by “preaching Christ” to the occasional hearer from another group who drops in upon one of our meetings out of courtesy. We will make no great impact upon the world at large by merely immersing our own children.

We need to face up to the fact that as Paul declared, “some

proclaim Christ out of partisanship” (Phil. 1:17). We belong to Christ but he does not belong to us. Let us cease to look upon honest believers about us as pagans and heathen. Let us cease to regard them as apostates and heretics. These words are misused when applied to sincere believers in our Lord Jesus Christ who are mistaken about the implication of certain scriptural passages. Can we lead other men to Christ while we cannot live together with those already in him? Shall we preach Christ and practice division? Dare we pray for men to believe in Jesus while we forget his own prayer for those who do believe in him? Does not our proclaiming Christ lay upon us the responsibility to answer his prayer for one-ness of those who accept that proclamation? Perhaps the greatest problem that faces us is not that Christ is not preached, but as it was in the days of Rome, men “proclaim Christ out of partisanship”? Are we as anxious to see people saved as to have them see things like we do?

The Human Factor

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[Abstract]

The problem of division in the ranks of the believers is one of the major problems of our day. Men tend to react in different ways when confronted with such a problem. Some close their eyes and try to ignore it. Others attempt to minimize its importance and make it appear that the solution lies in the emphasis of something else. Still others seek to isolate and insulate themselves from reality by erecting a wall around themselves and the party with which they are allied. Such tactics are actually forms of escapism. They stem from fear and frustration. They are the resort of immature minds.

The problem must be faced for God has laid upon us a solemn responsibility to do something about it. He has committed those whom he designates his sons to the task of making peace. This entails more than simply being inclined toward peace or being on the side of peace as opposed to division. It involves more than thinking about peace or desiring peace and praying for it. One may do all of these and still do little to really create peace. The peacemaker must analyze the problem of division, endeavor to understand the motivations of the past which have caused it, and he must direct his energy and talent in creativity to bring about a state of unity.

I say he *must* do this because any responsibility enjoined by God has to be met, either in this life or in the one to come. We

cannot finally evade an answer to the problem for we must either arrive at an answer here, or we shall arrive at the place where we must answer for our failure. To be a peacemaker means more than reading a journal which advocates peace or endorsing the work of another who labors for it. It means a personal commitment to a task with the expenditure of time, effort and energy required to achieve it. It requires a persistent and consistent attempt to lessen every area of tension. He who would be called a child of God must be a peacemaker!

This is an age of conformity, postponement and substitution. No one wants to be regarded as different. No one desires to be designated a radical. There is a conspiracy of timid souls to maintain the status quo. The problems of life are put off until another day, or something else more in keeping with the wishes and desires of the people is substituted in the hope that it will provide an opiate to drug the senses and quiet the throbbing conscience. But the world is in a topsy-turvy state. The same holds true for the church. The present condition is opposed to the divine plan and purpose. We cannot attain unto God's will by perpetuating our status. We must change it. There is a sacred imperative to do something that will bring us to a state more in harmony with the divine will.

Unfortunately reformers are always deterred by the threat of being labeled as traitors and radicals. We must come to realize, however, that one who is loyal to a party may betray the cause of Christ. The party spirit is a work of the flesh. The real traitor is the one who claims to be faithful to the ideals of Jesus while motivated by narrow partisanship. As for being a radical, perhaps that is what we need most of all. The word is from the Latin *radix*, a root. It is from this we get our word radish. A radical is one who gets to the root of things. He is not satisfied to meander through life dealing only with superficial matters. Jesus was a real radical. His teaching was a little too radical for some of the people in his day on earth; it is still too radical for many in the church.

When we get to the root of the question of division among the believers it will be seen that our problem is one of human relationships. In this connection J. B. Phillips writes: "The deep fundamental problems of human life are really neither intellectual nor technical; they are always in the last resort problems of human relationship." The case can be summarized in a few brief sentences. Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross to remove walls of partition and to make men one in him. He prayed for the oneness of all who believe in him on the testimony or the apostles. Those who believe in him are rent and torn. Schism and division are rife in our world.

Thus our present state is opposed to the purpose of the cross. It is a contradiction of the prayer of Jesus. Why is the religious world in this condition? Perhaps there is no simple answer. No doubt many complex forces and factors contribute to it. One thing is obvious, we are just what our thinking has made us. We have not thought as God thinks or we would be united. We have developed a philosophy which is counter to God's purpose. In pursuing it we have fractured ourselves into numerous segments and factions.

It is a common assumption that all divisions are caused by deviations from a divine pattern, either by adding something God has not commanded or by deliberately omitting something he has demanded. This generalization like so many others is not true. Many of those things which are credited with creating division did not create it at all. The alienation of heart already existed and the first thing that was presented which could be magnified into a rallying standard was seized upon and emphasized until the open rupture came. The real cause was the clash of temperaments, the selfish desire to dominate and domineer. It was not so much a matter of principles in many cases as of personalities.

A frequent source of difficulty is the tendency of man to legislate his opinions into law. He then seeks to bind these

opinions upon others and those who refuse to be bound are driven forth. When modes and methods are hallowed by traditional practice, it is easy for partisans to believe that the early saints practiced a procedure because the party practices it. "The pattern" is not so much bound upon us by the early church as it is bound upon the early church by our practice. The interpretations of certain fathers of the party become the norm and constitute the criteria by which everyone is to be measured including the new covenant writers. The holy word has been utilized to prove about anything and everything that men want to do.

J. B. Phillips again writes: "Although in the heated atmosphere of the revival meeting the phrase 'the Bible says' may carry fervent conviction, the intelligent man who has read the Bible knows perfectly well it can be made to say a lot of things, and that, as a matter of sober history, witch-hunting, slave-owning, and the inhuman practice of *apartheid* have all been justified by reference to the same Bible."

It is doubtful that we can eliminate the human factor from our divisions. These generally result not so much from cool rational discussion in love, but from heated emotional argument in hate. Men cannot learn to live together until they first learn how to live. Our rifts will be healed and our barriers removed when each member of the body learns what it means to say "To live is Christ." It may be true that many of our parties have originated from a desire to be faithful or loyal but it is a misplaced loyalty. No man can prove his loyalty to Jesus by separating from his brethren because Jesus positively forbids it through the teaching of the apostles. To be loyal to Jesus one must continue to love all of the brethren, not just those who see everything as he does.

Our divisions are monuments to our tragic failure. Their very existence bears mute testimony to our spiritual immaturity. They proclaim to all the world that we are still babes, that we

are carnal and walk as men. So long as these divisions continue we all rest under the stigma created by our own selfishness and littleness, “for while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?” It is useless to boast of our progress and gains in the spiritual realm so long as strife exists, for while it exists we are of the flesh. We are not extraordinary men, we are merely ordinary men! The only hope of clearing ourselves is by cleaning up the condition.

Our schisms are witness to our lack of real regard for Jesus. Nothing can be elevated as a basis or test of fellowship without first reducing Jesus to a position that is inferior and secondary. When the apostle was dealing with the schismatic state of the Corinthian congregation he declared, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” He did not mean that no one could emphasize anything else for men were doing just that. He did mean that no one could lay any other foundation of unity and fellowship. The very existence of the parties among us shows that those who have proclaimed the loudest their loyalty to Jesus have been building on other foundations.

Our first major task is to recapture the sense of commitment to Jesus. When our life is “hid with Christ in God” the love of God will be shed abroad in our hearts. Brethren will become of greater importance to us than opinions, ideas or methods. We shall no longer be so much concerned as to whether men are conformed to us as that they are transformed by him. We shall cease to make laws and bind them upon others, but we will be bound to them by the one word which fulfills the whole law— *love!* We need not love Jesus the less because we love more of the brethren.

We hear much about following “the pattern” but God has not given us a pattern of separation, segregation and division. When primitive saints became disunited they were not blessed but condemned. When schisms arose the apostle did not select

one party as “the faithful church” for no party is the church. Those who would follow the pattern must walk in love toward the brethren. The pattern is one of cohesion not of division. Those who demand a scripture for what they do should cite the scripture upon which they acted in dividing from their brethren. It is not to be found. God is not double-tongued. He does not command unity among brethren in one verse and urge division among them in the next. Here is what *the pattern* says, “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

The Perfect Church

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[Abstract]

Many casual students of the primitive church have a very distorted picture of conditions prevailing among the early disciples. There is a widespread notion that perfect agreement prevailed upon all matters, that a specific pattern was immediately given and that all concurred in it without discussion or deviation. This viewpoint is unrealistic and contrary to fact.

Those who first acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Christ were Jews. They brought with them into their new relationship the prejudices and partisan ideas which had motivated them in the past. There is no indication that they ever intended to become “a church of Christ.” It is far more probable that they expected to constitute a synagogue of Messianic Jews with a membership composed of those who regarded Jesus of Nazareth as having fulfilled “what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets.” Certainly it was not their intention to allow anyone to participate with them who had never been circumcised. It was some of their own members who went to foreign cities and taught the Gentile converts that “unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses you cannot be saved.”

Peter did not understand the full implication of his own words spoken under impulse of the Spirit when he declared that “the promise is unto . . . all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God doth call.” Several years later when the

time had arrived to share the promise with some who were “afar off” it was necessary for God to perform a miracle upon him before he would take the good news to a Gentile. Even during the trance into which he fell Peter hastened to remind God that he had been orthodox with reference to kosher foods. When he returned from his mission, happy to be back again with the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem, he was censured by the circumcision party in the congregation for going to visit and eating with uncircumcised men. He hastened to assure them that it was not his idea, and that it was either go or withstand God, so he went.

The believers still worshipped daily in the temple and retained their membership in the synagogues. Many years later the elders of the congregation at Jerusalem pointed out to Paul “how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law.” They urged Paul to engage in a certain temple ritual so “all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law.” Paul actually circumcised Timothy because of the Jews in the area surrounding his home “for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

Not only was there race prejudice with reference to the uncircumcised but there was provincial feeling between Hebrews and Hellenists. The former were Palestinian Jews and more rigid in their separation and exclusiveness. The others had grown up in Greek-speaking areas of the Roman Empire and were bi-lingual. One of the first areas of tension among the disciples in Jerusalem arose over a charge of favoritism. The Hellenists charged the Hebrews with being partial in the daily distribution of food commodities.

But does not the record say “the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul”? Indeed it does but we must not interpret this to mean that they had no problems of adjustment, no controversies or variations of opinion. They were

one because of their recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. They were a company of men and women who realized that in their very city “there were gathered together . . . against Jesus . . . both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel.” They were one because they shared in the hope kindled by his resurrection and because “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” But they were still in the flesh and subject to human frailty and shortcomings.

Perhaps the “perfect church” has never existed anywhere on earth. True, we have an infallible God, a perfect Savior, and a complete revelation. But we are the church. We are the members who constitute the one body. And we are in various stages of growth. Not one of us is perfect. The perfect church is an ideal toward which each generation must strive in the light of the revelation. “We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone.” But it is still true that “the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” Let us not become discouraged by our failures and weaknesses. Let us do our best and believe that through his grace and the cleansing power of his blood, Jesus may yet “present the church to himself all glorious, with no stain or wrinkle or anything of the sort.” This will be the Lord’s doing— not ours— and it will be marvelous in our sight!

Only One Church

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[Abstract]

I have been preparing the material for this article or preparing myself for the material for many months. In the article I shall say some things which are long overdue. It is not my intention to be sensational yet much of what is said will appear challenging to our former concepts and expressions. The casual reader laboring under the curse of unconcern will not take the time nor make a real effort to grasp the significance of what is written. The traditionalist and partisan will bristle with resentment at what is read. But the eager student of revelation, maintaining an open mind and motivated by a sincere desire to know the will of God, will critically examine our thesis in the light of the language of the Spirit. It is to such we must look for honest criticism and we invite all such to express themselves to us freely so that we may examine what they say and eliminate the flaws and fallacies which show up in our thinking.

I never write to create controversy but to express honest conviction. "Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe, and so we speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). Still when varied views are presented research is stimulated and this encourages statement of divergent ideas. This is good for thereby we learn from each other. It is our desire that all who cannot in good conscience share our views write us the reasons why such is the case. We promise to scrutinize carefully all that is offered. With the

preliminaries disposed of we now propose an examination of the nature of the church of God. It would be more factual to say that this is a re-examination since the subject has been so frequently discussed in the past.

The word “church” is the term employed by translators of the sacred scriptures to express in English the idea contained in the Greek *ekklesia*. In every instance but one in which “church” occurs in the King James Version it is a translation of *ekklesia*. The single exception is Acts 19:37, where a more literal rendering would be “plunderers of temples,” rather than “robbers of churches.” The Revised Standard Version is more nearly correct in its employment of the term “sacrilegious.” “You have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.”

The word *ekklesia* is a combined form of two words: *ek*, out; and *kaleo*, to call. The term signifies those who are called out and by that very same act are gathered or called together. In the old covenant scriptures two Hebrew words were employed to signify the gathering together of the people of God— the Israelites. The word *edhah* which in a secular sense was used to refer to the harvest which was a gathering of the sheaves or vintage and to recruiting of the people for a specific task such as war, is from a root meaning “gathering.”

In the Septuagint which was a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures made some two hundred years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, *edhah* is translated by *sunagoge*, bringing together. In the Revised Version this is generally rendered “congregation.”

The other Hebrew word *tahal* is from a root form meaning “to call or summon.” It is understood that those who are summoned will come together; that is, gather at the place and for the purpose for which they were summoned. The Greeks had a term akin to this and applied to an assembly of citizens of a

city-state. Such an assembly was not a mere collection of inhabitants in the *agora*, or marketplace, nor a casual convening of a group for discussion or debate. It referred to a proper assembly of qualified and accredited citizens possessed of credentials and the right of franchise, called out or summoned to meet for decision on matters of state. The Greek term for such an assembly was *ekklesia*.

Where the word *tahal* occurs in the Jewish scriptures the Septuagint uses *ekklesia* as the Greek equivalent. And where this word occurs in the ancient oracles the Revised Standard Version employs the term “assembly.” It is noteworthy that the King James translators never once employ the word “church” in the old covenant scriptures although once in the new covenant writings they do refer to Israel as “the church in the wilderness.” The reason is obvious. Stephen was quoting from the Septuagint Version as most students realize, so used the word “ekklesia.” Of even greater interest is the fact that the RSV drops the word “church” at this place and says, “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Yet, wherever the word *ekklesia* occurs, relating to the assembly of the saints, the same translators used the word “church” instead of “congregation.”

Pursuing this study of linguistics in order to lay a foundation for our principal theme, it must be mentioned that the word “church” is not an adequate translation of *ekklesia* at all. There is nothing in it which signifies a calling out or calling together. It has no connection with either an assemblage or a congregation. It came into our English language as an abbreviation of a wholly different term, *kuriou oikos*. This originally referred to a manor house owned by a feudal lord. It thus means literally “the house of a lord.” While it is true that the *ekklesia* of God is “the house of the living God,” the word for house does not translate *ekklesia*. A recognition of the inappropriateness of the word “church” prompted Alexander Campbell, in the version *Living Oracles* to substitute the word

“congregation” wherever the word “church” appears in the Common Version. Hugh J. Schonfield, in his *Authentic Version* uses the word “community.” This is probably the best translation of the word.

The King James translators use the word “church” because it has acquired a certain ecclesiastical meaning. It is a professional term sanctioned by the clergy. It did not have such a connotation in the days before the rise of the so-called “Christian clergy” so the same translators never use it in the old covenant scriptures. There they faithfully render the equivalent Hebrew terms by “assembly” or “congregation.” Such reasoning as this will be lost upon many of our contemporary religionists. They are not so much concerned about the rightness of things as in defending what they have whether it is right or wrong. Instead of “searching the scriptures daily to see whether these things be so,” they invest their time in condemning those who dare to question their traditions.

It is from a recognition of this mental bias that we herein use the word “church” which has become sanctified by repeated usage despite its inappropriateness. We must “speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of the flesh.” We have no desire to wound the conscience of the weak nor drive from us those who cannot concur in our findings. But in our discussion of “the church” we have our own mental reservations regarding the term even though we defer out of regard for the brethren to their opinions on the matter. Let us, then, in this thesis use the word “church” as a translation of *Ekklesia*.

That original term in the new covenant scriptures designates all of the called of God without a single exception. Every person on this earth who has responded to the divine call is by a divine act constituted a part of the *ekklesia*. It is impossible to conceive of one of the elect being outside the *ekklesia*. Every person who has been called out of darkness has by the same token been called into the light. One cannot be

called out of darkness and not be called into light, for otherwise he would still be in darkness. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, *God’s own people*, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people” (1 Pet. 2:9, 10). The *ekklesia* is composed of God’s people. All who are numbered among God’s people are in the *ekklesia* of God, the called of God. There is not one of God’s people on this earth who is not a part of the *ekklesia*.

This being true there is only one church on earth now, there never has been more than one since Jesus died on the cross, and there never can be more than one. If we are to use the word “church” as the rendering for *ekklesia* it must embrace all of the called, all of God’s people without a single exception. If we talk about “other churches” we imply that there are other called out people and since we can only become one of the called or elect by an act of God this is an admission that he has more than one body, a direct contradiction of what the record says.

In every instance in which the sacred oracles speak on this matter it is affirmed that there is one body. “For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:4, 5). The “many” includes all who are in Christ. It is inconceivable that *any* should be members and not be attached to the head and thus be members of the body. If the body is “the church,” there can never, while Jesus is head, be more than one church. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). The expression “so it is with Christ” forever precludes the thought of more than one church. It is absurd, in the light of the sacred oracles, to ask a man with what church he is affiliated. If he is one of the elect he is in the church; if he is not one of the elect he is not affiliated with the church at all.

It is equally ridiculous to talk about “uniting with the church of your choice.” In order to have a choice there must be more than one item from which to select. A man has a choice as to whether he will respond to or reject the call of God. If he rejects it he is not one of the called out; if he accepts it he has no choice of churches. He is added to the only one there is, the congregation of the “called out ones.” One has no more freedom to accept the church of his choice than he does to accept the God of his choice or the Lord of his choice.

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). There were congregations made up of Jews and others made up of Greeks, but in the very nature of things there could be no such thing as a Jewish church or a Gentile church. It took a long time for some of the early Christians to get this through their heads. In the same way there may be some congregations composed of white people and others composed of colored people, but there is no such thing as a colored church or a white church. In Jesus Christ there is no color line. His body is not divided by a median line with all of the members on the right side being white and those on the left being red, black or yellow.

One cannot choose whether he wishes to be affiliated with a church which receives colored people or refuses them for there is no such thing. There is one body, one church, and only one, and to it God adds the called ones, regardless of color. If you do not choose to be in a church with colored people the only other alternative is to be out of the church. Unfortunately, there are colored people out of it so your only spiritual choice is whether you’ll be in the church with colored people or be out of the church with colored people. One can no more choose his spiritual brothers than he could select his physical brothers. In both cases brotherhood results from fatherhood and we must welcome those begotten by our father whether we wish to do so or not. The other members of my physical body did not select

my right arm or left foot, and the members of the one body do not select each other. "But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (1 Cor. 12:18). He did not arrange them as you chose because in this matter you have no choice. We should thank God for that!

No one who was ever baptized by the Spirit was baptized into other than the one body. "By one Spirit we were *all baptized into one body.*" Of course, the Spirit could not baptize one into any other body, for there is no other. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to that one hope that belongs to your call" (Eph. 4:4). "Just as you were called." Note how the one body and one Spirit are tied in with the calling. The called ones constitute the one body. Anyone not in that body is not one of the called or elect. One might as well talk about choosing which Spirit will give him life as to talk about which church he will embrace. "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9). It is also true that "Any one who is not a member of the body of Christ does not belong to him." You have no more choice of bodies than you do of Spirits. "There is one body, and one Spirit."

We are told that God ordained one church but men have created other churches. This cannot be for men have no power to call other men out of the world and save them. To make such a statement necessitates a shifting of terms and definitions to get from "church" to "churches." It is true that men have brought into existence institutions which they call "churches" but these are not and cannot be churches. Men have also made other gods which are really not gods. "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods . . . But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him" (1 Cor. 8:4-6). By the same reasoning a sect is nothing and there is no other church than one, consisting of all the elect of the earth. The same authority which declares there is one God asserts there is one body, the church. Notice that it is not said that there

should be, or ought to be, one body. The record says, "There is one body." One could as consistently affirm that there is more than one Lord as to assert there is more than one church.

We are asked what we propose to do about The Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, The Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Church, and a host of others. My reply is that not one of these is a church. "There be that are called churches," just like "There be that are called gods," but a man can no more create a church than he can create God! What are these? They are sects or parties within the realm of Christendom, that domain which includes all who confess that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and God's Son. They are not an *ekklesia* of God, nor the *ekklesia* of God, so they are not churches. They exist without divine authority or approval.

The Methodist Church is a party subscribing to the opinions and interpretations of John and Charles Wesley. The Baptist Church is a party subscribing to the opinions and interpretations originally embodied in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. The Presbyterian Church is a party crystallized around the teaching and opinions of John Calvin. The Reformed Church is a party addicted to the opinions announced by Ulrich Zwingli and other reformers. There may be, and no doubt are, children of God scattered among all of these. They are not God's children because they are attached to a sect, but in spite of it. God adds no one to a sect. He added them to the church and they joined a human party. In this they erred just as God's children err in many things. The church is not, and by its very nature cannot be a sect, and no sect can be the church of God. The very word "sect" is exclusive and indicates that there are others not of it who are Christians, but the word "church" as used by the Spirit, *the ekklesia*, is inclusive. It embraces all of the saved. There can be and there are many parties or sects, but there is only one body, one church.

Lack of understanding of this point betrays many of the

good brethren who oppose my thinking on fellowship, into ridiculous positions. They go to Webster's Dictionary for a definition of fellowship. Apparently the inconsistency of using a twentieth century American dictionary to define a term employed by Anglo-Saxon translators to render a word used by the Holy Spirit in addressing the Greek-speaking world of the first century never occurs to them. By consulting Mr. Webster they deduce that fellowship is a relation "existing between members of the same church." They emphasize and dwell upon this phrase as if to make it appear that I advocate that fellowship is a relation between members of *different* churches.

Such brethren deserve pity more than censure. They imagine they see a fire-breathing dragon attacking all they revere. They unsheath their trusty traditional sword and dash forth out of their castle, widely swinging right and left, more frequently hitting themselves than anyone else. These brethren have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They want to do what is right but they should take out a little time and think before they speak. They understand neither what I suggest nor what the Bible says about fellowship.

Certainly fellowship is limited to those affiliated with "the same church," for that is all there is in existence. No one has advocated a state of fellowship between members of "other churches" for there are none. My whole contention on fellowship has been that it is a divine relationship existing between all members of the one body. I have never advocated fellowship with or between sects or sectaries, but with the *Christians* in all sects. The Christians are all in the same church by an act of God. They are members of one body. I am sorry that a lot of them put themselves into something else where God did not place them, but I'll not help get them out by denying they are Christians.

The real contention is not now and never has been on fellowship. The question is whether we shall recognize all of

God's children as composing the *ekklesia*, or limit His family to the constituency of a faction, fraction, or fragment. I insist that I must regard all of God's children as my brethren. Because we have the same parents I am not ashamed to call them brethren. I am sorry that we are divided and that we have been betrayed into sectism by the party spirit but I shall not allow this tragedy to sever me from God's children. All of my brethren are members of the church— all who are members of the church are my brethren. And the church is bigger than any faction which men have created. God pity it if it is not!

Recently a couple of brethren whom I esteem highly, and who are elders of a congregation in the midwest, tried my case *in absentia*, and without even talking to me concerning my position reached the conclusion that I was a heretic. When I questioned them as to the basis for such a conclusion I found that they charged that my teaching would “lead to fellowship with the denominations.” These are fine brethren and I love them but they no more understand what I advocate than the man in the moon. Fortunately the latter does not make false accusations against me and in this respect sets an example for some of my brethren who are on this planet.

I am opposed to denominationalism. Sectism is sinful, condemned of God and deplored by all good men who understand the divine will. Instead of advocating “fellowship with the sects” I am dedicated to the destruction of all sects and the uprooting of all factions by killing the taproot which sustains and nurtures them— the party spirit. He who suggests that I am favorable to “fellowship with the sects” is wholly ignorant of my position and in no sense qualified to judge of its merits. Sectism must be defeated. It must be overthrown. It is inimical to the Christian concept and nullifies the purpose of God. It creates the false impression that there can be more than one *ekklesia* (church) in defiance of the plain statement, “There is one body.”

I have suggested that the real bone of contention is the

constituency of the church of God. It is evident that no one is a part of the *ekklesia* who was not added to it by God; it is equally evident that every person so added is part of the *ekklesia*, or church. As I view it, all of those who are saved from their past sins and are reconciled to God are added. Jesus declares that “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” I take it that the salvation here mentioned is from past sins. The fact which one must believe in order to be baptized is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I conclude, therefore, that any person who believes this fact and validates his faith by being immersed is added to the church and thus is a member of the one body. Since, as our opposing brethren mentioned above have said, fellowship is a relation existing between “members of the same church,” I conclude that I am in fellowship with every sincere baptized believer on the face of the earth, seeing that all such are in the same church.

If it be argued that some of these baptized believers are in different “churches” I deny it. There is only one church, the *ekklesia*, the called of God. True, some of them may be in different parties or factions but if they are in a church at all they are in one church; if they are not in it they are not in a church. Can a man be in a faction or belong to a schismatic group and be a part of the church of God? Certainly so, although his attachment to the party is condemned of God. The first letter to the Corinthians points out that the called saints (1:2), the brethren (1:11), those who had been “called unto the fellowship” (1:9), had divisions *among them*. They were divided into parties consisting of Paulites, Cephasites, Apollosites and Christites (not Christians). Yet they composed “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1:2).

God formed the church but men created these parties. The parties were composed of those whom God had added to the church but neither of these parties nor all of them together, constituted the church of God at Corinth. The church of God existed at Corinth before any of these parties came into being.

The apostle did not deny that those affiliated with the parties were in the church of God. He affirmed it! But they were not in the church because they were in the party. They were in the church by the grace of God and in the party by the mistake of men.

The tragedy at Corinth was that those who claimed to be of Paul thereby separated themselves from those who claimed to be of Cephas, Apollos, or Christ. Each splinter no doubt thought it was the tree, and each party thought that it was the church of God. In this they were all wrong. No party among the brethren in Corinth while Paul was on earth was the church; no party in the United States today is the church. God's people are divided among themselves now as they were in Corinth then. The remedy of the apostle then was the utter elimination of the schismatic spirit. That is the only remedy now. It will avail little to have meetings to talk about uniting so long as the narrow, exclusive, bitter party spirit is imbedded in the hearts of those who meet, for it will germinate and produce other divisions and factions tomorrow. Until we are able to regard and respect each other as brethren, as part of the church even though divided by opinions into divergent parties, we will get nowhere except into deeper trouble!

All attempts at recapture of the concept of unity of the Spirit must start with the view that there is only one church and can never be another; that the *ekklesia* is a divine institution formed according to an eternal purpose and that man can no more create a church than he could create God or the Holy Spirit. Men may evolve heresies or sects and they do. These are the result of a carnal nature. They are, all of them which are in the spiritual realm, works of the flesh. But there is as much difference between being in the church of God and belonging to a sect as there is between being a citizen of the United States and belonging to a political party. A citizen may join a political party but he is not a citizen because he does so. In the political and social realm there is nothing inherently wrong with formation of

a party based upon a certain political philosophy. In the spiritual realm sectism is inherently wrong because it is dangerous to the welfare and preservation of the divine organism which is maintained by mutual love and always adversely affected by sectarian rivalries. The spirit of competition and rivalry is opposed to the very nature of the church of God.

Still it is wrong to assume that the church will fail if factions are not foiled. The church is the body of Christ. It is not subject to corruptions or decay. No body is dead while the head still lives and Jesus has been raised from the dead to die no more. He ever liveth and because he does the church, the one body, ever lives. Men may wither and die upon factional vines and partisan plants but the one body will continue. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It is for that reason I am no longer concerned with sectarian rivalry, with the struggle for the supremacy of this insignificant faction, or that. I am content to be what God has made me through His Spirit, to remain where He has placed me, and to regard all others whom He has received as my brethren.

No faction now existing is the church of God in its fulness. There is no such thing in these days as “the faithful church” or “the loyal church” with reference to any party. Not one of these has gathered all of God’s children into its corral. To speak of “the faithful church” is to imply that there is an unfaithful *ekklesia*. We do not believe that! There is only one *ekklesia*, one church. Men may betray its best interests and become traitors and deserters. They may form human parties composed of their own kind, but these are factions and not “churches.” The *ekklesia* is the body of Christ. My body cannot be unfaithful to me, although some of its organs or members may become diseased.

Those parties whose partisans refer to them as “the faithful church” are simply narrow and exclusive segments of a

divided disciple brotherhood which have certain points of emphasis and regard as faithful those who parrot “the party line.” They are not the church, although many in them may be attached to the church. Frequently those of their number whom they count as least worthy because they refuse to be bitterly factional are closest to the ideal of God. Their ranting, rampant, shouting public proclaimers are often farthest from the ideal of the Spirit.

Very humbly do I implore all of my brethren to pray for me regardless of the tragic circumstances which now separate and segregate us. Intreat for me before His throne that I may conquer and soar above the natural inclinations of the carnal man with its factional spirit. I do not consider that you need to be personally affiliated with the particular faction in which I grew up to have your petitions acknowledged and your prayers answered. It is enough for me that He has added you to the church, where the Holy Spirit can help your infirmities in prayer as He does mine. I am not interested in seeing you added to anything larger or smaller than the church. May all of us catch again the majestic vision of one body composed of all of God’s dear children and our beloved brethren. I am happy that there is only one church. I am glad that there can never be another!

Christians in Babylon

Mission Messenger (June 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

Are there any Christians in the religious sects about us? This question occurs with increasing frequency in the letters we receive. It is our intention to face up to such questions regardless of personal consequences. Only by doing so can we live with ourselves and be true to the trust He has imposed upon us. Only by this method can we serve our generation before we fall asleep. Truth must be our chief consideration so I unhesitatingly state that I believe the sheep of God are a scattered flock and that God has a people in Babylon. I am convinced that there are many Christians among the sectarian parties of our day.

Mind you, I do not believe that there are any Christians outside the body of Christ. Every Christian on earth has been added to the church of God. A Christian is one who is in Christ and it is impossible to be in Christ and not be a member of his body. All who have been immersed upon the basis of their faith in Christ Jesus are in Christ. "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

The children of God are divided. Christians are separated from one another. This is the real tragedy. We should not think it strange that the children of the devil are divided. It would be peculiar if they were united. But it is indeed sad that Christians are not together, seeing that "God is not the author of confusion

but of peace.” Our constant aim should be to help bring all of the sons of God into a state of togetherness. We cannot accomplish this by denying that they are sons of God. Neither can we do it by creating another sect more exclusive and intolerant than those in which they are already involved.

It is only when we recognize our brethren and love them as brethren that we can move toward a closer association with each other and a closer walk with God. We cannot unite the family by denying the paternity of those who compose it. This was clearly understood at the outset of the restoration movement of which most of our readers are the heirs. Alexander Campbell described it as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” We have lived to see the day when the parties resulting from this project, or from abuses of it, regard as “heresy” the mere intimation that there are any Christians in the sects. This is a complete reversal of thought. What has happened?

There is really no easy answer to be given for a number of complex factors have combined to provide the present attitude. We represent about the fifth generation of those who launched the noble experiment. All of us were born into an age when the party spirit had crystallized. We found a well-entrenched organization already on the scene operating under the official title “Church of Christ” or “Christian Church.” That organization grew up almost in self-defense when the early restorationists were driven forth from the sectarian groups which spewed out the leaven of their testimony. At the outset there was no separate group existing under the label “Church of Christ” and had not been for centuries. It was a good many decades before there was such an organization.

Those who are presently members of one of the twenty-five factions denominating themselves “The Church of Christ” are generally good people. They are not inclined by nature to be vindictive or hateful. But they have been conditioned to believe that the particular “Church of Christ” with which they are

affiliated is identical with the church of God mentioned in the new covenant scriptures. Since each faction has its own test of fellowship in an unwritten legalistic code or creed it is obvious that one who does not subscribe to it is not a child of God.

The members of “The Church of Christ” have been led to believe that they alone constitute the kingdom of heaven. They are the Israel of God, and all other believers in Christ are deceived and are not believers at all, but unbelievers. These are regarded as being “without hope and without God in the world” and are to be treated as heathen and pagans. It is only fair to say that among the more scholarly party leaders there is probably a revulsion of spirit against such a narrow and illiberal attitude but they dare not express themselves openly. They have contributed to the party spirit, and are now supported by it. It would be suicidal for them to try and breast the current which they have helped to create.

As an indication of how far adrift the restoration movement has gone we need only mention that the suggestion that there are Christians in the sects is now bitterly assailed as “new doctrine.” This expression is the kiss of death to any idea to which it is applied for it is unthinkable to admit that those who have long held the key of knowledge could learn anything else. An infallible interpretation dare admit no error! *Yet it is the view that there are no Christians among the sects that is new is doctrine!* This is modernism gone to seed! Not one of the early restorationists of note held such an idea. If they had there would have been no restoration movement. The very purpose of the project was to unite Christians and there was no party called “Church of Christ.”

The men who began the restoration movement were in the sects— Methodist and Baptist parties. It is a fair question to ask at what date every Christian on earth deserted every sect and left none remaining where so many had been before? When did every disciple abandon all organizational error so that all who

remained were not disciples but impostors? When did the restoration movement become the church of Christ? If we cannot answer these questions it might be challenging to contrast our modernistic viewpoint with that of some of the pioneers. We shall quote these men not to prove that there are Christians in the sects but to show that they thought there were. Thus our position is not new doctrine, but the opposing view is the novel one.

We quote first from the witnesses who signed "*The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*" on June 28, 1804. These men were Robert Marshall, John Dunlavy, Richard McNemar, Barton W. Stone, John Thompson and David Purviance.

Let all Christians join with us, in crying to God day and night, to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of his work, and give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth. We heartily unite with our Christian brethren of every name, in thanksgiving to God for the display of his goodness in the glorious work he is carrying on in our western country, which we hope will terminate in the universal spread of the gospel.

We quote next from the "*Declaration and Address*" which was presented to the members of the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, in September, 1809, by its author, Thomas Campbell.

Moreover, being aware from sad experience of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter warrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and were it possible, would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God.

A good many years later, Thomas Campbell identified his “Christian brethren” and proved that he recognized them as existing under various partisan titles.

We speak to all our Christian brethren, however diversified by professional epithets, those accidental distinctions which have unhappily and unscripturally diversified the professing world. By our Christian brethren, then, we mean the very same description of character addressed in our Declaration published at Washington, Pa., in the year 1809— namely, ‘All that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, throughout the churches.’ If there were none such at that time throughout the churches, then Christianity was dead and gone. And if there be none such at present within the same limits, it still continues extinct.

It was Alexander Campbell who definitely stated the goal of the restoration movement. The following appeared in the book “*Christianity Restored*” which was published at Bethany, Virginia, in 1835.

A deep and an abiding impression that the power, the consolations and joys— the holiness and happiness of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the christians in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union; upon having a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ either in express terms, or in approved precedent ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.’ This was offered in the year 1809 in the ‘Declaration and Address’ of the Washington Association, Pennsylvania.

In 1862, Benjamin Franklin, who was editor of the *American Christian Review* stated his position very clearly:

There are individuals among the sects who are not sectarians, or who are more than sectarians— they are

Christians; or persons who have believed the gospel, submitted to it, and in spite of the leaders, been constituted Christians according to the Scriptures.

In the very same year, Brother Franklin made the following statement in his paper:

That there are Christians among the sects, a people of God in Babylon, we have believed and admitted, and committed to print many years ago, and we believe the same now. That these have a right to commune, and, enjoy in common with all Christians, all the blessings of the house of the Lord, we presume is not doubted by any brother.

Two years later, in his quarterly for March, 1864, Moses E. Lard while writing on the topic "*Have We Become a Sect?*" had this to say:

Against the individual members of these parties we cannot have even one unkind feeling. Many of them we regard as true Christians, and love them sincerely. But as they occupy a place in bodies holding traditional and other unsanctioned tenets; holding practices unknown to the Bible, and supporting humanly imposed names, we must tell them plainly that they stand on apostate ground.

Frank G. Allen was editor and proprietor of *The Old Path Guide*, a monthly journal "devoted to the restoration and defense of primitive Christianity." In his issue of October, 1880, Brother Allen wrote thus:

We are not of those who believe that gruffness and discourtesy to those who differ from us religiously are synonyms for soundness. Inflexible fidelity to truth does not demand this. Nor do we think that anything is gained by magnifying the differences between us and others. The best interests of the cause we love demand that only the real differences shall be presented, not imaginary ones, and these in kindness and love. Our standard of right and

wrong is not what the sects do, but what the Bible teaches. Nor have we any sympathy with the reimmersion of Baptist, or any other people, unless their faith was defective when first immersed. With these exceptions those who go forth to ‘baptize Baptists’ are working under a modern commission. The idea that all God’s children are found among those vulgarly called Campbellites is a false conception of our reformatory work, and the teaching of the word of God. It is natural for those holding this position to conclude that our plea for Christian union is not only useless, but senseless.

David Lipscomb, who was editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, writing in his book *Questions Answered*, says on page 582:

There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the party spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.

Daniel Sommer was editor of the *Octographic Review* and produced a booklet under the heading *Religious Sectism Defined, Analyzed and Exposed*. He expressed his sentiments in this language:

What shall we say of those preachers who denounce all persons who happen to hold membership in a sectarian denomination with a sentence of sweeping impeachment, as though they were all under the influence of sectism? We should say that they are probably more sectarian than some whom they denounce. Their manner shows that they are unscripturally exclusive, and this is one of the elements of sectarianism.

It can be seen by the foregoing that I occupy the same position as those other “liberals” and “modernists” of yesteryear — Campbell, Stone, Lard, Franklin, Allen, Lipscomb and Sommer. The charge that this position is a “new doctrine” is absurd and ridiculous. The fact is that “The Church of Christ” has become sectarian by adoption of its present position. It can only contribute to strife and division as long as that position is maintained. Let me make myself clear. I hold that every sincere immersed believer in the Sonship of Jesus is God’s child and my brother. That is true regardless of how much such believers are “diversified by professional epithets.”

To demand that one of God’s children be forced to submit to re-baptism at the hands of one of “our preachers” in order to be in “our fellowship” is sectarianism pure and simple. This is the very essence of the sectarian spirit. Such Church of Christism like all other “isms” is an insult to the person and dignity of the Holy Spirit by whom we “are all baptized into one body.” No one demonstrates loyalty to the Father by refusing to recognize his other children; no one manifests faithfulness to Christ Jesus by denying those whom the Son is not ashamed to call his brethren.

Make no mistake about it! Sectism is sinful. It is a work of the flesh, a symptom of carnality and a sign of spiritual immaturity. It is not hallowed because we practice it, nor purged from evil because we are guilty of it. Sin is no different when those who engage in it sit in a house labeled “Church of Christ” than it is when practiced under any other name. Not every person in a sect is sectarian. Sectarianism is the party spirit. It is an attitude toward truth. It is not so much what a man thinks as how he thinks; it is not so much where he is as why he is there! A man can be wrong on a doctrinal matter and not be sectarian; he can be right on it and be sectarian. He can be in the Methodist Church and not be sectarian; he can be in the “Church of Christ” and be sectarian.

We call upon all men to leave their sectarian spirit as they would flee from any other work of the flesh. We need to hate this garment spotted by the flesh! It is only those who are free from the bondage of sectism who can furnish the leadership to a better and brighter day! It is not “new doctrine” to love and cherish all of God’s children; it is dangerous not to do so.

The Higher Path

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

“Set your heart on the higher talents. And yet I will go on to show you a still higher path.”

This is the way James Moffatt translates 1 Corinthians 12:31. He does not make Paul speak disparagingly of those abilities which men may possess. They are not discouraged from trying to attain unto higher talents. Indeed, they are encouraged to set their hearts on achieving these. The community of saints needs the ministration of every gifted person. God has not created a body which needs to be satisfied with inferior performance. Mediocrity is not a sign of spirituality.

But the men who possess gifts, and the gifts which men possess, should ever be viewed in a proper frame of reference. There is someone who is greater than the men and there is something which is greater than the gifts. “What do you possess that has not been given you? And if it was given you, why do you boast of it as if it had been gained, not given” (1 Cor. 4:7). Though the man who has the “higher talents” may appear to take “the high road” while others of less ability take “the low road” of Christian service it must always be remembered that the “still higher path” can be trodden by all— gifted and ungifted alike!

The “still higher path” is the path of love. In the days of

special dispensations of the Spirit, not all received the gifts. “One man is granted words of wisdom by the Spirit, another words of knowledge by the same Spirit; one man in the same Spirit has the gift of faith, another in the one Spirit has gifts of healing . . .” The limitation in the reception of these gifts is indicated by the language of the writer, “Are all workers of miracles? Are all endowed with the gifts of healing? Are all able to speak in tongues? Are all able to interpret?”

But the gift of love, the first fruit of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5:23) can be had by all. It is a universal gift to the saints of God. And it is the only hope of unity. We will not be brought together by gifted men. The congregation at Corinth was divided over them. It is only when our hearts are captured and controlled by love— that fierce and unquenchable passion of desire for the good of all— that we shall be welded together. It is useless to possess the gifts unless we are surrendered to love. He who has “the higher talents” and has not love is nothing. This is the plain statement of the inspired writer. We must love ourselves into togetherness. We will never be able to achieve it by debate, dispute or derision. We can never accomplish it through human wisdom or philosophy!

The attributes of love are the characteristics which alone can usher in a brighter day by creating a united church. We will continue to strive in vain for peace until we learn this lesson. “Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy, makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient.”

We have tried other means and our present state bears mute, but eloquent testimony that any boasted greatness is but hollow mockery. Let us cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ our Lord and confess our error in thinking that we could unite by dividing, or secure peace by force and compulsion. Instead of

seeking to expose others, let us expose our hearts in humble contrition, that He may purge away all the dross of hatred and strife. "A broken and a contrite heart he will not despise." We are told to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." Let us begin by purifying our hearts of the party spirit, of the vanity and pride which are born of the sectarian attitude. Free from the spreading contagion of such poison we can be free to love all who love Him "who loved us all and gave himself for us."

We are free to love our brethren; we are not free to not love them!

Many of us have been little, factious, hateful and censorious. We have sought for areas of disagreement. We have fomented trouble and stirred up strife. We have searched the writings of men, not to learn from them, but to find something with which to condemn them. We have searched the writings of God to find something with which to justify ourselves or our party. Let us now invite all who revere His holy name to join with us in searching those sacred oracles to find the "still higher path." If we had always loved the children of God as we have cherished our own opinions we would not have reduced the Christian plea to the sordid spectacle it now exhibits to an unbelieving world.

The "higher path" is one in which we can ignore the sting of personal thrusts and insults. We can walk above the consuming spirit of revenge and recrimination. We will not need to think of "getting even" or of "giving as good as we get" because we will be able to forgive and forget! We can even rejoice when we are persecuted and reviled knowing that this introduces us to the company of the prophets who have gone before. What freedom is brought to the spirit when one knows that he can love all of his brethren, that he can climb over walls and barriers on the wings of affection and not be earth-bound by the chains of partisan prejudice.

Love was a higher path than the special gifts and talents of the Spirit in the days of primitive Christianity. It is still a higher path than the natural gifts and talents of our own day. He who would be more than “a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal” must learn to speak in the tones of love, for without these the tongues of men and of angels are reduced to empty clatter. Regardless of how great and mighty our talents may seem, let us pray, “Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

Analysis of Heresy

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[Abstract]

The thoughts of God and the ways of God are not the same as the thoughts and ways of men. He says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." The human mind is not capable of arriving at divine thought merely by reason or logic. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" There are some things which had to be made known by revelation or mankind would always have remained ignorant of them. We can learn many things by our senses of sight and hearing and by acting upon the knowledge thus gained we can form mental concepts. What we need to know and cannot thus learn God has given by revelation. The apostle writes, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived . . . God has revealed to us through the Spirit."

Intelligent creatures communicate with each other by means of language. Any revelation to man must be given in this fashion if it is to be understood. That which cannot be understood is not a revelation but a mystery. Language is composed of words which may be delivered orally or in writing. The Holy Spirit had to employ words to convey the thoughts of God to the minds of men. To this the sacred writer bears witness. "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught

by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.”

A word is a symbol of an idea or thought. It employs a certain combination of sounds or of written characters which are intended, when heard or seen, to convey to the mind of the one whose senses are thus exercised the idea which is in the mind of the speaker or writer. The communication of thought is always a difficult process. To transmit an exact image from one mind to another is not easy. Words come to mean different things to different persons. All of us are creatures of environment and training and our use of language is affected by these factors.

The problem of our understanding is even greater when the message was delivered twenty centuries ago and in a tongue alien to our own. For one thing it is not always easy to find an exact equivalent to a word in another language. We must also realize that words are not static. They alter in meaning with the passage of time. Words are like the persons who use them—they possess both a body and soul. The body of a word is its form as seen or heard. It is composed of sounds or characters as the fleshly body is of muscle and tissue. The soul of a word like the soul of a man is invisible. It is the mental image that is formed when the word is used. The image grows or recedes as the meaning attached to a word expands or contracts through the march of time.

If we would understand the revelation of God we must not only know the words used by the Holy Spirit but we must also know the significance attached to each one of them. One might be able to repeat every word of the sacred oracles and not understand the message of God at all. It is not enough to know what an English word means now when it is used to translate what was written in Greek by the apostles. A twentieth century dictionary is not an adequate guide to the meaning of the Holy Spirit. We are indeed fortunate that men have devoted their lives to translating the sacred scriptures. “Other men have

labored and ye have entered into their labors.” But we still have the personal responsibility of determining what idea God intended to convey by the words selected. Translation is one thing and interpretation a wholly different thing.

The importance of this cannot be too greatly stressed. If we do not know what God meant by what He said we will not have the thoughts of God at all. In such an event the scriptures are not a revelation but an orderly arrangement of words and phrases. The fact is that the sacred volume becomes a revelation to each of us only as we understand what God is saying. Without this we have the form of words but the soul has fled. The Book will then be to us a dead letter for “the body without the spirit is dead.”

While this is sad enough there is an even more dangerous aspect which grows out of lack of understanding the message of the Spirit. One may form a wrong concept of a word and do so in all sincerity. If he passes this on to others as the meaning intended by the Spirit he misleads his hearers. This is always regrettable but not always equally serious. None of us has a perfect knowledge of either the mind or language of the Spirit. All of us must constantly amend our thinking as we learn additional things from the word of God. Words are like coins in that they do not all have the same value. We do not like to lose any money but we would rather lose a penny than a dollar. In our teaching we may pass along a thought which does not do justice to a word or actually distorts its meaning and still we may do little harm. But in other instances the word under consideration may be vital to our relationship unto God. A mistaken view of such a word may do a great deal of harm to the whole system of revealed religion. Until such a mistake is corrected it may be impossible to recapture for our generation the idea of God as expressed in his revelation.

It is my intention to discuss such a word in this article. I realize that some are not interested in a study of this nature.

They will even quote, “Charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.” There is a difference between studying words to determine their true meaning and disputing about words. It is not our intention to engage in strife or empty argument. We propose to make an unbiased investigation of the language of the Holy Spirit to determine the thought of God on a vital subject. This will not ruin the hearers. It may save the church in our generation from perpetuating an error that has proved to be tragic and destructive.

Justice demands that we say that the readers of this journal who are indifferent about such matters constitute a very small minority. The majority are eager students, anxious for truth and willing to make a sacrifice of time and effort to secure it. The quality of the readership has steadily increased. Bitter partisans have weeded themselves out for it is characteristic of the party spirit that it cannot long endure that which does not conform to the party position. The result has been to provide a select group who constitute a sort of fellowship of the concerned ones and who have a genuine longing to know the will of God. We are grateful for such a forum and realize a deep sense of responsibility toward God and those who read the things we write.

Our present readers represent many facets of religious belief. They belong to various Protestant sects. However, most of them are affiliated with some branch growing out of the Restoration Movement launched in the early part of the nineteenth century by Thomas and Alexander Campbell and their co-laborers. If our writings seem especially slanted in the direction of these it is not because our regard for them is greater than for other earnest students but simply because there are more of them who read this particular journal. We trust that while we deal with some of the problems confronting the heirs of the Restoration Movement we may say something which will be of interest to others also.

The immediate question before us concerns the meaning of “heresy.” I consider this one of the most important studies we have ever made. It is not an exaggeration to say that the hope of answering the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers may actually hinge upon our arriving at a correct understanding of the term. Certainly we must receive all whom God receives and reject all whom God rejects. We can only know whom He receives or rejects by what He has revealed. “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:17). Christ does not receive us because we have perfect knowledge or agree with each other on everything. It is distinctly said that he receives us in spite of our differences. “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; *for God hath received him*” (Romans 14:3).

If we are to receive one another on the same basis that Christ receives us we cannot make an opinion a test of fellowship. We must receive each other regardless of opinions held. “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions” (Rom. 14:1). But are we not told to reject heretics? Indeed we are! “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus 3:9). Is not a heretic one who holds an opinion at variance with our views? This is the definition generally given but if it is true we can never reconcile the scriptures. It will be impossible to *receive* one upon whose opinions we are not to sit in judgment, and at the same time reject him as a heretic for holding certain opinions.

The scripture which tells us to welcome a man regardless of opinion is quite plain. In the context the apostle even gives us examples of how men may differ in opinion and still be received of God. The apparent contradiction must lie in the definition of the word “heretic.” What does it take to make one a heretic? On what ground can a man be rejected as such? We regret that any thorough examination of words must be somewhat technical. It is not possible to write upon such a theme in light popular

fashion. In our research we shall be as simple and plain as possible. Our purpose is not to confuse but to explain. Yet there has to be in the heart of the reader a desire to learn. We believe that most of our readers are eager to know the truth and that they will study what we write. We trust that what we say will not be boresome nor tiring.

The restoration brotherhood has been splintered and shivered into fragments. There are some two dozen factions now existing. Each of these claims to be the one and only holy, catholic and apostolic church of God upon the earth. All of these have resulted from an attempt to purify the church by withdrawing from “heretics.” These brethren are sincere. They all feel that they are contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. It is strange indeed that they have not paused to examine their own thinking. The command to reject heretics was evidently given to keep the church intact, but its attempted enforcement has divided the church into rival parties. That which was given for protection has proven to be destructive beyond description. Surely there is something wrong in our definition of heresy.

What is heresy as it is today regarded by these various “Churches of Christ”? The answer is that it is any view or opinion which differs with the position of the party. A man must either conform in every respect to the partisan thinking or he is branded as a heretic and rejected. Thus “heresy” differs with each party.

What is “heresy” in one “Church of Christ” is regarded as “sound doctrine” in another. Let us illustrate. One party holds that Bible classes in which to teach the word of God constitute a departure from “the apostolic pattern.” Any person in their number who verbally disagrees is judged guilty of “heresy” and rejected. In the same town there will be a party which holds that Bible classes are justified by the scriptures. To oppose that position is “heresy.” When these debate with each other as they

often do, the discussion is not between brethren who receive each other but between “heretics” who mutually reject each other.

In one group it is heresy to advocate individual cups, in another it is heresy to contend for one container; in one it is heresy to suggest breaking the loaf before passing it, in another it is heresy to suggest passing it without first breaking it. Depending upon the segment under consideration advocacy of instrumental music, colleges, the pastor system, orphan homes, national television programs, classes, cups, literature, fermented wine, unfermented grape juice, leavened bread, and a host of other things, is regarded as heresy.

The brethren stigmatize each other as sectarians or hobbyists, and reject each other as heretics. In “Church of Christ” usage a sectarian is one who has what we oppose and a hobbyist is one who opposes what we have. If we oppose instrumental music, those who have it are sectarians; if we have Bible classes, those who oppose them are hobbyists. If we oppose a missionary society, those who have one are sectarians; if we have individual cups, those who oppose them are hobbyists. No two parties regard the same people as sectarian and no two regard the same people as hobbyists. Those who are sectarian to the one extreme are hobbyists to the other. Yet each of these two dozen factions is “the only faithful church” in its own sight and its adherents are “the loyal brethren.” To this deplorable state have we come by reason of our thinking and the condition will continue to grow worse until our thinking has been changed.

We cannot think that the serious brethren in any of these factions can be satisfied with conditions as they are. It is obvious that no one faction will win the adherents of all other factions to its position. Instead the history of our movement leads us to expect only more division and disunity so long as we continue on our present course. Already the most divided religious movement on the American scene, “The Church of Christ” will

eventually become so fractured and fragmented that its shame and disgrace will reflect against it in every community where it is known. What has happened to this great effort which was launched for the express purpose of uniting the Christians in all sects?

Those who compose “The Church of Christ” are not vicious or mean. They are generally good people and sincere in their religious efforts. But they have misunderstood some of the vital teaching of the Spirit and have constructed unwritten creeds which they seek to bind upon others with the dire results we can observe. No greater error afflicts them than their mistaken view of heresy. So long as they retain it they will drive from themselves every independent thinker, impose rigid conformity as the desire of heaven, and continue to splinter and fracture themselves into rival and warring camps. That we may pinpoint the problem created by their grave error we wish to make some statements relative to heresy which can be proved and defended. Startling as some of these statements may appear we have no hesitancy in affirming that they are true.

1. As the Holy Spirit uses the term, *heresy* does not refer to any opinion whether true or false. A man might hold any opinion regardless of how wrong it is and might even express that opinion to others and still not be a heretic.

2. Heresy has no relation to doctrine. It is not something preached or taught and is never employed in direct connection with any word translated “preaching” or “teaching.”

3. A man may be a heretic even though what he teaches is in perfect harmony with the word of God, for heresy does not relate to that which is taught, but to the motive and attitude of the one who teaches.

4. The definition of heresy as now exemplified by the various groups designated “The Church of Christ” is not that of

the new covenant scriptures. It has been borrowed from Rome where it was developed to enable an apostate church to enforce her dogmas under penalty of physical death.

5. In the scriptural sense those who are most frequently rejected in these days as heretics are not such at all, but the term can be justly applied to those who reject them.

What is the special implication of these things to the divided disciple brotherhood? It is this. No one is a heretic because he believes instrumental music or missionary societies are justifiable. No one is a heretic because he believes in colleges or orphan homes. No one is a heretic because he believes in the premillennial coming of our Lord. No one is a heretic because he believes in Bible classes, individual cups, or uninspired literature. These things may be right or they may be wrong. We are not dealing with whether they are justified or not. We merely say that one who believes in any of them is not a heretic and his statement of such belief is not heresy. This is not even a consideration of whether he who believes in one or more of these things should be rejected or not. It is a simple declaration that if one is rejected on the basis of such belief it must be upon some other ground than that of heresy.

A man might be guilty of error and indicted on a false charge. In civil courts such a case is thrown out. We are not sitting in judgment now to assess the right or wrong involved in belief of the use of instrumental music or societies nor to determine whether the pre-millennial interpretation is sustained by the sacred scriptures. We merely affirm that those who defend their views of these things are not heretics because of doing so, and to charge them with heresy on that account is to make a false accusation against brethren. Mind you, those who believe in these things may be led into heresy because of them, and those who oppose them may be led into heresy by their opposition. But neither advocating nor opposing them is heresy, therefore no man can be rejected as a heretic on either ground.

It will now be seen that one of the most important tasks confronting the restoration brotherhood is to determine the meaning of heresy. If what we have said thus far proves to be true it is obvious that hundreds of good brethren have been driven forth as heretics who were not such at all. Many divisions have been caused by branding certain things as heresy which were not at all in that class. One of the symptoms of the perilous times to come in the last days is that men will become false accusers (2 Timothy 3:3). Against this crime even the aged women are warned (Titus 2:3). What is not generally recognized is that the word translated accuser is *diabolos*, and that is the word for Devil. In Revelation 12, where we have a description of the war in heaven it is said, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil." John then heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for *the accuser of our brethren is cast down*, which accused them before our God day and night."

To falsely accuse our brethren does not merely place us on the side of the devil. It makes the one who does it a personal *diabolos*, a devil. I must freely confess that I have been guilty of this sin in the past. I have accused brethren of heresy who were not heretics. I was honest when I did so, but I was wrong. I was ignorant of the meaning of heresy and in my zeal for the purity of the church of God I became rash and intemperate in my accusation of others. I am sorry and ashamed of such speech and conduct. Prompted by love for all of my brethren I pray that I may live long enough to undo some of the harm caused by the arrogance born of ignorance. To this end I entreat all of our readers to pray for me.

The word "heresy" is merely the Anglicized form of the Greek *hairesis*. Basically it means "choice, option." It is used nine times in the new covenant scriptures. In the King James Version it is rendered "heresy" four times and "sect" five times. It is applied to the Sadducees in Acts 5:17, "Then the high priest

rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation.” It is applied to the Pharisees in Acts 15:5, “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed . . .” Paul declares that “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Acts 26:5). The Pharisees and Sadducees each constituted a sect or heresy among the Jews. That which made them a heresy was not what they believed or taught, but the fact that each constituted a party or *sect*.

There is nothing inherently sinful in the word “heresy.” A choice or election is not wrong of itself. Originally no bad significance was attached to the term. Jesus did not once during his earthly sojourn condemn the Jews because they were Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes. Judaism always provided leeway for varied opinions or interpretations. Instead of condemning what the Pharisees taught, our Lord said, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.”

It should be remembered that in spite of their differences the various sects of the Jews did not set up rival places of worship. They all worshipped at the same temple, offered the same sacrifices, respected the same priesthood and observed the same ritual. Frequently both Sadducees and Pharisees would be numbered among the priests. There was no apparent attempt to drive each other out of Judaism and all seemed to respect the right of others to differ. Dr. Edersheim in his book “Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ” says: “The course of our investigations has shown that neither Pharisees nor Sadducees were a sect, in the sense of separating from Temple or Synagogue; and also that the Jewish people as such were not divided between Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Dr. George Campbell in his “Preliminary Dissertations on the Gospels” says of heresy, “The word was not, in its earliest

application, conceived to convey any reproach in it, since it was indifferently used either of a party approved, or of one disapproved, by the writer.” Alexander Campbell in “The Christian System” writes thus: “As the word *sect* or *heresy* found only in the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles, does always in the former simply mean a *party* without any regard to its tenets, the term has nothing in it either reproachful or honorable, nothing virtuous or vicious.”

If the word had always been translated *sect* as it should have been there would be less confusion about it in these days. Certainly many who have been charged with heresy would not have been so accused. The inconsistency of the translators is seen in one specific case which should be apparent to all. When representatives of the Sanhedrin went to Caesarea to indict Paul before Antonius Felix in the Praetorium, their case was presented by a lawyer, Tertullus. He charged Paul with being a trouble-maker, a seditionist, and “a ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). The word for *sect* is *hairesis*. In his reply Paul says, “But this I confess unto thee that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers” (verse 14).

Of this passage, Alexander Campbell says: “It is only once rendered *heresy* in the Acts, and in that place it ought most obviously to have been *sect*. Paul had been accused by Tertullus with the crime of being a ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes. Now, in vindicating himself from any censure in this case he ought to have met the charge under the same title. This he did in the original, for in verse 5th, in the indictment, and in verse 14th, in his defense, we have the same word *hairesis*. How injudicious, then, was it on the part of our translators and the Vulgate to make Tertullus accuse Paul of a *sect*, and to make Paul defend himself of a *heresy*, when both Tertullus and Paul used the same word in their speeches as reported by Luke in the original!” We shall not burden the reader with the remainder of Campbell’s treatment of this passage as it can be read in full in his book *The Christian System*.

Heresy is not spoken of in a bad sense in either of the four gospel records or in the book of Acts. It is never spoken of in a good sense in the epistles. Why the difference? The answer is that the church of our Lord is to be “essentially and constitutionally one.” It is a community which is to maintain unity. Division is destructive of its nature, detrimental to its purpose and harmful to its functioning. A sect created within it contributes to its weakness and corrupts it. Thus heresy is rebellion against the will of the King. It is treason, for it betrays the divine purpose and encourages rivalry among those who should strive together and not against each other.

Is not all division caused by introducing new doctrine? Does it not all stem from innovation? The answer is in the negative. Many cleavages have been caused by men who without scriptural warrant enact laws where God has made none. Dogmatism is the root of a great deal of our trouble. The demand for conformity in matters of opinion is a fruitful source of heresy. No opinion ever divided a community of saints when held or stated as an opinion. But unwarranted demand that one renounce an opinion and subject himself to tyrannical thought control has shivered and split many congregations.

No opinion constitutes heresy for heresy is the “party spirit” as *hairesis* is translated in Galatians 5:20 in the Revised Standard Version. A man can be wrong in a matter of doctrine and not have the party spirit; he can be right doctrinally and be guilty of the party spirit. Thus one can be correct in doctrinal matters and be a heretic. A heretic is not one who holds an unorthodox position, but is a factious man. For this reason the *Revised Standard Version* rendering of Titus 3:10 reads: “As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him.” No one is quite so factious as the man who thinks he knows all that can be known and who demands that everyone else give in to his views as the price of peace. Some of the most contentious people I know brand all who differ with them as heretics, while those whom they label as

heretics may be mild, gentle and easy to be entreated.

Young's Literal Translation renders Titus 3:10, "A sectarian man after a first and second admonition be rejecting." A sectarian man is one who devises partisan tests and separates from his brethren or drives them out if they do not concur with his views. Any person who makes a test of fellowship out of anything which God has not made a condition of salvation, and who holds himself aloof from his brethren on that basis is a sectarian man. He is a heretic. He regards his party as the church of God on earth and his attitude is divisive and factious. Edgar J. Goodspeed translates the passage: "If a man is inclined to a sect, after warning him once or twice, have nothing to do with him."

I was reared in one segment of the Restoration movement. I was brought up to believe that it constituted the church of Christ on earth and that no one in the world was in Christ except those who were in this party. It was the "loyal church" and no one outside of it could be a Christian. We used to argue whether we should even use the word "brother" when addressing a member of another splinter group. If someone dissented from the party platform or partisan position he was indicted under a general charge of heresy, and under this we spelled out the specific "heresies" of which we thought he was guilty. In every instance these amounted to expressing views contrary to our accepted party creed.

If one said he could see no harm in instrumental music, missionary societies, colleges, the pastor system, charitable institutions, etc., we immediately placed him under grave suspicion, and went to work upon him at once to get him to recant his sin. It made no difference if he said that he intended no harm and would not create division. He could not believe such things and remain among us. He had to renounce his false doctrine and "line up with the truth." When one insisted on doing his own thinking and would not bow to our party

ultimatums he was accused of heresy, admonished twice, then excluded to be regarded “as a heathen man and a publican.”

Having learned the meaning of heresy and having grown in knowledge I now realize that it was my attitude which was factious. I was the real heretic in such cases as I have mentioned. To a great extent this has been true of all of us. We have been brought up in, or brought into, a partisan “fellowship” in which “the brotherhood” consists only of those who conform to our views. We confuse brotherhood with conformity and fellowship with endorsement. Unwittingly, all of us who do this have become heretics. We are motivated by the party spirit and this is heresy. Every faction among us is a miniature sect, a heresy in embryo if not in fact. I have repented of my heretical attitude. I am no longer a defender of any party nor the champion of any faction. In such a state of freedom I am at liberty to love all of my brethren in all of their factions and not be circumscribed in affection by party lines drawn by men.

Actually we are the victims of Roman Catholic propaganda. It was the pope who convinced the world that heresy consisted of “an opinion maintained with obstinacy against the doctrine of the church.” It was not until the fifth century that this came to be the accepted meaning of the word. Rome made it so that she might beat, flay, strangle, burn or behead dissenters. Those who were killed by Rome were not heretics. Those who killed them were. We borrowed a page from the book of the mother of all sects, for the sectarian or party spirit is the same in essence wherever it is found.

The church has no doctrine. It has no official teaching. The doctrine of our Lord has been given through the holy apostles and those who are members of His body seek to continue in it. But the church is composed of men and women. They are fallible. They have no infallible interpreter or interpretation. For this reason the members of the body must be tolerant, longsuffering and patient with each other. They must be

forbearing toward one another in love. As they read and study the sacred oracles they may arrive at different conclusions. If these are not grave enough to sever them from God they should not be serious enough to separate them from each other. No man who honestly and sincerely believes that God teaches a thing is a heretic. He may be mistaken and suffer from grievous error in reasoning, but he is not a heretic. A heretic is not one who pleads for unity, but one who is factious, contentious and divisive.

Commenting on Titus 3:10, Albert Barnes says of the term *heretic*, “The true notion of the word is that of one who is a promoter of a sect or party. The man who makes divisions in a church, instead of aiming to promote unity, is the one who is intended. Such a man may form sects and parties on some points of doctrine on which he differs from others, or on some custom, religious rite, or peculiar practice; he may make some unimportant matter a ground of distinction from his brethren, and may refuse to have fellowship with them, and endeavor to get up a new organization. Such a man, according to Scripture usage, is a *heretic*, and not merely one who holds a different doctrine from that which is regarded as orthodoxy.”

There are many among us who are like I once was. They have a zeal but not according to knowledge. In their attempt to keep the church pure they brand all who differ with them as heretics. In doing this they reveal that they are themselves heretical. The concluding statement of Dr. George Campbell in his *Dissertation on Heresy* should produce serious thought. He says:

I shall conclude with adding to the observations on the words *schism* and *heresy*, that how much soever of a schismatical or heretical spirit, in the apostolic sense of the terms, may have contributed to the formation of the different sects into which the Christian world is at present divided, no person who, in the spirit of candor and charity, adheres to that which, to the best of his judgment is right, though in his opinion he should be mistaken, is in the

scriptural sense either schismatic or heretic; and that he, on the contrary, whatever sect he belong to, is more entitled to these odious appellations, who is most apt to throw the imputation upon others. Both terms, for they denote only different degrees of the same bad quality, always indicate a disposition and practice unfriendly to peace, harmony, and love.

This is our own conclusion and is expressive of our personal sentiment arrived at through intensive and painstaking research in the term “heresy” so we adopt the closing statement of Dr. Campbell as the closing statement of our analysis.

Are They Apostates?

Mission Messenger (July 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

One of the fruits of the party spirit is the development of a special vocabulary consisting of what may be called “loaded terms.” Generally the words employed are found in the sacred scriptures but they are given a significance never intended by the Holy Spirit. Frequently these expressions are used to prejudice the partisan followers against dissenters and non-conformists and make sure that “the loyal members” will not give them a hearing. Such words become a part of the mechanism to keep the members “in line” and discourage any attempt upon their part at original thinking.

As an example of what we mean we cite the word “apostasy.” The Anglicized form of the Greek *apostasia* does not occur in the King James Version. It is found twice in the original. In Acts 21:21 it is translated “to forsake” and in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 it is rendered “a falling away.” The term originally had a political overtone and appears in the papyri as a designation of those who rebel against the government or plot its overthrow. It carries with it the idea of defection from the existing order based upon revolt against it.

It is our opinion that it conveys the same implication in the sacred scriptures. In Acts 21:21 the elders of the congregation in Jerusalem inform Paul of rumors circulated concerning his teaching. It is pointed out that thousands of Jews believe but

they are all zealous of the law. They have been told that the apostle is teaching Jews of the Dispersion to forsake Moses, that is, to fall away from him, or apostatize. Note the means by which it was alleged this was being done. It was by “saying they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.” Since circumcision was the seal of covenant relationship and that relationship bound upon the Jew the necessity of keeping the law (verse 24) it is evident that “forsaking Moses” would constitute outright rebellion.

But the Jews never did regard differences of opinion or interpretation as “apostasy.” Judaism was very tolerant in the days of Jesus and the apostles. Even a twelve year old lad could sit in among the rabbis “both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes all worshiped at the same temple. The disputes between the two principal schools, Hillel and Shammai, did not lead to one driving the other out. It was one thing to forsake the law, a wholly different thing to discuss the implications of its language.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the falling away (apostasy) will be characterized by open revolt. The man of sin will oppose God and exalt himself above God. He will usurp the temple of God and proclaim himself to be Deity. His coming is after the power of Satan and he will use fake miracles, deceitful signs and lying wonders. Thus the apostasy is rooted in rebellion and will result in the elevation of “the mystery of iniquity.” Those who are involved in it have not “received the love of the truth that they might be saved.”

Today the charge of “apostasy” is hurled against every person who cannot subscribe to the partisan tests of fellowship created by various factions growing out of the restoration movement launched in the early years of the preceding century. Since each of these parties has a different criterion of “loyalty” a person who is an “apostate” to one group is “faithful and sound” in the eyes of another. The word “apostate” is a reproachful

epithet used as a brand or stigma for every person who does not wholly agree with “the powers that be.” Every man who thinks for himself is guilty of apostasy in the current party vocabulary.

Those who contend for one container to be used in passing “the fruit of the vine” in the Lord’s Supper regard those who use individual cups as apostates. Those who oppose Bible classes regard those who have them as apostates. An apostate may be one who endorses colleges or opposes them, one who indorses instrumental music or opposes it, depending upon what faction he is allied with at the time of such endorsement or opposition. It makes no difference how sincere one may be in his expression of conviction. If he is “not lined up with the faithful brethren” he is an apostate.

We believe that such use of language is unworthy of God’s children, detrimental to the cause we profess to love, and inimical to the welfare of the church of God. It is indicative of a desire to place others of the saints in the worst possible light. It is unfair, uncharitable and unscriptural. Not every person who differs with us on some point of controversy has apostatized. No person who is in Christ Jesus, who loves the Lord and seeks to do his will out of a pure fervent heart is an apostate. To call him such a name is to reveal not only a sad lack of love but a considerable degree of ignorance.

Apostasy is a falling away from the faith, a deliberate revolt against Jesus and his authority. Unfortunately such expressions as “the faith” are also loaded terms in these days. “The faith” not infrequently means the traditional interpretations placed upon the new covenant scriptures. “The faith” is that unwritten body of opinions in each party bound as a law upon the members and constituting the test of “loyalty.” Since each party has an “infallible interpretation” the slightest deviation from this creed is looked upon as rebellion against Jesus and the one who can no longer condone the narrow and intolerant spirit is assailed by his accusers with, “The Spirit

speakeeth expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from *the faith*.”

We do not doubt that many will depart from *the faith*, but we do doubt that the Holy Spirit meant by “the faith” an opinion related to cups, classes, or colleges, or any of the host of other things which loom so great on our partisan horizons in these days. The symptoms of those who do depart are specified as “giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” Not every person who reads a passage and comes up with a different viewpoint than ours is heeding seducing spirits or under the influence of demons. There is not a congregation in this land where every member interprets every passage alike, but that is not attributable to demon influence. To accuse men of “departing from the faith” just because they do not concur with us on how to break the loaf, whether to use fermented or unfermented wine, or whether to have Bible classes or not, demonstrates that he who makes the accusation certainly does not know what *the faith* is and is quite ignorant of what constitutes apostasy.

Then how shall we label those who differ from us? Why label them at all? Is not the attitude which encourages such labeling sectarian in nature? Do we not brand men as “liberals,” “conservatives” and “antis” to include or exclude them from our number? Is that not the essence of the party spirit? Are we not all liberal in some things and conservative in others? Are we not opposed to some things, and if so, are we not “antis” with regard to those things? If God’s children are our brothers why not call them brethren? Those in Corinth who were at such odds they were suing each other in heathen courts were not given special distinction by the apostle. He simply said, “*brother goeth to law with brother*.”

If asked how I regard those who oppose Bible classes my reply is that I regard them as my brothers. If asked how I regard

those who favor instrumental music in their corporate worship my reply is that I regard them as my brothers. I have no half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. The fact I do not agree with them does not make them apostates. If it did, every other person in the church would be an apostate in my view, for I do not agree with any person I ever met upon every point of interpretation. My ideas today on many points differ from my ideas of twenty years ago. I have learned a few things by study of the Word but I am not a self-made apostate because I disagree with my former views. I trust that I am maturing spiritually.

I do not think that the Holy Spirit in using the word *apostasia* meant to imply or inaugurate something that would make God's family disintegrate into warring segments with each group blasting away at the others as "apostates." It seems to me that it is about time that some of God's children grew up. While they are accusing others of falling away from the faith they are in danger of falling out of their spiritual cribs.

Are We a Denomination?

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

Is “The Church of Christ” a denomination? Many of its members vigorously deny that it is. Its preachers publicly affirm that it is not. Its advertisements appearing in the newspapers among those of other religious organizations boldly assert that it is non-sectarian and undenominational. Those who are unbiased in facing the facts know that these claims cannot be sustained. “The Church of Christ” as it exists today is a denomination in the same sense as The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, or The Presbyterian Church, and for the same reason. Although this statement may appear treasonable we simply request our brethren to think honestly and sincerely about the matter. The answer is inevitable.

We need to distinguish between the words “sectarian” and “denomination.” They are too often used interchangeably or as synonyms. But there is a difference. “Sectism” is a demonstration of the party spirit. It is “heresy” as the Holy Spirit uses that term. It is manifested in an attitude toward other believers that is factional and divisive. But the word “denomination” is from the Latin *nominare*, to call by a name, coupled with the prefix *de*. It refers to a specific designation, to the act of naming. In the religious sense a denomination is a group or society having a specific name or title. The word has nothing to do with the nature of the doctrine adopted and advocated by such a society. A group might teach nothing but

the truth and still be a denomination. If they had a specific title by which they called themselves as a means of distinction from others they would be a denomination. The primitive *ekklesia* of saints had no official title for a very good reason. No proper name was ever assigned to the disciples in a corporate sense. They were the “called out ones” by faith in the Nazarene. They were the *believers* while those who rejected the testimony of his Sonship were “unbelievers.” With the possible exception of the schismatics at Corinth it had not yet occurred to them to splinter, separate and segregate the believers from one another.

From the standpoint of ownership the believers constituted the church of God (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Gal. 1:13, etc.); from that of constituency the churches of the saints (1 Cor. 14:33); from that of heirship the church of the first-born ones whose names are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23). As to divine relationship they were the church of God in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 2:14); as to headship or rule the churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). In the matter of government they were the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of man, or the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. In unity and organization they composed the body of Christ.

These designations bestowed upon God’s people were never intended to be official and exclusive titles. They were merely common nouns used as descriptive of some phase or feature of the relationship sustained to God and each other. To fasten upon one of these and make it the specific name of the church and declare it is “the scriptural name” when the scriptures use them all, is to sectarianize that designation and denominate the church.

It is a common practice for partisan speakers to use as a topic, “What Name Shall The Church Wear?” These brethren blithely ignore all the terms used by the Spirit and seize upon an expression not found in the scriptures. They arbitrarily and dogmatically seek to bind this upon disciples of the Lord as an

exclusive title which must be worn to be “faithful.” Such speakers prove themselves to be sectarian. The expression “The Church of Christ” is not in the oracles of God in that form at all. Any group which so denominates itself, employing this as its title or specific name, is a denomination in the fair sense of that word, notwithstanding all the anguished protests to the contrary.

It is impossible to avoid the charge that the party with which we are allied is a denomination so long as it is denominated. All the childish denials cannot offset the fact that so long as men deliver talks intended to denominate the church they are contending for denominational status. To denominate is to name and if the body of believers who call themselves “The Church of Christ” insist on that as a title they are a denomination by their own admission. They use that expression exactly as other sects use “Church of God” or “Churches of God in Christ.” Both of these are found in the scriptures; both have been lifted and appropriated as party titles.

The primitive *ekklesia* of God was neither a denomination nor a sect. It had no official title. Jesus planted no religious party on earth called “The Church of Christ.” The saints in a corporate sense were described by the apostles according to the relationship under consideration at the time. There was only one church then, there is only one now. There never has been more than one church, there never can be another. A distinctive title is superfluous and sectarian in tendency. There is nothing in the category of *the ekklesia* from which it needs to be distinguished. It is simply the church and is composed of all the saved on earth without a single exception!

So long as members of “The Church of Christ” claim they are not a denomination they will continue to be one. It is only when they are willing to admit that as they now exist they constitute a denomination that they will take the necessary steps to correct their status. It is gratifying to the spirit to note that some are beginning to do so although often hindered by those

who cling for security to a party name. In order to be truly non-denominational the believers must renounce all official titles and specific designations used in an exclusive sense. They must become once again just the church *the ekklesia*— the called out!

This will not be easy to achieve in an age filled with sects and parties. But we will accomplish no real good in our generation toward restoring the primitive order by merely maintaining another sect or party. We will only augment the problem and add to the confusion. However, we must not conclude that all of the members of “The Church of Christ” want to be non-denominational. A majority of them do not. Like any other persons reared in a factional environment they will place their trust and hope in a “church name.” It will be a long dreary struggle before our brethren are won back from the sectarian spirit which grips their hearts.

It is amazing to what lengths men will go in order to maintain a divisive exclusiveness. Near where I reside there is a meetinghouse owned by certain brethren. On their sign in front are the words “Church of Christ” and underneath in parentheses the additional term “Christian.” They thus reveal that they are doubly denominational, and sectarian as well. Not only have they adopted a title to distinguish themselves from other disciples of the Master, but they have added a subtitle to distinguish themselves from other members bearing the same denomination. This would be amusing if it were not a grave symptom of that party spirit which is a work of the flesh. That makes it serious indeed!

By what practical means can we conquer the denominational trend? First, we must purge our hearts from the attitude which has given rise to it. To be undenominational in practice we must first become so in thought. We must cease to regard any faction, segment or party as the church. We must think of ourselves as being Christians only and not regard ourselves as the only Christians. We must cultivate a love for all

of God's children which will leave no desire to be distinguished from them. Then we must set about creating an atmosphere of spirituality in which all of them will feel welcome.

This means we will set the Lord's table as a feast in which every Christian, every immersed believer, may freely participate with us. We will regard all such who come among us as a part of the church of God even though in the past they have, by virtue of birth, training and environment, grown up in another segment of the believers. This does not imply nor necessitate any compromise of convictions. It only requires a recognition of brotherhood based upon common parenthood. When we have occasion to speak of ourselves as a group we should employ such scriptural language as describes the particular relationship at the time. We should practice using a variety of terms as did the apostles in their writings.

Let us not feel that our task will be easy. The spirit of sectarianism is deeply entrenched in the hearts of our brethren. Satan will not quickly release his hold upon our minds. So long as he can make of us just another denomination among others, he will effectively reduce the impact of our plea. We need to pray very earnestly for each other, and to strengthen each other in our resolution to be children worthy of the Father who sent His Son to die for us all. And we need to have that courage born of faith which will not allow our consciences to be at ease until we have won the victory for truth and righteousness. Please pray for us!

The Greatest of These

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

Many years before Jesus was born the Romans had a motto, “Love conquers all.” The motto was correct but the type of love possessed by the pagan world was inadequate. No mere affection could overcome everything because emotions are always variable and affected by external circumstances. It was only when the *agape* (love) of God was demonstrated in the sacrifice of Jesus that mankind came into possession of a power which would eventually dethrone the Caesars themselves and make the cross a badge of honor instead of an emblem of shame.

The love of God was something which could be, and was manifested. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). Life is dependent upon love. No love, no life! That which was manifested can be perceived. The manifestation was God’s part, the perception is ours. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). A brother is worth more than my life. Indeed, Jesus teaches that it is better not to live than not to love. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6).

Love for others is the foundation of the Christian system. It is the ABC in the school of discipleship, the primary lesson which must be learned. “For this is the message that ye heard *from the beginning*, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11). That love is not emotional, but motional. It is an activating and compulsive force. “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). *The Amplified New Testament* has it, “For the love of Christ controls and urges and impels us.” It is this love which is unconquerable and triumphant. While it is true that faith is the victory which overcomes the world, it is just as certain that love is the victory when it comes over the church.

The apostle rises to the summit of human eloquence when he describes the attributes of *agape* in 1 Corinthians 13. In verses 1-3 he shows that it is *indispensable*. Without it the tongues of men and angels are as sounding brass and clashing cymbal. Without it the gift of prophetic insight, the understanding of the deepest mysteries and the knowledge of secret truths are nothing. It is not a question of love or something else. It is love or nothing!

In verses 4-7 love is shown to be *invincible*. Its faith knows no limit, its hope never fades and its endurance has no end. In verses 8-10 it is affirmed to be *indestructible*. “Love never fails—never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end.” This is not true of prophecy, tongues or knowledge. In verse 13 love is given *immortality* and majestic greatness.

It is because we have not realized that love is the power motivation which cements us together, repairs breaches when they occur and binds us in an unbroken fellowship, that we have reduced the Christian realm to its present pitiable and disgraceful state. The early Christians did not conquer mankind by philosophic reasoning, by public debate and forensic striving with each other. The cruel, sadistic Roman populace, seeing the sands of the arena stained with the blood flowing from the lacerated bodies of these humble people, said, “Behold how these

love one another.”

Men are frequently persuaded to come into “the church” who have no real sense of covenant relationship with Jesus. No one is truly converted to Him who has not “known and believed the love that God hath to us.” To *know* that love is not merely to know about it, or to have heard sermons preached on it as a topic. It is to personally and genuinely experience it, to be captured and controlled, invaded and pervaded by it! To *believe* that love is not merely to give intellectual consent to it, but to be committed to it, not as to *a way of life*, but as to life itself!

Love is not the way of safety, security and conformity. After all these things do the modern heathen seek. Love is the way of risk, adventure and creation. God took a calculated risk when He sent Jesus on the great adventure which made this the “visited planet.” Jesus risked everything— he emptied himself of all glory! We will never be transformed until we dare to risk everything, make ourselves of no reputation and take upon us the form of a servant. This is love manifested!

Restoring Restoration

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[Abstract]

Abraham Altars was not a formal member of the Presbyterian Church. But he was a student of the Bible and he was interested in religion. Thus it happened that his farm home located between Mount Pleasant and Washington, Pennsylvania, became the scene of a meeting held in the summer of 1809 which was destined to directly affect our lives and several millions of others like us. This meeting, like all others of kindred nature, was but one link in a chain of events. It was forged out of circumstances which preceded it and became a vital cause in creating conditions which followed. It is doubtful that any of the rugged pioneers who gathered for the occasion sensed the impact which would be made upon future generations, but almost a century later J. B. Briney wrote:

Subsequent events show that this little meeting was probably the most important religious convocation that had ever met upon the American continent. It was made up of earnest, pious, God-fearing men whose souls were thoroughly tired of the jangling voices of a variant denominationalism, and who were in search of some common ground upon which all might stand together as one united brotherhood. Their chief concern was to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and heal the gaping wounds of his bleeding and distracted body.

The central figure in the meeting was Thomas Campbell,

until recently a minister in the Seceder Presbyterian Church, whose teachings on the unity of believers in Christ and whose disregard for sectarian divisions had aroused much controversy. When he advocated that the Lord's Supper was for all of the Lord's people and that it was not a denominational gift to be bestowed upon the orthodox but a Christian privilege to be enjoyed by all the saints together he was accused before the Presbytery where he was formally tried and censured. He appealed to the Associate Synod of North America which set aside the censure on the basis of a technicality in the proceedings of the Presbytery. A committee was appointed to review the case and brought in a report that his replies were "evasive, unsatisfactory, and highly equivocal."

Recognizing that he was laboring under a cloud of suspicion and that certain of his brethren were scrutinizing his every word and action he stood it as long as possible and then renounced the authority of the Synod and Presbytery. This meant that while he retained his membership in the Presbyterian Church, he would no longer be regarded as a minister of that communion. With a deep reverence for God, a profound respect for the Bible, and an intense love for the souls of men, he still sought to influence his neighbors for good. In his book *Religion Follows the Frontier* Winfred F. Garrison writes:

He continued preaching as opportunity offered, in churches wherever he was permitted, otherwise in private houses. The burden of his plea was for Christian liberality and union. Many heard him gladly. Among his hearers, who were for the most part Seceder Presbyterians, there developed a group of sympathizers among whom there was a vague bond in their general sentiment in favor of union and in the personal influence of Thomas Campbell.

It will be readily understood that most of his preaching would be done in private homes rather than in meeting-houses, many of which would be closed to him. Accordingly the special meeting was convened at the home of Abraham Altars to

determine what steps should be taken to encourage the fraternal spirit among those who loved righteousness. Mr. Campbell, in solemn and grave tones, stated the purpose of the meeting and proceeded to outline the reasons why the Christian domain was in such a serious state. J. B. Briney describes the speech in these words:

In simple but burning words of moving eloquence he dwelt upon the word of God as an infallible standard of faith and conduct, and as offering an ample basis of universal union and communion among Christian people. He called attention to the lamentable fact that men had not been satisfied with this heavenly boon, but had neglected and abandoned it for their own theories, speculations, and philosophies, thus breeding contention, strife, animosity and divisions among the disciples of Christ, who should be of one mind, one heart and one purpose. Having gone over the ground with great care and thoroughness, bringing the true situation vividly before the minds of his attentive hearers, he proceeded to promulgate the principle which, in his judgment, was to govern them in the work which they had undertaken.

Mr. Campbell led up carefully to the climax of his speech. When the time came he announced the foundation upon which reformation should be attempted. "That rule, my respected hearers, is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." This statement fell like a thunderbolt upon the hearts of those who had been reared in a sectarian atmosphere. In his monumental work *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, the biographer Robert Richardson writes:

It was from the moment when these significant words were uttered and accepted, that the more intelligent ever afterwards dated the formal and actual commencement of the reformation which was subsequently carried on with so much success, and which has already produced such important changes in religious

society over a large portion of the world.

The Washington Association

Following the meeting at the Altars home another was held on August 17, at which the little band of neighbors resolved to form “The Christian Association of Washington.” This was not a “church” nor was it intended that it should grow into one. It represented no organized revolt against nor secession from any religious society. It was a voluntary association of the concerned ones in the community to promote piety and reverence, to study and evaluate their peculiar problems of a religious nature, and to encourage among all men those moral and spiritual views which the members considered essential to the development of mankind. The first statement of their resolution declared, “That we form ourselves into a religious association, under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.”

It was deemed essential to have a statement of their aims and objectives drawn up in formal fashion, and Thomas Campbell was assigned the task of writing the statement. He began the work immediately and in three weeks had completed his “Declaration and Address.” On September 7 he read it to the members of the Association and after full study and discussion of the contents it was approved and an order issued to have it printed. As Mr. Campbell read to the interested group of farmers and tradesmen on that Thursday morning his family was on the stormy Atlantic bound for the new world. It would be another three weeks until the *Latonia* would dock in the harbor at New York on September 29.

It is not our purpose in this article to analyze the notable document first read by its author in the little Pennsylvania community more than a hundred and fifty years ago. In our

humble opinion it constitutes one of the greatest uninspired documents in the history of the Christian religion. We are chiefly concerned just now with the spirit which called it forth and with an examination of the current status of the movement which it launched. We are anxious to determine if that movement has forgotten its goal and gone aground on the rocks of party strife. First we propose to hear from the foreword of the document itself.

Moreover, being well aware from sad experience of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter warrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God.

The “Declaration and Address” was written to promote peace on earth among men of good will by making them aware of God’s will. It was an olive branch plucked off during the raging of the torrent of universal disturbance and schism. It originated because of an awareness of the futility of achieving the divine purpose on earth by the methods then employed. It contains this statement:

This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair to find for ourselves or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions.

Two words stand out in this address— *desire* and *despair*. These are among the most forceful terms in human language. One expresses aspiration, the other frustration. Often these become the dissimilar parents of *desperation*. And the “Declaration and Address” was sired by the latter! A quarter of

a century later Alexander Campbell looking back upon this preparatory stage of the restoration movement wrote in *Christianity Restored* as follows:

A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolations and joys—the holiness and happiness of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union; upon having a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ either in express terms, or in approved precedent, ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.’ This was offered in the year 1809, in the ‘Declaration and Address’ of the Washington Association, Pennsylvania.

These things stand out in bold relief! The restoration movement originated as a project for uniting the Christians in all the sects. It grew out of a “desire to be at rest” and to “recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches.” It was engendered by an awareness of the “pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians.” Those who inaugurated the project were “tired and sick of the bitter warrings and janglings of the party spirit.” They were convinced that the power, the consolations, the joys, the holiness and happiness of the religion of Christ were all lost “in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms.”

Most of those who read my articles are heirs of this noble experiment. What is the present status of these heirs? They now represent the most divided movement in the contemporary American scene. The project originated to unite “the Christians in all the sects” has forsaken its original intent and become so involved in “feuds and bickerings” that it contributes only to “the bitter warrings and janglings of a party spirit.” We have cluttered up the religious scene with a group of miniature sects the members of which are often filled with intolerance, hatred

and bigotry. The worst is yet to come for if we continue to pursue the policy and philosophy which has governed us in the past there remains for us only more strife and division. Unless we alter our attitudes and transform our thinking we will bequeath to our children and our children's children a world so filled with religious tension and dissension that they will sink beneath the weight of our cruel folly!

Our current state reminds one of Daedalus and his son Icarus in Grecian mythology. Daedalus, a sculptor and architect, fled to Crete after killing his pupil Talos. He was received by King Minos who commissioned him to build a Labyrinth at Knossos, in which to confine the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. This monster annually ate seven youths and seven maidens which had to be supplied by Athens. Unfortunately, Daedalus constructed the Labyrinth with such intricacy that he became lost in it himself and could not find the way out. Our brethren have spun a web of legalism and party tests which has them trapped until each generation adds new strands to bind them all the tighter.

There are two major segments which have grown out of the "project . . . for uniting . . . the Christians in all the sects." Because the introduction of instrumental music into the corporate worship was one of the aggravating factors leading to separation these are commonly distinguished as instrumental and non-instrumental. The former have about five or six groups to their discredit but the latter have more than two dozen factions to their dishonor. No other religious movement is so strife-torn and factional. No other is so schismatic. We must face up to the true picture of the state to which our thinking has brought us.

As the little band of Presbyterians stood in the "valley of decision" in 1809 so we stand once again in the same place in this our year of destiny. Shall we continue to promote the sectarian spirit, or shall we restore the spirit of restoration? Shall we

plunge on deeper into the quicksands of partisanship and legalism or shall we revive in our generation “the desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God”? The hour is growing late. The sands are running out of the upper glass. We must decide soon.

Is there any hope remaining? We reply that there is provided we lose our fears and with true courage born of faith embark on the great adventure of discovery. Like the disciples of old we have been fishing too close to shore and we have toiled all night and caught nothing. At the bidding of the Master we must launch out into the deep and let down our nets. Certainly there is more danger but there is also greater reward. We must recapture a sense of the vitality of truth. We must cease to think that it will lose in every encounter with error. We must emerge from behind our sectarian walls and enter anew the fray in the whole Christian arena. In short, we must go back beyond the point where we gravitated into a sect and “take up the quarrel with the foe.” And we must be able to distinguish between friend and foe. Jesus declared “He that is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:40). We must quit assuming that he who is not at our side is always against us.

The First Great Error

The fundamental error in our thinking as a people came when we confused the restoration movement with the church of God. The church is a divine organism, the restoration movement was a project originated by men at a given period in the history of the church. Its purpose was not to restore the church to earth, for the church never ceased to exist on earth. The temple of God has never been razed, the body of Christ has never died, the family of God has never become extinct. The announced purpose was to “restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of

God.” True, the church was rent by schism, and the people of God were a scattered flock but that same condition prevails even now! When Thomas Campbell wrote “The Declaration and Address” there was not a separate party anywhere which was called by the distinctive title “Church of Christ” and there had been no such organization for centuries. Even after the Campbells and their co-laborers were driven out of the Presbyterian and Baptist communions they formed no party under this title. Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone united their forces as the result of a meeting held in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1832. Campbell preferred the name “Disciples” while Stone preferred “Christian.” Eventually the terms “Christian Church” and “Church of Christ” were used interchangeably. It remained for David Lipscomb in 1906 while writing in reply to an enquiry from the United States Census Bureau to bring about a separate listing under the title “Church of Christ.”

It is obvious that there is a difference between the church of Christ and “The Church of Christ” just as there is a difference between the church of God and “The Church of God” in our time. The church of Christ embraces within it every saved person on earth. There is not a child of God outside of it. This is not the case with “The Church of Christ” as it came to be so designated among the religious bodies covered by the census. Indeed there are now some twenty-five parties which wear this title and with few exceptions each of these regards itself as the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of God on earth, while repudiating the claims of all the others. The exclusive attitude of these is an indication of the party spirit which motivates them.

The church of Christ was in existence before the days of Alexander Campbell. He was a member of it even while he was allied with the Redstone and Mahoning Associations of the Baptist Church. But “The Church of Christ” as that title is now employed designates a party in Christendom which grew out of the reformatory work launched by the Campbells. The members

of this party confusing it with the church of God now deny that there are Christians in the sects and most of them refuse to regard as brethren in the Lord those who are affiliated with other segments of the same movement. Instead of laboring to unite the Christians in all sects they frequently divide and separate from each other, setting up rival parties in the same area, thus adding to the confusion in the religious realm. Some of them go so far as to argue for re-immersion of those who come to them from other parties of the movement. Thus has the spirit of sectarianism crystallized in new tests of fellowship and unwritten creeds.

A Second Error

Another tragic mistake was made when men lost the distinction between the good news of Christ and the apostles' doctrine. This affected the congregation of saints in a vital way, since it set up knowledge of a system instead of faith in a person as the primary ground of admission to the fellowship. The gospel was to be preached, the doctrine was to be taught. The first was a message announced to the world to bring men into a relationship with Christ; the second was a course of instruction for training those in the Lord. Alexander Campbell early saw the importance of the distinction and wrote:

Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily, for the church and the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all protestant Christendom. The public heralds of Christianity, acting as missionaries or evangelists, and the elders or pastors of Christian churches are indiscriminately denominated preachers or ministers; and whether addressing the church or the world, they are alike preaching or ministering some things they call Gospel . . . They seem to have never learned the difference

between preaching and teaching.

Because of the fatal errors arising from confusion at this point Campbell was insistent that a return to the vocabulary of the Spirit must include a proper understanding of the distinction between these words. In *Popular Lectures and Addresses* he said:

The difference between preaching and teaching Christ, so palpable in the apostolic age, though now confounded in the theoretic theologies of our day, must be well defined and clearly distinguished in the mind, in the style and utterance of an evangelist or missionary who would be a workman that need not to blush, a workman covetous of the best gifts and of the richest rewards . . .

The difference between the good news which was to be proclaimed and the system of doctrine which must be interpreted and taught is clearly marked in an article in *Millennial Harbinger* for April, 1862:

We preach, or report, or proclaim news. But who teaches news? Who exhorts it? We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or to those who have received it. Paul taught the Christians; he admonished, exhorted, commanded and reproved Christians and on some occasions declared the glad tidings to them who had received them, but who seemed to have forgotten them, as he wrote to the Corinthians.

Let me explain why it is so important to the community of saints to recognize and maintain this distinction. Jesus commissioned the apostles to proclaim the gospel to all creation. He declared that those who believe and are immersed will be saved. Salvation from past sins and introduction into the fellowship is conditioned upon belief of the gospel. The gospel consists of facts related to Jesus Christ. That which must be believed in order to salvation is that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son.

Many today have been conditioned to think that the entire scope of the new covenant scriptures constitutes the gospel. They regard the letters addressed to churches and individuals as part of the gospel. Since one must believe the gospel in order to be saved it follows that one must understand and accept their reasoning and interpretation of every point of doctrine to be recognized as a child of God. We must never overlook the fact that the partisan spirit always substitutes the interpretation of God's word for the word itself and demands conformity not just to what God says but to what the party deduces he meant when he said it. This completely alters the Christian system. It makes salvation dependent upon attainment to a certain degree of knowledge rather than upon faith in a person.

This has been the real root of division within all Christendom. It is the basis of most controversy among sincere religionists. It is the ground of orthodoxy which has been used to stifle all original thought and hound out as traitors all honest dissenters. It is the rock upon which every restoration movement in history has run aground and been battered to pieces. The Campbells clearly understood this and labored to offset it in advance. They did this by two methods. First, they carefully defined the terms essential to entrance into the fellowship, showing what was involved in faith. In the second place they carefully pointed out that unanimity of opinion, interpretation or knowledge in doctrinal matters could never be made a proper foundation for unity.

With reference to the first Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian System* as follows:

But the grandeur, sublimity and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this— that the belief of one fact . . . is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes to salvation. The belief of this one fact, and submission to one institution expressive of it, is all that is required of heaven to admission into the

church.

That there may be no question as to what is meant by this language Campbell proceeds to explain further:

The one fact is expressed in a single proposition—that Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah . . . The one institution is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Every such person is a disciple in the fullest sense of the word, the moment he has believed this fact . . . and has submitted to the above-mentioned institution; and whether he believes the five points condemned, or the five points approved, by the Synod of Dort, is not so much as to be asked of him: whether he holds any of the views of the Calvinists or Arminians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, or Quakers, is never once to be asked of such persons, in order to admission into the Christian community called the church.

Having come to a realization through observation and study that fellowship in Christ can never be made contingent upon conformity in interpretation, Thomas Campbell expressed this idea in his “Declaration and Address.” The careful student will be amazed at the wisdom exhibited in his statement. It places reasoning and research in proper perspective. The right of every individual to go directly to the sacred writings for himself and the concomitant right to form conclusions based upon his personal investigation is asserted. It is conceded that when deductive reasoning is fairly done the concepts may be called the doctrine of God’s word. But it is asserted that these concepts are not *formally* binding upon the consciences of Christians except as they are grasped and understood to be truth.

I must confess that I studied this matter for years before I caught the significance of the word “formally.” Every man who sets to his seal that God is true thereby obligates himself to

accept all truth as revealed by God. But the nature of man necessitated that revelation be given gradually and progressively — “line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.” Revelation has been perfected but man has not. His knowledge and understanding of truth must also be gradual and progressive. He must “grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.” Every man in Christ sustains a *moral* obligation to the Creator to accept all truth as it is revealed to his consciousness to be truth. Because of his frailty and imperfection some things may appear to be truth in one stage of development which will need to be discarded in the brightness of greater light.

No two of us possess the same degree of mental aptitude. We are at various stages of growth and intellectual attainment. It would violate conscience to be forced to acknowledge as truth that which cannot be personally established as truth. To take the reasoning of one individual or group and bind that *formally* upon all others, even those who have not as yet been able to arrive at the same conclusions, is to do an injustice to the human spirit and is a violation of the Christian ethic. Such matters must not be made terms of fellowship but belong to the edification of the members of the body in love.

It would be as absurd to demand conformity of all to a higher degree of attainment in a system conditioned upon progression in knowledge as to demand it in a world requiring progression in revelation. In other words, one could as justifiably demand that Isaac and Jacob understand the epistle to the Romans in order to be saved as to demand that every person in the fellowship of Christ fully grasp all that is implied in chapter twenty of the Revelation letter to be saved. Every child of God is *morally* bound by his relationship to Jesus to accept all truth as he becomes aware of it but the relationship we sustain to each other does not convey the right to *formally* bind our interpretations upon each other. Any such coercion and compulsion of spirit must result in faith in the wisdom of men. All that we have thus stated is contained in a few simple

sentences written by Thomas Campbell in these words:

That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet they are not formally binding upon the conscience of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church's confession.

It has been the fate of most religious reformations “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men *in Christ* are created equal” to fall into the hands of ambitious men who manipulate them to the achievement of their own ends. Men desire the blessings of freedom without accepting the responsibilities associated therewith. It is easier to abdicate our share in the royal priesthood than to serve in our capacity. As any such movement grows its adherents moved by frantic fear for its survival come to depend more and more upon methods devised by human ingenuity and less and less upon the providential care of God.

Almost without exception every reformation inaugurated to free men from the dominance of a clergy has ended up with a clergy of its own. The clerical spirit thrives on the party spirit and is sustained by it. The clergymen become the authorized interpreters of the oracles of God. By subtle means the average man becomes convinced that he cannot understand the will of the Lord so he relegates this to professionals, trained specialists. By the same token the doctrinal interpretations of these must be accepted without question. To doubt the clergy is to disbelieve God. The Romish church set up an infallible interpreter. Most of the parties growing out of the Restoration Movement believe

they have an infallible interpretation. The last is actually worse than the first for belief in an infallible interpreter will at least preserve unity. The Roman Catholic Church today is one of the most tightly knit organizations in the world. An infallible interpretation substitutes party dogmas for papal decrees and is productive of division every time someone discovers additional truth.

Perhaps it was a realization of the dangers inherent in dogmatism and orthodoxy that prompted Thomas Campbell to reject doctrinal knowledge and conformity as the basis for Christian fellowship. Of course he was also motivated by a clear conception of the foundation of communion as expressed by God. One reads with wonder and amazement the safeguards thrown about truth and his heart is saddened to see how his own brethren by deviating from these announced principles have not only failed the restoration movement but have become sectarian in doing so. Consider the following clear statement as found in the “Declaration and Address”:

That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths and defensive testimonies, in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes the better; yet, as these must be, in a great measure, the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion, unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information, whereas the church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

There is no use denying that the heirs of the great project to “unite the Christians in all the sects” is now “in evil case.” The two errors in thought with which we have been dealing are

not the only ones which foster the partisan spirit that has fragmentized and fractionalized us. We have referred to them in this treatise primarily because the first confuses the nature of the church of God while the second confuses the nature of the message of God. These are fundamental. It was because of these two grave errors in the religious world that the “Declaration and Address” was written. That document was clear upon these issues. It is a sad and tragic thing that we have now made a full circle and are once more involved in sectarianism of our own creation because we have lost the truths enunciated so many years ago.

Unless there is a reversal of attitude and a change of philosophy “the Churches of Christ” can only look forward to a grim future of strife, contention and division. These various parties contain within themselves the seeds of schism and they will “multiply and fill the earth after their kind.” There will be little of a constructive nature contributed to the distressed and distraught realm of Christendom.

Conclusion

Certain conditions existed in the early part of the nineteenth century which called for inauguration of a reformatory movement. Sincere men who loved the Lord could no longer continue to go deeper and deeper into the welter of sectarianism. Creeds and parties were multiplying. God’s children were separated and segregated from each other. They were enemies instead of friends. Alexander Campbell wrote thus:

Tired of new creeds and new parties in religion, and of the numerous abortive efforts to reform the reformation; convinced from the Holy Scriptures, from observation and experience, that the union of the disciples of Christ is essential to the conversion of the world, and

that the correction and improvement of no creed or partisan establishment in Christendom, could ever become the basis of such a union, communion and cooperation, as would restore peace to a church militant against itself, or triumph to the common salvation; a few individuals, about the commencement of the present century, began to reflect upon the ways and means to restore primitive Christianity.”¹

The same situation now prevails among the heirs of the restoration movement. If that movement was the answer to the tragic state existing in the early part of the previous century is it not the answer to the same tragic state existing in the last half of the twentieth century? Is it not time once more that a few individuals begin to reflect upon ways and means? In short, is it not time to restore the spirit of restoration?

END NOTES

1. *The Christian System*, London (1843) p. iv.

A Great Abuse

Mission Messenger (August 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

The idea that each congregation of saints is to direct its own affairs and be responsible for its own business has been generally held by most of the more than two dozen factions that have grown out of the restoration movement. They have repeatedly affirmed an adherence to the principle of “the autonomy of the local church.” Autonomy is a combined form of *auto*, self, plus *nomos*, law. It refers to a state of self-government, independent of outside influence or control. It is our conviction that this was the system approved by the apostles as ambassadors of Jesus, and it is easy to see why divine wisdom would endorse congregational independence while at the same time upholding a universal monarchy embracing all of the subjects of the King.

But it is one thing to assert a governing principle and a wholly different thing to embrace it and become obedient to it. It is not a law on the lips of the subjects but that law enshrined in their hearts and translated into action which makes a people great. God declared, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Perhaps in no other case is this condemnation more appropriate than in the one with which we are dealing. The history of our brethren demonstrates that they have been as lax in respecting congregational autonomy as they have been loud in proclaiming it. There are two things they cannot bear:

one is to hear the idea attacked, the other to see it put into practice.

Theoretically it is assumed that when a congregation of believers selects men who are then ordained as bishops it is free under God and the guidance of these brethren to arrange and dispose of its concerns, subject to no earthly synod, conference or brotherhood board of arbitration. Apparently the theory has never been taken seriously and it has been generally ignored for all practical (or impractical) purposes. It breaks down from one or the other of two sources. One is internal and the other external abuse of the principle. The first occurs when the bishops arrogate to themselves prerogatives which were not theirs by right of appointment; the second when preachers or others outside the congregation seek to interfere in decisions of the congregation, or when one congregation attempts to dictate the policy to be pursued by another congregation. The first violates the autonomy of the local *church*, the second that of the *local church*.

The right of government is resident in the congregation. No group of persons can bestow upon others that which they do not possess. Since it is a fact that no group or society can act in a corporate capacity except through properly recognized agents it is a wise provision which authorizes a plurality of bishops in the local congregation. The qualifications for such men are provided by the constitution, but the congregation must be the electorate and judiciary, interpreting and determining the meaning of these qualifications and selecting the men who meet them. These men cannot be appointed under constraint or duress but must indicate a willingness to serve. When appointed they superintend and guide through sufferance of the congregation and by their bestowal of the right to do so.

The bishops are slaves of Christ chosen by their fellow-slaves to fulfill a certain trust. They do not constitute the church, nor are they a church within the church. They are specifically

enjoined against lording it over the heritage entrusted to their care. They cannot act arbitrarily against the wishes of the body. God has made no provision for government without consent of the governed. If a bishop presents a matter to the congregation and they reject it, he can either seek to convince them through love, withdraw the matter, or resign. He cannot force his fellow-slaves into a pattern contrary to their will. Unfortunately, many bishops become enamored of office and think more about authority than about a proper example to the flock. Such an attitude results in tyranny over God's people. It is a flagrant abuse of privilege.

An unbiased survey of the situation among the various factions designating themselves "The Church of Christ" will demonstrate that the expression "local autonomy" has become a mere catchword. Generally the power over each faction is exercised by a hierarchy of preachers, a top echelon of ecclesiastics, who hold the power of "life and death" over the congregations. Any decision of a local congregation which does not meet their approval must be reversed or a rigid boycott will be enforced with the intention of making the congregation "knuckle under." A local congregation cannot secure a man for a series of meetings who does not have the stamp of approval of those designated as "our main preachers." Government is not so much by local autonomy as by distant autocracy.

Obviously this hierarchy in most cases is composed of men who feel that because of their superior ability they are called of God to protect and safeguard "the brotherhood." This frequently goes to the extent of attempting to censor what the members read. They are not altogether to blame for they have inherited the system and often the position of prominence from predecessors in whose good graces they were able to remain. By now the congregations have become so beaten down and frustrated that they find it easier to conform than to complain. It is hard to kick against the pricks!

The problem is aggravated by another factor. Just about every faction has an official journal, a paper which represents the party platform. The editor through power of control over the propaganda dispensed can wield a sway over the party which often makes it spiritual suicide to resist. I grew up in a faction in which preachers and congregations were disciplined through the “loyal paper.” All the editor had to do was shut a man out of the columns and publish a scathing indictment of him and every door in “the brotherhood” was slammed against him. It made no difference if his home congregation still respected and recognized him, he was through, and so was the congregation if it could not be “whipped into line.” For want of a better term I have coined a word which represents this form of government—*editorcracy!*

I can recall a case of local discipline in a small congregation over which a few preachers disagreed. Before it was over with all the preachers (with few exceptions) had taken sides and congregations that did not even know where the original trouble spot was located on the map were forced to “take a position.” This they generally did on the basis of the stand taken by their favorite preacher. If local autonomy were adhered to, no trouble would ever affect more than one congregation!

I must confess (although I am now ashamed of it) that when I write about such partisan tactics I can do so from personal experience. I suspect that I was a “factionalist of the factionalists”! I recall when a couple of brethren many years ago printed a document which they thought would lead toward unity. There was a considerable furore over what was regarded as a “compromise” and as one of the rampant leaders of the opposition I actually helped to arrange for a conference in a central location to decide what steps “the brotherhood” should take. We demanded that all the preachers and congregations wishing to be regarded as “faithful” take a stand against the document. Those who did not were to be regarded as “disloyal.”

Congregations were divided, friendships disrupted and brethren alienated. Of course my action was stupid and childish but it is a good illustration of how far one will go when driven by the party spirit.

No congregation has a right to bind a decision on any other. No congregation has a right to interfere with or meddle in the internal affairs of another. No congregation can take disciplinary action against or “withdraw” from another. We might not like the way brethren in another congregation do some things. We need not do them that way, and we may exchange views in a friendly and brotherly fashion seeking to eliminate possible sources of friction, but no congregation has any authority over another. There is little use of opposing popery in Rome and endorsing it in America!

As an editor I can share my views with those brothers who wish to share in them. I cannot force others to view things as I do and I will not try to do that. If brethren agree with me I will try not to be puffed up with pride, if they do not I will not become arrogant toward them. I am resolved that I will love those brothers who disagree with me as much as I love those who agree. I will not try to rend, divide or separate them into warring camps. It is not necessary for brethren to subscribe to either this paper or my views for me to love and respect them in the Lord. It is my firm conviction that if we would really practice the autonomy of the local congregation as well as advocate it that we might go a long way toward eliminating some of our grave problems of human relationship in the one body. Let us all stay in our place!

False Teachers

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

The party spirit breeds exclusiveness and intolerance. These are symptoms of sectarianism. In order to maintain intact its structure every faction must develop a species of legalism. This becomes the criterion by which the worthiness of men is measured. It is of the essence of the party spirit that it places an interpretation upon the word of God, then substitutes the interpretation for that word. The next step is to exalt this interpretation to the place of divine revelation and demand obeisance to it as the will of heaven. Most of those who contend so freely for the authority of God's word in these days are really contending for a recognition of their views and opinions as authority. This is dogmatism and it is one of the worst foes of the freedom to which we have been called in Christ Jesus.

The Roman Catholics have an "infallible interpreter." Each of our factions has an "infallible interpretation." The first recognizes as authority the word of God and tradition; the second seeks to impose tradition upon the word of God as authority. The penalty for dissent in each case is the same excommunication. He who disagrees with either an infallible interpreter or an infallible interpretation must be branded as a "heretic" and driven forth. One must never question that which is infallible.

Those who are animated by the party spirit exhibit it in

their attitude toward and treatment of those who by honest conscience disagree with them. In reality the party recognizes no room for honest difference of opinion. The scriptures are so plain and they have the explanations so detailed and pat that anyone who does not concur with the party presentation is dishonest and insincere. It is amazing to listen to preachers of "The Church of Christ" harangue the "sectarians" on how plain and simple is the word of God. To hear them one would think it would be impossible for anyone to have a single point of disagreement. But they seldom take time to explain how it happens that there are more than two dozen parties in the non-instrument branch of the Restoration alone. That movement is currently the most divided one on the American religious scene. They are split over everything from the method of carrying the Lord's Supper to the congregation to the method of carrying the gospel to the world!

There is no satisfaction in relating these sordid facts. One becomes nauseated at heart in his contemplation of them. But we must face up to reality. We will not better ourselves by developing an "ostrich complex." We would prefer that such matters relating to our sorry state could be kept concealed but that would be hypocritical. Let the truth be known and then we can start to remedy our present plight. We suggest that one way by which we may do so is to correct our spiritual vocabulary and bring it into line with fairness and justice. It is important to speak where the Bible speaks but it is just as important to speak as the Bible speaks. It is especially so when the opposite course will malign or stigmatize a brother.

Let me illustrate what I mean by referring to the expression "false teacher." This is a term of opprobrium hurled at every conscientious dissenter from the narrow party programs. Among those who believe in one container for the fruit of the vine every sincere person who expresses a contradictory view is a "false teacher." Among those who oppose Bible classes any person who voices an opinion in favor of them

is a “false teacher.” All who do not oppose colleges, orphan homes, missionary societies, or instrumental music are “false teachers” as viewed by some. So mixed and muddled is the situation that every person in the disciple brotherhood is a false teacher as viewed by many of his other brethren.

We do not believe that the Holy Spirit employed this term in any such ridiculous fashion. A man can be wrong about a lot of things and not be a false teacher in the scriptural sense of that expression. No man who loves God and is earnestly seeking to serve Him to the full extent of present knowledge is a false teacher even though he is mistaken about some matters and expresses his views about them. The factional spirit with its arrogance and defiance prompts men to glibly hurl epithets at many whose spirit is better than that of their accusers.

I have recently read a document purporting to be on fellowship but which was actually written to justify and defend division. The author uses the term “false teacher” at least five times and this is just five times as often as it appears in the new covenant scriptures. The Greek *pseudodidaskalos* occurs only once, in 2 Peter 2:1. About a year ago I did extensive research on the implication of this term and this led to a complete revision of my application of it. I was startled at my previous factional usage of the expression and I realized that I had done much harm through my ignorance. I should like to share with you some of my conclusions.

The word *pseudo* carries with it the idea of deliberate and intentional falsehood. The teacher under consideration is not only lying but he is conscious of the fact that he is lying. He utters premeditated falsehood with the purpose of beguiling or deceiving unwary or unstable souls. He is frequently motivated by love for gain or prestige. This is brought out in the context where the term occurs. The following things are affirmed of the *pseudodidaskalos*: (1) They will secretly introduce destructive sects; (2) They will even deny the Lord that bought them; (3)

They will induce many to become licentious; (4) They will cause the very way of truth to be reviled; (5) In their greed they will exploit their hearers with false words.

To categorize every brother who does not see all things just as we do as a “false teacher” is an insult to the Father of spirits whose children we all are. For example, I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship of the community of saints. On this subject many brethren seriously and honestly disagree with my views. They sincerely feel that I am mistaken in my interpretation of the scriptures as related to this problem. But I do not brand them as “false teachers.” I think they are mistaken on this point just as I have been (and no doubt still am) mistaken on many points. None of us know all there is to know, but surely we are not all “false teachers.” So I love and respect these brethren who differ with me. I regard them as my brothers because our relationship was not established on the basis of a position as relates to instrumental music but by the new birth.

It is altogether possible that as God looks at it the renunciation of fellowship and denial of brotherhood constitutes one of our gravest sins. It strikes directly at the heart of the family and sets the children to warring with each other. Perhaps division has done more injury to the cause of the Lord than any of the innovations that have been introduced. It should not be forgotten that few divisions have been caused by those things which were credited with causing them. Family ties are severed by lack of genuine love. So long as fervent love exists not even a major problem will create schism. When love grows cold even a minor matter will create a split. We have been torn asunder because of “the will to divide.” We have willed to separate over every difference instead of to remain together in spite of them and to work out our difficulties in love.

It is lack of brotherly affection which prompts us to say and think the worst about a brother. We label and brand each

other because by so doing we save our own personal pride, and inflate our ego. Behind all such manifestations is fear— blind, unreasoning fear— not fear of the other man, but fear of our own inward littleness, fear that what we have will not stand the acid test. By designating those humble souls who question and challenge us as “false teachers” we can be rid of the responsibility of facing them and of listening to what they say. We can exclude them, drive them forth, and turn a deaf ear to them. It was thus that the Sanhedrin acted toward Stephen just before they stoned him to death as a “false teacher.”

We are divided over more than a score of things. Regardless of how right we may be about those things we are wrong to be divided from our brethren. There is no authority in God’s word to separate from our brethren. Those who separate themselves are classed as “sensual, having not the Spirit.” Those who claim to recognize God’s word as authority should show that passage where God demands that we divide the body of believers. We have repeatedly practiced it! Where is the chapter and verse for brethren breaking up into warring and opposing camps? Every command is to live in harmony and to maintain unity.

It is as wrong to put away our brothers for every cause as it is for a man to put away his wife for every cause. The same God who decreed in the first creation that a man and wife should be one flesh, has decreed in the new creation that we all be one spirit. It is as sinful to rend the fabric of the spiritual family as to destroy that of the fleshly family. To maintain domestic union we must make allowances for each other, we must be patient and longsuffering. So long as love exists we do not separate regardless of how difficult our problems become. Should not the same conditions obtain in the Lord?

Background of Restoration

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[Abstract]

The day after Easter Sunday in 1951 dawned cold and gray in North Ireland. A gusty wind sweeping in across Belfast Loch drove rain squalls before it and the city appeared drab through the mist. But there was sunshine in the souls of the sixty-five saints young and old, who gathered at the little meetinghouse on Berlin Street, off Shankill Road. A fervent prayer was voiced for the blessing and protection of heaven and the group filed out to board the chartered buses. It would be after dusk when they again arrived in the city after a day which would linger in their memory.

The immediate objective was the little village of Ahorey, some thirty-five miles away. This was the site of the Presbyterian Church to which Thomas Campbell had ministered until he sailed for America in 1807. Through the previous efforts of William Hendren and Joseph Hamilton of the Belfast congregation permission had been secured for me to speak in the Presbyterian meetinghouse. When we arrived at our destination the buses stopped just outside the stone fence enclosing the churchyard which had been the community burying ground for several centuries. From the gate there were but three houses visible in the community, low cottages, whitewashed and with thatched roofs. The blue smoke of peat fires burning on the grates threaded upward from soot-blackened chimneys.

We were welcomed at the door of the meetinghouse by Mr. T. S. Hoey, stated clerk of the Presbytery. Inside the door there is a bronze plaque sacred to the memory of Mr. Campbell who was the second minister to serve the congregation. The engraved plate designates him as “a prophet of union.” The members unlocked the gates leading to the pews and filed in quietly. I opened the little gate leading to the speaker’s platform and sat facing the audience. From this same platform Thomas Campbell had often surveyed the auditorium with its quaint balcony and paraffin lamps. In the second row of pews the youthful Alexander Campbell had often sat to listen to his father expound the tenets of Calvinism which he never fully renounced during his lifetime.

On this occasion the congregation stood to sing “The Lord’s My Shepherd” and William Hendren voiced a prayer for the unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world. I opened the large old pulpit Bible to the second chapter of Ephesians and read the impressive language of Paul. I spoke to those assembled about the sin of sectarianism and the need of restoring unity to the divided and strife-torn believers. It was pointed out that the restoration movement had not been completed and it remained for our generation to resume that task which others had so nobly begun. I concluded with the words from “In Flanders Fields” by Col. John McCrae:

Take up our quarrel with the foe;

To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep . . .

The audience filed silently from the meetinghouse. Officers of the congregation made us welcome. I was taken to see the manse which was newly remodeled and decorated for the arrival of the minister who would assume his role in a fortnight. It was an interesting house which this rural congregation provided for its pastor. There was a little fireplace in each room where peat dug from nearby bogs would supply the fuel. A quaint yard in the rear of the building would provide room for the meditative minister to stroll among the flowers. As for myself, I could have spent several days walking among the graves in the churchyard and reading the inscriptions on the ancient stones.

I did stop for some little time before the grave of the man who succeeded Thomas Campbell when the latter sailed for America in 1807. The lengthy tribute read as follows:

Sacred to the memory of the Revd. Samuel Beatty who departed this life March the 9th, 1834, aged 50 years. He performed the duties of the ministerial office in the congregation of Ahorey for 21 years with fidelity and zeal. Simple and unaffected in his manners and of a most obliging disposition, he lived in the hearts of his people, and being possessed of much medical skill, his sphere of usefulness was greatly enlarged. It would appear that he had a consciousness of the near approach of his dissolution from the subjects which he chose latterly for illustration. His last text was Philippians 1:23, 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is for me far better.' In grateful memory the congregation has placed this stone over his mortal remains. Readers, be ye also ready!

I wondered as I gazed down at the little mound how the reverend Mr. Beatty regarded the news about his predecessor which filtered back to North Ireland. How did the members of the congregation feel about the debates between Alexander Campbell and Presbyterians— John Walker, of Mount Pleasant, Ohio, in June, 1820; and W. L. Maccalla, at Washington,

Kentucky, in October, 1823? Were the Campbells regarded as heretics and traitors by those among whom they had formerly lived? Did Mr. Beatty read "The Christian Baptist" which was first published on August 3, 1823? If so, did he use it as a text and warn the members against the teaching of their former pastor and his son? In any event no apparent change had been wrought in the Presbyterian Church at Ahorey.

My musings were interrupted by a message from a very gentle lady who lived in a typical Irish cottage close at hand and who extended an invitation to the "American visitor" to have tea with her. That invitation was enlarged to include several other brethren and their wives. The kettle was bubbling over the peat fire on the grate when we entered the small rural home. It is possible that Mr. Campbell had often visited those who dwelt in the little whitewashed house in his day. I am sure that the hewn beams supporting the thatch never looked down upon a more appreciative visitor.

Mr. Hoey graciously invited me to his home for the purpose of making a tape recording to be presented to the next session of the Presbytery. I spoke of our gratitude for the kindness shown in allowing us to address those who assembled in the meetinghouse. I explained why the work of Thomas and Alexander Campbell had made an impact upon our thinking in America and expressed the hope that others might arise among them who would plead for the union of Christians in all sects upon the basis of a "thus saith the Lord."

I was anxious to see the city of Armagh, realizing that it must have played a part in the life of the Campbell family. This ancient place dates its existence as a city from at least 300 B.C., and it was here that St. Patrick built his first cathedral in 445 A.D. Although the original structure is no longer in existence its site is occupied by another cathedral. Part of it was begun in the 8th century but the main part was erected in the 13th century. It is not difficult to imagine that the youthful Alexander Campbell

would frequently visit this historic spot near which lie the bones of the first king of Ireland, Brian Boru, and his son Morrough, who were killed at Clontarf after defeating the Danes and Norsemen who invaded Ireland.

No doubt great interest was also shown by the young man in the astronomical observatory founded on “the Hill of Honey” in 1790. This renowned center for the study of the celestial bodies may have helped to kindle a reverence for the planetary system in the mind of the youthful Campbell. However, we suspect that it was the great library constructed in Armagh in 1771 by Primate Robinson which was the center of his attention. Over the doorway of the stately old stone building is the sign “Pseuches Iatreion”—Medicine Shop of the Soul. Within it are all the volumes of history and religion about which the true student dreams but is hardly ever able to look upon. It was with greatest reluctance I tore myself away from the storehouse of lore and wisdom. Even yet my heart turns longingly back in memory to this treasure trove of knowledge.

The gray clouds were darker as we boarded the buses for our return to Belfast. Soon we were engulfed in a swirling blizzard. The equinoctial storm pelted us in all of its fury. I stopped in at the home of one of the brethren for tea and sat a long time visiting with the family before the cheery fire on the grate. When I stepped into the snowy night for the two mile walk to my place I felt alone “a stranger in a strange land.” But it was a glorious occasion for meditation after a day filled with experiences of singular richness.

As I walked through the narrow streets my mind was reeling with questions. What forces operated in the life and thought of a humble Presbyterian preacher in a remote rural area to fill him with an inner compulsion to act as a champion of unity? What was there in the background, training and early life of such a man which impelled him toward the role for which destiny selected him? Was it the providence of God that ill

health drove him to leave Ireland where his reasoning would have been smothered out by a well-entrenched clergy? What power directed his steps toward that area in Pennsylvania where the scattered forces of a divided Calvinism would arouse his compassion and kindle a desire for communion with all of the needy and spiritually hungry believers? What inner sense of kinship with all of the sinful suffering millions eventually makes itself felt in spite of the hardened layer of partisan indoctrination and transforms one from a narrow factionalist into a loving advocate of divine grace and peace?

By this time the thoughts were tripping through my heart like the snowflakes danced through the night air as they appeared out of the darkened upper void into the soft glow of the Belfast street lamps. Invigorated by the walk through the stormy night, it seemed as if the dusty cobwebs were swept away from the inner chambers of my mind. Thousands of miles away from the factional atmosphere in which I was reared, surrounded upon all sides by sleeping thousands in a great city, I realized how trivial and inconsequential were the things which had been allowed to rend and divide us. How local and parochial some of those things appear when projected against the universal need of suffering humanity. Suddenly there surged into my very soul the real meaning of that sentence incorporated in the "Declaration and Address" written by Thomas Campbell two years after his arrival in America.

The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct; and of none else, as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

When Mr. Campbell penned those words he was still a Presbyterian. Little did this gentle shepherd know where such an ideal as he expressed would lead him. Now in the same city

which he had frequently visited as a young man I came to realize quite suddenly how we had forsaken that ideal. To those with whom I was associated the church of Christ on earth was not essentially one. It was not intentionally one. It was not constitutionally one. The church of Christ on earth was a party. It was the party to which each belonged, myself included. And there were as many “churches of Christ” in America as there were factions. Each party was its own “brotherhood.” Each had on its exclusive party banner— “Immanuel”— God with *us*! I recalled that this was also the motto adopted by Kaiser Wilhelm during the first world war.

What right had I to express the hope to a little Irish Presbyterian church that they would send us other men imbued with the spirit of unity and restoration? Had we not already smashed into hostile fragments a noble movement inaugurated to unite the Christians in all the sects? Were we not even now more narrow and intolerant than those about us whom we regarded as schismatics? I knew that at last my own life must be directed into additional fields of research. I wanted to know the history of this movement of which I was an heir and I also wanted to contribute my own feeble powers to restoring the spirit of restoration. I turned my face heavenward with the large flakes stinging my cheeks and earnestly prayed for the wisdom and courage to proclaim “peace on earth to men of good will.”

I am fully aware of the criticism of some who will look upon this issue of the paper as a total loss. Upon what grounds can we justify the expenditure of time and effort required in studying the restoration movement? I hold that there is much more to be gained than the mere gratification of personal curiosity. All of us are products of the various factors which have blended together to make us what we are. No one of us is an island. The labors of those whom we have not seen affect our lives in many ways. Jesus said, “Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” If we know why and how the others labored we can know better how to enter into their labor.

J. W. McGarvey wrote:

The natural and benevolent wish that posterity may profit by the experiences of the past, furnishes another, and perhaps a nobler motive, for making a permanent record of passing events. If history, as the sages have told us, teaches by example, the most effective of all kinds of teaching, the lover of his race and of the God who employs human instrumentalities to guide and govern the race must wish that all the good deeds of men shall be transmitted from age to age as helps to every rising generation.

It has long been to me an interesting field of thought that the religious life of a people is affected and moulded to an extent by the whole of their experiences in every domain of life. Thus certain cultures, times and areas are more conducive to the revival of the Christian way than are others. It appears that nature, political fortunes, scientific developments and many other social features work toward the day when men will rise up as reformers. Our spiritual life is colored by all of the diverse facets of our existence. That Alexander Campbell concurred in this view it is evident from a letter which he addressed to James Wallis of Nottingham, England on August 15, 1837.

There is no doubt, sir, by the association of ideas, or by some mysterious affinity, a peculiar sympathy exists between all the pursuits of men; and when changes, sometimes miscalled improvements, in society, become the order of the day, they ramify and extend through all the operations of the mind; and hence improvements in agriculture, in manufactures, in commerce; new discoveries in science or in the arts of life, mingle with our religious theories and conceptions.

The lives of men are formed and shaped by conditions existing about them. In turn, they condition and reform the culture of which they are a part. Thus we are heirs of all the great concepts of the generations past. We are both created and

creative. The “Declaration and Address” which spurred the restoration movement was both fruit and seed. It was not written upon impulse. It was the crystallization of the ideas which had been clamoring for expression in a heart burning with eager desire to see those barriers removed which had long held God’s people aloof from each other. It is much easier to pluck the fruit than to grub in the soil and uncover the roots which made that fruit possible. But a true horticulturist will not be satisfied to merely eat fruit in utter ignorance of how it was produced, nor can the eager disciple content himself with “entering into the labor” of other men without learning as much as he can about their labors which made his own possible.

Northern Ireland undoubtedly formed the best background extant for encouragement of that individuality in thought which characterized the mind of Thomas Campbell. It was then, as it is now, one of the most rugged strongholds of aggressive Protestantism on earth. Not only are the people cheerful and industrious but they possess a mental ability which enables them to see the humorous side of life and to describe it in a fluent fashion and with telling phraseology. While the mass of the Irish people descended from the Celts they absorbed the early invaders of different races, but the English and Scots who settled in the northern part of the island were never assimilated. The sturdy independence and persistence of these inhabitants has produced some eminent students and researchists in every avenue of human endeavor.

Thomas Campbell was also fortunate in his selection of a companion. Jane Corneigle was of French Huguenot stock. As a result of the frightful murder of thirty thousand Protestants in Paris and its environs on St. Bartholomew’s Day, A.D. 1572, her ancestors fled to the mountainous regions of France. Life here proved so precarious that these Calvinists were eventually forced to make an exodus and find asylum in other countries. The Corneigles and Bonners settled in County Antrim, near Lough Neagh, a region where the Protestant faith was as

strongly implanted as was Catholicism in their native country. Here Jane Corneigle met Thomas Campbell who had been born in County Down, in 1763, and when they were married they lived at first on the family estate about three miles from Ballymena. Here Alexander Campbell was born on September 12, 1788 when his father was twenty-five years of age. Years later this son wrote thus of his mother:

As a helpmeet of my father in the work of the Christian ministry, I think I never saw her superior, if I ever did her equal. He was frequently called from home on protracted tours in his public ministry of the Gospel; but though her cares and solitudes were always on such occasions more or less augmented, I never heard her complain; but rather to sympathize with him in his works of faith and in his labors of love. She, indeed, cheerfully endured the privations of his company, in the full assurance that his absence from home and labors in the gospel would ultimately redound more to the glory of God and to the happiness of man, than his confinement to any particular locality.

The lot of any reformer is always difficult. Man is resistant to change, preferring often to continue in familiar error than to embrace forgotten truth. He who attempts to awaken a sleeping world that does not wish to be aroused finds himself unpopular indeed. Frequently the stigma and reproach heaped upon such a man falls heaviest upon the hearts of his family. Forced to see the one whom they love suffering from the antagonism and misrepresentation of those who once were closest friends, there is ever the temptation to feel that it is not worth the struggle to attempt a rescue of those who do not sense their own plight. In this respect, Jane Campbell did not falter for her son wrote:

In all the trials and vicissitudes of her protracted life, and especially during the conflicts of her husband with the opposition, the enmity and the envy he had to encounter for duty and conscience sake, while endeavoring to effect a reformation in his own Synod and Presbyteries,

both in the Old World and the New, she stood by him in faith, hope, and love, and most cheerfully became a partaker with him in all the trials and consequences incident to, and resulting from, his advocacy of primitive and apostolic Christianity, and its restoration to its beau ideal, as pictured and developed in the inspired writings of the apostles and evangelists of Jesus the Christ.

The youthful years of Thomas Campbell were marked by deep religious conviction and concern for salvation. Out of this feeling grew a sense of social consciousness, a fervent desire to serve God by serving humanity. Realizing that some of the area south of Lough Neagh did not have access to instruction he moved to one of the more unenlightened sections and opened an English Academy. A large number of pupils came under his influence and he devoted his energies to their intellectual, moral and religious development. After awhile he was called to preach under supervision of the Synod of Belfast and sometime during 1798 he was invited to become the minister at Ahorey which was under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Markethill. It is the personal opinion of the writer that divine providence which operates in the lives of devout men directed the steps of Mr. Campbell to this spot on the earth's surface to prepare him, or enable him to prepare himself, for the great task which he would prosecute in the New World thousands of miles from his then humble abode.

It would be impossible for me to detail all of the reasons entering into my conclusion and I can mention but a few. After years of research I am convinced that, so far as my knowledge extends, the first group of disciples of Jesus, after the Dark Ages, to sever all sectarian ties and resolve to be simply Christians with a view to restoring the primitive order, met at Dungannon, in County Tyrone. They had been meeting in a congregational capacity for a number of years when Thomas Campbell moved to a farm some eighteen miles away to continue his school instruction and fill the pastorate at Ahorey. It would hardly be possible for one of such wide knowledge and interest as Mr.

Campbell to be wholly unaware of a group whose action had long been a subject of more than local controversy.

Of even greater significance as a current contributing to his stream of thought was an Independent church which met at Richhill, close to Ahorey. When his schedule of duties allowed him to do so, Mr. Campbell visited the services of this congregation. There he met men like Rowland Hill who was born in Hawkestone in 1744 and was educated at Eton and Cambridge. Possessed of evangelistic fervor and of a desire to share the good news of Christ with the masses, he preached in barns, streets, fields, and by highways and hedges, wherever men would pause to listen. The clergy of the day deprecated his methods because he did not hesitate to tell a joke or make a witty remark to gain attention. One can only wonder what impression was made on the mind of Mr. Campbell as he listened to this man who spoke so freely and informally, but of whom it was written, "truths were always balanced in his mind; and his heart was established with grace. He always blended together doctrine, experience and grace. He fell into no errors. He embraced no whims."

Then there was James Alexander Haldane who with his brother Robert had seceded from the Church of Scotland. Being men of financial importance they had planned to go to India and propagate the gospel, but when the East India company thwarted their hopes they devoted their lives to promoting religious truth in the British Isles. They organized a society for the purpose and began publication of the *Missionary Magazine*. Of this journal, Greville Ewing, a dissatisfied minister of the Church of Scotland, became the editor. James Alexander Haldane was at the height of his power when Mr. Campbell met him. In 1805 he published his revolutionary work, "A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances Observed by the First Christians." It is difficult to read this volume without forming a conclusion that it planted the seed for much of what was later written by the Campbells. Our concepts always derive their

strength and substance from many sources.

The divided state of the religious world at the time must have engendered a great deal of concern in the mind of the Presbyterian pastor at Ahorey as he neared his fortieth birthday anniversary. One describes the religious condition at that time in these words:

Sad as was the tyranny which caused the upheaval of the French Revolution, there was not less tyranny in the domain of religion. State establishments existed everywhere save in the Republic of the New World, and it had just reached the conception that governments had no right to fetter the consciences of men. There were in most countries protests against the State Church, but the Dissenters were deprived of equal rights, were often persecuted and had themselves imbibed the intolerant spirit from which they had suffered. Christendom was a medley of discordant and warring sects, without harmony, without friendship, at sword's points, each presenting to the other its shibboleth, and ready to cut off all who were unable or unwilling to pronounce it in the prescribed manner. The different sects were Ishmaelites, with hands against all beside. Everywhere the spirit of those apostles who forbade him who walked in Christ's name but walked not with them, prevailed.

Although one of Mr. Campbell's disposition would he greatly disturbed by the appalling state of division in the whole Protestant realm, he was much more affected by the strife within his own immediate communion. In 1732 more than forty ministers of the Church of Scotland presented a petition to the general assembly asking for a redress of grievances and specifying a number of deviations from the constitution of the church. At the same time another plea signed by several hundred elders and unofficial members was offered. The latter dealt primarily with what was called "patronage," a practice which denied local congregations the right to select their own ministers. Because of the controversy which ensued division

resulted and those who left the established church were known as Seceders. These secessionists became quite numerous and set up three Presbyteries under one Synod.

The Seceders did not continue in undisturbed tranquillity. A dispute arose among them about the Burgess oath which was required of all who held local offices. It was required of such officials in a burgh, or borough (a corporate town) that they swear to protect and defend “the religion presently professed in this realm.” Those who thought such an oath could be taken in all good conscience were designated Burghers, those who revolted against it were called Anti-Burghers. The conflict became so keen that an open cleavage occurred in 1739. Mr. Campbell was connected with the Anti-Burgher branch of the Seceder division of the Presbyterian Church. He was fully aware of the strife and contention which had been carried on with intensity of feeling.

With a heart filled with concern Mr. Campbell appeared before the Synod of Ireland, convened in Belfast in 1804, to plead for the unity of the Burghers and Anti-Burghers in Ulster. Having read his speech made on that occasion I am convinced that he was formulating those concepts which would later lead to the inception of the restoration movement. He gave a scathing indictment of the evils resulting from religious schism. While we recognize that some of our readers might find a long quotation boring we cannot resist the impulse to have you read a part of his speech.

This, our unhappy division, appeared to us an evil of no small magnitude, whether abstractly considered as inconsistent with the genius and spirit of the Christian religion, which has union, unity, and communion in faith, hope, and love, for its grand object upon earth, or whether considered in its hurtful tendencies, as marring and embarrassing the cause which it was the grand object of the secession to promote. For has it not exposed the zealous contenders for a reformation, on both sides, to the

contempt and jeers of the scorers, and filled the mouths of scoffers with reproach and obloquy? Has it not been fraught with the awful consequence of distracting, disturbing, and dividing the flock of the Lord's heritage, and of sowing discord among brethren? Has it not been productive of a party spirit, both among ministers and people, stirring up and promoting an unhappy disposition of evasion and reprisals upon the boundaries of their respective communities? Has it not had an awful tendency to relax discipline, or render it abortive, by opening a door of escape to the delinquent, or by its dissuasive influence upon ministers and sessions, for fear of losing the subject, in case he should take offence? Has it not had a very embarrassing tendency with respect to many of the serious and well-meaning, when they, seeing our division, upon enquiry find that the subject-matter of our difference is not to be found either in the Old or New Testament?

This plea was unavailing at the time, but in 1820, sixteen years later, and after Mr. Campbell had been in the United States for thirteen years, the unhappy situation was resolved and the two factions of Presbyterians in North Ireland again merged their efforts. In the interim the plea for unity had been carried to the new world on a wider scale.

Thomas Campbell had not been long in America until he saw even more clearly "the awful consequence of distracting, disturbing, and dividing the flock of the Lord's heritage." When he wrote the memorable "Declaration and Address" which he first read to the Washington Association in September, 1809, he hammered out that document on the forge of a heart that burned with zeal to rectify a condition which was intolerable to one who revered the name of Jesus. It was this pronouncement which struck a death blow at the sectarian spirit. Although in its inception it was "a cloud like a man's hand" it soon filled the land with "the sound of abundance of rain" and the parched hearts of men blighted by spiritual drouth again revived in hope.

It is time to restore the spirit of the restoration whose heirs now constitute one of the most divided religious movements in the world. What qualities are needed to pursue this objective? What forces in the lives of men can operate to pry the vehicle of reform out of “the slough of despond” and start it on its way again? To whom can we look for leadership amidst our tragic state? Let us examine the factors which contributed to the inception of the restoration movement and determine if it may be possible to recapture them for this generation.

1. The restoration movement was launched by men who were dissatisfied with the *status quo*. They were not “at ease in Zion” nor were they “settled on their lees.” Thomas Campbell wrote in the Declaration and Address that they were “tired and sick of the bitter warrings and janglings of a party spirit.” He declared that they despaired of finding rest “by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions.” Alexander Campbell wrote of an abiding impression relative to “the forms and ceremonies, the speculations and conjectures, the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms.” No restoration worthy of the name will be undertaken by those who feel that they have attained perfection or who deceive themselves into thinking that what they have is the ideal state. Those who ask what there is to restore will never restore anything! Restoration results from the restless conscience!

2. Restoration must always be preceded by reformation. In its infancy restoration is not a movement of the masses but a dream in the heart of an individual or, at the most, a few individuals. Any individual who seeks to further this ideal must have his own Damascus Road experience. He must be stricken to the dust. He must be made to see the futility of his past life and his present actions. He must be stripped of pride and arrogance. He must be deprived of his trust in all the world counts of value. He must say of his life as did Paul, “I count it so much garbage, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in

him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith” (New English Bible Translation).

Like Daniel he must set his “face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” And like Daniel he must begin by admitting, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.”

He who would help to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem must say like Nehemiah, “I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.” And like Nehemiah he must speak thus to the Lord: “Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant which I pray before thee now, day and night . . . and confess the sins . . . which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.” It is useless for one to attempt to promote the unity of all believers while defending the sectarian divisions created by his fathers, or while apologizing for his own partisan attachment.

Men who change things and rescue God’s children from exile in Babylon must conduct themselves like Ezra. “I arose up from my heaviness, and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day.” One does not deserve to walk with Jesus who is not willing to accompany him to Gethsemane. We dare not ask to share the blessing of his presence if we desert him amidst the olive trees of the garden of weeping!

3. The spirit of restoration must be kindled by

wholehearted commitment to a search for truth and an unreserved dedication to follow where it leads. This requires a willingness to alter one's thinking and to amend one's practice to "keep abreast of truth." When the Campbells cut loose from their moorings and resolved to be guided by the pole star of restoration they little knew where it would lead them. "They went out, not knowing whither they went." Thirty years later Alexander Campbell wrote:

None of us who either got up or sustained that project, was then aware of what havoc that said principle, if faithfully applied, would have made of our views and practices on various favorite points. The application of the principle already stated trimmed us so naked, that we strongly inclined to suspect its fallacy, and had well nigh abandoned it as a deceitful speculation. Time, however, that great teacher, and Experience, that great critic, have fully assured us that the principle is a salutary one; and that although we seemingly lose much by its application, our loss consists only of barren opinions, fruitless speculations, and useless traditions, that only cumber the ground and choke the word, so that it is in a good measure unfruitful.

No man can further the cause of reformation while striving to be consistent with his past. He must walk in light of increasing knowledge. He dare not stumble at the noonday as he did in the mists and shadows of the dawn. It is a frequent resort of narrow partisans to publish the earlier writings of a reformer to contrast them with his current productions. No greater honor can be bestowed upon a man than to demonstrate that he had the courage to alter his thinking as he grew in knowledge of the truth. Only the densely ignorant or grossly prejudiced boast they have made no changes with the passing decades. Those who say such should hide their heads in shame for their wasted years. All of the gains that have been made in any field of human experience and endeavor have been made by men who dared to rise above the blind conformity of the age in which they lived.

The heretics of yesterday are always the heroes of today!

One who stops to ask what will be the consequences if he accepts truth is unworthy of truth. To such a person truth becomes merely a policy-making instrument to be accepted or rejected upon the basis of what it will do for him or to him. He is not a free man. His life is conditioned and ruled by other men. His course is determined before he discovers truth—the path of least resistance!

4. The reformer must labor for the approval of God and steel himself against the reproaches of men. No one will be hated more intensely by bitter partisans than the man who refuses to be one. It is an indication of the party spirit that it seeks always to capture the free spirit and to clip its wings so that it cannot fly over the restrictive barriers. It is a difficult thing to be just a Christian and not to allow oneself to be allied with or used by some faction or group to further its own selfish interests. The sectarian attitude is rife in our land. It works in subtle and devious ways. None of us is ever wholly free from its blighting influence. We encounter it at every step. It manifests itself in the policies and programs of those with whom we are closely associated. Often it is the price we must pay for continuing friendship but it is too great a price.

One who strives to rise above the sordid spectacle of sectarianism should read often and meditate much upon those passages which encourage to faithfulness regardless of external pressures. “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.” “For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.” “For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.”

5. The heart of him who pleads for restoration must be

filled with love for mankind. This is not the same as love for a particular kind of man. It is universal and all-embracing. It is the love that God had for the world when He sent Jesus to die for all. It is the love that was commended unto us while we were yet sinners. It is not a love for those who are worthy, but for those who are unworthy; not for the lovable but for the unlovable, not for the hopeful but for the hopeless. Much of what passes for love in these days is very selfish. It is a narrow patriotism or partisan feeling, a regard based upon race, face or place. Such an attitude will contribute nothing worthwhile to the welfare of mankind.

It is time that the scattered fragments of the Restoration movement be gathered together. We have been shattered, splintered and severed too long. Hearts have been saddened, family ties broken, communities rent asunder, and congregations torn to bits by explosive passions. The glorious concept of brotherhood must once again be recaptured, the ideal must be re-affirmed and the hearts of all stirred into action leading toward peace. The bugle call of destiny sounds again and those who have been sleeping in their party bivouacs must arouse themselves and form an unbroken army to march against the common foe. We shall gain nothing for our age by perpetuating the feuds of our fathers. If in their search for truth they were split and riven, in our continued search for truth let us find the nobler path of unity.

They have rights who dare maintain them;

we are traitors to our sires,

Smothering in their holy ashes

Freedom's new-lit altar fires;

Shall we make their creeds our jailer?

Shall we in our haste to slay,

From the tombs of the old prophets

steal the funeral lamps away

To light up the martyr-fagots

round the prophets of today?

Adventures in Religion (1)

Mission Messenger (September 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

All who love the Lord Jesus desire above everything else to be loyal to His cause. No one who has “set to his seal that God is true” would deliberately and maliciously offend the Father. But we have become so factional in these days and division is so rife, that we tend to mistake loyalty to the party for allegiance to Christ. We have become the victims of so many pressure groups that we seldom stop to determine how Jesus would react to our complex problems. Many of us do not really know him as a person, although we know a number of things about him. There is a great difference!

Of course none of us can be sure of just how our Lord would deal with some of the situations which confront us. He has left us no detailed bill of particulars and has given us no legal code with all the contingencies spelled out in fine print. We do not even have a biography providing a complete story of his life. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had no intention of giving us a history of his career. They merely set forth those events that would prove that he was the Son of God. The latter admitted that Jesus did many things which he did not chronicle and said, “If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”

God does not deal with us in these last days as with children. He has not supplied us a rule book with footnotes in

which every phase of spiritual activity is meticulously covered. We must ascertain those principles which governed our Lord and apply them as best we can in the Jet Age which is far removed from the days of Herod and Pontius Pilate. Fortunately those principles have never been abrogated by heaven nor superseded by any superior wisdom of mankind. We can by a proper study of the greatest life ever to bless this earth learn that personal philosophy which will be best for us during our brief life span. I should like to suggest a few things which appear to me to have relevance for our day.

1. Jesus did not recognize every command of God as of equal weight and significance. He knew there were certain requirements that were central to our relationship while others were peripheral. When a lawyer asked him which was the great commandment in the law Jesus did not say there was no such thing. Instead he recited the command to love God. He said, "This is the first and great commandment." He then gave the second and said, "On these two hang all the law and the prophets."

This is a forceful statement because it shows that love for God and neighbor is basic. From these two every other thing required is suspended. One might break the formal and ritualistic requirements and while he would be held accountable for these infractions the relationship would remain intact, but if he rejected or violated the foundational requirements the whole structure would tumble in disarray. The lawyer was discerning enough to see this. He replied, "Master, you have spoken the truth . . . to love God . . . and to love your neighbor as yourself—is far more than any burnt offerings or sacrifices." The record says, "When Jesus saw how sensibly he answered, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'"

The converse of this must be that when a man regards ritual and ceremonial requirements as being on par with personal relationship to God and his brethren he is a long way

from the kingdom. One nears the kingdom, according to Jesus, when he sensibly approaches the problem of our relationship as contrasted with legal demands. Yet most of our divisions have been caused by some aspect of tragic error at this juncture. Jesus knew that the law was given by God but he knew there were “weightier matters” than some of the keen points of distinction which had been arrived at by the scrupulous legalistic minds of the scribes.

2. Jesus evaluated the relationship with a brother as taking precedence over a formal act of religious service. “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” The altar was ordained of God. It was the very center of national worship. The most important religious ritual was to be interrupted to establish proper relationship with a brother. Jesus would never have considered that a thing was settled so long as division existed between brethren. He would never have callously remarked when a brother was driven forth, “It is good riddance of bad rubbish!” He taught that reconciliation with an offended brother was to be the constant endeavor of those who love His instruction. Actually Jesus associated with “the rubbish.”

3. Jesus recognized that man was not made for religion, but religion was made for man, and the ultimate expression of religion was doing good to needy mankind. One sabbath while they were going through the grainfields, the disciples plucked off heads of grain, rubbed off the husks between their palms, and ate the grain. The Pharisees immediately called to the attention of Jesus that his followers were doing what was not lawful on the sabbath. Jesus went to the very heart of the matter. He recalled that when David “was in need and was hungry” he entered the very precincts of the house of God and there ate the bread of the Presence, *which it was not lawful for any but the priests to eat.*

This teaching was revolutionary to the legalists of that day. All legalism sacrifices human need to ceremonial observance. The life, or even the soul, of a man is worthless compared with “obeying the law.” Let the law be upheld at all costs, regardless of human suffering or inner turmoil. Men are but machines, mere robots, to perform stated acts. This reasoning was directly contradicted by Jesus when he declared, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.” The goal of religion is to develop one in all his faculties and potentials to the highest possible degree. It is to encourage and assist him in the arrival at that place where his personality fulfils the divine responsibility which is his to bear. When religion becomes destructive of the finer virtues, when it engenders hatred, animosity and carping criticism, when it drives apart those who claim to love Jesus instead of drawing them closer together it is prostituted to the baser elements of our earthbound existence.

It is a sad error to mistake being loyal to the party or to partisan traditions with being loyal to Jesus and the ideals which he espoused and for which he died. It is possible that nothing in our day so militantly stands in the way of real Christian living as party prejudices. We need men who will rise above such narrow concepts of brotherhood and restore to our aching hearts the real Jesus, in all the glory and majesty of that divine love which sent him to an unworthy world filled with sinners. True Christianity has not been tried and found wanting— it has just not been tried in our generation!

4. Jesus intimated that the ability to love may be in proportion to a recognition of the need for forgiveness. One who feels that he is so good that he requires little mercy from God will have but meager compassion for others. Such a person lavishes all of his love upon himself and has but a small surplus to share with anyone else. This was exemplified when a prostitute came in from the street while Jesus was dining with a rich Pharisee. The woman stood behind Jesus crying, letting her tears fall on his feet and then drying them with her hair. She

kissed his feet and anointed them with expensive perfume, an action which made the host indignant. This elicited one of the most pointed parables which Jesus concluded with the remark, "But the man who has little to be forgiven has only a little love to give." If we would develop a love to share we must begin with a sense of our own need. He who comes short of recognizing his shortcomings will come up short in bestowing love.

Restoration Astray

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

The task of a faithful historian is never an easy one. Human nature being what it is no cause involving men, regardless of the high ideals with which it began, can long continue uncorrupted. The true recorder of events must not allow his personal bias to influence him to the extent that he will unduly emphasize the gains and successes and withhold from the reader the less flattering aspects. It is in such an attitude that we undertake our current series of investigations. Only time and our finished product can reveal whether we will be able to maintain that degree of objectivity with which we begin.

Most of those who read this little journal are the heirs of a noble religious experiment which was launched about the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was described by one of its chief advocates as “a project to unite the Christians in all sects.” In previous issues we have sought to trace the roots of this worthy endeavor. We have explored the background, character and other factors in the lives of the men who were motivated to inaugurate such a majestic program.

We regret that our task is not completed. It would be pleasant to halt our narrative on the high plane of idealism with which the Restoration movement began. Unfortunately, that movement has now degenerated into the most divided one in the contemporary religious scene. In addition to the major cleavage

occasioned by introduction of instrumental music, there are now some two dozen segments of the non-instrument group alone. We propose to examine the underlying causes contributing to the rise of factionalism and determine if possible when the disciple brotherhood abandoned its original aim. Our purpose is not to be merely critical of past attitudes but to personally profit by the mistakes of our predecessors. Certainly we can better get the Restoration movement back on the main track if we know at what point it was derailed.

In developing this phase of the subject it is impossible to write as a disinterested observer or an outsider. The writer, after leaving the Lutheran communion at an early age, virtually grew up in one of the parties resulting from disintegration of the Restoration movement. The members of this splinter group regarded it as the church of God on earth. It alone constituted the kingdom of heaven, and its constituents were the only faithful children of God. All others were looked upon as aliens or errorists whose only hope of eternal life lay in locating and formally attaching themselves to one of the “loyal” congregations, a term used to designate those local units which met the party tests.

I freely confess that I was factional in my outlook. I conformed without question to the traditions of the party fathers. Everyone who did not conform I regarded as either a sectarian or a hobbyist. When one altered his views and could no longer endorse our position fully I looked upon him as a traitor to Jesus and an apostate from the faith. I either joined in verbally “stoning” him or figuratively held the coats of those who did so. I helped to drive from us those whose only guilt was that they were too honest to allow us to continue to think that they condoned our interpretation on every point.

When I write about the factional spirit I write from experience. I know the extent to which one may deceive himself into believing that a party is the one body, and that no one can

be joined unto Jesus who is not an adherent of the party. I know how sincerely men may labor under this delusion to make the sacred scriptures a factional oracle and interpret each passage as if it were written solely to advocate the party platform. I know what it means to search the word of God as a favorite debater and recognized champion to find those passages which can be used to gain a victory over the chosen gladiator of a rival party. I can say truthfully that I never doubted when I engaged in any debate that I alone represented the church of God on earth and that my opponent was deceived, if not actually a deceiver.

Now I am saddened by my past disposition of intolerance and lack of charity. It only contributed to greater dissension and gendered more strife in a world already too filled with that unwholesome commodity. We gain nothing for the cause of our Lord by selfishness and bigotry. While most of us had little to do with the creation of those factions with which we are allied, our perpetuation of them only serves to add to the confusion and distress of the religious realm. No segment, group, or faction growing out of the Restoration movement is the church of Christ to the exclusion of all others. Not even “The Church of Christ” as a separate organization listed in the United States Census is the church of God exclusively. The census bureau can number, list and catalogue the members of an organization, but only God knows the names of all who are in the divine organism— the one body.

A Forsaken Goal

The Restoration movement was not inaugurated to launch another “church” yet it has resulted in a number of warring groups being started. It is not unfair to say that those who started out to bring peace to a divided church are now the most antagonistic of all the current religious segments. Their bitter attacks upon each other by radio, newspaper, and other mass

media, have made any plea for unity by them a laughing-stock among thinking people. The movement has actually ceased to “move” and has crystallized into a sect. The various parties look upon accessions from each other as “conversions” and report in partisan journals with great glee the defection of a preacher from another party to their own.

Certainly when the Restoration movement ceased to be a means to an end and became the end, it then and there became merely another religious organization among many others. It can never be restored to its original aim and purpose until its members are made to realize that the work of restoration was never completed. Only when these disciples are ready to assume the task of seeking to “unite the Christians in all the sects” can it truly be said that we have resumed where our fathers left off. We must regard the interim as a mere interlude and the structure (or structures) we have erected as but temporary at best, in many cases unnecessary and in some cases detrimental to the cause of our Lord. It will be difficult indeed for most of us to attain to this plane of thought but unless we do we can only look forward to other divisions in the future. We will cumber the ground instead of bearing fruit and God may order that we be cut down.

In this study of causes we shall attempt to be factual and practical. Our aim will not be to find fault or to assess guilt but to study those factors which operated in the lives of men at certain stages of the Restoration movement contributing to its present state. Men live but a few decades at most. Their lives and convictions are shaped by their environment and training. They seldom accumulate a great deal of knowledge of the past. They cannot peer into the future and determine the ultimate consequences of their acts. They can only practice and perform in the light available unto them. Perhaps in the same circumstances we would proceed exactly as they did. We will not help the present by being bitterly censorious of those who preceded us nor arrogantly self-righteous about our own

attitudes or abilities. If our fathers slew the prophets we need not garnish their tombs.

A Forgotten Task

It is necessary to re-state again and again for this generation the basis upon which the pioneers of restoration hoped to answer the prayer of Jesus for unity. Not only have they forsaken it but they have forgotten it! Thomas Campbell early learned that the foundation of the Christian system was faith in a person. He observed that the divisions existing among the believers had been caused by exalting opinions and he rightly saw that there could never be unity upon such grounds. It remained for Alexander Campbell to distinguish so aptly between faith, knowledge and opinion, and to demonstrate clearly that God had predicated unity upon the first because it was absolutely impossible to achieve upon the basis of the other two.

The creeds of men were regarded as statements of crystallized opinion, divisive in their very nature because they demanded conformity in the realm of opinion and proscribed all who could not in good conscience conform. They were not rejected merely because they were creeds, that is statements of belief, but because they all created a false basis of acceptance and justification by setting up agreement in irrelevant matters as the ground of salvation. It was proposed to offset and eliminate the baneful effects of these by a re-affirmation of the divine creed, belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and the Son of God.

This was deemed the central fact of the whole Christian system. It was the hub which joined all of the spokes together and while these might appear to be far apart at the perimeter they were held together in a unified whole by the rim of love, that circumferential tie which maintained a unity in diversity.

Those who were joined to Christ might differ about many matters of opinion and interpretation but these were to be subjects for discussion and not occasions for division. Nothing was to be regarded of the same importance as the recognition of the Sonship of Jesus for upon this fact the salvation of the whole world depended. It was primary while matters of doctrinal growth were secondary. *Faith was to hold a man to Christ while opinions were held by men in Christ.*

A Factual Example

The restoration movement began to disintegrate only when men forsook its original premise. It was wrecked on the rocks of creedalism although these were unseen dangers since they were unwritten creeds. In its inception the opinions of men were never allowed to become tests of fellowship. One of the best examples of this is found in the treatment accorded Aylette Raines.

Aylette Raines was born in Spottsylvania county, Virginia, January 22, 1798, and was sprinkled in the Episcopal Church when four years old. When he was 13 years old the family moved to Kentucky where he later began teaching at the age of 18, continuing for three years. He then moved to Crawford county, Indiana, and here fell under the powerful influence of a sect of the Universalists. Being a young man of brilliance and unlimited courage he began proclaiming the final holiness, happiness and salvation of all men. He was joined in this endeavor by a good friend and fellow-worker, E. Williams. They called themselves "Restorationists" because of their belief that all men would be restored to original purity and perfection.

Raines carried his message into Ohio where he learned that Walter Scott was making a tremendous impact upon the thinking of the people. Convinced of the rightness of his position, and ready to meet any who challenged it, Raines went to hear Scott. The first message made a profound impression upon him

and he returned only to have his initial impressions strengthened. The conviction took hold of him that he had not been proclaiming the gospel at all. The philosophy he had been announcing, whether it was true or false, could not save a man from sin. If one believed it there was nothing in it to save him, if he disbelieved it there was nothing in it to damn him. He began to preach the Good News that Jesus was the Messiah and God's Son and that justification from past sins was achieved through faith in this fact. Meanwhile he still retained his philosophy called "Restorationism."

The change in his presentation brought Raines into conflict with his former colleagues. After much discussion with Williams the latter also became convinced of the rightness of the gospel plea. He and Raines went down into the water and Williams immersed Raines into Christ, whereupon Raines reciprocated by immersing Williams. Mr. Raines then made application to be received into the Mahoning Association and this provided the first real test of the principle that men can be united in the faith while holding to divergent opinions about speculative matters. Of this occasion one historian who was later intimately associated with Aylette Raines writes as follows:

It was at this point that the first great danger arose to try the nerves and test the wisdom of the pioneers in this cause, and put to the proof the principles which they had espoused, and upon which they had launched their enterprise. It was the question whose solution was to determine the fate of the Restoration. If the disciples could not be united in faith and have fellowship with each other, while holding contrary opinions as respects matters lying outside the circle of faith, then the movement was doomed to dismal failure. But if they could do these two things, the success of their plea could not be thwarted. Thus the most momentous interests were placed in the balance.

Fortunately at the next meeting of the Mahoning Association both Thomas and Alexander Campbell, as well as

Walter Scott, were present. Jacob Orsborne introduced the matter and asked for a definite settlement of the question whether a man holding the views of Aylette Raines should be accepted. Thomas Campbell was the first to speak on the subject. He expressed regret that such questions should even be introduced or that a man's opinion should be held to be a subject for discussion. He said,

“Brother Raines has been with me during the last several months and we have fully unbosomed ourselves to each other. He is philosophically a Restorationist and I am a Calvinist, but notwithstanding this difference of opinion between us, I would put my right hand into the fire and have it burned off, before I would hold up my hands against him. And from all I know of Brother Raines, if I were Paul, I would have him in preference to any young man of my acquaintance to be my Timothy.”

Alexander Campbell spoke next. He reviewed what he had said so often about the distinction between faith and opinion. He asserted that if a man held to and proclaimed the everlasting gospel of Christ large liberty should be allowed him in the domain of private opinion. He proposed that Mr. Raines give assurance that he would proclaim the gospel as did the apostles and retain his opinions as private property. Walter Scott concurred with the Campbells and Raines expressed his intention to pursue the course suggested. The question was then put to the Association. “Whether there be any law of Christ by which a brother could be condemned who deported himself as Mr. Raines proposed to do.” The Association voted by a large majority that there was no scriptural ground for rejecting such a person and he was received with full accord.

The sequel to this account is found in this statement published by Aylette Raines near the close of his long and eventful career in the service of Christ:

The great kindness and magnanimity with which the

Campbells and Walter Scott treated me after my baptism, and before I was convinced of the erroneousness of my restorationist philosophy. They used to say to me, 'It is a mere philosophy like Calvinism and Arminianism, and no part of the gospel.' They made these isms of but little value and therefore not worth contending for, and they did not put themselves in conflict with my philosophy, but rather urged me to preach the gospel in matter and form as did the apostles. This all appeared to me to be reasonable, and I did it; and one of the consequences was, that the philosophy within me became extinct, having no longer the coals of contention by which to warm or the crumbs of sectarian righteousness upon which to feed.

A Further Achievement

A demonstration of the spirit of reform which rose above all factional tendencies is found in the union effected between the forces gathered by the proclamation of Barton W. Stone and those which rallied behind the Campbells. When it was learned that there was great similarity in the pleas made by each of these groups there naturally arose an interest in trying to promote a unified effort. It was aptly pointed out that if the principle espoused was not great enough to weld together those who were so close in their ideals it was hopeless to try to unite the rest of the religious world.

There existed some grave differences in the position of Stone and Campbell. Although both had grown up in the Presbyterian communion their backgrounds were divergent. When Stone became convinced as early as 1804 that immersion was the apostolic practice he did not see the relation of baptism for the remission of sins. He would not consent to join the Baptist party and no Baptist preacher would immerse him unless he did, so he was immersed by a Presbyterian. After Campbell was immersed the Brush Run congregation (in 1813) made application to be received into the Redstone Baptist

Association and acceptance was granted. Alexander Campbell believed that among the Baptists there could be accomplished a work of reformation unparalleled on earth. In 1825 he wrote:

In one thing the Baptists may appear, in time to come, proudly singular and preeminently distinguished. Their historian in the year 1900 may say, We are the only people who ever did tolerate any person to continue as a reformer or restorer among us. While other Sects excluded all who would have enlarged their views or exalted their virtues, while every Jerusalem in Christendom stoned its own prophets and exiled its own best friends and compelled them to set up for themselves, we (Baptists) constituted the only exception of this kind in the annals of Christianity— nay, in the annals of the world.

This statement proved too optimistic and the union with the forces of Stone established the breach with the Baptists. An outstanding Baptist leader said, “The Campbellites have made the gulf between us impassable by throwing themselves into the arms of the Arians.” The uniting of the two forces striving for restoration was not easy but finally accomplished by the utter crucifixion of the party spirit. There were two main areas of difference which had to be resolved. One had to do with the name by which the saints should be designated, the other with the nature of Jesus Christ or the doctrine of “the Trinity.”

Stone had long contended that the reformers should be styled Christians, while Alexander Campbell held out for the word disciples. He advanced his reasons for his position in well prepared essays as was his custom on any controversial issue. It was here the basic principle of the restoration exhibited its utility and the question was resolved by refusing to bind upon the brethren either position in a dogmatic fashion. J. B. Briney wrote of their agreement as follows:

As religious names the early restorers saw that the only thing essential to unity was to discard all human and

unscriptural names, and wear only such as are approved by the scriptures— any of them or all of them. It was discovered that a single name was not necessary to unity, for it was noticed that the primitive church was united, although the members were known by various names, such as disciples, Christians, saints, brethren, etc. In this matter and within New Testament limits the followers of Christ are free.

The other problem was more difficult. Stone rejected the speculative Trinitarian formula which was written into the orthodox creeds. Since all creeds are regarded by their adherents as being merely statements summarizing the doctrine of God, to reject the language of the creed as they look at it is to reject the word of God. Accordingly the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists of that day concluded that any man who refused to be designated a Trinitarian must be a Unitarian. In vain Stone tried to tell them that he was neither and in an attempt to explain his position he made statements which were twisted and stretched by his opponents into apparent denial of the deity of Jesus. The preachers of the various sects placed their interpretations on what Stone said and forthwith attacked those interpretations as representing his position. The battle waxed great.

It was in this instance that the distinction between faith and opinion saved the day. Those who were allied with both the “Christians” and the “disciples” believed in and proclaimed the facts of the gospel. All acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth was the only begotten Son of God, that he was made flesh and dwelled among men, that he died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day for our justification. All agreed that we are cleansed from our sins by his blood and that he ever lives to make intercession for us. All recognized him as the great high priest residing at the right hand of God. They agreed to proclaim these things in the language of the Spirit and to insist upon no special theory or view of his pre-incarnate nature. Each man might retain his personal opinion as to the mode of divine

existence but to advocate such an opinion was distinct from preaching the word. Consequently they agreed to give themselves to proclaiming the gospel while retaining their opinions to themselves. Again we quote from J. B. Briney:

But happily they soon came to see that it was wholly a speculative matter that did not pertain either to human salvation or Christian living, and that it should not be made a test of fellowship among disciples of Christ, nor of controversy among brethren— that it should be relegated to the realm of opinion and every individual left free to hold such opinions on the subject as might seem to each one to be most in accord with Scripture teaching and human reason.

A Fatal Error

What has happened to the heirs of this noble project inaugurated “to unite the Christians in all the sects”? They have become fractured into more than two dozen warring factions representing the most divided religious movement on the American scene today. Having abandoned the fundamental principles of the Restoration movement they have allowed themselves to degenerate into narrow parties, each with its own unwritten creed as a test of fellowship and communion. The philosophy they have espoused can only lead to more division in the future. It is prompted by “the will to divide” and nurtured by a misconception of certain elemental truths related to our relationship together in Christ Jesus. Actually legalism has been substituted for love and dogmatism has displaced liberty in the Lord.

Under the guise of upholding the authority of God’s word the representatives of each faction put forward their own interpretations and opinions and these are made the criteria of judgement. The honest soul who cannot in good conscience conform is branded as a heretic and expelled from the party.

There are as many standards of authority as there are factions and each faction protests that it alone is “loyal” and all of the rest are traitors and apostates. The least deviation from a traditional procedure is regarded as an excuse to destroy all brotherly relationship and becomes the occasion of another division. Nothing is so cheap, nothing so little valued among members of “The Church of Christ” as brotherhood. It can be strangled or crucified at a moment’s notice and over the most trivial matters.

Although each faction still pays lip service to the distinction between matters of faith and opinion, no two groups are agreed on what things belong in either of these categories. What is considered a matter of faith by one group is recognized as a matter of opinion by others, and vice versa. Almost without exception they have lost the distinction between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine and have made the tragic mistake of concluding that all of the new covenant writings are a part of the gospel. This is the weak spot in the armor, the Achilles’ heel, which must some day doom the movement to extinction unless corrected! So long as this fallacy is maintained there can be predicted a dire future of division and strife in which blinded partisans will bite and devour one another until the inevitable fate of such conduct overtakes them.

Many of the current divisions could never have occurred if men had been true to the principles which sparked the restoration movement. Unfortunately, the Campbells and their contemporaries were succeeded by men of lesser ability and greater personal ambition and we can today see the result in a disturbed and scattered brotherhood. Men have climbed to prominence as the chief proponents or opponents of certain issues which should always have been kept in the realm of opinion. When issues are forced and stressed beyond their proper proportion and relation to the Christian system only strife and evil can result. The intemperate attack on brethren who hold certain views always results in crystallization of party

feeling. Some men seem to thrive as defenders of orthodoxy and must find an issue to keep themselves in the public eye. If they do not find one they invent one or distort the position of some other brother.

A Case In Point

As an example of unnecessary division caused by ignoring the principle relating to faith and opinion we may cite the formal separation over the pre-millennial interpretation of the scriptures. It will come as a surprise to our readers in other parts of the world and as a shock to those from other religious segments in our own country, to learn that an opinion relative to unfulfilled prophecy has created such a cleavage that in many communities in the United States there are two separate and distinct parties operating under the title "Church of Christ" and having little to do with each other except in case of public debate. Each party has its own schools for training of a special ministerial class, each has its own recognized journals, each its own missionaries.

I do not subscribe to the pre-millennial viewpoint. My personal position is opposed to this interpretation, but it is absolutely unthinkable to me that such a thing should be made a condition or test of fellowship. It happens that many of the pioneers in the restoration movement were inclined toward the pre-millennial idea of the coming of our Lord but this did not affect their association with brethren who felt otherwise. It was only after men were betrayed into adopting the factional attitude and setting up orthodoxy as the basis of fellowship that the matter was pressed and pursued until schism resulted. It was repeated and rehearsed like playing on a harp with one string until it seemed that a position on this matter was the most important thing in all Christendom.

One is made to wonder to what extent future generations

are made to suffer under the stigma created by ambitious and implacable leaders of previous decades. Many of our current divisions are inherited and the real cause which produced them originally was the temperament of the leaders in the early struggle. Of all the inexcusable, unjustifiable, and ridiculous divisions to perpetuate among a people who propose to bring unity to a divided religious world, that over the premillennial interpretation is the worst. Here is dogmatism gone to seed! An acceptance of an opinion as to the millennium is not essential to one's salvation. Thousands of men and women died for the faith of the gospel long before John wrote the Revelation letter. As a result of this scandal in the Restoration movement we now have two well defined parties with little fraternal exchange between them. This is the result of pressures and insistence from both sides followed by the inevitable public debates in which partisan gladiators spar for every forensic advantage. Neither side is guiltless before God. Both tend to look with some misgiving, and often with open suspicion, upon those who are not allied with their party. It is probable that those of pre-millennial leanings are somewhat more lenient and charitable than some of their rabid opponents, but they are certainly not all free from factional bias. The rash accusations made against them have caused them to counter with everything at their command and truth lies wounded in the street, the innocent victim of such exchanges.

We need to eliminate such cleavages and tear down the walls that have been erected against brothers in the Lord. It will be difficult because of prejudicial statements that have been made. Not long ago an official in a southern "Church of Christ" college told me that the pre-millennial brethren preached another Jesus. I told him that they recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and God's Son and this was the same Jesus whom I also confessed. He pointed out what he alleged were certain mistakes in their views about the position of Jesus. Apparently he could not grasp the difference between mistaken identity and wrong ideas about the right person.

I am not a member of any kind of millennial party. I welcome as my brothers in Christ those who hold the various views and ideas of the Lord's return. Certainly some of them are mistaken, and in some respects they may all prove to be. But it is not a view as to how he will come again that is the foundation of Christian union. It is belief that he has come in the flesh! "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2). Brethren should cease to proclaim *as gospel* their opinions and interpretations relative to the second coming. These are not a part of the gospel, whether they be right or wrong. We should not try to bind these views upon anyone as essential to salvation for they are not, and by the same token they should not be made tests of fellowship.

Our separation over such matters is an outgrowth of the party spirit. This is a work of the flesh. It is a sign of unspirituality and immaturity. It will damn us if we persist in it and refuse to repent. A man may be wrong about the millennium and go to heaven if he does not have the party spirit; he may be right about the millennium and go to hell if he does have the party spirit. Any man who makes a test of fellowship out of a millennial interpretation— pre or post, pro or con— creates an unwritten creed. Such a person is a partisan and a factionalist. There have been too many such factionalists on both sides of the issue. All such persons are childish, puerile in thought, and like ordinary men of the world. "For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?"

If we are ever to put an end to the shameful state which now exists we must rise above the factional spirit in which we have been reared. We must recognize as our brethren those who are on both sides of the fences that men have constructed. I want it known to all who read this that I shall not allow such issues as the one under discussion to affect my relationship with any of my brethren. I propose to move freely among all of them,

associate with them, respect them and love them. I shall not allow myself to be forced into any kind of party relative to the millennium through threats, coercion, group pressure or fear of boycott. It is time to call a halt to the insane frenzy of factionalism which will make a shambles of our plea!

I shall allow no theory or opinion about the coming of my Lord to drive me into hatred or antagonism toward any of my brothers for whom that Lord died. I love them because they are children of the same Father as myself. “Every one who loves the parent loves the child” (John 5:1). Jesus did not accept these because they held a particular view as to his second coming; I will not reject them for that reason! It is time to awaken out of sleep. It is time to repair the divisive damage our fathers have wrought. They were sincere but they were wrong about the implications of brotherhood and fellowship. Because they ate sour grapes is no indication that their children’s teeth should be set on edge!

Let those of us who truly love God begin now to show it by loving all of His children. Let us move freely among all of our brethren, loving them and praying for them in spite of their treatment of us. If we cannot batter down the stone walls that men have erected to debar their brethren let us gather the tools for those who come after us so they may be more successful because of our preparatory efforts. Those stones which are loosened from the wall, let us not hurl at each other, but pile them up for a foundation of a bridge of good will which may some day span the chasm caused by the erosion of the soil of brotherhood. Let us not bequeath to our posterity the sad legacy that we have had bestowed upon us by our fathers. It is time to do a right about face if we are to face about right!

Altering Attitudes

The division over the millennial question is merely one

example of the many which harass and hamper us. All of them are the result of an attitude which makes a brother of less value than an opinion. This is an exact reversal of the attitude which sponsored the Restoration movement. Now we must make another complete change if we are to recapture the spirit of that great effort. We have forsaken "the will to unite" and have been betrayed into adoption of the "will to divide." We must once again make fellowship in Christ Jesus of greater significance than orthodoxy. Such an ideal will not be easy to attain. It must fight for every inch of ground with partisan leaders entrenched in power and prestige. But it will eventually triumph because it is the will of God. Nowhere in the sacred scriptures is division authorized or sanctioned as a means of settling differences between brethren.

In order to properly assess the magnitude of work we must do in the recovery of the sense of brotherhood we propose to deal frankly and candidly with how and where the Restoration movement was diverted and sidetracked. This will mean the debunking of some of our long cherished grounds for partisan boasting. Certainly those who have been regarded as party heroes will be found to be all too human and our earthly idols will be found to have feet of clay. However, our purpose will not be to affix personal judgment but simply to re-discover those lost principles which will enable us to overcome the tragic state which now renders our plea for unity a laughingstock before the world. May we have your interest in the next issue which will get to the very core of our problem.

We trust that our brethren will look charitably upon our humble effort to face up to the grave problem of disunity in our day. We make no vaunted boast of having all the answers. We are merely sharing with you our ideas of what we believe will usher in a brighter future for our children. If you cannot concur in our thinking we will love and respect you just the same. We are not obligated to love the things that have divided us. We are obligated to love our brethren. We do not regard them as

separated from us but we are separated from each other. If our words seem critical and censorious of brethren we beg your forgiveness. We are not fighting our brethren; we are warring only against the factional attitude. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.” We eagerly solicit your prayers in our behalf, regardless of your present alliance. May God be with you all.

Adventures in Religion (2)

Mission Messenger (October 1961)

Volume 23

[Abstract]

1. Jesus taught that a man creates the standard by which he will be judged. We will be weighed in the scales which we use to weigh others. God will accept our own yardstick as the criterion by which we will be measured. “For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.” If your basis of judgment for your brothers is strict conformity to legalistic procedure and you deviate from that law in the slightest degree you sign your own death warrant and seal your own doom. If you demand as a requisite to fellowship with you that others must have the same degree of spiritual knowledge as yourself, then you must have the same degree of knowledge as God to be in His fellowship. If you do not have, you will be damned, not because God desires to judge you thus, but because you chose that basis of judgment.

The way to assure that God will be lenient and merciful unto you is to be forbearing and forgiving toward your brethren. “Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for one another because you love one another” (Eph. 4:2 *Phillips*). Since we cannot claim perfection God must either make some allowances for us or we will be lost. I am convinced that He is willing to do this because He loves us. But if we do not love our brothers enough to make allowances for them we cannot expect to measure them by one rule and be measured by another.

It is for this reason we are under a “law of liberty” which means that we operate under a principle of freedom. The apostle says, “We are free to serve God not in the old obedience to the letter of the law, but in a new way, in the Spirit” (Romans 7:6). If we were under law and not under grace we could not make allowances for one another regardless of the degree of our love. We would have to “exact the pound of flesh for every failure” because law knows nothing of mercy, but only of justice. Since we serve in a new way we can extend mercy for ignorance and mitigating circumstances. Circumstances do make a difference. “Anyway, you should speak and act as men who will be judged by the law of freedom. The man who makes no allowances for others will find none made for him. It is still true that ‘mercy smiles in the face of judgment’” (James 2:12, 13).

Recently, on the outskirts of a town I saw a sign which read: “Speed Limit— 25 Miles Per Hour. Fine— One dollar for every mile in excess. *Write your own ticket!*” In that town the judge will assess you according to your own decision. The eternal judge will do the same. It will be well to recall that Jesus said, “For if you forgive people their failures your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive people their failures neither will your heavenly Father forgive yours” (Matt. 6:14, 15).

A prospective proselyte once approached the aged Rabbi Hillel (who died when Jesus was about ten years old) and enquired of him what was involved in obeying the law. The reply was, “What is hateful to thee, do not unto others. This is the law, the rest is commentary.” Jesus agreed that the rest was commentary but he turned it from a negative to a positive statement. “Therefore in whatever way you would have people treat you, treat them the same; for this sums up the law and the Prophets.” You are writing your own ticket!

2. Jesus taught that reciprocal love is no proof of a righteous life. It is not a distinction belonging to children of God

and, therefore, has no particular promise of reward. Such love not only falls short of perfection, but is grounded in selfishness whereas true love is selfless. It expends itself with no thought of personal gain or return. Much of our love today is partisan and parochial. It is exclusive and limited. It is reserved for those who do things as we do. Many point to closely knit factions and fraternities as examples of love. In reality these may be merely mutual admiration societies. Their members love each other only because they know they have the ability to respond in kind. That is like being certain that a man has the money on hand to pay back a loan before you let him have it. Such a man does not really need the loan. Jesus used this very illustration.

“If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get your money back, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners and hope to get their money back. No, you are to love your enemies and do good and lend without hope of return. Your reward will be wonderful and you will be sons of the most high.”

Here is a real test of the depth of your conviction. God has said “your reward will be wonderful” if you turn love loose in your life and turn your life loose in love. If your motto has been to “live and let live” He challenges you to get love and really live! Do you know someone who is an enemy of yours? The best way to get rid of him is to “love him to death.” When Lincoln was rebuked for showing kindness to the South during the Civil War and told that he ought to destroy his enemies, he answered, “Do I not destroy them when I make them my friends?” One of the quickest ways to destroy factionalism is for those who are members of various parties to start visiting each other— not to find fault but to find friends! Jesus ate with publicans and sinners because He loved mankind. The Pharisees and scribes murmured because they did not know how to love that kind of

man. Their religion got in the way of their love. Such religion is the worst kind of slavery. A member of a faction said to me not long ago, "I'd like to get out to hear you but I do not know what they would do to me." A man in jail once said identically the same thing to me.

3. Jesus taught that the will of the Father is sovereign and He has a perfect right to administer His affairs as He wishes. What God wills to do is right, because He has the right to will to do it! He may dispose of His blessings irrespective of any previous agreement. This is illustrated in the story of the farmer who went to hire laborers for His vineyard. Early in the morning he hired a group after agreeing to pay them each a silver coin a day. He went out again at nine o'clock in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock and five o'clock in the afternoon. Each time he hired additional workers and told them to go to work and he would give them a fair wage.

At sundown the laborers were summoned and lined up to receive their pay. The foreman was told to start with the last ones who were hired and pay them off first. As each came forward he was handed a silver coin. Those who were employed first expected to receive more but each got just one silver coin. This caused a lot of grumbling which came to the ears of the farmer. He said to them, "I'm not being unjust with you. Wasn't our agreement for a silver coin a day? Take your money and go home. It is my wish to give the latecomer as much as I give you. May I not do what I like with what belongs to me? Must you be jealous because I am generous?"

In the final day of accounts there may be those who will share in the blessing of God's bounty, not upon the basis of an agreement, but upon the basis of fairness and justice. Jesus continually held out that no law was of universal application. We ought not to bind God by a law which He has given to bind us. When He put all things under the feet of Jesus He excepted Himself. The grace of God existed before the church and is

greater than the church. While we have no right to violate the agreement of God, nor seek to receive His blessing upon any other ground, He will not violate that agreement if He sees fit to extend mercy above and beyond it. He can do what He wishes with what belongs unto Him. Let us hope that we shall not be found grumbling about His administration of mercy nor seek to argue about our human concept of fairness.

A Brighter Day

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Volume 23

[Abstract]

The signs are everywhere manifest that we stand upon the threshold of a new era as heirs of the Restoration movement. After a long dreary night of factionalism and strife, when the dark clouds of debate and partisanship eclipsed the sun, an occasional shaft of light breaking through a rift betokens the dawn of a better day. Those who have long been sick at heart with the wars and wrangles engendered by the factional attitude are lifting up their downcast hearts with a hopefulness unique in our generation. Many despairing that anything could be done to alleviate the sad state of Zion and resigned to trudging the pathway of traditionalism to its bitter end are now cautiously conceding that something may be done!

Something is being done! At the risk of partisan persecution men are daring to rise above the narrow intolerance of their own past to break through walls and batter down barriers which other men have constructed to keep brethren apart. Without sacrificing personal convictions or compromising previous views, the value and dignity of brotherhood is being reaffirmed and recaptured in a drama of spiritual adventure which cannot long be ignored even by its most bitter antagonists. This is one of the most vital and refreshing things that has happened to the forces of restoration in a hundred years. It could become the prelude to a real restoration of the restoration spirit.

The Holy Spirit has a way of supplying needs in the spiritual realm when those needs become acute. God has not retired on social security. This is God's world and nothing is more essential to this age than the gathering and unifying of the forces of righteousness. Slowly, deliberately, but with increasing momentum, hearts are beginning to respond to the irresistible impulse of the Spirit. We are being impelled toward a closer walk with God and our brethren *all of them!* You can read the stirring story in reports of meetings in many papers. You can see it in happy faces reflecting an inward glow of renewed relationship at those meetings.

For more than two years the editor has sought to avail himself of every invitation to share in the meetings of brethren of every existing faction. He has regarded every such invitation to participate as an open door swung wide by angelic hands, to explore areas of agreement in love. He has watched initial fear and suspicion melt away with hope and joy taking their place. He has seen skepticism supplanted by sanction and doubt dispelled by delight. The army of the saints, plagued by division in its own ranks, harassed by hatred and hamstrung by hostility, is being once again welded into a cohesive force that even yet may bring the full power of its arsenal to bear on the real foe.

Of course there is opposition. We have all been brought up in or brought into a factional pattern. Those who have lived so long in the swamps and lowlands of unbrotherly hate cannot all be transferred at once to the mountain peaks of faith and made to breathe the rarified atmosphere of brotherly love. Many have difficulty getting their breath. While gasping for it they lash out at those whose spiritual lungs are adapted to the purer air. The essential thing is that we love them, cherish them, hold ourselves ready to help them when they will permit. This is the only guarantee against starting another party— the absolute refusal to succumb to the temptation to love only those who agree and separate from those who do not! A faction can only result from a factional spirit.

We must cultivate patience and forbearance! *The New English Bible* renders Philippians 4:5, "Let your magnanimity be manifest to all." The word translated "magnanimity" is *epieikes*. It is one of the most important terms in the sacred scriptures to the renewed restoration spirit. We urge our brethren to do research in its implications for our day and its problems. It is not too much to say that this word, correctly understood, will revolutionize our entire approach toward discipline and brotherhood.

The word *epieikes* is a good illustration of the richness of the Greek language. It demonstrates the keen discriminatory features of that language. We have no single word in our tongue which will adequately translate it. Matthew Arnold renders it "sweet reasonableness" but this does not do justice to it. Aristotle, in the book of ethics which he dedicated to his son Nicomachus, concluded that the term signified that which was better than justice. He said it is that which corrects the law when a deficiency occurs because of the generality of the law.

Laws are given to regulate intelligent beings but such beings cannot all fall into the same category if they possess will as well as intelligence. They are affected by circumstances, opportunities, natural temperaments and abilities. No law can then be made which will be universal in application. The spirit of the law, its intent, design and purpose, must be understood and applied by intelligent administrators. It is here the Christian administrator is superior because he interprets the law on the side of mercy. If laws are made for the good of man, not only is man superior to law, but his good is superior to law. But the letter of the law is sometimes opposed to the good of man, so there must be some quality which is "better than justice." That quality is expressed by *epieikes*. Archbishop Trench in his *Synonyms of the New Testament* says the word expresses that "moderation which recognizes the impossibility that cleaves to formal law."

We believe the Restoration movement began in the spirit of *epieikeia* but as we became more sectarian in attitude we became more legalistic. This is a natural trend for it is by legalism that the sect perpetuates itself. Now there is every evidence that while respecting and reverencing the will of our absent lord we are rejecting the idea of “smiting our fellow-servants” as a means of demonstrating our faithfulness to our stewardship. This is not equivalent to lowering the requirements of law, or of disregarding any of the demands of law, but it is rising above the letter of the law to operate in the realm of the spirit. Here is our hope for the future. William Barclay in *A New Testament Wordbook* says, “A new world would arise in society and the Church if men ceased to base their actions on law and on legal rights and prayed to God to give them *epieikeia*.” Perhaps it would do as well to substitute for some of our outworn slogans the scriptural one, “Let your *moderation* be known unto all men.”

The Growth of Division

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[Abstract]

On September 7, 1809, Thomas Campbell presented his “Declaration and Address” at a meeting of “The Christian Association of Washington” in Pennsylvania. Mr. Campbell was a Presbyterian and so were most of the others who were present, but the document which was read and approved set forth principles which were destined to cut across all sectarian lines and give the greatest impetus to Christianity since apostolic days. It constituted the foundation of what was described by Alexander Campbell as a project to unite the Christians in all sects.

Today those of us who are heirs of that restoration movement constitute one of the most divided religious classifications in America. Recently this writer visited representatives of nine different factions in one Texas city. Three of these employ instrumental music in their corporate worship, six of them do not, but not one of the groups has any working relationship with any of the others. In Dallas thirteen distinct factions were catalogued and there may be others. True, some of these are small and insignificant with respect to the number of adherents but they cannot be discounted on that basis. The situation is best illustrated by a statement made by a rather eccentric Texas preacher who is now deceased. Someone who contemplated a move wrote to ask if he could find “a loyal church” in the new location. The preacher wrote back, “There

are ten *loyal churches* in that area and neither one will have a thing to do with any of the others.”

What forces have acted upon the brethren to bring about this sad state of affairs? What are the tributaries which have contributed to this flood tide of factionalism? What caused the will to unite to give way to the will to divide? We must not expect to find a simple answer to our complex problem. It is possible that we can never know all of the factors involved. No one can point to a specific date in our history and say that it marks the beginning of our disintegration into partisan warfare.

Many have undertaken an analysis of this kind in the past. The literature that has been produced upon the subject forms no small accumulation. On what grounds do we again cover the same field with any optimistic hope that we may discover that which others failed to see? Let it be understood that our judgment is not infallible. Our deductions may prove to be incorrect. We do not offer the result of our research to our readers in any dogmatic or arbitrary spirit. We simply share with those who are among the concerned ones certain views which have crystallized as a result of our study. If there is any possibility of our contribution producing results for good it will stem from the following considerations.

1. Many of those who have done research on the outgrowth of the restoration movement have sought justification for the party with which they were affiliated as opposed to other parties. They have regarded all others as factional and themselves as constituting the church of God. We no longer represent any segment, section or splinter growing out of this movement. We freely acknowledge our own factional attitude in the past and apologize for it. Far from delving into our history to justify our past conduct, we begin by admitting that there is no scriptural justification for it. We are searching for the development of the spirit of factionalism, not so much to accuse others of being motivated by it as to eliminate it from our own hearts and lives.

2. We believe it is a fallacy to conclude that we are divided over the things which have been credited with being the cause of our divisions. This is made apparent when we consider that our brethren have seriously differed about certain things which were much more important than some which have been credited with division, yet they have remained together as relates to those things. Too, they did not divide when the so-called divisive things were introduced but labored in mutual brotherhood for many years until agitation drove them apart. Almost every writer has proceeded upon the basis that the introduction of certain things, called innovations, created the divisions. It will be our thesis that the actual division was wrought by the party spirit. Unity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:3); disunity is a fruit of the party spirit (Gal. 5:20). Most of those things to which division has been attributed would have caused no real schism among the pioneers of the restoration movement. There first had to come a change of spirit or attitude before division could result.

3. As we view it many of those who have written in the past on all sides of the issues have been guilty of over-simplification. As an example we cite the once common question, "Who drove the wedge that split the log?" In this illustration the log represents the church, but in the first great cleavage in the restoration movement, as in every other one since, there has been disagreement over what constituted the wedge. Those who opposed instrumental music affirmed it was the wedge; those who favored it declared the wedge was the disposition to bind as law that which God had not bound. Fervent orators have stood on each side of the riven log and pointed the finger of accusation at each other. Meanwhile the log remains divided. We confess that we are not so much concerned about who split it as we are about who is going to get it back together. The unity of the log is the important thing. Arguing about who split it may be interesting diversion but it is secondary in importance. God will adequately take care of the guilty one *or ones!*

However, we cannot resist the impulse to look at a few aspects of this example. We suggest that the identity of the log may be as hazy with some of our brethren as is that of the wedge. It is generally assumed that the log is the church but it was the disciple brotherhood growing out of the restoration movement that was split over instrumental music. That brotherhood did not necessarily constitute the church of God in its fulness. The church is composed of every called out person in the world. Not all of them were affiliated with the disciple brotherhood when the log was split! This fact was well understood by those who constituted that brotherhood in those days. The concept has been lost by most of the splinters since.

If a log is split in half, both halves are a part of the original, and will always remain so. They are related to each other by cells and tissues in a way they can be related to no other trunk or tree in the world. But when “the log” was split each side immediately began to treat the other half as if it were another or foreign log. No relationship was acknowledged, no affinity sought, and the two portions moved farther from each other through the years. It is our contention that before unity can be effected there has to be restored to those who constitute both parts a deep sense of relationship, a mutuality of feeling. If both sides concentrate their sole interest on the wedge and are oblivious of each other there will be no energy expended to produce union. If they consider each other they can at least lessen the gap. It is possible that a recognition of brotherhood can be restored even while the wedge remains in place. Many a tree has for years existed with a knife or scythe imbedded in its trunk. Perhaps we need to suffer awhile from “pricks in our eyes, and thorns in our sides” (Num. 33:55) to teach us the value of respect for the authority of God and love for each other. But we should not suffer in stolid silence when we can remove the pricks and thorns.

I cannot leave this analogy without another observation or two. Those who have sought diligently to affix the blame for

splitting the log have been much more concerned about who did it than about the fact that it was done. It is not so much the unity of the log as the identity of the splitter that has interested them. This is proven by the fact that each half has not hesitated to split again and again under almost any provocation. The instrumental brethren have used the cleaver a half dozen times while the non-instrumental brethren have apparently proceeded on the basis that once a log is split the thing to do is to make kindling wood out of your part as soon as possible. If this fragmentation continues the restoration brotherhood will be reduced to a pile of divergent splinters. "The churches of Christ" will be so many toothpicks.

4. Most of those who have written have begun with a false premise about fellowship. They have been misled into assuming that fellowship was something extended or withdrawn by the church. Contrary to this view, fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by God through the Good News concerning Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9). In reality the body of Christ is the fellowship. This is illustrated in the usage of the word *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (*koinonia*) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (*koinonia*) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Fellowship is not endorsement. It is not unanimity of opinion or conformity in interpretation. We do not come into the fellowship because we see everything alike, but because we are in fellowship we strive to see things alike. Fellowship is a reality into which we are introduced by God, harmony is an ideal toward which we strive in that relationship. Because of confusion at this juncture those who have written about the restoration have only served to make the rifts wider. With a proper understanding of fellowship we can see factionalism in its true light and recognize it as a sin not to be condoned or sanctioned.

5. All too often developments have been treated as isolated incidents wholly removed from the frame of reference in which they occurred. In our complex world few things are unrelated and wholly unique. The circumstances obtaining at the time when things are introduced have much to do with their acceptance or rejection. That which was pressed to the point of division in one generation might not be given passing notice in another. Our religious convictions are not segregated from our other mental concepts. Life is not a series of unrelated thoughts and actions. Social, economic, scientific and moral factors all combine with our religious views and help to motivate our thinking. It is not wholly by accident that instrumental music, for example, became a problem when an industrial revolution was transforming American from a pioneer status to a more cultural level, nor that division followed close on the heels of the Civil War which had frequently pitted brother against brother and encouraged sectional feeling. This does not justify either the introduction of instrumental music or the division resulting from the attitudes toward it, but it may help to explain both. We propose to weigh all factors within the scope of our limited knowledge and fit them into the puzzling picture when we can.

6. Many of those who have written on the history of the restoration movement imply that our present condition is incurable. While all regard the causing of division as a grave misdemeanor in the sight of God, it is assumed that when division occurs it has to be accepted as an irreparable state. This I refuse to believe. It is unthinkable that the power which drew us together when we were aliens has not the strength to bring us back together once we are brethren. It is not only the creation of division which is a sin, but the division which is created is a violation of God's plan and purpose for mankind. No one can be indifferent about division between brethren and be faithful to the trust imposed upon us by the Father.

I refuse to regard division among brethren as a normal state any more than I regard disease as the normal condition for

a physical body. I deny that we should supinely accept the current state of affairs and make the best of it. The fear engendered by the party spirit which has intimidated us in the past should be shaken off with the spirit of complacency. It is time to move forward, to fight factionalism and to wage peace. It is as wrong to perpetuate division as to begin it. We sin when we adopt the philosophy that we are obligated to perpetuate the feuds our fathers started. We are obligated to stop them! Our writing on the rise of factionalism will be in confidence and hope that we can help to rectify the situation. Because something must be done there is something that can be done! Brighter days can come. The dark clouds of disunity can be dispelled. The power of God can effectually work in us.

When Thomas Campbell read the “Declaration and Address” there were only seventeen states which had been admitted to the Union. Ohio was the last to be granted statehood before that time. Beyond its confines to the west lay a great wilderness area, although pioneer settlements, some quite populous, dotted the region between Ohio and the Mississippi River. The first Protestant Church in Missouri Territory had been established but three years before, a congregation of Baptists planted by David Green, near the town of Jackson. Indian tribes still freely roamed and hunted over the area. It was seventeen years later that the Kansas, Shawnee and Iowa tribes were removed from the state. The conditions of that day can best be described by Elder Samuel Rogers, the second preacher to bring the Restoration plea into Missouri.

Not long after I settled in Ohio, a number moved from Bourbon county, Kentucky, and settled on Ramsey’s Creek, in Pike county, Missouri. Their Macedonian cry had come to the ears of Brother James Hughes and myself, and we determined to go to their assistance. We made ready for the journey and set out, prepared to take soldier’s fare on the route, as, most of the country through which we had to pass was yet a wilderness. We were both fond of tea; so we carried a coffee pot, tin cups, and a tea

canister with us. At each settlement through which we passed, we would procure provisions enough to last us to the next one. The settlements in Indiana and Illinois were so far apart that we were compelled to camp out most of the way. I had learned to cook in the army, and now made it my business to prepare the meal, while Brother Hughes unsaddled our horses and hobbled them out for the night. I generally had a tin-cupful of strong tea for each of us, and bread and meat sufficient to satisfy the demands of nature but this was all.

Following the work in Pike county, Hughes decided to return to Ohio, but Rogers resolved to go to Howard county and visit with Thomas McBride who was the first preacher to bring the cause of reformation into Missouri. Here is his description of the lonely journey.

By the aid of a pocket compass which I always carried with me in those days, I made the first day's journey without much difficulty, and was fortunate in finding, about sundown, a hunter's camp, in a beautiful grove, convenient to water. Here I determined to stay for the night. I unsaddled my good horse, Paddy, hobbled him, and turned him out to make his supper on the fine grass that was still green in the grove. With my flint and steel I soon kindled a fire; then I prepared my supper, after the eating of which I was ready for bed. My saddle bags were my pillow; I slept on my saddle-blanket and covered myself with the blanket I rode upon. I slept tolerably well until midnight, when I was aroused by the howling of a pack of wolves in the vicinity of the camp. I arose and renewed my fire, knowing that this would keep them at a respectful distance, and again I retired to rest. At break of day I was up, and soon having my tea ready, I ate a hearty breakfast, saddled Paddy, and was off. I entered a vast prairie just as the sun was rising.

The pioneer heralds of restoration carried the message into the rude dwellings of the hardy souls who were hewing home

sites for their families out of dense forests. Many meetings were held in the open in groves of trees, some were conducted in homes of the settlers where eager listeners sat on benches clustered around the fireplace. Frequently a schoolhouse was used for the gathering. Here is the description of one such edifice as given by a chronicler of those early days:

After many consultations and many delightful seasons of worship in their cabins, they determined to build a school house which would also answer for the purpose of a house of worship. These sturdy young farmers, with some of their new neighbors, felled the forest trees and created a commodious log cabin, covered with boards weighted down with poles, daubed with mud, floored with puncheons, seated with benches made of split logs supported by pegs driven into the round parts of the logs. The window was made by the removal of a log from one side, a rude sash was inserted and oiled foolscap paper was substituted for glass. The chimney, which was wide and deep, was built of split logs and sticks, and daubed with mud or clay. The one door was made of boards and hinged and latched with a wooden contrivance which answered the purpose admirably.

The school house completed, no teacher was at hand, and they were compelled to await his coming. He came ere long in the person of an Irish pedagogue, fresh from the sod, whose name was Allan Bass, whose accomplishments were that he could 'read, write and cipher' as far as to 'the rule of three,' at which point any precocious boy that dared to reach it was 'turned back.' His only fault, so far as now remembered, was that he would get drunk on Friday evening, remaining so till Monday morning, and it was often suspected that he was not duly sober then.

So long as these primitive conditions obtained questions such as that of organized mission effort and the use of instrumental music did not trouble the disciples. They were too busy taking the Good News to all and sundry to take the time to

stop and form an organization. At first the question of who should go did not enter into the picture as there was a deep feeling that every person who heard was under a divine obligation to share what he had learned. They took literally the admonition, "Let him that heareth say, come." There was an eagerness upon the part of the preachers to go into "the regions beyond." Every unevangelized area was looked upon as a direct challenge. They reacted to invitations of the believers to remain among them and labor as did the Master, "And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; but he said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose'" (Luke 4:42, 43).

The question of using an instrument in the corporate worship did not trouble them. There were no instruments in most communities. The various denominations did not use instrumental music in their worship and most of them were to undergo some difficulties when it was introduced. Peter Cartwright, the famed Methodist circuit rider, who was just three years older than Alexander Campbell wrote:

We had no Missionary Society; no Sunday School Society; no church papers; no Bible or Tract Society; no colleges, seminaries, academies, or universities; all the efforts to get up colleges under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States and territories, were signal failures. We had no pewed churches, no choirs, no organs, in a word, we had no instrumental music in our churches anywhere.

Many of the original reformers came from Presbyterian ranks in which the use of instrumental music was then opposed. In 1888, John L. Girardeau, Professor in Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina, wrote in his book "Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church" as follows:

The non-prelatic churches, Independent and

Presbyterian, began their development on the American continent without instrumental music. They followed the English Puritans and the Scottish Church, which had adopted the principles of the Calvinistic Reformed Church. How the organ came to be gradually introduced into them it were bootless to inquire. They began right, but have more and more departed from the simple genius of Christian worship. On what grounds they have done this it would be well for them to stop and inquire. For if there be any force in argument their present condition cannot be maintained. It is a clear departure from the practice of the church, both early and reformed.

Another thing which militated against advocacy of instrumental music in worship by the restoration pioneers was the publicity given in their day to the division occurring in the Jewish synagogue over the question. These men were already familiar with the fact that the worship of the primitive ekklesia took its form from the synagogue rather than from the temple. Six years after Thomas Campbell first read the "Declaration and Address," on June 14, 1815, Rabbi Israel Jacobson in Berlin, Germany, introduced an organ into the synagogue worship for the first time. This created a furore in the Jewish community and feeling ran so high that a petition was made to the emperor, Frederic Wilhelm III, to close the synagogue, which he did. The breach widened between the reformed and the orthodox, and the former aided and abetted the growing schism by building their first temple at Hamburg, which they dedicated on October 18, 1818. In it they installed a fine organ but employed a non-Jewish organist.

These actions abroad threw American Jewry into a ferment and provided the chief source of conversation in the Jewish homes and of discussion in the synagogues. The more liberal element, seeking to divorce themselves from traditional practices and forms were outspoken, and since many of them were prominent in business circles their controversies were sometimes aired in the press. In 1840, Rabbi Gustav Posnanski

of Temple Beth Elohim, in Charleston, South Carolina, asked for a vote of the congregation on whether or not to install an organ. The vote was 46 for doing so and 40 against. The protest vote was chiefly from the older members. When the organ was brought in the dissenters entered suit in court for redress of grievances. The decision was rendered in favor of the majority and an appeal was taken to the State Supreme Court. The decision of the lower court was upheld in an opinion handed down in 1846. In this opinion written by Justice Butler, the court held that it was powerless to make decisions as to the merits of religious controversy and must depend upon the will of the majority of the members. The minority group then withdrew from the others and organized another congregation.

This controversy is especially important to the objective historian for several reasons. First, one of the principal arguments used in the courts by the orthodox Jews against instrumental music in worship was that it was an innovation borrowed from the “Christian” church. This was an exact reversal of the plea made against adoption of instrumental music in Christian worship. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* wrote, “Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.” There is really no conflicting element in what appears to be divergent views. The worship of the *ekklesia* was patterned after that of the synagogue in which the instrument was not used. Instrumental music was used in the temple service along with a priestly caste, burning of incense, sacerdotal garments, holy water, etc.

When the Roman church finally became an open admixture of paganism, Judaism and Christianity, many of the forms of ritualistic Judaism were adopted. Meanwhile the synagogues continued as they were until more modern members, affected by their contact with Christian elements undertook to alter the worship procedures. Thus, the Orthodox Jews were not in conflict with the early Christians in their statements, for when

they affirmed that instrumental music was borrowed from the “Christian” church they had reference to Christianity after it had adopted Jewish liturgical practices.

Another important feature of the trial in South Carolina was that it confirmed with reference to introduction of instrumental music into religious worship, the precedent set in previous kindred matters, that the civil courts are powerless to rule as to the merits of religious controversy, and established the majority rule as the basis for judgment in local situations.

That we be not further tedious let us summarize some of our own conclusions regarding the storms of contention which came to batter the forces of restoration.

1. The divisions which occurred cannot be properly evaluated if considered as isolated from the age and conditions in which they arose. They were part of a pattern. In the nineteenth century almost every Protestant religious organization suffered from strife over the question of instrumental music. The Jewish synagogues, the Presbyterian church, and the disciple brotherhood are still divided over this question and related matters.

2. It is altogether possible that if the restoration brotherhood could have survived this particular period of tension it could have remained intact. Some of those things which were then introduced might never have been introduced at all, and those which were might have been dealt with upon a more rational basis rather than upon an emotional one.

3. The transformation from a frontier and pioneer status to a more settled and cultured society, augmented as it was by the growing industrial revolution, had a profound effect upon the religious life of the people. Any period of rapid change in the life and economy of a people is fraught with great problems. This is vividly portrayed before our very eyes in the struggle of

backward nations to take their place in the sun of international recognition. The development of America in the last half of the nineteenth century was without parallel in the annals of history. We still suffer from some of the decisions made during the intensity of growing pains.

4. The effect of the Civil War with its strain on family relationships and its relegation of brotherhood to a position inferior to sectional prejudice affected our forebears more than most of us realize. The proud boast that the disciple brotherhood passed through the war over slavery without dividing is only partially true. It is probable that it would be more nearly correct to say that this brotherhood did not divide *openly*, or that it did not divide *then*. That the conflict between “the Blues and the Grays” affected the future course of our brothers in the Lord can be proven beyond question by the unbiased researchist.

5. In this series we are not interested in assessing guilt. We are not especially trying to determine the right or wrong of those things which have been credited with creating schism in one of the noblest projects ever to command the attention of sinful men. Our purpose is to try and understand why brethren who labored together and loved each other very dearly could become antagonistic and fractured into parties filled with spite and venom. We believe that this was the result of the rise of a factional spirit and it is our expectation to trace those causes leading to it and help to eliminate that spirit from our lives. We must either conquer it or perish!

6. Our whole course is directed toward healing breaches rather than causing them; of binding up wounds rather than inflicting them; of creating unity rather than schism. In our next issue we will proceed with the analysis of those factors which produced the shameful state in which we now find ourselves. We ask that you pray for us that we may be used by the Spirit as humble instruments to further the cause of “peace on earth among men of good will.”

In our coverage of the rise of factionalism as it was augmented in dealing with problems evolved from the creation of the missionary society and introduction of instrumental music, we shall no doubt say many things which will cut across the traditional thinking of all our readers. We are not writing from a controversial standpoint and you need not agree with us to be respected as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be content if all of us are inspired merely to re-examine our hearts and convictions in the light of what is said. It is still true as Socrates said, that "The unexamined life is not worth living." If, after honest scrutiny of what we have written, you cannot find it within your heart to concur, we shall continue to love you fervently as brethren and leave the issues with God.

Adventures in Religion (3)

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[Abstract]

Jesus was a perplexing person to many who heard him while he was on earth. They were disturbed by the fact that he taught, as well as by the facts which he taught. In the first place he did not make teaching his profession so he was not a professional teacher. Indeed, many of the greatest truths he uttered were spoken almost casually, some of them as answers to questions from hecklers. He did not attend one of the schools for scribes or go to a college for rabbinical students. He made no appeal to formal degrees or educational attainments as a reason why he should be heard. He was not a theologian and he offered the people no course in systematic theology.

The scribes were always sure of themselves, but they were not always sure of their teaching. It was too frequently a subject of dispute with other scribes. The difference between Jesus and the scribes was easily seen by the people. "When Jesus had finished this discourse the people were astonished at his teaching; unlike their own teachers he taught with a note of authority" (Matt. 7:28, 29) Any person who dares to rise above the narrow concepts of his age and set forth great principles will gain both enemies and friends. Jesus was no exception as his attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles upon one occasion demonstrated. "The Jews were looking for him at the festival and asking, 'Where is he?', and there was much whispering about him in the crowds. 'He is a good man,' said some. 'No,'

said others, 'he is leading the people astray.'”

It was this occasion which gave Jesus an opportunity to enforce some great truths. One of these is the inner testimony to the truth of God which is resident in every sincere individual who is unreservedly following Christ to the best of his ability. It is not essential that one be conversant with the logical processes which go into books on apologetics in order to have assurance of the divine origin of the message of our Lord. Another principle is that a man demonstrates his sincerity when he aims at the honor of the one who sent him, rather than seeking for self-praise. These affirmations were called forth because of the astonishment of the Jews. Here is the way the scriptures record it, “When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished. ‘How is it,’ they said, ‘that this untrained man has such learning?’ Jesus replied, ‘The teaching that I give is not my own, it is the teaching of him that sent me. Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own. Anyone whose teaching is merely his own, aims at honour for himself. But if a man aims at the honour of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in him’” (John 7:14-18).

It is our personal conviction that the teaching of Jesus would provoke about as much astonishment today as it did among the Jews, if it was correctly evaluated. Actually, most of us take what Jesus said and fit it into thought-patterns of our own. We have formulated our ideas of goodness and righteousness and into these moulds we pour the great teachings of the Master and conceive of the crystallized forms we produce as being those of heaven. Men tend to think of holiness in terms of places and times. They define goodness in relation to specific deeds. To them, it consists of particular performances in a particular manner. The one who does these things is considered to be a righteous man because he does them. All of this would be regarded by Jesus as superficial, perhaps even a hypocritical

approach. We believe that the following principles are very important in the concept of righteousness which was enunciated by our Lord.

1. Jesus taught the ideal of a completely unified life, an existence wholly integrated and not separated into various departments. The entire personality is governed by a central force, and it is this abiding internal principle which makes one good. Goodness does not consist in the mere performance of deeds. It is an inner quality of being. There is no distinction between thoughts and deeds, or between motives and actions. Things are good because they are done by good men. It is the man, not merely the transaction, which makes the difference. “A good man produces good from the store of good within himself; and an evil man from evil within produces evil” (Matt. 12:35).

The nobility of this concept escaped the legalists in the days when Jesus was on earth. It still escapes those on earth since Jesus returned to heaven. Few of us dare even yet to believe that “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit” (Matt. 7:18). An apple tree is not an apple tree because it has apples on it, but because it is that kind of tree it bears apples. If it is impossible for a good tree to produce bad fruit, then whatever is produced by such a tree must be good. However, men tend to exalt laws instead of the principles such laws were given to preserve. The keeping of such laws then becomes the chief good. Any deviation therefrom is regarded as evil.

There is a higher good than that of keeping laws. Laws are given to regulate relationships and those relationships are superior to the regulations. Jesus used as an example the case of David and his men when they were fleeing from Saul. Being hungry, they entered the sacred precincts of the House of God and ate the loaves of the Presence “which *it was not lawful* for them to eat.” When there is a conflict between perpetuation of life and performance of law, the first becomes the chief good.

Life is superior to law! Actually there is no conflict about this in the heart of the one who truly understands Jesus, for he spontaneously does what is right. He “produces good from the store of good within.” He does not have to stop and quibble about the matter. The decision has long ago been made. It is not the good deed that produces the store within, but it is the good store within that produces the good deed. It is not new deeds or new acts that Jesus wants, but *new men*! “You must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God’s creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by truth” (Eph. 4:24).

2. Jesus taught that while all righteousness welled up from within, it had to flow out. He knew nothing about a religion kept bottled up by traditional restraints. So effervescent was true religion and goodness that it would burst the bottles (Luke 5:37). Religion was not a stagnant pool. It was a flowing spring. It was not a cistern but an artesian well. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “The water that I shall give him will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life.” On the last day of the festival in Jerusalem he said of the believer, “Streams of living water shall flow out from within him” (John 7:38).

The true religion was to be known by its *fruits*. Jesus knew that a religion which did not reveal itself openly was empty and vacuous. He pronounced a sentence of condemnation on the fig tree when he came and found not fruit. He could not be content with mere leaves. There are no ornamental trees in God’s acreage. One either bears fruit or cumbars the ground. God demands the whole man and nothing less. Someone said “It does not take much of a man to make a Christian but it takes all of him there is.” Jesus only painted one word picture of the final judgment and in it he made no allusion to worthiness based upon knowledge of doctrine, theological perception or argumentative ability. The criterion for entering into and possessing the kingdom was simply the good done for others.

It is interesting to note that in this presentation Jesus goes to some length to show that those who gave food and drink, showed hospitality, sheltered the homeless and clothed the naked, did not know they were doing it for him. They were motivated purely by compassion and not by hope of reward. They were not so much demonstrating their religion as their character. Their good deeds were not partisan gimmicks to advertise “our church” or to influence people toward it. They were simply sharing what they had with suffering humanity and they were surprised to hear Jesus say, “Anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.”

This may help to explain another statement of Jesus. “I tell you there is not a thoughtless word that comes from men’s lips but they will have to account for it on the day of judgment.” The King James Version has “idle word.” The Revised Standard Version renders it “careless word.” I confess that this used to bother me. That was before I considered it in the light of the context. At first it seems very extreme. It tends to portray God as a harsh and exacting taskmaster instead of a loving Father. But we must remember that a man does not reveal his true self when he is on guard and watching every word. It is when his guard is down and he is not trying to make an impression for social or other reasons that he shows what he really is. It is the careless or idle word, the chance act, which gives you a glimpse into the heart. You cannot judge a man so well by his formal as by his informal speech. Since judgment has to do with the man as he is, not as he wants others to think he is, this is the proper criterion — the word idly or carelessly spoken, the thoughtless expression.

3. Jesus taught that the inner quality called goodness was never static. It was ever changing and amending character for the better. The good man was never satisfied with his current state. He must be ever climbing and never standing still. Complacency has no place in the life of the concerned one. The man who stands and boasts of what he is and what he has done merits no notice from God. An outcast from society who bows

his head, smites his breast, confesses his sins, and prays for forgiveness, goes to his house justified rather than the other. The apostle Paul makes a statement which portrays the creative nature of the goodness which keeps the eye fixed on Jesus. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:16).

"With unveiled face . . . are being changed." Think about these expressions. It is the man who "sees through a glass darkly" who does not change. His vision is distorted, his perspective is warped, his sight is clouded. There are veils over the faces of many— veils of prejudice, of tradition, and of partisanship. These allow only a blurred image of the Christ. One cannot properly discern his Lord through a film of legalism. Such a man may be like the disciples on the way to Emmaus. They were actually talking about Jesus and what had happened unto him. It was inconceivable to them that anyone who resided in the vicinity of Jerusalem should not know these *things*. "As they talked and discussed it with one another, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but something held their eyes from seeing who it was" (Luke 24:15). It is possible to know a lot of things about Jesus and still not know him! There are so many things which seem to hold our eyes!

The goodness of which Jesus spoke is not merely outgoing. It is also ongoing. It produces a flexibility of spirit, an elasticity of soul, which allows itself to be shaped and reshaped by increasing knowledge. It is not hardened by conformity to the past or the infirmity of the present. It is transformed and transforming, striving ever to an unattainable ideal, yet becoming more ideal for the striving. It regards law not as horizontal but as vertical. It is not a restraining fence but a ladder, and even as one climbs the rungs he looks between them to a new vista and a better world offering new challenges for tomorrow.

Rejecting and Returning

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[Abstract]

The history of all great revolutionary religious movements indicates that they are given impetus because of the intolerable conditions existing when they are launched. Under the influence of leaders who have grown tired of the state of affairs, and motivated by a desire to reform the prevailing order, men risk their all in the crusade for better things. But as time goes on, contact with the world around erodes away the spirit of reform, brings about adoption of those means and methods which destroy the original purpose, and the movement slows down and finally stagnates into sectarian tendencies until other men arise who have the courage to inaugurate another reformatory movement. Every reformation is corrective in nature and is called into existence by the prevalent condition of the times.

We think it can be shown that each movement is not only part of a cycle but that each passes through the same phases and in almost the same sequence. If this can be proven it would enable the careful analyst to determine at what juncture of the movement he stood at any given time and also to predict the coming phase into which it would pass. It is not our intention at present to develop this theme but there is a point we would like to mention. A great many become discouraged when they realize that every reform has terminated in the formation of additional parties. To them it appears that we are merely “going in circles.” We are convinced, however, that while each reformation is

cyclical it is also helical. It is on an ascending spiral. Thus, with each reformation we are lifted a little closer to the ideal. We do not “come out where we went in,” but we emerge on a higher plane. The essential attitude of each generation should be one of restoration because all succeeding generations stand on the shoulders of those which preceded it.

Christianity itself was the greatest revolution of all. It was introduced into the world at a time when hopelessness reigned with full sway over the hearts of men. Canon Farrar in his book “The Early Days of Christianity” says, “Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.” At the risk of extending our remarks unduly I would like to share with our readers quotations from two men of note who lived during the time of the apostles.

Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, was born in Cordoba, Spain, probably in the same year that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. His brother was Gallio (Acts 18:12). Through the influence of Agrippina, wife of Claudius, Seneca was appointed tutor for her son, Nero. About the same time (perhaps in the same year) when Peter was announcing to Cornelius, the Roman army officer, that the gospel was the only remedy for sin and evil, Seneca wrote:

The world is filled with crimes and vices. Things are too far gone to be healed by any regimen. Men are battling for the palm of reprobate manners. Each day lust waxes and shame wanes. Trampling down all that is good and sacred, lust hies it whithersoever it will. Vice no longer shuns the light. So barefaced is wickedness become, and so wildly does it flare up in all bosoms, that innocence is not to say rare, but is nowhere found.

Our next witness is Pliny, known as “The Elder” to distinguish him from his nephew who is called “The Younger.”

He was born about the time that Jesus was nineteen years old, and became famous as a historian and naturalist. His great encyclopedia of nature, consisting of thirty-seven volumes, was dedicated to Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian, and the man who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Pliny died of suffocation in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 when Herculaneum and Pompeii were destroyed. Pliny wrote thus:

All religion is the offspring of necessity, weakness and fear. What God is— if in truth he be any Being distinct from the world— it is beyond the compass of man's understanding to know. But it is a foolish delusion springing from human weakness and pride, to imagine that such an infinite Spirit would concern himself with the petty affairs of men. The vanity of man and his insatiable desire for existence, have led him also to dream of a life after death. A being full of contradictions, he is the most wretched of creatures, since no other has wants transcending the bounds of his nature. Man's nature is a lie, uniting the greatest poverty with the greatest pride. Among such great evils the greatest good that God has bestowed upon man is the power of taking his own life.

Into such an age of frustration and doubt the Christian concept brought faith, hope and love. Under the powerful motivation of these three, a tottering paganism went down and the whole world became conscious of a new humanity made possible through Jesus. The sad aftermath brought about by the ambitions and intrigues of men and resulting in the hierarchical domination of the clergy is too well known to our readers to detail it again. Suffice it to say that by the dawn of the sixteenth century Christianity had become so abused that the world was again wallowing in a slough of immorality and oppression. Of this period the eminent Irish historian W. E. H. Lecky remarks:

Wherever the eye was turned, it encountered the signs of disorganization, of corruption, and of decay. For the long night of medievalism was now drawing to a close, and the chaos that precedes resurrection was supreme.

The providence of God raised up men to meet the challenges of the age, and the Protestant Reformation shook Rome to her very roots. Already, John Wycliffe, a professor in Oxford University, had laid the foundation for reform. He has been described as “the unsparing assailant of abuses, the boldest and most indefatigable of controversialists, the first reformer who dared when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and, with his last breath, to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the papacy.”

Swiftly the seed of reformation was borne by the winds which swept across Europe to the hearts of honest men. Time would fail us to tell of the labors of Hus and Jerome (of Prague) in Bohemia; of Luther and Melancthon in Germany; of Zwingli and Oecolampadius in German Switzerland; of Calvin, Farel and Beza in French Switzerland. Unfortunately, Rome had left her mark, and all too frequently the reformers produced a union of church and state and sought to enforce their own creeds and interpretations by the secular arm. In spite of their affirmation of the principle of the right of private judgment, their words were not always backed up by their practice. Lecky writes, “The first Protestants were as undoubtedly intolerant as the Catholics.” So the stage was again set for another attempt at reform. J. B. Briney writes:

The testimony thus given shows that not only was Protestant Christendom divided into various and warring factions at the beginning of the 19th century, contrary to the prayer of Christ, and in contravention of apostolic teaching, but that theology had shrouded the gospel in mysticism, and that men, instead of looking to and relying upon the promises of the word of God, were groping in darkness in search of something foreign to the New Testament plan of salvation, and depending upon their feelings for evidence of the pardon of their sins and acceptance with God. The plain teaching of the gospel was shoved aside and ignored, and the speculations and

philosophies of men were thrust upon the consciences of the people, and belief in, and allegiance to them demanded. Confusion reigned everywhere, and spiritual darkness was dense. Presently people began to tire of these conditions, and noticed that they were out of harmony with Bible teaching. The times were ripe for another forward movement, and men were ready to lead it. Whenever God providentially gets the people ready for a great work he providentially furnishes men to take it up and carry it on. This is made very plain by the facts of universal history. It is especially manifest from the facts of church history.

Nature of Restoration

It is a readily noticed phenomenon that when religious, social, or political affairs become deplorable a simultaneous reaction is aroused in widely scattered areas and among men of divergent backgrounds and talents. The restoration movement was no exception. In its inception it was not a single effort but eventually became a fusion of various forces struggling toward a common goal. Elias Smith and Abner Jones led a movement among the Baptists in New England; James O'Kelly and Rice Haggard among the Methodists in Virginia and North Carolina; Barton W. Stone among the Presbyterians in Kentucky; and Thomas Campbell among the Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and western Virginia. It now seems that the last mentioned may have had the clearest concept of the means by which, in his own words, "to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God."

Alexander Campbell revealed the definite objectives of the work in which he labored. Without specific aims toward which to strive any religious movement must soon go adrift. The purpose must be one of sufficient value and worth to command all of the spiritual resources of those engaged in it, else it will

flounder helplessly. Campbell wrote:

Next to our personal salvation, two objects constituted the *summum bonum*, the supreme good, worthy of the sacrifice of all temporalities. The first was the union, peace, purity and harmonious cooperation of Christians, guided by an understanding enlightened by the Holy Scriptures; the other the conversion of sinners to God. Our predilections and antipathies on all religious questions arose from, and were controlled by, those all-absorbing interests.

The first object was to be accomplished by a restoration of the primitive order as manifested by the apostles. In the “Declaration and Address” Thomas Campbell put it thus:

Our desire, therefore, for ourselves and our brethren would be, that rejecting human opinions and inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things, returning to and holding fast by the original standard, taking the Divine word alone for our rule, the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide to lead us into all truth, and Christ alone as exhibited in the word for our salvation; and that by so doing we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Note well the two words “rejecting” and “returning.” These were the watchwords of the restoration pioneers. There were certain opinions and inventions which had been adopted and enforced dogmatically. These had created schism in the ranks of the believers. It was proposed to purge the church of God of all such opinions and inventions as having no place in it. But these could not have been accepted as “of some authority” unless there was first a lessening of respect for the proper authority which was considered to be “the Divine word alone.”

The first of these words (rejecting) is essential to reformation but the second (returning) is not necessarily so. Both are involved in restoration. Reformation may be achieved by changing into a new and improved form but restoration has to do with a return to a former state. Those who are restorers are always reformers, but reformers are not always restorers. One passage in Isaiah incidentally portrays restoration. “*And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning* (Isa. 1:26). Restoration simply means returning to conditions “as at the first” or “as at the beginning.” One cannot restore an order by “restoring” something that was not in its original state. Neither can he restore it by retaining those things which have been added since and by other authority. There must be both a rejecting” and a “returning” and Thomas Campbell recognized this fact. The unity of believers was to be secured by a restoration of things “as at the first.” By the simple expedient of going back beyond the introduction of all the divisive opinions and inventions peace was to be restored. In order to maintain that peace no opinion in the future would be introduced as a test of fellowship and a source of friction.

As at the First

It was generally conceded that pure Christianity as exhibited in organization, piety and devotion was quite simple. It had been made complex by men and had come to be a philosophy which must be interpreted and dispensed by a professional clerical caste. The proposal to divest the church of God of all the accretions which had accumulated through the centuries appealed to the rugged frontiersmen of the early nineteenth century. The dross was to be melted from the gold in the crucible of hearts fired by an intense passion for peace. The barnacles were to be scraped from the bottom of the Ship of Zion in the drydock of scriptural research and that vessel made ready for sea again.

One of the first considerations was to secure a blueprint of the primitive *ekklesia* in its functioning and service. Without this men would not be able to agree upon what must be rejected and what retained. They could not return to something unless they knew when they had reached it. Alexander Campbell realized this and on August 3, 1823, published what he described as “a cursory view of some of the leading features of the christian religion, exhibited in *prospective*, and in actual existence at the first institution.” Among other things he wrote:

Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world. The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president of some female education society; his eldest son, the recording secretary of some domestic bible society; his eldest daughter, the corresponding secretary of a mite Society; his servant maid, the vice-president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday school. They knew nothing of the hobbies of modern times. In their church capacity alone they moved. They neither transformed themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies. The[y] viewed the church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of Heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men. They dare not transfer to a missionary society, or bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in doing so they should rob the church of its glory, and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God.

In view of the above it is difficult to believe that twenty-six years later Alexander Campbell would become the first president of the American Christian Missionary Society, a position he was to hold for sixteen years. His name is the first to appear on the “Act of Incorporation” in which he and a number of other men “with their successors, be, and hereby are

constituted and made a body corporate and politic, with perpetual succession, by the name of the American Christian Missionary Society, and by that name may sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, in all courts of law and equity, and are hereby invested with all the powers and privileges necessary for conducting home and foreign missions, in advancement of the Christian religion.”

A review of the statements contained in his “leading features of the christian religion . . . at its first constitution” indicates the following as his ideas concerning such societies:

1. The primitive Christians did not dream of organizing missionary societies in the world.
2. They would have regarded the support of such a society by either prayer or finance as robbing the church of its glory.
3. They would have considered such support as “exalting the inventions of men above the wisdom of God.”

It is obvious that many who were led to espouse the restoration movement upon the basis of such a plea would become disturbed in mind by the apparent abandonment of it. But the steps leading to the organization of the society were so gradual that others little realized their significance. There were but few diversions from the unremitting toil of pioneer life. The people were widely scattered and it was difficult to satisfy the craving for human association and fellowship. One means of answering the need was found in the camp meeting. To it people came with their families from distant points. They sang and prayed together and heard the more talented and informed speakers of the day. In their anxiety for their neighbors to share in the messages they frequently selected a gifted man to travel as their evangelist, with the various congregations bearing his expenses. The evangelist made a report to the gathering the following year and subscriptions were raised to carry on his

labors for another twelve months.

Out of this arrangement arose an insistent demand for greater organization to plan evangelistic work and assure its fulfillment. Some of the states began to hold annual meetings at which delegates of the various congregations made reports of membership, accessions to the faith, and other statistics. In 1842, Alexander Campbell wrote: "We can do comparatively but little in the great missionary field of the world, either at home or abroad, without co-operation." He concluded, "We can have no thorough co-operation without a more ample, extensive and thorough church organization."

David S. Burnet became seriously ill in 1845 and promised God that if his life were spared he would devote his energies to promoting an organization to take the gospel to the world. He used his *Christian Age* to urge co-operation in missionary activity. In May, 1849, Alexander Campbell wrote: "Reformation and annihilation are not with me now, as formerly, convertible and identical terms. We want occasional, if not stated, deliberative meetings on questions of expediency in adaptation to the ever changing fortune and character of society." On October 24-28, in that same year, a national conference was called and more than one hundred and eighty delegates convened in the meetinghouse at the corner of Eighth and Walnut Streets, in Cincinnati, Ohio. During these five days the constitution was drawn up for The American Christian Missionary Society.

When the report of this meeting appeared, Jacob Creath, Jr., who had opposed the convention, proposed that a general meeting be called in May or June of the following year to discuss the legitimacy of conventions and missionary societies. Some congregations of the saints registered a strong protest against the society. The elders of a Pennsylvania congregation wrote, "The church is the only missionary society and can admit no rivals." So great was the opposition and so meager the interest at

first that the movement languished for several years. But the first convention had been held and the first society organized, and because of the varied concepts concerning such matters the seed of distrust and disunity had been sown. Later this seed would germinate and bear the fruit of division. The divergent views became more crystallized in the hearts of their adherents. Those who thought in terms of restoring the primitive pattern became ever more critical of the right of the society to exist, but David S. Burnet wrote, "I consider the inauguration of the Society system, which I vowed to urge upon my brethren if God raised me from my protracted illness of 1845 was one of the most important acts of my career."

It seems to us as we read the earlier writings of Alexander Campbell and compare them with his actions a quarter of a century later that he made a definite change in his objectives and position. This, however, he disclaimed and sought to defend the American Christian Missionary Society as merely the church at work. On what ground he concluded it was necessary to secure a charter for "the church" that it might be "hereby invested with all the powers and privileges necessary for conducting home and foreign missions, in advancement of the Christian religion" it is difficult for us to see. Had the church been doing this work without the power and privilege before 1849? But we feel that our readers may be interested in the statement by Campbell, which was written in reply to a letter from James Inglis, an outstanding preacher in the Baptist party, who resided in Detroit, Michigan. In 1850, the year following the creation of the missionary society, Mr. Inglis wrote:

But, amidst these anticipations, the movement excites apprehensions, too. The body of Disciples is now influential in point of numbers and resources. They have advanced, through severe conflict, to their present prosperity, and now is the time when a denominational spirit will be apt to spring up. The selfish cant of 'our denomination' may steal in under a mere change of phraseology. The critical period, in this respect, is in the

outset of your associated efforts and organization. My apprehensions on this score are quickened by some features of the constitutions of the several societies formed by the convention at Cincinnati, and by some corresponding features in the proceedings of the convention itself.

To this scholarly and friendly epistle, Alexander Campbell replied in his characteristic form as follows:

In my first essay in the first volume of the Christian Baptist, I took the ground that the church, in her own capacity, was the only scriptural missionary institution known to the primitive church and to Christianity, as propounded by 'its Founder and His prime ministers,' and that no separate and distinct associations, composed of other persons than its members, could be regarded as of divine authority, or in harmony with the genius and spirit of the gospel and the church. To this view I am as much devoted today as I then was; and while consenting to a missionary society as a distinct object of contemplation, and as a means of diffusing the gospel, I now regard it as I then regarded it, as the church of any given district, in council assembled by her messengers, to devise ways and means for accomplishing this object with more concentrated power and efficiency.

General Observations

As we think back upon this occasion for the first real cleavage in the ranks of the restoration movement it may not be amiss to make a few statements with reference to the situation. These are not written to alter the views of the brethren or to condemn or justify any specific position but simply to record the reflections of the writer. Regardless of our personal attitude toward the missionary society we can all learn some things about the controversy resulting from it and can profit from what we learn.

1. Both those who introduced the society and those who opposed it acted upon honest motives. One group sincerely felt that it would innocently implement the spread of the kingdom of heaven on earth; the other just as sincerely held that it would constitute a surrender of the plea for restoration of the ancient order. Unfortunately, in religious matters, those who differ soon come to impugn the motives of those who hold divergent ideas and the controversy passes from the domain of the rational to that of the emotional. We have tried to settle too many of our differences with hot heads and cold hearts when they should always be discussed with cool heads and warm hearts.

2. Satan takes advantage of our disagreements and exploits them for his gain. He employs them to engender the party spirit which is a work of the flesh. One way of implementing the party spirit is to alienate brethren by false accusation and assignment of base designs. Those who opposed the missionary society were indicted as being opposed to mission work and proclamation of the gospel. Those who favored it were charged with entering into a premeditated conspiracy to willfully betray the cause of Christ. Both charges were false. Labels beget parties. They tend to force men to band together in self-defense. Since labels are affixed as brands by the opposition their very tendency is evil and divisive. Little is accomplished in behalf of peace by tagging some brethren as “Digressives” and others as “Old Fogies.”

3. It is the nature of organizations that they seldom legislate themselves out of existence. That which is introduced as an expedient today becomes a necessity tomorrow. That which was created to meet an emergency in one generation will create an emergency to perpetuate itself in the next generation. All human organizations are the offspring of human thinking. They are conceived in human minds and beloved by those who gave them birth. Frequently they come to mean more to those who support them than the divine organism created by God. This is evidenced by the fact that severe criticism of the church will not induce a reply but the least unfavorable reference to the

organization brings instant retaliation.

4. In our study of the history of religious movements it is frequently impressed upon us that things are introduced upon one basis in one generation and defended upon wholly different grounds by succeeding generations. All of us are constantly faced with the temptation to search the scriptures to justify what we possess. This is directly opposed to the spirit of restoration. We should always recognize that a stream can accumulate sediment as it flows along its channel in contact with its banks. A religious movement will likewise collect accretions from its contact with the world. We ought to be willing to constantly reevaluate our practice and profession in the light of the revealed testimony of God.

5. Although in their inception it is the stalwart character of their membership which forms the basis of distinction for most religious movements, when those same movements grow older and become more sectarian in nature they tend to point instead with increasing pride to their organizations and institutions. Actually that which is recognized as a badge of progress may be a symbol of shame. Most organizations are born of fear. When the initial flame that kindled individual hearts burns low and the zest for service born of love recedes, there is an urge to organize in order to capture and preserve the waning powers and direct them in some effective measure. All too often the accomplishments are actually less than those of a handful of pioneers who had nothing behind them upon which to depend for sustenance and were forced to “look unto Jesus.”

When the disciples no longer care for orphans, organizations are created to fulfill this function. When they no longer train every enlistee to be a soldier, organizations are created to train a special “palace guard” to defend the faith. In time the idea never occurs to the average member to put on the whole armor. He does not think it pertains to him. When all lose interest in taking the good news to friend and neighbor,

organizations are created to do this while those who contribute to the organizations sit in air-conditioned comfort to have the message “sounded in” to them which they should be sounding out to dying sinners. Perhaps one of the greatest errors in the history of Christendom was that of building houses in which to preach the gospel. This removed the warfare from the battlefield to the mess hall. It reversed the process of the Spirit which laid upon the shoulder of the believer the responsibility to go and take the message and placed upon the lost the responsibility to come and get it.

Instead of publishing colored brochures telling of the great accomplishments of our organizations we need to publish apologies for the necessity of having them. The moment we start thinking in terms of an organization *sending out* missionaries we betray our lack of knowledge of God’s program for His people. The church does not send out missionaries, it is composed of missionaries. We are all missionaries and it is precisely because we have lost our sense of mission and vocation that we seek to prepare a professional caste under professional supervision to enable us to hold up our heads among the sectarian groups which surround us. Our organizations are not so much banners of success as monuments to our failure. We did not recapture the spirit of primitive Christianity so we settled for something less—moral mediocrity. We created a cult of the unconcerned!

6. Organizations sustain the same relationship to the spiritual realm as machines do to the social and economic realm. Indeed organizations are a part of our machinery. They represent inventions created to enable us to go farther and do so with greater speed. They are facilitating devices. It is because of this that they are regarded as harmless expedients. Machines are neutral, they are neither good or bad. They can be used to accomplish good or evil. It is reasoned that we ought not to oppose their creation or existence but concentrate on regulation of their use. We become less certain of this all the time.

It has been generally accepted that the Machine Age when introduced marked a milestone in human progress, that it was a great step toward a higher order of civilization. It may yet be proven that this judgment was rendered too hastily and prematurely before all the data was in and the results could be properly evaluated. If by civilization we mean moral and spiritual growth of mankind it may be argued that the Machine has destroyed rather than augmented it. The Machine Age may have been born of a desire for the easy life, of a lust for luxury. Instead of marking a great conquest in the realm of the Spirit it may have been nurtured by a compromise with the flesh. Perhaps it pampered the belly instead of enriching the heart. In any event man invented the Machine as a servant but it has now enslaved him and become his master.

Once again we see the result of misplaced loyalties. Man is the creator, the machine is the created. Men now worship and serve the creature more than the creator. When two shining creations of metal feeding upon high octane fuel, hurtle through space at more than a mile per minute and crash into each other, there is often less remorse over the dead and dying than over the damage rendered to the beautiful machine. Men will freely give their sons at the call of the government and send them away to die with drums beating and flags waving, but if that same government sought to attach their automobiles there would be a rebellion. It is true that men made machines but it's equally true that machines have made a new type of man.

When "civilization" was in its infancy men were sickened if a fiend in human form slit the throats of a half dozen helpless children. Now a man may become a national hero if a machine lifts him above the clouds from which he may drop a bomb upon an unsuspecting populace, which will scatter the entrails of ten thousand people over the surrounding landscape, and sear, blind and maim thousands of others who will be doomed to a life worse than death. It is an irrevocable law that when men worship the creature more than the creator they are "given up

to a base mind and to improper conduct” (Romans 1:28).

Of course we do not imply that the organizational machinery which men have created in the spiritual realm will be utilized in such a manner as that we have described. But there are certain likenesses which must not be treated lightly. (1) Machinery creates a sense of dependency and produces a deadening conformity which is destructive of the individual spirit. After a generation or two man becomes helpless without the organization. (2) The machinery comes to direct and dominate as men (or congregations) surrender their right of function to it. Men contribute their capital to the organization and the organization uses this money to gain control or supervision even of the activities of those who contribute. (3) The Machine always breeds machines, but what is a hundred times more dangerous, it artificially creates new needs which demand other forms of machinery. The church, like the government, can become the slave of bureaucracy. Already the religion of the Son of Man is so complexified that it requires trained professional personnel to operate the machines— Ministers of music, Youth Program Ministers, Ministers of Education.

We have been made the victims of our organizational processes. It is probable that the Cincinnati Convention of 1849 lit the fire in the forge from which the chains were welded that took away our freedom to restore the primitive order. We are a long distance from the simplicity of the original *ekklesia* of God. Perhaps Alexander Campbell doomed the movement to become one of contemporary conformity when he wrote that year: “We want . . . deliberative meetings on questions of expediency in adaptation to the ever changing fortune and character of society.” There is a grave difference between adaptation and reformation. The church is intended to transform the character of society and not be conformed to it. Let us never forget that we are not sectarian because we have these organizations, but we have these organizations because we have become sectarian!

7. The division which occurred did not settle the organizational question for either side. Those who favored the establishment of the missionary society have since suffered from several cleavages among themselves as to the place of the society, and have resorted to the courts to clarify ownership of the property claimed by one side or the other. Those who opposed the society have split into several factions over the charge that they created other institutions in the same category and bearing all the earmarks of the missionary society. They also have become involved in lawsuits and court actions among themselves.

Any person who studies earnestly the history of events related to the restoration movement must reach the conclusion that division is like war in that it constantly shifts the ground of our problems, but never solves them. We should realize that division in the ranks of God's army is not the road to purity of morals or of doctrine. Each division lays the groundwork for others to follow. It is a fact that division between brethren is nowhere sanctioned in the sacred scriptures as a remedy for our ills. It is the most widely practiced procedure but it is without any scriptural authority.

8. It is possible that the creation of the society in 1849 marked the termination of the original purpose of the restoration movement. We say this not because the society was formed. Its formation was merely a symptom of a much deeper and more subtle change of goals. The restoration movement was launched as "a project to unite the Christians in all the sects." The establishment of "our own organizations" and "our own societies" signalled the crystallization of the sectarian attitude and betokened the fact that a new party had been born with all of its exclusive partisan mechanisms to perpetuate its power and enlarge its gains. Mr. Inglis, the Detroit Baptist preacher, could see this, although Alexander Campbell could not.

My Personal Attitude

We must face up to situations and conditions as they exist. We cannot live in a dream world of idealism nor a Utopia of perfectionism. Our brethren are divided, rent and torn asunder. We will gain nothing by rash and unprincipled accusations or by impugning motives. Our task is not to create new schisms nor to widen old gaps. We can best serve the cause of the Prince of peace by pursuing peaceful methods. We should begin with a recognition of the scope of fellowship and brotherhood so that we will not look upon our discussions as wars between aliens but as problems among brethren.

I am personally resolved that I will follow the apostolic example of preaching the gospel of God's Son and planting nothing in any community except a congregation of disciples. When I leave an area I shall be concerned that there be but one thing there which was not there before I came— a church of the living God. I believe that all the Father wants done for the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of believers can be done by this unit of the divine organism. Anything that cannot be done through it and by it is something He does not want done. It is my conviction that through the indwelling Spirit of God the church is empowered to accomplish the purpose of God for this generation.

But how shall I regard those who sincerely believe they can scripturally implement the work of God through methods my conscience will not allow me to condone? Certainly I shall respect them as my brothers. Especially will I rejoice in every good work they perform and in every soul they lead to acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh. If one goes to the dark recesses of a tropical jungle and at great personal sacrifice proclaims Christ Jesus to half-savage natives and leads them to reformation of life, I shall not deny that the preacher or the natives are God's children and my brethren, merely because the former is supported by a missionary society. "Some indeed

preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The former proclaim Christ out of partisanship, not sincerely . . . What then? Only that in every way whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice” (Phil. 1:15-18). This is not to imply that all who are sent forth under auspices of a missionary society preach from envy, rivalry, and partisanship. Certainly many thus preach who are opposed to missionary societies. I refer to the passage only to show the principle that one may rejoice at the results achieved although he cannot always endorse the methods and motives leading to such achievement. Any other course makes us more partisan than those we condemn.

I am a firm believer in the fact that God has not retired from contemporary history. He is not a God of the past but also of the present and of the future. He is active and working in our day. “He holds the whole world in His hand.” The tragedies and crises of yesterday can be woven into His pattern for our times in ways we cannot foresee or realize. Even the factions among us can be turned into practical use in the fulfillment of the divine purpose and made to serve as tests in the laboratory of faith (1 Cor. 11:19).

I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I hold the conviction that world events are so shaping themselves in our generation that the entire approach to missionary effort may have to be re-thought, revamped and revised. I have been analyzing trends within recent months which indicate that the missionary societies in all Christendom may some day be scrapped as outworn and ineffective. I shall not here discuss those trends nor detail the factors which lead to my conclusions but they are sufficient to warrant this statement that our readers may observe the rapidly advancing conditions. God may, through His providence, force us to settle some of our grave difficulties which we have considered unsolvable in the past. When this happens there may be a return to the primitive method in which “all those who were scattered abroad went

everywhere preaching the word.”

It is obvious that the systems we have evolved have not provided for the effectual sharing of all our gifts and talents. Actually we have created and utilized methods which make it impossible for the average person to contribute anything but money. Celsus was the first infidel on record who attacked the Christians. He sneeringly remarked that “wool-workers, cobblers, fullers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind,” proclaimed what he designated an illiterate faith and knew how to “commend it to women and children.” That at which he scoffed was the strength of Christianity as opposed to the philosophy of the schools. In his book *The First Three Christian Centuries*, Islay Burns writes of the early saints:

Then they were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were ever at work. Every member was also a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian; the favorite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian; the captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house may be a Christian!

Conclusion

I am convinced that a majority of our present readership will study with interest what has here been written. Despite the fact that we have all been affected by our factional backgrounds and associations we have grown tired of trying to deal with our problems by traditional slogans and familiar cliches. Certainly there will be mixed emotions as you read. Many will be reluctant

to acquiesce in the positions expressed. But all agree that our past thinking has constituted a “philosophy of separation.” It has produced strife and division unparalleled by any other religious group in this century. While it may be argued that we have contributed nothing to the betterment of our condition by this article all will agree something must be done.

We only ask that you read with fairness and objectivity. If you cannot agree with what we say you will still be loved and respected as a brother or sister in the Lord. You need not conform to our thinking on these matters for us to cherish and respect you. We will receive you as God, for the sake of Christ, has received us. It is not conformity to our thinking, but the new birth, that makes us children of God and thus a part of the brotherhood of the redeemed ones. As we continue to explore the history of the movement to which all of us are related and see the rise of factionalism, it is to be hoped that all of us can see our way clear to the dedication of ourselves to the crusade for “peace on earth among men of good will.”

I have this final word to say about the proclamation of the gospel. It is my personal opinion that the controversy over the missionary society arose because of a mistaken concept as to the nature and mission of the church of God. Both those who favored and those who opposed the society were wrong, as we see it. The sharing of the good news with a world of lost sinners was never entrusted as a task to any organization, human or divine. It is not true that the church was a missionary society. True the church was composed of missionaries, for the simple reason that our sharing of the glad tidings stems from our covenant relationship with Jesus and not our membership in the church. The church was not planted to preach the gospel. The gospel was preached to plant the church. The message was first and the community of saints resulted from it. It must ever be thus!

In our next issue we shall deal with the problem of

instrumental music in its introduction among the congregations resulting from the restoration movement. It will be our humble intention to analyze the real factors contributing to our unfortunate division. We shall deal with the problem as it relates to fellowship and we shall suggest certain things that may lay the foundation for better days for the strife-torn brotherhood of disciples. Until next month we bid you farewell with our prayers ascending for all of you. We never write an article nor mail an issue of this paper without a fervent prayer that God may bless us all— writer and reader alike. Pray for us and if possible write us. Your own personal reactions are always read with interest and studied with benefit. May His grace attend you all!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1962)

Volume 24

The Path of Peace

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Incendiary Instruments

Mission Messenger (January 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

The disintegration of the restoration movement under the impact of the factional spirit is a story to “make angels weep and strong men bow themselves in grief.” The heart of the faithful historian recoils from the task of picturing the dissolution of the noble effort even while his sense of fairness and honesty demands that he pursue it to its end. It is a tragic tale of brother fighting against brother, a narrative of bitterness and hate, of strife and debate, of law suits and political maneuvers. The aftermath which we can still view betokens the intensity of the storm which passed over the heads of our parents and grandparents, laying waste the fond hope of uniting all the believers in Christ Jesus.

We are probing the ruins again, not to set fire to the wreckage, but in the hope that we may start anew to rebuild the city of peace. It is our intention to be both chronicler and commentator. We shall not only record events but try to determine what gave them significance. We shall attempt to interpret their relevance for our day. What we say will not be offered in dogmatic fashion. We will respect those who disagree as much as we do those who concur. While it is not our aim to assess guilt neither is it our intention to condone wrong. In this issue we shall be dealing with a topic which is charged with tension. Instrumental music in the public worship of the saints has become a symbol of intangibles. To one group it is a token of

freedom, to another a badge of apostasy.

It is difficult to write on such a theme in objective fashion. The problem is enhanced when one is possessed with a deep personal conviction on the matter. Yet it is impossible to avoid dealing with this subject for its roots are intertwined with the division existing among heirs of the restoration. All we can do is to plead with our readers to defer judgment until all the evidence is in. Do not render your verdict upon partial testimony. If after reading all we write upon the subject you wholly disagree with what is said we shall allow our case to rest with you. As you read please bear in mind that our specific purpose in this series is not to determine the right or wrong involved in the use of instrumental music but simply to study the problems created by its introduction as relates to unity.

J. W. McGarvey wrote in *Millennial Harbinger*, November, 1864, that in the earlier years of the reformation there was "entire unanimity in the rejection of instrumental music from our public worship. It was declared unscriptural, unharmonious with the Christian institution and a source of corruption." He admitted that occasional attempts were made to introduce instrumental music but said it was "at first a sufficient objection to such attempts that a large portion of the congregation were offended and that the Scriptures forbid giving offence to brethren." It is obvious that if instrumental music ever entered the public worship of restoration congregations there would have to be a change of attitude toward the instrument or a change of attitude toward the brethren. It is our conviction that both occurred.

We are interested in the factors which produced these changes for several reasons. (1) When those factors are no longer present attitudes may again be changed. Circumstances do alter conditions. (2) The introduction of the instrument was symptomatic of a feeling which may no longer exist in the hearts of those who have grown up in an environment where its use is

traditional. (3) To charge against those who now employ it the same attitude as those who introduced it and to argue from that premise may be decidedly uncharitable. We must not hold any person liable for a position or attitude which he personally disavows. (4) The introduction of the instrument was preceded by an erosion or decay of the sense of brotherhood. Our first task is to restore the recognition of brotherhood and within its frame of reference work toward a solution of our current difficulties. If we seek to solve our problems by continued attack upon symptoms we will only worsen our state. We must sit down as brothers dealing with an inherited difficulty and not as aliens obligated to perpetuate a relentless feud. (5) We should cease to regard others as separated from us and realize that we have become separated from each other.

The restoration movement gained its early impetus because it appealed to the plain, hardy pioneers by its simplicity and freedom from ostentation. There were no musical instruments in the rude cabins of these settlers, and such instruments were associated with effeminate tastes. The idea of having them in the sacred worship was obnoxious. In 1856, Peter Cartwright, the famous Methodist circuit rider, wrote in his autobiography as follows:

The Presbyterians, and other Calvinistic branches of the Protestant Church, used to contend for an educated ministry, for pews, for instrumental music, for a congregational or salaried minister. The Methodists universally opposed these ideas; and the illiterate Methodist preachers actually set the world on fire—the American world at least— while they were lighting their matches.

But the old preacher could see “the handwriting on the wall.” The Methodists were demanding an educated ministry and institutions were being created to supply the demand. He declared, “I do not wish to undervalue education, but really I have seen so many of these educated preachers who forcibly

remind me of lettuce growing under the shade of a peach tree, or like a gosling that had got the straddles by walking in the dew, that I turn away sick and faint.” He was disturbed by the thought that popular clamor for a salaried minister and instrumental music to pamper pride would spell the end of a virile movement. We ask your indulgence for one more quotation.

I awfully fear for our beloved Methodism. Multiply colleges, universities, seminaries and academies; multiply our agencies and editorships, and fill them all with our best and most efficient preachers, and you localize the ministry and secularize them too; then farewell to itinerancy, and when this fails we plunge right into congregationalism, and stop precisely where all other denominations started.

The restoration was passing through the same throes as it was transformed from a rustic to an urban movement. As the original purpose of “uniting the Christians in all sects” receded, and a desire to “hold our own among the sects” became the chief objective, alterations began to be urged regardless of the feelings of the brethren. Three years after Peter Cartwright wrote the above, the first instrument of music was introduced into the worship of a restoration congregation. We think it will be interesting for our readers to know something about the personalities involved in this radical change, and of the results accruing from it.

In 1859, Dr. L. L. Pinkerton brought a melodeon into the meetinghouse at Midway, Kentucky. There were vigorous protests which went unheeded. Dr. Pinkerton was always a controversial figure. One historian writes, “Throughout the eighteen-fifties and -sixties he was a thorn in the flesh not only of the strict constructionists, but of most of those who considered themselves progressive; but such was his evangelical ardor, the fervor of his piety, and the unselfishness of his service, that even his severest critics found it difficult not to love him.” For all of

these traits, it appears that Pinkerton was somewhat inflexible in his views and bent on having his way regardless of consequences. When he died on his sixty-third birthday, President James Garfield wrote of him, "He was a man of most positive and intense nature; his opinions were convictions."

L. L. Pinkerton was born at Baltimore, Maryland, January 28, 1812, but was reared in Pennsylvania and Virginia, near Bethany. His Presbyterian father taught him the tenets of Calvinism, but he was unable to "get religion" at the mourner's bench. In September, 1830, he heard one sermon by Alexander Campbell and immediately requested the privilege of being immersed. After studying medicine he established a lucrative practice in a suburban district of Cincinnati where Walter Scott was laboring. It was because of the insistence of Scott and David S. Burnet that he discontinued his medical profession and began preaching in May, 1838. It was in 1844 that he moved from Lexington to Midway, Kentucky.

While at Lexington Dr. Pinkerton had guided the congregation in erecting a new meetinghouse on Main Street. Several of the well-to-do families wanted to reserve pews, which they marked with their personal name plates and fitted out with cushions. This action so incensed some of the others that they entered the new structure one night, pried off the name plates and ripped the upholstery to pieces. Dr. Pinkerton publicly assailed those who had been guilty of this vandalism and feeling ran so high he had to resign.

After the Civil War, in which he served as a surgeon in the Union Army, Pinkerton returned to Lexington in 1865 as a teacher in Kentucky University. The Main Street congregation ignored him in spite of the fact that he had led them in the construction of their building and once served as their minister. The opposition to him was so great that he resigned from the college faculty after one year. Three years later the congregation attempted to bring him to trial on the charge that he was guilty

of “conduct of a schismatic character, and calculated to create and keep up strife in the body of Christ.”

In January, 1869, Dr. Pinkerton and John Shackelford began a periodical called the *Independent Monthly*. In an article titled “Bible Inspiration” Pinkerton denied the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the scriptures. He attacked “Reason and Revelation” by Robert Milligan and branded it as fallacious. He affirmed that there would be a second chance after death for those who died without knowledge of the plan of God. He advocated a Presbyterian form of government for the churches, stating that it was a matter of liberty to select that method which was most efficient. It is probable that he was the first exponent of “open membership.” He produced an article designated “No Immersion— No Membership in a Church of the Reformation.” In it he declared that he would allow each man to settle the question of baptism for himself. Dr. Pinkerton declared that he would personally teach and practice immersion but would not deny admission to the congregation to one who did not concur. His position was that he “would not thrust his translation of a Greek word between a man’s conscience and his God.”

We mention these things because they may help to give an insight into the nature and temperament of the man who boasted in 1860 that he was the only preacher in Kentucky who approved of the use of the organ and his church at Midway was the only one in the state that had an organ. It is barely possible that general division might have been averted had it not happened that on April 12 of the following year the Confederate forces began their bombardment of Fort Sumpter and the War between the States became a reality.

It has been the proud boast of those allied with the restoration movement that they did not split over the issue of slavery and war as did most of the other religious bodies in America. This is true as regards formal or overt separation but

the civil strife left its imprint. The very nature of the conflict cheapened brotherhood, aroused suspicion and magnified differences. We freely admit that there was a rapidly developing difference in philosophy among those who constituted the forces of restoration yet it might have been possible to have averted a serious disruption had it not been that the tempers of men were inflamed. In *Lard's Quarterly*, April, 1865. the editor wrote:

No position has been more distinctly enounced, or more firmly held among us, than this: that matters of opinion shall never be made tests of fellowship. The pertinacity with which we have clung to this principle, so obvious and so just, and defended it both for ourselves and for others, is no secret. It has been our pride and our boast. Is it so now? Alas, for the mutability of man! The last four years have seen it changed not in the sacred matters of religion but changed in the paltry affairs of politics. Many so-called brethren in our ranks now actually refuse to meet with and fellowship their brethren of the adverse political faith. Not only so, but they have gone so far as to advise and counsel their arrest, imprisonment, and banishment, for no crime against any law of heaven or earth, but merely because of a difference in political opinions. Even preachers have not blushed to be foremost in the work.

At the very time when passions were kindled by the war, instruments were introduced in some of the congregations. The regard which had formerly been shown for the personal feelings of the brethren who objected was no longer accorded. The congregations were being rent asunder by the violence of the discussions pro and con. Those who opposed the instruments but who saw the tragic results which would accrue from severance of fellowship were outspoken in their condemnation of the organ but just as plain in their statements relative to maintenance of brotherly relationship. They regarded the use of the instrument as a surrender of the very basis of the former plea.

Dr. H. Christopher, writing in *Lard's Quarterly*, for

October, 1867, expressed it in this fashion:

Standing on the ground and proceeding on the principle so frequently proclaimed before the world, that in all matters of religious faith and practice, the faith and practice of the apostolic church are our only guides and authorities, the introduction of instrumental music into our congregations is simply a logical and moral impossibility. It can not be done without abandoning our ground and giving up our fundamental principle. We are compelled to discard this innovation on primitive practice, or give up all pretension and purpose of prosecuting any further the grand design of our reformatory movement. And if we have been right up to this time, to abandon the ground and principle would be nothing less than apostasy. To this dilemma are we driven by the most remorseless logic and by the highest considerations for honesty and consistency.

Prof. J. W McGarvey, in *Apostolic Times*, 1881, wrote after the same tenor:

It is manifest that we cannot adopt the practice without abandoning the obvious and only ground on which a restoration of Primitive Christianity can be accomplished, or on which the plea for it can be maintained. Such is my profound conviction, and consequently the question with me is not one concerning the choice or rejection of a necessary expedient, but the maintenance or abandonment of a fundamental and necessary principle.

F. G. Allen, who became influential as editor of *Old Paths Guide* which he started, wrote thus:

I regard the use of the organ in the worship a violation of one of the fundamental principles of our plea for restoration and unity. We have ever claimed that our plea is catholic— that is, we hold as common ground that, and that only, which is conceded by all to be right. In

restoring just what we find in the beginning in faith and practice, and refusing all else, we stand on undisputed ground . . . The world has seen and felt the advantage and self-evident correctness of this catholic position; but the introduction of the organ, since all cannot worship with it, is a violation of this grand principle. All can worship without it; all cannot worship with it. Therefore we can be united and harmonious without it; we cannot be harmonious and united with it. To introduce the organ to the destruction of our peace and unity is a complete renunciation, therefore, of this principle of catholicity characterizing our plea for the union of God's people on God's word.

Benjamin Franklin, whose leadership and plain manners endeared him to many, and who was distinguished from the illustrious statesman of the same name, by the designation, "the gospel preacher," declared:

If any one had told us forty years ago, that we would live to see the day when those professing to be Christians; who claim the Holy Scriptures as their only rule of faith and practice; those under the command and who profess to appreciate the meaning of the command, to 'observe all things whatever I have commanded you,' would bring any instrument of music into a worshiping assembly, and use it there in worship, we should have repelled the idea as an idle dream. But this only shows how little we knew of what men would do; or how little we saw of the power of the adversary to subvert the purest principles, to deceive the hearts of the simple, to undermine the very foundation of all piety, and turn the very worship of God itself into an attraction for the people of the world, an entertainment or amusement.

It is evident, however, that these men were able to distinguish between an attitude toward "innovations" and "fellowship." F. G. Allen said that it was not a question of fellowship. Both J. W. McGarvey and Benjamin Franklin were

unwilling to regard use of the instrument as a test of fellowship. In his book, "Brother McGarvey," W. C. Morro writes:

When he found that it was necessary to speak he was largely content to state his position and not to press it to the point where it would become a barrier or a cause of division between him and his brethren. This much is a certainty: McGarvey never allowed his position on the organ question to become a cause of division within the church. His soul recoiled from such a step. Yet, he stood so firmly by his original position that he was willing and actually did bring upon himself discomfort, alienation from friends, and practical isolation, yet he was not willing to impose this upon others.

Winfred E. Garrison in his book "Religion Follows the Frontier," writes about the situation in these words:

But it should be said that much Christian forbearance was practiced on both sides. Franklin (anti-organ) advised the anti-organists to meet separately for worship if an organ was put in over their protest, but not to organize a new church, or create a split. And Errett (pro-organ) advised discarding the use of the organ where there was opposition by a considerable minority.

Not all the writers were as amiable in their treatment of the question or of those who contended for the instrument. Moses E. Lard, a staunch defender of the missionary society was just as strong in his opposition to instrumental music. This was regarded as the "middle of the road" position in that day. His advice to those troubled about the problem was given in *Lard's Quarterly*, March, 1864:

Let now, as further evidence of this, any set of brethren, no matter how pious and true, set about inducing a church which has introduced an organ, to put it away, and these brethren will soon fall under its proscriptions and it will absolutely go the length of putting

them away before it will put away its organ. It will part from everything and anything rather than its infamous box.

But what shall be done with such churches? Of course nothing. If they see fit to mortify the feelings of their brethren, to forsake the example of the primitive churches, to condemn the authority of Christ by resorting to will worship, to excite dissension, and give rise to general scandal, they must do it. As a body we can do nothing. Still we have three partial remedies left us to which we should at once resort 1. Let every preacher in our ranks resolve at once that he will never, under any circumstances or on any account, enter a meeting house belonging to our brethren in which an organ stands. We beg and entreat our preaching brethren to adopt this as an unalterable rule of conduct. This and like evils must be checked, and the very speediest way to effect it is the one here suggested. 2. Let no brother who takes a letter from one church ever unite with another using an organ. Rather let him live out of the church than go into such a den. 3. Let those brethren who oppose the introduction of an organ first remonstrate in gentle, kind, but decided terms. If their remonstrance is unheeded, and the organ is brought in, then let them at once, and without even the formality of asking for a letter, abandon the church so acting; and let all such members unite elsewhere. Thus these organ-grinding churches will in the lapse of time be broken down, or wholly apostatize, and the sooner they are in fragments the better for the cause of Christ. I have no sympathy with them, no fellowship for them, and so help me God never intend knowingly to put my foot into one of them.

A year later, in the *Quarterly*, dated April, 1865, Lard referred to his previous statement, and added:

Editors and preachers may write and preach against organs till the last trump shall sound, but while they countenance the churches in which they stand, visit them,

and suffer the machines to be cracked over their heads, they are but whistling idly in the air. There is but one way to cure the spirit in question— crush it. When a church learns that no preacher will set foot within its doors while it holds an organ; when it sees that its members are abandoning it; that it is fast coming to naught; and that unless it gives up its unholy innovation it is destined to ruin— then will it kick out its organ, and not before.

As more homes began to install organs in the parlor and these instruments ceased to be a luxury, the pressure to have them in the meetinghouses increased. The controversy waxed fierce in every section of the land. It was the chief subject discussed in the papers from 1864 to 1875. The spiritual life of many waned as character became no longer the criterion of the Christian walk and loyalty to Christ was judged primarily by an attitude toward the organ. Partisan spirit was aroused to such an intensity that W. K. Pendleton exhorted, “We notice a growing heat under the discussion of this subject— but let us keep cool.” This warning went unheeded. Men boasted of the congregations into which they had thrust organs, or of those in which they had thwarted its introduction, as so many scalps dangling from the party belt.

Challenges for debate began to be issued by the opposing groups within local congregations. Each camp secured a champion who had built up a reputation as a party “hatchet man” for his side. The debaters were not always noted for their intellectual ability. A common boast was that they “would skin an opponent and tack his hide on the barn door with the bloody side out.” They resorted to ridicule, invective, sarcasm and derision. The public gladiatorial combats, held in full view of the delighted sectarians whom the movement started out to unite, were not investigations carried on between brethren. They were fights to the death between tribal warriors, the “Digressives” and the “Antis.”

Only at first did calm sense prevail and then not for long.

When the congregation at Seventeenth and Olive Streets, in Saint Louis, Missouri, had an organ forced into the worship by a small group of agitators, many of the brothers and sisters with tears streaming down their cheeks, stumbled from the auditorium, their hearts both incensed and broken. There still lingered in their minds the greatness of the cause which they had espoused so they agreed to submit the case for arbitration. Among those who heard the respective sides were Robert Graham and Isaac Errett. These brethren decided that one soul was worth more than an organ and that a brother for whom Christ died should not be destroyed by preference for any expedient. They recommended that the organ be silenced. This was done and the dissenting members were restored.

But the united effort did not long continue even in Saint Louis. Those who desired to use the organ felt they were being inhibited in their freedom and the next rift was caused by their withdrawing and securing another place to meet. This produced one of those queer ironical twists so often noticeable under such circumstances. The hall which they rented did not have an organ, the meetinghouse they abandoned had one. For months there were two groups worshipping not far apart. One group had an organ which they would not use, the other group would have used an organ but had none.

In many urban communities especially there were those who felt it was necessary to make the congregation "cultured" regardless of the manner by which it was accomplished. In the heated exchanges the instrument became a status symbol. Those who regarded themselves as in a higher social bracket and who were progressive in thought and action resented the idea of "holding back the church" in the community to please "a bunch of old fogies." They saw no reason for catering to the whims of an uneducated segment who would make the congregation always subject to the regulation of yokels. In turn, those who opposed the instrument often regarded themselves as the loyal defenders of the bastion against a sinister group of conspirators

whom Satan had infiltrated to destroy the last hope of Christianity from the earth.

Regardless of the spiritual and scriptural implications of the music question (and we are convinced there are many such worthy implications) we dare not overlook the circumstances and conditions which contributed to *the division* over the issue. We must never lose sight of the fact that instrumental music in the social worship of the saints is one thing, while division into *two rival parties* over the subject is a wholly different thing. It is our contention that while such subjects as the use of an instrument may be debatable, the subject of division among brethren is not debatable. If opposition to the instrument is based upon the silence of the apostolic doctrine, opposition to division among the members of the family of God must be based upon the positive declarations of scripture.

In any final analysis, such questions as instrumental music aggravate the problem of maintaining brotherly and family relationships, but overt division is caused by an attitude toward *brethren*, not by an attitude toward instrumental music or other such innovations. It is because of this fact that I contend that social, political and economical factors, prevalent at a given time, may have much to do with our spiritual reaction to troublesome and vexing problems. Certainly the transformation in our national life wrought by the industrial revolution, or the effect of the Civil War on our social fabric, have nothing to do with whether instrumental music in Christian worship is sanctioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, but they may have a lot to do with the atmosphere in which such problems are discussed and in the manner in which the discussions terminate.

It is possible, and I think quite probable, that this great test of the restoration movement had to end in division because of the very condition prevailing at the time of its introduction. To maintain that state of division and to make the same accusations and counter-accusations as were made in its

inception, when conditions have altered, reveals that we are naive and childish. This in no sense implies that a thing becomes right in one generation which was wrong in another. It does not argue that instrumental music in the corporate worship is sanctified by the passage of time. Our contention is that it was an attitude toward *brotherhood* which resulted in the formation of distinct parties around the pro and con of this issue, and it is time for us to recapture the sense of brotherhood. We may never settle such questions as those which have split and fragmented us but we will settle our eternal destiny in a manner we do not crave if we do not love our brethren— *all of them!*

In past generations those who lived in the remote hill country of our Missouri Ozarks were often superstitious and illiterate. In spite of this they possessed a high degree of integrity and family honor. When insulted they knew but one way to purge the blot from their name and that was by ambushing and killing the guilty person. Often this provoked a feud which was carried on from generation to generation, with members of each clan swearing over their latest victim to “wipe the others out.” I have personally immersed into Christ some of the descendants of these feuding families. They have gone to the same schools and sat in the same classes. They are now members of the same congregations of the saints. They have outgrown the cruder methods of their fathers. Shall we learn in every department of life except the spiritual? Will we perpetuate the same bitter feuds which made havoc of the restoration plea in past years? Will we transmit to our children the same heritage of bitterness and sectarian animosity which we have received from our fathers.

It occurs to me that if we can grasp the significant difference between a thing and *the division* which occurred among brethren when they discussed it, we will be able without compromise of any personal conviction to restore a concept of brotherhood as a proper framework for future investigation and examination. And it will help us to realize that the disintegration

of brotherhood was encouraged by external forces of which the participants were wholly unaware at the time. Those factors have been altered or amended in some cases and in most cases have passed away. It is time for a re-study of brotherhood and fellowship in the light of more advanced knowledge and free from the unfortunate interference of outside elements which had such an adverse influence a century ago— free also from the personalities which then affected the struggle!

The instrument has lost its importance as a status symbol either in home or congregation. The industrial revolution which has acted to raise the living standard to such a high plane has made it possible for almost any home to possess radio and television. Aerials are seen above the poorest cabins and rudest shacks. Music appreciation is taught in schools. Congregations which oppose instrumental music have, in some instances, developed the art of singing until it is conceded by all that an instrument would be a hindrance instead of an aid. Those who do not employ instrumental music are no longer regarded as “old fogies.” It not infrequently happens that their place in the industrial, economic and educational world earns for them in some communities a respect not enjoyed by many who contend for the instrument. The implications of the instrument as a social gauge have been completely altered.

The division now existing is an inherited one. We do not know of a single congregation that has been disturbed for several decades by the attempt to put in an instrument. We know of several that have suffered some unpleasantness when certain ones have sought to remove an instrument. Many of the brethren who see no harm in the use of an instrument and who do not consider it a sin would never recommend adoption of an instrument in a congregation that did not have one. Others in this category would gladly surrender the instrument in their locality if the decision were theirs to make, and if this one act would secure peace and harmony and reunite the divergent elements in love.

Under existing conditions it seems rather absurd to regard all who worship where an instrument is used as “dividers of churches,” and to quote Romans 16:17 as universally applicable to them is both unfair and untrue. There is a difference between one who “causes division” and one who grows up in a state in which he may be wholly oblivious that division exists. It is also possible that the attitude of those who oppose the instrument has done as much to perpetuate the controversy as has a love for the instrument. The unbrotherly treatment that has been accorded has cemented the factional spirit in many communities.

The simple truth is that in the inception of the problem the partisan spirit was not the exclusive possession of either side. This was demonstrated by the eagerness of both groups to rush into the courts of the land to guarantee their property rights often at the expense of their spiritual influence for generations to come. The ruin wrought by lawyers who knew nothing of the goals of the restoration movement and whose relation to the problem under dispute was on a mere mercenary plane can never be fully assessed until eternity reveals its effect in the lost souls driven away in discouragement or disgust.

Any sensible approach to the situation as it now exists must be made on a basis other than that of partisan debate by selected champions before the religious world. It is just possible that such an approach was never Christ-like in its nature, and was one of the means used by the Arch-foe to assure that the family of God would become so divided as to feel it was useless to ever strive for unity again. If we are to defeat his sinister designs we must reject his weapons which belong to “the works of the flesh.” We must recognize that in every factional movement the partisan debate is one phase through which it passes until men can arise who look at the situation as a whole and who recognize that those methods which engender or encourage passion and emotion provide no rational solution of the difficulty. But we should reject such ineffective and outgrown weapons as we would the “law of fang and claw.”

This does not mean that the question of the use of instrumental music is settled, or that it no longer needs to be studied and discussed. Men cannot be asked to set aside their convictions or to “just go along” with each other as if nothing had ever happened. Such a course would be merely following the path of least resistance and this always makes for crooked men. We must face up to the fact that in some places the question will never be settled in such a manner as to provide any working agreement. This should not deter us from working on the problem and lessening areas of tension where we can. It is possible that in the physical realm we shall never discover a cure for cancer which will be universally successful, but we must dedicate our energies toward trying to do so and never allow discouragements and setbacks to offset our zeal.

Our proposal is very simple. It is based upon the general recognition that before the division occurred we were united, all of us part of the same fellowship. The introduction of the instrument and other things placed a strain upon the ties of brotherhood. Under the existing conditions then prevalent our fathers sought to solve the problem by division and by a declaration that a state of brotherhood no longer existed. We need not question their sincerity nor impugn their motives. Instead we should credit them with the noblest intention, that of preserving the purity of the church and the original purpose of the restoration movement. But in the light of additional knowledge we can see that they misunderstood the implications of “fellowship” as the Holy Spirit used the term. Perhaps it would be safer to say that in the heat of the controversy they forgot those implications, at least temporarily. We must now decide whether we shall continue to perpetuate their mistaken concept.

If we decide to do so in order to preserve our partisan status, we shall doom our posterity to such recurrent divisions as will eventually divide the restoration movement out of existence. The philosophy adopted by our fathers was a factional one. It

can never produce unity. It can only perpetuate existing divisions and breed new ones. If we decide to renounce this unscriptural concept of fellowship or brotherhood we can then begin to examine our points of difference from a new perspective, as brethren seeking for a common solution, not as enemies or aliens seeking to capture each other. We can recognize our differences as legitimate subjects for exploration but not occasions for division.

It is at this juncture we must personally face up to some grave problems as did our fathers in their day. One of those problems is occasioned by fear—the fear that we may lose all we have gained so far. Thus, there are some who would take a limited view of our situation and who ask why we cannot restrict our efforts to restoring a proper sense of fellowship to those only who do not use the instrument. They are willing to recognize as bothers those who are divided over cups, classes, colleges, etc., and seek to alleviate the conditions existing among these, but they recoil from a recognition of those who employ the instrument in worship. They regard them as sectarian, whereas the groups who do not use instrumental music are looked upon as factions or parties *within the church*.

This attitude will never meet the needs of our day. In the first place it is unscriptural. It makes a distinction between sectism and factionalism, but these are applicable to the same thing so far as God's word is concerned. Moreover, it does not get to the real core of the problem. It is artificial and superficial. Our divisions have not been caused by things but by an attitude toward others of God's children, our brothers. It is not enough to merely nibble around at the troublesome issues which have arisen to plague us since we adopted the factional approach. We must go back to the time when we were misled into accepting that approach and reject it, and start to deal with our problems on a wholly different basis—one that will lead toward unity which God commands instead of toward division which he condemns.

This is a real adventure of faith! For those of us who have always lived sheltered, protected lives behind the barriers we have erected since our fathers chose the factional method in an attempt to protect what they had gained, it seems too risky and daring to associate with those of other factions and groups with a view to allowing the leaven of the Spirit to work in direct contact with the whole lump. But there are some considerations we should always bear in mind. First, it is false to assume that truth must always be overcome by error when they are brought into contact. Indeed it should be the other way around. Moreover, God is working in this age. The Holy Spirit is mightily at work in the hearts of many who are heirs of the restoration movement prompting toward unity and oneness. We do not risk anything when we submit and surrender ourselves completely to the guidance and care of the Spirit. We are never safer than at such a time.

Actually we are lost anyhow if we continue to evaluate our own little parties as the church of God and are thus led to disregard as our brethren those who have been reared in other factions. Nothing is a greater insult to the Father than the refusal to recognize His other children as our brothers. Instead of protecting what we have gained by maintaining a factional attitude, we actually insure our own condemnation. In the only portrayal which he gave of the final judgment scene, Jesus conditions our entrance into eternal rest upon our attitude toward and treatment of our brothers. This is the area to which we need to give the greatest attention for, if we believe Jesus, it is the one which will determine our right to be welcomed into the kingdom prepared for the faithful.

We can see no real gain to be derived from merely agreeing to recognize those who see “most things as we do,” while we nourish the seed of partisanship in our hearts. It is not that we need to turn over a new leaf; we need to turn up with a new life! As we become convicted of the wrong inherent in our divided state we will be tempted to do the same things our

fathers did three-quarters of a century ago. They chose the factional method of trying to preserve their spiritual gains; we may choose to gain spiritually by preserving the factional method. They doomed the restoration movement to failure by their choice; we will doom our souls eternally, for we could profit by their mistakes.

No faction among us today is “the loyal church.” Not one is the church of God to the exclusion of all others. All of them are parties. They exist as monuments to our failure to keep the peace.

Their partisan gains and growth do not necessarily enrich the kingdom of heaven. Their multiplication is a disgrace to us and not a blessing to humanity. It is time for all of us to rise above the narrow partisan approach and to restore the spirit of the restoration movement. As I see it, this involves going back to the place where we began to divide, and not starting in at some subsequent point where we sub-divided. It means a recapture of the true sense of brotherhood in Christ Jesus based on the new birth. It does not mean endorsement of those things which were brought in to test and try our fathers. It does not mean the adoption of a single thing that you regard as an innovation or which you cannot conscientiously condone.

It does not involve a change of procedure where you worship. It does involve a change of heart toward those baptized believers who do not proceed as you do. It does not require surrender of any truth you hold, or of anything you hold to be a truth. It only involves renunciation of the greatest error Satan ever palmed off upon us— the fallacy that we can untie ourselves into unity, split ourselves into harmony and divide ourselves into oneness. I do not deny a single thing which our fathers in the faith discovered to be the truth, but I want it to be known to one and all that I renounce the factional approach which they adopted. In spite of their sincerity it was no part of the truth, it is not now and never will be!

I regard as my brothers in the Christ every sincere immersed believer in the Lord Jesus. Our differences I will approach as differences between brothers, not as occasions of strife between aliens. I deplore the introduction of instrumental music over the protests of the saints but I deplore even more the adoption of the false premise that those who were my brothers yesterday are no longer my brothers today. I renounce as untenable the very idea that brotherhood in Christ Jesus is based upon any other consideration than the mutual Fatherhood of God. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and not by conformity on matters of opinion or interpretation.

It is my intention, if God spares my life, to deal directly and positively with the rise of the factional spirit, in our next issue. It will be my purpose to show how those who opposed innovations chose the factional method of dealing with their brethren who introduced them, and how these latter then adopted that method in retaliation, and aggravated, irritated and agitated until in many communities the bitterness created by this intestine strife and civil war still lingers to haunt the battlefield and to thwart any real hope of producing unity until hearts are purged and renovated. We shall quote from legal briefs and court decisions to show how love had fled and mercy hid her face while hate was enthroned on the sacred altar.

Perhaps what is said in the paper next month will humble us all as it should. Certainly as I contemplate my own past and see how I was victimized by the party spirit bequeathed from our ancestors, as I realize how I even regarded the sacred oracles as a repository of scriptures to be drawn upon for factional conquest, I am saddened, distressed and penitent. I do not ask you to concur with what I write. I only ask you to fervently pray for me that I may have understanding of His will for my brief life and courage to fulfill the design without fear of what men may do unto me.

We believe that every anxious member of the fellowship of the concerned will want to share the paper next month with others who need to be shaken from their complacency. We promise you that it will be worth reading, even though you cannot find it in your heart to agree with its contents. In the meantime, you are my brother if you are God's child, and I love you sincerely because I love Him. I am resolved to make nothing a test of fellowship or communion which He has not made a condition of salvation! This recognizes my right to disagree with my brothers *in Christ* and respects their right to disagree with me. Thus Jesus becomes central in our thinking and we truly become one in Him!

Adventures in Religion (4)

Mission Messenger (January 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

To identify yourself with Jesus, allowing Him to dwell in you, is the greatest adventure of which one can be capable in the flesh. Unquestionably, the outstanding event in the history of mankind occurred when God broke through the physical barrier. This earth became the visited planet. In Jesus dwelt all the fulness of Deity in a body. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.” Until that time the ideals of man were hazy images. Now the longings and aspirations and challenges were focused in the reality of a person, an ideal man. It is not surprising that he was killed. There are two things society cannot tolerate—for one to live too far below their standard or too far above it. The first they commit to prison, the second they nail to a cross.

Jesus lived dangerously! He was not a rabble rouser. He chose to feed a hungry multitude rather than weld them into a political mob. He was not a shouting demagogue. When he spoke in the house “his voice was not heard in the streets.” He did not harangue the populace with waving arms and clenched fist. Instead, his approach was so gentle that it would not break a crushed reed or extinguish the tiny spark on smoking flax. It was his utter unselfishness which made him a threat to the world of his day—or of any day! Religiously, politically, socially, economically, the world in which we live is geared to serve the selfish ends of those who are in power. They are hedged in by

traditional rules and regulations, forms and ceremonies. They can use exclusiveness, boycott, threat and rumor to protect themselves and make it appear foolish for a lone individual to “buck the machine.”

The man who introduced Jesus ran afoul of the moral corruption of “the powers that be.” His head was chopped off in the gloomy dungeon of Machaerus and this bloody trophy served up on a platter to a scheming woman who shared her bed and her body with her brother-in-law. It must have required a considerable degree of courage to enter the province of Galilee after this, but the record says, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God.” Such daring is always branded fanaticism by those who “play it safe” religiously. It makes a difficult situation for the folk at home, because they become the butt of ridicule due to their relationship. “When his family heard this, they set out to take charge of him, for people were saying that he was out of his mind” (Mark 3:21).

Nothing is more upsetting for a group than for someone to really believe that all humanity is related and that we have a responsibility toward all men. Such a person will not limit his association to “the right people.” He disregards convention. He goes as freely to the homes of the humble as to the mansions of the “upper crust.” Of course the best way to mark him off the social register is to start a whispering campaign and attribute ulterior motives. If it can be made to appear that he is not as good as he pretends to be, that really he is a glutton and a drunkard, the polished and refined can dismiss him from their thoughts without a qualm. In that way the kingdom of heaven can be reserved for “the country club set” who will not have to be embarrassed by the homespun manners of the uncultivated.

Jesus readily distinguished between beauty and ornamentation. He knew that one was natural and the other artificial. “And why be anxious about clothes? Consider how the

lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin; and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was not attired like one of these.” I suspect that Solomon had a whole retinue of tailors. No doubt they bought the finest fabrics from the looms of every country. They contrived to make the king the Beau Brummel of his day. With all of their skill, however, they could only attire Solomon from without. The real beauty is from within. It comes only from God. “God clothes the grass in the fields, which is there today, and tomorrow is thrown on the stove.” Even that which is fragile and unenduring serves its purpose in God’s plan.

For a long time I have been wondering if the real soul of adventure is not in the search for the beauty of nature as opposed to the artificial. We say that one is an adventurer who leaves the grime and smoke and dirt of the city to live in a log cabin on the shore of a wilderness lake. We use the term to designate one who becomes tired of ascending skyscrapers while walled up in an elevator and scales the wind-swept steeps of a wild snowy peak in the Himalayas. We apply it to those who leave the placid surface life and descend to the depths of the ocean to visualize the fantastic beauty never before observed by human eye. And when, after months of the weary grind which erodes away the spirit, we take a vacation and camp beside a clear lake surrounded by tall spruce, we whisper in awe and reverence, “This is God’s country.”

It has been said that our own civilization is becoming a decadent one because the spirit of adventure has disappeared. There are no new areas to challenge pioneers. Every remote spot has its burned out ashes of a campfire and its litter of empty beer cans. Our political leaders seek to arouse us from lethargy by coining slogans about the “new frontier” but we are jaded and tired and suspicious that this is merely another gimmick for raising taxes. All history bears mute witness to the fact that cultures are like the men who compose them. When they lose the spirit of daring they either die or continue an existence of such

cautious and hopeless mediocrity that it can be said of them, “that though you have a name for being alive, you are dead.”

But the realm of exploration need not be closed to you! The most challenging area God ever created is relatively unexplored as yet. We have been deceived by the artificial and the superficial. Behind the facade lies a great vista, beckoning him who has the courage to enter. It is the field of human understanding, the vast area of brotherhood, the almost untrammelled wilderness of spiritual relationship—the creation of God! We have penetrated but slightly into this magnificent realm, then settled down and created our organizations which have shackled and enslaved us. We have made ourselves the serfs to systems upon which we are dependent for support and financial aid. Our own vision is thus made subservient to the restricted limitation of the most selfish and nearsighted member of the group whose objection will be voiced in business meeting if we dare to rise above our own narrowness. We are no longer lions of courage freely roaming the veldt, we are well-trained bird dogs who have learned how to “heel” when the whistle blows.

Before Jesus could begin the greatest adventure of the ages, he had to break through the curtain of flesh and become identified with man. “The children of a family share the same flesh and blood; and so he too shared ours, so that through death he might break the power of him who had death at his command” (Heb. 2:14). He did not come as an interplanetary traveler to share the hospitality earth had to offer. He did not come as a heavenly investigator to see how we were making out. He was not a colonial inspector sent out from headquarters. He came as one comes to his brothers. He shared their lot. He identified himself with them in every way. “And therefore he had to be made like these brothers of his in every way” (verse 17). This was the brotherhood of mankind and Jesus shared in their every weakness, desire and temptation. “For ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one

who, because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way, only without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Those who would share in this adventure must also break through the curtain of the flesh and become identified with Christ. This is not possible to one who is cautious, frightened or dismayed by what others think or say. It is the way of the “bold approach” (Heb. 4:16). It is not the route of the prosaic nor the haunt of the humdrum. It is new and vibrant with life. “The blood of Jesus makes us free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new, living way which he has opened for us through the curtain of his flesh” (Heb. 10:19). Men dream of penetrating behind the Iron Curtain of Red Russia or the Bamboo Curtain of Red China, but the greatest adventure of all is to cross through the Flesh Curtain dyed red by the blood of Jesus and enter the realm of the spirit.

The blood which flowed from the body of Jesus was warm human blood. It made him akin to every man in every nation in every age on earth. God has made of one blood all nations. The blood which courses through my veins is also human blood. It identifies me with every individual on this earth. “We are God’s offspring.” As the record says, “That is why the Son does not shrink from calling men his brothers” (Heb. 2:12). To identify myself with Jesus is to identify myself with his purpose— “to bring many sons unto glory.” It is commonly thought in these days of shallow reasoning that this will be done through the agency of our religious organizations which, in our simplicity, we call “churches.” Actually, these may hinder instead of help. They have erected barriers, built walls, and created barricades to keep God’s people apart. They have set up false standards of loyalty and devised spurious tests of fellowship. It has come to pass that one must break through the “religious barrier” before he can even reach Jesus.

That which God creates is natural. That which man makes is artificial. As it was with the field lily and the apparel of

Solomon— there is one glory of the natural and another glory of the artificial! If Jesus were on earth today he would ignore the conventions we have created, the traditions we cherish, and the selfish codes we countenance. He would recognize a brotherhood of all the redeemed, a fellowship of all the humble followers in his footsteps. There is just one flock of God as there is just one Shepherd. There is just one church on earth. There never was but one, there never can be but one. Those who compose it are all children of the same family. “We know that we have crossed the frontier from death to life because we do love our brothers” (1 John 3:14). If you believe this and are willing to pay the price for believing it, you can share in the great adventure, and Christ will live again on earth *in you!* The cross was the cost to Christ.

The Unequal Yoke

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[Abstract]

Of all the symptoms of the party spirit perhaps none is more fraught with evil consequences than that of wresting the scriptures to justify a position of separation and exclusiveness as relates to brethren. The entire tenor of the sacred writings is one of encouraging unity and condemning division. To select a passage and interpret it in such a manner as to contradict the very purpose of God is a great tragedy. It is like poisoning the well from which an entire community draws its water. It substitutes bitter for sweet and darkness for light.

As an example of what we mean consider the partisan application of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 which begins with the admonition, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” and concludes with the command, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” This is quoted by factional leaders in order to enforce a boycott directed against other splinter parties. It is employed as a threat to discourage all fraternization across party lines. It is used to make it appear a dire sin to even go hear a man speak who does not belong to “the loyal church.” An “unbeliever” in party parlance is anyone who disagrees with “the powers that be” on the factional test of fellowship.

If a party opposes Bible classes one who does not oppose them is an “unbeliever.” If the party opposes individual cups one

who does not oppose them is an “unbeliever” with whom you dare not associate. If instrumental music is made a test of fellowship those who use it are “unbelievers” and you must have no concord with them. “The unclean thing” which must not be touched (verse 17) is whatever the party opposes. Each party has a different test of fellowship so the “unclean thing” differs with each party. That which is unclean to one group is clean to another.

Although such an interpretation appears ridiculous to a real student of the sacred oracles, our readers would be surprised at how many factional leaders stand before their adherents and proclaim it in all seriousness. The deplorable thing is that such men confound believers with unbelievers, and use the latter term to describe those who are the very opposite of the ones so designated by the Spirit. No one who *believes* in the Lord Jesus Christ and has come into covenant relationship with Him can possibly be *an unbeliever* regardless of how many mistaken ideas he may have while in that relationship. No believer can become an unbeliever by any position he honestly holds on instrumental music, Bible classes, colleges, or individual cups. These are divergent views and opinions held by believers.

There is a catalog of terms in the passage under consideration referring to association. In the King James Version they are listed as yoked together, fellowship, communion, concord and part. Those with whom God’s sons and daughters are not to participate are listed under the following terms: unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidels and idols. The word translated “infidel” in verse 15 is the same as the one translated “unbelievers” in verse 14. Surely a man is not an infidel because he disagrees with us about instrumental music or individual cups. If having a mistaken idea makes a man an unbeliever there are no believers on earth.

Who is an unbeliever as the Spirit uses the term? Certainly

an unbeliever is the opposite to a believer, and believers are those who are added to the Lord (Cp. Acts 5:14). Fortunately, the apostle draws a contrast in his first epistle to the Corinthians which gives an insight into the scriptural connotation of “unbeliever.” In chapter 6 he deals with the matter of resorting to heathen courts to adjudicate their disputes. He condemns their impleading each other before such tribunals instead of selecting moderators or referees from their own number. “Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?” (verses 5, 6). It is evident from this that members of the brotherhood are not unbelievers. No brother in Christ Jesus is an unbeliever.

In verse one the unbelievers are identified as the unrighteous, and the brothers as saints. “When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare to go to law before the *unrighteous* instead of the *saints*?” The unrighteous cannot be in the church because the apostle says, “If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by *the church*?” A point frequently overlooked in this connection is that he identifies the unrighteous as the immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers and robbers (verses 9, 10). These are the unrighteous and the unrighteous are the unbelievers. To brand as “unbelievers” those sincere brethren who hold different opinions than ourselves is not only to do them a grave injustice but also reflects the paucity and inadequacy of our own scholarship. We do not so much indict others as we demonstrate our own ignorance of the scriptures.

Against what was Paul warning? The clue is found in two expressions in the series of questions. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? . . . And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” The association and fellowship of God’s people with idolatry which was so prevalent in Corinth was forbidden. They were to come out from idolaters and be separate from

them and touch nothing unclean. “The unclean thing” had reference to the lewd and lascivious practices engaged in as a part of the very religion of pagan temples.

Ephesus, with its temple to Diana, was also a seat of idolatry. To the Ephesians Paul wrote: “But fornication, and all *uncleanness*, covetousness, let it not be once named among you, . . . no whoremonger, nor *unclean person*, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God . . . Be not ye therefore partakers with them . . . And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5). To apply these passages to sincere brethren in the Lord to promote separation and division among them; to imply that followers of Christ are servants of Belial—these are crimes of deepest dye against brethren.

It is no wonder that under the influence of such interpretation we have become fragmented into fractions, split into segments, and torn into tatters. It is time for brethren to grow up and quit searching the scriptures for a pretext to dissolve brotherly affection and turn saints toward tribal warfare. It is an insult to the Father to brand his offspring as unbelievers and infidels. Such a course is unwarranted, unwise and unscriptural. “These are they which separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

The Sand Creek Address

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[Abstract]

It is not, therefore, within the province of this court to pronounce judgment upon the doctrines taught by Alexander Campbell and believed and practiced by his followers, or to determine which faction of the Sand Creek congregation, in their practices in their church congregation, from an ecclesiastical standpoint, is correct, as the courts have no concern with the questions whether a religious congregation is progressive or conservative; whether a musical instrument shall be present or absent during church services; whether the preacher shall be selected from the congregation or shall be a person employed by the congregation for a stated time at a stated salary; whether missionary societies and Sunday schools shall have separate organizations from the church congregations or not, or whether the funds necessary for the support of the church shall be contributed wholly by its members or raised in part by fairs and festivals. All these questions, and kindred questions, must be left to the determination of the church congregation.

This is an excerpt from the decision of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois in the case of “The Christian Church of Sand Creek, Shelby County, Illinois, versus The Church of Christ at Sand Creek.” The opinion was filed on February 21, 1906. It was read by Mr. Justice Hand with all of the six other justices concurring. This case was typical of many which

plagued the heirs of the restoration movement at the dawn of the twentieth century. The decision was presented the same year that David Lipscomb informed the United States Census Bureau that a separate listing under the title "Churches of Christ" should be accorded those congregations which opposed instrumental music and certain other things. Formal division was now an established fact among those who had started out to answer the prayer of the Savior for the unity of all believers.

The year of 1830 is famous in Illinois history because it marked the arrival of the Lincoln family who migrated from Kentucky, coming by way of Indiana. Many other Kentuckians came the same year and some of them planted the first congregation of disciples in the state at Jacksonville. Two years later Barton W. Stone moved to Jacksonville and from that time on his *Christian Messenger* was published there. In 1834 enough of the settlers in Shelby County had been converted to the restoration plea that John Storm and Bushrod Henry organized a congregation at Sand Creek and erected a log meetinghouse. In 1836 Tobias Grider united with the congregation and became its pioneer elder as well as a preacher of the gospel. Sometime later Peter P. Warren became associated with him as an elder and preacher.

There was little in the inception or early history of this rural congregation to indicate that it would have a prominent role in the unfolding drama of strife and division in the ranks of the restoration movement. But fate plays strange tricks and destiny, like lightning, strikes in unexpected places. Almost half a century passed and the little country church swelled in number time and again when the maturing young people in the community were immersed at the annual meeting. Many of these were forced to go elsewhere for work but they carried with them the fond memory of the place where they were baptized. Each August the Sand Creek congregation had a special gathering which was virtually a homecoming, a mass meeting attended by hundreds. Homes in the community were thrown wide open in

hospitality. Basket dinners were served on Saturday and Sunday under the trees in the yard of the meetinghouse. The surrounding woods were filled with teams that had drawn loaded wagons, buggies and surreys to the scene.

Prominent preachers were secured for this annual event and the influence of the meetings was far-reaching. When the restoration began to be troubled and disturbed by introduction of the innovations that were creeping in, it was decided that Sand Creek was the place best suited to making a stand in opposition to these things. The annual meeting presented an unparalleled opportunity because of the number in attendance and their favorable attitude toward the congregation. The decision was not made hastily. It was discussed fully and deliberately. The leaders of the congregation were encouraged by a thirty-seven year old evangelist who had just purchased the *American Christian Review* in 1887.

Daniel Sommer was born near Washington, D. C., January 11, 1850, of poverty-stricken German parents. A serious minded youngster, he was induced to unite with the Methodists, but upon learning the plea of the restoration movement, he accepted it. Having a desire to preach the gospel he enrolled in Bethany College where he continued some two years. After the death of Benjamin Franklin at Anderson, Indiana, on October 22, 1878, the paper which he had published became a medium for advertising. The main source of revenue came from manufacturers of patent medicines and nostrums. Daniel Sommer bought the paper with borrowed money and began as editor by discarding all worldly advertisements. The decision to do this created great hardship.

He was assisted in this enterprise by some members at Sand Creek, Illinois, and two of the elders jointly signed a note with him to secure money from a Dr. Oliver, to apply on purchase of the paper. Soon after he assumed editorship he urged the leaders at Sand Creek to "draw a line against the

innovators” and proposed to publicize their action as an example to other congregations faced with the same problems. Other congregations in the vicinity of Sand Creek were consulted and expressed a willingness to concur in any action thus taken. It was decided to draw up a document which would recognize “a formal division” and amount to “disfellowship” of those who advocated certain practices. To make it more impressive the statement was to be called “An Address and Declaration.” This was a play on the term “Declaration and Address” which was the designation of the famous document presented by Thomas Campbell exactly eighty years before.

The Sand Creek Declaration

Peter P. Warren was selected to write and publicly read the statement. It was agreed that it would be presented on Saturday afternoon, August 17, 1889, and that the reading would be preceded by a discourse on “Innovations” delivered by Daniel Sommer. This procedure was followed and the document was signed by six representatives for the Sand Creek Church, four for the Liberty Church, and one each for the Ash Grove Church, the Union Church, and the Mode Church. An addendum stated, “Elder Colson of Gays, and Elder Hoke of Strickland congregations signed, but as individuals only, because the congregations whence they came, had not been called together so as to send them formally. Green Creek congregation, by a letter from Bro. Jesse Baker, endorsed the movement.”

The “Address and Declaration” began with a statement of the original ideals of the disciples in the restoration movement. It pointed out that peace and harmony prevailed so long as these ideals were treasured. It then called attention to some painful facts and considerations made necessary because “there are those among us who teach and practice things not taught nor found in the New Testament.”

Some of the things of which we hereby complain, and against which we protest, are the unlawful methods resorted to in order to raise or get money for religious purposes, namely, that of the church holding festivals of various kinds, in the house of the Lord or elsewhere, demanding sometimes that each participant shall pay a certain sum as an admittance fee; the select choir to the virtual, if not the real, abandonment of congregational singing; likewise the man-made society for missionary work, and the one man imported preacher-pastor to take the oversight of the church. These with many other objectionable and unauthorized things are now taught and practiced in many of the congregations, and that to the great grief and mortification of some of the members of said congregations.

It is interesting to note that the question of instrumental music is not specifically mentioned in the document although it may have been referred to as part of the “many other objectionable and unauthorized things.” The aim and intent of the action is specified in the final paragraph.

It is, therefore, with the view, if possible, of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the churches, that this effort on the part of the congregations hereafter named is made, and now, in closing up this address and declaration, we state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all that are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished, and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren.

After Daniel Sommer purchased the *American Christian Review* he changed its name to *Octographic Review*, and true to his promise he published the “Address and Declaration” in that paper, with added observations of his own. He pointed out that

there had long been discussions about “the question of drawing a line of demarkation between the churches of Christ and our innovating brethren.” The matter had even been agitated in columns of the *Review* ten years before “but it was then thought by the brethren generally that some other solution than a formal division could be reached.” He charged the innovating disciples with being “the dividers of the brotherhood” and declared, “They have abandoned our original position and have gone out from us because they were not of us.” However, he wrote, “Let it be distinctly understood that we have from the first agitation on this subject been numbered with those who earnestly endeavored to find some other solution of the problem than a formal separation.” The editorial concluded in this fashion:

If this sentence of an inspired apostle be adopted throughout the brotherhood, then the time will come that our ‘Modern School Brethren’ will have fixed upon them the odium of having by division disgraced the best cause on earth and having thereby become a party among parties, a sect among sects, a denomination among denominations. In the meantime the loyal disciples will become more firmly than ever established in their original principle in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, and endeavoring to establish everywhere the Kingdom of Christ as it was in the beginning. Amen.

The year prior to the one in which Peter P. Warren wrote the “Address and Declaration” was the one in which David Lipscomb, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* first presented his thesis on “Civil Government” in the *Christian Quarterly Review*. Having gone through the tragic period of “Reconstruction” following the Civil War, Lipscomb reached the conclusion that all civil government originated with and belonged to Satan and that a Christian could not hold office or even vote at the polls. This view was not generally acceptable in the North and there was a considerable amount of feeling engendered over it and other issues. But David Lipscomb endorsed the “Sand Creek Declaration” and gave his commendation to its authors.

Personal Observations

Later on in our investigation we will detail the series of events which led to the Sand Creek church trial, for we cannot ignore this and correctly portray the rise of factionalism. Before doing this, however, it seems appropriate to make some personal observations relative to the “Address and Declaration.” Two years after the Supreme Court of Illinois rendered the decision referred to at the outset of this article, I was born in a rude two-room miner’s shack in the Missouri Lead Belt. At the time my parents knew nothing of the restoration movement. My father was a skeptic, my mother a devout Lutheran with spiritual roots running back to Denmark. My father had finished the third McGuffey’s Reader, my mother could not read or write English.

By a chain of circumstances not necessary to detail at this juncture, my father heard and became convicted of the plea of the churches of Christ, and when I was five years old I saw him immersed into our Lord. Although my mother continued in the Lutheran communion until two years after I began preaching the gospel, a profound change came over our family life. The first preachers whom I ever recall seeing were Daniel Sommer and his son, D. Austen Sommer. With an insatiable hunger for knowledge I lay flat of my stomach on the grass for hours, listening as my elders talked while sitting on hickory splint bottom chairs under a shade tree in the yard.

Between the date when the Sand Creek Declaration was read and the time of my birth, all had not been harmonious among the forces opposing innovations. Contrary to expectations “the loyal disciples” had not “become more firmly established in their original principles in contending for the faith.” After having said that the most fatal mistake Alexander Campbell made “was the establishment of a school to train and educate young preachers,” David Lipscomb himself helped inaugurate the Nashville Bible School. Other schools sprang up, among them “Western Bible and Literary College,” at Odessa,

Missouri. Daniel Sommer regarded these as “human institutions to do the work of the church,” and in the same category as other societies.

Daniel Sommer testified at length in the court case involving Sand Creek and received with much satisfaction the judgment of the Supreme Court of Illinois, on February 21, 1906. Less than a year later, on the afternoon of February 18, 1907, he began a debate with B. F. Rhodes at Odessa, Missouri, on the question of “the Biblical right to establish an institution of learning which is chiefly secular, in order to furnish an occasion to teach pupils in the Bible.” In 1908 he published a written “Discussion on the Bible School” with J. N. Armstrong. Thus, when I first became aware of the restoration movement I learned to regard it as an attempt to hold the fort against “Old Digressives” and “New Digressives” as the advocates of colleges were designated.

Long before I knew anything about the “Declaration and Address” prepared by Thomas Campbell I was conversant with the “Address and Declaration” written by Peter P. Warren. In my childish mind I conceived of the church of God as having had a perfect and unbroken existence until the introduction of missionary societies and instrumental music. Then the Sand Creek document was conceived in the hearts of true and staunch defenders of the faith and proved to be the thing which salvaged truth from the rude hands of an implacable foe, restoring order out of chaos. That the cause had again been betrayed by a “southern element” was regrettable but not wholly unexpected from those in secessionist states. I grew up under the impression that there were few, if any, “loyal churches” south of the Mason and Dixon’s Line. Most of their members did not even read the *Review*.

Now, from more mature years and judgment, I would like to re-examine the decisions made at Sand Creek in 1889. I do this in full recognition of the price that must be paid by any

person who questions the traditions of his fathers. I am aware of the fact that one must bear the stigma of “traitor” or “heretic” who dares to challenge the partisan concepts of his associates. But I am committed to an honest search for truth regardless of personal consequences. I cannot live with myself nor be prepared to meet my Lord if I compromise my conviction in a matter so important as this. I have resolved that I will shield no part of my thinking from examination and that I will accept nothing simply because it has been taught by men in the past. My faith must stand, if it stands at all, “in the power of God and not in the wisdom of men.”

In my analysis of the rise of factionalism I have come to believe that the philosophy embodied in the Sand Creek Declaration laid the foundation for the subsequent disintegration of the restoration movement. I am not especially concerned with the principals involved except as they were agents to give expression to a general feeling. Neither am I primarily concerned with the document except as it voiced the ideas held by so many. My review is not to be construed as an attack upon either the persons involved or the declaration they made. It is intended to be a searching study into the motivations and implications of thought which crystallized in the address.

For that matter, the document could well have been produced at numerous other places in 1889. The discussion of how to handle the rise of innovationism was rife in the land. In mass meetings held at Moberly and Richmond, Missouri, calls were made for just such a written expression “drawing a line of demarkation.” I do not impugn the motives nor question the sincerity of those who signed the document. Far from this, I am certain they did what they believed was best for the cause of Christ out of a deep love for the church of God.

In spite of the devotion of the author and signers the document was the product of fallible men. It originated in the thinking of men and Daniel Sommer referred to it as “the

sentiments of the brethren who assembled at Sand Creek.” No document of human origin must ever become so sacred that to question it is regarded as sacrilege. We must never confuse “the traditions of the elders” with “the law of God.” No human production can ever be elevated to a sacred status without a simultaneous loss of respect for the revelation from heaven. There are those among our contemporaries who deeply resent our current research. They are fearful of the consequences. They would prefer to maintain the status quo even though it involves accepting division than to examine with open minds the factors which produced the tragic condition. Present error has a greater lure than newly-discovered truth.

Points of Clarification

In our review of the Sand Creek Declaration there is no attempt to condone those things which it condemned. We do not deny that they were innovations and it is evident that they were without scriptural warrant. But there is a difference between those things and *the division* which resulted from agitation of them. The factional spirit is sinful. The party spirit is a work of the flesh. To oppose evil from a factional standpoint is as wrong as to uphold evil from any standpoint. It is not opposition to evil but the factional spirit which is wrong. It is subversive of the divine government to create a party to oppose wrong. This is a species of doing evil with the hope that good may come.

It is our opinion based upon research into the factors leading to the adoption of the policy of attempting to preserve purity by division, and upon observation of the consequences resulting from application of that policy, that it is factional in nature and essence. It is our further opinion that this policy pursued regularly as a course of action can only culminate in more divisions, and ultimately will counteract and destroy any real spiritual gains made by those who adopt it. We hold the view that this philosophy is without sanction in the sacred

scriptures, that it is contrary to the examples given of the primitive *ekklesia*, and it is in contravention of the purpose of God. It originates in human wisdom prompted by fear. It proposes to maintain what has been gained by regimentation of thought.

There is little to be gained in any final analysis if, in an attempt to keep innovations from destroying the church of God, we adopt those methods which will eventually achieve the same end. If “the church” is destroyed in our generation it matters little whether it is done by those who profess to be “faithful” or by those whom they denounce as “unfaithful.” A man is just as dead if shot by a faithful wife as by one who is unfaithful. The restoration movement today is splintered into more than two dozen antagonistic parties. These have been created by application of the philosophy that was adopted by our fathers three-quarters of a century ago. Since the cleavage resulting from introduction of the instrument, those opposed to its use have averaged four partisan divisions for every decade of their separate existence.

This is not all. Other divisions must follow in the future. Every time a truth is discovered, every time honest investigation forces a change of mind, there will be another division. This philosophy bars the door to further scriptural research, makes real unbiased study a crime, and places a premium on mediocrity. It throws a dam across the channel of thought, freezes the acquisition of knowledge, and constitutes an unwritten creed. It makes blind conformity a blessing and enthrones orthodoxy as the ideal. If a system, like a tree, is known by its fruits, we should eliminate this one immediately.

Let us not indulge precious time or waste our efforts in an attempt to establish guilt for what occurred three-quarters of a century in the past. Our brethren were faced with grave and serious problems. They were frightened by an oncoming wave of innovations which would destroy all they held sacred. They had

to make a decision as to the best means to withstand the onslaught. Perhaps the choice was exactly the one we would have made at the time and under the circumstances. We have the privilege of looking backward upon the outworking of their method. We can admit all the good that was done through it without perpetuating it if conditions have altered. Radium treatments may be administered to a cancer patient at one stage of his illness but if continued indefinitely may become as harmful as the disease.

I do not regard the Sand Creek Declaration as I once did. I no longer think of it as an embodiment of those means which will provide the proper answer to every situation which confronts us when men advocate things we cannot endorse. It is not a panacea for all of our spiritual ills. Indeed I think it contains within it the seed which, when ripened, may prove as destructive as the innovations it proposed to thwart. The spirit which is entombed within it will force every generation to declare non-fellowship with every preceding one. Under the influence of this thinking no congregation of fifty years ago would be recognized by present day congregations if it taught exactly as it did then, and none existing today will be regarded as faithful fifty years hence. It is doubtful if David Lipscomb or Daniel Sommer would be allowed to speak now in most of the congregations they planted. In view of these statements allow me to make some observations about the address written by Peter P. Warren.

A Critical Examination

1. The Sand Creek meeting at which the document was signed was essentially a delegate convention. True there were a great many others in attendance but the signers had been formally sent as representatives or delegates of their respective congregations. The congregations had assembled and authorized them to sign in their behalf. It is specifically stated that “the

brethren whose names stand alone in signing the document represented the churches from which they came.” Of two others it is said they “signed, but as individuals only, because the congregations whence they came, had not been called together so as to send them formally.”

Every one of the signers would have opposed a delegate convention to determine policy and did oppose the convention which met in Cincinnati and inaugurated the missionary society. Yet they met at Sand Creek as congregational delegates and entered into a coalition, adopting and signing a document which was intended to serve as a policy making instrument in dealing with brethren who were not even present or represented. The editor of *Octographic Review* wrote, “We endorse the foregoing document *as adopted and signed* at the Sand Creek meeting.” All such meetings are divisive in their outworkings.

2. The Sand Creek Declaration sounded the death knell for the autonomy of the local congregation. Its very purpose was to reach out and discipline, even to the point of excommunication, those not affiliated with the congregations from which the delegates were sent. It was an ultimatum, adopted and published, which intended to transfer into the hands of certain ones the right to determine when others at a distance and not even in their congregations should no longer be regarded as brethren.

The editor of the *Octographic Review* wrote, “It does not propose to disfellowship any till they have been admonished and refuse to turn from their waywardness.” This is a clear admission that it did propose to “disfellowship” certain ones and it placed the judgment as to when to take such action in the hands of those not even remotely connected with the congregations in which some of the “guilty” ones were members. Out of this kind of reasoning grew the idea that one congregation could “disfellowship” another congregation and that the elders of one church could pronounce the sentence of

“spiritual death” upon another congregation over which they held not the slightest degree of jurisdiction. Nothing more unscriptural was ever conceived by the minds of partisan men.

It is astounding that men would meet to deal with those who “teach and practice things not taught nor found in the New Testament” and depart so far from both the letter and spirit of the new covenant scriptures. Certainly this declaration was an innovation for which no one could produce a “thus saith the Lord.” Eventually, as it always happens, the power of decision became invested in the editor of the official organ and all nonconformists were cut off without trial or appeal. All that was required to drive one forth from the party was a censure by the editor. The unfortunate victim had no recourse. He could not publish a reply to be read before those who had read the censure. The “loyal churches” did not dare call upon him or recognize him. He was given the “deep freeze” treatment by even his former friends. Branded a “traitor, heretic and apostate,” he either gave in, gave out, or gave up!

It is appropriate to remark that the Sand Creek Address and Declaration differed from the Declaration and Address written by Thomas Campbell. The purpose of the document written by Campbell was to unite the Christians in all the sects; the purpose of the document written by Peter P. Warren was to call for division among disciples. One was written to remove barriers between brethren, the other to draw a line of demarkation between them. One marked the beginning of war against the sectarian spirit, the other marked the start of a conflict which would be waged in that spirit.

A Partisan Foundation

3. Another feature must not be overlooked. The Sand Creek Declaration laid the foundation of brotherhood based upon conformity in matters of opinion, interpretation and

congregational practice. Let me not be misunderstood at this juncture. Such conformity is an ideal for which to strive. Nothing less can be the goal of all who are sincerely interested in restoration of a primitive order. But there is as much difference between the basis of entering family relationship and the aims and ambitions of a family as there is between the basis of acquiring citizenship and national ideals of the citizens in the aggregate.

Regardless of all partisan appeals and propaganda to the contrary brotherhood is the result of common fatherhood. "Now the one who sanctifies and those whom he sanctifies both have the same Father, and thus he is not ashamed to call them his brothers" (Heb. 2:11). We are not unaware that a strain may be put on family ties. We do not doubt that the wilful and deliberate advocacy of certain things over the protest of humble brethren in 1889 presented a difficult situation. We do not question the decision as to how to meet the problem. We do not deny that if we had been present we would probably have agreed to the action. We freely admit that for years we implemented the decision in our own conduct toward others, but this does not make it right. We believe that even though we acted sincerely we worked against the interest of peace and unity.

The policy of those opposed to innovations as stated at Sand Creek was that when those who were "guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions" had been admonished and given sufficient time for reflection, "if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren." This is the equivalent of declaring that at a certain time to be determined by human judgment those who did not conform to the written ultimatum would be disinherited from the family of God and no longer recognized as His children. To those who protest that this is a forced interpretation it only needs to be pointed out that one would certainly regard as his brothers all who were children of the same father as himself. The statement,

“We will not regard them as brethren” is equivalent to saying, “We will not regard them as God’s children.”

We know that defenders of our traditional position declare that the cause of Christ was saved by the forthright action of our fathers in the dying decades of the nineteenth century. They believe that the drastic steps taken then preserved “the faithful brotherhood.” But an unbiased investigation will show that we now have as many “brotherhoods” as we have factions. One who reads the reports in partisan journals will soon learn that “News of the Brotherhood” contains reports only from the limited number who conform to the partisan concepts of the editor. One who learns better is hounded from “the brotherhood” although he is generally received with open arms as a *convert* into another “brotherhood.” This is the natural fruit borne by the philosophy adopted by Daniel Sommer and David Lipscomb, which, because of their influence became the official and orthodox policy of the “The Church of Christ.” Stripped bare of all extraneous matters it is a philosophy of brotherhood based on conformity of opinion, a relationship that is extended only until others deem that one has had “sufficient time for reflection.” It is brotherhood based on the calendar— or clock!

Our problem is augmented because this philosophy sees only two alternatives. It is either accept the innovations which become the pets of men, or no longer regard such men as brethren while they hug their pets to their bosoms. But this is an incorrect assumption. There is another alternative. One may continue to regard men as his brothers while steadfastly refusing to condone or sanction what his heart cannot regard as right or proper. We believe this is the scriptural course. Certainly the first is untenable for we cannot expect that men will endorse that which they believe to be wrong. We think that the second has proven itself to be injudicious and unworkable for it has left a sordid trail of division and has brought the restoration movement itself into disrepute. The first is based on compromise, the second on dogmatism, but the third is the way

of love and thus the only way of genuine brotherhood!

4. We believe that our approach to the problem of securing and maintaining purity in doctrine has been factional in nature. This will be denied by hundreds and thousands who have so long defended that policy it will be difficult for them to ever admit they were in error. But the advocacy of any system which proposes to divide God's people into various camps, cliques, splinters and segments, is certainly factional in its out-working. The truth is that God has not offered division among brethren as a possible solution to problems facing those brethren. The Sand Creek Declaration was written for the specific purpose of recommending separation of a formal nature. The very language used to justify it proves what we allege. Referring to attitudes ten years preceding it is said, "It was then thought by the brethren generally that some other solution than a formal division could be reached." Again it is said, "We have from the first agitation of this subject . . . endeavored to find some other solution than a formal separation."

The context of these remarks proves that the document was an attempted solution by "formal division" or "formal separation." This could mean nothing other than that from this time on the brethren who had labored and worshiped together would be divided and separated from each other. Now if formal division or separation is authorized by the Father as a means of settling problems in His family the document was justified. But a careful examination of the scriptures will reveal that it is not so. Jude, in his condemnation of those who "walk after their own ungodly lusts" writes: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (verse 19). The RSV translates the passage, "It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit."

Formal division must always create at least two parties of those who have been one. In the type of case before us these will be rival parties. Yet Galatians 5:19, 20 affirms, "Now the deeds

of the flesh are quite obvious, such as . . . dissension, jealousy, temper, rivalry, factions, party-spirit . . . and the like” (James Moffatt). “Anyone can see the kind of behavior that belongs to the lower nature . . . quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, jealousies . . . and the like” (New English Bible). Few of us would dare deny that those on both sides of the feuds in the previous century were affected by one or more of these works of the flesh. Jesus Christ has nowhere authorized his disciples to formally separate from each other. He has repeatedly urged them to attain unto harmony. “Fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity. Rivalry and personal vanity should have no place among you” (Phil. 2:2, 3).

To those who live in congregations which tolerate false teaching, there is not one single admonition to divide or separate and create rival parties in the same community. Instead Jesus says, “Those who do not accept this teaching and have had no experience of what they like to call the deep secrets of Satan; on you I will impose no further burden. Only hold fast to what you have until I come. To him who is victorious, to him who perseveres in doing my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations” (Rev. 3:24-26). To those who are in a congregation that is pronounced dead, and one which has never completed a single thing it started out to do, there is not a hint of division or separation. Instead the few who are worthy and deserving are promised that He will receive them (Rev. 3:3, 4). To a congregation that has divided although they still meet in the same location, the admonition was not to continue in formal separation, but to cease it. “Mend your ways, take our appeal to heart, agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

Opposing Considerations

Against this reasoning, those who are advocates of the factional approach to purity of doctrine, urge the words of Jesus, “You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a young wife against her mother-in-law, and a man will find his enemies under his own roof” (Matt. 10:34-36). If this means that Jesus came to create division among the believers, and to urge brethren to set each other at nought, then his mission is wholly irreconcilable with his work and sayings. Whatever is involved in bringing a sword it refers to his mission to the earth. It was what he came to do.

In Matthew 7:9-11 the heavenly Father is favorably contrasted with physical fathers. “If you, then, bad as you are, know how to give your children what is good for them, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him!” It is inconceivable to me that a father while sitting at the table with his children would hand one of them a dagger or sword and encourage him to slay the others. On the night of his betrayal Jesus prayed that the believers might be one in him so the world would believe that God had sent him. Surely he would not come for the express purpose of setting them against each other. Three times in one week after his resurrection he appeared to the disciples with the greeting, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19, 21, 26). Does this not indicate that he came to bring peace to the disciples?

What did Jesus mean by the statement, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword . . . and a man will find his enemies under his own roof.” The context shows that this was a part of his instructions to the twelve when he commissioned them to go to Jewish towns and villages with the announcement, “The reign of heaven is approaching.” They were told, “Be on your guard, for men will hand you over to the courts, they will flog you in the synagogues, and you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, to testify before them and the heathen” (Matt.

10:17, 18). The intensity of the animosity is shown by the fact that “Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child, children will turn against their parents and send them to their death. All will hate you for your allegiance to me; but the man who holds out to the end will be saved” (verses 21, 22).

It is in this connection Jesus declares he did not come to bring peace to the earth. The nature of the message is such that it transcends all earthly ties and considerations. But the sword is not to be used by one brother in Christ against another such brother. Brethren are not to settle their differences as enemies under the same roof. The parting gift of Jesus to the disciples was not a sword with which to chop his body to bits. “Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears” (John 14:27). Jesus did not shed his blood that his followers should hack each other to pieces over individual cups, fermented wine, colleges and Bible classes!

Again, those who defend the factional approach as a solution to problems, quote James 3:17. “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.” In their interpretation, purity is made to refer to doctrinal matters and is actually conformity to the norm of the party. The degree of purity which one possesses is determined by the intensity with which he opposes missionary societies, instrumental music, Bible classes, individual cups, unfermented wine, or other things of a controversial nature. Thus the standard for measuring purity differs with each faction. What is pure to one may be impure for another. I recall that in one factional dispute some years ago between brothers in the Lord and in the flesh this passage was constantly quoted to justify separation and division. While all of us should strive to know God’s will and grow in grace and knowledge of the truth, I doubt that James has in mind any justification of the factional attitude. It may be interesting for you to read the comment which Albert Barnes makes on the passage.

It is true that a church should be pure in doctrinal belief, but that is not the truth taught here. It is not true that the scripture teaches, here or elsewhere, that purity of doctrine is to be preferred to a peaceful spirit; or that it always leads to a peaceful spirit; or that it is proper for professed Christians and Christian ministers to sacrifice, as is so often done, a peaceful spirit, in an attempt to preserve purity of doctrine. Most of the persecutions in the church have grown out of this maxim. This led to the establishment of the Inquisition, this kindled the fires of Smithfield; this inspired Laud and his friends; this has been the origin of no small part of the schisms in the church. A pure spirit is the best promoter of peace, and will do more than anything else to secure the prevalence of truth.

Does not this passage imply that the first step toward real Christian character is a pure, or sincere heart? In the same context James contrasts the wisdom that is earthly and declares that it is the motivating factor in those who have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition *in your hearts* (verse 14). In verse 16 he says, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.” Then he continues, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity.” Do not all of these proceed from pure hearts that are purged of “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition”? Surely every congregation should be as pure in doctrine as possible and they need to make those alterations and changes which will help them to attain to greater purity, but to quote this verse as grounds for division among believers in Jesus seems to me to do a grave injustice to the sacred scriptures. We ought not to forget that the very next verse reads, “And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” But even God could not write a law which was a safeguard against the spirit of factionalism.

My Personal Position

In the next issue I shall deal with the partisan tactics exhibited by those who introduced the “innovations” against which the Sand Creek Declaration was directed. The leaders forsook all semblance of brotherly love and deliberately sought by the arm of the civil law to take the property long held by those whose consciences forbade their sanction and adoption of certain things. This crystallized community and family feeling and doomed the restoration movement to an incessant civil war carried on by snipers and guerillas until this very generation. It was an ill-advised move taken by those who proved beyond doubt that “the party spirit” is indeed a “work of the flesh.”

I am committed to the task of pleading for unity among the believers. I am convinced this can only be achieved by a restoration of the primitive order. This prompts me to oppose anything, in tendency or in fact, which will delay such restoration. I do not plead for unity regardless of restoration nor for restoration irrespective of unity. My plea is for unity based upon restoration of apostolic order and principle. This includes a restoration of the apostolic concept of brotherhood. It follows that I am not only opposed to those things which will obstruct restoration but I am also opposed to those *methods* which will destroy any hope of unity.

While I deplore the introduction of any innovation which seriously affects an attempt to restore the primitive order, I also decry any system devised to oppose such innovations which will forever banish the hope of securing unity in Christ Jesus. Those congregations representing the various divergent segments which call themselves “The Church of Christ” have adopted a philosophy of attempting to maintain doctrinal purity by separation, that is, by fractionalizing and factionalizing the previously existing brotherhood. They have developed an unwritten creed of dogmatism. It is based on a theory of disciplinary action which may be designated *ex familia*, out of the

family.

This method was contrived to meet the problems posed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Its application has now effectively reduced a glorious movement started to unite “the Christians in all sects” into the most divided religious movement on the American scene. I revere the memory of men like Daniel Sommer and David Lipscomb, leaders in the north and south, but they overstepped their human limitations when they proposed to un-Christianize and depose from God’s family those who disagreed with them. Only the Father has a right to tell who should be regarded as brethren.

I want it known that I love God and I love every word in the sacred oracles. But I renounce the traditional twentieth century “Church of Christ” factionalism as a means for achieving God’s purpose in this age. I shall continue to oppose everything that I believe to be out of harmony with God’s plan but I shall not allow these things to interfere with my love or regard for any of my brothers who sincerely and conscientiously disagree with me about the implementation of that plan. In short, I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. I shall not seek to establish brotherhood by definition of a human document, nor by conformity in matters of opinion. I shall be a brother to all who have been begotten by my Father. Brotherhood based upon fatherhood, fraternity based upon paternity, this shall be my standard because it is scriptural. I will free myself from all partisan traditions, schemes and ideas which men have adopted to offset unity of the Spirit. I intend to be a free man in Christ, bound only by His word. “You are bought with a price, do not become slaves of men” (1 Cor. 7:23).

The unity of the Spirit is one of community, not conformity; of diversity, not uniformity. It is rooted in mutual love, not dogmatism; in freedom, not in slavery. Our peace is a person, not a plan or a program!

Basis of Authority

Mission Messenger (February 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

It would appear from articles in partisan journals and from radio addresses on partisan programs that members of “The Church of Christ” feel that the real strength of their appeal in this generation lies in their emphasis on the authority of the revelation of God and its implementation in their practice and conduct. A realistic appraisal of our condition will reveal a great gulf between the facade presented to the world and the actual state of affairs among ourselves. If the new covenant scriptures, as a sole rule of faith and practice, constitute a proper foundation for unity, members of “The Church of Christ” should be of all people the most united. Instead, they constitute the most divided religious movement on the contemporary American scene. There are more than two dozen distinct factions in the non-instrument group alone.

It borders upon hypocrisy for “front men” and publicity agents of these groups to go before the world with an appeal for all to unite upon the authority of the scriptures when they are in constant turmoil and confusion among themselves over the implications of God’s Word. There are more public debates in the United States each year between members of the various “Churches of Christ” than all the rest of the religious world put together. They have not only divided in the past but their philosophy will continue to divide them in the future. This sad state is an open demonstration of what happens to those who

proclaim one thing and practice a wholly different one.

Our brethren are sincere in their contention that the word of God is our only source of authority but they cannot distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what God has said. Interpretation is what men think he meant by what he said. Revelation is divine. It is the disclosure of the infinite mind. Interpretation is the application of the human mind in an attempt to fathom the divine disclosure. We are bound to recognize revelation as our source of authority because of our relationship to God.

We are not bound to recognize the interpretation of any man as authoritative to us unless it commends itself as truth to our own mind and conscience. We are not to be judged by any man in that realm because in it no man is master of another.

We are not at all divided over what constitutes authority. All of us acknowledge that “God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of every individual man” (1 Cor. 11:3). It is only when some seek to exercise lordship over others that difficulty arises. Practically every division among us has occurred when men placed a certain interpretation upon some portion of revelation, then substituted it for the revelation and sought to bind it as the will of God. Separation comes as the result of interpretation, not revelation. Every party among us has access to the divine revelation. Each one of them contends fiercely that it is following that revelation. Actually, each faction thinks it has *an infallible interpretation* and all must kneel to it. This amounts to making our faith stand in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God.

There is little difference in essence between “the infallible interpreter” of the Church of Rome and “the infallible interpretations” in “The Churches of Christ.” The first does make for a united front, whereas the second creates and then multiplies divisions. Both are dogmatic and authoritarian. Both

make their traditions as binding as God's revelation. Both are instruments to produce conformity by threats of damnation to those who resist. Both employ the carnal weapons of thought-control, censorship, boycott and excommunication for divergent opinion. Both exercise power over the masses by a top-level dictatorship which stifles original thinking and makes the members mere pawns in the frightful game of political factional feuds.

We must do nothing to undermine faith in God's revelation as our basis of authority. That revelation must be our final court of appeal. As such, it must be magnified and elevated as the communication of God. At the same time we must recapture and re-affirm the right of every child of God to hear the voice of God speaking to him and not through an interpreter. Each must be allowed to approach that revelation for himself free from coercion exercised by any other human being. We will be judged in the last day as individuals, not as groups or congregations.

The understanding is a natural faculty. It can never be made the subject of any command except as that command is itself a reason adapted to satisfy and persuade it. To build up a congregation of "loyal brethren" kept in line by fear of reprisal or by force is to create a congregation of hypocrites. The only truly "faithful church" is one composed of those who are free men and who associate with each other in a congregational capacity because of their mutual love for Jesus our Lord. They are drawn together by him, not driven together through fear. The plea for recognition of the authority of divine revelation is good and wholesome. It needs to be heard in every corner of our land. The practice of substituting partisan interpretation for revelation is evil. It needs to be banished forever from our lives. No man can be trusted to judge for all others, not even an editor, but every man may be trusted to judge for himself. This is the divine order and we disregard it at our peril. Truth is the heritage of free men. It is not as we conform to party norms that

we either discover or defend truth, but rather is it in the free exchange of thought. Differences should be stepping-stones not stumbling-stones.

Every factional leader on earth, driven by aspiration for control of others, has a Messiah-complex and indulges in “playing God.” Men who wonder what will happen to the cause of Christ when they die, and who predict its departure upon their demise, end up by being tyrants while they live regardless of good intentions or high motivations. In 1800 Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” With this as our motto we can truly assert the authority of divine revelation free from the domination of partisan spirit.

Brothers at Law

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

The shady grove surrounding “the brick church” as the place was familiarly called, was filled with wagons and buggies. The teams had been unhitched and the horses were now tied by one of the reins to the rear wheels from which position it was possible for them to eat the hay thrown down in the back of the vehicles. The owners had made preparation for a lengthy stay. This Saturday, August 14, 1889, was to be a memorable one at Sand Creek. Fifty-five years the congregation had met in this vicinity, first in a log house, then in a frame house, on land belonging to Tobias Grider. But in July, 1874 James Turrentine and his wife Sarah deeded the present site to “The Trustees of the Christian Church of Sand Creek” and the brick meetinghouse costing thirteen hundred dollars had been erected.

Great changes had taken place in many of the congregations of the reformation in Illinois since John Storm and Bushrod Henry had banded the first little group of disciples together at Sand Creek in 1834. The latter had migrated from Virginia in November, 1830, to begin preaching in Shelbyville. In July, 1831, he started a congregation with nine members in that county seat and by 1834 it had grown to seventy souls. In 1832 he set forth the principles of the restoration in Walker’s settlement, and started a congregation of seven members. In two years the local Presbyterian party disbanded and all of its constituents joined the restoration movement. The tide was

running high when the effort was launched in the Sand Creek community and a new log meetinghouse was erected.

But the past half century had seen the introduction of a number of innovations. Since the missionary society had been organized at Cincinnati in 1849 there seemed a general disposition to borrow various items made popular by the sectarian world. The practice of hiring a pastor had become prevalent in city congregations, some of which resorted to various commercial schemes to raise money and even went so far as to bring instruments of music into the public worship. The congregations at Shelbyville and Windsor now had organs. They had taken their stand with the "Progressives" or "Digressives" as their opponents referred to them. But the church at Sand Creek did not waver. The brethren "pursued the even tenor of their way." They were content to remain among the "Antis" as those were dubbed who had more conservative tastes in matters religious.

The leaders viewed with alarm the encroachment of modern methods. The question of what to do in the growing emergency formed the topic of many Sunday afternoon conferences between themselves and the brethren from Liberty congregation, another rural outpost but a few miles away. They consulted with Daniel Sommer, who lived in Indianapolis, and it was decided that a line must be drawn against the "digressive element." It was suggested that such action could be dramatized if a public declaration was issued and representatives from concurring congregations signed it in the presence of the audience. Daniel Sommer pointed out that the Restoration movement began with the "Declaration and Address" read by Thomas Campbell; now it would be saved by an "Address and Declaration" read at Sand Creek.

It was decided that the annual August meeting would provide an unparalleled opportunity to take a stand. Visits were made to Ash Grove, Union, Mode, Green Creek, Gays and

Strickland. The leaders of all these places agreed that something must be done and done quickly. Members were already going to Shelbyville and Windsor and taking up with "the foolishness of the Digressives." All agreed that Peter P. Warren was the one to write and read the statement. This aged man had preached in all of these localities. He was respected by all who revered "the old paths." Announcement was made in all of the congregations through the area that a showdown was imminent and that action of a definite nature would be taken at the August meeting at Sand Creek. There was a prospect of "fire works" if some of the Progressives from town were present but Daniel Sommer would be there to keep the situation under control.

And now the great day had dawned. Those who had been designated as representatives by their congregations felt a sense of destiny as they hooked the teams to their wagons. They were going to take a step which ought to have been taken long ago. It was time to mark off the list of faithful brethren those who persisted in having their way regardless of what scripture taught. These delegates had already seen the draft of the address written by Peter P. Warren. As they drove along the dusty roads there came back to mind the statement, "If they do not turn away from such abominations, we can not and will not regard them as brethren." Yes, it would truly be a wonderful occasion for the people of God. It would mark the date of formal separation from the "Modern Schoolmen," as Brother Sommer designated the "innovating disciples."

Daniel Sommer faced the large audience. There were few of them that he had not met. They had driven long distances to hear him in the past. He was the recognized defender of orthodoxy and his position was the more glamorous now that he was editor of the paper which Benjamin Franklin had started and which he employed with such vigor to battle every tendency at departure from the scriptural pattern. On this day Daniel Sommer was in his physical prime. He took great pride in stopping by the blacksmith shop and lifting with one hand a

piece of iron which taxed most men to lift with both hands. His deep voice carried without a break or quaver to the remote limits of the crowd. His subject was "Innovations in the Church" and he was thoroughly conversant with the material. He left no doubt in the minds of the hearers that "there is no law human or divine, which innovators hold themselves bound to respect in dealing with those who oppose their devices." He knew of but one scriptural solution— formal division!

Peter P. Warren arose in dignity and read the address. "It is, therefore, with the view, if possible of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the churches, that this effort on the part of the congregations hereafter named is made." When he finished reading, he laid the manuscript on the table which would be set the next day with the fruit of the vine and the one bread which symbolized the one body. He signed the document, and then the other Sand Creek delegates, led by A. J. Nance, came forward and affixed their signatures. Four representatives from Liberty followed. After them in succession came the delegates from the other congregations. At last division had been recognized and given official status. From henceforth brotherhood would be determined by a willingness to oppose certain things. The "Antis" were committed to a program of brotherhood by counteraction.

At first the address made little difference. The "Progressives" in Shelbyville and Windsor continued their activities as usual. Visiting preachers coming in hurled the customary blasts at "reactionaries and obstructionists" as they called the "Antis." In private they passed around a cartoon which depicted David Lipscomb of Nashville, Tennessee, as an old woman with a broom trying to sweep back the waves of the ocean of "progress." It was freely predicted that the Restoration movement would again be united on a more liberal basis when a few "old fogies" in country churches died off. Unity would come more quickly by "funerals" than by fighting. The missionary society would convert the world to Jesus and usher in a virtual

millennium. Such documents as the "Sand Creek Address" were temporary irritations that had to be endured by a progressive movement.

At Sand Creek and Liberty no difference was noted. There was always a relapse after the excitement attendant upon the "big meeting" in August. The farmers were working early and late getting in their fall crops. When they gathered on Sunday farming conditions made up the chief topic of conversation before and after services. No reference was ever made publicly to the address. When someone came forward during the "invitation song" he was merely asked, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God?" No one was ever asked about his position on innovations as a requisite to baptism. Gradually, everything settled back to its normal state with the preachers publicly denouncing the innovations, and the membership talking mostly about corn and alfalfa. Only in the homes of the leaders where visiting preachers stayed was there animated talk about "developments." Gradually, the subject of the organ was supplanted by discussion of the founding of Nashville Bible School by David Lipscomb. A "new digression" had started among those opposed to instrumental music and it had now stolen the limelight. The last decade of the fading nineteenth century passed slowly into history.

Almost at the threshold of the new century a series of events took place which were to kindle the fires of the party spirit seven times hotter than they had ever burned before. This time it was the "Progressives" who took the initiative and demonstrated that the implications of the Sand Creek address had been rankling in their hearts for years. Under ill-advised leadership there began a movement to try and take by litigation the property held by those who opposed the innovations. This was to be done on the basis of a technicality. In the inception of the Restoration in Illinois and Missouri no distinctive title was applied to the disciple brotherhood. The condition is best illustrated by this brief prepared by Daniel Sommer for the

Sand Creek church.

As far as the name of the church is concerned, we say that all the proof shows that from the beginning of the Reformation of the 19th century, the church has always been known by the names Christian Church, Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ. Any congregation in the brotherhood might adopt either of these names, or any other scriptural name as the 'Church of the First-born,' the 'Church of God,' and thereby take a name approved of by the brotherhood. All of these names were used as synonyms, interchangeably, and meaning the same thing.

The term "Christian Church" had been the most popular one among the members and the people of the community as well. The property was therefore deeded to "the trustees of the Christian Church." This was the name most frequently found above the doors of the church buildings or engraved upon their cornerstones. When "the line of demarkation" was drawn by the Sand Creek address those who opposed the innovations sought to distinguish their party from the others. Gradually they began to adopt as a title "Church of Christ" and to apply the term "Christian Church" to those who used instrumental music. The community knowing little of the reasons for the change still spoke of them all as "The Christian Church."

Those who favored the innovations in various communities were urged to organize as "The Christian Church" and sue for the property held by the "Antis" on the basis that they no longer constituted the "Christian Church" but were a new party formed by secession and created by adoption of the Sand Creek Declaration in 1889. History reveals that such suits were hardly ever entered until local, trivial and unrelated matters prompted personal feeling, but once such litigation was in progress the prominent preachers on both sides flocked to the spot to qualify as expert witnesses on the traditional procedures and practices of the church. A study of the court cases shows that their testimony was contradictory at almost every point but one. All

agreed that each congregation was autonomous and “a law unto itself.” Apparently none of them saw their own inconsistency in coming long distances to insert themselves into congregational affairs. Typical of the testimony on this point is that of the Rev. E. A. Hoffman, a Progressive, as given in circuit court in the Sand Creek church trial.

Each church in the brotherhood is entirely independent of the other, and it is in control of its own affairs. There is no ecclesiastical authority over the management of their affairs; there is no higher court than the congregation; they may ask counsel of others, but there is no authority; there is no such thing as presbyteries or synods.

The Hammond Case

The first trial in which the Sand Creek Declaration figured involved the disciples in the village of Hammond, in Piatt county, Illinois. In 1882 it was determined that a number of persons favorable to the restoration principles lived in the vicinity of this village. John K. Warren offered to donate to them a lot for the erection of a meetinghouse if they would organize a congregation and Orlando Powers agreed to give them an adjoining lot on the same condition. A preliminary meeting was held in October and a sufficient amount of interest was manifested so that John Love was instructed to write up a church covenant which would be signed by all who desired to become charter members. On November 25, 1882, they convened and eighty-four persons signed the following “Declaration of Faith.”

We hereby covenant together that the congregation composed of the undersigned unite themselves together in one body as true Christian worshipers, to be known only as ‘The Church of Christ,’ agreeing before God and with one another to take the word of God as our only rule of

faith, practice and discipline, repudiating all human creeds; announcing the belief that anything practiced for church duty, not taught in the word of God is idolatrous, hence is sinful, and that we will not give such things our aid but try to prevent others from embracing them; and further promising to honor and obey the officers selected and appointed for the church.

At this meeting three trustees were elected and a certificate of organization was drawn up by George S. Morris, the secretary of the meeting. This certificate was notarized on December 7 and the following day was filed in the office of the recorder of Piatt county. On February 9, 1883, John R. Howell was sent to secure the deed to the lot from John K. Warren. He was accompanied by one of the trustees, Anderson Wacaser. When Warren asked how the deed should be made out, Howell told him just to make it to "the trustees of the Christian Church." This was the way most of the members and the community spoke of it. Later, during the trial in court, Howell testified on cross-examination as follows:

If I had known when I told Warren to write the deed that the local name was Church of Christ, I suppose I would have told him to write it Church of Christ. I didn't know at the time that I told Warren how to write the deed that the local name adopted by the church was the Church of Christ. I didn't know it had more than the name of Christian Church. I don't know; I might have known, too, they are called the Church of Christ

In 1899 a small group of dissenters in the community, knowing that the last of the original trustees, John Love, had died July 24, 1897, met in a hall a few blocks from the meetinghouse and elected three of their number as "trustees of the Christian Church in Hammond Illinois." Learning of this move, the members of the Church of Christ met on July 5, declared the office of trustee vacant and proceeded to elect successors to the original trustees. The three men elected at the

hall served notice on the congregation that they were entitled to the property and demanded access to it for their use in worship. They declared that if it was not surrendered voluntarily they would enter it in any event. On New Year's Day in 1900 the trustees of the congregation changed all the locks and fastenings on the doors in order to protect the property against forceable entry. On August 23, 1901, the congregation was served notice that a suit for ejectment had been brought in the name of the Christian Church of Hammond, Illinois, "to obtain possession of said lots and the house of worship erected thereon."

The case was heard in the Circuit Court of Piatt county before the Hon. W. G. Cochran as presiding judge. It was affirmed by the complainants that the property was deeded to the Christian Church, that it was unlawfully occupied by the Church of Christ which was an organization composed of those who had seceded from the Christian Church on August 14, 1889, with the adoption of the "address and declaration" at Sand Creek, Illinois. An appeal was taken by the Church of Christ and because of the nature of the case the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois reviewed the case in the fall term. Their decision was handed down on December 18, 1901. The opinion of the court was read by Mr. Chief Justice Wilkins. It reversed the decision of Judge Cochran and vested ownership of the property in the possessors.

Our concern in the ruling of the Illinois Supreme Court lies chiefly in the findings with reference to the name of the church and the decision regarding the Sand Creek Address. Despite a personal interest in the science of jurisprudence I cannot become involved just now with merely legal aspects of these trials. We are studying the rise and growth of the factional spirit and its effect on the restoration movement. It will be necessary to resist the temptation to explore legal pathways in order to keep to the task at hand. Although "the trustees of the Christian Church" sought to make a play on names (much as the Church of Christ does now) their attorneys had to make certain

admissions, noted by the Supreme Court.

Counsel for the appellee say that it is clearly established by the evidence that the original society formed in Hammond was known and recognized by several different names or titles. It was called 'Church of Christ,' 'Disciples of Christ,' and the 'Christian Church,' and these terms were identical in meaning, and used to designate persons of the same religious belief who were members of the same religious denomination.

Acting upon this information and concession, the Supreme Court opinion held, "But certainly it cannot be said the congregation worshipping in the church at Hammond under the legally organized name of 'The Church of Christ' has withdrawn or seceded from the Christian Church." For the information of our readers we furnish herewith their finding with reference to the Sand Creek Address since it was to play a vital part in future litigation.

We do not think the 'Address and Declaration' introduced in evidence by the defendant, made at Sand Creek, Shelby County, August 14, 1889, can have any legal bearing upon the title to the property in suit. At most, that declaration shows that those who made it differed from other members of the church which they claimed to represent, as to proper methods and practice, in the church government and modes of conducting religious worship . . . They differ, if at all, in their views as to what is the true interpretation of the teaching of the Bible or word of God.

Members of the judiciary knew from experience the difference between a law and its interpretation.

The Sand Creek Case

The excitement over the Hammond case had hardly died

away when another of much greater magnitude arose to further intensify the feeling on both sides. This one involved the congregation at Sand Creek and because of the location it became a focal point in a do-or-die struggle of the "Progressives." Before the trial was over preachers had been subpoenaed from far and near. The case in circuit court occupied two full weeks and the evidence fills 1635 pages. Practically all of the legal talent in the area was retained by one side or the other. Technically, the case was an attempt to secure possession of a brick-building erected at a cost of thirteen hundred dollars; in reality it became a gripping battle between two philosophies to gain public favor and legal approbation. Those who brought the suit soon became mere pawns. Their original intent was forgotten even by themselves as a bevy of "experts" sought to establish "the orthodox position" which was to distinguish the "true church."

The wise and able jurists who composed the Supreme Court saw through the smoke screen created by the counsel for both sides and in the final opinion delivered by Mr. Justice Hand pointed out the divergent philosophies involved. They designated 1849 as one crucial point and 1889 as another. The first marks the year of the inauguration of the missionary society; the second the year of the reading of the Sand Creek Address. They also note the partisan use of the terms "Christian Church" and "Church of Christ." We cannot desist from sharing their opinion with our readers even as we apologize for the length of the quotation which comprises one paragraph of the decision. We feel that you will do well to read it in full. We could occupy scores of pages in discussion of its implications.

The several church organizations formed by the followers of Alexander Campbell— and they are numerous— at the time of their organization were, and now are, purely congregational in their government; that is, there is no general conference, synod, presbytery or other similar body which exercises supervision over said church congregations, but each organization, in matters of

practice, in church government and otherwise, is sovereign, and the congregations so organized have no creed except the Bible, the view of the followers of said Alexander Campbell being, that where the Bible speaks the congregation and its several members are authorized to speak, but where it is silent the congregation and the members thereof should also remain silent. In 1849 there sprang up among the members of said religious sect different views upon subjects of practice to be adopted by the congregations with reference to matters upon which the Bible is silent, one view being, that in the matters upon which the Bible is silent such silence should be construed as a positive prohibition; the other view being, that if the Bible is silent upon a given subject pertaining to church government then the congregation may formulate a rule in that particular for the government of the congregation. The diversion along the lines above suggested seems to have grown as the church membership increased, and in 1889 there was a wide difference of views between the several congregations, and between the members of the same congregation, relative to many practices in the church, such as to the propriety of having instrumental music in the church services; the employment by the congregation of ministers of the gospel for a fixed time and for a fixed salary; the organization of missionary societies and Sunday Schools as separate organizations outside the regular church congregations; the raising of funds for the support of the gospel by holding church fairs and festivals, and perhaps in other matters of a similar character; and in that year, at the annual August meeting held at Sand Creek church, and where there was present a large concourse of people drawn together from different congregations, Rev. Daniel Summer, a follower of Alexander Campbell, preached a sermon upon what was characterized as innovations upon the practices of the church, and afterwards a declaration, known as the "Sand Creek Declaration," was presented to the brethren present for their endorsement. That declaration condemned many, if not all, of the practices above referred to. It was signed by a few, only, of those who were present, and it was not

considered binding upon any member of the church or upon any congregation unless signed by the member or adopted by the church congregation, but was considered merely advisory to the members of the church. The division heretofore referred to, from that time forward seems to have spread, and at the time this suit was commenced the evidence shows the followers of Alexander Campbell had divided upon those lines to such an extent that one faction in the church was characterized as progressive and the other conservatives, the members favoring the more liberal view being called "Progressive," while those entertaining the more conservative view were called "Antis." The persons entertaining the progressive view appear latterly to have usually favored and taken in their church congregation the name "Christian Church," while those favoring the conservative view have taken the name "Church of Christ" as the name of their church organizations.

"Great oaks from little acorns grow," and great court cases grow from minor incidents. None of the issues referred to in the Supreme Court decision had anything to do with instigation of the original suit. In 1903 the membership roster at Sand Creek contained 130 names. There were three elders. It had been the custom of the congregation to hold singing schools periodically and to make the instruction available to all, paying the teacher from the general fund. In November 1903, a man by the name of McCoy asked permission to hold a singing school in the meetinghouse. He proposed to finance it by touring the community and signing up scholars on a subscription basis. He announced that he would start the class on a certain Wednesday night.

On the Lord's Day prior to this the elders placed the matter before the congregation. Several urged that it was an inopportune time for a singing school because it was the corn husking season. Two members spoke against having it at the time because they had been summoned as jurors in the fall term

of court. No one favored the project openly so the elders announced that no singing school would be held but that the class might be conducted on the following Wednesday night. Instructions were given for any who attended to see that no subscription paper was circulated. When McCoy came for the first session one of the elders informed him that the congregation had decided against having a singing school at the time. He ignored this and announced another class for Thursday night.

The following day McCoy and two members drove about the neighborhood and solicited names. They met another elder who informed them again of the decision of the congregation. On Thursday night McCoy sought to appeal to the trustees of the congregation for use of the building but these decided that they would respect the decision of the congregation. It was on this occasion that one of the chief instigators of the legal suit said they had no intention of tearing down the house or of carrying off the seats and that the church property was deeded to the Christian Church and he had the deed in his house. The singing class was transferred to the schoolhouse, but at a public meeting the spokesman referred to denounced the elders for their decision and stated that since the age of miracles ceased there were no elders and neither the elders nor the congregation had any authority over him.

In February, 1904, this man ceased to attend and after the elders had visited him at length to urge his return with no success, public announcement of excommunication was made. Some twenty-seven others then ceased to attend and began meeting at the schoolhouse. A few days later two of these waited upon the trustees and asked for use of the meetinghouse half the time. They stated that they represented "The Christian Church of Sand Creek." On July 7, 1904 the group posted public notices calling for a meeting to be held on July 16, for the purpose of electing trustees and other officers and to adopt the corporate name contained in the deed to the property made by James Turrentine. At the meeting they adopted the name "The

Christian Church of Sand Creek,” and filed a certificate of organization in the Recorder’s Office.

Following this a suit was brought in circuit court. In their Bill in Equity the complainants referred to the bishops as men who “claim to be Elders in some sort of a religious organization called by them ‘the Church of Christ’” and charged that they “pretend they have the title to and exclusive use of the same (property) and fraudulently and wrongfully withhold the same from the Christian Church of Sand Creek.” It was affirmed that the “said so-called Church of Christ and the defendants named herein, claim to base their said action upon certain things that were done at a meeting held at orator’s said meetinghouse sometime in 1889, at which meeting some over-righteous malcontents made a public declaration of what they believed, and undertook to define what your orators and others ought to believe and how they ought to worship.”

The testimony shows that none of the complainants had ever previously indicated any favorable inclination toward the various “innovations” and some of them had actually made extreme statements in opposition thereto. But now, in an attempt to make it appear that there was a difference between the “Church of Christ” and “Christian Church” all of the points of difference were espoused and declared to be “the doctrines, customs, practice and beliefs” of the church. This made it possible to import preachers who qualified as “experts” in these various areas of interpretation. Motivated by a desire to gain the victory each party placed its best men on the stand and the legal contest was prolonged as skillful attorneys sought to use them to win a point for one side or the other.

“The Christian Church at Sand Creek” had two serious disadvantages. All of its expert witnesses affirmed the autonomy of the local congregation, and under examination stated that in cases of disagreement, the wish of the majority should be accepted and respected by the minority. Since there were but

thirty who had seceded and about one-hundred who remained, and since none of the elders or deacons had defected, their legal cause was helpless from the outset. It appeared that the main point to be gained was an attempt to destroy the effectiveness of the “Sand Creek Declaration,” and to brand “The Church of Christ” with “acting in an unneighborly, unmanly and bigoted manner, with no fairness,” as stated in the original bill.

In the light of subsequent history there are some interesting facets of the complaint. One charge made by “The Christian Church” was “that Sommer professed to take the Bible and the Bible alone, but instead of that he would receive a member that had been baptized in the Methodist Church without further baptism, that he would receive a member of the Baptist Church that didn’t believe that baptism was essential.” Clearly this was before some of “The Churches of Christ” had adopted the re-baptism theory which crystallized them into a sect, and before some of “The Christian Churches” adopted the practice of open membership which denies the necessity of immersion as admission to fellowship. Time brings great changes!

The Court Decisions

The Hon. Samuel L. Dwight, Judge of the Circuit Court of Shelby County, Illinois, prefaced his decision with the statement, “This case, although not involving a large amount in dollars and cents, is, in some respects, one of importance and one in which a large number of persons seem to be deeply interested.” He commended the attorneys for their great learning and research in behalf of their clients, the members of the two parties for their conduct and citizenship, the witnesses for their religious fervor. He wrote:

The taking of the evidence, consuming as it did nearly two weeks, unfolded the history of the Christian

Church— a splendid organization coming into existence perhaps a century ago, avoiding tiresome creeds and looking alone to the Bible as a guide to faith and practice.

He said, “That church has grown and spread throughout the Union and its faith and teachings find a response in the hearts of people everywhere. This church was the only religious body, I believe, to have a headquarters upon the grounds of the World’s Fair at St. Louis.”

His finding was in behalf of “The Church of Christ at Sand Creek.” The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court of Illinois. We have already quoted at length from the decision of the members of that court as read by Mr. Justice Hand. That decision pointed out that even though “the great majority of the church congregations which are professed followers of Alexander Campbell have adopted in practice the innovations from the practice of which defendants in error held aloof” this would not affect the status of the Sand Creek congregation because each congregation is sovereign “in all matters pertaining to church government— that is, each congregation has the right to determine for itself what its practices in the manner of conducting the worship of God in the congregation and its church business shall be, so long as such practices are not in conflict with the positive commands of the Bible.” The Supreme court upheld the decision of the circuit court.

Personal Comments

It is my conviction, after research into the history of the restoration movement, that the cleavage came because of a decay of love and the rise of a factional spirit. I know our fathers were faced with serious problems. They were called upon to exercise their human judgment. They chose division as their instrument to preserve doctrinal purity among the disciples of our Lord. In doing so, they kindled the schismatic attitude. The fruits of this

mistaken philosophy are everywhere manifest in the manifold divisions which plague their children today. I renounce the traditional philosophy embodied in "The Sand Creek Declaration" which is one of "brotherhood based upon conformity." It has been destructive of peace and inimical to our welfare. Those who continue in it can never become "agents of reconciliation."

No group of men, regardless of sincerity or righteousness, has the right to come together and declare that others who have been born into God's family shall "no longer be regarded as brethren." This is discipline based on *ex familia*, out of the family, and it is not within human jurisdiction or prerogative. It substitutes "the wisdom of men" for "the power of God." It is unscriptural and antiscritptural. It removes the salt from the body and the leaven from the lump. It is based on fear and defeatism. It is the foundation of exclusivism and monasticism. Its outworkings can be seen in the narrow concept of the factional groups which have been nourished on it. Unless it is rejected as a basis of spiritual life it will breed other divisive offspring in the future which will be sustained by the pap flowing from factional breasts, until we shall be divided out of existence.

I am opposed to every foreign element introduced into the government and worship of the *ekklesia* of God but I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We must repudiate and reject the whole concept of trying to unite the children of God by dividing them. Brotherhood is based on fatherhood, fraternity is based upon paternity— and I must recognize as brethren all of His children. I am sick and tired of the bitter wrangling and jarring of the party spirit. I cannot answer the prayer of Jesus for oneness by the advocacy of division. The traditional attitude of our various fragments and splinters is mere modern Church-of-Christ-ism and as sectarian in nature as most other "isms." If this be treason make the most of it!

Many of my brethren have inherited another spirit, that of innovationism. Under the guise of freedom that has been passed down to them they know no restraints except their own wishes. In a mad scramble for worldly success and recognition they have been tempted to scrap the exhortations to holiness and to wink at sin. If some of us have been touched with the taint of exclusivism, these have been cursed with the blight of “inclusivism,” the philosophy that anything that pleases us must also please God. The word of God is not the real authority at all but the desires of the half-converted cult of the unconcerned ones whose wishes have to be catered to in order to keep them appeased. The exclusivists will allow no one to go with them who does not agree in every particular; the inclusivists agree that anything goes and are not particular!

If we cannot achieve unity by refusing to embrace our brethren in the Lord, neither can we promote peace by embracing those things which are not in the Word. Is it not time for a soul-searching, a re-study of the revealed will, a real return to the spirit and power of the primitive *ekklesia*? How much longer shall we perpetuate the bitter feuds of yesterday and the unspirituality of our own day? Would it not be better to live on crusts and wear rags with a clear conscience than to dine on “kingly fare” and be banished by the King over there? Let us have a real restoration of the restoration spirit. Let it begin here! Let it begin *now*!

Once to every man and nation comes

the moment to decide;

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood;

for the good or evil side;

Some great Cause, God’s new Messiah

offering each the bloom or blight,

**Parts the goats upon the left hand and
the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt
that darkness and that light.**

Adventures in Religion (5)

Mission Messenger (March 1962)

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[Abstract]

The very word “adventure” has a touch of glamor about it. We think of risk and daring when we hear it. There is nothing staid or commonplace in its implications. It is unfortunate that we seldom think of it in connection with the religion of Christ. That religion has lost something in its modern watered down version. It has been reduced to a routine of meeting attendance and this is carried out from a sense of duty or because of fear of divine reprisal. Actually the brand of “Christianity” with which we are familiar has little relationship to the kind of life which was characteristic of Jesus and the primitive saints. It has lost much of its verve and most of its vision.

We have been conditioned to a life of security and safety. Our bank deposits are guaranteed by an insurance corporation. Old age has its social security and pensions. We are sheltered and protected against the storms of life. Every aspect of existence has its safeguards. Religion is no exception. The result is that it has lost its appeal to the fearless and brave. It tends to become primarily the resort of the very young or the very old—the adolescent and the aged. But the “Christianity” we see manifested is no more like the original article than a stroll through the meadow is like climbing the Matterhorn. The very fact that men have diluted and weakened it is proof that they cannot tackle the responsibility involved in its powerful demands.

We hear a great many sermons dealing with the quiet life, and advocating a serene and placid disposition. These have led us to think that Christianity is a rocking-chair existence. We conjure up visions of saints as retired persons sitting in the shade, reading the Bible and conversing with mutual friends about matters of general concern. This is not the picture which the Bible paints. As God reveals it, the believer is a man of action impelled by an inner compulsion that allows no time for rest. He is pictured as a boxer, not in training but in combat. He is not beating the air or punching a bag, he is fighting for his life and willing to die to obtain it!

He is depicted as a soldier, not on leave or furlough, but engaged in deadly warfare. God's word knows nothing about a soldier in civilian dress, but clad in the full panoply of armor with sword unsheathed and pressing the battle against an implacable foe. The Christian is engaged in a race. He is not sitting in the grandstand but is down on the course, running, straining, gasping, sweating, reaching toward the prize. We have become a nation of spectators. The many loll at ease to watch the few fight for victory. Thousands fill the stands to see a handful of persons battle it out on the playing field. This philosophy has invaded the field of religion and our contributions become the price of admission to watch professionals perform.

We need to recapture the sense of personal adventure in the religion of Jesus. We should cease to make safety a fetish or security god. Faith is not a sure thing, it is a risk. It is a leap in the dark but with full confidence that His hands will be there to catch us and bear us up. Anyone who flies in a jet-powered plane six miles above the surface of the earth is taking a risk but not nearly so great a risk as if he were borne into space on an eagle's wings. "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). We have too many who are grounded by fright, bounded by caution and hounded by fear.

Jesus did not teach men to “play it safe.” He taught them to live dangerously. He implied that it was better to risk and lose than to keep through fear. Do you remember the man with one talent? “I was afraid and I went and hid your talent.” This man expected to be commended for his prudence and discretion. Instead he was addressed as a “wicked and slothful servant.” This seems strong language to apply to one who sought to safeguard another’s property. But it is better to lose through use than to fail through fear. One is wicked when he seeks to “hold his own” when what he owns should not be held. He is slothful when he hides in the ground that which should be in circulation. Non-use is abuse! The master said, “You ought to have invested my money.” When one invests he takes a chance. The one-talent individual pleaded the nature of the master as his excuse but the parable implies that it is that very thing which should prompt one to put what he has to work. The servant was faithful who “went and did;” that one was worthless who “went and hid.”

The New English Bible renders Matthew 16:25, “Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self.” Men leave home to seek for gold, uranium or diamonds. When they find that for which they are looking a dream comes true. Yet it is a fact that the actual finding is often an anti-climax. It is the anticipation, the searching without knowing what the next minute will produce that is the real adventure. Not so with the man who finds his “true self.” Life really begins when this happens. Millions are doomed to plod their weary way through earthly existence and never make this discovery.

Our lives are “bound by shallows and by miseries” as Shakespeare puts it, because we are afraid to risk everything. We are frightened by what our relatives will say or what the neighbors will think. We fetter and shackle ourselves by rigid conformity. Life becomes a drudgery and a bore. We want to “stay in good” with all of the brethren and we are resigned to insipid mediocrity to do so. “Whoever cares for his own safety is

lost.” There are great causes to challenge thinking. There are great crusades which need conducting. There are abuses that need correcting. Those who take up the cross will be ridiculed, reviled and derided. But the heart will beat faster with the spirit of real adventure and when it seems that all has been lost all will be gained. This is the way of the cross!

There is a difference in being at cross purposes with those around you and having *the cross purpose* for your life. Too many have a martyr complex. These are not killed, they simply commit suicide. They do not lose their lives, they merely take them. They cannot find themselves because they look too close to home. They get in their own way. Note that it is not the man who merely *invests* his life who will gain. There are thousands who commit their lives to the church and the religious way of existence. You can check their names on the record, you can see them sitting in the pews every Lord’s Day, you can behold their punctilious observance of all the ordinances as given. They will tell you that through habit “the church has become a part of our lives.” That is the trouble— life is partitioned off in little well-defined cubicles. There isn’t anything adventurous about such protected and well-regulated little procedures as they indulge.

Life must be lost *for his sake* and not undertaken for our own benefit. I tend to be a little skeptical of those who do their duty merely because they are afraid not to. Surely there is little zest about such an existence. One may put in the time when he ought to be throwing in his life. We tend to think of religion as an adventure when it is carried out by missionaries in a reeking jungle compound or in a foreign city with strange tongue and customs. But it is sometimes easier to meet a challenge across the ocean than to meet one across the street. One whose conscience troubles him about race prejudice can more easily go to Africa and preach to the blacks than he can go to the slums and teach a Bible class of Negroes in his own city. There is a difference in losing your life for his sake and running from it for your own sake. It is better to lose your life running into something than to

desert it by running from something!

We do not really lose our lives when we shut ourselves off from the rest of struggling humanity, we just lose our purpose for living. The medieval monks had their monasteries, we moderns have our factions. They both serve the same purpose. They keep the salt in the shaker, the leaven in the jar and the seed in the bag. Those who shut themselves in monasteries did not quit living, they just quit and went on living. Many of us have done the same thing. We need to restore the element of risk and adventure to Christianity. One reason the devil did not dare tackle too many of the early Christians was because they were daredevils. When he threatened to tie them to the stake and burn them they did not quail because “they were fit to be tied.” We’ve lost that fitness, and more than anything else in these days we need to recapture it! When we stake all on Jesus we’ve nothing to lose at any other stake!

The Two Spirits

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

One who surveys the appalling wreckage of the Christian *ekklesia*, as wrought by the sectarian attitude, cannot help but be astounded and to wonder within his heart how such frightful disintegration could occur. Even among the heirs of the Restoration movement the fabric of brotherhood has been rent and torn with such violence that in many metropolitan areas there will be more than a dozen different splinter groups, each proclaiming that it is “the faithful church” and refusing to have any spiritual intercourse or relationship with others. Those who visit another faction are treated as pagans and unbelievers and are granted no recognition whatsoever.

It is not enough to designate such behavior as childish and immature. True, the apostle says of those who were in such a state, “I had to deal with you on the merely natural plane, as infants in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:1). But there is a reason why grown men act like babies and until that cause is discovered and eliminated we will only perpetuate and intensify our present condition. The actions of infants result from instruction and imitation. When big people act little they but reflect the training and conditioning they have received. All of us are products of our past.

Our outward demonstration of factionalism is but a manifestation of the spirit which motivates us. It is useless to try

to change our practices until we change the tenant who dwells in our hearts. The actions we behold are only reflections of that occupant. Our divisions are fruits of the party spirit. Love and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). You cannot eliminate sectarianism as long as the sectarian spirit prevails. You cannot maintain division when the Holy Spirit triumphs. For that reason the apostle does not dismiss the schismatic attitude as a mere temper tantrum of spiritually retarded children. He says, "I could not speak to you as I should speak to people who have the Spirit. I had to deal with you on the merely natural plane, as infants in Christ."

"People who have the Spirit" just do not divide and sever themselves into parties. If this is not the implication of the passage I confess that I know nothing of true interpretative procedures. If this is correct, then we need to begin our reconstruction program by recapturing the importance of the indwelling Spirit. It is at this point we have failed. Our factions are but external symptoms of an internal disorder. We are victims of our own philosophy. That philosophy was not so much derived from the scriptures as it was contrived to meet what we regarded as abuses in the sectarian world. In our attempt to avoid and overthrow sectarianism we have been betrayed into becoming sectarian.

Because some placed emphasis upon having a spiritual experience we ridiculed the idea of any personal encounter with God. Because some stressed the emotional aspect to the neglecting of the rational, we stressed the rational to the utter abolition of the emotional. We became a people of keen minds and cold hearts. While others abused the Spirit, we misused the Word and made the fearful mistake of substituting a legalistic formula, forgetting that the new covenant is a "covenant expressed not in a written document, but in a spiritual bond; for the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

Like all who trust in legalism we even searched through the scriptures, confusing gospel and doctrine, and marked out our own little distinctive trail. Every man in pursuit of salvation was forced to follow this track like a human bloodhound, sniffing his way from passage to passage, and passing over the intervening terrain without bark or backward glance. As a result we manufactured a sort of kitchen stepladder approach to God's grace. You can see this exhibited in a thousand sermon outlines and designated the "steps to salvation." This expression nowhere occurs within the word of God although it is a favorite one of those who profess to "speak where the Bible speaks." A person who searches the scriptures for himself and takes all of "the steps" but not in the same order does not land in "salvation" but in error and from this state he must be rescued by being immersed over again by a "Church of Christ preacher"— whatever that is! It is somewhat as if Paul had insisted that every person who came to Christ would have to go first toward Damascus.

In our congregations are many who have been convinced of the propriety of "water baptism" who have never been committed to the Christ-life at all. They trust in a name over the door of the meetinghouse or in their conformity to a rite. We do not derogate either of these when we point out that the basis of our hope is our relationship to the Father through the Spirit. This is the reason why the congregations are filled with persons who partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and partake of worldliness the other six days. It accounts for the action of many who never forget to watch their favorite television program and never remember to study their Bibles. It helps to understand why men will rush from the meetinghouse with the final "Amen" to light up a cigarette and burn the lung-searing incense to the great god Nicotine, spending more for the tobacco they puff into the air than for the support of proclaiming the word to the lost.

There is grave danger in placing our trust in a thing, a

proposition, a precept or an institution even if these are divinely created. There is always the possibility of professing one thing and practicing another. When the apostle sought to encourage the Christians at Corinth to overcome the lust of the flesh he did not make his appeal to the fact that they were “members of The Church of Christ” in Corinth. Instead, he asked, “Do you not know that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Spirit, and the Spirit is God’s gift to you?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

In our attempts to line out the sectarians in our sermons we have become sectarian and entangled in our sermon outlines. So legalistic have many become that to them the written word is identified with the Spirit. One man, patting the copy of the testament in his coat pocket said, “I’ve got the Holy Spirit right here in my pocket.” But the book in his pocket said the Spirit should be in the heart.

Peter did not say, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive a copy of the new testament.” The Holy Spirit cannot be the word of God for it is distinctly affirmed of the penitent on Pentecost that those who gladly received the word were baptized. We receive the word in order to be immersed into Christ and the Holy Spirit because we were.

Man’s heart was not made to be a vacuum. There is actually no such thing as an empty heart although that which fills many hearts is of little value. Man cannot remain at a standstill and still stand as a man. He must be impelled from within. If he is not motivated by the Holy Spirit he will be a slave of the flesh and one of the works of the flesh is the party spirit. God designed that this should be “the age of the Spirit” but men have defied his will by following “the spirit of the age.” They have become conformed to this world instead of being transformed through the Word. We are at home in the world. We are no longer pilgrims but patrons; not foreigners but homesteaders in reverse. The world has staked out its claim in

us.

Although we enlisted to fight the world, the flesh and the devil, we have long since ceased to fight either and have turned our weapons against each other. We have split ourselves into segments and fractured ourselves into fragments, and have bathed our weapons in the blood of our brethren. Like savages who dance with fiendish glee about the bodies of their victims before devouring them, we have become spiritual cannibals, biting and devouring one another while forgetting the predicted consequences for such procedure. We have hailed as heroes those who could fling their verbal tomahawks and cleave the skulls of brethren who dared to differ, we have justified dissension and glorified debate.

The secret of unity is the temple image. If we can emphasize and enforce this in our thinking we will repair our present breaches and preclude all future breaks. If we are the temple of God then to destroy that temple is to do injury to ourselves and to invoke the wrath of God. One should no more be inclined to break up the dwelling-place of the Father than he would to chop down the house of his earthly parent. It is a tragedy that, while a man who burns down an earthly abode is arrested as an arsonist, one who inflames the house of God is decorated as a party hero. "Surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells. Anyone who destroys God's temple will himself be destroyed by God, because the temple of God is holy and that temple you are."

The reason the temple concept is so important to unity is that it contemplates the structure not as a finished product at all, but as a constantly growing one. The stones that are added to it daily are living, and as all living things, are subject to change, alteration and amendment. The church of God is timeless and ageless. It is flexible enough to receive and incorporate within itself men of varied attainments, abilities, social standing and gifts. Its unity is not that of conformity but of diversity. It does

not incorporate within itself liberals and conservatives as such any more than it does Jews or Gentiles. It receives men— all men who are born again— and welds them together by a bond which transcends all national patriotism or rational proclivities.

The temple of God will alter in its external aspects from generation to generation as living stones are quarried from various cultures and civilizations. God does not demand that we forsake our abilities and forget our aptitudes. He only requires that we channel them into a higher and nobler realm of service than the worship of self-interest. The cement of love is elastic, not hardened. It holds us together by the power of the Spirit and not by the spirit of power. It is at the divine center where no change is ever made. The foundation does not grow. It is only those planted upon it who develop. The cornerstone is the same yesterday, today and forever. “In him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you too are being built with all the rest into a spiritual dwelling for God.” “In him . . . in the Lord” all growth and building takes place.

Ponder the significance of the terms “bonded together in him” and “grows into a temple.” Here are passages which need to be explored because in them may lie the hope of our future peace. If we can remain in him while growing together, if we can tolerate and respect each other while the growth process is taking place, tomorrow will be brighter than today. Our today is the result of our thinking yesterday. We have thought ourselves into division. Can we think our way into unity?

And we must not overlook the expression “you are being built with all the rest.” Who is included in “all the rest.” You do not know and I do not. Only the divine architect can tell. “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” But whoever they are they are a part of that spiritual building in which God dwells. And as “a shrine of the Holy Spirit” I am being built “with all the rest” into a “habitation of God through the Spirit.” God be thanked!

Factional Flames

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

All such that are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished, and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren.

This statement in the “Sand Creek Address and Declaration” read in August, 1889, was an act of “formal division” according to one of its chief proponents. It was written to “draw a line of demarkation between the churches of Christ and our innovating brethren.” Endorsed by Daniel Sommer in the north and by David Lipscomb in the south, this became the orthodox position of the restoration protestants. It has now become sanctified by three-quarters of a century of practice and is generally regarded as the will of God. Its repeated application has shattered the restoration movement into numerous rival and antagonistic factions. In spite of its evil fruits of strife and division it is offended by most parties with such zeal that one who dares to challenge it is regarded as a heretic.

It is “with malice toward none and charity toward all” that we deny the philosophy of separation from brethren is God’s program for his children. We grew up in a narrow factional environment, nourished on the theological milk drawn from the

breasts of such a partisan *alma mater*. We regarded that faction as the church of God. For it, and it alone, God spent four thousand years preparing the world of mankind. For it only did our Lord endure the cruel reproaches of men and die upon the cross. Its members were the saints of God to the exclusion of all others. They were the “loyal brethren” and all others on earth were unfaithful and apostate. The bounds of the kingdom of heaven reached no farther than “our brotherhood.” The one body comprised those congregations only which listened to “faithful preachers” and rejected all others as “false teachers.”

I have a deep compassion for all of my brethren who are fettered and chained by such concepts. I know the surging and tugging of the spirit to be free. I know the inner revulsion of heart against the inconsistency involved in calling upon one to pray whose life is a disgrace, while treating with cool disdain a visitor from another faction whose behavior is saintly but who is outside the pale, treated as a heathen and publican, because he does not concur with our interpretation. I know the sickening feeling when doubt creeps into an honest mind and one begins to question how long he can continue to wink at partisan shortcomings and sins while condemning others wholesale “because they walk not with us.” I now realize that this whole fabric of behavior is not of God at all. It is merely the implementation of human judgment reached by men under stress. He who opposes it does not oppose the will of God. That will can never be done on earth as it is in heaven until we mature enough to reject this human philosophy which has cursed us with division and will eventually damn us unless we triumph over it through the Spirit.

Certainly differences among brethren must be faced! The problems which arise must be met. We cannot become “human ostriches” and thrust our heads into the sand, ignoring those things which threaten us. We do not castigate our brethren for dealing with troublesome issues in 1889. There were innovations which appeared to them as being destructive of the faith. No

doubt our fathers did the best they could at the time and under the circumstances. We are in poor position to chastise them for adopting the procedure they did, seeing that we personally practiced it for years without question.

Now that we do question it we have no desire to reflect upon them. We must walk in the light available unto us and the increasing knowledge of truth demands that we adjust our lives accordingly. It does not require that we condemn those who exercised their best judgment under darker skies. No human decision must ever become so sacred that it dare not be reviewed. No human conclusion must ever be so hallowed that it cannot be re-examined. We propose to set forth very humbly our estimation of the nature and results of that philosophy of brotherhood which has become basic Church-of-Christ-ism in our day.

1. The "Sand Creek Address" was a formal statement of what was believed to be a solution to the problem of innovationism. It was a human expedient devised as an emergency measure when other means were considered failures. One of its defenders said, "We have from the first agitation of this subject been numbered with those who earnestly endeavored to find some other solution of the problem than a formal separation." This same writer designated it as containing "the sentiments of the brethren who assembled at Sand Creek, in Shelby county, Illinois, on August 17, 1889."

2. After being adopted, however, it soon became the criterion for measuring the faithfulness of men. Those who cut across all factional lines and respected brotherhood regardless of innovations were looked at askance and were soon driven out as disloyal. By establishing "separation" as the official means of opposing error, two parties were automatically created. After this one could no longer protest against innovations as a non-partisan. He had to "line up" or he would be "lined out." Thus it came to pass that it was not opposition to error but partisan

alliance which became the test of loyalty.

3. The word of God condemns separation from brethren as a means of implementing the divine will. It is regarded as a symptom of sensuality. “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19). Separation is the resort of the immature and the carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Division among the children of God is a sin, a work of the flesh.

4. The philosophy of separation is based upon a false premise, that in any direct encounter between truth and error, truth must inevitably succumb and suffer defeat. It is promoted by an unreasonable and unreasoning fear that we cannot preserve what we have gained without constructing a human wall about it. This is essentially the foundation of all creedalism and monasticism. It renders impossible the doing of God’s will on earth as it is in heaven, because it removes the salt from the mass, the leaven from the lump and the light from the pathway.

5. The “Sand Creek Address” usurped divine prerogatives and transferred them to fallible men. Only the Father has a right to determine whom we shall “regard as brethren.” Brotherhood is not the result of partisan agreement but of the new birth. Fraternity is based upon paternity, not conformity. The purpose of the decision was to set at nought certain brethren. Granted that these brethren were wrong in attitude and in error in their thinking, yet we are forbidden to retaliate. God will adjust many things at the judgment seat which we have no power to correct here. “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10).

6. It is apparent from history that the arbitrary decision to dissolve brotherhood was made with a view to justifying use of the civil courts in property suits. The scriptures are plain on this matter. “I speak to your shame . . . brother goeth to law with brother.” The apostle further declares, “Now therefore there is

utterly a fault among you; because ye go to law with one another.” By adopting a position which made it possible to no longer regard as brothers those who differed, court cases were inaugurated all over the country. This was one of the most shameful periods in the history of the restoration movement. To see those who preach unity so divided they cannot even adjudicate their own disputes is a tragedy beyond description.

7. Any theory or system which embodies division among the believers as a necessary part of its constitution must be both unscriptural and anti-scriptural. The doctrine of defense by disunity, of preservation by separation, or of faithfulness by fission, is unknown to the divine revelation given to the members of the one body. God does not demand unity of the believers in one passage and sanction their fragmentation in another. We do not reject the truth of heaven when we refuse to subscribe to this philosophy. It can only breed factionalism and strife.

Recounting Results

It is no pleasure to review the effects of the factional philosophy but the faithful historian cannot ignore them. As we catalog the conditions which were created we will be able to see the fruits of a negative approach. By such an unbiased evaluation we will be in a position to make correction of our attitudes.

1. Since it was the organization of the missionary society which first gave rise to the charge of innovationism many of those who opposed it actually came to exhibit but little interest in proclamation of the gospel to other nations. The faction in which I grew up shrugged off any concern for those in the rest of the world with the oft-repeated phrase, “There are plenty of heathen at our back door without going to other parts of the earth.” Not only did we not encourage men to go to the regions beyond with the good news but we refused to send to any who

went forth from other factions. While there are some of the non-instrument groups which have greatly stepped up the tempo of their foreign preaching program, there are many factions which never contribute a cent per year to the proclamation of the word on foreign soil. Many of those who are sent out go to take their divisive and partisan feuds to other nations of the earth and thus spread the sickening blight of American factionalism.

2. The philosophy of separation produced an unfortunate and spiritually unhealthful attitude toward the sacred scriptures. These came to be regarded as a repository of partisan material, an arsenal of factional weapons produced especially to bombard dissident brethren in other splinter parties. Passages were warped, twisted and wrested to justify practices to which they had no relation. Those who have read with unbiased minds the conflicts over instrumental music, bible classes, individual cups, etc., know how party champions both pro and con, have distorted and contorted the revelation of heaven to win a point. As a sense of brotherhood disappeared and those who disagreed were branded as apostates, sectarians or false teachers, nothing was deemed unfair in dealing with them.

3. Inconsistency of the most aggravated type characterized all of the factions. This is ever the case when legalism supplants love of truth and when the letter rather than the spirit becomes the canon of approval. Men who passed the partisan test of fellowship were labeled as “sound in the faith” although their lives were often a disgrace to their profession. Consecrated and godly men from other segments of the disciple brotherhood were treated with coldness and indifference when they visited another faction. They were even deemed unworthy of directing a prayer to heaven. Because they did not belong to “the loyal brotherhood” they were ignored with disdain by those who were inferior in both behavior and scholarship. Thus each faction became “inbred” in thought and faithfulness to God was equated with ability to parrot the party line and to repeat the errors and fallacies in interpretation which had been woven into

a spotted pattern of orthodoxy.

4. On the ground of witnessing by withdrawing “The Church of Christ” developed a monastic exclusivism which crystallized it into a narrow and rigid sect. In the faction with which I was identified there was but one “loyal paper.” When the editors of this party organ, as we saw it, defected and “compromised” we held a mass meeting and gave our support to another editor. I can recall when the only literature actually sanctioned in the home consisted of books and tracts produced by members of our own religious clan. Since scholarship was rather limited the variety was not too great. Among us were some who would read nothing else for fear of being defiled. It was not uncommon to hear one say, “I’ve got my Bible and that’s enough for me.” Gradually each faction became blighted by ignorance and intolerance, knowing only the arguments used (or misused) to sustain the party position. It has been an interesting phenomenon to observe partisan champions referring “learnedly” to foreign languages, the implications of which they did not understand, while unable to speak English well or to read it in such a manner as to convey its intended meaning.

As a whole “The Church of Christ” recognizing no brotherhood beyond its parochial limitations has contributed very little to the universal current of religious thought. Its seminaries have concentrated on producing a factional clergy steeped in pedantry. The administrators of these fountains of knowledge have had one eye focused on the Bible and the other cocked at that particular “brotherhood” from which they drew their support. Motivated by fear they have stifled every teacher who was a non-conformist. It became a “kiss of death” for any student to write home that a professor was advocating an idea or interpretation which did not fit the traditional pattern.

The products of these schools, growing up in such an insular environment, have been incapable of furthering the

original purpose of the restoration movement which was “a project to unite the Christians in all the sects.” They have had no contact with the flock of God scattered over the sectarian hills. Frequently they do not even know the members of other factions of the movement living in the same city. Thus they have built up confined and illiberal parties in which real freedom to think, speak and act, no longer exists. Although Jesus intended that there should be one community within whose borders men might dwell in harmony despite divergent opinions, the philosophy of separation created a multiplicity of regimented circles in which intolerance is counted a virtue and forbearance is reckoned as a sin.

Multiplying Divisions

With the adoption of the philosophy of family fragmentation to perpetuate purity of doctrine “the decline and fall” of the restoration movement was hastened. After the first cleavage in the fabric of brotherhood the seed was planted which would result in deterioration and decay. The first enemies of the primitive community of saints were from without. Jewish zealots for the law resorted to the naked sword to “make havoc of the church.” It remained for the heirs of the restoration movement to turn “the sword of the Spirit” against their own brothers and wreak havoc once more to this great effort to bring peace to the divided domain of Christendom.

Even while the courts were deliberating on the Sand Creek suit, Daniel Sommer was preparing for an attack on what he called the “New Digressives.” With the inception of David Lipscomb College, the incentive to launch such schools was furnished and one was started at Odessa, Missouri. In February, 1907, Daniel Sommer and B. F. Rhodes met in public discussion at Odessa, and later at Hale, Missouri. In his sixth speech at Odessa, Brother Sommer declared, “My friends, you will find that every argument that he can use in favor of this institution

can be used in favor of man-made missionary societies, and every other man-made institution for the purpose of advocating religion.” This position committed Brother Sommer to “no longer regard as brethren” those who endorsed such schools.

In 1908, he began a written discussion with J. N. Armstrong, then president of Western Bible and Literary College at Odessa, and later to become president of Harding College. Not once did Sommer refer to Armstrong as brother although Armstrong repeatedly addressed Sommer as such. After one essay in which Bro. Sommer assailed Bro. Rhodes as “an unfaithful witness, a reckless asserter, and a bold bluffer,” and Bro. Armstrong and others as “bold and blatant, disrespectful and untruthful, in their attempts to defend the colleges that I oppose, and to besmirch me because I oppose them,” his opponent wrote:

I know that my respondent and a very few other preachers are so blinded by their party spirit that they would be willing to rend asunder the body of my blessed Redeemer over the matter. Indeed they have advocated the ‘making of it an issue’ before this unkind speech of Brother Sommer’s. Thanks be to God the brethren love the peace of God’s children more than they do partyism. Should I meet a church that would not ‘employ’ a preacher simply because he opposes this school I would call it sinful discrimination of God’s children. I have never felt the least alienated from any brother in Christ because he opposes the school work. I have condemned the dogmatic, ‘pitch-fork’ style in which the opposition has been waged for I deplore it. It is no way to show a man his error by making a desperate effort to convince the world he is as mean as an infidel, that he is desperately wicked, that he is beyond all redemption.

Again, on page 265 of the printed account of the discussion, brother Armstrong alludes to Brother Sommer’s disregard of him as brother in these words:

Why will Brother Sommer trifle with this serious question by trying to turn this discussion into a wrangle over English construction? Doesn't he want union, peace, good feeling and love, among brethren? Does he really want to stir up ill-feeling, strife, envy, jealousy and division? Is he trying to feed the spirit of party and prejudice? Is he ignoring the earnest entreaty of the Holy Spirit to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? What have I done that Brother Sommer manifests such bitter feelings toward me? True, I married Harding's daughter but why should his anathemas against Harding reach unto me? Before he ever saw me and knew but little of me he ceased to call me 'brother.' Is his bitterness against Harding so deep that he disfellowships those related to him?

The attitude of Brother Sommer in the matter of "brotherhood" is summed up in a statement recorded on pages 299 and 300 of the book:

About six years ago I began, with much reluctance, to oppose a certain class of colleges, for they had been projected by men whom I supposed were my brethren. But I have tested six of them, and have proven them to be reckless in regard to truth, on the College Question, and slanderers of me personally. As a result I cannot regard them as my brethren, and do not so designate them except through force of habit in form of expression. My opponent, on the other hand, has professed to regard me as a 'brother' but likened me to a cowardly 'dog' in his 3rd essay, and to a 'bull dog' in his 19th. Between these extremes he has been guilty of much vituperation and scurrility, toward me personally. In connection with this I mention again his almost incessant misrepresentation of me and the position I occupy. In view of all this I solemnly state that I question whether the sun has ever shined upon a greater burlesque on education than when such men as I have referred to arose and offered themselves to the Churches of Christ as educators of their children . . . I appeal likewise to all of my brethren to unite with me in

daily prayer that God will save his churches from all their enemies, and especially their college enemies.

Members of certain segments of the non-instrument wing of the restoration movement are inclined to castigate Brother Sommer for his attitude toward them and their institutions. This comes with poor grace in view of the fact that his attitude was the natural consequence of the separationist philosophy adopted some years before and which is still the orthodox position of those who opposed Brother Sommer. Actually he was allowing them to taste their own gruel. They “disregarded as brethren” those who endorsed “innovations.” When another innovation was introduced Brother Sommer consistently applied the official policy and refused to “regard them as brethren.” It was the philosophy which needed to be blamed, not Brother Sommer. But many in “The Church of Christ” rejected Brother Sommer and retained the philosophy and have since split themselves into smithereens!

Brother Armstrong’s opinion about those who composed “the brotherhood” proved to be too optimistic. It was not long until those who endorsed the schools referred to their opposers as “Sommerites” and were in turn designated as “collegeites.” The two parties grew farther apart and prejudice was aroused by articles which inflamed passions. Soon there was little recognition of brotherly feeling and the factional attitude prevailed in the hearts of those on both sides. Often this was intensified by sectional feeling. In the non-instrument segment of the restoration movement brotherhood was now determined by an attitude toward religio-secular schools.

This was merely the beginning of sorrows. As congregations began to mature every alteration in method and procedure brought strife and alienation. Local congregations were thrown into furore when baptisteries were installed in meetinghouses for convenience in immersing. There were those who contended that “the pattern” was for baptizing in streams.

Fortunately, an overt break on a wider scale was averted, and the disciple brotherhood escaped the fate of the Mennonite movement, one segment of which is known as “River Amish.” (For the benefit of those who are interested in historic backgrounds it is interesting to note that the American Mennonite movement suffered from division over the same things that divided our restoration movement, and often in the very same period. This is interesting because their background is primarily German and Dutch, whereas ours was Scotch and Irish).

In the early days of the restoration movement the members marched forward each Sunday to lay their financial contributions on the table. This tradition based on a misconception of the words, “lay by him in store,” became so ingrained that when some congregations decided to pass a plate to receive the gifts, strenuous objections were raised on the ground that this was “aping the sects.” In some instances members quit attending, in others there were those who ignored the plate and marched to the table after the service to deposit their contribution in stately but solitary dignity.

Other matters, however, actually invoked the severance policy and the age of factionalism came into full flower in all of its shameful consequences in the first part of our century. Division occurred over “the order of worship” when certain ones dogmatically affirmed that Acts 2:42 contained the sequence in which “the items of worship” must be observed to be acceptable unto God. The doctrine of the autonomy of the local church was flouted as it always is by the factional spirit. Congregations which did not follow “the pattern” as to “the order” were branded as disloyal, in turn those who insisted upon it as “the only scriptural way” were designated as hobbyists. The visiting preachers resorted to insinuation and innuendo and kindled the flames of partisanship.

When certain congregations began to have classes on

Lord's Day for the purpose of Bible study and teaching, a hue and cry was raised which has not yet subsided. An open rupture occurred and the faithfulness of men to the Lord Jesus Christ began to be tested by their personal views regarding a method of instruction. Zealots on both sides pressed their ideas and opinions both by oral proclamation and through the press until membership in the family of God began to be measured, not by the new birth but by an attitude toward Bible classes. Both sides diligently searched the scriptures with a fine tooth comb to find justification for their partisan procedures. One group found sanction for their system in every mention of the word "teach" while the other used the same passages for condemnation. It was not the word of God, nor even the interpretation of it, which caused the division, but rather the philosophy of "preservation by separation" which was adopted in 1889. J. N. Armstrong saw this and said in the debate with Brother Sommer in 1908:

The very spirit which my respondent manifests to such a marked degree is stirring up strife in the house of God over many matters. Even in the Octographic Review family itself there is at present urgent need of peacemakers. Division is threatened and brethren are being set at naught. If the factions forming persist in the effort now making, peace will be destroyed. Brother Denney believes that it is wrong for the church to separate into classes on the Lord's Day to teach the Bible. A host of disciples stand with him. The brethren who oppose this practice believe brother Sommer is not abiding in the word of the Lord, and brother Denney evidently thinks that if brother Sommer persists he (Sommer) should be withdrawn from. This spirit is the crop from the seed brother Sommer and others of the Octographic Review have been sowing for years. They are but reaping what they have sown. I do not doubt that there are whole-hearted Christians on both sides of the question of dividing into classes. Here is a time for forbearance, long-suffering, and patience, on the part of all while, in brotherly love, a deep, earnest search for truth is being made.

I am confident that both Brother Sommer and Brother Denney were sincere in their approach to the class question. Both thought they were doing the will of the Lord. Both thought they were “speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent.” But they were victims of a human decision which had been reached in an attempt to deal with the first “innovations” introduced into the disciple brotherhood. I was nurtured on the philosophy embodied in that decision. I grew up to regard all who worship where instrumental music was used as sectarians. I looked upon all who opposed classes as hobbyists, or “antis.” I sustained exactly the same relationship to these latter as those who used the instrument sustained to me. If I regarded either group as brethren it was with grave mental reservation. They were spiritual “half-brothers” or “step-brothers.”

There is one aspect of our factional state which I wish to mention. I found it easier to be charitable toward those who opposed classes than toward those who endorsed the use of the instrument. In an honest attempt to comprehend and evaluate this feeling I have come to the conclusion that we resent those who have what we oppose more than we do those who oppose what we have because of a psychological quirk. Those who use the instrument regard us as “antis” while we regard as “antis” those who oppose classes. As so used the word “anti” has certain connotations and overtones of inferiority. I think we regarded those who opposed classes with a sort of patronizing air. They were objects of compassion because they could not distinguish between things that differ. But this very association of the word “anti” made us resent its application to us by those who used the instrument since by our own definition we assumed that they regarded us as a little bit queer.

It should be pointed out that there is a difference between a person being anti-instrument with regard to the corporate worship and an “Anti” as the term is often employed. The first relates to a man who holds a personal conviction as to the use of

instrumental music; the second to one who is a member of an anti-instrument party. The same distinction should be made with reference to a position on Bible colleges or any other controversial subject. The man who belongs to a party, or faction, makes the thing a test of fellowship. He conditions brotherhood and family relationship upon an attitude toward that thing. He no longer regards as brethren those who do not concur with his views.

I owe an apology to both those who use instrumental music and to those who oppose Bible classes. In truth, I owe the same apology to those in every other faction than the one in which I grew up. I have not altered my views as to either instrumental music or Bible classes but I have certainly amended my thinking on fellowship and brotherhood. I am saddened and ashamed by my previous littleness and intolerance. I now realize that in our present divided state no faction of the disciple brotherhood is "the loyal church" nor is the restoration movement the church of God. There are some in all of our parties who are as faithful as they know how to be. There are others in all of them who are a disgrace to our profession. I propose to love all of God's children as my brethren, to move among them all as they will permit and when I can do so without giving them offence. I shall discuss with them our differences as brethren and not aliens!

Our formation of parties or factions around various sides of controversial issues is sinful and wrong. Division among brethren is condemned of God. One does not violate the will of God when he rejects division in the spiritual family as a means of furthering God's purpose. Recognition of brotherhood and not rejection of it is our only hope of correcting the ills among us so we may get on with the task of "uniting the Christians in all sects." Our present state has not been produced by following God's word but by implementing the philosophy which produced the initial cleavage. And it will not be enough to go back to a certain stage since we adopted the policy and recognize as our brethren those who have since divided. We must go all the

way back and reject the philosophy as such. Then we can restore brotherhood and in that frame of reference examine anew the differences which created our difficulties.

All of our parties exist as fruit of the party spirit. They will continue to exist only so long as that spirit prevails. When love for God and His children is enthroned in our hearts the party spirit must “fold its tent like the Arabs, and as silently steal away.” Our history is one of tragedy and bitterness, of sorrow and division. It can become one of glorious conquest. We can once more join the stream of religious thought from which we have been isolated and insulated. We can bring to bear upon the whole scope of Christendom these truths we have learned as did the Campbells, Stone, and others of their day. The world of sectism can again be made to reel and totter under the impact of a plea for unity and restoration. But the force of that plea will be nullified and neutralized so long as we preach unity and practice division.

Perhaps the saddest day for the restoration movement came when certain ones began to advocate re-baptism of those previously immersed as a requisite to fellowship. Although there are at least nine “designs” of baptism, or blessings accruing from it, set forth in the new covenant scriptures, these arbitrarily fixed upon one and made it their creedal test for the validity of baptism. By demanding that the believer know in advance that his baptism was for this specific “design” they substituted knowledge of a result for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the determining factor. In one fell swoop they sought to un-Christianize many of the sheep of God scattered over the sectarian hills. This partisan attempt to stake a factional claim on baptism was unknown to the pioneers of the restoration movement. It was valiantly resisted by David Lipscomb and others when it began to be advocated, but the third generation of restoration heirs had become so crystallized in their party spirit that they confused “The Church of Christ” with the church of God.

This doctrine has so affected the judgment of some that they will not even accept into congregational membership those who come from another segment of the restoration movement unless they submit to re-baptism. It is not an unheard of thing to see an article in some journals arguing that “Christian Church baptism” is not valid. The inference is that “Church of Christ baptism” (whatever that is) is valid. Nothing else that has ever happened has contributed more toward making “The Church of Christ” an insular twentieth century sect than the general adoption of the false premise involved in the dogma of re-baptism. It stems from a complete misconception of the nature of the *ekklesia* of God. Until that fallacy in reasoning is removed we will never recapture the significance of the statement by Thomas Campbell in the “Declaration and Address” that, “The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one.” Until we grasp the meaning of that sentence we will simply devote our labors toward constitution of another sect in an already cruelly divided world.

Even as Daniel Sommer and J. N. Armstrong were debating the question of colleges in Missouri, in 1908, the spirit of factionalism was being kindled in other parts of the nation. Brethren were being alienated, congregations were being rent asunder, tempers were flaring and passions were surging. Brother Armstrong remarked about this fact in these words:

Again I say, the spirit manifested by my respondent in this debate will make splinters of the Church of God. Think of the divisions in the state of Texas alone, and be wise. There are brethren there who endorse our school work but agree with brother Denney in the contention among the Octographic Review readers; so brother Denney and these Texas brethren could be one at this point, but could destroy one another on the school question. Texas brethren are setting at nought one another on many questions. Brother Rice is building up a sect over ‘the order of worship,’ then, there is the rebaptism question over which so much strife has been caused, and so

many brethren set at nought. There is actually church property in Texas with a restrictive clause in the deed concerning 'sect baptism.' Now, brother Sommer and I agree on the rebaptism question, the classification of children, the order of worship, etc., but he disfellowships me on the school question. There are half a dozen, or more, petty sects in Texas alone, yet they are absolutely one on the great principle that a 'thus saith the Lord' is necessary to establish any religious practice. They are misunderstanding woefully what Christ has said on these subjects.

In the mad surge of factionalism the voices of moderation were drowned out. Those who pleaded for unity despite divergent opinions were branded as compromisers. They were ridiculed as being "soft." Love for the party was substituted for love for mankind. Division became the accepted mode of resolving every difficulty. It was defended and glorified as the will of God. "Gospel meetings" became the excuse for bitter partisan attacks. The advent of radio made it possible for factional orators to dispense their propaganda on a wider scale. The body of Christ was hacked and chopped to pieces under the guise of loyalty to its Head. Humble followers of the Master who could not conscientiously acquiesce in every partisan interpretation were denounced and placed under anathema by those whose moral life could not compare with theirs. The restoration movement, harassed and hagridden, became the most divided of any religious group on the American scene. The philosophy of separation and exclusivism had burst out in full bloom. The seed planted years before had produced a deadly Upas tree.

Now, after many years the axe is being laid at the root of the factional tree. Perhaps there has not been a brighter prospect in more than a century. The problems we face are still many and great. The spirit of division is entrenched deeply in the hearts of some of those whom we love. Doubt, suspicion, and hatred rear their ugly, snaky heads like modern Gorgons. But

there is in the hearts of many a yearning for closer ties. There is a recognition of our common origin and a sense of our mutual need of each other. The plea for oneness is heard in the land. In our next issue we will present our reasons for lifting up our heads in hope. We urge you to read “The Decline of Factionalism” because it will strengthen your determination to press the crusade for fellowship and brotherhood among the members of all of our dissident groups. Until next month may the Prince of peace bless you greatly!

Adventures in Religion (6)

Mission Messenger (April 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

There is a constant temptation in our modern culture to identify ourselves with Jesus in word while ignoring his demands upon our lives. It is a matter of personal honor to be regarded as a Christian. In respectable circles of society it is a card of admission. It is a good recommendation when you seek a position as a junior executive. It has come to pass that being a Christian is no more of an adventure than being a minor stockholder in Bethlehem Steel or the Carey Salt Company. A Christian is no more expected to change the world than a holder of one share is expected to change the policy of these corporations. Both are expected to acknowledge the head of the firm and do nothing but conform.

Unfortunately for this philosophy, acknowledgment of the head of the community of saints entails a life of non-conformity to the world. We cannot really recognize his lordship without assuming our own responsibility to change and transform the environment in which we live. Any person who attempts this embarks upon the high seas of adventure. He will become a prophet without honor in his own city. He may be stigmatized and ostracized by the unthinking ones whose hearts he tries to fire with the real message of God. "It is always the same— you never fail to resist the Holy Spirit! Just as your fathers did, so you are doing now. Can you name a single prophet whom your fathers did not persecute?" (Acts 7:51, 52). Those to whom this

was addressed proved the validity of the accusation. They stoned to death the one who asked the question. We live in a profit-taking and not a prophet-making society! Our norm is deadly to the spirit. We address Jesus as Lord but serve things as our gods. Thus we are absorbed and assimilated by the culture around us. We talk about adjustment to life and by this we mean adapting ourselves to the standards of the world. We are afraid of being conspicuous by being different. Our witness is stultified, our hopes are crucified, and we become resigned to helpless mediocrity. There is no longer anything heroic about what we call Christianity.

Jesus recognized the temptation to conform and asked, "What is the point of calling me, 'Lord, Lord,' without doing what I tell you to do?" This implies that there really is no point to much of what passes for Christianity in these days. Those who subscribe to it are quick to acknowledge Jesus as Lord but the idea that they should actually adopt the implications of his way of life is remote from their thinking. The "churches" are geared and managed so the spirit is not free. If one should attempt to eat with publicans and sinners he would be treated exactly as was the Master during his personal sojourn on earth. Every day must have been one of genuine adventure to Jesus. It was also one fraught with constant danger.

Our lives are too shallow. It is easier to set up a pre-fabricated structure on the sand than to build a permanent home. The whole world around us is one vast sub-division consisting of pre-fabs and a man who goes in for solid construction is regarded as "an odd ball." If one chooses a course in college which will enable him to serve the needs of humanity instead of to secure a lucrative position, if he reads and studies diligently even to the neglect of the big football game of the season he is a "square." If he expresses a deep conviction in Bible class on the Lord's Day which cuts across the preacher's thinking he is a dangerous influence and will have to be warned. Because of this, religion has become a monotonous and tedious

performance. We must recapture the spirit of adventure or die because we have lost the sense of adventure of the spirit.

Here is the way Jesus puts it. “Let me show you what the man who comes to me, hears what I have to say, and puts it into practice, is really like. He is like a man building a house, who dug down to rock bottom and laid the foundation of his house upon it. Then when the flood came and the flood water swept down upon that house, it could not shift because it was properly built.” Note that the test of a properly built house is not its external attractiveness but its ability to withstand times of crisis. The strength is derived not from the superstructure but from the foundation. Before a man can build upward he must first dig downward. If he does not do this any structure he erects will be superficial.

What is “rock bottom”? How do you know when you have dug deep enough? The rock bottom life is one that involves three things— coming to Jesus, hearing His words and putting them into practice. When one adopts as his philosophy one of total commitment to Jesus, when he resolves to reproduce the life of Jesus on earth to the fullest extent subject only to his human limitation that person has hit “rock bottom.” He is then ready to start building. After that, every stone he lays will bring him nearer heaven. What are some of the involvements of the rock bottom way of life?

1. A universal love for mankind, based not upon reciprocity, but upon love for love’s sake. The world cannot be changed by love of force but by the force of love. We must inaugurate a reign of love in our hearts with all men as subjects. “For if you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even tax collectors do that!”

2. An association with men based not upon their agreement with us but upon their need for compassion and understanding. An actual cultivation of those who are outside our group. “And

if you exchange greetings only with your own circle, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do that much.”

3. A renunciation of the rule of gold in behalf of the Golden Rule. This will enable you to disprove the cynical proverb that “Every man has his price.” No one can give his loyalty to some things and be loyal to the creator of all things. It is wrong to worship the creature instead of the Creator; it is impossible to serve them both. “No one can be loyal to two masters; . . . You cannot serve God and the power of money at the same time.”

4. A substitution of forgiveness of failures for a failure to forgive. This is not the same as ignoring failures or merely overlooking them. It requires a recognition of the failures and an understanding of those who have failed and it is not the same as pretending that no failure exists. “For if you forgive other people their failures, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you will not forgive other people, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your failures.”

5. A proper sense of values leading to a life free from concern about the merely physical and sensual aspects of existence. The pagans in the days of Jesus were always thinking about things to eat, drink or wear. The neo-pagans of our own day exhibit the same characteristics. Over against these is the wholly committed life. “Set your heart on his kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course.”

Only a house built upon an unshakeable rock will not be shaken or rocked by storm and wind. It costs too much to build cheaply. No house can be better than him who lives in it for “every house is builded by some man.” We build for this age only when we build on the sand, that which is to endure for the ages must be built on the Rock of Ages. Shifting sands and drifting lives will not stand against wild waters and sweeping storms. Take heed how you build!

This Is Life Eternal

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

The Christian religion is perfectly adapted to the needs of man as he is. As man is a creation of the Word of God, so the religion he requires is a revelation of the word of God. It is not a discovery made by man but an uncovering of the thoughts of God for man. It is not so much the result of man's search for God as it is a revelation of God seeking for man. While man is in the flesh he exists in three time dimensions— past, present and future. He lives in the past by memory and in the future through expectation. This exalts him above the animal creation and demonstrates his rationality. It also emphasizes his need of religion.

The Revised Standard Version has the psalmist saying, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God" (Psalm 8:4, 5). This is correct. The word here rendered "God" is *elohim*, the same as found in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." One who is "little less than God" must be a responsible being and thus ever aware of shortcomings and frailties in the flesh. At the same time, he must revolt against the thought of the utter termination of his existence and the extinction of his personality. Crushed between the sins and failures of yesterday and the dread of death tomorrow, he has no present. He is here in the flesh but his mental self, the real being, is elsewhere, existing in one of the

other dimensions. Man is said to be depressed when he is compressed or crushed between two weights. The guilt of the past creates anxiety and the fear of the future produces anxiety. Caught between these he becomes a helpless victim with the walls closing in upon him. As the present shrinks and he dwells more and more in the past or future, both of which are now unreal, he eventually withdraws from all reality. He then has no real existence except the physical and even this is affected and impaired in his morbid state. The whole purpose of Christianity is to enable man to recapture the present, for only the present is life.

It is true that Jesus Christ is said to be “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” but that is accommodative language. There is no past or future for that which is uncreated and eternal. The purpose of the Christian revelation is to make man more like God, to fit him for fellowship with the divine, and this requires making man ever conscious of the present. When Moses watched the flock of Jethro in the wilderness about Horeb, and his mind reverted to the circumstances of his exile and contemplated the possibilities of freeing his people from slavery, his reveries were disturbed by the voice of God. But before God could arrest his attention he had to arouse him from the distractions of the past and future.

The record of the event is very enlightening. The angel appeared in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush. First, Moses looked, then began talking to himself, “I will turn aside and see this great sight.” “When God saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’” Moses replied, “Here I am.” God then instructed him to go to the slaves and say, “I AM has sent me to you.” When a man can truly speak to God and say “Here I am” then the I AM will be there. God can never be “I Was” or “I Will Be” for Deity has no past or future tense.

If man is to have fellowship with God and with the Son he

must recapture a sense of the present, that is, he must experience eternal life. He must be freed from the burden of guilt in the past and from his fear of death in the future. It was to accomplish precisely this state that Jesus was manifested to the apostles who heard him, saw him and handled him. “The life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us . . . so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:2, 3). It is ridiculous to talk about eternal life being *merely* a future prospect, for there is no such thing as living in the future. When the future arrives it is the present. If a man *does not* have eternal life in the present he *will not* have it in the future. “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life. I write this to you to believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

One who has the Son has life for the simple reason that he has recaptured his present through Christ. Guilt and anxiety shrink our horizons to nothingness and the world closes in upon us. Our guilt is simply our past “open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). It becomes a complex because we are able to do but are unable to undo. Our problem is that we have not the power to regard the past as past, we project it into the present. We cannot simply stop and start over because every time we start we are stopped by thought of our past.

Only God can remedy this and he does so by making us a new creation in which the past actually passes. “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). Note that the new is present, not future. It is not something “to come” but a state that “has come.” It is present. But, can we forget our past, so long as we can think? It is not necessary that it be forgotten

by us but that we have a consciousness it has been forgiven by Him. The sense of guilt stems not so much from the act committed as from the fact that it is unremitted.

Jesus took our past by assuming our guilt. “For your sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Paul recalled that he “formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted” Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13) but he could say, “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal” (Phil. 3:13). The reason is clear. “I received mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus . . . but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:13, 14, 16).

Just as Jesus took our past upon himself by being made sin, so he removed our anxiety for the future by becoming our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). This he accomplished by devitalizing death. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage” (Heb. 2:14, 15). It is an incongruity to think of a son of God being frightened by death. Only the sons of men have such fears. So the Son of God became the Son of man that the sons of men might become the sons of God. Through him we are “more than conquerors.”

The cross of Christ removed our fear of the past, the open tomb our fear of the future. The grave is not the end but the beginning of a richer experience. A Christian does not leave home at death; he goes home. So Jesus can say, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself” (Matt. 6:34). The world no longer closes in upon us

but opens up before us. Our horizons are pushed back behind and before us so that there is no setting sun “and night shall be no more” (Rev. 22:5). “Forgetting the past” and “having no anxiety for tomorrow” we live in the divine present as well as in the divine presence, and we live in the first because of the last.

The pressures of the world are still there. They are all about us but they are rendered helpless by a superior force within us. “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” The reason is given by Jesus, “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). It is true that we are in the world but it is also true that we are in Christ and he is in us. So long as we are in him the world cannot overcome us; so long as he is in us we can overcome the world. We are protected because we are in him; we are powerful because he is in us.

“We know that we ourselves are children of God and we also know that the world around us is in the power of the evil one. We know too that the Son of God has actually come to this world, and has shown us the way to know the one who is true. We know that our real life is in the true one, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the real God and this is real, eternal life” (1 John 5:19, 20).

Decline of Factionalism

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

It seems to us that a knowledge of Ezekiel 34 is a *must* to every member of the fellowship of the concerned. This is especially true if their concern leads them to conclude that the answer to the problem of division lies in a restoration of the spirit of the primitive community of the saints. In this chapter, filled with pastoral imagery, the people of God are regarded, not as a unified whole but as a scattered flock. Two reasons are assigned for their dispersion. One is the selfish indifference of their shepherds, the other the cruel arrogance of some members of the flock toward others.

The shepherds are accused of feeding themselves at the expense of the flock. They refused to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the crippled, bring back the strays or seek for the lost. They were charged with ruling with force and harshness. There is a significant statement, "So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd." It seems contradictory to condemn shepherds while at the same time declaring there was no shepherd. In verse 8 occurs this statement, "Since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, . . ." It must be remembered that shepherding is a function and one who does not tend the flock is really not a shepherd. However, there are those who assume the title without accepting the responsibility. They regard themselves as shepherds because of position, God

disregards them because of their disposition. Instead of such shepherds guarding the flock, the flock must be protected from the shepherds. “Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they be not food for them.”

The entire blame for the scattered condition does not rest upon the shepherds. It is necessary for God to judge between sheep and sheep (verse 17). There are those who regard God’s pasture as a private possession and they resent the intrusion of others where they have staked their exclusive claims. In defence of their assumed rights they are callous and brutal toward the weaker ones who are driven off. “I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, I will save my flock . . . I will judge between sheep and sheep” (verses 20-22).

Not all who drive others away are cruel and harsh. Some are merely unconcerned about their needs. So long as they are filled they do not care what happens to those who follow. They are indicted because they feed on the good pasture, then trample the remainder into a muck; they drink the clear water at the springs, then foul the rest with their feet. The spiritual world has frequently become one of defiled and corrupted spiritual food and drink, obnoxious to the hungry and thirsty sheep.

The prophet was not pessimistic about the ultimate result. It was the will of God that the flock be united. He heard the voice of God saying, “I myself will search for my sheep . . . I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness . . . I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David and he shall feed them . . . I will make them a covenant of peace . . . I will send down the showers in their seasons; they shall be showers of blessing . . . And they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they are my people.” The purpose of God will not always be

thwarted. This is the hope of the saints.

The condition which existed in fleshly Israel is today duplicated in spiritual Israel. God's people are now scattered over all the face of the earth. They wander over every sectarian hill and every denominational mountain. Helpless and forlorn, many of them become a prey to evil influences. They have passed through "a day of clouds and thick darkness." Many, viewing their plight and distress, look upon their condition as hopeless. They conclude that the sheep are so entangled in the wilderness they can never be extricated and are doomed to continue in their divided state until they are consumed by fate. Actually this is a symptom of unbelief which ignores certain undeniable facts.

The Unifying Cross

1. In the days of old, God called his people back from Babylon and restored them to their own land as a unified whole. He pointed out that this was not for their sake or because they deserved it but to vindicate his holy name (Ezek. 36:21). We must realize that the Christian way has been profaned among the heathen once more because of our Babylonian captivity and God will not allow his purpose to fail on the earth.

2. The power of the cross is sufficient to unite the people of God. By it we were reconciled when we were enemies of God. Certainly we can be brought together now that we are the friends of God. The reason for our sectarian division is not that the cross has failed, but we have failed the cross. We have sought unity by conformity instead of community, by organization instead of by personal reformation and consecration. We have not planted the cross as a rallying standard but we have planted churches made after our own image and likeness, and then designated them as the body of Christ. The cross is not so much an emblem of death as an encouragement to life—the life of the Son of God. That life embodied in ours will draw us closer to one

another. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

3. God has already demonstrated a power to unify divergent elements much more widely separated than those which today profess faith in Jesus Christ. The Jews and Gentiles were filled with animosity toward each other. They regarded each other as dogs. They did not recognize the same God. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:13, 14). If the barrier existing between Jew and Gentile could be dissolved through the blood of Jesus there is no existing hostility between us which cannot be terminated.

4. Jesus would not pray for an impossible condition. On the very night before his betrayal, Jesus prayed for the unity of all who believe in him through the testimony of the apostles. He asked for this unity to become a reality for two reasons: first, that the world would know that God had sent him; secondly, that the same world would know that God loved the believers as he loved Jesus. This implied that the purpose of God as related to Jesus and the disciples can never be fully exhibited to the world until the believers are a unit. The world will never accept the testimony of the divine Sonship from a divided church, neither will it recognize the divine love for the ransomed ones until they constitute a redemptive fellowship. This state is to be accomplished by recognition and acceptance of a divine gift—the glory of God. “The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22, 23).

We have been seeking for unity through means which

make it impossible of attainment. We have sought to bring it about by coercion, compulsion, dogmatism and debate. We have been trying to envision it while we had a veil of partisanship over our faces. It is not to be achieved except by that attitude of humility which makes us see clearly the real glory of the Lord. In other words we cannot have the unity of the Spirit until we have the spirit of unity. This can only be produced in us as we are personally transformed by the Spirit. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

5. Many of us bear in our own hearts the living testimony that the factional spirit can be changed and crucified. God can do for others what he has done for us. Some who were once bitter and contentious can now share in love and bestow it. The spirit of brotherhood pervading the heart can prompt us to yearn and seek for a greater fellowship in Jesus. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (Rom. 8:32).

Our skepticism about attaining unto unity is an indication of human weakness. Because we cannot see *how* this will be done we conclude that it *cannot* be done. Because we doubt that it can be done we oppose any attempt to bring it about. Our unbelief makes us victims of the cynical spirit. The apostles were once confronted by a man who brought his demon-possessed son to be healed. Apparently they tried their customary formula of exorcism with no success. Jesus walked into the crowd, and seeing their predicament, rebuked the evil spirit. “And the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly” (Matthew 17:18). The disciples privately asked why they could not cast the demon out and Jesus informed them, “Because of your little faith.” Simply because the evil party spirit appears too strong for us is no indication that it is too great for God.

The fact that the Holy Spirit is working mightily in the

hearts of men in this very generation, leading toward unity and oneness, is amply evident to every one who sees with unveiled face. The signs are evident and manifest to the interested observer. We are standing at the threshold of a new day. Obviously many do not see this because their eyes are closed. Thoreau wrote, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake." Some may ask why this is any more the case now than in the past. The answer is simple. We have been made ready by circumstances and events for this day. Certain factors have combined to prepare us as instruments of the spirit to achieve the divine purpose. Let us list a few of those things which contribute to this state or condition. These are by no means all of the factors and they may not be the most important but they are worthy of consideration because they serve to explain the altered attitude which makes us "vessels fit for use by the Master."

The Crumbling Walls

1. A sense of shame because of our involvement in the divided state of the believers. Many of us no longer regard any faction as the church of God. We do not try to defend separation as the divine means of securing unity. We recognize that division is a sin and the party spirit a work of the flesh. We do not attempt to justify our previous attitudes. We deplore them. This position makes us akin with all of the real thinkers and leaders in all of the splinter parties in the world today. One who is apologetic for division among God's people shows how dated is his reasoning.

An American theologian has written, "Disunity in the name of Christ is a scandal and a shame." The Methodist Church in Australia includes in its prayer the statement, "Forgive, O Lord, the hypocrisy of the Church in attempting to reconcile the world when its own life is sundered apart by bickering and bigotry." Before we can have a serious attempt at unity we must have a common base from which to start. We are

finding it in the growing abhorrence of the frightening sectarian status quo.

We should not become discouraged because there are still those who proclaim unity and practice division. The party spirit is subtle and enduring. Satan will release his hold upon us with great reluctance. His greatest weapon has been the divisive spirit and he will not surrender it readily. It can be wrested from his grasp only by humility and confession of guilt. We are coming to the place where we can see the shame and mockery of our philosophy of separation. We are starting to flow together in a recognition of mutual failure to keep the peace and this will become a compelling tide.

2. A realization of the futility of the policy pursued in the past. All of us are becoming convinced that no one faction or party will be able to absorb and assimilate all of the others. In the past we have split over every matter of difference that has arisen. This has crystallized the party spirit and made it difficult to resolve the problem. The cleavage always became wider with the passing of time and was augmented by the agitation of preachers on both sides. There was no real exchange of thought on a rational basis. The only procedure was public debate in a tension-charged emotional framework.

There is a growing conviction that such public debates as have been conducted have seldom done much permanent good. These have not really been forums for the mutual search for truth but spiritual gladiatorial combats by chosen champions. We are aware that no faction has all of the truth and that all of us have something to contribute to the others, while all of us can learn from others. We need not sacrifice any truth we hold in order to listen to others. In our divided state no one faction is the loyal church to the exclusion of all others. We are fast giving up the “loyal church fallacy” in our thinking and returning to the concept of one body composed of all those individuals who are joined to the head— our Lord Jesus Christ. Although these are

members of the one body they may be divided by unfortunate circumstances which have arisen in the past to plague and trouble the restoration movement. While deploring these differences we can recognize our common standing in Christ.

3. An increased educational scope with training in the art of thinking. The greatest enemy of parochial and provincial thought is education. Through it, the doors of the mind are opened to greater vistas and nobler heights. The narrow sectarian spirit fears true liberal education more than anything else. Our young people are being exposed to knowledge as never before in our history. The great thoughts of the ages are filtering through and are affecting the consciousness of our generation.

Men who are enabled to evaluate things properly and look at them in the right perspective will not be content to allow the great relationships of life to be disturbed by matters of an inferior or secondary nature. Those factions which desire to maintain their identity should retire behind barricades and refuse to educate their young. The party spirit simply cannot survive under the searchlight of naked truth. Through the medium of the educational process the walls of sectism are being battered down.

4. The depreciation in value of those things which have been credited with division in the past. One of the favorable by-products of war is the result of uprooting people and transporting them into new areas where they are confronted with varied situations. Soldiers and civilians are sent into other parts of the world where the things which seemed so important at home are unknown. That which formed the chief topic of religious nature in their previous setting seems incongruous in an area where it has never been heard of.

Ours is an era of greatly augmented travel. People are brought into contact with each other and become convinced that there are many who are sincerely seeking to serve God besides

those in the faction to which they belong. At home they would not dare to attend at another congregation of divergent practice because to do so would bring down upon their heads the suspicion and wrath of those with whom they are allied. Away from home they feel a greater sense of freedom and are thus given a better insight into the attitudes and motivations of others.

The proof that additional contact and exposure is detrimental to the maintenance of the party spirit is found in the extreme attempts of factional leaders to keep their adherents from going to hear those who differ with them. They employ threats, coercion, boycott, and false accusations to hold their members "in line." There is increasing evidence that many are beginning to think for themselves and are coming to resent the dogmatic and authoritarian whip-cracking tactics of preachers who wish to be regarded as the authorized interpreters for the splinter party. As the dignity and rights of the individual are restored and the priesthood of all believers is re-affirmed men will come to realize that we have but one high priest and he is not on earth. Factions are maintained by factional leaders.

We must not overlook the contribution being made by the mass media for the dissemination of knowledge. The printing press is the modern "gift of tongues." Obviously the press, radio and television, make possible the circulation of a great deal of error but at the same time much truth filters through to the hearts of the honest. It is a fact that many factions which take no part in the drives to stem the flow of harmful pornographic material through the mails go all out in an attempt to keep their members from reading material published by their brethren in other segments. A faction survives only through rigid exclusivism. When barriers are broken down factionalism withers and dies on the vine.

5. A feeling of urgency relative to the world situation. In pioneer days news was conveyed very slowly. One part of the

world might not know for months what had taken place in another sector. A great catastrophe— tornado, tidal wave, or hurricane could devastate an area and the rest of humanity would not learn of it for many weeks. The situation is very different now. All of us have been forced to join the human family. That which affected Burma, Cuba, or the Congo yesterday, is the theme of discussion at our breakfast tables today. As our world grows smaller our hearts must grow larger if we are to survive. Gone are the days when oceans were private moats around our national fortresses.

There was a time when it was sufficient religious exercise to defend our local party against frontal assaults by traveling preachers who came into the isolated community advocating a divergent view about cups, classes, or colleges. Now the whole Christian concept is being challenged as never before and we are made to realize that we are just a small part of the whole. It seems a rather feeble performance to make a great ado about whether Jesus wants the fruit of the vine in the communion of his blood to be fermented or unfermented while the savage forces of atheism surround us crying that there is no God. It is like arguing over whether we shall have tea or coffee for luncheon while an Indian raid is in progress, or like tacking a shingle on the garage roof while the house is on fire.

In the days of the American Revolution when the various colonies were fiercely contending with each other over their own rights, Benjamin Franklin sought to bring unity out of partisan chaos by pointing out that “we must all hang together or we may all hang separately.” There is little hope that a narrow faction will continue if Christianity goes down in our nation under the iron heel of world communism. Surely there must be some area in the realm of the spiritual where we can stand together against the dialectical materialism which threatens all that we hold dear — and that *we all* hold dear! The world ferment in the winepress of wrath has reduced to the realm of the trivial our little contentions about fermented wine as the cup of the Lord.

6. Recapture of implications in the language of the Spirit. We are very fortunate to live in an age when much research is being done in the field of spiritual linguistics. We ought never to be afraid of what honest study will uncover. Alexander Campbell in giving a synopsis of reformation goals placed the discovery of the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit first in order. We are convinced that it deserves this distinction since practically all else is dependent upon it. As we see the true import of the spiritual words we can detect the fallacies in our previous reasoning, and we are thus enabled to correct our errors.

Only eternity will reveal the full import of discoveries related to Greek terms such as *koinonia*, *hairesis*, *schisma* and *apostasia*— all of which have been transliterated in order to become a part of our English language. What a difference it makes to realize that our fellowship in Christ is not endorsement, that it is not contingent upon unanimity of opinion, conformity in interpretation, or attainment to a specific degree of knowledge. How wrong we have been in branding others as heretics and apostates merely because they disagree with us upon some matters.

While we are being led to see the significance of these matters we must exercise a great deal of patience toward those who continue to advocate human traditional definitions and positions which we now know to be in error. We must regard with charity those who ridicule and make light of growth and advancement in knowledge, realizing that all such brethren are motivated by fear and driven by fright. Men must have time to mature in their thinking, and the maturation process is always hindered when partisan alliances enter in. We will gain nothing for the cause we love more than life by personal attacks upon those who cannot concur in our thinking. Indeed, such personal attacks are always the resort of weak men with weak causes. One who is Christ-centered in thought seeks neither to elevate men nor to derogate them.

7. Loss of importance of traditions in the space age. We are being driven into a greater appreciation of the divine power which made the universe and now sustains it. The immensity of the firmament with its whirling galaxies, the potency in each atom which makes it a world in miniature, all of this increases our sense of awe and reverence. It makes us realize that man in his exercise of creativity is truly but a “little lower than God” as a correct rendering of Psalm 8:5 would have it.

Our scientific discoveries are forcing us to make certain adjustments in our thinking about the material universe. Our frontiers are being extended beyond the planet upon which we live. Instead of this lessening our appreciation of God it serves only to increase our reverence and awe. We dare not leave God out of our meditations now. This is demonstrated by a return to religion upon the part of the scientists themselves. But there is a recognition of the fact that if the terrestrial sphere is so much greater than we had dreamed, it is possible that the kingdom of heaven is more glorious than we had suspected.

The things about which we have fought and argued begin to appear trivial in the light of the eternal purpose. It seems incongruous that God spent thousands of years preparing mankind for the coming of Jesus, that our Lord suffered, bled and died at Calvary, and that he arose from the dead, all for the one purpose of planting a small sect confined to one nation (or to two or three states in that nation) to carry on a constant warfare for a particular way of breaking the bread or passing the fruit of the vine at the Lord’s Supper.

It is not difficult to understand how the “many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11) are involved in and concerned about the titanic struggle between Light and Darkness, but it is not easy to see how this innumerable host of celestial beings would be greatly exercised about a debate over fermented wine in Texas, or individual containers in California. The perspective of some has

become so shortened that “the kingdom of heaven” now consists of a dozen or so small conformist groups in which “the faithful preachers” can be numbered on the fingers of one hand. There are actually some who feel that their demise will cause the church of God to sink into oblivion. They regard Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God to preside over a dying faction.

In the past some have thought of the church of God as a kind of American institution and have regarded the kingdom of God as one which depends for its existence upon the support of American money, much like “the democratic way of life.” We are now becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that there may be a great difference between the church of Christ and “The Church of Christ.” The first has always been catholic and timeless; the second is somewhat indigenous to America. It helps us to realize that “the Lord knoweth them that are his,” but there is no indication that we know them all. And it does no harm to realize that John saw “a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the Lamb, with palm branches in their hands, and crying with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.’” The kingdom of heaven is not an English-speaking institution and does not have its headquarters in the United States. Surely many of the things which have caused division in the disciple brotherhood in the United States have little relevance to the universal struggle waged between the Prince of peace and the prince of the power of the air, except as they have engendered feelings and attitudes which have unwittingly placed us in the camp of the latter and made us a part of “The Black Legion.”

The Growing Hope

We are standing at the threshold of a brighter era for the heirs of the restoration movement. With an increasing awareness of our destiny in the religious panorama, we will be

able to see a sense of brotherhood rekindled and thus will be able to make our witness felt once more in that domain from which our unfortunate philosophy of separation has excluded us. We are the outgrowth of a "project to unite the Christians in all the sects." We have allowed ourselves to become the most seriously divided of all the contemporary religious movements. But there is becoming evident in every faction a stirring of hearts for unity. There is a "sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees" (2 Samuel 5:22) and men are beginning to bestir themselves, for the Lord is going before us and is also our rear guard.

Many are sympathetic to the crusade for brotherhood recognition but they dare not express it openly at present. They would only arouse fierce animosity in the party of their allegiance and would be ostracized by those whom they dearly love and cherish. They are secretly thankful for the plea that is being made although they cannot declare this publicly. Their prayers ascend for the ultimate success of the effort to restore the spirit of restoration and these prayers are very essential to our wellbeing. For years there has been a deep surging inward feeling of dissatisfaction with their position in the hearts of the real thinkers in every faction but they have not known what to do to alleviate the condition. It is encouraging to them to know that there are others who cherish and share in the same concern as expressed in this little journal. It is essential that we respect their confidence and keep their own feelings confidential.

In some sections of our nation brethren are able to do something of a positive nature to implement their desire for unity. Members of the several factions in some communities meet regularly for discussion of the problem. True, there are those who still regard fellowship as endorsement and equate community with conformity, and who thus retard any significant progress toward a closer working relationship. However, the very fact that men have now grown sufficiently mature that they can meet and talk with proper respect for each other is good.

Men of courage are arising whose thinking transcends the narrow partisanship of the groups with which they are affiliated. These twentieth century pioneers of unity in the disciple brotherhood are willing to go wherever God opens up a door and share their views without dogmatism or coercion of others. The historians of the future who record the events of this age will not be able to ignore the contribution toward kingdom extension made by those congregations which have dared to blaze the way by arranging for rallies consisting of brethren from all the splinter parties who have met in love and mutual regard to open up new vistas of service and sainthood. The sheep on the hills are lifting their heads and starting to come toward each other so that they may, in some future day, form one flock under one Shepherd. The sunlight is dispelling the dark and cloudy day.

In some of my recent speeches on fellowship I have been listing seven signs of hope for brighter days to come. Since these betoken the decline of factionalism I shall list them here for the encouragement and strength of all the members of the fellowship of the concerned ones in all of our splinter parties.

1. A restored vision. Every ideal must first exist as an idea. There can be no tangible creation unless it is preceded by a mental image. The finished picture must first exist in the mind of the artist. There can never be a united church unless someone first sees it thus in his heart. The sculptor must see the angel in the rude stone and then labor to remove the mass around it. At last there are those who have the concept of a united church. So long as they can see it they can strive to remove the partisan debris and restore the image in their hearts. The Creator will work with them in this act of creativity.

2. Dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. All reformation grows out of discontent with an existing and intolerable condition. We are coming to recognize that division multiplies our problems rather than solving them. It augments our troubles

rather than lessening them. We cannot fracture ourselves into fraternity nor fragmentize ourselves into unity. We must purge out the party spirit.

3. Increasing consciousness of brotherly love which transcends artificial and partisan barriers and makes rational discussion a possibility. We are finding an affinity which pulls us together with greater power than those things which pulled us apart. In the joy of a common Fatherhood we find a common purpose more important than factional emphasis.

4. A maturity which recognizes public partisan debates on an emotional and personal level as offering no real or permanent solution. There is an increasing awareness that such debates aggravate our problem.

5. The favorite climate in the entire religious world which provides increasing opportunities for propagating our plea. Great doors and effectual are being opened up by the Spirit as the hearts of all are turned toward unity of the believers in Christ.

6. A correct estimate of our problem, rejecting childish oversimplification and slogans on the one hand, and refusing to be daunted or intimidated on the other hand by morbid pessimism created by the gravity of the situation into which we have fallen.

7. Meetings where representatives of all parties and factions may meet as equals with due respect for each other as brethren, study and reason together about the problem and strive to assist each other in discovering a solution.

In this more intelligent atmosphere the partisan champion, waving signed propositions, blustering, daring, challenging all comers, is dated as to method. He is clearly behind the times for serious brethren have outgrown the childish partisan method of thrusting a chosen gladiator into the arena to represent a clique.

No one can represent another person before the tribunal of minds any more than at the judgment bar of God. In quiet effective ways the leaven of unity is working. The magnetism of the Holy Spirit is drawing the hearts of the concerned ones closer together. Like attracts like! We have lived to see the ebb tide of factionalism. The churning waters of hate are receding. The divisive spirit is being conquered by the love of God and love for the brethren. Great things await the children of God. Look up, take heart, the best is yet to be!

There remains one fear. It is expressed over and over. By what means do we propose a reformation of the restoration without the effort terminating in a new party or another division. In the light of history no question is of greater importance. We must face this without evasion. In our next issue, God willing, we will detail for you the reasons for saying there will not be another division as a result of this crusade. But in the meantime, remember that you are living in one of the greatest decades of a century. It is your privilege to see the forces of division beat a retreat and those of unity surge forward.

No longer does the trumpet make an uncertain sound. A great invincible spiritual power is beginning to pass like a shudder over the frame of an inert body. The spiritual eyes are awakening; the spiritual muscles are flexing. The saints are gathering. The sheep are coming home. Eyes fixed on the cross as their goal they are approaching from all directions, getting closer to each other with every step nearer to Him. God bless them and help them! God be with us and help us to help them—*all of them!* They are His and He is ours! Praise be to Him for all things!

The Hands of Folly

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

“Wisdom builds her house but folly with her own hands tears it down.” These are the words of Solomon, wisest monarch who ever sat upon an earthly throne. They are peculiarly appropriate in the study of religious reformation. Every attempt to offset the sectarian spirit has resulted in the formation of another party. Satan seems to delight in thwarting noble purposes and in diverting them back into the channel they seek to avoid.

After almost a century of division and factionalism in the disciple brotherhood which grew out of the early nineteenth century restoration movement, we are again engaged in an attempt to recapture the spirit which animated our fathers. The revival of the restoration arouses mixed feelings among the adherents of every splinter party. Questions are being asked, doubts are expressed and positions are being challenged. All of this is a good omen. In any work of such momentous importance we should proceed with caution. Careful examination of every step is essential to assure proper and scriptural procedure. We need to face up fearlessly and unhesitatingly to the queries that are being raised.

One of the most frequent points of interrogation concerns how we propose to avoid creation of another party. It has often been pointed out that it is possible to develop an anti-party

faction. We should confess frankly the difficulty involved in maintaining a purely non-partisan position. We are not as brilliant as many who have preceded us nor any more consecrated to God than they were, yet their reformatory attempts ended in new sectarian alliances. A consideration of this fact is very humbling, saddening and frightening.

It may happen that well-meaning but overly zealous individuals will employ such methods as would abuse our plea and turn this crusade into a factional movement. While we deplore such tactics we may be powerless to prevent them. However, it is our intention to labor for peace based on a destruction of all sectarianism and we feel there are certain basic considerations which can prevent another division and another party. Parties occur as the result of schisms and if we can prevent a rent in the fabric of fellowship we can keep formal factions from being created to the further disgrace of the cause to which we have committed our lives unreservedly. In this article we propose to enunciate the principles upon which we rely.

1. We will regard division among brethren as a sin against them and Christ. So long as we look back upon it as a reserve weapon to be used as a last resort in defence of self we will justify its employment. The apostle classifies “strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, and party spirit” among the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It appears in a list which also includes immorality, idolatry, and drunkenness. He declares that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. One can hardly indulge in that which he has crucified.

We should no more condone the party spirit than we should sanction idolatry or drunkenness. Idolatry is not a legitimate means of expressing an inner sense of reverence for a superior force in the universe; drunkenness is not a proper manner of satisfying thirst; neither is division a divinely

authorized method of correcting error. Our problems in the fellowship are like all problems of human relationship, they are deep and complex. In seeking a solution we should be wary of any answer which appears to be cheap and easy. Separation in the religious realm is like separation in the domestic domain—it is an admission of failure. It is also a means of evading the real problem which is one of adjustment. It is easier to run away than to face up to reality.

Like drunkenness, which is another work of the flesh, division is a form of escapism practiced by the insecure and socially incompetent. By visualizing division as God does we will come to look upon it as abhorrent, destructive of the family relationship, and alienating God's children from each other. Under such circumstances we will no more consider forming another party than we would practice any of the other sins of the flesh. Our best protection against the creation of another faction is a realization of the real nature of factionalism.

The Indwelling Spirit

2. We will become ever more conscious of the role of the indwelling Spirit in our lives. It was not the intention of Jesus to leave us as orphans during his absence from the earth (John 14:18) and he has sent another Counselor to abide with us through this age (14:16). It is actually to our advantage that Jesus has gone away and the Spirit has been sent, for while Jesus was in the flesh he could be but one place at a time. The Holy Spirit is not subject to limitations of the flesh but can be everywhere on earth and dwell in all of God's children throughout the world (Cp. John 16:7). It was not merely an accident that Jesus spoke of peace to his followers in direct conjunction with their reception of the Spirit. (John 20:21, 22). The Holy Spirit is the divine agent through whom peace is secured.

One of the chief causes contributing to the present factional state is the loss of the significance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers. This has made of Christianity a cold legalistic system and such a system always intensifies problems of human relationship without settling them. "It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 19). If divisions are set up by those who are devoid of the Spirit, it is obvious that only men who are filled with the Spirit can restore peace to a troubled world. It is the Spirit which links us with God and ties us to each other. I am one with every other person in the world in whom the Holy Spirit abides. If I can grasp this thought in all of its glorious fulness God can use me as a humble instrument to bring love, joy and peace to the hearts of men, for these are fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) in the lives of those who walk in the Spirit.

The partnership of the ransomed ones is really "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14) which, like the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, should abide with all of us. That fellowship obligates us to have a mutual concern for unity. One can no more practice or defend division among brethren than he could practice or defend any of the other works of the flesh. We must not get the divine order reversed. Our fellowship does not grow out of thinking and feeling alike, but these result from our fellowship. It is not because we have a common concern for unity that we enter into the fellowship, but because we are in the fellowship the care for unity follows in the hearts of all who are true disciples. This is clearly portrayed in a remarkable passage written by Paul. "If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any *sharing of the Spirit*, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness *by thinking and feeling alike*, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common core for unity" (Phil. 2:1, 2).

The hands of folly have torn down the house of wisdom by ignoring the cementing influence of the Spirit and substituting

conformity of opinion, unanimity of interpretation, or attainment to a certain level of knowledge as the basis of community. These things are responsible for every creed that has been written by men. They are the very elements which have swept over the Christian structure through the ages and left a trail of destruction in their wake. It is as impossible to have peace upon such a foundation as it would be to build a Christian character upon the works of the flesh. These have occasioned the bitter quarrels and the cruel fights that have marred the history of Christendom. The only hope of offsetting them lies with the Spirit. "If you go on fighting one another tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction. I mean this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfill the desires of your lower nature" (Gal. 5:15, 16).

The party spirit cannot dwell in a heart that is filled with the Holy Spirit. Factionalism is a symptom of the lower nature, of that which is carnal within us. "Can you not see that while there is jealousy and strife among you, you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature?" (1 Cor. 3:3). It is impossible to change a man's nature by law. So long as we seek to overcome the problem of strife by law we will only create more strife. We must have divine aid to overthrow the lower nature. It is at this juncture we should grasp the importance of a statement of the apostle with reference to "the desires of your lower nature." He writes, "That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it . . . But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (Gal. 5:17, 18).

We recognize the weakness and frailties of our human nature. That nature prompts us to engage in quarrels and disputes. It causes us to contend jealously for our own opinions and ideas. It inspires a feeling of revenge and retribution. It is responsible for rivalry and personal vanity. All the laws ever passed will not overcome these tendencies for nature is not altered by law. Even the divinely ordained law which was "holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12) could not transform man.

“What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done . . . our . . . conduct no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3, 4). The Spirit not only fights against the lower nature but is victorious over it. That nature is put to death by the Spirit. “It follows, my friends, that our lower nature has no claim upon us; we are not obliged to live on that level. If you do so, you must die. But if by the Spirit you put to death all the base pursuits of the body, then you will live” (Rom. 8:12, 13).

Since law has no power to transform and our lower nature robs it of potency, it appears that if we are to overcome such works of the flesh as strife, division and party intrigues, we must live on a plane above “the purely human level.” This is the equivalent of saying we must reside in a domain which transcends law, a realm in which law is not operable. In such a realm one is not guided by laws which are external but by an inner power. The fruits of such a life are not regulated by any written code. “The harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (Gal. 5:22-25).

What we are striving for is no mere reformation of our thinking but a complete and absolute resignation of self, the whole self, to the Spirit. Certainly this will effect a radical change in our thought patterns but only as such mental concepts are part of the entire being. Our problem in the past lies in the fact that our religion has been only a part of our lives. It is an area reserved in the heart or mind to find expression on certain days, in certain places, or in doing certain things. To the true Christian there should be no specific “sacred” days, places, or things. Wherever he is, whatever he does or whenever it is done, all must be done to the glory of God. No one can divide the family of God and do it to His glory. To think that he can do so

is to think evil if division is evil.

It is our aim to recapture the significance of the greatest commandment, the one which must come first. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” The word “all” leaves no department of life untouched. It provides no possibility for making provision for the flesh to fulfill its desires, not even the desire to get away from those who are problems to us. Note the term “all your mind.” This lifts religion from a purely pietistic level and makes it a practical something. One must analyze himself and his associates with a view to solving problems, not creating them. We shall stop short of nothing less than the wholly committed intelligence of all.

How will this avoid division in the spiritual ranks? The answer is quite simple. Division and strife belong on the “human level of your lower nature” (1 Cor. 3:3). When men, through surrender to the Holy Spirit, move off of this level to a higher one they will no longer resort to those means which they formerly employed. “You must be made new in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature of God’s creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by truth” (Eph. 4:23, 24). There will be a recognition that the Holy Spirit can be grieved but there will be studious avoidance of those things which would offend this royal guest. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for that Spirit is the seal with which you are marked for the day of our final liberation. Have done with spite and passion, all angry shouting and cursing, and bad feeling of every kind. Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:30-32).

Being Genuine

3. We shall avoid the creation of another party by endeavoring to remain “genuine” even amidst the clamor of

partisanship. The apostle wrote to the divided congregation at Corinth, “In the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Cor. 11:18, 19). This demonstrates that one can be non-partisan even in a congregation with factions formed in it. How did Paul establish that he was genuine? Did he create another party known as “the loyal church”? Not only did he not do this at Corinth but he refused to recognize the party lines that others had drawn. He regarded them all as brethren and refused to be aligned with any group to the exclusion of other brothers, not even a group calling themselves by his name. He simply ignored the party walls which men had erected.

To Paul, those who assembled as a divided church, still constituted “the church of God which is at Corinth” and were “the called saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). They were in the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord (verse 9). In the very passages where he mentions their strife he addresses them as brethren. It appears that he did this deliberately to show that in spite of their schisms the relationship with him had not been dissolved. “It has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, *my brethren*” (1:11). “But I, *brethren*, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ” (3:1). It was in connection with his teaching against striving for special honor and exalting self that Jesus said, “You are all brothers” (Matthew 23:8). A recognition of the extent of brotherhood and the equality which grows out of it will preclude all factional ambition.

One who is genuine has a proper evaluation of men. He realizes that Apollos and Paul are mere servants through whom men believe. One of them may plant, the other may water the plants, but only God can give the increase. “He who plants and he who waters are equal” (3:8) so it is foolish to “be puffed up in favor of one against another” (4:6). In view of this one should

not “boast of men” (3:21) but, “as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord’” (1:31). The Corinthians were urged to become imitators of Paul (4:16) and Paul simply refused to recognize the denominational lines drawn in the congregation. He regarded his allegiance as belonging to Jesus and not to a party. To him the kingdom of heaven was greater than any faction and he did not propose to allow his vision to be shortened by factional limitations.

The genuine believer recognizes that Jesus is central and everything revolves around him. He refuses to be sidetracked or stampeded by any philosophy which puts human interpretation as primary and the Son of God as secondary. One of the chief causes of factionalism is that of “taking sides” or of “lining up” with this group or that. Many do not see that the factional spirit cannot be overcome until someone is able to rise above it and recognize that being in the party is not the equivalent to being in Christ. It is possible to oppose evil tendencies and error without creating a party through which to do so. Much that passes for faithfulness in these days is merely fidelity to the party and men will do virtually anything to make the faction succeed. Pride is the basis of much of our contention in these days. We reject it with all of its implications as containing no hope for a better future.

Open Hearts

4. It is our conviction that the philosophy of the “wide open heart” will preclude the possibility of another party. When Paul faced the factionalism at Corinth he did so in this spirit. We must not overlook the fact that the intent of certain of these factions was to exclude Paul and those who labored with him. The congregation was admitting and listening to men whose sole purpose was to turn them against Paul. In this emergency the love which values others even more than self was clearly demonstrated. “Men of Corinth, we have spoken very frankly to

you; we have opened our heart wide to you all. On our part there is no constraint; any constraint there may be is in yourselves. In fair exchange then (may a father speak to his children?) open wide your hearts to us" (2 Cor. 6:11-13).

It is pointed out that those who are factional and opposed to the crusade for unity may drive us out. We are asked if this will not automatically create another party. Drive us out of what? No man can drive us out of Jesus Christ our Lord! The only thing men can do is to exclude us from their hearts for over those hearts we have no control. But they cannot remove themselves from our hearts for over these they have no control. And we simply refuse to be separated in heart from any of our brethren. If we go among them and they refuse to recognize us, when they come among us we will welcome them. We will pray for them, help them, share with them to the extent they will permit; and when they will not permit we will love them just the same. We will still visit them and go among them when we can even though they ignore us.

It is our intention to engage in no party intrigues, to sanction no political alliances against any of God's children. We will not form any power blocs nor seek for advantage through human cleverness. When men employ such measures against us we shall not retaliate in kind. It is our honest feeling that God can be served by our dishonor as well as our honor, by the blame heaped upon us as well as the praise bestowed upon us. "Honor and dishonor, praise and blame are alike our lot: we are the impostors who speak the truth, the unknown men whom all men know; dying we still live on; disciplined by suffering, we are not done to death; in our sorrows we have always cause for joy; poor ourselves, we bring wealth to many; penniless, we own the world" (2 Cor. 8:9-10). Of course it is very difficult to maintain this ideal under pressure but God will strengthen with might those who plead for peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers"

We will not sever ourselves from our brethren. If we go to

communities where they are divided we shall see beyond the walls and envision our brethren on both sides of the barriers. We will call upon those to pray with whom we cannot agree upon many things; we will give brotherly recognition to those whose hearts are filled with personal bitterness against us. Our entreaty to them will be, “Do make a place for us in your hearts! We have wronged no one, ruined no one, taken advantage of no one. I do not want to blame you. Why, as I have told you before, the place you have in our heart is such that, come death, come life, we meet it together” (2 Cor. 7:2, 3). If Paul could feel thus toward the Corinthians I have never seen a congregation toward which I could not feel the same way. Bad as are some of the congregations I know, I am not aware of any as far gone as was the church at Corinth when the apostle wrote of “the place you have in our heart.” My brethren just cannot remove themselves from my heart. The key to it belongs to Jesus!

A Common Fallacy

5. Perhaps the greatest safeguard of all against the creation of new parties is our repudiation of the “loyal church” fallacy. This is the mistaken idea held by many that one faction in our divided state is loyal to God to the exclusion of all others. This stems from the view that the discovery and emphasis of a certain truth, or what is considered to be a truth, makes of the party which stresses that truth, the church of God, while those who do not see it are relegated to a position in which they are regarded as being either sectarians or hobbyists. This childish and immature approach to the Christian concept is based upon ignorance of the nature of the called of God. So long as this view is cherished it will fragmentize the saints and maintain tribal conflict.

No faction is the “loyal church.” This is a myth which has become traditional in spite of the fact that it is opposed to both scripture and sense. No doubt every faction has discovered some

truth, although quite frequently the point of factional emphasis is mere opinion. But no faction has discovered all of the implications of God's word for our generation and adoption of the factional attitude precludes the possibility of arriving at further truths. Every faction is circumscribed by an unwritten creed. An invisible circle has been drawn beyond which no amount of study or research can take one because as long as a faction regards itself as "the faithful church" to go beyond the party interpretation is considered as "transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Christ." It is the very essence of factionalism that it equates its partisan brotherhood as "the Church of Christ" and its party line as the revelation of God.

Factional representatives urge their adherents to study to show themselves approved, but the word "study" is a loaded term. It does not mean to do unbiased research but to search the Bible for additional arguments to defend the partisan *status quo*. The party hero is the one who can twist and wrest the most passages to make the factional position appear more plausible in debate. The real student of God's word is regarded as a heretic and soon driven forth. There is nothing more dangerous to factionalism than real objective research of God's message to mankind. The last thing any faction wants to see is for its members to start truly studying and thinking for themselves.

Since every faction has discovered some truth but no faction has discovered all truth, the exclusivist attitude makes it impossible to share the truths we have learned or to share in the truths which others have learned. The party spirit is inimical to all non-sectarian growth or development. The result is that the thinking of every party becomes inbred and sterile. It ceases to be original and creative. Minds become rusty and hearts become barren from mere repetition of traditional explanations and accepted interpretations. Those who doubt are driven out, those who question are made unwelcome. The faction becomes a gloomy fortress to preserve musty thought which the free world has long since outgrown in its onward march toward greater

knowledge. Yet, in our current state we do not recommend going from one fortress to another. We suggest that all of them throw open their windows and let in the fresh air and drain their moats and provide free access. There are good brethren behind all of the somber and forbidding walls.

The “loyal church fallacy” has driven brethren to a practice in the past which is divisive in its very nature. When members of one faction learned a truth from a member of another faction, they forthwith concluded that the party of their former allegiance was not faithful and transferred to the other. In many instances they began a campaign to win as many of their former associates as possible and thus intensified the feeling which was already aroused against them as “traitors” and “apostates.” The spirit of rivalry is always kindled by such injudicious procedure. One is not in any party long until he discovers that, while it is strong in some things, it is very weak in others. Disillusionment is the inevitable fate of all who change affiliation to find the “faithful church.”

Our recommendation is that the brethren in the various factions stay where they are and act as leaven for good. What is needed is not the creation of a new segment called “the loyal church” but people who are loyal to Christ Jesus the Lord in spite of the unfortunate schisms which have occurred in the past. One who has grown up in a faction understands its motivations and is in better position to share with its members the truths he gains than one coming from a different background. Moreover, when one transfers to another group he loses his effectiveness for reformation among those with whom he has been associated, and often is regarded with suspicion by those to whom he goes. It is contrary to the spirit of Jesus for us to abandon those whom we deem to be sick in order to associate with those we consider to be well. If we learn a truth we can do very little to spread it among those who already have it but we could do a great deal in sharing our knowledge with those who have not yet ascertained it.

Congregations are made up of human beings and all of them will be beset by the same problems which confront persons. It is not being a member of “a faithful congregation” but being a faithful member of the one body that counts. The congregations planted by the apostles of our Lord fall very far short of heaven’s ideal. Paul planted and Apollos watered at Corinth but the congregation was far from perfect. Now if Paul could not start a congregation that remained “faithful” on what grounds do we flatter ourselves that we can do so? It is for this reason that not one of the apostles ever commanded brethren to pull out and start a “loyal church.” With all of the tragic sins infecting some of the seven churches in Asia Minor Jesus did not instruct the members of any of them to withdraw and start “a faithful church” across the street. Surely those who planted them in the first place were faithful and if they could depart so far from the original intent, any other congregation started by an elite corps would terminate the same way.

The attempt to start faithful churches by separation from brethren can only fill the earth with unfaithful factions! There is only one church on earth. There never was but one, there never will be another. Starting a faction is not planting the church. There are people in all of the factions who are members of the church. Some in all factions are as faithful as they know how to be, some in all of them are a disgrace to the Christian profession. A faction does not become “the faithful church” by a particular position on colleges, cups, and classes, because a faction is not the church at all. The church is greater than any faction, greater than all of them together, greater than the restoration movement, greater than “The Church of Christ” which is one segment that grew out of the restoration movement.

If a man has grown up in a narrow intolerant party and increasing wisdom demonstrates to him that it is not the church to the exclusion of all others, let him not leave his brethren and go join another faction. Let him stay where he is, love those with whom he has labored, exhibit patience and forbearance in

sharing his newly-found knowledge. “The servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome, but kindly towards all. He should be a good teacher, tolerant, and gentle when discipline is needed for the refractory. The Lord may grant them a change of heart and show them the truth, and thus they may come to their senses” (2 Tim. 2:24, 25). Instead of refusing to associate with congregations which were wrong in profession and practice, it was precisely that kind of congregations which the apostles proposed to visit and to which they sent evangelists. Their letters were not all written to “loyal churches.” There was hardly a “new testament congregation” which would not have been split by modern adherents of Church-of-Christ-ism.

The “leaven concept” of kingdom extension is directly opposed to the “loyal church” fallacy. The first operates by keeping the truth in contact with those who do not as yet have it; the second operates by removing the truth from contact in order to preserve it inviolate. The first has as its goal the saving of men; the second has as its goal the saving of truth. The fallacy lies in a misunderstanding of the nature of truth. Truth is incapable of destruction. We do not need to take steps to save it or protect it. It is eternal and invincible. Actually, men do not lose truth. They stray from it and become lost. It is the men who are lost and not the truth. To take truth from those who do not have it in order to preserve it is like taking medicine from the sick in order to keep the medicine. Jesus knew this so he deliberately chose to associate with social and religious outcasts. The Pharisees, whose very name means “Separatists” could not understand this. Their counterparts in our own day still do not understand it.

All of our factions have grown out of the “loyal church” fallacy for this is the natural fruit of an arrogant party spirit. When one rejects this whole concept he will not clutter up the religious landscape with another useless party. He will not try to get men to leave where they are and cleave to him, but stay where they are and cling to Christ. The only ones who should

leave where they are at present are those who have deserted their brethren in the past because of an erroristic philosophy. They should repent of their error in thinking and return and inform the brethren they were sorry that they separated from them. This does not mean they must admit they were wrong in accepting new truth but simply that they made a mistake when they allowed an increasing knowledge to sever them from those whom they love. Of course, it will no doubt be true that most of these can labor better in their new and present relationship, but it will serve the cause of unity if they are big enough to express regret for their former action in separating.

We are striving for a fellowship of the concerned ones in every party instead of having concern for another party. This will establish fellowship on a horizontal rather than upon a vertical plane. The fellowship in Christ is always horizontal. It cuts across all barriers and penetrates all walls— social, racial, national and political. The factional fellowship is always vertical. It draws a line of demarkation down through the saints. We must recapture a sense of fellowship which reaches through these lines. This means that those who are among the concerned will actually feel a closer kinship with those who are concerned in other parties than they will with the unconcerned in their own party. This fellowship will be based upon spiritual affinity and not upon mere geographical proximity. It will be a union of kindred minds and not merely a gathering of persons in the same building. To take the concerned ones out of all the parties and create a new party composed of these would be a tragic error. It would do the very thing we oppose. Moreover, it would convert many of the concerned into unconcerned ones for it is in time of greatest challenge that we exhibit the greatest concern. There is little incentive to propagandize among those who share our every conviction because there is no need to do so.

This horizontal fellowship will touch the good and honest hearts in all of the parties and the work of peacemaking will be extended. Those who are in Christ are in the church wherever

they are. Any person who must leave where he is and join something else to be in the church is not in Christ to start with. Here is the real solution to the problem of creating a new party. It would be ridiculous to separate brethren and band them together into another faction to plead for unity. It is wrong to create a faction even to propagate truth. Let brethren remain where they are, share the truths they learn and learn additional truths. It is not necessary to change parties to practice truth. This has been our childish procedure in the past and every reformation among us has created a new party. It is impossible to form a new faction if every man stays where he now is. Truth is not a party possession and belongs to no faction. If you were to start a new faction truth would no more be its private property than it is that of the factions already in existence.

There are those who urge that this is providing “an easy way out” but such is not the case at all. Nothing is more trying or difficult than to remain where brethren do not agree with you. This requires tolerance and forbearance. It taxes the patience and tests Christian fortitude. It would be much easier to “pull up stakes” and leave just as it would be easier for a doctor to spend all of his time with people who are well. The factional way is the easy way because it is the path of evasion and escapism. Those who are shopping around to find a group which agrees with them on every point are looking for something which does not exist unless they locate a party of bland conformists. And if the bland lead the bland they will both fall in the ditch!

It is argued by some partisans that certain factions are more nearly right than some others and one should get in the one that is “nearest right.” Our observation of these “nearest right” groups is that they judge the degree of rightness by the intensity of contention for certain partisan tests while in spirit and attitude they are very smug and self-righteous. Many of them do little, if anything, to take the message to the world. They are satisfied and complacent, contentious and exclusive. But who

is to judge the proportion of error in a congregation which makes it imperative that you leave, or the degree of righteousness in another which makes it “loyal.” Who is to set the standard or formulate the criteria for measurement of the status of righteousness? One thing I do know and that is the congregation is far from right which sets brethren at nought and holds them in contempt because of opinion (Romans 14:3). Congregations, like Pharisees, can pray, “Lord, we thank thee that we are not as others.”

Unfailing Love

6. A true conception of brotherly love will militate against our gravitating into another sect. It is essential that ours be a true grasp of the significance of love since every man possessed of a narrow partisan spirit protests that he loves the brethren. He may even argue that this is the reason why he will not recognize or associate with them. Such puerile thinking actually condemns Jesus for coming into this world and associating with those whose lives he could not endorse. It was precisely because he could not endorse them that he desired to associate with them. But if one reveals his love by refusing such association, then Jesus did not love us at all. The self-righteous do not truly love others in a real sense. Theirs is an unwholesome love for self. In a final analysis love for party is an egotistic infatuation because it is a love only for those who agree with one. It results in a man becoming his own god.

A man does not separate himself from those whom he loves. Separation is the result of sin, selfishness and sectarianism. Love is the bridge that spans the gulf created by these evil forces. Sin separates; love unites. The prophet declared, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God” (Isa. 59:2). The apostle writes, “But Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God’s own proof of his love toward us” (Rom. 5:8). One is drawn toward those whom he

loves and separation produces agony of heart until reunion occurs. No one ever voluntarily separates from an object of his wholehearted affection and when uncontrollable circumstances conspire to create such separation there is constant longing for the joyous occasion of meeting once more.

If we accept as factual the glorious attribute of love as presented in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 we can never again separate from our brethren and we must labor to heal those breaches already existing. These majestic phrases describing love should be engraved upon our hearts in livid letters of flame. They should not be merely memorized but memorialized in our lives. God help us to understand the urgent need in this time of crisis of this divine fruit so that we may reach forth our hands to pluck it and make it ours. "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

The hands of folly will tear down any house that wisdom builds if allowed to do so. We have seen the piles of wreckage and the heaps of debris which mark the ruin of a glorious restoration movement. It is time once more to "rise up and build." Let us forego the wrecking bar and take up again the tools of the artisan. Let us "seek peace and ensue it." Let us find the way to keep the fabric of brotherhood intact despite our differences. We must decide whether we shall bequeath to posterity a temple of righteousness or a gloomy ruin. If we continue to shiver and shatter our "breaking will be that of a potter's vessel which is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a sherd is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or dip water up out of the cistern" (Isaiah 30:14).

There is no greater ideal to which the child of God can be consecrated in these days than that of the unity of all believers in Christ Jesus. This is the answer to the world's problem! It is our

only hope of survival! Let us banish from our hearts the spirit of factionalism. Let us enthrone Jesus in our lives until he rules and reigns in every department of our existence. Then we can help to bring about that glorious state for which he prayed.

Adventures in Religion (7)

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[Abstract]

The most startling fact about human existence on earth is that it confines in a temple of clay a spirit which was meant to be free. There is ever a struggle; on the one hand of the occupant to divest himself of the tent in which he is forced to dwell, on the other hand of that tabernacle to enfold and involve him until he cannot escape. What we are pleased to refer to as life is not really life at all but a constant death-grapple. Life in its fullest may begin after what we call death. "Flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and the perishable cannot possess immortality" (1 Cor. 15:50). True life lies in possession of the kingdom of God.

The spirit is timeless and designed for timelessness. It is only as it dwells in the fellowship of the Eternal One that it experiences that state in which it thrives. While we are in the body there are limitations of time and space and these cannot be overcome during our sojourn in the flesh. Man can free himself from the pressures of weight by launching into space but he is only one place at a time and his fellows can time him at that place. He will always displace a given space and do so at a specific time while he is in the body.

But we must not assume that because the spirit is temporarily imprisoned in the flesh it is powerless to experience any sense of timelessness, or eternal life. "Stone walls do not a

prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” The spirit is still spirit even while enshrouded in the tent. It may rise above the flesh, in a sense, and repose in God. When it does so it experiences in such a fellowship that eternal life which is invested in the Eternal One. “We here declare to you that eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:2, 3).

The flesh conspires to make us feel that it is in gratification of the physical that we really live. When we taste the heady wine of the sensual and are momentarily transported outside of self in a grand paroxysm of forgetfulness, we are apt to call that living. But we return to the realm of the prosaic with the realization that “desire shall fail and man goeth to his long home.” It is in the encounter of the soul with God where each awakening is to a brighter prospect and a more glorious aspect that the true adventure lies.

In the physical relationship called marriage, two persons “are no more twain, but one flesh.” They are together in the relationship, yet there are moments of great intimacy to which the apostle refers as “coming together again” (1 Cor. 7:5). They do not live constantly in the throes of ecstasy. These constitute the climactic periods heightened by expectancy and sanctified by abiding love. Thus it is in the relationship of the spirit, for “he who links himself with Christ is one with him, spiritually” (1 Cor. 6:17). There are those moments of encounter with the Spirit which leave us exhausted with the very thrill of the experience and which constitute a foretaste of the delight which awaits us over there. Life takes on a whole new meaning, phrases from the sacred word leap forth in nobler perspective, the burdens of the world pass from us as the world itself shall some day pass.

The timelessness of God is beautifully expressed in 2 Peter 3:8, a passage which begins with the admonition that we should

not lose sight of its content. I am persuaded that many have not yet caught sight of its meaning. "And here is one point, my friends, which you must not lose sight of: with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day." This is not just two ways of saying the same thing. These are wholly different things. In this figure of speech, to say, "A thousand years is like one day" is the ultimate in contraction; to say, "One day is like a thousand years" is the maximum of expansion. Both are expressions of timelessness because the power required to compress a thousand years into one day and that required to amplify one day into a thousand years must be eternal.

It is a source of comfort to know that with the Lord a thousand years is as one day. This is a pledge of the inviolate nature of the divine promises. There can be no forgetfulness because with God there is no past, only an eternal present. But the expression, "one day is like a thousand years" contains a promise in itself. To him who enters into intimate fellowship with God in a transcendent spiritual experience it is like living a thousand years in a single day. With the tug of the flesh and the demands of our nature it is doubtful that many of us will share in a full day of superlative encounter. But a thousand years is 365,000 days, and if each day is like that, then even a minute projects itself into a thrilling occurrence.

The secret of the timeless experience is utter loss or surrender of self and complete identification with God. There is a sharing in the divine purpose and through it a participation in the divine nature. Selfless consecration to the vocation which is known as "the high calling" will make possible a mountain-top communion with the divine. God is met at different places by different persons. It may be the encounter will come when one resolves to take the good news to some blighted region of the earth, or when he resolves to lose himself in an unstinted effort to answer the prayer of the Savior for unity. It may occur when a Christian woman resolves to devote herself to cheering the last days and final hours of cancer-stricken patients in a large city

hospital, or when a high school girl interests her friends in devoting a part of their vacation period to working in a children's ward, not for spending money but for spreading happiness.

A group of young people who visit the aged, infirm and shut-ins, to sing for them, will have a rewarding experience. It is not uncommon to hear such unselfish ones declare that a day spent in such a fashion is the finest of all days. Why should it not be, seeing that it is projected into a thousand years, and that angelic hosts, although unseen by human eyes, join in praise for such a noble effort. One may rise above himself as he gazes at purple mountain majesties, as he walks on a lonely beach where white breakers foam out their dying efforts, or as he sits in a shady wilderness grove with only the sounds of the bird songs about him. But one may also experience such an encounter as he sits on a tractor and watches the cool brown loam turn up behind his plow while blackbirds dart down into the furrow to pick up worms and beetles. Or a housewife may know the encounter with God when she watches the school bus recede into the distance bearing her children to a place of educational training. On such occasions high resolves are made and promises given.

“The Word was made flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). He was no less the Word when he was flesh than before. He shared our flesh that we might share his glory. To effect this our transformation is as essential as was His. As he was the Word translated into flesh, so we in the flesh must be translated into the Word. When this happens we will be partakers of life and light eternal— life and light. “In him was life and the life was the light of men.” To become a sharer with God, a partaker of the divine nature, a partner in the purpose of the ages, this is the supreme adventure of all. We should keep our eyes alert and our hearts open to find God and to experience His presence.

Does not Heaven begin that day

**When the eager heart can say,
Surely God is in this place,
I have seen him face to face
In the loveliness of flowers,
In the service of the showers,
And His voice has talked to me
In the sunlit apple tree.**

Explaining My Position

Mission Messenger (July 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

We want you to read a letter we received recently. It is typical of many which cross our desk these days. It will serve as an explanation and apology for rehearsal of what many of you have heard so often in the past.

I am a young preacher who has been greatly worried about the divisions among our brethren. Our position seems so inconsistent in a lot of respects. We draw the line against people who are so much better than some we fellowship. Several months ago I started receiving MISSION MESSENGER. I do not know who sent my name to you but the paper has given me renewed hope. I can see that you have written a great deal in the past which I have missed. Can you briefly explain your position on fellowship? One of the brethren told me that you feel there is a difference between fellowship and endorsement. Is this true?

Fellowship is a state or condition like partnership, companionship or sonship. We enter this state by response to the call of God. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). That call is issued through the gospel. "To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). The gospel is the Good News concerning Jesus of Nazareth. It is the message that "Christ died for our

sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Paul, who was set apart for the gospel of God, identifies this as “the gospel concerning his Son” and declares he was “designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1-4).

The gospel does not consist of abstract propositions. It is not a code of laws, a compilation of letters by inspired or uninspired men, nor the history of an institution. It is news. It has to do with relation of certain facts pertaining to a person, intended to prove that person to be the Son of God. The prime condition in this proof is that “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). By their enemies these witnesses were accused of “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). The purpose of witnesses is to testify to facts and facts have to do with things. Accordingly, when Jesus expounded the old covenant scriptures to those who were to testify, he “said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day,” and he added, “And you are witnesses of *these things*” (Luke 24:48).

The proper response to the testimony of credible witnesses is belief of their testimony. Since the witnesses in this instance are concerned only with creating belief that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son they have limited their testimony to facts which support that conviction. All testimony must be confirmed to be credible. Supernatural testimony must be confirmed by supernatural demonstrations. The witnesses of the Sonship have been selective, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, in recounting a sufficient number of mighty works to induce faith in Jesus. “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30, 31).

It is obvious that belief of the testimony that Jesus is the Messiah will entail a reformation of life and surrender to his will in loving obedience. He must be coronated Lord as well as Christ in every believing heart as well as in heaven. To this the first public proclamation of the witnesses gives strength. “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified” (Acts 2:36). While it is true that news is either believed or disbelieved, it is also true that there is an element of obedience growing out of the very nature of the news concerning Jesus. Mere intellectual assent is not enough. The acceptance of such testimony demands a transformation of life and character. One of the witnesses thus testifies, “To him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ . . . according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to the faith” (Romans 16:25, 26). He further asserts that the witnesses “received grace and apostleship to bring about obedience to the faith for the sake of his name among all nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:5, 6).

It is evident that those who are the called belong to Jesus Christ and those who belong to him are those who have become obedient to the faith. These have been called by the gospel and that gospel is summed up in one great fundamental fact, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. One who believes that fact believes the gospel. One who acts in obedience to that faith obeys the gospel. This one fact is the foundation upon which the community of Christ is planted (Matt. 16:18). One who believes that fact is built into that community upon implementation of his faith.

Just as there is but one fact that must be believed in order to respond to the call of God, so there is just one act essential to demonstration of that faith in order to establish covenant relationship. Jesus said to the witnesses, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and

is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15, 16). Preaching the gospel is issuing the call. Believing the news that Jesus is God’s Son and being baptized on the basis of that belief is responding to the call. One accepts testimony by belief but he can only acknowledge Lordship by obedience.

It is an arrangement of divine beneficence that we “belong to Jesus Christ” upon belief of one simple fact and obedience to one simple act. “God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). This includes the unlearned as well as the learned, the foolish as well as the wise. It embraces the ignorant, illiterate and unschooled. If we came into the fellowship with God through complex explanations of doctrine or by interpretation of difficult portions of divine revelation, then only a few wise men would be among the called. Yet the apostle writes, “For consider your call, brethren, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26). We become sons of God by faith that Jesus is His Son. We enter into Christ, that is, into the state of fellowship with him, through baptism “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Every sincere immersed believer in Jesus Christ is in the fellowship. He enters that fellowship by belief of one concrete proposition and obedience of one concrete act. He may know little of the new covenant scriptures and may be wrong about much of what he does know, but this does not debar him from the fellowship for access to it is not based upon knowledge of a book but upon faith in a person. Certainly an acknowledgment of the lordship of that person will entail a constant effort to know his will and a sincere attempt to obey it as learned, but learning and knowledge are the result of study and study is a slow, methodical process. To be in the fellowship is to be in the family of God and one enters that family by birth. Fellowship as respects God is based upon sonship; as respects other members

of the family it is brotherhood.

The suffixes “ship” and “hood” indicate a state into which persons enter. Fellowship is a mutual relation between “fellows” or comrades, just as companionship is a mutual state enjoyed by companions and partnership is a relation between partners. We are called into this state by the gospel. We enter it by being born again. Just as the physical birth makes all who are born to the same father and mother brethren to each other, so does the spiritual birth. Every person on this earth who has been born again is God’s child and my brother. A person may be ignorant about many things but this does not affect brotherhood or fellowship, which are one and the same. Brotherhood is based upon common fatherhood and fraternity is based on common paternity.

Fellowship and Knowledge

Although it is a common thing to attempt to condition fellowship upon attainment to a certain degree of knowledge this is both unscriptural and impossible. Knowledge is based upon mental exercise and past experience. The minds of men are as varied as their physical beings. They differ in perception, analytical powers and retentiveness. No two persons on earth are identical in the degree of knowledge possessed.

In 1 Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul shows the futility of basing fellowship on knowledge because of three factors. While it is true that “all of us possess knowledge” it is equally true that “If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (verses 1, 2). All knowledge is relative but when we accept knowledge as the ground of fellowship we always use our own knowledge as the criterion. This means that we always have an imperfect standard to which we demand perfect adherence of others. This actually amounts to “playing God” with our fellows.

In verse 7 the apostle shows that there are varied degrees of knowledge in the church, even with reference to behavior connected with “eating meat offered to idols.” “However, not all possess this knowledge.” In verse 10 he designates one member as a “man of knowledge” but in verse 11 he refers to another as a “weak man.” It is such a weak man who would not even be regarded as a brother today, or if so regarded, would be called “a hobbyist.” Yet Paul refers to him as “the brother for whom Christ died” and implies that to sin against him is to sin against Christ (verse 12). Instead of ousting one from the fellowship whose knowledge was inferior every attempt was to be made to avoid “causing my brother to fall” (verse 13).

The third reason why knowledge can never become the basis of community existence is because it is always conditioned on past teaching and even if such teaching were correct, the inferences we draw from it might not be so. “There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience being weak, is polluted by the eating” (verse 7). All of us are creatures of environment. Our teachers have been human and we are human. They have passed on their imperfections in knowledge and we have imperfectly understood much of what we have read and studied for ourselves. This need not discourage us because freedom from error is not a condition of reaching heaven. If it were, heaven would have no population. Entrance to the eternal abode is conditioned upon our attitude toward error, upon our willingness to correct our concepts when we become aware of truth. Regardless of our attitude all of us will die with mistaken ideas about many things. Certainly this chapter (1 Corinthians 8) effectively eliminates equality in knowledge as the foundation for fellowship.

We should be reluctant to predicate fellowship with our brothers on a condition which would make it impossible for us to be in the fellowship with God and Christ (1 John 1:3). It is an established truth that “with the judgment you pronounce you

will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get” (Matt. 7:2). If we demand that our brothers be our equals in knowledge and in grasp of truth to be in our fellowship, then God will demand that we have perfect and infinite knowledge to be in his fellowship. We thus damn ourselves by the law we devise to exclude others. It is clearly taught that when we judge others while we are inconsistent we “presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience” (Rom. 2:4). Instead of excluding our brethren who do not see things as we do we should, “Be humble always and gentle, and patient too. Be forbearing with one another and charitable” (Ephesians 4:2).

Fellowship and Opinion

Fellowship cannot be conditioned on unanimity of opinion. The opinions of honest and sincere men will always differ in certain areas. This is not to be deplored and is not alarming. It is the natural result where persons are trained to think for themselves. Trouble results only when there are those who seek to bind their opinions as matters of law and make them tests of admission to the community of saints. This is dogmatism and it is one of the greatest foes to spiritual peace. It is assumed that all division is caused by men adding to God’s word and that it is the result of a spirit of innovation. This is not true for frequently it is the spirit of Diotrephes (Cp. 3 John) which produces the dissension.

We have no right to make anything a test of entrance into the fellowship which God has not made a condition of entrance into salvation. It is not our business or our right to catechize one concerning his view on the millennium, the manner of the Lord’s coming, the security of the believers, or anything else which he may hold as an opinion. There is room in Christ for differences of opinion. The apostle forever precludes debates over such matters with the words, “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions” (Romans

14:1). Our brethren do not stand or fall before us but before the Master. They do not belong to us and we have no right to pass judgment upon them (verse 10). We are to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (verse 19). Experience will teach us that arguments about opinions do not produce faith and tend to tear down. “Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God, and you are happy if you have no qualms of conscience about what you allow yourself to eat” (verse 22).

Fellowship and Interpretation

Fellowship is not to be conditioned on uniformity in interpretation of the documents which make up the new covenant scriptures. There is a difference between revelation and interpretation. Revelation consists of what God has said, interpretation of what men think he meant by what he said. Revelation is an act of the divine mind, interpretation is the result of applying the human mind. There are some very foolish ideas advanced about this matter One such idea is that the scriptures do not need interpreting, they merely need obeying. The absurdity in this position can be seen in the actions of those who make the statement. They have their Bibles marked full of explanatory notes, they conduct studies of an expository nature, they print and distribute papers and tracts in an attempt to make their understanding of the meaning of the scriptures clear. If it is true that the sacred scriptures require no interpretation we ought never to hand a person anything except a copy of the Bible. It would be inconsistent to explain to him the bearing of a single passage. Jesus did not subscribe to this theory for when he found men who failed to understand and were slow to believe, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them everything in the scriptures that referred to himself” (Luke 24:27).

Just here we are reminded that some are disturbed by the

passage which says, “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). This has nothing to do with expounding the meaning of the scriptures, for Peter himself explained the prophecies to the Jews who had studied them for years (Acts 2:16, 25, 34). At Thessalonica Paul spent three weeks during which “he argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead” (Acts 17:2, 3). The expression in 2 Peter 1:20 has to do with the *origin* of the prophecies contained in the sacred scriptures and not with an explanation of them. This is shown by the immediate context. “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

The prophets did not see events which occurred and then interpret them. The prophecies do not represent their personal judgment about matters. Prophecy did not come as a result of private observation. Instead, men under the direction of the Holy Spirit predicted in advance the things that would transpire. Of course prophecy has to be interpreted as our Lord himself demonstrated in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), and as Philip showed on the road through the Gaza Strip (Acts 8:35). It is generally true that those who insist the scriptures require no interpretation are the most arbitrary in binding their interpretation upon others. They confuse their interpretation with the word of God.

Another false impression is left by some who teach that the word of God is so plain that it requires little effort and no research to understand. The truth is that there are many difficult and challenging things in the scope of the sacred volume. One of the most common faults of our day is that of over-simplification. We need to be somewhat wary of those who know all of the answers. One of the inspired writers said of Paul, “There are, of course, some things in his letters which are difficult to understand” (2 Peter 3:16). Our own limited study

bears out this observation. Fortunately those things which are central to salvation are simplest, while those things which are peripheral are increasingly obscure. It is not necessary that one be able to correctly interpret every passage of divine writ to come into Christ. It is necessary that he accept the testimony of the qualified witnesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Those who acknowledge the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5) must recognize the sacred right of each individual to approach the scriptures for himself. To take that right from others is to lay the foundation by which it may be taken from ourselves. In the exercise of that right one must judge for himself what the implications of scripture must be. To do this demands the use of reason. All men acknowledge the place of reason in forming spiritual convictions because they all produce evidence by which they hope to influence reason. Yet many deny the right of an individual to arrive at a conclusion different than the one they have reached. In a final analysis this amounts to saying that those who thus act feel they are infallible interpreters.

Fellowship and Reasoning

The right to employ reason must involve the possibility of being in error unless one concludes that human reasoning is infallible. That no man is infallible is evidenced by the fact we are told, "Let every one be definite in his own convictions" (Romans 14:15). This indicates that while no man can be trusted to judge for all others each man may be trusted to judge for himself. This avoids pride and arrogance on one hand and menial subservience on the other. It allows the dignity of the individual to remain unimpaired and provides that "your faith might be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).

To forbid a man to change his view or opinion under threat of excommunication may make a hypocrite out of him but

it can never make an honest believer. A congregation composed of such persons is not a tribute to God and truth but is a monument of deceit and spiritual dissatisfaction. No one can authoritatively interpret the word of God for another person. If he could interpret it for one he could for ten, if for ten then a hundred, and if for that many he could do it for all. It is of such fiber the fabric of papacy is woven. For this reason God did not condition the fellowship of the saints upon conformity but upon community, the sharing together of the divine life in spite of individual differences.

Even those who deny the unity in diversity are forced to practice it. There is not a faction on earth whose members all concur in the meaning of every scriptural passage. Many of them are at odds over a multitude of scriptures. Their class periods are frequently given over to warm discussion of varied views. They respect these differences in every area except the one which the faction arbitrarily regards as the test of fellowship. On this one matter every person must agree or be thrust out. On every other they may differ seriously. Often the area of their disagreement is more vital to the spiritual welfare than that upon which uniformity is required. No two preachers agree upon explanation of every scripture, not even those who proclaim loudest that the members must see everything alike or be damned.

It is true that fellowship in Christ is not to be equated with endorsement. We are in the fellowship with many who do things we cannot endorse; we endorse many things done by those with whom we are not in the fellowship. Fellowship is from *koinonia* and relates to the state into which we are called by God. It is brotherhood and is entered by proper response to the good news, that is, by being born again. Endorse is from the Latin *en*, on, and *dorsa*, back. It means literally “to sign on the back,” and thus to sanction. Of course those in the fellowship hold views that are divergent about many things, but this does not affect their fellowship.

Paul and Peter were not out of the fellowship when Paul withstood his fellow-apostle to the face (Gal. 2:11), although Paul certainly did not condone his actions or endorse his “not walking uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14).

Paul was not out of the fellowship as related to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:9) although they were guilty of many things he could not endorse. He did not once hint that any of them should come out and start “a faithful church” nor did he threaten to do so if he came. Instead, he said, “The rest will I set in order when I come” (1 Cor. 11:34). We need to face up to the fact that the congregation at Corinth was in much worse state than most of those which have divided in these days. Paul demonstrates the attitude we should manifest toward congregations which engage in some practices we cannot endorse. We should not regard them as wholly right or completely in error. In 1 Corinthians 11:2, he writes, “I must give you credit for remembering what I taught you and adhering to the traditions which I passed on to you,” but in verse 11 he says, “But in giving you the following rules, I cannot commend your conduct.”

If we had been members at Corinth we would probably have split the congregation over the matters which we could not commend. It is astounding that we have developed a theory about fellowship (which means joint participation) that always results in unjointed separation. Our problem is that we have completely missed the basis of our fellowship. We are not partakers of mutual opinions but sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6). Diversity of opinion does not cause division. It is dogmatism which produces schism. There is room in Christ for men to work together who have divergent views, but there is not room enough on earth for men to work together who have a factional spirit. We must either develop a healthy love for our brethren or continue to shatter the fabric of brotherhood by an unwholesome love of opinion.

So that there will be no mistake about my personal position I shall be as plain and explicit as possible. I regard as my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ all sincere immersed believers in Him on this whole earth. Since fellowship is brotherhood these are in the fellowship of which I am a partaker. The brotherhood which I recognize is limited only by the new birth. I am in the fellowship with all who are in Christ Jesus. I do not agree fully with a single one of these. I do not give a blanket endorsement to the ideas, interpretations, or spiritual ideologies, of any of them. I endorse a universal brotherhood of all of God's children but I do not endorse fully any brother who is in it, nor do I demand that any fully endorse my views and opinions. I am bound to all of them by love and not by conformity.

I do not regard the restoration movement as the church of God. I have no doubt that God has children on this earth, and I have brethren in Christ, who have never heard of this American phenomenon. But I do regard as in the fellowship those who are heirs of this movement regardless of their current views about instrumental music, orphan homes, colleges, classes, individual cups, fermented wine in the Lord's Supper, and all the host of other things which became controversial and were elevated to divisive status. Brotherhood is not based upon an attitude toward any of these. It results from the fatherhood of God. I shall love and respect all of His children as my brothers. I will go among them, speak to any of them, and show love and forbearance to all of them. When they come where I am, I will recognize them, call upon them and allow them the full right of sharing in the fellowship of which I am a part. I shall simply ignore the walls and barriers erected by factional men. I shall see my brothers on both sides of these walls.

I must retain my integrity before God and thus refuse to sanction or condone what I personally conceive to be contrary to His design or purpose for my life. But I shall neither seek to lord it over my brethren nor to constitute myself as their judge. I

shall allow them to answer to the Master to whom they are amenable as well as myself. I am sick and tired of the warring and jangling of party strife. I shall have no part in it. Instead, it shall be my aim to labor that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

These are my views on fellowship and endorsement and for them I must answer unto God in the last great day. “It is a prime requisite in a trustee that he should prove worthy of his trust. But, as a matter of fact, it matters very little to me what you or any man, thinks of me— I don’t even value my opinion of myself. For I might be quite ignorant of any fault in myself— but that doesn’t justify me before God. My only true judge is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:2-4). It is in his glorious fellowship I have learned the true meaning of fellowship.

The Common Life

Mission Messenger (July 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

One of the tragedies of this age is our tendency to take the majestic concepts revealed by God and reduce them to the trivial and commonplace, to be bandied about by glib tongues often speaking from unconsecrated hearts. In the crucible of human reason, heated by the fires of partisanship, we simmer away the glorious and ennobling truth and leave only the dross. We tend to drag down to the dust that which was designed to lift us up to the heavens. There is hardly a great word of the Christian revelation that has not been “stripped and robbed” and left to languish along the highway of modern theology.

There is no better example of what we mean than the current use of the word “fellowship” by members of “The Church of Christ.” The Greek *koinonia* is a term of such grandeur that no single English word is adequate to express its varied aspects. The Holy Spirit selected the word which always involves the idea of *sharing* and employed it to designate our participation in the divine nature and in the redemptive society composed of the ransomed ones. In either case, whether in its divine or human relationship, this fellowship is the sharing of a common life made possible by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The very idea of this fellowship was the hidden purpose of God. “He has made known to us his hidden purpose namely,

that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The apostle calls this “the secret of Christ” and identifies the secret as the fact that “through the Gospel the Gentiles are joint heirs with the Jews, part of the same body, sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:6). Notice the words “joint heirs” and “sharers together.” These are terms descriptive of fellowship and they are applicable to those who are “part of the same body.”

What makes us “joint heirs?” Is it that we hold the same opinions or have the same views as to the implementation of the apostles’ doctrine? Not at all! “The Spirit of God joins with our Spirit in testifying that we are God’s children; and if children, then heirs. We are God’s heirs and Christ’s fellow-heirs, if we share his sufferings now in order to share his splendour hereafter” (Rom. 8:17). “If children, then heirs!” That which makes us a child of God makes us an heir. What is the condition upon which we continue as such? It is the sharing of a life. On this earth we share a life of suffering; in the hereafter we shall share a life of splendour. In whatever state we are with him, here or hereafter, we share in his life. This is fellowship!

It is obvious that those who share the common life, who are in association with each other because of attachment unto him, will constantly seek to harmonize their opinions and interpretations. But such harmony is an ideal toward which those who are in the fellowship ardently strive. It is not fellowship and should never be confused with it. We share in the common life before we understand everything alike. We share in it though we shall never understand everything alike in our human imperfection. No apostle ever exhorted any congregation of brethren to achieve unity in order to be in the fellowship. Every such command was given to those in the fellowship and because they were in that state.

The family of God is like our physical family. We become

sharers of the common life by coming into the family. That which brings us into the family brings us into the common life, makes us sharers of the family relationship. We enter that relationship by birth. Those of us who enter it do not have the same opinions about everything when we enter it nor is it necessary that we ever do in order to remain in it. The family relationship is not contingent upon that. Anyone who predicates fellowship upon unanimity of opinion or understanding lays the foundation for the dissolution of all fellowship. Such a position is unscriptural, impractical, and impossible of attainment. We share in the common life, not because we have the same opinions, but because we have the same parents.

If you want to see how much harmony is produced by basing fellowship upon conformity all you need to do is to examine the status of those who do so. You will find them splintered and rent, challenging and debating each other, refusing to recognize one another as brethren, and generally presenting a disgraceful spectacle to the religious world. If a philosophy is to be judged like a tree, by the fruit it bears, here is one which needs to be cut down, refused and rejected by all thoughtful persons. It breeds exclusiveness and arrogance, it confuses party allegiance with faithfulness to God, it confounds human tradition with divine truth. It makes absolutely impossible the harmony which it demands.

Our fellowship has both a divine and human aspect. On the divine side it is a mystical union and participation in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ through the gift of the Spirit. On the human side it is a fellowship of brethren whose mutual relations are transformed through the gift of the Spirit which they receive. This state is described as one in which “men have been once enlightened, when they have had a taste of the heavenly gift and *a share in the Holy Spirit*, when they have experienced the goodness of God’s word and the spiritual energies of the age to come” (Heb. 6:4, 5). The fellowship in the Holy Spirit is directly linked with the grace of Christ and love of God. “The grace of

the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and *fellowship in the Holy Spirit*, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). Our relationship with the Godhood is established by grace through love and it is a divine fellowship.

Out of the common life in Christ and the sharing in the Spirit comes the urge for thinking and feeling alike. The shared life creates a mutual concern for unity. “If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any *sharing of the Spirit*, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity” (Phil. 2:1, 2). The Holy Spirit is not bestowed on a factional basis. He is not a sectarian gift or possession. He will not be confined or restricted by the party walls which men erect about themselves. For that reason the fellowship in Christ Jesus transcends all partisan barriers and embraces and encompasses all of the children of God.

It is regrettable that God’s sheep are still a scattered flock. It is saddening to think of the parties and sects which men have created. But wherever there is a sincere child of God, whether in this faction or that, the Spirit of God dwells in that child and he is in the fellowship because the Spirit is in him. And all such Spirit-filled persons are members of the one body. There is only one church now, there never was but one, there never can be but one. It is the *ekklesia* of God composed of the “called out” saints. Whoever has heard the call and responded to it is a part of the *ekklesia*. No splinter, segment or section of our currently divided religious world represents the church of God in its fulness. The sheep have not all been gathered into one partisan corral. While our task is to “unite the Christians in all the sects” it is not to bring them into the fellowship. They are already in it. The fellowship is a divine creation like the *ekklesia*, indeed it is the *ekklesia*. It is the fellowship of the called out ones, the saints! It is precisely because they are already in the fellowship that we should seek to bring about a united witness so the members of

the one body may be able to function harmoniously that the world may believe that God has sent Jesus!

William Temple said on August 3, 1937, “The church is not an association of men, each of whom has chosen Christ as his Lord; it is a fellowship of men, each of whom Christ has united with himself.” This eminent theologian saw the difference between association and fellowship. More important than that, he saw the difference between a human action and a divine creation. We are a part of the fellowship by an act of God. We cannot purchase a gift of the Spirit nor purchase the Spirit as a gift. We have no power to deprive a man of the Spirit in whom he seeks to dwell. We can deprive such a man of our association but when we do so we suffer inestimable loss and we may not especially harm the man.

We have been deluded and deceived by the Arch-foe into equating that divine state called fellowship with our petty arguments over cups, classes, colleges, fermented wine, orphan homes, music, and a score of other things. In a world where men are distraught, disturbed and dying, where the fiery maw of hell is being furnished fuel by the death of untold, unsaved millions, we have taken the time to turn the sword of the Spirit against God’s children and slash and shiver them to bits over how to break the bread or pass the emblems. While the gray wolves of atheistic communism surround the camp of the saints with their slaver jaws dripping in readiness for the crunching kill, we are indulging in the reckless folly of fratricidal strife. The wolves are united and the sheep are at the throats of one another. Is there more power for unity in a godless ideology than in the crimson tide which streamed down the side of Jesus?

What have we contributed to the world by our philosophy of unity by separation and fusion by fission? Have we restored the church of God? Does someone answer that we have established “The Church of Christ”? We have done more than that. In the United States we have created more than two dozen

“Churches of Christ” each of which is the loyal church in the eyes of its partisan adherents who will not even recognize the members of the others. Have you ever watched or listened to a preacher as he was forced to admit reluctantly that one in another faction “may be a brother *in error*”? Have you noticed how much more emphasis is placed on “error” than on “brother”? While we are separated, segregated, strife-torn, and self-willed, we are all “brothers in error” and those who say they are not make the biggest error of all!

Where was “The Church of Christ” when Thomas Campbell wrote and read his “Declaration and Address” in 1809? There was not a congregation of people on the face of the earth who worshipped under that title. Had the church of Christ become extinct? Was Jesus a king without a subject, a shepherd without a sheep, or a head without a body? To what did the faithful martyrs belong who died during “The Dark Ages” and who are clothed in white raiment, having palm branches in their hands? They were not members of a “local Church of Christ” for there was no such thing known among them. Is it possible that a man can be a member of the one body without holding “membership” in a “Church of Christ”?

When did the Restoration movement become “the Lord’s church”? On what date did the last Christian in the sectarian world desert his sect to become a member of “the faithful church”? In what year was the last wandering sheep gathered in? When did God’s people at last become identified with one American movement or party, so that henceforth all others were sectarians and there were no sectarians left in “The Church of Christ”? When did baptism into Christ become the exclusive right of the party adopting the name “The Church of Christ” and to whom did this sacred rite belong prior to this time so that someone could administer it to one who replanted “The Church of Christ”? Or, should we ask, when was it transferred from the *ekklesia* of God, catholic and universal, to become the sole possession of an indigenous American party which grew out of a

nineteenth century restoration attempt?

It will not be necessary for you to warn me of the consequences of asking such questions. I know what partisan hate and animosity can do. But these things must be faced. Too long we have been blinded by prejudice and hoodwinked by vain tradition. We must be shocked into a return to sanity or we will continue to multiply factions under the false assumption that each new party is a re-creation of the church of God. We have forsaken the goal of the restoration fathers, but even worse, we have betrayed the trust of the Son of God. We have been tricked into denying brotherhood with many of God's children, we have rejected many whom he has accepted. Many whom we have rejected are closer to God than some we have accepted!

“The Church of Christ” today occupies the same relationship to the church of God as did the “Christ party” in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:12). While others were saying, “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos” or “I follow Cephas,” a member of this party would say, “I am Christ’s.” But he did it for the same reason that the others said they belonged to various men, to draw a line of demarkation between his party and others in the church of God. Perhaps it was to this arrogant group who sought to make Jesus a party chieftain that the apostle addresses his first question, “Is Christ divided?” It certainly must have been to this faction he wrote, “Look facts in the face. Someone is convinced, is he, that he belongs to Christ? Let him think again, and reflect that we belong to Christ as much as he does” (2 Cor. 10:7). Perhaps this could well be said to many of us by thousands of God’s dear children in the world today.

Fellowship in Christ Jesus is not *joint participation* in the Lord’s Supper conditioned on either leavened or unleavened bread, fermented or unfermented wine, one container or individual cups, with the bread broken before distribution or broken in turn by each one to whom it is passed. Fellowship in Christ Jesus is not *joint participation* in Bible study, either in

classes or one group, with or without uninspired literature. Fellowship in Christ Jesus is not *joint participation* in this or that program of preaching or charitable work. It is not *joint participation* in the song service with or without instrumental accompaniment. All of these things have created problems among those who are in the fellowship and they have been approached and resolved in various and divergent ways. All of them, in view of the orthodox philosophy of maintaining purity of doctrine by separating from brethren, have been allowed to become divisive. This is a shameful tragedy in our history.

But fellowship is infinitely greater and more wonderful than all of these. It is sharing in a life, in the divine nature. It is joint participation in the Holy Spirit, the gift of God to all of his children. We must not conclude that the Holy Spirit enters us only when we recognize and confess error and leaves us when we make a mistake. The Holy Spirit is our assurance of life and our Father in heaven no more kills his children when they make a mistake than I would kill one of my children for the same reason.

The indwelling Spirit is not an indication that one is free from error or he would dwell in none of us. The Spirit is a testimonial to the fact that we are sons of God. "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." We may grieve the Spirit and often do; we may quench the spirit and no doubt we do so, but the Spirit does not leave us when grieved any more than a father deserts his children when they aggravate him.

Let us grant that brethren are wrong in their reasoning when they adopt individual cups, Bible classes, uninspired literature, instrumental music, etc., still these do not destroy the fellowship for it is not based upon any of them, nor upon all of them put together. Those who adopt them are still brethren if they were before. Fellowship is not something we can extend or withdraw. It is a divine relationship which God has created. It is

brotherhood! A mistaken idea at this juncture causes many to plaintively ask, “How can I be in the fellowship with someone who uses instrumental music in the worship?” They ask, “If I recognize such a person as in the fellowship do I not *jointly participate* in his music which I believe to be wrong?”

Like the apostle I shall use a human example. There were six children in my father’s family. Suppose that two of them played cards for recreation and I was opposed to the practice. Would my recognition of them as my brothers mean that I *jointly participated* in their card game? No one would be so foolish as to say it did. Would our honest difference over this form of activity negate the family relationship? Would I be unable to cooperate with them in anything at all seeing that I could not do so in this one particular? Would I be unable to *jointly participate* with them in painting the house on Tuesday seeing that I could not *jointly participate* with them in their game on Monday? The fact is we did not become brothers because we played cards or did not, but because we had the same parents. We were sharers in the family life although we could not in good conscience all *jointly participate* in the same activities. The fellowship in Christ is the sharing in a life and not in an opinion or interpretation!

We need to mature in our thinking and exhibit that moral and spiritual stature which will enable us to see and speak of fellowship in its true and majestic magnitude. Let us cease to equate it with endorsement or subservient conformity and recognize it for what it is— the mutual sharing in the life of our Lord through the gift of grace. As for me, I regard every sincere baptized believer in the Lord Jesus as in the fellowship. While distressed by the differences which plague us and the divisions which beset us, I shall allow none of these to dissolve the divine relationship. I could not do so if I would for it is not in my power to do so. Jesus is greater than the church and the church is greater than any faction or sect. It is greater than all of them together. It is the redemptive society composed of all of the

redeemed. It is the fellowship of the holy ones, the brotherhood of the saved.

How Far Is Too Far?

Mission Messenger (July 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

Since I began to devote my efforts primarily to promoting unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus I have become the object of attention of a goodly number of preachers who previously ignored me. They do not know exactly what to do with me for the simple reason that I no longer represent any splinter, segment or faction of the disciple brotherhood. If I would limit my association with, and visits to, one particular group, they could categorize me. This would be a big relief because they know how to handle another partisan. They are not so adept at dealing with a free man in Christ who can love them all regardless of their variegated opinions and interpretations.

Those who now come to question me on the basis that they wish to know what to tell those who ask them about me, generally end up by saying they appreciate my attitude but they think I have gone too far. I appreciate their attitude also because for a good many years a lot of them have been telling those who asked them that I believed a lot of things I never dreamed of believing. I suspect it would still be a little better if they would tell those who ask them about me to ask me and let me tell them. But how far is too far? A careful analysis will show that in every instance those who make the statement are perfectly willing to go along with much of the teaching on “fellowship” provided they can retain the party of their allegiance intact and undisturbed. The problem is not so much that I am advocating

anything startling or new. My approach is revolutionary because I insist on practicing what a lot of preachers have always hinted at.

A number of brethren in the past have written in the “orthodox” journals and spoken in college lectureships the same things I write and say. The difference is that with me these ideas are not just liting propaganda but life principles. I propose to implement them in my life and this is the thing that some cannot take. The members of the non-instrument “Church of Christ” party would welcome anything I could do to get the factional adherents to cease fighting over Herald of Truth, institutional homes, colleges, the one-man preacher pastor system, Sunday schools, uninspired literature, unfulfilled prophecy, individual cups, fermented wine, the order of worship, and all of the motley group of other things which have shaken and shivered them to fragments. So long as I am willing to restrict my efforts to the factions which oppose instrumental music I can be tolerated, but when I regard those who use instrumental music as my brethren and move among them in love I am going too far.

I am constantly besieged by anxious querists asking, “How can you fellowship the Christian Church?” Patiently I go back over the ground and explain to them that they are using the word “fellowship” in a sense in which the Holy Spirit never used it. I point out that I do not “fellowship” the “Christian Church” or the “Church of Christ.” I am in the fellowship with all of God’s children who are in these segments and with a lot of others who are in neither of them. This concept of brotherhood is as far above the thinking of the average “Church of Christ preacher” as the heavens are higher than the earth. With him it is not enough to be opposed to instrumental music but one must also be a member of a non-instrument party (his particular one) in all of its ungodly and unwholesome exclusivism.

This is not the end of sorrows! My brethren in the so-called Independent Christian Churches, sometimes called the

“Conservatives,” cautiously welcome my brotherly treatment of them. They have been blasted, stigmatized and assailed with such animosity and venom by non-instrument zealots in the past that it is hard for them to realize that a man can oppose instrumental music and still regard them with fraternal love. I present a problem to them from several angles. Some of them regard me with outright suspicion. They still think there is “a catch to it” and if they allow me too much freedom among them the time will come when I will go berserk, and like Carrie Nation, snatch a hatchet out from under my cloak and start smashing their electric organs and grand pianos. They are always a little uneasy when they invite me to speak and heave a gentle sigh of relief when it is over.

However, the real problem with the “Independents” is that I regard myself as being in the fellowship with all of God’s children who happen to be in the “Disciples of Christ” denomination. They are grateful that I do not make instrumental music a test of fellowship or brotherhood in Christ, but for me to exhibit brotherly regard for the “Disciples” and to speak at their invitation is going too far. They would much prefer that I be affiliated with the “Conservative” party but since I refuse to do that they will still tolerate me if I “draw a line” against the Disciples. It is not enough to be opposed to “open membership” but I must enroll in a closed party to oppose it.

Of course I do not restrict my regard for my brethren to those only who are in some segment of the Restoration movement. I am no longer suffering from the vain delusion that this movement is the church of God. The flock of God in this age is a scattered flock. All of the sheep have not yet been led or driven into one exclusive corral. Every sincere immersed believer on this earth is God’s child and my brother. Some of these sheep are caught in strange thickets. I do not think I’ll help their plight by belaboring them over the head with rod and staff because they allowed themselves to become thus entangled.

Because they are sheep of God they are a part of the flock of God even though still in the wilderness. While they are seeking to extricate themselves I will recognize them, call upon them and help them when they are where I am. I know how difficult it is to extricate oneself from partisan brambles and briers.

How far is too far? In each instance the party spirit cries out that one who goes beyond the party limits goes too far. Each faction has drawn its line on the shores of time and declares, "This far and no farther shalt thou come!" To all partisans unity is based on conformity and the party norm is the will of God. I refuse any longer to allow my conscience to be regulated by fallible men and my love to be circumscribed by human tradition. I regard the party spirit as a sin of the deepest dye. I shall respect every child of God as my brother, commending what I can and condemning what I cannot commend.

The reaction to my stand by entrenched partisans is interesting. Because I steadfastly refuse to become aligned with any of their parties and retain the right to think for myself "without benefit of clergy" they assume that I am not sincere and am a mere self-serving opportunist. They just simply cannot conceive of how any man can love those who differ with him, so they consider that my love is not genuine. They are waiting (somewhat wistfully in some instances) for me to crack up and reveal the same old bitter factional attitude which I once manifested. They wait in vain. There have been too many long nights of weariness and praying, too many tears, too much heartache to return to the narrow, bigoted, intolerant, selfish, arrogant attitude of yesteryear, forged by the chains of orthodoxy. Whatever happens to me now, whether I live or die, it will be to the Lord and to no party. I shall face any eventuality as a free man in Christ Jesus. Praise his holy name!

More than any other person on earth I realize my own weaknesses. I am not at all above the temptation to go too far. My judgment is not infallible, my strength is not supernatural.

But no man can go too far in recognition of his brothers when he goes only as far as God goes. God recognizes all of his children as children. I cannot go too far when I regard all of them as brethren. They are God's children while scattered abroad, they are his before they are gathered in one. "He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but also that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51, 52).

With the bonds and restraints, the ties and the straitjacket of the party spirit holding us back the temptation is not that we shall go too far but that we shall not go far enough. If we mark out our own limits and draw our own lines we will always be sectarian. Whether a man is "a liberal sectarian or a conservative sectarian" makes but little real difference, for it is not being of a liberal or conservative bent or turn of mind that is a sin, but being a sectarian! Any artificial barrier erected to exclude brethren from brotherhood makes of those who remain within such barriers a sect. No one can go far enough until he removes that barrier and regards all of God's children as brothers— and treats them as such. It is the transformity of the new creation and not the conformity to old tradition which makes us children of the Most High. If one listened to a lot of brethren he would not go too far because he would never go at all! He would die as he lived— a partisan!

It is useless to appeal to the sect of the satisfied or to the cult of conformity. But there are those in every party who are members of the fellowship of the concerned. Our plea is to all of these. Let us discard "the yoke which neither we nor our fathers could bear." Let us rise above the narrow confines of legalism and restore the concept of the glorious church without spot of schism or wrinkle of rancor. May party cries cease! May Jesus Christ be enthroned in our hearts as he is in heaven. This is a work for heroic men and not for cowards. The trumpet is sounding! The call of God goes forth! Let us not fail him in this hour of destiny!

Adventures in Religion (8)

Mission Messenger (July 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

Real vital faith makes men “too good for this world.” I am not speaking of the watered-down version of belief which characterizes most of us in these days. Saturated as it is by doubt and diluted with disgust, it produces characters which are adapted and adjusted to the world, and these are more affected by the world than they affect it. There isn’t anything particularly heroic about the average Christian because he is more inclined to be “average” than Christian.

The spiritual sterility which passes for religion is no doubt the result of a good many factors. In the first place, it is considered in bad taste to demonstrate one’s religion openly. If he would avoid the charge of radicalism or fanaticism, he must cleverly conceal the fact that he believes. Our world has undergone a complete transformation since the days when Jesus was upon the earth. In those times men wanted to appear more religious than they were. They would disfigure their countenances so they would appear gaunt and hollow-eyed and others would give them credit for fasting. They had a trumpet sounded to announce a great contribution to charity. No longer do men want recognition for such gifts except when filling out their income tax blanks.

One of the big problems Jesus faced was to keep everyone from getting in early to secure a front pew. He was pretty stern

in his denunciation of those who hurried to meeting to grab a chief seat in an elevated position where all the other worshipers could see they were present. If Jesus were to see the average congregation in these days he would be surprised at how well his teaching is being heeded. Unfortunately, the motivation is not quite that sincere and wholesome. The “amen corner” is as unpopular as a spoken “Amen” is presumptuous. It is amazing how those who yell like Comanche Indians at a Saturday night ball game sit like wooden cigar store Indians on Sunday morning. The quickest way to lose status now is to “go all out” for religion. It generally embarrasses your associates in the congregation, especially if they have friends who are not members. You are expected to “play down” any enthusiasm for real Christian service, to treat it lightly and jokingly. Of course, you are expected to do your share but it must be in nonchalant fashion, with a sort of “don’t care whether school keeps or not” attitude. It will not do to attack the matter seriously or soberly. If you do someone will start calling you “preacher.” This is an indication that religion is now a business to be run by professionals, and amateurs have no business “monkeying around” with its management.

It is true that many have developed two sets of religious attitudes. One is reserved for the public services. Surrounded by stained glass windows filtering in an eerie glow they have a sanctimonious expression as they sing, “Rescue the perishing, care for the dying.” As soon as they get out of the door of what they call “the sanctuary” and get a filter tip lit up, they engage in good-natured chaffing and banter about the very message which a few minutes before they pretended to hear with earnest concentration. The difference is even more apparent the next day at work or on the golf course. It is quite obvious that religion has come to be merely a buffer to ward off or soften the blows of fate. It is like a fire insurance policy which one purchases because of the personality of the salesman. It isn’t necessary to know anything about the home office if you keep your premiums paid up.

Faith has succumbed to fashion. Loyalty to Christ has been swallowed up in looseness of life. It is easier to belittle than to believe, to trust in luck than to trust in God. We have a “form of godliness but deny the power thereof.” Our hope is not in the hereafter but in what we are after here. We estimate spiritual growth by the figures on a bulletin board. Our standing is determined by statistics. Success is a matter of attendance and accounts. It is not so much a statement of conviction as the statement from the bank which is of vital concern.

If we are to alter this state of affairs and recapture the significance of the transforming power of the Spirit in our lives we must be willing to “launch out into the deep” in the realm of faith. True, it is safer to let down our nets closer to shore, but that which is safest may not be sanest, if the object is to catch fish. Faith involves a risk. There is a difference between being saved and “playing it safe.” The real heroes of faith were not those who proved they were as good as anyone else in the world, but those who demonstrated that they were “too good for the world.” The world got rid of many of them because they had already rid themselves of the world. The motto of the world is “Conform them or crucify them!”

One of our crucial mistakes is to think we must wait for some big crisis in which to demonstrate faith. But the quality of faith does not depend upon the magnitude of the problem which confronts us. Besides that, the church is always at crisis while in this world. A high school student who has been sitting with the group in the back of the auditorium may become a leader if he starts sitting on the very front seat, exactly as one demonstrated non-conformity in the days of Jesus by sitting in an inferior position. It may take faith to deliberately choose to lend your influence to a small congregation where you can truly help rather than to go where all is made ready to your hand. A large congregation is frequently a hiding place where one may “lose himself” figuratively— and literally!

There is a raw recklessness about genuine faith which makes it border upon madness to the casual and indifferent. It is not mere coincidence that the terms “the cowardly” and “the faithless” appear together in the category of the condemned. Nothing is more disconcerting to any sect than for one to rise above conformity and “preach the good news of the faith which once he tried to destroy” (Gal. 1:23). To fling oneself into such a task with utter abandon can only bring the charge, “You are raving; too much study is driving you mad.” But to all who confuse faith with fidgeting and floundering around in what is called “religious activity” in these times, we recommend a reading of the account of the truly faithful. Read it slowly and seriously!

“Through faith they overthrew kingdoms, established justice, saw God’s promises fulfilled. They muzzled ravening lions, quenched the fury of fire, escaped death by the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength, they grew powerful in war, they put foreign armies to rout. Women received back their dead raised to life. Others were tortured to death, disdaining release, to win a better resurrection. Others, again, had to face jeers and flogging, even fetters and prison bars. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were put to the sword, they went about dressed in skins of sheep or goats, in poverty, distress, and misery. *They were too good for this world.* They were refugees in deserts and on the hills, hiding in caves and holes in the ground” (Hebrews 11:32-38). Think of this the next time the congregation spends an hour in business meeting arguing over whether to secure cushions for the pews!

Getting Untangled

Mission Messenger (August 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

It was Rupertus Meldenius who coined the slogan, “In essentials unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Those who are heirs of the Restoration movement have generally altered this to read, “In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, charity.” Unquestionably, the formula was originally pronounced as a basis for encouraging unity through promotion of charity in all things. In application, however, it has produced division through argument over the first two points. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are a people splintered by a slogan.

While our disunity is regrettable and disgraces our profession it is not wholly bad. It is apparent that it is an indirect result of a motivation that is commendable. There has been a constant attempt to preserve what men conceive to be “matters of faith” and a determined resistance against erosion of spiritual values by allowing “matters of faith” to be relegated to the realm of “matters of opinion.” It is possible that, in an attempt to avoid the chaos of anarchy, we have adopted the coercion of dogmatism, but we have done so with a view of defending the faith.

It is our personal view that our fathers when confronted with the problem of innovations were betrayed into adopting a philosophy of attempting to preserve doctrinal purity by

separation from brethren. This was no doubt the result of fear prompted by a love for truth. We do not censure them for their decision. No doubt they did the best they could under the circumstances but they passed along to us not only a heritage of disunity but the thought-pattern which will continue to divide us every time someone is forced by conscience to dissent from the party norm. We have lived long enough to see what our fathers could not see— the fruit of the seed which they planted. If we expect to eliminate the fruit of strife we must stop planting the seed of division.

It is apparent that our philosophy for settling problems is not of God, for He is “not the author of confusion but of peace.” To continue blindly along the road to disunity under the mistaken idea that every time we create a new faction we please God and plant his church anew is to perpetuate a species of folly which does no honor to our mental processes. Nor can we retain the philosophy and half-heartedly settle our lesser difficulties on a different basis. We must reject and renounce the whole theory that brotherhood is based upon conformity and that we please the Father by treating some of his children like pagans and pariahs. We must go all the way back to the place where the philosophy was adopted and began to be applied and restore a sense of brotherhood and family relationship in which to approach our varied problems from a totally new perspective.

In an honest attempt to do this very thing I propose an investigation of our accepted slogan. I shall be quite candid and forthright for no other attitude will achieve what needs to be done in restoring the framework of peace. I am aware that what I am about to say will run counter to what most of us have always been taught but it is what we have always been taught that has created our partisan position and shivered us into splinters. We can never regain unity by merely promoting and parroting the party line which is responsible for our disunity.

It would be easy and pleasant for me to deal only with the

divisions that have occurred by opposition of brethren to those things approved by the segment with which I have been associated. We can brush aside their arguments as inconsequential and look upon them with a kind of tolerant compassion. For example, we have always had Bible classes on Lord's Day. By the same token, I think we have always regarded those who oppose such classes as being somewhat immature and childish. We *knew* that classes were in the realm of *opinion* and why any one should make a great ado about it was beyond us. The fact that the opposition regarded classes as in the realm of *faith* we discounted as being characteristic of "hobbyists."

The same thing is true regarding individual containers for the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. In our particular faction this was a mere matter of opinion. We were not seeking to bind the practice on anyone. We used individual cups but if others wanted to use one drinking glass that was their business. We would not disturb them and we didn't want them bothering us. We could *smile* benignly upon those who "ignorantly" regarded such things as matters of *faith* and patronizingly pray that the Lord would open their eyes so they could see as well as ourselves.

I could ingratiate myself with the members of the party in which I grew up, some of whom think I have "gone liberal" as they quaintly express it, if I would confine this article to a defence of what we have. I could make it clear that we regard those who oppose cups and classes as brethren, that we do not propose to bind these things upon them, and we will tolerate them while they are "growing up" to our ideal stature. This would reassure my associates who have not known quite how to regard me or what to do with me. They would feel that I was "back in the fold" and that I was "safe" and "sound."

But there is another side to the story. There are those who have adopted things we have always opposed, such as institutional homes, a professional pastor system, missionary

societies and instrumental music. In these things the shoe is on the other foot and the same brethren who are so anxious for me to label cups and classes as matters of opinion now insist that I regard these other things as matters of faith. But the brethren who have them look upon them as matters of opinion and they are a little bit amused that we create such a furore over them and regard them as matters of faith. They are not generally seeking to bind them upon us and they are perfectly willing to tolerate us if we will “stay out of their hair” and not agitate them about matters they consider to be *opinions*.

I confess I would feel a little forlorn about our faction if it were not for the fact that almost every other faction is in the same boat, or in another boat on the same pond. Each faction belongs both to “the haves” and “the have-nots” with the possible exception of the one on top and the one on the bottom of the party pile. To the one on top everything is a “matter of opinion” and they have no faith; to the one on the bottom everything is a “matter of faith” and they have no opinion, that is, they do not think. The first is pro-everything and the second is anti-everything! In between these two are all the rest of us striving to distinguish between what we call “faith” and “opinion.” Is there any alleviation possible for our divided state or must we be doomed to constant dissension and strife? Perhaps we are too optimistic but we would like to suggest that a non-partisan evaluation of our state *may* provide a better framework for our future association. Before we make any suggestions let us observe the following points which may serve as a foundation for our study.

1. In our currently divided state anything which is possessed by one faction and opposed by the members of another is regarded as a “matter of opinion” by those possessing it and a “matter of faith” by those opposing it. Thus, everything which is credited with contributing to division is regarded by some brethren as in the realm of faith and by others as in the realm of opinion. Missionary societies, instrumental music,

colleges, the one-man pastor system, orphan homes, classes, individual cups, fermented wine, and all the host of other troublesome issues are either “matters of faith” or “matters of opinion” depending upon the perspective from which they are viewed.

2. In our naive vocabulary a sectarian is one who has what we oppose; a hobbyist is one who opposes what we have. In the faction in which I was reared those who endorsed instrumental music were sectarians; those who opposed classes and individual containers were hobbyists. In turn, we were categorized as sectarian by those who opposed cups and classes. All of the factions regard others as sectarian or hobbyistic except the farthest extreme groups. To one of these everyone else is a hobbyist and there are no sectarians; to the other everyone else is a sectarian and there are no hobbyists.

3. The divine revelation affords no specific catalogue of what we term “matters of faith” and “matters of opinion” and does not use these terms to designate or define separate areas. Principles are laid down which are to be used as guide-posts of interpretation and warnings are issued against the dogmatic spirit. If you were to give one hundred men each a sheet of paper and ask them to list all matters of faith on one side and all matters of opinion on the other side, it is probable that no two lists would be the same, unless the authors indulged in partisan collusion and consultation.

4. Every party is built around certain points of emphasis and these are made central in the thought and essential to the existence of that party. These points are always based upon interpretation of certain scriptures or upon inferences drawn from the scriptures. They are not matters of positive revelation and for this reason are not concurred in universally. Although agreement is demanded upon these matters in order to remain in the good graces of the party, wide divergencies of viewpoint are entertained and tolerated in other areas.

Faith and Opinion

It is clear to any unbiased observer that we have a double standard; one by which we judge those who have things we oppose, another by which we judge those who oppose things we have. In the first case we demand of others what we ourselves are unwilling to do in the second. When certain ones oppose what we have we insist it is our right as the ones who possess the things to determine they are matters of opinion. When we oppose what others have we deny them the right to determine what is in the realm of opinion. Let us be specific. This is crucial since it involves our consistency and integrity.

Take the average non-instrument “Church of Christ” which has Bible classes, for example. When others oppose their classes the members insist upon acceptance of *their decision* that this is in the realm of opinion. But when opposing instrumental music they insist that those who have it also accept *their decision* that it is in the realm of faith. They are to be supreme judges in every case. On what ground can one party argue that it is the sole repository of truth and all others must kow-tow to its decisions and distinctions? If we demand that those who use the instrument, which they regard as a matter of opinion, give it up in behalf of unity, are we not by the same reasoning obligated to give up classes and individual cups, which we regard as matters of opinion, in order to have unity? Who determines which one of our more than two dozen parties is “the faithful church” to whose infallible pronouncements and irrevocable decisions all others must do obeisance?

It is this web of inconsistencies and maze of absurdities into which we have fallen that make so many despair of our ever attaining to any degree of workable unity. I do not agree with their pessimistic outlook. On the contrary I regard our divided state as one which clamors so loudly for correction that something will be done because something must be done. Something is being done! We will not alleviate the situation by

trying to untangle each knot in the snarled up mess. We must go back and re-think our position on the basis of righteousness, truth and love, without reference to partisan prejudice. We cannot solve our problem, for instance, by attacking it as members of two warring clans— “The Christian Church” and “The Church of Christ.” We can only solve it by approaching it as brothers in the Lord and members of the one body. Let us study it in that light just once and see what a difference it makes.

Simply because the problems involved in the use of the instrument have been so great I want to deal with it in this discussion. Perhaps no other question has troubled the heirs of the Restoration movement any more than this one. I have previously analyzed for our readers the historical, temperamental and psychological factors which elevated it to a status not commensurate with its value. I cannot now review those things, but it is generally recognizable that this is a major barrier in our relationship. If we can resolve it or even lessen the tensions it has created we will by that very achievement do much to adjust other and lesser problems. Regardless of other points of dissension we have two great segments of the Restoration movement today which are distinguished from each other by their respective attitudes toward instrumental music in the corporate worship. They are even frequently referred to as “instrumental” and “non-instrumental,” thus demonstrating that this is a prime issue.

Those who oppose instrumental music generally assert that it is in the realm of faith; those who endorse it affirm that it is a matter of opinion. Both sides agree that *no opinion should be made a test of fellowship* and that we should be tolerant with divergent opinions. However, so long as one side regards the use of the instrument as being in the realm of faith it appears there can be no fraternization until the other is willing to renounce the instrument. Accordingly, those who oppose the instrument refuse any brotherly recognition to those who employ it. Generally they will not even call on such a person to lead in

prayer if he visits their meetings; frequently they refuse to acknowledge him as a child of God or a brother in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who use instrumental music in corporate worship are convinced that their opposers are making laws which God did not make and are seeking to bind such laws upon them. They feel their Christian liberty is at stake and to relinquish the instrument at the demand of the opposing forces is to “surrender to the antis.” They rebel against the very thought of acknowledging that to be a sin which their conscience leads them to believe is a matter of indifference. The two attitudes create a stalemate and make it appear there is no way by which a real sense of brotherhood can be restored until one side or the other “gives in.” Neither side can conscientiously do so with their current views.

Which viewpoint is correct? Is the use of the instrument in the realm of faith or is it in the realm of opinion? Because there are two answers given we may find a solution which will allow us to regard each other as Christians and make it possible for us to work together in some areas although we may not eliminate all of the points of tension and friction. This will certainly be better than the present state of absolute isolation from each other. We must begin by a recognition of each other as brothers. This is easily done if we will visualize a congregation worshipping together as brethren in Christ. Certain ones begin to suggest that they would like to see an instrument used in the praise service. The controversy eventually waxes warm and they separate from each other. Those who desired to have the instrument now begin using one. So there are two groups of worshipers in the community; one with the instrument, the other without. But if they were brothers before, they are brothers still. Putting in an instrument did not negate the new birth by which they entered God’s family.

Each must admit the honesty of the other. Opposition to an

instrument does not make one honest; endorsement of the instrument does not make one dishonest. So we have two groups of honest brethren differing as to the scriptural propriety of instrumental music. Since we are obligated to avoid “setting at nought a brother” each must treat the other with proper respect and regard for the divine relationship. It will help to remember that the new covenant scriptures nowhere specifically brand the use of instrumental music as a sin. Those who conclude it is a sin do so by deduction from certain scriptural principles. Those who endorse the instrument say that such deduction is not warranted by the facts in the case. Whether or not the use of the instrument is justified is a question of interpretation.

It is the opinion of one group based upon study of God’s revelation that the use of instrumental music is wrong; it is the opinion of the other group based upon their study of God’s word that its use is justifiable. It is a matter of opinion then whether the use of the instrument is a “matter of faith” or a “matter of opinion.” Since all are agreed that we dare not divide over opinions, we are obligated to respect the views of each other until such time as we can decide whether the question is in the realm of faith or opinion. When we can all agree upon whether it is one or the other the question will be settled, for all of us are anxious to have unity on matters of faith, and to avoid division over matters of opinion. Meanwhile, one side of the issue cannot dogmatically assert it is one or the other and force brethren into conformity contrary to conscience. All we can do is to avoid making it a test of fellowship until we arrive at the point where we can sincerely agree upon its status.

But suppose we never reach such agreement? We must continue to love and respect each other as brethren until we stand before the judgment bar of God. He will adjust all of those matters in conformity with his own will and eternal purpose. “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). All matters not clearly revealed

will finally be adjudicated by Him to whom all of us, instrumental and non-instrumental alike, claim to direct our praise and homage. We are not commanded to love instrumental music but we are commanded to love our brethren and not to “set them at nought” over matters of opinion.

Does this mean that in many communities the brethren will continue to meet in separate locations? Certainly so. In some areas, through love which transcends all else, there may be a gradual integration of forces which will enable all to maintain spiritual integrity of individual conscience. In most cases this will not soon occur, in many cases it will never do so. But there will be a recognition of brotherhood and a realistic application of the principle of local autonomy of the congregation which will enable both groups to respect the opinion of each other. The oneness for which we plead is not a geographical unity but a spiritual affinity. There are many areas besides singing in which we do agree and in these we may lift up a united witness and testimony. We should not allow our views about one facet of service in which we disagree to negate all of those areas in which we agree. Because one light is burnt out in a chandelier is no excuse for bursting all of the other bulbs and creating a total blackout. If someone throws a ball through the front window we will gain nothing by smashing all the others out!

What can one do whose conscience forbids him to join in the praise service when an instrument is used? He can refrain from singing under such circumstances and should do so. He need not be impolite or boorish, but remember the injunction, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (Rom. 14:22). He can meditate in silence and be grateful to God that an increasing passion of love for the brotherhood makes it possible for him to respect those whose views and opinions are so divergent from his own. At the same time he can pray for the day when an even greater sense of fellowship and unity will dispel the clouds and clear the mists away.

Would it not be better for such a person just to stay away from meetings where the instrument is used? This depends upon the person. Each must be allowed the liberty of private decision. As for myself, I cannot stay away from those whom I love and regard as brothers. I feel obligated on the basis of 2 Corinthians 2:8 to confirm my love to all of my brothers. I think this must be done through association and by overt acts. I want to learn from my brothers regardless of how much I differ with them on certain things. I do not want to impoverish my spirit by an attitude of exclusivism.

I am sometimes asked how I am received by those among whom I go. I can truthfully state that a majority of the brethren in all of the various factions and segments are kind and considerate. There are always exceptions, of course. In one school where I spoke in the chapel service, one of the professors declared I was not in fellowship with them, contrary to my avowal, because I did not join in the singing when the instrument was played. Upon several other occasions the brethren have exhibited some resentment because I stood in respectful silence during the song service. I overlook these little childish demonstrations of the party spirit toward me because I realize there is a deeply ingrained fear of and animosity toward the “Antis” by every group. It is difficult for many to see how one can be opposed to the use of instrumental music and not be a part of an “Anti-instrument party.” Actually, those who *demand* that one sing where the instrument is used are clearly making the instrument a test of fellowship. It will take a long time to outgrow our traditional feelings and we will need to make a good many allowances for each other.

I cannot help but feel that it is best for us to face up frankly and openly to our differences. I do not mean that we should argue about them all of the time as if these were the only matters of value in the Christian life. Most of them are not central to the Christian concept at all. But we should not be wishy-washy and namby-pamby. When I call upon a brother

from the “Christian Church” who attends my meetings I have no illusions about his views. I know he does not agree with my ideas about instrumental music. If I waited to call upon one who agreed with me on every interpretation I would never call upon anyone. When I move freely among those who use instrumental music they know my position. It is precisely because we differ and recognize the fact that makes our joint association so effective in dispelling the evil influence of the party spirit.

Because I believe in congregational autonomy I do not demand when brethren invite me to address them that they silence the instrument. When they voluntarily do so out of deference to my feelings and the views of those who accompany me, I rejoice, not because the instrument is not used, but because of the manifestation of brotherly love and courtesy which are the ornaments of Christian humility. Ornaments may not make a person any *better* but they may make him more *attractive*.

Instrumental music is not our only problem. It is just one of many. I have referred to it because, in the eyes of many, it is the gravest one. Indeed, there are those among the two dozen non-instrument factions who would gladly discuss settling the differences among themselves if we would exclude the brethren who use the instrument from consideration. This is a childish approach and will never really settle anything. We are divided because we have inherited a philosophy of maintaining doctrinal purity by division among brethren. This fallacious and unworkable system was devised by our fathers and first applied by them when instrumental music was introduced. It is useless to try and adjust our problems which have arisen since that time while retaining the false concept which gave them birth.

The axe must be laid at the root of the tree. We must go back to the initial cleavage and restore the concept of brotherhood in spite of differences. There is little use to grub out the sprouts while the roots lie untouched for we will only provide for other divisions in the future. What I have said in this essay

about instrumental music is applicable to charitable institutions, colleges, individual cups, Bible classes, uninspired literature, fermented wine, and all of the other troublesome issues. Many who are upon both sides of these questions are honest, sincere, humble saints of God. They want to serve Him acceptably. They do not want to be uncharitable and divisive. They realize the sad state in which Zion languishes.

But they have grown up in parties, or grown up and come into parties, each of which thinks it is the church of God to the exclusion of all others. They cannot see how they can be true to God and love those who differ with them to the extent that they can cut across the party lines. The hope for the future lies in the fact that without a single exception everyone of these will affirm that we dare not divide over opinions. Now we do not ask those who use individual containers to regard this as a matter of faith and seek to bind their use upon others. We would oppose that. Neither do we ask those who oppose individual containers to regard it as a matter of opinion and begin to adopt them. We would oppose that as a flagrant violation of conscience.

Here is our proposal. Since honest brethren sincerely disagree over whether the use of individual containers is a matter of faith or a matter of opinion, let us remember that it is a problem of interpretation. The big question now before us is an opinion as to whether the use of cups is a matter of faith or a matter of opinion. Since we cannot force another to see the things as we do let us respect each man's right of opinion as to which category is correct. In this fashion we can at least maintain a relationship which will allow us to work together in many areas as brethren with hope that time, love, and the Holy Spirit, may bring to pass a better day. No one need give up any truth he has ever learned, no one need sacrifice one item of conscience. Let congregations determine their own procedure with utmost love for others who differ. Let us visit each other and share with each other in such meetings as do not demand sacrifice of spiritual integrity.

To those who put Christ first and exalt him above all else a sense of brotherhood is greater than any view about music or cups. As the divine magnet who draws all men unto himself, he should exert enough power to hold us close enough to him that we shall remain together. So long as Jesus is our only creed this will be true; when we allow other things to become a creed we will dissolve over differences. If Jesus is central in our concept of The Way, our agreement in him will be more powerful than our disagreement about things on the rim of Christianity. We will be transformed by him rather than conformed to each other.

But we are asked if a man can reach heaven who is in error? Certainly so, else there would be no one in heaven. Freedom from error is not a condition of reaching heaven; it is attitude toward error which determines our worthiness or unworthiness. One cannot renounce a thing as error until he learns it is an error. There is a difference between being evil and being mistaken. No man is infallible so no one is free from error. We must not equate wrong notions with rebellion against God. One can misunderstand a parent without revolting against his authority. There are some in every party who are dishonest and unjust; there are many who are honestly doing the best they know how to do. None of us know all there is to know about everything; all of us have much to learn. We can learn more readily and help each other more fully, if we will treat one another with brotherly kindness and courtesy. This is the way of love!

Christ and the Church

Mission Messenger (August 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

We doubt that any serious thinker will challenge the observation that error is tolerated and needed reforms postponed because of fear. To question a traditional mode of thought or procedure jeopardizes the future of one who exhibits sufficient courage to do so and few indeed are willing to brook the scorn or withstand the opposition incurred by criticism of that which has come to be accepted as truth. In full awareness of this state of affairs we very humbly submit that we feel our brethren are generally incorrect in their evaluation of the church the *ekklesia* of God. It might not be of sufficient concern to merit this article were it not for the fact that the misconception causes men to trust in the wrong source for salvation and actually may substitute worship of the creation for that of the Creator.

Any hesitancy about expressing our position in this article is caused by apprehension that we may appear to be speaking derogatorily of the church. This is not our intention and such an application of our words would be a decided injustice. We have the greatest respect and deepest reverence for the church of God, but it is not our Savior, nor is it upon an equality with Him. To place the church in its proper perspective is not to reflect against it at all. That the church consists of those who are saved we do not doubt but that the saving power is invested in it we seriously question. It is possible to so emphasize the church

that men will idolize it rather than glorifying God. The tendency to do this is seen upon every hand.

The shepherd is greater than the flock. That is why it was a remarkable thing for the Shepherd to give his life for his sheep. No one regards the sacrifice of sheep for the sustaining of the life of the shepherd as an extraordinary thing. It has been going on for centuries and dates back at least to the time when Noah left the ark and God made a covenant with him. Now the church is simply the flock of God composed of those who acknowledge Jesus as being “the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.” We are but “the sheep of his pasture.”

It is also axiomatic that the creator is superior to the created, and the church is a creation, not a creator. Of Jesus it is affirmed, “He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, *that in everything he might be preeminent*” (Col. 1:18). It is a fact that this passage is seldom quoted for the purpose for which it was written as expressed in the last clause. It is fitted into sermon outlines on the identity of the church, but the apostle referred to the subservience of the church under the headship of Jesus as an argument for his universal prerogatives.

Even more pointed is the example of the church as a building or house. To the congregation at Corinth Paul wrote, “We are fellow workmen of God; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). Peter wrote, “Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). But it is distinctly said, “The builder of a house has more honor than the house” (Heb. 3:3). The context goes on to say, “But Christ was faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house . . .” (verse 6). When we honor the church to the same degree, or on the same plane, as we do Jesus, we are in error.

Although it may sound like treason, we unhesitatingly say that we are not saved by the church, or even through the church

as an instrument. The church is not a Savior but requires one. “Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Eph. 5:23). Since there is only one Lord there is only one church. There never was but one, there can never be but one. There is only one church on earth now and it is composed of all the called out ones. Every person in the world who has heard the call and responded to it has been constituted a living stone in God’s house. No man has power to attach another as a member of the body, no man has power to detach another from the body. “But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:18, 27).

Our modern stress upon the church is often the result of a competitive denominationalism. We proclaim “the church” and not the Lord. Our energies and efforts are directed toward aligning men with a specific viewpoint or opinion relative to this doctrine or that. We see announcement of such topics as “To Which Church Should One Belong?” which implies there is more than one and that man has a choice. The fruit of our vying and contention is everywhere seen but no place more clearly than on farflung mission fields where simple pagans who were united under heathendom are divided against their fellows under “Christianity.”

In the midst of our modern Babel there are few voices now lifted up to declare that “the Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one” as was announced by Thomas Campbell in 1809. Incidentally, when Mr. Campbell issued this statement he was a Presbyterian. He continued a Calvinist until death, a matter which occasioned considerable friendly argument between himself and his son Alexander. This concept has been lost and the various parties and factions have obscured the vision since we have glorified them as “churches” as if God could have more than one group of “the called out” or as if one man on a creedal basis could call others out.

Our task is to preach Christ and him crucified. The nature of sin has not changed and the remedy for it has not altered. We need not be concerned about getting men into “the Lord’s church” for this is the Lord’s work and it should be marvelous in our eyes. Nor need we be worried that any person who is brought to Christ will be added to any other church. There is no other church!

While we are facing up to this issue we feel impelled to face up to another. In doing this we offer our reasoning based upon our knowledge of God’s word and the nature of God as revealed in that word. Since these things are our own deductions we are not inclined to be either dogmatic or argumentative about them. Those who disagree with us will be loved and respected as highly as those who concur. The question is often asked concerning those who are ignorant of the call. Will any be saved outside the church? That Jesus is the Savior of the body is not questioned but will God save any who have not heard the call or in whose case there are circumstances which make it impossible to comply?

It is frequently affirmed that it is impossible for God to save anyone except on the conditions he has authorized us to announce. We do not think this logically follows. The authority of God is sovereign and supreme. While it is true that “the head of every man is Christ” it is just as certain that “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). Christ is the head of all things to the church by sufferance of God. “For God has put all things in subjection under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:27). But God is not under Christ and is not bound by his authority, for the same verse says, “But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection under him,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him.”

We have no right to bind God by the ordinances he gave to bind us, nor attempt to place under law one who is superior to all law. That God’s grace existed prior to and constitutes a realm

larger than the church no thoughtful student will deny. Grace is not a product of the church but the church is a product of grace. That the church occupies a position under the domain of grace and extends only to well defined limits within that domain I freely concede. But that God's grace can never be administered outside those boundaries I am unwilling to admit.

It will be said that if God saves anyone at all outside the church he will be contradicting his own law. Such a statement is the fruit of shallow thinking. It overlooks the fundamental truth that the authority which gives a law is superior to the law which it creates. If this was not true no law after being once issued could ever be altered, amended, repealed or suspended. When one acts above and beyond law he no more contradicts law than one contradicts his obligation by acting above and beyond the call of duty. Moreover, it is a recognized principle that a judge may exercise clemency and extend mercy in the face of positive statutes when one has failed to comply with the same because of circumstances. It is even affirmed that "mercy triumphs over judgment." This is because all law must be relative as relates to humanity and no law, human or divine, can be given which anticipates and prepares for all exigencies.

God has demonstrated in other areas than the spiritual that he makes exceptions in the ordinances he has given. In the natural realm he has ordained a "fixed order" of the sun for light by day and of the moon and stars for light by night. So definite was this ordinance that it was used as a token of his perpetuating power for his chosen people (Jer. 31:35, 36). Yet he had no hesitancy about suspending the arrangement at the behest of Joshua or as a sign to Hezekiah. This was not a contradiction of "the laws of nature" but simply the application of a superior power out of which the ordinances were derived.

We do not argue that God *will do* thus and so with reference to salvation beyond his revelation to us. We simply say that he *can do so* without proving untrue to his covenant. It is

not his unrevealed action but his right of sovereign power and grace which we defend. This does not authorize those of us who act under the authority of Jesus to offer salvation to any person except upon the basis of his declaration. It will be no comfort to the one who would deliberately reject the teaching of the Son under the mistaken idea that he might still be saved by grace. But there is a grave difference between refusal to act because of rebellion and failure to do so because of lack of knowledge due to uncontrollable circumstances. It is uncharitable to indiscriminately brand as rebels those who are uninformed or helpless.

Perhaps we are mistaken in our conclusion that much of our problem is seated in a false opinion about the church, yet we believe there are serious dangers in exalting it to an equality with the Lord. Such a view not only tends to inflate our ego (since we are the church), and make us supplant God in judgment; it also makes the interest of the church turn inward and becomes self-centered. Eventually the church spends its effort in saving itself to the neglect of the lost world. It tends to rely for strength upon the material rather than the spiritual factors of its existence. It becomes rich in all that money can buy and poor in everything it cannot purchase.

We are the “called out” and he who called us is greater than those who are called. He calls to us but we call upon him. He is lord of all, we are slaves; he is the master, we are the servants. We should cease to hold out the church as a saving institution and regard it as a communion of the saved ones. If it be urged that we are saved because we are in the church, let it not be forgotten that we are in the church because we are saved. We are the church. It is not something separate and distinct from our lives which we join. No man can plant the church; no man can join it. No man has power to save himself nor do all men in the aggregate have power to save themselves.

A proper evaluation of the church in relation to Christ will

make it possible for us to exalt Him to His proper status without derogating or deflating the fellowship of the saints. We should be careful that we do not, in our zeal for the church, be guilty of making it a rival in our affection for Him who regards it as His body. “Unto Him be glory in the church, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!”

Adventures in Religion (9)

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[Abstract]

It is difficult for men to grasp the implications of the fatherhood of God. Even though Jesus came as a visible demonstration of the love of God for humanity we tend always to revert to legalistic ritual as a means of warding off divinely ordained calamity. Sinners as we are, we seek to expiate our transgressions by our own puny sacrifices and to atone for our guilt by our feeble offerings. We never seem to be able to remember that he offered himself once for all and that he made the only atonement in which there is any efficacy. We are living B.C. lives in an A.D. age. And because we are doing so we are never able to free ourselves from a consciousness of guilt. There is remembrance made of our sins every year, and in some cases, every day!

Torn between realization of our own tendency to fall into temptation and the dread of impending doom for having done so, we struggle on enshrouded in remorse for the past and in abject fear of the future. Always under such conditions men seek to alleviate their mental torture by devising and imposing upon themselves new restraints and regulations in the mistaken belief that observance of these makes them better than other men, and that thus they come closer to the divine ideal. The most sacred ordinances become subject to meticulous scrutiny. Mote-seeking becomes the chief vocation of modern Pharisaical partisans.

The whole problem, as Paul so well states it in Galatians 4, is that the fulness of time has come and God wants to treat us as sons but in our spiritual immaturity we continue to demand that we be regarded as slaves. And because the Father has removed us from law and placed us under grace we strive to convert grace into a law. We have a greater feeling of security when we are behind a fence and if God will not provide us with a fence we will construct one of our own. We are careful to make it portable so we can take in more ground or give up some, as the mood strikes us or as we listen to the spellbinding persuasiveness of a modern lawyer or scribe.

Even when man was under a divine law which was “holy, just and good,” he constantly sought to weave more strands into the rope with which he was bound. Never quite sure that he was pleasing God he attempted to ingratiate himself in the divine favor by adding more legalistic details. The *Mishnah* is full of trivialities which were discussed in all seriousness as if the hope of humanity was dependent upon their proper disposal. The Sabbath was to be a day of rest, free from all servile work. It was agreed that bearing a burden was work, but what constituted a burden? If a burden was something which one lifted or carried on his person, what about a cripple who buckled on a wooden leg, or a man who wore a false tooth? If one could not carry a stone, could he still lift up one large enough to toss at a bird or throw at his cattle?

We have gone one step further. Having been freed from the bondage of law we have converted “the new spiritual principle of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2— J. B. Phillips) into a law and then proceeded to do as all legalists inevitably do. We have adopted our interpretations as law and bound them upon others as the divine intent. The most solemn and sacred ordinances, intended to convey a blessing and strengthen our sense of oneness, have become the battlefields of partisan hatred. In their emphasis upon details men have forsaken the very spirit and purpose of the observance and are left holding an empty

shell from which life has fled. This is clearly seen in the contentions relative to the Lord's Supper which was given as a visible symbol to the world that we are one body (1 Cor. 10:17).

We believe it is time for a thorough examination of "the pattern concept" which has long been the basis of orthodoxy in "Church of Christ" circles. Why was it that when God gave Moses the pattern for the tabernacle, only one building was constructed around which all of the tribes encamped? Now each tribe takes "the pattern" and builds its own tabernacle and all of the other tribes are excluded from any participation in its sacred service. Yet each tribe proclaims that the tabernacle it has constructed is the one "according to the pattern" and all of the others are a sham and pretence, with only hypocrites and apostates ministering therein. We have built more than two dozen different and diverse "Churches of Christ" which have little to do with each other while each proclaims to a startled world that it alone is "according to the pattern."

It is my intention, God willing, during the next year, to pursue a kindly, but relentless investigation of "the blue print theory" which has been sanctified by sermonizers and used to rend the people of God into warring and feuding construction engineers! Why do brethren contend so vehemently for certain details while at the same time waving others aside as of no consequence? Why do we, of all people, fail to see the difference between preaching and teaching or gospel and doctrine?

Why do we plod along demanding unity upon the basis of doctrinal conformity when we do not agree upon its implications among ourselves? Why do we make the word "gospel" cover every word of the new covenant scriptures and conclude that a man who does not share our explanation of Revelation 20 has not "obeyed the gospel." Why do we brand and stigmatize every opinion with reference to some point in the epistolary writings as "another gospel"? Our lack of real scholarship is astounding in view of the claim that we alone are right in our interpretation of

the sacred writings. We can promise you that the months ahead will contain for you some interesting experiences in research. This is to be a real adventure in the realm of the Spirit. But it will provide no pleasure for the partisan and prejudiced!

The Basis of Faith

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[Abstract]

It has long been a subject of contemplation with us that Christianity is not only the kind of religion which an intelligent Creator would bestow upon humanity but the only kind of religion which a merciful God could bestow upon an intelligent creation. In making this statement we are not unaware of the inadequacy of the very terms we use. Neither “Christianity” nor “religion” is capable of defining or describing the revelation of Deity in bodily form, and the first is never used within those scriptures which we regard as holy. Our problem of communication is further hindered due to the warped and distorted usages to which both words are subjected in our modern culture.

All religion grows out of a sense of dependency, which, because of our nature exhibits itself as a need. Without knowledge of God, and left to himself, man seeks to satisfy his need and develops a superstition. Those who believe in God and recognize him as a benevolent creator accept as a corollary to this belief that he will provide a means of gratification on the highest basis. Every other need of man has been supplied in a manner adapted to his state or condition. It would be strange indeed if this universal need were the only one neglected, seeing that it is the very one which establishes the closest relationship between the creator and his intelligent offspring. Those who acknowledge the existence of God must admit the *possibility* of

his revealing himself to mankind; those who know the nature of man must recognize the *probability* of his doing so.

It would be impossible to conjure up a concept of a powerless God. Even those who have made idols which were impotent had to invest them with imaginary powers in order to conceive of them as gods. It was this prostitution of the faculty of imagination which made such worship superstition. In idolatry, man created a god by natural means and sought to bestow upon him supernatural ability. In this he exhibited his folly since the creator is always superior to the created and no one can bestow a power greater than he possesses. By the same token it is impossible for us to conceive of a loving creator who would deny to his creatures that which they needed most. If God *would* provide a means of satisfying hunger and could not, he is powerless; if he *could* do so and would not, he is merciless. In either instance he would not be God. Because of our need and his might we must conclude that he has revealed himself to mankind for our good.

The word *religion* is from the Latin *re*, back, and *ligo*, to bind. It is that which acknowledges man's need for direction and guidance from a higher source than his own reason and experience and *binds his mind and heart* to follow that source which he recognizes. It is here that the skeptic demonstrates his lack of keenness in discrimination when he brands all religion as superstition. "Superstition" is derived from a combined form meaning "to stand over" and insofar as it recognizes a power superior to man it is religion. But not all religion is superstition. Both sonship and slavery demand subservience to a superior, but the second does so out of unreasoning fear. The same distinction obtains with reference to revealed religion and abject superstition.

Having said this much about religion we turn our attention to "Christianity" which has suffered a great deal from its enemies but much more from its friends. The former have

attacked it openly as a foe worthy of their steel; the latter have sought to confine and enslave it as unworthy of being released in its purity. It has been dressed in such varied creedal garbs and exhibited in such diverse philosophical attire, that its true form has long since been forgotten. Those who argue learnedly about it, mistaking the cloak for the person, often know the least about its real nature. It shall be our purpose in this thesis to humbly explore some facets which seem to have been generally forgotten, with the hope that we may stimulate further research in our generation.

Reverting to our introductory sentence we propose to show why the nature of man required just such a revelation as God has vouchsafed to him. Man is a finite creature. He is limited by time and space. He can only be one place at a time. He enters this world at a given time and leaves it at a given time. He comes in with no previous experience and devoid of present knowledge. During his life span he is dependent upon the testimony of others for information as to what transpires where he is not and for what transpired before he was. Mankind has long since recognized the possibility of being deceived and the tendency of some to practice deception. Through bitter and tragic experience the human race has learned that the only thing that can be depended upon is that man cannot.

But all previous experience is necessary for the present good. No man is isolated from his own generation and no generation is unaffected by previous accomplishments and discoveries. The very essence of progress is the employment of the sum total of human knowledge to date as the foundation for new discoveries and greater accomplishments in the present generation. In view of the necessity for testimony and the possibility of deception, humanity from its earliest days, and as a means for its own protection and survival, devised or adopted certain principles related to testimony by which it could be determined to what extent reliance could be placed in the information conveyed. When testimony meets the requirements

of these criteria it must be believed by a rational being or he lays the groundwork for rejection of all previous experience and by that act renders himself irrational.

Laws of Evidence

The Creator recognized the need of and subscribed to the criteria adapted to and accepted by man as essential. This is important and we must present documentary proof. In every case involving testimony there must be the thing to be attested and the persons to testify. Since witnesses are human and subject to frailty they may be both careless as to details in observation or forgetful of such details as they observe. To offset either of these tendencies it was early deemed requisite that testimony be established by more than one witness. It is obvious that such a requirement had no particular relation either to the thing attested or the ones who testified. If a thing transpired, ten thousand declaring it had not would not alter the fact. If only one saw a thing transpire he would be as thoroughly convinced as though ten thousand others saw it. The *knowledge* of the witness does not depend upon corroborative evidence, it is the *faith* of those to whom the witness testifies that requires it.

God placed his stamp of approval on this law of evidence. "A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained" (Deut. 19:15). In John 5:31, Jesus says, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true." He did not imply that personal testimony is always false, because in John 8:18, he declares, "I am one that bear witness of myself." In both cases the context shows that he referred to the fact that according to the laws of evidence his testimony would not be accepted as true. He proceeded to cite as additional witnesses, John the Baptist (6:33); his mighty works (6:36); the Father (6:37); and the sacred scriptures (6:39).

In addition to the requirement for a plurality of witnesses to establish a fact, every society sought to discourage deception by imposing sanctions and penalties upon those guilty of perjury. Thus we read, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who utters lies will not escape” (Prov. 19:5), and again, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who utters lies will perish” (Prov. 19:9). In man’s primitive social state God ordained the principle of *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation, as the most effective deterrent to malicious injury. “The judge shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother” (Deut. 19:18, 19).

Because of the awe and reverence with which sacred persons and things were regarded, men soon began to place themselves under oath in reference to these in giving testimony. By this means they called down punishment upon their heads if what they said was false. Although the very nature of God is such that it is impossible for him to lie (Heb. 6:18) he subscribed to the recognized law of evidence in his promise to Abraham. “When God made his promise to Abraham he swore by himself, for there was no one greater by whom he could swear.” That this amounted to Deity accommodating to a recognized human custom is apparent by the language used. “Among men it is customary to swear by something greater than themselves. And if a statement is confirmed by an oath, that is the end of all quibbling. So in this matter, God, wishing to show beyond doubt that his plan was unchangeable, confirmed it with an oath” (Heb. 6:16, 17).

In view of these statements it is evident that any requirement of God, based upon belief of testimony, will conform to the recognized laws of evidence. He has demonstrated that these laws have divine approbation. We are not required of God to believe what is incredible, indeed we could not do so, for the rational mind is incapable of that. The revelation of God in its ultimate is a historical fact and the

testimony as to this fact must be subjected to the same measuring reed as the testimony regarding any other historical event. The credibility of the history involved in the Good News concerning Jesus of Nazareth is to be ascertained on exactly the same basis as that of any other history.

It may even be questioned whether there is such a thing as a legitimate distinction between *profane* and *sacred* history. If God is the great king of all the earth and rules in the affairs of men there is no such thing as an unrelated fact. There may be, and we accept it as true that there were, men who recorded history under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and others who wrote from purely human motivation and experience, but all history simply records the footprints of God in human affairs. The *historians* may be holy or profane but history cannot be so divided. Remember that there is a difference between history and the recording or interpretation of that history.

Nature of Christianity

The Christian religion differs from all other major religious systems of the world in that it is essentially historical. Other religious systems are based upon human philosophy, speculation, or mysticism. Christianity is not a metaphysical synthesis or a complex arrangement of abstract propositions. Its central affirmation is that at a precise time in human history redemption from sin became available to all mankind as the result of a divine breakthrough of the flesh curtain, and that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” Stated in another way it revolves around the theme that the Logos (Word) which was “with God and was God” actually “became flesh and dwelled among men,” exhibiting those qualities which proved him to be “the Son of God.” “He was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead” (Romans 1:4). In order to share in the redemption made possible through God’s grace one must believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of

God.

This places Christianity definitely in the realm of history. There was either such a person as Jesus of Nazareth or there was not; he was either what he claimed to be or he was not. No one denies that we have certain historical records establishing the claim that there was such a person. It is admitted that these records are of sufficient antiquity to be admitted as valid testimony, if they are true. The question of credibility, then, involves only two questions, both of them related to the witnesses. If these questions can be answered satisfactorily the competency of the witnesses is established. If this is certified the testimony must be believed, or *all historical records of every nature must be rejected*. The first question must relate to the scope of knowledge of the witnesses, the second to their character. The first has to do with their accessibility to the facts, the second to their personal honesty and trustworthiness.

The Christian faith is not contingent upon any subsequent deduction from or speculation about the facts, nor is it specifically concerned with the inferences or doctrines growing out of or connected with the facts. These may be interesting fields for investigation upon the part of those who believe but they in no wise affect the historical facts which constitute the foundation of the Christian system. They may be related to the spiritual growth of those in the faith but they are no more the faith than the formula fed to a baby is the seed by which it is begotten. The whole proposition resolves itself into the problems (if there are such) related to the competency of the witnesses. Were these men in a position to know the certainty of the facts to which they testified? Were they the kind of men who would truthfully report what they knew?

It has been said that every supernatural act connected with the career of Jesus has been denied. This is a careless statement. No one at a later date can deny or disprove an alleged fact. To deny that a miracle has been performed one must be present at

the time and submit the performance to the proper criteria. If not present he can only challenge the validity of the testimony. But before one challenges the veracity of another, justice demands that he give his reasons for doing so. It is not sufficient reason to say that the testimony runs counter to his preconceived notions and views. On that ground all scientific progress would be ruled out or nullified.

Purpose of Testimony

There are four accounts preserved of the incidents related to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This amply fulfils the requirement for a plurality of witnesses. It cannot be urged against these that they are inadequate as biographies because they leave too many gaps in the story of his life. These are not biographies at all and were never intended to be. The writers had a definite purpose in mind and were selective of the masses of material at hand in order to accomplish their purpose. One of them who knew Jesus best asserts that there are many things which were not recorded and gives the reason. "There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess eternal life by his name." Concerning the wealth of detail available to one who would be a biographer the same writer says, "There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world would not hold the books that would be written."

The writers were not journalists attempting to produce works of literary worth. They did not write to gratify curiosity or to gain recognition for themselves. They were not striving to produce a best seller or to make a living by their pens. They simply believed that Jesus was the Messiah and God's Son. They recorded those things which convinced them in the full

conviction that when the facts were known all other honest people would also acknowledge the divine Sonship.

They knew what they had seen and heard. One of them says in preparing to close his narrative, "It is this same disciple who attests what has here been written. It is in fact he who wrote it, and we know that his testimony is true." On one occasion when they had been imprisoned over night and were in court next day, they were threatened with legal reprisal if they did not "refrain from all public speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus." Their pointed reply was, "We cannot possibly give up speaking of things we have seen and heard."

Of those who wrote, one was a Greek physician. His account was addressed to a high official in the government as the form of address, "Your Excellency," demonstrates. It is written in the cultivated language of one trained in the "Materia Medica" of his day. This narrative was produced after careful research and detailed investigation. It was prompted by a desire to provide authentic knowledge at a time when many writers were recording their versions as gleaned from original testimony. Regardless of how accurate or inaccurate some of these written accounts may have been, it is important to realize that Jesus of Nazareth had made such an impact on men that, in an age and among people not renowned for literary skills, many were hastening to put into permanent form the material available unto them. It is even more important to know how widespread was the tradition handed over by original eyewitnesses and which could serve as a criterion for judging the written accounts. It is significant that of all the written accounts mentioned, the one preserved for us is the work of one who made a meticulous and detailed study in order to provide authentic knowledge to a government official.

The author to Theophilus. Many writers have undertaken to draw up an account of the events that have happened among us, following the traditions handed down

to us by the original eyewitnesses and servants of the Gospel. And so I in my turn, your Excellency, as one who has gone over the whole course of these events in detail, have decided to write a connected narrative for you, so as to give you authentic knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed” (Luke 1:1-4).

The physician was a close friend and traveling companion of Saul of Tarsus, a former rabbinical student of the Hillel School in Jerusalem. The personal encounter of this man with Jesus while enroute to Syria to persecute his followers had turned him into a proclaimer of the Good News. Luke came to Jerusalem with him and when the apostle was arrested and held in custody in Herod’s palace at Caesarea for more than two years, Luke apparently remained in Palestine. This would have provided ample opportunity for interviewing personally those who were intimately connected with the life of Jesus. It is possible that the mother of Jesus was still alive. It is certain that one of his brothers was a resident of Jerusalem. Luke was with Paul when he met this brother. “Next day Paul paid a visit to James; we were with him, and all the elders attended” (Acts 21:18).

The Virgin Birth

If any person would be skeptical about an alleged “virgin birth” and about miracles of healing, it would certainly be a physician. One can but imagine the probing questions which would be put by such a trained mind going “over the whole course of these events in detail.” Insofar as we know, Luke was the first scientist to confront the facts of the Christian faith. Certainly he applied the scientific method. He reviewed the testimony in detail and had in mind the goal of all scientific research, the arrival at “authentic knowledge about the matters.” Is it not striking that he gives a much more detailed account of the circumstances connected with the virgin birth and

records more of the miracles of Jesus than any of the other writers?

The connected accounts of the circumstances surrounding the conception and delivery of John and Jesus are straightforward and factual. There is no apparent embellishment of the record. It is just such as would be written by one who interviewed the principals involved. These are carefully identified by name, place of residence, and time of the events. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee, with a message for a girl betrothed to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David; the girl's name was Mary." Certainly the first person on earth who would be concerned about the virgin birth would be Mary, and Joseph would share in that concern. In both cases nothing short of divine reassurance would have sufficed, and in both cases such reassurance was given as was satisfactory to the two of them.

The news that she was to have a child would evoke one primary question in the mind of a humble maiden. "How can this be," said Mary, "when I have no husband?" It is remarkable how this question still troubles our contemporary scientists and speculative theologians. Because they are unwilling to face up to the fact, they conclude that Mary must have had a husband and concealed the fact. But the investigator who sought to determine the truth so that he could convey "authentic knowledge" records, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child to be born will be called 'Son of God.'"

What motivates learned men in our day to spin theoretical webs of thought to obscure this simple account? Is it that they *cannot* accept it or that they *will not*? We have no inclination to make a sweeping indictment or blanket accusation but we suspect that the implication of this event comes with such devastating force against the modern theory of *the origin of man*,

that to protect this theory they must deny the origin of the Son of man. It is significant that in Luke 1:3 Jesus is called “Son of God” and in Luke 3:38, the earthly lineage is traced back to Adam who is also called “son of God.”

If it is true that all things were made by the Logos and that without him was not anything made that was made, it follows that not only was the first man truly a “son of God” but the seed in his body and the ova in the body of his counterpart were the creation of the Logos and “life came from life.” When the Creator deigned in the fulness of time to send the Logos that his creatures “might have life and have it more abundantly” it required no greater miracle to unite the Logos with an ovum from the body of one who was directly descended from the first “son of God” than to give life to that son when he was fashioned from the dust of the ground. If a man in the flesh could be made “son of God” the Son of God could be made a man in the flesh. “And the Logos was made flesh and dwelled among us.” The real challenge was not in the incarnation of Jesus but in the incarnation of Adam, for the last could not have been possible without the first.

Perhaps, in the final analysis, the denial of the incarnation is an attempt to rid oneself of the thought of responsibility to God. The philosophers of our generation have only attempted an evasion and escapism on a grander scale than their less sophisticated contemporaries who have to be content with cruder methods. For if we are all descended from “a son of God” and the “Son of God” descended to show us how sons of God ought to be, his life stands as a constant rebuke to our selfish and sinful existence. His own generation could not understand his thinking and sought to put him out of their world on a cross; our generation cannot stand under his thinking so we seek to cross him out of our world of thought. We have refined our methods of crucifixion.

We are aware of the contention that a belief in the virgin

birth is not essential to a recognition of the sacrificial virtues of the cross. It is argued that the death of an innocent man for a great ideal presents to us a sufficient pattern for a god-like life. But this is not enough! An ideal may prevent us from sinning in the future but it cannot purge out our sins of the past. One can never have a pure conscience until it is purified. For this reason it makes a difference who died on the cross. *Any theory which begins with the Logos as a man who became God is in direct contravention of the divine purpose which begins with the Logos as God who became man.* The emptying of the blood from his body has significance only as the culminating act of an emptying process which began when he was in the form of God and “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). That the connection we make is valid is evidenced by the succeeding verse, “And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”

Those who deny the virgin birth pose as benefactors of mankind, seeking to release us from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition. Unable to derogate the moral ethics of Jesus they emphasize his humanity. I confess some skepticism as to their purpose for it would appear that all too frequently the opposition to the virgin birth is not so much an attempt to establish his humanity as to get rid of his divinity. My skepticism proceeds from the methods employed. Assuming the impossibility of such a miracle they make all testimony to the contrary conform to the assumption. This is directly opposed to the scientific method and the laws of evidence. It is the very basis of all superstition. The virgin birth either happened or it did not. It is a fact or it is not a fact. Whether we *believe* it happened must depend upon testimony. We were not present to examine the alleged fact; we are now limited to acceptance or rejection of the testimony. To reject it on the basis of a preconceived notion is purely prejudicial.

The Fidelity of Luke

The basis of inductive philosophy, as distinguished from theory and conjecture, is the axiom set forth in Newton's *Principia*, "Whatever is collected from this induction, ought to be received, notwithstanding any conjectural hypothesis to the contrary, till such time as it shall be contradicted or limited by further observations." The only recourse for those who deny the testimony is to prove *by evidence* that those who testify to the facts either had no accessibility to the facts or did not exhibit trustworthiness in recording them.

Certainly the methods and motives of Luke cannot be questioned for these are the very ones employed by all true scientists. There can be no question of his accessibility to source materials for many of the eyewitnesses were still alive when he wrote "of all that Jesus did and taught" (Acts 1:1). With reference to the appearance of Jesus after his resurrection Paul wrote in the spring of 57 A.D., "He appeared to over five hundred of our brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died." In the summer of the following year Luke was with Paul in Palestine and in position to interview the witnesses before writing to the governor.

The very design of his account argues against it being a forgery. Remember that it was written when its contents could be inspected by many whose names were mentioned in it. An impostor always avoids specificity. He deals in generalities. He carefully guards against giving names or dates. Contrary to such procedure, Luke seems to go to every length to date events, provide the names of government officials, and designate geographical areas. Let us cite only two of the many examples. The first has to do with the birth of Jesus. "In those days a decree was issued by the Emperor Augustus for a general registration throughout the Roman world. This was the first registration of its kind; it took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (Luke 2:1, 2). Since all of these things would

he recorded in the public annals of Rome and open to inspection it is evident that the writer must have known whereof he spoke.

Even more explicit is the documentation relative to the time when John the Immerser began his proclamation. "In the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, when Herod was prince of Galilee, his brother Philip prince of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias prince of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness." Even the distinctions involved in the words translated "emperor, governor, and prince" would be significant to "His Excellency" to whom the record was addressed.

We cannot refrain from mentioning an undesigned statement which seems to us to indicate the fidelity of Luke as a historian. All of us are aware of the professional pride, so often mis-called "ethics," which forbids any reference to another engaged in the same profession in such a manner as to reflect against the profession. As a physician Luke was obligated to investigate circumstances related to alleged miracles of healing. One of these had to do with a woman who was troubled with an aggravated case of hemorrhage. True to his profession, Luke records the incidence of the disease as of twelve years duration.

When journalistic ethics conflict with professional ethics, the truth must be recorded regardless of consequences. One might be astounded at the difference between the report on a case as stated in a professional medical journal and that given to the family of the patient. So Luke the physician, acting as historian, writes of the woman, "She had spent all of her available funds on physicians, none of whom did her any good."

While we are dealing with this case I should like to remark about another fact or two. It is apparent that the unfortunate woman was motivated by a desire to escape publicity due to the nature of her affliction, as well as by superstition with reference

to the garment of Jesus. Because God had ordained that the people of Israel were “to make tassels on the corners of their garments . . . and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue; and it shall be to you a tassel to look upon and remember all the commandments of the Lord” a special significance was attached to the hem of the garment. The unlearned and ignorant came to regard it as sacred or holy, and there is little doubt that the woman thought of it as possessing curative value since it was worn by one regarded as “a healer of diseases.”

The charge frequently made by the critics of Jesus that he invaded the privacy of the woman and exposed her to public gaze for exploitation of personal power is wholly unwarranted. Upon this initial announcement that someone had touched him, all disclaimed it. The apostles quickly pointed out that the crowd was pressing upon him but Jesus insisted that someone had touched him because he felt power had gone forth to heal. “Then the woman, seeing that she was detected, came trembling and fell at his feet. Before all the people she explained why she had touched him and how she had been instantly cured.” At this juncture, Jesus spoke, “My daughter, your faith has cured you. Go in peace.” It is just as necessary to cure minds of superstition as to heal bodies of disease. In this declaration it was simply pointed out that there was nothing about his clothing which had healing power, but it was faith. This public declaration would offset any tendency to ascribe magical powers to externals. There is a difference between a miracle worker and a sorcerer and Jesus wanted that difference understood. Incidentally, the event demonstrates also the difference between casual contact with Jesus and the deliberate touch of faith.

The system called Christianity has as its foundation the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Belief of this one fact is all that is necessary in so far as faith is concerned, to secure pardon and enter into fellowship with God and Christ. When one submits to the act of baptism in proof of the validity of that one faith he becomes a partaker of all the privileges of

the divine family. “For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment” (Gal. 3:26, 27).

The Testimony Confirmed

All testimony must be confirmed in order to be received in faith. God made our rational powers and has so constructed us that a thing must be rendered credible to be truly believed. This is the purpose of confirmation. It is to render the testimony credible. When regarded from the standpoint of effect upon our mental faculties confirmation grants unto us the power to believe. It makes belief possible. But the fact is one thing, the testimony to the fact another thing, and the confirmation of it still another thing.

We have a perfect right to enquire of those who question the divinity of Jesus what manner of confirmation it would require to convince them. Let them be very specific at this point. Only two alternatives are open to them. They must either admit that no amount of proof would convince them or that supernatural demonstrations would be required. If they take the first they reveal that they are gross materialists and sensualists, impervious to change and adamant in heart, unaffected by facts. If they admit a willingness to consider facts and the testimony related to such facts, irrespective of previous opinions, it is evident that only supernatural confirmation can establish beyond controversy the divinity of one under consideration.

But what kind of confirmation of the claim of divinity would be best adapted to create faith in the hearts of mankind? This would depend upon the type of men to be affected and the purpose of thus affecting them. There would be a great deal of difference in the presentation of a claim of divinity to the top intellectuals of the world for the purpose of creating a satisfactory human-divine philosophy, and the presentation of

such a claim to the universal mass of mankind, steeped in ignorance and immorality, for the purpose of saving them from their sins. The nature of the confirmation would be the same but the demonstration would of necessity be altogether different.

Now it must be remembered that Jesus of Nazareth made no claim of coming to effect a new social order, create a new philosophy, or present a new approach to problems of international relationship. He stated his mission in terse sentences. "The Son of man has come to seek and save that which is lost." "The Son of man came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Certainly the confirmation must, like the testimony, be adapted to the state or condition of those to be affected. Testimony which cannot be understood or confirmation which only confuses are both worse than useless.

We unhesitatingly affirm that if all men are expected to believe the confirmation must be such as is related to universal human experience. It cannot be limited to those who reside in a certain area of the earth. Those supernatural works which are done must be in the realm of common human experience. There are many such experiences— suffering, disease, hunger, fear of the elements, and death, to name a few. Not only must supernatural claims be confirmed by supernatural acts, but these must be performed in such a manner as to be obvious and certain.

It is our contention that if an unbiased committee acting in advance had drawn up a list of the confirmatory acts required to establish the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, taking into consideration the persons and purposes related to his claims, their report would have had to include the very type of deeds he performed. Jesus recognized the nature of the evidence required to prove his claims. When John sent to enquire, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect some other?" Jesus made

no appeal to his doctrine or ethical teaching. He said to the emissaries, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news” (Matt. 11:4, 5). That this was valid confirmation is evidenced by the statement of the Jewish Council member, “We know that you are a teacher sent by God; no one could perform these signs of yours unless God were with him” (John 3:2). It is significant that the record says, “Yet among the people many believed in him. ‘When the Messiah comes,’ they said, ‘is it likely that he will perform more signs than this man?’” (John 7:31). That is still a pertinent question!

In view of these things it comes as a little strange that men in our day would seek to discount the miracles on the ground of their nature. Unable to attack his devoted life and pure character they must seek by other means to whittle away at his life in order to reduce him in stature to the purely human level. But there are some things which cannot be ignored. Jesus claimed a preexistence with the Father. He claimed to be the Son of God. He was willing to meet the logical requirement for confirmation of the claims. We have accounts of his miracles as preserved by eyewitnesses and investigators. The witnesses had adequate access to the sources of information. They were honest in their records. We are either forced to believe them or to reject the only basis upon which any historical account becomes credible.

The Universal Message

The core of Christianity is the gospel, the Good News. This is the message of heaven to an alien world. It does not consist of doctrinal discussions or abstract propositions. It is a proclamation of facts related to Jesus of Nazareth and intended to lead men to believe in Him as the Son of God. The gospel is not for the church. It is for the world. It is intended to enroll

citizens in the kingdom, not to train those who are citizens. The Good News is an announcement of the fact that Jesus died for our sins, that he was buried, that he rose again on the third day, and that all this is in harmony with and in fulfillment of the scriptures. By this we are saved if we keep in memory these things.

The two memorials connected with the Christian system are directly related to these facts. One is an initiatory rite by which we enter the fellowship created by the gospel. In it we re-enact the facts of the Good News and thus identify ourselves with the Message. By this identification we are enabled to procure for ourselves as individuals that which was made available to the world by his death. We become incorporate with him. Just as the man Christ Jesus brought life to the world through his crucifixion, so we enter into that life by our crucifixion (Romans 6:6). "By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendour of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life. For if we have become incorporate with him in a death like his, we shall also be one with him in a resurrection like his."

Jesus had to die only once and we need to be baptized but once. When Jesus was raised he was free from the dominion of death, when we are baptized we become dead to sin. We are no longer slaves of sin. Baptism need never be repeated. There is one baptism as there is just one faith. The one faith is the substance of the gospel message. It is the conviction that God has raised Jesus from the dead and made him both Lord and Christ. This is the thing that the first hearers of the Good News were told to accept as certain (Acts 2:36). It is that faith which is a foundation for reformation of life and baptism (Acts 2:38). It is that faith, the one faith, which is a foundation of our fellowship in Christ Jesus the Lord.

The Good News is universal in extent because it is to meet

a universal need. All men are sinners and all stand in need of salvation. Because it is a historical message and consists of testimony to facts, all men may believe it just as all may believe any other historical fact which has been confirmed. The Good News is not the exclusive possession of any sect, party or faction, regardless of how sincere or earnest its adherents may be. Any person on earth who has heard it may, and ought to, share it with every other who will listen to him. "Let him that heareth say, 'Come.'" The power to save lies in the Message and not in the messenger nor in any splinter group or segment to which he belongs. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the saving power of God for every one who has faith" (Rom. 1:16).

Because the power to save is inherent in the Good News the effect of the Good News is not vitiated when the facts are announced, regardless of error in doctrine maintained by those who announce it. The power is in the nature of the Message and not in the character of those who proclaim it. Facts are facts regardless of men's attitudes or motivations. The facts have never been announced by a perfect man and never will be. But wheat sown by a blind man will produce a crop if sown in the proper place the same as if it were planted by one whose faculties are unimpaired. The power to produce is in the seed and not in the sower. Whether wheat or Good News is planted "it is God that giveth the increase." "But the others, moved by personal rivalry, present Christ from mixed motives. . . . What does it matter? One way or another, in pretence or in sincerity, Christ is set forth, and for that I rejoice" (Phil. 1:17, 18).

The Universal Response

Just as the Message is universal so the response to it is universal. The spontaneous reaction of the honest heart to credible testimony is belief. If that belief is in a person who has performed some great act of mercy in our behalf and whose life presents the challenge of an ideal, we react to our belief by a

reformation of life and seek by some means to demonstrate our faith. Faith ever looks for overt manifestation and must do so if it involves recognition of lordship for obedience is the only proper response to lordship. Jesus said, “Why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord’— and never do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46). Again, “Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father” (Matt. 7:21). When the Good News was first proclaimed, the proclamation ended with the words, “Let all Israel then accept as certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” The immediate response of the convicted hearts was, “Friends, *what are we to do?*”

The response to a divine message should be divinely ordained and God has authorized one act to validate our belief in one great fact and thus to bring us into that state where we share all of the blessings and privileges belonging to heirs of God. That one great fact is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that one act is immersion in water of the believing penitent. Baptism is not the door to any party, sect, or faction, in our disturbed and distorted Christian realm. Baptism is the response to the Good News and not to a sectarian appeal. “Then he said to them: ‘Go forth to every part of the world, and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation. Those who believe it and receive baptism will find salvation’” (Mark 16:15, 16). No sect or party can appropriate baptism to itself as partisan property to be administered as a sectarian rite without incurring the judgment of God. As there is one faith to be universally proclaimed to the world, so there is but one baptism in response to that faith. He who shares the message can immerse him with whom he shares it. The validity of baptism depends upon faith in the facts by the one immersed and not upon some peculiarity of the immerser.

Since baptism is the divinely ordained response to the Good News, no party, sect, or segment, can invalidate its effect

when a believing penitent submits to it. Baptism is not the response to a doctrinal position, to abstract propositions or to a creedal compilation. Regardless of the mistaken views upon such matters, held by either the penitent believer or the administrator, baptism is not invalidated because it is not related to these things. There never was a perfect man immersed since the death of Jesus and there never was a perfect man who did the immersing. Every believing penitent has been ignorant of many things and every baptismal administrator, without exception, has been wrong about many things. When one believes the facts which constitute the Good News and is immersed because he believes them, he receives remission of sins whether he understands that blessing or not. Remission of sins is a judicial act which takes place in heaven. It is a divine act of clemency bestowed upon proper response to the fundamental fact of the Christian system and not upon perfect knowledge of all that is involved in the divine will.

The Good News is not and can never be made a sectarian message because it is the proclamation of God to a sinful world. Men who are sectarian may proclaim it and may even flatter themselves that it is their exclusive possession, but it is no more so than the life-giving air which we breathe is a national possession. Baptism is not and can never be a sectarian possession because it is the divinely ordained universal response of believing penitents to a universal message. Men who are sectarian may administer it and even flatter themselves that because they do so it introduces a proper subject only into their exclusive partisan fellowship, but the over-ruling power of God unites the subject not to the sect to which the administrator belongs, but to the one body composed of all the saved on earth. No man has the power to immerse a man into a sect when that man truly believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and is immersed because of that faith. God frustrates the designs of men when they seek to exploit his universal mercy for sectarian purposes and partisan pride.

The Universal Body

Just as there is one faith and one baptism so there is but one body. The one baptism which is the validating act of the one faith introduces one into that one body. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). The one body is the universal fellowship of all the sincerely immersed believers in the Lord Jesus. The one body is not a sect or party and no sect or party is the one body. The one body is not a composite of all the sects on earth. Sectarianism is a product of the party spirit. The one body is a product of the Holy Spirit. The one body is not composed of congregations joined together by mutual consent and recognition. It is composed of individuals who are united with Christ. Every person on this earth who is joined to the Son of God is a member of the one body and is in the fellowship with every other person on earth who is in Christ Jesus. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).

The church is a divine creation. There is only one church on earth now, there never was but one, there never can be another. No man can create a church nor can any group of men acting in concert do so. God created only one church and if a man is not in it he is not in a church at all. The church is composed of the called out ones. They are all in it, there is not one of them out of it. Only God can call men out of sin so only God can create a church. Man can no more invent another church than he can invent another Spirit or create another hope. “There is one body and one Spirit even as you are called in one hope of your calling.”

No splinter, segment, fragment or fraction, parading under the title “church” is “the loyal church” or “the faithful church” in our decadent age. So long as schism exists among us we have all fallen short of the divine ideal, and to “miss the mark” is to

sin. We will never attain to the ideal of God by blinding ourselves to the reality of our status and demanding that everyone else confess to us. We will never attain to it by advertising our segment or exploiting our party as “the one body” and implying that no one else belongs to Jesus because he does not belong with us. The party spirit is a sin. Factionalism is a work of the flesh. We can sooner become what God wants us to be on our knees than standing over others “cracking the whip.”

We are neither infinite nor infallible. Every exclusivist party on the earth has its written or unwritten creed and it is this creed which makes it sectarian and exclusive. Any party which does not contain within its confines all the saved on earth today is a sect pure and simple. Any group which debars any of God’s children and refuses to regard them as brothers is sectarian. Any group which creates traditional positions, explanations, interpretations and opinions as the basis of its fellowship is a sect regardless of how boastful and arrogant its claims or how loud and clamorous may be its disclaimers.

The Good News is a universal Message. The response to it when proclaimed is a universal response. Those who respond in faith to the accredited testimony of the ambassadors become, by divine act, members of the one body. By coming into him who is the head they constitute the one body over which he is the head. No man can bring them into it, no man can exclude them from it. One man can bring another to Christ Jesus, only God can bring him into the divine relationship. Fellowship is not something extended or withdrawn by men but a divine state into which we are called by God.

Men may conspire to put out of their synagogues those who truly acknowledge Jesus (John 9:22) but no man can amputate a member from the body of Christ. Jesus will come to those who are cast out by men and test them with the one question that really counts. “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of

man?”” (John 9:35). If one is right about Jesus he may be wrong about many other things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus he may be right about all else and still be lost. Salvation is not a relation to things but to a person, Jesus Christ, and because it is a relation to this one person there is only one faith. God has made him “our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

One may be a member of the one body and something else! He did not enter the “something else” by the one baptism and God did not add him to it. God never adds those who believe in Jesus and are baptized into him to anything except the one body. That is why there is only one! A man may attach himself to “something else” because of mistaken views, false emphasis, or doctrinal bias. It is such crystallized opinions and creedal bases of fellowship which produce all of the sinful divisions in the religious world.

The Good News divides none of God’s children from each other. It is a statement of simple facts about Jesus of Nazareth. It is to be received upon the basis of credible testimony. Because belonging to “something else” divides us into warring segments and pits the members of the family against each other in unholy fratricidal strife, all sectarianism is sin. We can only fulfill the real purpose of God in our generation when we become and remain just Christian— and Christians only! This involves a recognition of all of God’s children as our brothers regardless of the partisan barriers they have erected. To recognize the walls men have created as legitimate is to make ourselves sectarian.

Because God recognizes that there is only one church and cannot be more than one, he never regards anyone as “belonging to another church.” He treats all men as individuals and will judge them as such. In this respect we need to be like the Father. We should acknowledge all truth as held by any man and we should use the truth discovered as a foundation upon which to build additional truth. Using the truth we ourselves have as a

foundation we should welcome additional insights regardless of the source of transmission, realizing that in its ultimate all truth comes from God. This will enable us to flow together without anyone having to surrender any truth to which he has ever held himself addicted. If we can disregard all sectarian barriers which men have erected, if we can forget the creedal dams which they have thrown across the stream of thought and regard them all as persons striving to learn more of the divine will, we can rise above our sectarian bias and the Holy Spirit will enable us to overcome the divisions which have plagued us through the centuries.

The Christian system was designed by heaven “as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). It was never intended to sever, sunder, or split the believers into warring tribes or rival camps. Our problem has been one of false emphasis. Each party has waved its banner aloft while each has cried “Lo, here!” or “Lo, there!” But the day is past when God’s people should encamp about the tabernacle under tribal symbols of identity. We are the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. Let us emphasize the Good News “in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast— unless you have believed in vain.”

The Ignorance of Wisdom

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[Abstract]

The letter was like many of its kind which flood the mails today. It was an epistle of solicitation sent out by a national organization as part of a fund raising campaign. The letterhead was attractive, the message was appealing. On the left side of the sheet was a long list of endorsers, men prominent in the economic, social and religious realms. It is part of the psychological approach of these times to identify a movement with important persons. The status of a cause is judged by the prestige of those who are willing to be identified as sponsors.

Contrast with this the method employed by God in launching the rule of heaven among men. For many days certain words of Jesus have been churning about in my consciousness. I have been earnestly endeavoring to grasp their significance and thus probe the divine motivation. I am convinced that much of our current thinking is in direct opposition to the design of God. In our anxiety to see the cause succeed it is possible that we are thwarting the will of God. We rely upon skill, cleverness and word jugglery to advance the kingdom of God. We place our dependence in psychological persuasiveness, forgetting that it is one thing to increase “our membership” and a wholly different thing to enlarge the borders of spiritual Zion.

“At that time Jesus spoke these words: I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these

things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will” (Matt. 11:25, 26).

Who are the wise and understanding ones? Why did God hide certain things from them? How did he do so? Why were the words spoken “at that time”? These are all relevant questions if we would understand the program of divine revelation. Certainly this passage illuminates the truth that God’s ways are not the ways of men. His method is the exact opposite of that which men employ. It would seem that the purpose of God could best be promoted by the power, position and prestige of those whose wisdom is respected by the world, but His gracious will has decreed otherwise.

Who are the wise? Let it be observed that the term is not here used as the opposite of ignorance. In no case does God speak with approval of wilful ignorance. While it is true that involuntary ignorance is not a sin, voluntary ignorance is always so because sin is “to miss the mark.” Anyone who falls below his potential because of his indifference or unconcern sins to the extent that he does so. Neither are the wise those who merely have an education. To educate is to “lead out” or to “draw forth.” It consists of bringing out the natural abilities and powers which one possesses. Since these are the gift of God it is an offence against him to not use them to the fullest.

The Greek word for wise is *sophos*. It is used in a commendatory as well as a condemnatory fashion. We are to be “wise as to what is good” (Rom. 16:19); we are to walk “not as unwise men but as wise” (Eph. 5:15); the congregation is to submit problems of disagreement to wise men for arbitration (1 Cor. 6:5). But there is a “wisdom from above” and a wisdom “which cometh not from above” (James 3:15, 17). The latter is variously referred to as “the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor. 1:20); “the wisdom of men” (2:5); and “the wisdom of this age” (2:6).

It is very essential that we know to what the term “world” applies in the expression “wisdom of the world.” If we do not we may fall into the grave error of deprecating the knowledge and skills of those who serve God by serving the needs of humanity. It is true that science, mathematics, linguistics, and social studies are all of the world in a sense, but to conclude from this that one should not major in these fields in college is to have a misconception of God’s word. God created the mind of man and gave him his rational faculties. He has placed no limit upon the scope of man’s intellectual attainment. Deity is not anti-intellectual.

We may best grasp the significance of the word “world” by studying some of its characteristics. The world resents and hates those who testify of the true nature of its works. “It hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (John 7:7). It has a distinct animosity toward those who are not of it. “The world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). Contact with the world defiles (2 Peter 2:20) and stains (James 1:27) because of the corruption that is in it through passion (2 Peter 1:4). We may define the world as that state which represents the totality of human life, apart from, alienated from, and hostile to God. The wisdom of this world seldom parades under a banner ascribed “Atheism.” It prefers such labels as “secularism” or “humanism.”

In our introductory passage Jesus expresses gratitude that God has *revealed* to babes what he has *hidden* from the wise or sophists. Clearly that which is revelation to one group is concealment to the other. We are not to conclude from this that God has deliberately forbidden one group to have access to revealed truth. On the contrary, “God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). There must be something about the nature of the revelation which makes it invisible to those in a certain frame of thought.

Is Revelation Complete?

The apostle points out that there is a spirit of the world which some men receive and this renders them unspiritual. In this state they cannot understand the things which God gives for these are bestowed through the Holy Spirit. “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12). The revelation imparted to the apostles has been imparted unto us in words. The philosophy of the world has a vocabulary and the Holy Spirit has his vocabulary. This does not mean that the Spirit has invented or developed a new language for the world. Instead, he has taken the means of communication adopted by man and used it for conveying a divine message. The vocabulary has been enriched and ennobled by a depth of meaning which transcends the material or natural.

It is the conviction of this writer that while revelation is complete in one sense, it is not in another. The message of God involved in the new creation is complete, the discovery of what is contained in it is not. In view of the fact that revelation is an uncovering, the word of God does not actually become a revelation to us *as individuals* until we discover the real depth of its meaning. Of course there is no new truth as relates to God’s mind but there are depths of understanding which have not yet been plumbed, and men will continue to bring up gems of truth they have not seen before from the unfathomed caves of God’s grace. The Holy Spirit did not give the word and then retire from the scene. He dwells in the same heart into which the revelation is received and quickens the understanding. It is here that the merely natural (animal) man, motivated by “the spirit of the world” is at such a loss. “And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13).

The reason why God’s revelation has been hidden from the wise is because it is spiritually discerned. The sun shines as

brightly upon a blind man as upon one with full use of sight, but the former does not see it. It is hidden from him because of the lack of the faculty of sight. “In this case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Note the expression “they are folly to him.” This occurs in a context which is dealing with worldly philosophers. To such wise men the real wisdom of the ages is foolishness.

It is a startling thing that while some did not know God because of ignorance, these did not know him because of wisdom. “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). This is the folly of philosophy! This is the ignorance of wisdom! Please observe carefully how the word “believe” is used in direct contrast to “wisdom.” The wisdom of this age creates its own criteria. These rule out “belief” and make “faith” the resort of the credulous and unlearned. Having decided by “wisdom” that there is no realm of the supernatural everything which purports to be in that category must be explained by naturalistic means or regarded as a myth. Anyone who believes it is just not “wise.”

By ruling out in advance any possibility of the miraculous all proof to the contrary is simply explained away with “plausible words of wisdom.” The manna in the wilderness, for example, was not “bread from heaven” but the exudation of a honey-like sap from trees. The feeding of the multitude by Jesus was accomplished when selfish men were motivated to dig into their packs to share their food with those who had none, moved by the altruistic action of him who blessed a little store and began to share with those nearest him. Thus, what passes for “faith” rests in the wisdom of men and he is considered most faithful who can explain away the most. The power of example is

substituted for the example of power. A demonstration of the spirit of sharing takes the place of sharing in a demonstration of the Spirit. In such a time as this the words of the apostle ring out, “And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).

The Faith of Babes

This explains why God has revealed to *babes* what has been hidden from the wise. Unable to devise finespun theories to explain what they do not understand, babes must exhibit trust and confidence in one to whom they commit themselves because of mutual love. A little child is not afraid to walk in the dark if he can hold to the hand of his father. Although in the blackness of night he cannot see the father’s form, he knows he is present by the warm grasp of his hand. Though he cannot see ahead he has firm confidence he will reach his destination because the one who guides him knows the way. This is the wisdom of ignorance as contrasted with the ignorance of wisdom. The wisdom of ignorance leads to faith; the ignorance of wisdom leads to unbelief.

This brings us to the point in our investigation where we can note the setting for the remarks of Jesus. The writer declares, “At that time Jesus spoke these words.” If you will read the preceding paragraph you will note that Jesus was censuring the cities of his personal acquaintance. He compares them with the luxury-loving heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon and the vice-ridden city of Sodom. The basis of his condemnation was that enough miracles had been performed within their walls that would have caused the heathen cities to repent in sackcloth and ashes. But the worldly-wise citizens of Galilee paid no heed. “Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not

repent. . . . At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them unto babes.’”

It seems quite apparent that our faith must rest either in the demonstrations of God or in the explanations of men! But the explanations are of demonstrations. The very fact that men feel called upon to make an explanation is positive admission that something happened and the something that happened was of sufficient importance to require an explanation. Take, for instance, the work of feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. It has been suggested that under the influence of Jesus a little lad was induced to share his meager lunch with those around him. This stimulated others to divide what they had brought with those who had none. When all shared in giving and receiving there was enough for all. Later, as men reflected upon the event, it seemed like a miracle that enough food had been produced to satisfy the need of everyone.

This is an example of the “plausible words of men’s wisdom.” The event is thus reduced to a sort of glorified fish fry with everyone kicking in his share of the edibles. But no one goes to such length to discuss the thousands of “pot luck dinners” which have occurred in past centuries. Moreover, the explanation does not meet the demands of the demonstration. John was present on the occasion and helped to tidy up the place and gather up the scraps. In his straightforward and simple account it seems almost as if he anticipated that “there would be scoffers in the last days.” He records that Jesus and his disciples were sitting down up in the hills on the other side of the Sea of Galilee when they looked up and saw a great crowd of people swarming toward them.

Jesus turned to Philip and said, “How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” John said he did this to test Philip because Jesus knew what he was going to do. What he was going

to do was not to discover enough folks with prepared lunch boxes to take care of the multitude. Andrew remarked that there was a lad who had five barley loaves and two fish but he spoke deprecatingly of the fact. “What are they among so many?” John declares that Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. Then occurs an interesting statement about the meal, “So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments *from the five barley loaves* left by those who had eaten.”

One cannot gauge the power of a miracle by its effect upon those who did not see it, or who live many centuries afterward. The real test is upon those who were present and witnessed the event. The reaction to this feat was amazing. “When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.” This is a significant statement. They referred to the prediction of Moses, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among the people *like unto me!*” Their statement the following day indicates that their minds reverted to Moses because “he gave them bread from heaven to eat.” In view of the fact that they had seen another miraculous feeding they immediately concluded that this was the prophet like Moses.

Even more important is the next statement, “Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself.” It is evident that if they could make him king they could live off of government handouts the rest of their lives. Human nature has not altered to any great extent down to our day. The very next day the multitude showed up again, after having diligently sought him, but he said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”

We should not leave this without mentioning a subsequent

event related to it. The disciples embarked in a boat with little preparation. “Now they had forgotten to bring bread; and they had only one loaf in the boat.” Jesus cautioned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. “And they discussed it with one another, saying ‘We have no bread.’ And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, ‘Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? . . . Do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?’ They said to him, ‘Twelve.’ ‘And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?’ And they said to him, ‘Seven.’ And he said to them, ‘Do you not yet understand?’” We leave this case with the wise men of this age facing the same questions. “Are your hearts hardened? Do you not yet understand?”

Wisdom vs. Power

Man cannot rid himself of faith. He must place his trust in something. It is noteworthy that Paul does not place the wisdom of God in conflict with the wisdom of men when dealing with this question. Instead he writes, “that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the *power* of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). It is here the battle rages in every generation. The wisdom of this age constantly batters away at God’s demonstration of power. It can appropriate the wisdom and claim it, but it cannot duplicate his power, so must deny it. This is always the basic attack against revelation. Babes feel no need of explaining it so merely accept it. The wisdom of men regards revelation as a challenge because it dare not adopt what it cannot explain in naturalistic terms.

There are two methods of attack. One is to reduce God’s revelation to the purely human realm; the other to exalt the productions of men to an equality with that of God. It matters little, in the final analysis, whether God is reduced to the status of man, or man is elevated to the status of God. The effect is the

same if one denies that what Paul wrote was inspired of God, or if he affirms that Milton and Shakespeare were equally inspired with Paul.

The crux of the conflict in our day must always center around the prophecies of those who claimed to reveal in advance the things which would transpire. There are two kinds of power in the universe— intellectual and physical. Those who acknowledge the existence of God must recognize that there are two kinds of intellectual power, natural and supernatural; and two kinds of physical power, human and superhuman. The first of these in each instance belongs to man and grows out of his nature; the second belongs to God and is inherent in his nature. It follows then that there must be two kinds of miracles, or two forms of demonstration of the divine power.

One type of miracle would relate purely to the physical realm and would operate in such a manner as to especially affect those who saw or heard the demonstration. It would be apprehended by sensory perception and thus would encourage immediate belief in the hearts of the observers. Such a miracle could affect future generations only through belief of the testimony of those who saw it. But supernatural demonstrations in the intellectual realm are not limited to the earthly sojourn of him who manifests them. In view of the fact that the nature of man hides from him the future, to predict with utmost accuracy what will transpire a thousand years hence requires the same supernatural power of intellect as to feed a multitude by multiplication of loaves and fishes requires superhuman power over physical elements.

Only those who were present at the time had actual knowledge of the miraculous *works* of Jesus. Future generations could only have faith in what these observers saw. By the same token, those who heard the prophetic *words* of Jesus could not have knowledge of their fulfillment as would future generations. Because of the two types of miracles, one to affect directly those

who were present, the other to affect directly those who were remote from the scene in time and place, we can summarize by saying that we believe what they saw, and they believed what we see.

Basis of Conflict

There is a constant conspiracy of “the wisdom of this world” to rid the world of a belief in the foreknowledge of God. Science, falsely so-called, is engaged in a relentless struggle to eliminate belief in divine prescience. If it be admitted that “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” the fate of the skeptic is sealed. In order to get rid of hell men must first get rid of God, for it has been *predicted* that he will be revealed from heaven “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God” (2 Thess. 1:8). To offset the possibility of that revelation from heaven men must deny the probability of any revelation from heaven.

We would expect the brunt of the attack to be made on that portion of sacred scripture which is alleged to be first in order of time. If doubt can be cast upon it a cloud will rest upon subsequent writings claiming the same origin. We are not at all surprised at the brilliant and incisive attack on the writings of Moses. Boiled down and simmered away, however, it all relates to a denial of the possibility of God knowing the future and preparing for it in advance. Since this calculated attempt is a good illustration of the tactics employed by “the wise and understanding” in every avenue of scripture let us briefly analyze some of the methods used.

The unfolding of human history demonstrates how “God takes the wise in their own craftiness.” One generation invests time seeking to discover what is wrong with the Bible, in time another generation reveals what is wrong with their discoveries. For a number of years “the wise” declared that Moses could not

have been the author of the Pentateuch because the art of writing had not been invented and the laws enunciated were far in advance of the comparable culture of that day. But in December, 1901, a block of black diorite was found on the acropolis of Susa, by a French expedition under the direction of Director General M. de Morgan. This monument, almost eight feet long and broken in three pieces, proved to be the "Code of Hammurabi," a civil law produced by an early Mesopotamian king who antedated the time of Moses. The critics now took the position that Moses had copied his law from previous documents. A meticulous search was made for a likeness of the ten commandments in the earlier code with a view to casting doubt on the original authorship in the sacred scriptures.

Men who labor on the assumption that there is no such thing as a divine revelation will grasp at straws to sustain their theory and when enough straws are found will imitate the first of "The Three Little Pigs" and build a straw house which is subjected to destruction as other discoveries are made. Strangely enough, one theory is always succeeded by another theory. There is seldom a return to the obvious fact of divine interposition in the affairs of men. It is amazing the extent to which the writings of Moses have been dissected and the grotesque creature which has been created when men try to fit the pieces together according to their own ideas.

Currently, the bulk of so-called scholarship which is branded as relatively conservative, regards the law as being a synthesis of at least four different codes. One of these was the Deuteronomic code, another a blending of two later scribes or schools, one of which used the term Elohim for God, the other the name Jehomih, or Yahweh. A third source was "the holiness code" purportedly written by the prophets of the exile and post-exilic period, and the last was the priestly code of ritualism which allegedly developed during the exile and upon the return to rebuild Jerusalem. Thus, William Barclay in his book "The Making of the Bible" writes, "To put it in very brief form, we

might say that the Law, the Pentateuch, equals D+JE+H+P.” One who still believes that God spoke to Moses and that Moses wrote the first five books is looked upon with some degree of pity and compassion as a credulous antiquarian or an immature babe. It is in that company we take our place, admittedly with more faith in God than the wisdom of this age.

Nature of Criticism

The first known attack upon the authorship of Moses was made by Celsus, the first great heathen opponent of Christianity. Until his time, not one question related to this initial revelation was known. The works of Celsus have been lost but they can almost be reconstructed from the complete reply and refutation made by Origen. It is apparent that Celsus, who wrote near the close of the second century (Lardner dates his work as 176), was brilliant, clever and erudite. I have studied the reply of Origen and it is obvious that Celsus made all of the arguments which were revived by the rationists of more recent ages. But so thorough was Origen in his devastating review that he silenced the opposition until many centuries had rolled by.

The Reformation sparked a revival of the opposition to the authorship of much of the sacred writings. As the scriptures were rescued from “dead languages” and translated into the living tongues of the people a great revival of Bible study was instituted. In the exchange of thought rivalry sprang up and out of this came opposition to long cherished positions. Following Celsus the next attack upon the authorship of the Pentateuch was by the fiery Carlstadt in 1520. He labeled it a forgery. Soon Roman Catholic writers took up the cudgel on the basis that to cast a reflection upon the authorship would weaken the Protestant contention for the Bible as “the only rule of faith and practice” and “the sole arbiter and court of appeal” in all questions involving religious or theological disputes.

A foundation for this was laid by Ibn Ezra, the great medieval rabbi, poet and philosopher. Born in Toledo, Spain, in 1092, he became a master of numerous languages while excelling in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. Before his death in Rome in 1167 he had traveled over Europe and Africa for twenty-five years, leaving behind a voluminous mass of written materials among which were lengthy scriptural commentaries. He affirmed his view that the Pentateuch contained evidences of having been copied from earlier accounts and contained some post-Mosaic material. Although he was opposed in this conjecture by the Talmudical scholars, the slender thread he spun was picked up and woven into a strong cord by others.

In 1653 the Catholic theologian Masius (Maes) suggested that the Pentateuch had been re-written by Ezra. Two years later, Peyrerijs, influenced by Ibn Ezra, published his conclusion that the Pentateuch was not the work of Moses but an abridgement from a larger work by Moses. But it remained for another to give the greatest emphasis to this idea. Benedict Spinoza was of Portuguese-Jewish descent. Born in Amsterdam in 1632, he lived but forty-five years, but made a profound impact on the thought of his day and that of succeeding generations. He was given a thorough education in orthodox Judaism but was weaned from it by his research in physical science and through reading after the French philosopher Rene Descartes. Spinoza withdrew from the synagogue and was excommunicated by the rabbis who used political influence to have him banished from the city. Living just outside the city limits he eked out a bare living grinding optical lenses while writing his treatises on philosophy.

In 1670 Spinoza published his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in which he took some isolated and obscure statements made by Ibn Ezra and welded them into a set of systematic propositions. His conclusion was that not only did Moses not write the Pentateuch, but the whole body of historical writings in the old covenant scriptures constituted a mere winnowing out of

materials from a much greater mass and at a later date, and the bulk of the matter has become lost. In 1696 Anton Van Dale took up the theory and contended that the winnowing was done in the age of Ezra and was properly the work of this Jewish scribe following the exile.

A half century later, in 1753, Jean Astruc published what was intended to be a complete reply to Spinoza. Rejecting the post-Mosaic theory he postulated that Moses had relied upon previously written materials. Referring to the divergent titles for God, *Elohim* and *Jehovah*, he suggested that there were two accounts of the creation and later events and that Moses had placed them parallel with each other. It was his view that a careless or ignorant copyist had mingled them in consecutive fashion. He went so far as to intimate that there were as many as a dozen original documents and even speculated as to their respective authors.

Until this time the views of the various writers had been offered with no special attempt to label their efforts under a specific category. It remained for John Godfrey Eichorn to coin the term "Higher Criticism." Born in Dorrinzingen, Germany, in 1752, he was appointed professor at Jena when he was twenty years old, and in 1788 was made professor at Gottingen, where he served until his death forty-three years later. He advanced the idea that the original documents of the Pentateuch were all written during the time of Moses, some of them by Moses himself, and these were later compiled by someone during the time of Samuel. Eichorn gave the name "higher criticism" to his effort and it came to be a designation for the efforts of those who seek to prove that the accredited books of the Bible are forgeries in part or in whole.

It is probably too late to protest the assumption of this title by those who seek only to discredit what is generally believed. Criticism has its place in the study of any historical document, divine or human, inspired or uninspired. It is a legitimate

pursuit when, as Prof. J. W. McGarvey says, "it is the art of ascertaining the authorship, date, credibility and literary characteristics of written documents." There is a difference between honest attempts at ascertainment and investigation merely to sustain a theory. Under the latter circumstances *higher* criticism has a *lower* motive. Why should the word "higher" be applied to discreditation and not to accreditation? Is one inferior simply because he refuses to run off after every speculative idea advanced? The whole truth is that there has never been agreement among "higher critics" and all of them have spent as much time criticizing each other as they have in ostracizing Moses! The most effective means of assuring you will be subject to criticism in the next generation is to adopt the views of the higher critics in this one.

The "document theory" with which we have been dealing was supplanted by the "fragment theory" advanced by Alexander Geddes, a Roman Catholic theologian in Scotland, and by J. S. Vater in Germany. In 1806 De Wette set forth the "supplement theory" which was modified by Ewald in 1837, out of which modification grew the "historical theory." Passing swiftly over these so as not to bore our readers we come to the theory most generally in vogue in our day. It received great impetus from an eminent scholar at Strasburg by the name of Reuss, but it was popularized by one of his students K. H. Graf. The latter insisted that Deuteronomy was prior to the ritual law which is now commonly designated the priest code. He credited Ezekiel with creating the ritual law with additions to it continuing to be made well after the days of Ezra.

Abraham Kuenen, taking his cue from Graf, went a step beyond and theorized that the religion of Israel was merely a natural religion. He taught that it was originally polytheistic like the other religions of the world, but under the guidance of the prophets speaking from a moral standpoint, it developed into a monotheistic religion.

Julius Wellhausen, building upon the foundation of Graf, constructed or fabricated the great speculative system so generally adopted by critics of our modern day. Briefly stated it involves a belief that the Pentateuch should be called “the Hexateuch” for it consists of eight volumes instead of five. This work is a composite one drawn from four specific stages as follows: (1) A Judean prophetic historian who was a *Jehovist* and who compiled a history of Israel about 800 B.C.; (2) An Ephraimite prophetic historian who was an *Elohist* and who produced a similar account about 750 B.C., the two accounts being compiled together by a redactor (German term for “editor”) at a later date; (3) A writer of a different character who wrote the main part of what is now designated Deuteronomy, producing his work during the reign of Josiah, or about 621 B.C.; (4) Beginning with Ezekiel the ritual or ceremonial law began to be placed in written form, to be codified by Ezra about 444 B.C.

The first of these is designated J, the second E, the third D, and the fourth P, referring to the priestly code. Distinct from all of these is a special section on the holy life (Leviticus, chapters 17-22), allegedly written by an unknown priest and labeled H. All of this was supposed to have been collated and joined together by a redactor not later than 280 B.C. It is possible that the average reader of a journal such as this one may shrug his shoulders and say, “Who cares?” It must be remembered that it is not such a reader who formulates the religious thought and moulds it in our generation. Those who do are not only constantly exposed to the views we have outlined but also to the subtle pressure to adopt them or be scoffed at by “the intellectuals.” And it is the indifference and unconcern of “the average reader” which makes possible the rapid growth of such theories.

Objections of a Babe

Despite its apparent insignificance this paper is now read by the students in a number of theological schools. Fully cognizant of the results which may accrue we unhesitatingly reject the hypotheses of so-called "higher criticism." To those who brand this as childish ignorance we simply say that we prefer to regard it as "childlike faith." An examination of the premises of higher criticism as related to the Pentateuch will demonstrate that practically all of the objections can be resolved by a firm conviction that God knows the future in advance and unfolding history is part of a design. Once admit the prescience of God and all of the difficulties disappear. Deny this and you have no God!

Why should "higher criticism" be so intent on destroying faith in inspiration? Of course one needs to be hesitant about judging motivations but the more I ponder upon the problem in the light of facts, the more do I wonder if these theories are not the result of an attempt to sustain another theory which leaves God out of creation. So long as there is design in revelation to govern the existence of man, it will be difficult to deny there was design in creation to govern his origin.

I am not alone in this conviction. Dr. B. D. Eerdmans, who succeeded to Kuenen's chair in the University at Leyden, and who also built up a reputation as a rationalistic critic said, "I definitely separate myself from the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen school, and I contest the so-called newer documentary hypothesis generally." He further said, "Evidently the argument of the critical analysis is not merely analytical. A good deal of belief in evolution is involved in it." (See "Criticism in Troubled Waters" by Prof. James Orr, D.D., Glasgow, Scotland, in *Homiletic Review*, Nov. 1909.)

The truth is that there are some great gaps which the critics have not yet bridged and one does not need a lot of scholastic ability to see them. Indeed, some of them are so simple as to appeal only to babes. It is assumed that the ritual or

sacrificial law began to be written by the priests of the exile and was codified by the priestly scribe, Ezra, after the return from Babylon. The purpose was to sanctify and reestablish Jerusalem as the center of the worship of Jehovah and to make this city the mecca of the exiles. Then how can we account for the following?

1. The city of Jerusalem is not even mentioned in the entire Pentateuch. It is once referred to as Salem, but then it was the abode of Melchisedec to whom Abraham paid tithes. If Moses wrote the Pentateuch this is understandable, since it was not until the time of David that this city, a garrison of the Jebusites, was captured.

2. How does it happen that the hen was omitted from the list of clean and unclean birds? It is fairly well established that this fowl was introduced from India, probably in the days of Solomon, who was an exporter of exotics. By the time of Jesus the fowl was so common that he compared his concern for Jerusalem to that of “a hen gathering her chicks under her wings.” How did the later priestly writers overlook this domestic fowl from their code?

3. Why is there no reference to the use of music in the liturgical worship if the Pentateuch was compiled long after the days of David? This king ordained the use of orchestra and choirs in the temple worship and their use became a regular part of the sacrificial observance, but there is no reference to such in the Pentateuch at all.

4. In view of the fact that the synagogal system took its spontaneous rise from the needs created by the exile, why is there no intimation of it if “the redactors” who compiled the code lived after that time, even down to 280 B.C.?

Basis of Objection

I do not personally feel that I am acting arbitrarily when I fly in the face of modern “scholarship” and state my honest conviction that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. There are certain recognized criteria for establishment of the authorship of any document. These are accepted by the courts as guidelines when there is a contest over such a matter. In any case involving litigation over authorship the three following rules always apply.

(1) The claim of authorship found within the written document must be granted prior right in any consideration related to such authorship, and has a strong presumption in its favor. Such presumption must be even stronger if the document was one of public notice or accessibility and the claim was not contested at its origin.

(2) The validity of the claim of authorship *may be* established exclusively upon the basis of such claim as made within the body of a written document and *must be* granted unless such claim is proven to be false.

(3) In any contest of the validity of such claim of authorship the burden of proof rests upon the contestant and not upon the defender of such claim.

With reference to the first law of evidence there is no question about the affirmation that it is the word of Moses. Repeatedly the phrase, “And the Lord spoke unto Moses” is used. It occurs over and over again. That the writing was a matter of public knowledge is evident from Exodus 25. “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord” (verse 4). “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people” (verse 7). “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words” (verse 8).

The claim to authorship went unchallenged for almost 1700 years and then was challenged by an infidel, Celsus. This

challenger was so effectively silenced that not another dared to rise for hundreds of years. The currently accepted theory of the critics is only one of many advanced in recent centuries, all of them contradictory to each other. A theory relative to a proposition is neither self-sustaining nor a proof of the proposition. A theory cannot constitute proof because it first has to be proved, at which point it ceases to be a theory. A theory is not established fact or truth but speculation. The claim of authorship of the Pentateuch *cannot be proven* to be false by a theory and until proven to be false no one can be called either unscientific or injudicious who accepts it.

Instead of the critics becoming more certain of the validity of their theory as time permits for additional study of its implications they are becoming more cautious in advancing it. Julius Wellhausen produced in his "Die Composition des Hexateuchs" in 1889 what was designated as "the assured results" of higher criticism. It was alleged that he had established his postulation "beyond recall." But William Barclay, in his "The Making of the Bible" published last year says, "It is to be understood that what follows is a reconstruction of events, as we think that they happened, and, although in our narrative we state the events as facts, we are none the less well aware that it is reconstruction and not indubitable history which we are presenting."

It is at this juncture the danger of higher criticism is apparent. We live in a time when intellectualism is worshiped as the *beau ideal* of human attainment. Men do obeisance before titles and degrees bestowed by other men. They frequently accept what brilliant men write, forgetting that such men are not always sure of what they write. When such men state the events "as facts" lesser minds accept what is stated as factual, not knowing that the critics are merely recounting these things as "we think that they happened." Placed on that basis one may disagree with what is stated without disagreeing with proven fact.

Of course it is not true that one man has as much right to his “think-so” in any given field as another, if the other has invested years of honest study in that field. To declare that he has is to glorify the arrogance of ignorance. For one who is grossly ignorant of nuclear fission to blatantly run counter to the experts in this scientific area is ridiculous. One has a right to speak what he thinks, but that is not a prerogative to speak without thinking. Often the immature and superficial reasoner would be more respected and honored if seen and not heard. We make no charge of dishonesty or insincerity against those with whom we disagree in this article. In their research they have uncovered countless nuggets of great worth. We appreciate their efforts but simply refuse to accept as genuine what we believe to be “fool’s gold” because we have seen no assay which convinces us it is the real thing.

Conclusion

It is our conviction that “the wisdom of this age” has created a false premise and that the research has frequently been done with this premise in mind and has not been objective or final. We think this false premise is the result of a philosophy of naturalism which denies supernaturalism and thus shuts itself off from all that the supernatural can produce. “A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:14).

This passage affirms that there is a domain which “belongs to the Spirit of God.” Those things which lie in that realm are not discoverable by human genius but must be revealed by divine power. The unspiritual man slams the door shut on these things by denying there is such a realm. He brands as sheer foolishness that which is said to be revealed. He can no more grasp these things through a closed mind than one can physically reach through a closed door. Regardless of his mental

genius in other fields he staggers in darkness with regard to spiritual matters when he closes the door for he shuts out the only light that can illuminate in this area. "It needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit."

One may be talented in the field of electronics, or skilled in any of the arts and sciences, and still be stumbling in a world of spiritual darkness. We are now prepared to understand the statement of Jesus with which we began this thesis, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will." Note the manner in which God was addressed. He was designated as "Father" but also as "Lord of heaven and earth." This is important!

A babe realizes above everything else his dependence upon a family relationship. True wisdom in the spiritual realm begins with the acknowledgment of the fatherhood of God. "Should we not submit even more readily to our spiritual Father, and so attain life?" (Heb. 12:9). In addition to this there must be a recognition of lordship over heaven and earth, that is, the created universe. The same one who is our Father by spiritual generation is the governor of the universe by right of creation. When one acknowledges that his individual wellbeing and that of the whole world is directly related to God's providence, he has fitted himself for a proper appreciation of revelation. It is inconceivable that a father would not wish to communicate with his babe, especially when that babe acknowledges his own helplessness and absolute dependency.

A babe takes upon faith that which he cannot explain. His happiness is not conditioned upon having a rational solution to all of the problems of life but upon a complete and unwavering trust in the author of life. He is not committed to finding a way to explain everything so he need not explain away everything he cannot find by his senses. The Holy Spirit operates in a heart

filled with faith, and not necessarily in a mind filled with knowledge. This is not to say the two are incompatible. Far from it. If such were the case not any of the wise men of earth would be called. It is only when the wisdom in the mind excludes the faith in the heart that the Holy Spirit cannot become operable in the person. The point is that there is no room for pride in knowledge or ignorance. Both present great temptations although the latter is the more contemptible as having the least justification.

“And so there is no place for human pride in the presence of God. You are in Christ Jesus by God’s act, for God has made him our wisdom; he is our righteousness; in him we are consecrated and set free” (1 Cor. 1:30).

The Basis of Authority

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[Abstract]

It was on July 4, 1823, that Alexander Campbell wrote the preface to the first edition of “The Christian Baptist.” In it he said,

It is a rarity seldom to be witnessed, to see a person boldly opposing either the doctrinal errors or the unscriptural measures of a people with whom he has identified himself, and to whom he looks for approbation and support. If such a person appears in any party, he soon falls under the frowns of those who either think themselves wiser than the reprove, or would wish so to appear. Hence it usually happens that such a character must lay his hand upon his mouth, or embrace the privilege of walking out of doors. Although this has usually been the case, we would hope that it would not always continue so to be.

It appears that Campbell’s hope has not yet been realized. The quickest road to unpopularity is the criticism of the religious segment or party with which one is identified. In spite of this reforms have to be wrought by such critics and the purity of the church generally is attributable to their efforts. It is in a spirit of humility I pen this article. I have no wish to be censorious. I do feel it is time that we face up realistically to our true status. At the risk of incurring partisan wrath I propose to examine the claims of “The Church of Christ” at its most vital

point.

In every controversy between members of its own factions, or between the members of one such faction and those of another religious group, the first court of appeal is to the proper basis of authority in the Christian religion. It is generally affirmed that the one and only all-sufficient rule of faith and practice is the revelation of God in the sacred scriptures. So classic has this statement become that many members of "The Church of Christ" labor under the impression that they are the only ones who make the claim and that all other religionists have no particular regard for the authority of the scriptures. Strangely enough almost every sect in Protestantism makes the same claim. Let us mention a few of them by way of documentation.

The Methodist Church in its fifth of the "Articles of Religion" says, "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

The United Brethren in Christ in their "Discipline" state, "We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the word of God; that it contains the only true way to salvation; that every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it with the influence of the Spirit of God, as the only rule and guide."

The Presbyterian Church in the United States has in its "Confession of Faith" these words, "Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the word of God written, are now contained all of the books of the Old and New Testament . . . All of which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life."

The "Discipline" of the Friends' Church contains the statement, "It has ever been, and still is, the belief of the

Friends' Church that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God; that, therefore, there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatsoever."

Confronted with such statements many members of "The Church of Christ" laugh in sheer derision. They brand all of the adherents of these other religious parties as insincere and false to their alleged standard. It is commonly believed that only members of "The Church of Christ" are truly honest in stating that they regard the scriptures as "the only rule of faith and practice." All others who say this are either deceived or deceivers. Now we have no desire to become a professional "debunker" nor operate as an "idol-smasher" but we think it is quite apparent that most members of "The Church of Christ" are laboring under a strong delusion when they express the view that they always "speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it is silent."

Like so many other cliches this one is more easily quoted than practiced. The truth is that the brethren play down a good many things on which the Bible speaks and are quite adept at reading into its silence what they want it to say. They bind upon men the things which appeal to them or which they have learned by tradition from factional fathers, while other things are glossed over as of no importance. To one who really knows "the inside" of the movement, a plea for unity made to the sectarian world by the average preacher in "The Church of Christ" is somewhat ridiculous. It is astonishing how our brethren can make a glowing appeal "to the sects" to acknowledge the truth and become one in Christ, and then engage in a warm debate with a preacher from another faction bearing the same name on the following day.

"The Church of Christ" represents the most divided religious movement in America in our age. It is split into warring factions over instrumental music, missionary societies,

orphan homes, colleges, the pastor system, brotherhood television programs, classes, individual cups, fermented wine, uninspired literature, marriage of divorced persons, and a host of other things. In some southern cities there are as many as fifteen different kinds of “The Church of Christ” and in all there are at least two dozen separate and distinct factions. Each of these regards its adherents as “the loyal brethren” and considers itself as constituting “the faithful church.” We have a right to ask “Which Church of Christ is it that speaks where the Bible speaks and remains silent where it is silent?” Every member knows the correct answer but when you tally them up you will find there are some two dozen “correct answers” and all of them different!

Our brethren are good people. They want to please God and reach heaven. Most of them are neither mean nor malicious but they are victims of their own propaganda. They have told others so often that they have no other creed than the Bible they have come to believe it. They must face up to the fact that although they have no written creed formulated by chosen delegates, they do have as many unwritten creeds as there are parties among them. Whatever a faction makes a “test of fellowship” or demands that one believe to be recognized as “loyal”—that is its creed. We are among the most creed-ridden people in existence today. And if one is to have another creed it would be better to have a written one. The conditions could then be stipulated in writing. As it is, a faction under the spell of a strong leader may change its creed over night and those who were “faithful” yesterday will be *disfellowshipped* tomorrow. One “stands in jeopardy every hour” under our present factional regime.

I do not think that God’s word is the basis of authority in “The Church of Christ” at all. If it were there would be no schism or factionalism, for this is contrary to the authority of that word which brands it as a work of the flesh. I am going to put my finger on some of the sources of authority in “The

Church of Christ” because I feel the time has arrived that someone must be quite frank and open. Mind you, I know the penalty for doing this, but I cannot expect others to do what I am too cowardly to do myself.

I shall be accused of opposing “the Lord’s church” but I have no intention of doing this at all. I do not equate “The Church of Christ” with the church of God in an exclusive sense. I am sure that merely being an adherent of “The Church of Christ” does not guarantee that one is thereby a member of the one body. I suspect there are those in “The Church of Christ” who are not members of the one body at all and there may be members of the one body who have not so much as heard of “The Church of Christ.” The one body is certainly the church of Christ but it is not necessarily “The Church of Christ.”

I apologize for such apparent bluntness of speech. I know how it sounds to the ears of those of us who have always thought of ourselves as “the elect of God.” I could wish that I knew of some gentler manner in which to convey the sad news but I must proceed in my own manner, asking you to forgive any crudity of language. I will be tagged as a “sectarian” for writing this way but I take comfort in the fact that I am less a sectarian now than I have ever been in the past. Certainly I am less a sectarian now than when I thought our faction was “the loyal church” and everyone else was damned and doomed. That spirit of bigotry was the very essence of sectarianism.

It is a common thing for the brethren to tell other religionists that if they were willing to do what the Lord said there would be no division. On this basis it would appear that those who came nearest to doing what the Lord said would be the least divided. Since we currently represent the most divided movement this is quite a reflection against us. Of course none of our divisions were ever created by anyone doing something the Lord had not authorized. When we have a split both sides insist they have done “what the Lord said.” I never knew of a division

in “The Church of Christ” in which either side was not “the faithful group.”

Either the word of God is not adequate authority to hold us together or we have unwittingly and inadvertently created other authority which we respect and follow in preference to the word of God. That this last is the case must be admitted, I think, by every truly serious thinker among us. In my discussion of this premise I will not be dogmatic or arbitrary. If you cannot concur in my thinking I shall still love you as a brother. However, I feel we should get these things out in the open and measure up to them. We should not hoodwink or brainwash ourselves into thinking that God will make an exception for us. He will judge us on the same basis as we judge others.

We need to recapture some very vital distinctions. One relates to the difference between revelation, inspiration, and interpretation. These three are not one. All scripture is given by inspiration. It was not all given by revelation. Revelation is from *apokalupsis*, “to lay bare, uncover, make naked.” Revelation is the method employed by God to *uncover* for man what he could not *discover* for himself. Revelation is the transmission of divine thought to the human mind. Interpretation is the application of the human mind to that divine thought in an attempt to grasp its meaning and significance for our life. Revelation from God is infallible but no man’s interpretation is infallible. God’s thought is absolute but our thought about it cannot be.

It is a common statement, “We are not divided over what God said, we are divided over what he did not say.” In a sense this is correct, in another it is not. Most of our little mottoes and slogans are the creation of immature minds. It is easier to oversimplify than to think through complex issues. Quoting little proverbs of our own construction satisfies us even though they may be contradictory. Actually, most of our divisions have occurred over opinions as to what God meant by what He said. Such opinions are accepted as “the will of God” and bound upon

others who rebel at being compelled to acknowledge what they cannot personally see in a passage.

Another distinction which needs to be again established is that relating to gospel and doctrine. The gospel is the Good News concerning Jesus. It is to be proclaimed to aliens to enroll them as citizens. It must be believed to come into relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is that by which we are saved if we keep it in memory. Upon it there can be no difference. It consists of facts to which credible witnesses give testimony. One either believes their testimony or he does not. But the doctrine is the course of instruction for students in the school of Christ. There will be varied degrees of advancement and proficiency in it as in every curriculum demanding acquisition of knowledge. Much of our present difficulty lies in a confusion of these two terms.

The real authority in many instances is *partisan traditionalism*. All of us were either born in a factional background or grew up and came into one. So long as there are two dozen parties in "The Church of Christ" no one of these can be the "Lord's church" to the exclusion of those in all others. Each of these factions has its own traditional pattern, each has its "fathers in the faith." The words of these men in debate are quoted as "an end to all controversy." Members of one faction know but vaguely, if at all, about the chief men of another. They are frequently astounded to learn that there are others who claim to be Christians and have heard only remotely of their prominent authorities.

In reality, it is not the revelation of God at all which is the authority, but undue emphasis of some specific phase of it. Thus, those who argue "learnedly" about either side of the issues concerning cups, classes and colleges, may be shamefully ignorant of the scriptures as a whole, and almost wholly devoid of real scholarship. The word of God becomes merely a repository for argumentative material to sustain a narrow and

biased viewpoint. It is searched and scrapped to find justification for a position which never once entered the minds of the holy apostles. The actual malady lies much deeper and factionalism is just a symptom of it. The real basis of our trouble is a form of legalism which perverts and subverts the very purpose of the sacred scriptures.

The tendency of legalism and factionalism is toward dishonesty. The faction exerts a tremendous influence over one who is within its clutches. All sorts of pressures are brought to bear in order to keep him from defecting. There is always the threat of excommunication with its subsequent boycott. There is the fear and dread of being branded a heretic or apostate if one no longer subscribes to the party test and regards the church as being greater than the faction. Many men “go along” keeping their inmost thoughts to themselves, not even able to discuss them with wife and children lest they discourage their spiritual growth which is always frail and precarious under a factional regime. It is obvious that the factional pattern, not the word of God, is the basis of authority in the various factions which bear the title, “The Church of Christ.”

“The Church of Christ” suffers from spiritual schizophrenia. It has a dual personality, one side of which it exhibits to the rest of the religious world, the other of which is known only to those inside the circle. A front is put on to project an image to the sectarian world of a great organization of more than two million members in the United States, all of whom bask in the sunlight of perfect harmony, held together by the indissoluble tie of mutual respect for the authority of the new covenant scriptures. Nothing is said about the thousands who have become disillusioned by petty clerical politics but who are afraid to leave for fear that in so doing they will be “deserting the Lord’s church.”

A careful study will show that “The Church of Christ” as it exists in the United States is not at all a united monarchy under

the authority of one supreme sovereign. Instead it is a conglomeration of factions, many of which are ruled by “editorcracy.” This word, which I have personally coined to define our state, means government by editors. It will be found by objective survey that most of the factions center around a periodical. The place where it is published virtually constitutes the party headquarters. The editor often exercises a sway over both congregations and individuals which can extend to spiritual life or death in so far as the faction is concerned. His expressed disapproval of any man, his refusal to recognize or publish his reports, may constitute “the kiss of death.” The long arm of journalistic discipline and censure can reach across the continent and override an eldership.

This provides an unhealthy state of affairs which belies the claim of congregational autonomy. Each editor has a clique composed of those in his favor. Others out in the field must walk circumspectly lest they offend this coterie of court favorites and a whispering campaign be started with the words, “You’d better keep an eye on Brother A. He is not as sound as he once was.” When this begins the unfortunate victim must take steps to ingratiate himself with “our main preachers” at once or he will pay the price of rejection. Men who seek to work into partisan graces publish their confessions or acknowledgments in the journal, whereupon the editor affixes his stamp of approval and the penitent can once more secure a lucrative position and avoid starvation for himself and family. The basis of authority for each faction is not the revealed scriptures but the official interpretation sanctioned by the editor. He determines what is to be made a test of fellowship, what is optional, and what is of no consequence. The list differs in each faction, the degree of emphasis determining the category.

Regional supervision is frequently exercised through what is called “the preachers’ luncheon group.” This is a select dining club composed of the preachers in an area who subscribe to a factional viewpoint. Occasionally they allow their wives to

attend. At such gatherings local policies and procedures come under review and tentative agreements are reached which are then “sold” to the elders and congregations by various pressure methods. The standard is not the word of God but orthodoxy. If someone in the area dares to think for himself and becomes “a fly in the party ointment” discussions are held as to how to best “handle him.” If the preachers feel they can insulate the congregations against his thinking by subtle warnings and veiled threats it will be decided to “let him die on the vine.”

If the non-conformist is persistent and will not “play dead,” and if there is danger that the boycott will not hold, a motion is made and seconded to invite the offender to appear before the preachers to be questioned. If he consents to this he will find a tape recorder all set up and he will be grilled by a chosen spokesman with previously devised questions. His answers can then be lifted and edited in such a manner as to prove him to be a “heretic.” The best way in which to meet the demand of a “preacher’s luncheon group” for a conference is to insist that an open invitation be given to all of the preachers, elders and members, male and female, in the area. Let all of the brethren attend and participate in the questioning. One who refuses to recognize the jurisdiction over his faith of the self-appointed tribal council and tribunal, and who insists upon the liberty of the entire priesthood of all believers is a real problem. Orthodoxy always thrives on “a closed door policy.”

Individual congregations are “held in line” not by a free approach or appeal to the sacred scriptures as authority but by a false impression which has been created relative to the function of elders. Despite the positive statement that in their oversight they are not to tyrannize over those allotted to their care, they often exercise a dogmatic and arbitrary sway which must be accepted in abject and servile obedience. We have no intention of reflecting against the hundreds of godly and consecrated men who have been invested with the office and certainly no desire to encourage disobedience or revolt against

any God-given authority they may possess. But “The System” which operates under the title “The Church of Christ” has perverted the functions of the presbytery and reduced the congregations in some cases to a state of spiritual serfdom. The elders decide upon policy and this must be accepted without recourse or protest. “The voice of the presbytery is the voice of God.”

A little reflection will show that this differs from the papal system only in degree. The elders are not infallible by right of office. Theirs is not at all the task of interpreting the sacred scriptures for any persons other than themselves. In fact there is no “official interpretation” authorized by God and one man’s view or opinion is not necessarily any more authoritative than that of any other man. When one develops strong personal convictions about the meaning of a passage, to encourage him to drop or sublimate his view, and accept that of the elders, right or wrong, may make an obedient hypocrite out of him but it can never make a devoted and free servant of Jesus Christ. It is amazing how often we reproduce on a local scale with minor characters the case of Galileo. If the elders are infallible in interpretation, which ones of them are? That they are not infallible arbiters is proven by the fact that they frequently disagree and often divide the flock over “what the Bible teaches” as it is so quaintly phrased.

Our real hope lies in the fact that so many are being challenged to think for themselves in this generation. Consecrated young men and women, trained to reason, and with a firm regard for the authority of the sacred word, are no longer content to accept orthodoxy as a substitute for that word and its authority. They are questioning the right of tradition, of a clerical caste, or of a closed-door group, to impose arbitrarily upon their thinking processes, when in the final judgment they shall be answerable to none of these, but only to the Lord Jesus Christ. Obviously this will create a ferment and state of temporary unrest. In our humble judgment this may be a good

thing. Nothing is more needful than to jolt us out of our crystallized sectarianism and start us once again on the road to healthful spiritual growth.

We have no bitterness toward any of our brethren. All of us have been victims of “The System” which always results when a movement toward restoration ceases to move and bogs down in an entrenched effort to protect its gains. I was reared in one of the factions calling itself “The Church of Christ” and I have neither intention nor desire to leave where I am and go somewhere else. If one is looking for the sectarian spirit he can find enough of it to satisfy him in the attitudes of many of his brethren; if he is opposed to it this provides as good a vantage point as any from which to direct his opposition. There would be no gain accruing from transferring to another faction or in uniting with a sect of another name. My only aim is to be loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ wherever I am.

I give it as my opinion, with which you will probably strongly disagree, that orthodox “Church-of-Christ-ism” has seen its best days. I doubt there will be any very real or significant gains made in the future, for a number of good reasons which I will not now mention. Numerically it may increase in comparison with past figures because of the population explosion and other twentieth century trends. There will always be some attracted by a legalistic dogmatism for many shun the responsibilities which go with freedom. These seek a religion with the details “all spelled out” and are perfectly willing to equate human interpretation with divine revelation. There is a sense of security and comfortable well-being provided by the limited factional atmosphere in which one is convinced that he has “fulfilled the law of God” by observing the rituals prescribed by the local minister. But many of the members are becoming jaded and tired of “taxation without representation.” The world around has caught on that we are as short on performance as we are strong on preaching. Our tragic and trivial divisions effectively demonstrate that the word of God is

not our rule of faith and practice.

Our appeal is not to any fragment, splinter, or segment of the disciple brotherhood, but to the fellowship of the concerned ones in all of these. Let us realize that the work of restoration has never been completed. In our trek from Babylon to Jerusalem we have been betrayed into thinking we had arrived when we pitched camp by the roadside. Too long have we like wine undisturbed in the cup “rested on our lees.” It is time to resume the journey. Let us strengthen our hands for the task as we cast off the chains and shackles of the party spirit. Let us march onward in the light of the word of God for that word must be our source of authority, our final court of appeal on earth. Let us rescue it from partisan hands and re-establish it as the real foundation of faith and practice. Then we shall have much to share with all of the eager searchers after truth in our distorted and divided religious world.

Problems in Attitude

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Volume 24

[Abstract]

The course pursued by any religious movement will depend upon the attitudes adopted by those who promote it. These attitudes, in turn, will be formulated and conditioned by traditional patterns and interpretations of scripture. We are all, to some extent, products of environment, training, and mitigating circumstances, to which we have been exposed. Our loyalties are often determined by inheritance and early association. All too often we equate these acquired dispositions with fidelity to God. The most intolerant and bitter sectarian is vocal in protesting that he is a true servant of the Master.

The readers of this little journal are drawn primarily from the ranks of those who are heirs of the restoration movement which was launched early in the nineteenth century by those who had grown tired and weary of the bitter warrings and janglings of the party spirit. It was described by one of its more zealous proponents as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Its goal was to restore a proper sense of fellowship and communion in which all of God’s children might work in harmony despite their varied opinions and divergent views. For several decades the movement made such tremendous strides that it appeared as if the domain of sectarianism would fall before its appeal. Then it disintegrated and lost much of its power.

Today, the heirs of the restoration ideal constitute the most fragmented and divided religious movement on the contemporary American scene. The public entreaty for unity made by the preachers of the movement falls like a hollow echo on the ears of a jaded populace all too familiar with the bitter attacks and lawsuits in which many of these same preachers have participated. Many have stopped by to listen to debates kindled by partisan animosity and filled with invective, innuendo and crude wit, and they will no longer be influenced by an invitation to unity from those who have proven themselves to be masters of dissension. The empty shell of the restoration movement remains but the spirit which once animated it has fled. Men still parade the mummy openly, but a mummy belongs in a museum.

What deadly philosophy has been adopted which would thus splinter and fragmentize a glorious movement to unite God's people? What metaphysical wolf in disguise has infiltrated the flock, to scatter the sheep and turn them against each other? We could hardly be more divided if Jesus had prayed for disunity and God had commanded it. We have split and shivered ourselves as if by so doing we were blessed of God and fulfilling the divine purpose among men. In some cities the startled inhabitants tune in their radios to hear the various parties sinking verbal tomahawks into each other as if tribal warfare constituted the *beau ideal* of spiritual attainment in Christ.

In such a complex situation as now confronts us we need to be careful that we are not betrayed into thinking there is a simple solution. The tangled skein will not easily become untied; the matted roots below the surface will not readily yield to pressure upon the plant above. But the difficulties involved should not deter the zealous researchist in an attempt to recapture and restore the spirit of the restoration movement. In no sense of having found the whole answer, we very humbly submit that we believe there are two ideas we should re-examine as we attempt in our generation to thwart "the will to divide."

Both of these have been sanctified by tradition received from our fathers and by their ingrained acceptance are actually hallowed in our thinking as though they originated with God. Let us look at them!

(1) *The philosophy that purity of doctrine must be maintained by separation from brethren.*

When our fathers were confronted with “innovations” they had to determine what course they would pursue in dealing with these matters. Their decision was to “no longer regard as brethren” those who practiced the things regarded as being unscriptural. Actually, as I shall show in a future issue, this committed the congregations to adoption of *orthodoxy* as a test of relationship. This has proven to be the rock upon which every vessel of reformation has eventually run aground. Orthodoxy is sired by fear and heresy is its stepchild.

The outworking of this theory can now be clearly seen. It has resulted in another schism every time an honest person could no longer pay lip service to the party norm. The aim of orthodoxy is to preserve *truth*, i.e., the body of interpretations accepted by the group and regarded by them as constituting truth. It proposes to do this by the deep freeze method, which actually is dogmatism and creedalism. It sets up conformity, instead of community, as the basis of brotherhood, and the one who cannot conform in every particular is placed under ban and eventually driven forth.

I have mentioned that orthodoxy is the offspring of fear and this is true. There is, first of all, the fear that in any encounter of truth with error, the latter must inevitably be the victor. In order to preserve truth, those who have it must retreat and withdraw, and build the necessary walls to protect themselves from further encroachment. Actually no such wall can ever be effective so long as those within continue to think and reason. It is because of this that none of the apostles ever

encouraged the members of any congregation which they had planted to leave it and form “a faithful church.” Every congregation they planted was a “faithful one” and if these could go so far astray, a new one planted on the same basis could do the same. The quickest way to fill the earth with “unfaithful churches” is to divide in order to plant “faithful churches.” The “loyal church” fallacy is one of our gravest errors. But I have written so much about this divisive concept in previous issues that I shall not pursue it further just now. I want to come to another facet of our problem which I feel we should explore objectively.

(2) *The philosophy that brotherhood is secondary to personal conviction and in any conflict between the two, the latter must always be defended at the expense of the former.*

It is astonishing how lightly we regard the sacred relationship of brotherhood in Christ Jesus. We seem ready to dissolve it upon the slightest pretext. We constantly place strains and tensions upon it as though it were the most insignificant of all things within the spiritual framework. Yet there is every indication that God has always regarded brotherhood as of paramount importance. This is shown in his encounter with the first man ever born of woman. When this man showed utter disregard for the relationship, God three times used the expression “your brother” in such a manner as to demonstrate the divine concern for it. The allusion to this by John is very striking. “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, *and not be like Cain*. . . (1 John 3:11, 12). Jude speaks of those who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit” (verse 19) and declares, “For they walk in the way of Cain” (verse 11).

Abraham, the father of the faithful, recognized that brotherhood should not be endangered by stress and strife. He seemed to sense that the relationship which was so sacred, could be eroded away by constant friction. Thus he was willing to

make personal sacrifices and concessions in order to maintain it intact. Brotherhood meant more to him than those *things* which would destroy it. He said, "Let there be no strife between me and thee, for we be brethren." It is interesting to note that he recognized the difference between geographical proximity and unity of heart, so he suggested to Lot, "Separate yourself from me." In this instance the true relation could best be maintained by physical separation. Unity today does not mean we are all in the same *place* at the same time, but that we recognize that we are all in the same *person* at same time. "He is our peace."

The fraternal relationship in Christ is always under attack. The sharpest darts of Satan are reserved for it. The Arch-foe knows that he is powerless before a united church. Nothing can hinder or impede the progress of God's people when they stand together and present an unbroken front. The only hope of the enemy is to get those who are children of God to turn the sword of the Spirit against each other. If they engage in fratricidal warfare and bathe their weapon in the blood of their brothers, the demons rejoice and hell has a holiday! The weakest spot in our armor is that of personal pride. It is here the conflict between maintenance of personal conviction and brotherhood relationship suffers its severest test.

Fortunately for those of us who respect the authority of the new covenant scriptures, the conflict is resolved by the apostle Paul. In Romans, chapter 14, he deals directly with the problem. A thoroughgoing analysis of this chapter is long overdue.

We must limit our remarks about it in this article to certain generalizations, but these may be used as foundational truths for more extensive study. Even a casual reading of the chapter will show that there is room in Christ for men to differ without destroying the relationship known as brotherhood. Verse 2 proves that those in the Lord need not all believe the same *things* to remain as brethren. Obviously this has nothing to do with what must be believed to enter the relationship for it is

specifically said that life is conditioned upon believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30, 31). Should one cease to believe this he would cut himself off from the life of the Spirit and consequently from that fellowship which proceeds from the indwelling Spirit (Phil. 2:1).

In the faith, that is, inside the domain of faith, there will always be those who are weak as well as those who are strong. God's family is composed of babies, children, young men, and adults— all of them brethren. He even has some retarded children, members of the body who are “more frail than others” (1 Cor. 12:22). No two of God's offspring are at exactly the same stage of spiritual and intellectual development at the same time. The Christian way was never intended to make mechanical robots but to develop thinking men and women. This means that doctrinal attainment can never provide a basis of unity. To predicate fellowship upon it is to destroy all hope of oneness. Love, which is the fulness of law, is the only bond which can actually unite God's children. So we read, “To crown all there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole” (Col. 2:14).

If nothing else had ever been written this would be sufficient, if grasped in its perfection, to prove that our unity as a family is more important than the personal viewpoint or conviction of any member of that family and no one can be a worse traitor to the Father than he who destroys the family relationship by trying to bind upon others such conviction. But more has been written and directly to the point. Repeatedly the term “your brother” occurs in Romans 14 and without exception it is used to show that brotherhood must be maintained at the cost of personal consideration. Brotherhood is the work of God and it must not be destroyed (verse 20). We must “not consider ourselves” (Rom. 15:1) but “each of us must consider his neighbor and think what is for his good” (verse 2), for “Christ did not consider himself” (verse 3).

Jesus did not condition our fellowship with himself upon attainment to the same degree of spiritual knowledge which he possessed. Think of all those whom Jesus has received in spite of ignorance, weakness, human frailty, and error in reasoning. Jesus has never rejected any man on the basis of a wrong opinion honestly held. He does not bind upon us what we are unable as yet to receive. He conditions his acceptance, not upon our knowledge but upon our love for God. "If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one love God, one is known by him" (1 Cor. 8:2, 3). It is on this basis we must receive one another. "In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

All division among brethren is precluded by the law of love. This is the only law actually operable in the family of God today. Division is the fruit of certain prior attitudes. These are generally two in number— the tendency to become censorious and judge another for holding certain convictions, or to hold him in contempt because he holds such convictions. The first is the great temptation to those who cannot conscientiously do what others can; the second is the great temptation to those who can do what others cannot. If either of these attitudes is nurtured and allowed to thrive, bitterness and separation will eventually occur and the work of God will be ruined.

How can this be avoided? The answer is really quite simple. Quit playing God! Our personal convictions and scruples are the result of environment, early training, temperament, inner nature, personality and motivation. Only God is capable of judging why we are like we are. Let us then accept one another in Christ as we are, and provide an environment in which all of us may grow up into him. "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom. 14:10). Our task is to preserve brotherhood and the best way in which to do so is to be careful not to place any obstacles in the way of a

brother. One of the greatest stumblingblocks is dogmatism. “Let us therefore cease judging one another, but rather make this simple judgment: that no obstacle or stumblingblock be placed in a brother’s way” (verse 13).

Does this mean that one must relinquish or abandon a personal conviction out of deference to the scruples of another? Certainly not! How can one discard a conviction? If he can do so without compunction, it never was a conviction, but simply a prejudice. There is nothing wrong with having a footstool but one does not need to place it in front of the door so others will stumble over it. That upon which one rests his feet would then become an obstacle for the feet of another. The solution is not to smash the footstool, nor to berate the one who could not see it, but to keep the footstool in its place. When the other sees the comfort it provides he may be constrained to secure one like it. He will obviously be more kindly disposed toward it as he observes it holding you up than he would if you placed it so as to cause his downfall. The record says, “If you have a clear conviction, apply it to yourself in the sight of God” (verse 22). One does not need to start a footstool party simply because he has a footstool. Remember that tolerance is not *endorsing things* that are wrong but *enduring those* who think they are right!

Sectarianism

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[Abstract]

A few days ago I sat in a huge modern library building housing thousands of religious and theological works. I gazed with a feeling akin to awe at the stacks containing these volumes. It was appalling to realize the variety of interpretations, opinions, and explanations, exhibited in them. Errors of great consequence were proposed or perpetuated and defended in many of them. The writers were not unscrupulous. They were not malignant. They were men of erudition and sincerity. From whence came this great mass of controversial material creating confusion and consternation? Surely no glib or simple answer can be given yet I would like to suggest one idea which I think may have some merit.

Men are prone to present their views without first arriving at a proper understanding of the nature of the appointments of God for achievement of the divine purpose as relates to man. Thus much that is spoken or written is artificial and superficial. It may deal at length, and even learnedly, with some aspect of revelation without ever seeing its relationship to the totality of God's universal program for the world. There is always a grave danger that we equate that phase with which we are concerned with the universal program. It is difficult to believe that the Godhood and myriads of holy angels are not interested in our latest views and discoveries to the same extent as ourselves.

Perhaps this has been the foundation of much sectarianism. Certainly it originated, insofar as its honest proponents are concerned, with a serious misconception of *the nature* of the *ekklesia*, the church of God. No one who apprehends the import of divine revelation upon this important theme could ever condone or defend sectarianism in any sense. The fanciful theory that those sects which are mislabeled “Christian” are branches of the one body originated with men whose knowledge of the essence of the church was faulty and fallacious. Perhaps they were misled by the figure of the vine and branches in John 15:1-8, but they need not have been. Jesus clearly identifies the branches as men who are his disciples. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. . . . By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”

The body of Christ is not composed of divergent sects. It is not even made up of congregations of believers. It is composed of individuals who constitute the one body because they are united with one head. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). One becomes a member of the one body by being baptized into it. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .” You do not baptize congregations, you baptize individuals, men and women.

Since the body is not composed of sects, no combination or coalition of sects can ever become the one body. The unity of the body does not consist of the peaceful coexistence of the sects, nor in their fraternization and functioning in one accord as sects. The church is a product of the Holy Spirit, a sect is the fruit of the party spirit (Gal. 5:20). Whether contemplated as branches or as members of the body, it is individuals who are involved. Therefore, all unity of the Spirit in its ultimate must be on an individual basis. It is as individuals we share the common life with the Father and Son through the Spirit and on the same

basis share in the common life with all who drink of that Spirit.

All sects are useless to the accomplishment of God's purpose. They are worse than useless because they are inimical to the divine intent even as are all other works of the flesh. Instead of building up the kingdom of God it is distinctly stated that those who manifest the party spirit "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). It is not the multiplication or amplification of sects, but their abolition, which will best encourage the progress of the Way. Sects are produced by rivalry and are wrong in origin as well as in principle and character. One does not edify or magnify the church of God by building up a sect. The church is composed of a peculiar people but every sect is the result of a peculiarity. There is a grave difference! The peculiar people should flock together; sectarian peculiarities drive the sheep apart. We do not doubt that many of God's children are scattered among the sects. It is this fact which makes sectarianism deplorable. If only the followers of Satan were divided there would be no cause for alarm. It would rather be an occasion for rejoicing, since sectarian division is a sign of weakness and impotence, and a kingdom divided against itself shall not stand. But sectarianism affects the disciples of the Master who ought to be one. It holds apart and aloof from each other those who are commanded to labor in harmony and to follow after peace. It is a sin against *the nature* of the ekklesia, because it makes those who are called out act like those who have never been called. It is for this reason the apostle writes, "I beg of you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . . eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Just as men create sects through ignorance of the nature of the church so others encourage and increase them through ignorance of the nature of sectarianism. It would be impossible to destroy the church of God without first destroying the Holy Spirit. The one body is both created and sustained by the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit we are all baptized into one body, by the

same Spirit we are all nurtured in the one body. “And all were made to drink of one Spirit.” By the same token it is impossible to destroy sectarianism unless we first destroy the party spirit. Sectarianism is both created and sustained by the party spirit. Sectarianism is the reflection and fruition of an attitude.

Most of our attacks against sectarianism have been quite empty and vain. They have consisted primarily of lopping off twigs and snipping at branches. They do not get to the real root of the difficulty at all. If we were to debate all of the current sects into oblivion without removing the cause of their existence there would be as many or more new ones for our children to combat in the next generation. The inefficiency of our method and approach is found in the fact that we have not been able to destroy *a single sect* but have ended up with numerous factions of our own. In the scriptural connotation there is no difference between a faction and a sect.

Our chief fault lies in dealing with those who are enmeshed and entangled in sectarianism as a mass or group. But the heavenly Father does not regard men as Methodists, Mormons or Mennonites. At his judgment seat each will stand and be judged as an individual. The roll call of heaven will not be one of parties. We should treat men as God treats them. It is wrong to charge against any man that which he disavows. It is a false accusation to impute to a man all of the doctrinal errors held by sectarian fathers in a less enlightened age unless he accepts and defends them. We should accept all honest seekers for truth where we find them for there is no place else for us to meet. We should ascertain what truth each holds and use it as a foundation upon which to build for there is no other foundation available in any man.

Sectarianism has made for shallowness of thought. This is a natural and inevitable result of undue stress upon some areas of the spirit to the neglect of others. And sectarianism must always exhibit itself in this manner. This has worked its own

rebuke in many places and we have lived to see the day when some men in all of the sects are seriously and soberly re-examining their own platform and history. This is concurrent with a wave of solemn recognition that division is the scandal of modern Christendom and that we must find our way back to a common center or perish. As men leave the shallows and wade deeper and deeper into the stream of God's revelation we should be walking by their side to support and sustain them. We will gain little by pelting them with pebbles and rocks from that portion of the bed of the stream which we have pre-empted, nor will we achieve any enduring good by attempting to saddle upon them the yokes they have outgrown and discarded.

It is ever a source of astonishment to see those who feel themselves to be the chosen of God to the exclusion of all others, searching the scriptures with eagerness and avidity to find some grounds for rejecting and refusing all others who love the Lord. But perhaps we should not be astounded at all for this may be characteristic of this very type of personality. Yet it remains that such a spirit of exclusiveness is the very essence of sectarianism. It created "the circumcision party" in the Jerusalem congregation. It has created most factions since. We cannot overcome sectarianism by adopting the sectarian spirit. If we would be used of God to overthrow sectarianism we must renounce worldly weapons. "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds."

What is the proper method of overcoming sectarianism? The answer lies in a recognition that the party spirit is identified as a work of the flesh, and is, therefore, engaged in entrenched war with the Holy Spirit. "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other. . . ." (Gal. 5:17). Our task is to bring each person who is dominated by the party spirit to that place where he can be indwelt of the Holy Spirit, so that living

by the Spirit he will be in a position to walk by the Spirit. When every one whose heart is filled with the party spirit becomes filled with the Holy Spirit, sectarianism must “fold its tents like the Arabs and as silently steal away.”

Now men act from motivation and one of the most powerful stimulants to action is example. If we demonstrate the power of the indwelling Spirit in our lives they will be led to imitate in order to secure the same benefits and blessings. We demonstrate the power of the Spirit by bearing the fruits of the Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” It is affirmed that against these there is no law. It might as well be said that neither is there any argument or defence. Every antagonistic action produces a reaction equal in force to the action. This simply confirms men in the party spirit.

We shall not be able to overthrow the party spirit by legalism. The fruits of the Spirit are not even in the realm of law — in respect to these there is no law. Those who walk after the Spirit are not under law. It is not by law but by love that God proposes to offset the works of the flesh. We have been laying down the law when we should have been living up to love. Those who are motivated by a desire to win personal victory or gloat over an opponent’s weakness are much more carnal and sectarian than those whom they oppose.

The spirit of exclusiveness and isolationism is simply the sectarian attitude gone to seed. This spirit exhibits itself in enforced censorship, boycott and intolerance. It seeks to tell others what they must read and hear and what they must abstain from reading and hearing. It demands that all others exhibit “honesty” by coming to hear our plea at the same time that it threatens with excommunication those who are fair enough to listen to the plea of others. It judges loyalty by adherence to party programs and promotions. It cheers even when we fail and sneer at others even when they succeed.

Sectarianism cannot be determined from a sign over a building nor by a religious title bandied about on the lips of men. All too often those who profess to be nonsectarian are the most sectarian of all. We cannot fight sectarianism by becoming sectarian any more than we can fight liquor by becoming drunkards. Much of what parades as “faithfulness to God” is merely fidelity to the party line. We pray that all who love God may rise above the sectarian spirit.

The Real Jews

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[Abstract]

The church of God is catholic. It is protestant. It is composed entirely of Jews. It is made up completely of those who are the seed of Abraham. No uncircumcised person has ever been affiliated with it. In spite of the negative attitude so often evident in the writings of those who claim to be “members of the Lord’s church” every one of these affirmations is true. The holy apostles sustain them all in their sacred writings. No one can ever fully understand the true nature of the church of God who does not grasp their significance. It is the wide-spread ignorance of them which makes religious division such a factor in our modern world.

1. Catholic

The word “catholic” means universal. It refers to that which “embraces the whole” as its derivation indicates. The church is a divine creation. It is the body which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as the head. Every saved person on this earth is in it. There is not one who is outside of it. Because there is only one head there is only one church. No man can create or establish a church. The church is made up of “the called out” and no man has the power to call another out of sin. He cannot even call himself out. All he can do is to respond to a call.

There is a great difference in saying that the church is catholic and in saying or writing "The Catholic Church." The latter is a distinctive title and its very usage as such implies that there may be another church which is not regarded as "Catholic." If there is, the first cannot be "catholic" either, for it will not comprehend the whole. The very adoption of this title gives the lie to that which it is intended to indicate. It is true there cannot be "two catholic churches" on earth at the same time, but it is equally true that no church can be catholic which recognizes the existence of another which it designates as non-Catholic. Of course there is no such thing as a church which is not catholic, because the body of Christ, which is the church, is all-embracing.

It is at this point that many of those who claim to be non-sectarian reveal their underlying sectarian attitude. Since the church of God is simply the body composed of all those who are joined to the head, and since the members of this body are sealed by the Holy Spirit, no man or group of men can number them today. "The foundation of God standeth firm, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." No census bureau can enumerate them. In our distorted, disturbed and distressed state, commonly called Christendom, God's sheep have become scattered over the sectarian hills and have become entangled in strange thickets. But they are still his sheep and he loves them. I also love them and want to see them walk in togetherness.

Men who over-simplify the problem seek to rid themselves of its implications by giving a title to that segment of the sheep enfolded in their corral. It is thought that by affixing the label "The Church of Christ" over the gate and by denying that any others are the people of God, this will make them exclusively "the Lord's church." Actually, this may contribute more to confusion than to furtherance of God's purpose. Salvation comes from standing behind the cross and not from being behind the right signboard.

It is a common phenomenon of our day to see someone point to “The Church of Christ” in a list of “churches” published by the census bureau, and compare statistical gains. Occasionally some naive and partisan soul refers to “the Lord’s church” as having some two million adherents in the United States, forgetting that the Lord’s church cannot be numbered by man and anything that can be is probably not the Lord’s church. Those who boast about their standing in a long line of rival denominations should remember that their very boast shows they are listed in the right category. There is no such thing as a Baptist Church, a Methodist Church, or a Presbyterian Church. Neither is there any such thing as The Church of God, The Christian Church or The Church of Christ. All of these are titles created and adopted by men as party labels in an exclusive sense. There is only one church now. There never was but one. There will never be another. One enters it by the new birth and every person on this whole wide earth who has been born again is a part of it, not through his action but by an act of God.

What we call “The Baptist Church” is not a church but a religious party that crystallized about certain principles of orthodoxy spelled out in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. What we call “The Methodist Church” is not a church but a religious party that has crystallized about certain principles of orthodoxy enunciated by John and Charles Wesley, and finally embodied in the Book of Discipline. What we call “The Presbyterian Church” is not a church but a religious party which crystallized around the principles of orthodoxy set forth by John Calvin and others. There can be no such thing as rival churches. There are rival parties, many of them, and the partisan spirit which created them is always bitter and jealous. But the church is a creation of the Holy Spirit and in it is no work of the flesh.

The church is not composed of congregations joined together in an organization by subscription to certain orthodox

views. It is a body, a divine organism, composed of individuals joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. “Now you are together the body of Christ, and individually you are members of him.” No man can attach another to Christ, no man can detach another from him. We are joined to each other only because we are joined to Christ. Our union is in him and through him. The only way by which I can be separated from another who is in him is by severing myself from him. The very attempt to segregate myself from others in him by giving a special title to those who concur in certain orthodox views is sectarian. The church has no title or special name because it has no rivals. It does not need to be distinguished from anything else for there is nothing else in its category. It is the church of God because it belongs to God. It is not “The Church of God” as opposed to other churches, for there are no other churches. It is the church of Christ because of his lordship over it. It is not “The Church of Christ” as opposed to other “churches.” The struggle to become non-sectarian by adoption of an exclusivist title is a symptom of ingrained sectarianism and demonstrates how subtly Satan works in the hearts of all of us.

The church is catholic because there is only one body, just as there is one God, one Lord and one Spirit. One might as logically talk about creating another God as another church. Jesus is a universal Savior and all who are saved are in his body, whether they be Jews, Greeks, slaves or free men. Every person on this earth in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is a member of one body. All of them are frail, fallible and frustrated in some respects. They cannot save themselves by their own power, individually or in the aggregate. “Christ is the head of his church and the Savior of the body.” That body is not a sect. It is not a party. It is not a combination of sects or a coalition of parties. It is universal and catholic, thanks be to God!

2. Protestant

Perhaps our negative attitude is more clearly revealed in connection with this word than it is with any other. Almost invariably when it is mentioned we think of filing an objection against something. So long have we evaluated loyalty to Jesus on the basis of what a man is against that we lose sight of the real fidelity based on what one is for. Only in a secondary sense does the word “protest” have any such meaning as “to dissent or object.” This is an acquired meaning as a little thought and study will indicate.

The word is a combined form. The prefix “pro” means “to be for.” We use it thus in the familiar phrase, “pro and con.” The root word *testis* means “witness” and *protest* means “to be a witness for, or in behalf of.” The primary definition as given in the English dictionary is “to assert; affirm; aver.” To say that the church is protestant is simply to say that it is “a witnessing community.” We grant that this original and divine concept has virtually become lost but we doubt not that it was a part of God’s intent and purpose. It has been tragically obscured by the rise and adoption of a clergy-laity system which has made “witnessing” the special function of a limited and professional group and has thwarted the conversion of the world to Christ. One of the healthiest signs in our day is the renewed emphasis on the responsibility of all the people. This emphasis is now found in every religious party.

The church can never be truly a protestant community until it recaptures in its fullest import the significance of “the priesthood of all believers.” It was re-affirmation of this vital truth which really sparked the reformation called “Protestant” and it was abandonment of it which kept that movement from being truly a reformation and caused it to founder on the reefs and rocks of sectarianism. Almost universal lip-service is paid to the principle at the same time that universal disregard is shown for it in practice.

Because of the enunciation by Jesus of the truth of the

universal brotherhood of discipleship free from the entangling and degrading influence of human lordship and mastership, we will never bring mankind into a brotherhood until we abandon that system which keeps them apart. We can never have one world as long as we have more than one Lord or Master. The true ecumenical movement is not one which provides for an association of sectarian groups each of which pays homage to the orthodoxy prescribed by its own exalted clerics, but a brotherhood composed of those who are free men in Christ. "Call no man father . . . call no man lord . . . call no man master . . . you have but one Lord and one Master, and *all of you are brethren.*" There is a grave difference between a brotherhood of men and a coalition of *religious parties.*

It was Peter who demonstrated conclusively that all of God's priests are laity, and all of God's laity are priests. It is not a mere accident that in connection therewith he also affirmed the divine purpose of this arrangement and demonstrated that the people of God constituted a protestant (witnessing) community. That Peter should be the one to do this through the Spirit is of the greatest significance seeing that men would use him as the basis for creating a false system diametrically opposed to that which he so faithfully portrayed. It is not an exaggeration to say that the full implication of 1 Peter 2:5-10 has never fully burst upon our consciousness since it was written.

The royal priesthood of verse 9 is composed of the people of God in verse 10. The word for "people" is *laos*. The priests of God are the laity, or, perhaps we should say it in reverse. The expression "people of God" shows relationship; the term "priesthood" shows the function. "An holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (verse 5). Our task is not to make a laity out of priests but to make priests out of the laity. It is to bring a sense of vocation to the laity, the people of God. There is no such thing in God's vocabulary as "a layman." The laity embraces all of God's people in whatever capacity they function. All are ministers of God and all who

minister do so as people of God.

God has never created “a clergyman” and by the same token has never created “a layman.” Men elevate one of their number as a clergyman and he, in turn, makes laymen out of the rest of them. The clergymen of today are the “fathers, lords and masters” whom the Lord forbade us to create. So long as they continue we cannot reach the state where “all of you are brothers.” God has a clergy but no clergymen; he has a laity but no laymen. It is unfortunate that an archaic rendering of one word in connection with God’s laity has created a misapprehension of the divine program. It is stated in the King James Version that the royal priesthood constitutes a “peculiar people.” The Greek word for *peculiar* is one which refers to securing a possession, generally by purchase. It relates to that which belongs to one as distinct from that which belongs to society in general, or that which is held in common. This will explain the contextual statement, “Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God.” They are his by right of purchase, they are God’s people because they have been bought with a price. They were people before, but not *a people* in the sense of a distinctive community belonging to a common Master.

That which makes the people of God a protestant community is the divine purpose in constituting them as a distinctive possession. “You are . . . God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (RSV). Vocation has to do with calling. The laity of God constitute and comprise a royal priesthood made up of a purchased people who are a witnessing community. Their very existence is proof of the majesty and greatness of the power of God. They are an *ekklesia*, a community of the called ones, to witness to his wonderful deeds. The church of Christ is intended to be a protestant community—to witness to the world and not to be witnessed to.

3. Composed of Jews

Every real Jew in this age is a member of the body of Christ and every member of the body of Christ is a real Jew. The term “Jew” originally meant simply “a man of Judah.” It was predicted by Jacob that the staff of tribal identity would not be lost nor a lawgiver be produced from the tribe of Judah until the Peacemaker came, and he would be the rallying point for the people of God (Gen. 49:10). It is significant that Jesus is referred to as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). The lion was the symbol of Judah and was on the tribal banner around which the tribe gathered. But it was predicted of the Messiah, “In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwelling shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10).

As the men of Judah in the flesh once gathered around their ensign with its figure of the lion, so now the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) gather around the real Lion of Judah. The apostle declares, “For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God.” The real Jew is distinguished by his condition, circumcision and commendation.

The word “real” does not mean that there were no physical Jews. It is not used for existence as opposed to non-existence. Rather it has to do with conformity to the design and purpose of God. The Jews regarded themselves as “the chosen race.” But the ultimate purpose of God was to base his election not on physical circumstances but upon spiritual. Those who relied upon their fleshly descent from Abraham as grounds of acceptability with the Lion of Judah completely missed the essence of God’s design. John the Baptist sounded the warning to them as he prepared the way, “And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ ”

The rite of circumcision was first announced to Abraham and it became both a sign and a seal. Those who were fleshly descendants of this man bore the outward mark as a visible token of their covenantal relationship unto God. Anyone who was not circumcised was to be “cut off from among the people.” The fellowship and participation in the observances and ceremonies of the original covenant were conditioned upon submission to circumcision.

But the promise of God to Abraham reached far beyond the limitations of a physical nation which came from his loins. Just as in his immediate domestic relations Abraham sired two sons, one by a mere physical alliance, Ishmael; the other in conformity to promise, Isaac; so in the divine arrangement he was to become the father of a fleshly seed and of a spiritual progeny. The first was created simply to make possible the second. Abraham was called of God originally that the call of God might be universal through his spiritual seed. In view of this it is the spiritual ones, not the fleshly, who constitute the real people of God—the true Jews.

No circumstance of physical birth, no mark in the physical body, no earthly family relationship, constitutes the claim of acceptability with God. Every child of God is the seed of Abraham and is, therefore, circumcised, but the circumcision is of the heart. It is “not literal but spiritual.” The apostle puts it this way, “In him also you were circumcised, not in a physical sense, but by being divested of the lower nature; this is Christ’s way of circumcision. For in baptism you were buried with him, in baptism also you were raised with him through your faith in the active power of God who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:11, 12). Only those who divested themselves of the lower nature are truly partakers of the higher nature. This divesting is “Christ’s way of circumcision.”

Abraham is the father of all who walk by faith and who repose confidence in faith rather than in their deeds as a means

of justification. In commenting upon the fact that Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness before he was circumcised, the apostle declares, "He was not yet circumcised, but uncircumcised . . . Consequently, he is the father of all who have faith when uncircumcised, so that righteousness is 'counted' to them; and at the same time he is the father of such of the circumcised as do not rely upon their circumcision alone, but also walk in the footprints of the faith which our father Abraham had while he was yet uncircumcised."

In the same context Paul reasons, "The promise was made on the ground of faith, in order that it might be a matter of sheer grace, and that it might be valid for all Abraham's posterity, not only for those who hold by the law, but for those who have the faith of Abraham. For he is the father of us all, as Scripture says, 'I have appointed you to be father of many nations.'" The expressions "all Abraham's posterity," and "the father of us all," indicate that all who are in Jesus are Abraham's seed. This is actually affirmed in Galatians 4:29, "If you are in Christ, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Or, as the apostle states it in Galatians 4:7, "You may take it, then, that it is the men of faith who are Abraham's sons."

The first occurrence of the word "believe" in any of its forms in the holy scripture, is in Genesis 15:6, in connection with God's revelation to Abraham, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." From Hebrews 11 we learn that there were those who existed before Abraham who acted by faith, but the account in Genesis does not use the word "believe" in describing their action. We hold that this fact is another undesigned proof of the divine authorship of the sacred scriptures. If it had been alleged that either Abel or Noah had been justified by faith, the critics would have ridiculed the contention of Paul that Abraham was the father of the faithful. As it is, nothing is more clearly taught than the fact that all who are in Christ Jesus are children of Abraham, and all who sustain the covenant relationship are circumcised with that circumcision

made without hands. “We are the circumcised, we whose worship is spiritual, whose pride is in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in anything external” (Phil. 3:3).

It becomes necessary for us to define the quality of the faith which justified Abraham, for it is not just those who have faith or believe in something who will be justified. The record specifically states that the promise is valid “for those who have the faith of Abraham.” It is especially required that we be precise and definitive because we live in a generation which is developing a cult of belief. The last decade has seen a rash of books and articles affirming that power, pelf and personality are instantaneously available to one who pushes the button marked “faith.” These books become best sellers only because of their appeal to a society which is empty and aimless. They do not point out the real solution but their popularity points up a real problem.

This is an age of ready-mixed cake flour, instant coffee, and pre-cooked meals. It is also the era of the pat solution and the ready answer. In such a time men allow themselves to be exploited by “get rich quick” schemes which do not always operate merely in the realm of finance or economics. When such schemes are given the benediction of a scriptural quotation wrested from its proper setting their appeal is made greater because of the natural desire to have the sanction of heaven. But the justifying force is not faith as such for under such circumstances men preach faith as a law—the law of success. It is not faith in belief nor belief in faith that saves. In the final analysis a faith in personal belief is faith in oneself and the end is always disillusionment. This is the hope that disappoints. Such faith pampers the ego and appeals to pride but it does not lead to that full and unrestricted surrender which alone guarantees salvation from self as well as Satan. The world is full of men who proclaim justification by faith and whose attitudes demonstrate it is faith in their own mental capabilities and interpretations about which they speak.

Fortunately, in the same chapter (Romans 4) in which the apostle makes his brilliant and incisive argument related to the faith of Abraham, he defines the nature and content of that faith. An analysis of this passage may be one of the most important areas of scriptural research open unto us this day. It embraces but five verses (18-22) with the last one a statement of conclusions, "And that is why Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness." The foundation of this faith was the revelation of God. God made a statement of truth to Abraham, "Thus shall your posterity be." It was not a mere intellectual assent to this statement as a truth, nor recognition of it as a divine utterance which constituted faith, for the faith which is counted for righteousness is eminently more than this.

The faith of Abraham was actually transcendent over certain finite rational processes. This does not mean that faith is irrational as skeptics would urge in attempting to prove that it is the resort of the credulous and superstitious. Indeed it is only rational beings who can manifest faith. We tend to define "rational" in such a manner as to limit and circumscribe it by the reach of human *knowledge*. This is like confining perception by the horizon. Faith operates in that realm beyond the assurance produced by observation or experience. Its strength lies not in *what* we know but in him *whom* we know. Faith is a leap into darkness but not into uninhabited darkness. The dark valley of the shadow has its Shepherd.

To thus believe is not to act irrationally because rationality is not simply reasoning or understanding, but the power to reason, and it is the exercise of this power which produces faith. No man can prove that faith in God is irrational or contrary to reason until the consummation of all things. If it then is demonstrated that there is no God and the promises in which we trusted were but vain delusions conjured up in our own minds, it will be apparent that what we now call faith was fallacious and irrational. But if there is no God all life and mentality will have become extinct and there will be no rational beings to judge our

irrational assumptions. On the other hand, if there is a God and his promises are fulfilled those who have not exercised faith in him will be proven to have been irrational during their whole lifetime on earth. I deplore that type of misplaced arrogance which spells rationalist with a capital “R” and equates it with skepticism as if those who believe are not rational.

Paul writes, “When hope seemed hopeless, his faith was such that he became ‘father of many nations,’ in agreement with the words which had been spoken to him, ‘Thus shall your posterity be.’” Almost every word in this brief sentence is filled with meaning for men of faith. Hope is a combination of desire and expectation in equal proportions. Although the desire of Abraham was great he had no reasonable grounds for expectation. Sarah’s womb was dead and his own body was as good as dead. In spite of this “his faith was such” that his response was equal to God’s revelation. This indicates that one who hears the word of God may have faith but not the faith that *is such* to make the response required. When God extended the life line, Abraham was willing to take hold of it though it meant laying his life on the line.

Abraham was aware of the obstacles to such faith but he wholly discounted and disregarded them as if they were nonexistent. To him the *promises* of God were greater than the *premises* of men. “Without any weakening of faith he contemplated his own body, as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, and never doubted God’s promise, but, strong in faith, gave honor to God, in the firm conviction of his power to do what he promised.” This is the faith which justifies. This is what we must have if we “walk in the footprints of the faith which our father Abraham had.” This faith is not conditioned upon a trust in our own power or ability. It is a “firm conviction of his power” which enables us wholly and unreservedly to commit ourselves to him and be utterly oblivious of the consequences. In such faith our own achievements do not count. They are not even a part of the

consideration.

Every person who is in Christ is a son of Abraham by faith, and therefore, a son of God. He is in covenant relationship with God. As many as have been spiritually circumcised are in the family, not by the blood of Abraham, but by the blood of Christ. In order to enter this relationship, belief of one supreme fact and obedience of one simple act expressive of it are all that is required. Every person who believes in Jesus as the Christ and God's Son, and who is immersed because of that faith, enters the covenant relationship. He may be ignorant of what is entailed in his new-found relationship, knowing little of his responsibilities or the blessings that will accrue, but when he manifests "the firm conviction in God's power to do what he promised," which prompts him to die to his past evil nature and give himself in glad abandon unto God, he has all of the faith that is essential to be reckoned for righteousness or justification. He has the faith of our father Abraham.

Such a man may grow very rapidly in grace or knowledge, or he may become dwarfed and stunted. He may have that keenness of perception which will early allow him to distinguish between good and evil, or he may be dilatory in exercising his senses and find maturity long deferred, but in spite of frailties, failures or shortcomings in judgment, he is still God's child. He is in the church of God. He is in the fellowship of all who are in the one body. He is a part of the one, holy, apostolic and catholic church of God. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Adventures in Religion (10)

Mission Messenger (December 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

The greatest thrills of human existence are not those which appeal to the flesh but those which are experienced in the spirit. The body is the tent, or temporary structure, in which one dwells and it is not so much what happens to the house as to him who lives in it that really counts. And there is nothing else which can provide the same sense of destiny, the satisfaction for deep soul-hunger, the incentive for complete surrender to service, as a consciousness that one has eternal life. It is unfortunate indeed that some regard this as being merely prolonged existence and look forward to it as they do life insurance which one must die to collect. Of course life insurance is not assurance of life at all and neither is the common concept of eternal life.

Eternal life is defined as knowledge of the Father and the Son. "This is eternal life: to know thee who alone art truly God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The word "know" has a much greater significance in the scriptures than we generally assign to it. It means infinitely more than mere intellectual awareness. It is used to designate that intimate relationship of a man and his wife which causes them to merge into one flesh and become the creative agents of a new life. "And Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore a son." To know God and Christ in the sense of having eternal life is more than knowing about them. One might rehearse fluently every detail of the life of Christ and never share in the Christ life. To

know Christ is to be joined unto him in such a transcendent relationship that one's own personality is surrendered and the two become one. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

It is at this juncture that legalism reveals its futility and emptiness. It is the stone given to him who asks for bread, the serpent passed to him who asks for a fish. Not only can it not satisfy hunger but it leaves one weak and faint from disappointment. It is disillusioning and disheartening. One who seeks to be justified by it can never know that he is saved. He proposes to tell others the way of salvation while living in constant doubt of his own state. It is my conviction that legalism stems from a misunderstanding of the relationship sustained by the written word to the Living Word.

I believe that the sacred scriptures contain a revelation of God to mankind, and that they are composed of the words of the Spirit. "We speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). Such words are "words you may trust, words that merit full acceptance" (1 Timothy 1:15). But the new covenant is not written with ink. It is written with the Spirit of the living God. It is not inscribed upon stone tablets nor upon parchment but on the pages of the human heart. The new covenant scriptures are not a law for justification for "it is evident that no one is justified before God in terms of law" (Gal. 3:11). We are "not under law but under grace." To take the word of grace and convert it into a law to bind upon men as a written code of acceptance with God is to doom them to certain death.

Law cannot produce life. "If a law had been given which had power to bestow life, then indeed righteousness would have come from keeping the law" (Gal. 3:21). The bestowal of life is outside the province of law. For that reason the new covenant is "a covenant expressed not in a written document, but in a spiritual bond; for the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). The new covenant system is not

one which presents Jesus as pointing to a book as our source of hope, but one which presents a book pointing to Jesus as our hope. A failure to understand this has produced a generation which can quote the book but still does not know Jesus. It is possible to have a head full of scriptures and a heart empty of the Savior.

One can possess a good knowledge of the scriptures and not have eternal life but he cannot possess the Living Word and not have that life. “God has given us eternal life, and this life is found in his Son. He who possesses the Son has life indeed; he who does not possess the Son of God has not that life” (1 John 5:11, 12). Men had the new covenant written in their hearts and possessed eternal life years before the apostles wrote the first word of the new covenant scriptures. And when they did write it was not to convey eternal life, but to confirm the fact that those in Christ Jesus already had it. “This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). It is interesting to note that John says about his letter, “It is addressed to those who give their allegiance to the Son of God.” This is the thing that really counts for one who does this will view the scriptures in the proper perspective.

Our problem today is identical with that of the Jewish legalists during the earthly sojourn of Jesus. When Jesus performed an act of mercy on the Sabbath it was more than they could stand. “It was works of this kind done upon the Sabbath that stirred the Jews to persecute Jesus” (John 5:16). One of the most poignant statements ever made occurred in connection with this circumstance. “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they testify of me. But you will not come to me that you might have life” (John 5:39, 40). Notice that the Jews supposed that by possessing the scriptures they possessed eternal life. They diligently studied and meticulously investigated every word and phrase of the written word. They debated meanings and discussed implications. They scrutinized, examined and deliberated upon every

interpretation. But they missed the whole point.

Any person, human or divine, is greater than the things spoken or written about him. No description of God can be equal with God. Just as the mind is greater than any thought it conceives or reveals, so the mind of God is greater than any revelation he has vouchsafed. The difference between the written word and the Living Word is that the latter was not only with God but he was God. He was not a revelation from God but a revelation of God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The message of reconciliation, the announcement of the fact, was entrusted to men, but there is a difference between a message and a person.

The grave danger is that men will make the mistake of thinking that in possessing the scripture they have eternal life and they will exalt the scriptures to the place of the Son. One cannot enthrone anything as absolute Lord of life without dethroning Jesus from that position. The purpose of the written word is not to give life but to testify of Jesus. One may be mistaken about many things in the written word as all of us are and still his eternal life will not be affected for the simple reason that life is not invested in the scriptures. Certainly they are essential to growth and development of maturity and one will be stunted to the extent he does not grasp them and revise and amend his life according to them, but life is in the Son. If one is right about Jesus he may be wrong about many things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus he may be right about everything else and still be lost.

Jesus said to those who studied the scriptures diligently and scrupulously, "Their testimony points to me but you refuse to come to me for that life." God did not "throw the Book at us" but He gave his Son for us. The purpose of the book is to point us to the person. The Jews had the law of God but they rejected the Son of God. That law was "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12) and so was the Son. But they said, "We have a law and by that

law he ought to die.” The law to which they referred was the law of God and they used it to kill the Son of God. That is what happens when men mistake the purpose of the scriptures and exalt a written code to the place of a Savior.

The fact that men could plead fidelity to the law of God as their reason for rejecting the Son of God should give us cause for concern when we see men today using what they refer to as “the law of God” to reject and exclude the “sons of God.” My soul is “bound up in the bundle of life” with all who have vowed allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. The family relationship is one of grace and not of law. For me to use the words of God to drive out those who are in the Living Word of God is unthinkable. “This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded. When we keep his commands we dwell in him and he dwells in us. And this is how we can make sure that he dwells within us: we know it from the Spirit he has given us” (1 John 3:23, 24).

Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ his Son. It cannot be purchased, bought or earned. It is that joyous state of union with the source of salvation which takes away all fear, even that of death. It is not so much extension of time as exhilaration of soul. It is more a communion than a continuation, a devotion than a duration. It is not merely an escape from hell nor an entrance into heaven. Jesus did not come so much to take us to heaven as to bring heaven to us. He did not come simply to keep us out of hell but to keep hell out of us. We need not be concerned that we are surrounded by sin so long as we are surrounded by him. “We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him.”

God did not give us his written word as a charm or amulet. It is not just by quoting a scriptural passage that we are able to resist the wiles of Satan. Indeed, some of the best informed are some of the weakest spiritually. In the final analysis it is possible

that a vaunted knowledge of the scriptures may not be so much a declaration of faith in the word as pride in our own memory or achievement. Many a man basks in the adulation of those who rehearse how well he can quote the Bible while his heart is filled with wicked and vicious thoughts. One does not need to converse at length with such a person to realize that with him religion is a question of *what* one knows rather than *who* one knows. Facing death the apostle could say, “That is the reason for my present plight; but I am not ashamed of it, because I know who it is in whom I have trusted” (2 Tim. 1:12).

The lack of assurance which characterizes the victim of a legalistic system for attempted justification is always apparent and tragic. Such a person may be high in the ranks of religious leaders while inwardly beset by doubts as to his own spiritual standing. A few months ago I asked the president of a Christian college if he was saved. All he could say under questioning was, “I hope I am.” He declared that he could not know for sure until he died. He was a man who had made a reputation for opening up areas to the preaching of the gospel and collected thousands of dollars to help save the lost and yet did not know whether he was saved himself.

This is typical of all those who regard the new covenant as a law book and condition their hope upon a knowledge of scripture rather than upon a personal relationship with the Savior. If I know that I am one flesh with my wife why should I not know that I am one spirit with my Lord? No law can give life and no legalistic concept can ever bring real assurance. One does not know where he stands with God under such a program. How does he know if he has learned every verse he is capable of memorizing? How does he know that he has done everything up to the present minute that he could have done? All he can do is to hope that he will be conscious in the last few minutes before death so he can “comply with the law of pardon.” The apostles stood in jeopardy every hour from forces without; these stand in jeopardy every hour from fears within. They have to live to

settle the question of sin because they do not believe that He settled it by His death.

It is such a cold, calculating system offered to a distraught and disturbed world which makes the "Christian" more frustrated and frightened than those around him. The wings of faith have been clipped and the soaring pinions shorn of power. No longer do "we mount up like eagles." We fill our days like domestic fowls pecking in the mud of our own fenced in enclosures, fleeing in fright at every fleeting shadow flitting across our pathway. The spirit of adventure which comes from encounter with Christ has disappeared. The party hero is one who can get half as many people back in a building on Sunday night as were present Sunday morning. This is our test of greatness! This is our criterion of nobility!

We must resort to gimmicks and gewgaws to hold the members "in line." Sunday school pins become our decorations for service above and beyond the call of duty. We must award prizes to get the children of God to read the Bible. Rivalry between classes must be used to stimulate the study of the sacred scriptures. We are now forced to apply "the hard sell." The gospel must be dressed up in the trappings of the hucksters and adorned with the livery of pressure groups. All of this is but the rattling of dry bones from which the spirit has departed. It is the rustling of the tattered remnant of a window shade in a house from which the living tenants have removed. "You study the scriptures diligently, supposing that in having them you have eternal life, yet, although their testimony points to me, you refuse to come to me for that life." This stern indictment of the Pharisees of yesteryear comes with equal force to the Pharisees of our own day. Pharisees come and go but Pharisaism goes on. We are victims of that misconception which causes us to mistake the means for the end, to worship the testament instead of the testator, to substitute menial service for the sacrifice of love. We build our hope on knowledge when it is love that builds; we seek to be acknowledged because of what we know when it is love that

brings divine recognition. “Of course we all have knowledge, as you say. This knowledge breeds conceit; it is love that builds. If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of knowing. But if a man loves, he is acknowledged by God” (1 Cor. 8:2, 3).

We will not need to bribe men to study the words of the Spirit when they are conscious that “God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Romans 5:5). But the attempt to secure spirituality by filling an empty heart with random scriptural quotations, rattling around amidst the impulses to do evil, is foredoomed to failure. Let men come to know Jesus in a rich and full experience of his blessed Person in their lives and no amount of money on earth could tempt them not to learn of his will. We need to bring Christ to men and men to Christ.

The great adventure is not the mastery of a chapter in the Bible but the beginning of a new chapter in the history of your existence by a mastery of self through allowing Jesus to enter the wide open portals of your very being. He did not come to bring a new religion to the world, he came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. He was not another religious leader, he is the Way, the Truth, the Life. He does not point us to a systematic theology as the ground of our hope. He is our Theology. Our “Theos-Logos” is a person. “And the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

“We know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, this is eternal life” (1 John 5:20). The “understanding to know him”— this is what we so sadly need in these days. What power would be unleashed in our lives, what vitality would be brought to bear upon a decadent world, what showers of

blessing would fall upon the parched desert of human strivings. Do you have what it takes to rise above the narrow bigotry of partisan religious politics, to renounce the misplaced loyalty to unwritten creeds, and come “to know him who is real”? What an experience awaits you when you leave the treadmill of triviality and enter the realm of reality!

War in Heaven

Mission Messenger (December 1962)

Volume 24

[Abstract]

There are two kinds of angels— the holy angels (Matt. 25:31), and the angels of the devil (Matt. 25:41). It was for these last that eternal fire was prepared. Angels are created beings. They came into existence by the power of God (Col. 1:16). He did not make some of them good and others wicked. He made them all good and some of them sinned (2 Peter 2:4). Their sin consisted in a revolt against God's authority. They were not willing to stay where he placed them so he willed a place where they have to stay. "Some of them were not content to keep the dominion given to them but abandoned their proper home; and God has reserved them for judgment on the great Day, bound beneath the darkness in everlasting chains" (Jude 6).

The writer of Revelation (12:7-9) describes an *unearthly* conflict which took place in heaven. I shall not speculate as to when this occurred nor gratify your curiosity about my exposition by spinning an opinion as to the degree of literality involved. I have no inclination to engage in a theoretical wrangle about things of which I prefer to confess that I know all too little. Instead I shall merely quote what the recorder writes. "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left for them in heaven. So the great dragon was thrown down, that serpent of old that led the world astray, whose name is Satan, or the Devil

— thrown down to the earth and his angels with him.”

I am sure the holy angels were associated with the Prince of peace and must have been pacifists. They were not conscientious objectors or non-combatants. War is an evil, whether it occurs in heaven or on earth. It is not necessarily a sin, but it is the result of sin. What evil is not? War is one of the resultant consequences accruing from a refusal to bring all other wills into subjection to the divine will. All battles first exist as a clash of wills and terminate in a clash of arms, if surrender is not made first. Hell is the final abode of the untamed will. That is one thing which makes it hell.

I doubt that it was ever the intention of heaven to crush the human will. When man loses his power to will he can no longer exercise the right of choice. He becomes a mere automaton or a robot directed wholly by external force. Instead of depriving man of this principle of creativity, God seeks only to direct it. This necessitates the presentation of motives sufficiently strong to engage his undistracted attention and to induce him to act voluntarily and deliberately. The new covenant revelation is adapted to the fulfillment of God’s purpose in this respect. It is designated to free man from the slavery of sin, to relieve his conscience of a sense of guilt, and to offer him a field of service commensurate with his relationship to the Creator.

It is unfortunate that there are always those who will exploit their fellows in order to gratify pride and gain prestige. We should not be surprised at this. It is exactly what took place in heaven when the angels were led to follow one who had the ambition to replace God as ruler of the universe. We are not informed as to the political promises made to these celestial beings but they were appealing enough to cause them to engage in insurrection. The battle culminated as it always must. The revolutionaries were flung over the battlements because “there was no foothold left for them in heaven.”

Every appeal to sectarian pride and arrogance in an attempt to get man to be “religious” originates with Satan and is designed to defeat the purpose of God. The Arch-foe has invaded the sacred precincts and infiltrated the camp of the saints. He is directing his assault from inside the breastworks. The lure of social recognition, the temptation to be regarded as belonging to the “right set,” the tug of vanity and pretentiousness— all of these are subtle weapons to destroy the real self-crucifixion and lowliness which are a part of true sainthood.

What are the appeals of “our church”? Are we proud to exhibit a beautiful structure designed by an architect of fame? Do we talk about “our location” on the right side of the tracks, in an area of such economic status that it will be free from an invasion of Negroes and lower income groups? Do we mention casually that all of the elders are presidents or vice-presidents of large corporations? Do we engage in “name-dropping” by referring to politicians, ballplayers, movie actors, and others in the public eye, who are affiliated with us? Do we regard with condescension and disdain those other congregations where brethren meet in less pretentious surroundings and tell of “how much more we have to offer” the person who really wants to be somebody?

All of these things speak of the unconquered will. They betoken our intention of trying to storm the portals of heaven by our own worth. It is unthinkable that we will not make it in the next world because we have certainly made it in this world. We do not know exactly what heaven will be like but it will not be much if we are not there to help manage it and show the other folks around and point out glories they would probably miss—not having been accustomed to such things. Undoubtedly the place will be immense because it will contain a lot of the people whom we encouraged by sending them a fruit basket every Christmas. It will be nice to meet them so they will have an opportunity to thank us personally for the generosity, seeing that both cars were in use at the time of the distribution of the

commodities, so we had to send them by the “church janitor.”

In the last great Day a lot of pretty important folks are going to accuse God of being unfair. They will be past the place where they are afraid to blaspheme and it will not make any difference anyhow. But the idea of allowing a group of dirty, half-starved, ignorant people, to swarm in through the gates of pearl, while they are turned away after all they have done for God— it just simply cannot be. “Here, you can’t do this to me! Who do these angels think they are? Stand aside, please, and let me up to the front. There’s been a mistake here somewhere. I’ve got my credentials with me. Here they are. I’ve kept a complete list of the wonderful works done in His name. There wasn’t anyone in our church who kicked in more on charity drives. I’ve got my receipts to prove it. What do you mean, these don’t count?”

The religion of our Lord is not one of a crushed will but it is one of a broken heart. It is the religion of “the cross purpose” in life which keeps us from being at cross purposes with God and with each other. It is not just the religion of Calvary’s cross but the religion of the daily cross. It is a religion of free men who are slaves— men who are at liberty to serve. “Now if your experience of Christ’s encouragement and love means anything to you, if you have known something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and all that it means in kindness and sympathy, do make my best hopes for you come true! Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but should learn to see things from other people’s point of view.”

The very next verse asserts, “Let Christ Jesus be your example of what your attitude should be. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God’s equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting

to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man.” Motivated by a love that was universal Jesus divested himself of all his prerogatives and stripped himself of all privilege. Hell will be full of people who insist on getting their rights, and what a hell it will be with everyone engaging in such insistence. The interesting thing is they will all have received their rights— that is why hell was created.

The degree of submission shown in the contrast between the two expressions, “God by nature” and “slave by nature,” sets for us an ideal, always unattainable in this fleshly existence, but always worth the striving. Christ can only be an example of what our attitude should be. Only one who was God by nature can truly become a slave by nature, for only God can appreciate in its fullest what constitutes the nature of a slave.

Jesus said, “I do not live to please myself but to do the will of the Father who sent me.” One of our greatest temptations in this day is to believe that we do the will of God when we live to please self. We have figured out how it is possible to do both so that we are no longer faced with a choice or an alternative. We have merged our own pleasure and God’s will until we can no longer distinguish one from the other. Black fades into white and white into black and our lives become a gray expanse. By such a merger we have become relieved of the need of submerging ourselves in the divine will. God’s will becomes our will because we project our will as His will. Thus Satan has held out to us the age-old lure that we can become as gods through knowledge! But in the final day there will be but two classes of people— those who have said to God “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, “Thy will be done.” Heaven will be full of the first and hell will be full of the second.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1963)

Volume 25

The Unity of the Spirit

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The Times of the Stork

Mission Messenger (January 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

The mild afternoon sunshine of early autumn warmed the red tiles of the housetop. This was the time of day he especially liked. Standing in perfect balance on one leg, he could see canals intersecting the town in every direction. Below him in the open square was the Kaas Market, now almost deserted after the early morning flurry when the round cheeses were sold. This was home. He and his mate had been coming for several years to occupy the nest on the false chimney erected for the sole purpose of attracting them. Each spring there was a celebration in the house below when they arrived. It was good fortune to have a family of storks on the roof.

If he had been able to read history he would have thrilled at the noble way in which his ancestors were regarded. He would have learned that the Hebrews called him khasidah, the pious bird, from a root in their language which meant “to desire or love strongly.” And he would have chuckled to himself at the mistake of Aristotle and Pliny, both of whom wrote that the young storks repay the care of their parents by supporting them when they grow old. He would have mused that the Greek and Roman philosophers had not met any of his hungry broods, but then he was not dependent upon their charity. He could still spear frogs with the best of them when they congregated at the mud flats or waded in the reeds. He would have rejoiced that the Latins, like the Hebrews, called him “the pious bird,” *avis pia*,

and that his ancestors in Thessaly were so famed for their skill in destroying serpents, it was made a capital crime to kill a stork. The penalty was the same as for killing a man.

But he knew nothing of history and as he stood with his beak resting upon the feathers of his breast, he was forced to live only in the present, despite his philosophic mien. Yet it was not altogether in the present, because, for several days he had felt the mysterious Call. He could not describe it nor even explain it. There was a subtle urge within, an indefinable tug at his whole being. It had been this way every autumn and it was always irresistible. It was not that he wanted to depart. He loved this pleasant spot and its comforts. He sensed the hardships and the dangers that lay ahead. He realized the need for wariness to escape the African fowlers. He knew from experience that every fiber of his great body would be exhausted by the long journey through the heavens.

But there was the Call. It was like a great power outside and beyond him drawing him onward. At the same time it was like a deep inner compulsion driving him forward. Was it from without or within? Perhaps it was both. He did not know its origin or source; he only knew that he must respond. He was helpless to resist. The Call was greater than himself although it appeared to be simply a part of him from the time he was a fledgling. He rippled and flexed his strong wing muscles. He preened and oiled his feathers. Tomorrow morning he would not return to this friendly roof. On strong wings he would lift himself toward the clouds. Riding on a thermal current he would rise upward until he was a speck in the heavens, his beak pointing toward the Dark Continent. He had received the Call. He must answer it. The mystic mandate of migration came from a higher authority than himself!

* * * *

“Even the stork in the heavens knows her times; and the

turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming; but my people know not the ordinance of the Lord” (Jeremiah 8:7).

Are you a *dichotomist* or a *trichotomist* with reference to the nature of man? Perhaps you do not know. Let me explain. A dichotomist is one who believes that man is a twofold being; a trichotomist believes he is a threefold being. I am a trichotomist, not alone because it is my conviction that this is what the Bible teaches, but because it explains so many things which otherwise would remain mysteries. One of those things is the difference between man and the *lower* animals. The use of the word “lower” indicates that man is an animal, but a distinctive animal in that he is on a higher plane. This I believe. I will refer to it later in my article.

“May God himself, the God of peace, make you holy in every part, and keep you sound in spirit, soul, and body, without fault when the Lord Jesus Christ comes” (1 Thess. 5:23). Spirit, soul, and body— what is the difference in these and how are they related to each other? That there is a distinction between soul and spirit is evident from Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.” Although the two can be separated, the distinction is so keen as to require the revelation of God to make it. It is not our wish or intention to become unduly technical but if the poet is correct in stating that “the proper study of mankind is man,” we can invest a little time very profitably in this investigation.

To grasp the meaning of such expressions as “soul” and “spirit” we must learn what sense the original terms conveyed when used by the Holy Spirit. This is the equivalent of saying that we must ascertain the meaning attached to those originals in the common speech of the people to whom they were first spoken through the instrumentality of the Spirit. Unfortunately, we live in a day of shallow thinking. The masses of men are both

intellectually lazy and indifferent. It is our constant hope, however, to be able to arouse and stimulate a deeper concern and we believe this can best be done through the leavening influence of the consecrated readers of this journal. It is not for our own selfish interest that we pursue this line of investigation but in sharing with you we will enable you to share with others.

Our task is heightened in our age because of its complexities. In a primitive state of society the wants of a people are few and a very limited vocabulary will suffice for communication. The situation is greatly altered when men, through research and discovery, unveil those things which were previously mysteries and outside their realm of knowledge. Language grows in proportion to the genius of a people. In an attempt to simplify for the masses of the uninitiated, familiar terms must be given varied applications and come to be used interchangeably. While this may tend to clarify for an existing generation it may confuse a succeeding one when these amendments are embalmed in written documents. The problem is even more acute when one deals with intangibles.

Man, as we commonly state it, is both material and immaterial. Since we are physical beings that which is physical makes its greatest impact upon our thought. We speak of man as *having a spirit*. God is a Spirit, so the divine mind regards man as *having a body*. So the apostle writes, "I know *a man* in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows" (2 Cor. 12:2). He regards the body as an earthly tent in which the tenant may be at home or from which he may be absent (2 Cor. 5:1-9). Death is therefore regarded as a journey in which a man departs from the flesh to go elsewhere and be with those who are remote (Phil. 1:23, 24).

The Greek word for body is *soma*, that for flesh is *sarx*. Although these are sometimes used interchangeably in that liberty of language which is permissible, the first refers to the

organization or structure, the second to the material which composes it. Physically, man is a composite of sixteen elements—solids, liquids, and gases— and these are insensitive. Matter has no consciousness. The same elements found in the human frame are found in a grain of wheat and in virtually the same proportion. In his elemental material constituency man does not differ from the lower animals.

The Greek word for soul is *psyche* and the corresponding Hebrew term is *nephesh*. Perhaps the best definition of the Hebrew word is that given by Prof. Girdlestone in his *Synonyms of the Old Testament*. He says that *nephesh* “has various shades of rendering and meaning, which must be gathered as far as possible under one or two heads. The soul is, properly speaking, the animating principle of the body, and is the common property of man and beast.” It is correct to say that the beasts have souls. It is not correct to say that a beast has a spirit. In this regard man differs from the rest of the animal kingdom.

It is obvious that there are certain characteristics beyond the merely material which men and animals hold in common. These must be properties of the soul and not of the spirit. Among them we mention sensation, emotion, desire, appetite, passion and instinct. These may be regulated in the human by his rational powers but they exist separate and apart from such powers. So Girdlestone further says of the soul, “It is something more than the bare animating principle of the body; at least, if it is regarded in this light, a large view must be taken of that mysterious organization which we call the body, and it must include the bodily appetites and desires. Thus the soul, according to the old Testament, is the personal center of desire, inclination, and appetite, and its normal condition is to be operating in or through means of a physical organization, whether human or otherwise.”

The Greek *psyche* had two connotations. The first was related to the breath which made life possible for the animate

creation. In this sense it is defined by the lexicographers as “the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing.” That animals and men have this in common will be seen by a comparison of Acts 20:10 and Revelation 8:9 where the word is found and translated “life” in both instances. From this the word acquired an extended meaning and came to refer to the soul, which is defined as “the seat of the feelings, desires, affections and aversions.”

That which exalts man above all of the rest of creation is the spirit. The Hebrew term for this is *ruach*. Its Greek equivalent is *pneuma*. It is the spirit, not the soul, which makes it possible for man to attune his heart unto God and to commune with him. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit of God acts upon and in conjunction with the spirit of man. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). God is never referred to as a soul but it is distinctly said that he is a Spirit (John 4:24). The soul is directly related to the physical being; the spirit may exist outside of such a body.

It is regrettable that a great deal of error arises because men are not acquainted with the laws of language. Words are like persons in that they possess both “body” and “soul.” The body of language consists of those symbols, either written or spoken, by which communication between rational beings is made possible. The soul of language consists of the ideas and concepts formed within the intellect. Words have personality and versatility and can project themselves as beings do. It is no accident that Jesus was called “the Word of God.” It would be a grave mistake to regard him solely as “the carpenter of Nazareth.”

There are those who make such a mistake with the word “spirit.” Because it originally signified “wind” they assume that it must always be so limited and confined. They ignore the fact that among ancient peoples the wind itself became a symbol and any term used for it must be extensive and applicable to those

qualities which are symbolized. That this is true with reference to *ruach* is evidenced by Dr. Girdlestone:

The word Ruach, like its Greek equivalents, *pneuma* and *anemos*, the Latin *spiritus*, the English *ghost*, and similar words in other languages, originally signifies wind or breath. . . . It is clear that the wind is regarded in Scripture as a fitting emblem of the mighty penetrating power of the Invisible God; and that the breath is supposed to symbolize, not only the deep feelings which are generated within man, such as sorrow and anger, but also kindred feelings in the Divine nature.

God is not set forth in Scripture as a *soul*— i.e., the center of physical appetite and the animating principle of a body, but as a spirit, i.e., an unseen living being, capable of deep emotions. It is revealed that God, and He alone, has the faculty of communicating His spirit or life to His creatures, who are thus enabled to feel, think, speak, and act in accordance with the Divine will.

A consideration of these pertinent facts would enable those who are mistakenly called “soul-sleepers” to avoid the erroneous idea that the word “spirit” always connotes only breath or wind, and thus offset their secondary conclusion that there is no consciousness after death. That there is no feeling or memory upon the part of the body (soma) in the grave is easily admissible, but there is more to man than the material. What has here been said of the Hebrew *ruach* is also applicable to the Greek *pneuma*. In view of this, the lexicographers point out that *pneuma* in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 refers to “the rational part of man, the power of perceiving and grasping divine and eternal things and upon which the Spirit of God exerts its influence.”

We concur with the expression of Martin Luther that the spirit is “the highest and noblest part of man, which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things, in short, it is the house where God’s word and faith are at home.”

Our thesis in this article is that man who denies God is actually worse off than the lower animals. Because he possesses a rational faculty he can ascend higher; because he is capable of doing this he can fall farther. We use even this expression accommodatively, for animals cannot be said to fall at all seeing that they possess no moral or ethical consciousness. But man is responsible because he is rational; he is accountable because he can associate truths and their consequences. Yet the lower animals, guided by instinct, respond to all of the guidance of the creator who made them, while man resists and refuses the tug of God on his heart. He employs the very mind which makes him a little lower than God to revolt against God, even though in so doing he admits the need of a God by making one of himself. These observations will prepare our minds for a summarization of truths.

1. In view of the fact that the soul (psyche) is the animating principle of the bodily organism which manifests itself in the expansion and contraction of the lungs and the resultant functions of the other organs, animals possess a soul in common with man. It follows, then, that all of those faculties and characteristics which belong to man as a purely animate being are related to the soul, while those faculties and characteristics which are peculiarly his as a *human* animal are related to the spirit, and these cannot be possessed by irrational animals.

2. Instinct is a possession common to both man and beast and is, therefore, related to the soul and not to the spirit. Instinct produces a certain knowledge designed for preservation of the species. In man it can be regulated by reason but because this is superior to instinct it may distort and subliminate it and actually employ such excess as to be destructive. "These fellows, however, are ready to mock at anything that is beyond their immediate knowledge, while in the things that they know by instinct like unreasoning beasts they have become utterly depraved" (Jude 10).

3. Instinct, unattended by rational faculties, is for the preservation of the physical existence only. Accordingly, when the soul becomes extinct at death and the tissue disintegrates there is no promise of revival or resurrection. Brute beasts are “born in the course of nature to be caught and killed” (2 Pet. 2:12). Rational beings, possessed of a spirit, are not so constructed. It is true that because man is an animal in relation to the natural realm, his body disintegrates and the soul is extinct at death, but spirit is indestructible. For this reason there will be a resurrection of all men, the just and the unjust. The term “resurrection” always applies to the body, never to the spirit.

4. In view of the fact that the body we now have is adapted to life in the natural realm and not to life in a spiritual realm, the resurrected body will not be like the present body. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). “So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown in the earth as a perishable thing is raised imperishable . . . sown as an animal body, it is raised as a spiritual body.” Strictly speaking we will not possess a soul, as distinct from the spirit, in the resurrected state.

5. The attributes of the soul will not be preserved in the resurrection body. Since it will be both imperishable and immortal the instinct of self-preservation could not exist seeing that its very presence implies the possibility of dissolution or destruction. In the resurrection state, desire, appetite and passion will no longer obtain. As an example, the sex instinct, common to man and beast and directly related to the preservation of the species, will be no part of the resurrected state. This may serve to explain the words of Jesus to the Sadducees, “In the resurrection there is no such thing as marrying or being given in marriage— men live like the angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:20). The sex instinct belongs only to the animal creation; marriage is the divinely ordained state in which rational animals are authorized to indulge it.

6. By the same token, those characteristics and attributes which belong to the spirit will not be abrogated in the immortal body. Will, reason and affection belong to us not because we are related to the animal creation but because we are related to the creator. Certainly they will be perfected in a manner in which they can never be while we are in the flesh. In this life we are a composite of flesh, soul, and spirit, and we are constantly affected by them all. Reason can never be wholly free from emotion, nor affection devoid of all prejudice. Ours is ever a life of struggle against the enemy of ourselves and we are destined to be free only when we have met and wrestled with the keeper of the last disputed barricade.

We recognize that the casual reader will jump to the conclusion that our explanation herein given contradicts the implication of the passage from the King James Version which we cited to prove that man is a trichotomy. This version reads, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This might seem to indicate that the psyche (soul) would be preserved in the resurrection when our Lord comes. We do not think this is the case and some of the later versions appear to clarify it. "May God himself, the God of peace, make you holy in every part, and keep you sound in spirit, soul, and body, without fault when our Lord Jesus Christ comes." This rendering shows that we shall be accountable when our Lord comes for the entire personality. We are obligated to be "holy in every part" and this means cultivation of soundness in body, soul, and spirit. This holiness and soundness proceeds from God. He not only specifies our goals but provides the power to attain unto them.

The soul is the responsive mechanism by which migratory birds answer the call of instinct, which is actually the call of the creator through nature. Without benefit of reason they have no power to refuse the call. For this cause it is often said that they are driven by blind impulse. Perhaps the word "blind" is misleading and the word "irresistible" would be a better term.

Only those who possess reason can become unreasonable. It is also true that only rational beings can feel a sense of remorse for failure to respond. One gap between the lower animals and man which cannot be bridged is that of conscience. Evolution has no way to account for its inception or development. Perhaps George Washington was right when he wrote in his childhood copybook that it was “a little spark of celestial fire.”

The spirit is the responsive mechanism by which intelligent creatures answer the call of God and his demands upon their lives. For this reason the appeal of God to mankind is a rational and not an emotional one. “Come now, let us reason together,” is the summons of Deity to mankind. This does not mean that there is not an emotional element involved. So long as man is in the flesh he is a total entity, threefold in nature. That which affects him in one area affects him to an extent in all. But the Spirit of God issues his appeal to the spirit of man, and when the latter becomes impervious to the call because of hardness of heart, God says, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”

An appeal which reaches the emotions through the rational faculties is right and proper because it is worthy of the dignity of man. Such an overture enters the being through the gate of intellect and commands the entire being from the throne room of the mind. The reverse is not true for the attempt to reach the intellect purely through the emotions is to “climb up some other way.” It serves only to cloud the reason and warp its function. Such an appeal must always be superficial and will eventuate in disillusionment. Because of this, feelings and sensations are not proper criteria of our standing with God. They belong to the animal rather than to the spiritual level of our existence. We would not want to be without them, for we would be cold indeed, yet we must control them and not allow them to control us. A fire in the house is one thing; a house in the fire is a wholly different thing.

Much of what parades under the banner of “Christianity”

in these days is an overt appeal to emotionalism. Men tend to confuse the arousing of “animal spirits” with the work of the Holy Spirit. Paroxysms of grief and sobbing accompanied by hysterical screaming and shouting are regarded as evidence that the power of God is at work. Generally such demonstrations are in inverse proportion to the ratio of intellectual attainment. The fact that such manifestations appeal primarily to the unlearned, ignorant, or emotionally disturbed, is excused on the basis that “not many wise men after the flesh are called.” Such an interpretation of this passage confirms the ignorance of the meaning of this scripture by those who offer it.

We live in an age of intellectual growth and there is a danger that those who have developed their mental capacities in other fields will confuse the religion of Jesus Christ with the unwholesome and unscrupulous abuses of it in the emotional realm, and will turn away from it in disgust. They may regard it as a resort for the credulous and a form of escapism for the psychologically unstable. Actually, such a reaction on their part is unscientific and indicative of a careless attitude. It is much like the decision of a man never to accept another five dollar bill because he was once handed a counterfeit. The religion revealed in the new covenant scriptures should challenge the highest and noblest attributes of mankind. No personality which rejects it can be complete and whole.

God created light and then created the eye to respond to it. These are complementary to each other and for that reason one is useless without the other. It is only as the eye responds to the light that it fulfills its divinely ordained function. What light is to the physical realm the truth of the Spirit is to the spiritual domain. The primary purpose of the human spirit is to respond to the light of truth through the eye of the intellect. To do this brings the spirit of man and the Holy Spirit into conjunction with each other and restores the harmonious relationship which should exist between an intelligent creator and his intelligent creation. Failure to respond leaves the inner man in darkness

and makes impossible the perfection of the personality. One who never heeds the call of the Spirit is like one who remains blind from birth.

Man, because of his nature, acts as a result of stimulation or motivation. The Holy Spirit presents those motivations which are calculated to cause the human spirit to react in such fashion as to prepare for achievement of individual destiny. The human spirit can be happy only when deep yearnings are satisfied and the Christian revelation is perfectly adapted for the attainment of such happiness or satisfaction. We think that most psychologists will agree that, regardless of how many other things are essential, there are three basic needs of the personality. These are: (1) A sense of real forgiveness in which the remorse for the past is overcome and no guilt consciousness lingers; (2) A true ideal to challenge one to rise above self in the present and to lose that self in a cause which transcends the individual; (3) A hope for the future which provides a proper incentive in the belief of the perpetuity of the personality beyond the limitations of time and space, that is, a conviction that the grave is not final.

The human being, possessed of rational powers, is able to live in three dimensions of time— past, present and future. Memory, determination, perception and imagination permit projection into the age to come as well as that which is past. Happiness demands a proper adjustment as to all of these, and the three cardinal attributes of the Way— faith, hope and love— make such adjustment attainable. Faith has to do with the past and the belief of testimony concerning historical fact; hope reaches into the future which need have no horizon except God; love is the means by which one identifies himself with the needs of others and thus by identification, may live on a universal rather than a merely personal plane.

The infinite mind has provided assurance that our sins have been blotted out or erased by the cleansing power of the

blood of Jesus Christ and they will be remembered against us no more. The sinless example of his life, even when tempted in all points as we are, gives us an ideal toward which we may constantly aspire, knowing that it is not in the arriving but in the striving that the blessing is conferred. The promise of a life beyond narrow confines and limitations, not only of the grave but of the temporal existence itself, offers such an incentive as to stagger our very imaginations. Just as the Holy Spirit is free so the human spirit tugs and struggles for liberty. But freedom from remorse for the past and fear of retribution in the future can only be won by recapturing the present in the fullest sense. This necessitates a heart filled with the love that casts out fear. Such love is a fruit of the Spirit. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

The secret of response to the call of God is opening the door to the heart so the Holy Spirit may enter. Regardless of what else one may have, if he does not possess the indwelling Spirit he is away from God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." The door is faith, not faith in a system or an organization, but faith in a person as expressed in one proposition— that he is the Son of God. If faith is the door, baptism is the knob by which that door is opened. There is ever the danger that men may confuse the door and the knob and consider the latter as the means of access rather than the act by which that means is made effectual. It is through faith we "enter the sphere of God's grace" and through faith the Holy Spirit enters the heart, but that door is opened by an act in which we demonstrate a complete and unconditional surrender, so total in its nature it can only be compared with death by crucifixion.

Once we realize that the Holy Spirit is shut out of our lives until we open the door, and once we realize that we open the door when we are baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, we will cease to rebel against a truth so obvious. It is still true that, "Through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ

as a garment” (Gal. 3:26, 27). If we may be allowed to change the metaphor to conform to this statement we must conclude that there is a difference between having a garment available, and the act of putting it on. The whole nature of man, guided both by instinct and reason, cries out for union with God. What a terrible tragedy that he who is the apex of God’s creation is less responsive to the Call than the lower animals over whom he exercises lordship by divine fiat.

War Bulletins

Mission Messenger (January 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

“Local autonomy” is a term heard frequently among the heirs of the restoration movement. It simply means that the government of the saints is congregational in nature. Each congregation is a separate entity. It is not subject to any human authority outside of itself! No board, synod or district presbytery can pass laws or resolutions which are binding on its membership. Its members are not subject to discipline administered by those outside of its own ranks. The congregation selects men from its members to serve as bishops and through these men conducts its own affairs, answerable to each other and to God.

In theory, this looks excellent. The average preacher in “The Church of Christ” can present a strong case for it to those in other bodies who have a different system. That is why so many of these are enticed into taking their stand with us, only to suffer grievous disillusionment at our actual practice. Of course there are a great many areas in which there are wide divergencies between our doctrine and actual performance. Most of the brethren would not make very high marks in a class on consistency. However, in no other area is there such flagrant disregard for what we affirm as there is in the doctrine of “local autonomy.” Many who acclaim it from the platform on Sunday spend the other six days of the week in utter disdain of what they boldly announced to be the scriptural procedure. It is chiefly an

“export doctrine” rather than one for home consumption.

One need only read the “local church bulletins” to verify what I say. These are much more vocal than local. Frequently the editor, generally “the *local* minister,” seeks to discipline and direct the affairs of other congregations in the same locality, or even in sections remote from where he labors. Other congregations are designated, castigated and chastised. They are criticized because of their selection of men to conduct their various meetings. They are attacked with partisan zeal and labeled with such epithets as “heretics” and “apostates.” It is obvious in many instances that there are those who comb their exchange bulletins to find something to enlarge upon as a basis for carrying on a constant running skirmish with other brethren of a different school of thought.

Few of the bulletins actually wage peace among brethren. Many seem dedicated to the unenviable task of creating greater animosity, arousing rancor and perpetuating unholy feuds among the saints. Satan has infiltrated our ranks and used the mimeograph machine to make a mockery of our vaunted cry of local autonomy. Preachers seem to feel that they prove their fidelity to God by dissemination of propaganda calculated to destroy the harmony of congregations whose members will not “parrot the party line.” Nothing so incenses the average defender of orthodoxy as an eldership which serves notice that they will run their own affairs and answer to God for their conduct, rather than to a bureaucracy of “loyal preachers” in the city. Of all “sins” this is the gravest because if persisted in it will destroy the right to meddle in, muddle up, and trample down those who are not under the jurisdiction of the meddler.

Russia has its Iron Curtain. China has its Bamboo Curtain. “The Church of Christ” has its Paper Curtains. The last, like the first two, has as its purpose the isolation of those behind it. It has been erected not to secure freedom but to deny it. No thought from the other side must penetrate. No light must

filter through which will reveal the darkened areas of tradition which now constitutes the unwritten creed of the party. It is a serious question whether many “church bulletins” serve any good purpose on earth by the attitude they reflect. They create strife, augment division and perpetuate ill-feeling. These things have no place in the lives of those who profess to be the saints of the Most High.

Certainly the medium of printing has a justifiable use. But when it is abused and misused, and is devoted to dogmatic, authoritarian attempts to impose upon other congregations a partisan program, its use should be given a careful scrutiny. By what power does an editor of a bulletin presume to tell those in another congregation what they must do or not do, to be regarded as “loyal”? On what ground does one proceed who proposes to tell the eldership and congregation in another place to whom they may listen, or not listen?

Actually, we are victims today of a clerical authority which differs only in degree with that of Rome. When something does not please the pope he issues a bull; when something does not please our brethren, they issue a bulletin! Some congregations, like the pope, suffer from a mistaken idea of infallibility. They always speak *ex cathedra* and must be the authorized interpreters for the whole world of mankind. Once they have decreed a dogma, “if any man come and bring not *this doctrine*, do not allow him in your house and neither give him any greeting, for he who greets him becomes a participant in his evil doings.” *This doctrine* is the party ruling on individual cups, Bible classes, colleges, television sets, nationwide television programs, orphan homes, fermented wine, charitable institutions— or instrumental music! *Evil doings* consist of taking the other side on these issues.

I wonder what would happen if every congregation of saints started to practice local autonomy and just minded their own business? What would be the result if, on a given Lord’s

Day, every eldership in the United States, announced that from now on they would read the Bible for themselves, without benefit of clergy, and be answerable only to God and to the congregation which chose them, for their conduct? Is “local autonomy” to be recognized only when brethren see everything as we do, and to be wilfully ignored when they cannot conscientiously do so? Will we continue to feel there is an “open season” for judging motives, intentions, and service to God, for all who do not conform in every respect to our own congregational activities?

We believe that sincere and consecrated bishops should start at once to govern their own congregations, and instruct the preaching brethren whom they support, that the congregation will henceforth confine its regulations to its own affairs! Nothing could encourage and foster the spread of fraternal feeling more quickly than this.

Ernest Beam and Unity

Mission Messenger (February 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

It is a common practice of many to relate any attempt at reformation with others which have preceded it. The motivation in doing so differs with the individuals who engage in it. In the case of our own plea for greater unity among the heirs of the restoration movement, the one name from the past most frequently heard is that of Ernest Beam. This brother began a paper called *The Christian Forum* in 1950, through which he publicized an appeal for the children of God to treat each other like brethren. Unfortunately, at the time I was still enslaved by the yoke of factionalism and could not even consider what he wrote objectively. In those days, any extension of charity toward those who differed with “the loyal church” of which I was a member, was assailed as a compromise.

Since that time, and with a greater degree of spiritual maturity, I can better evaluate the contributions made by this brother who is now deceased. I think we both held the same ideal and struggled toward the same goal. The differences, which are several in number, lie chiefly in the methods to be employed in helping our brethren throw off the shackles of the party spirit. Some of these differences seem to me to be quite basic to the eventual realization of our vision of a closer walk with each other under the rule of the Messiah.

It is probable that many of our readers have never seen an

outline of Bro. Beam's objectives. In a recent speech at Hartford, Illinois, Grayson Ensign repeated his "Seventeen Propositions to Promote Unity," as they appeared on page 14 of *Christian Standard*, October 8, 1949. We reproduce them here so that all of us can again evaluate them in the light of God's revelation and the divine purpose in our lives for this generation.

1. All sincerely immersed into Christ, with manifest purpose to be governed of Him, are one body in Jesus Christ, though some are now also in denominational churches and others also in church of Christ sects.

2. All of those in next above are commanded of God to receive one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

3. The receiving of brethren in Christ is never an endorsement of weakness, immaturity, and error even as Christ's reception of us is not His endorsement of our weakness, immaturity and error.

4. Those who will not receive the brethren but do disfellowship them, or some of them, are, on that account, to be marked, avoided, and rejected, even as the man under the old law who did kill was himself to be put to death.

5. The Scriptures forbid any sincere brother to violate his own conscience in religious acts and devotions whether that conscience is properly taught or not; and the Scriptures forbid the rest of us to ignore that conscience. Nor is our own liberty to be judged of another's conscience.

6. It is not necessary for the brethren to be of the same mind upon meats, days, circumcision, the law, colleges, missionary organization, orphan homes, instrument, "pastor system," cups, war, premillennial views, tobacco, classes, uninspired literature, names, or other such, as conditions of salvation and of receiving one another. Those of Proposition 1

are one body notwithstanding these and like differences.

7. Division in the body of Christ is always made by the brother who will not fellowship his brother. (This does not mean there are not times that a brother must disown a brother; there are. But the brother who disfellowships always and everywhere makes the division— those that should never be, as well as those that must be).

8. The brother, though right about every item in Proposition 6 above, is not permitted to bind that right, as a condition of receiving, against his brother who does not yet perceive the right.

9. The receiving of all those sincerely in Christ, by Paul, did not stop him from successful labor to overcome the wrongs of those received, but did enhance the working of it. The receiving by all of us, of each of the rest of us, in Proposition 1 above, by the wonderful grace of our God, can and should work the same way.

10. No more grace is required in my heart to receive my brother, as set out above, than is required in Christ to receive me now and hereafter. (Yea, the comparison is an unworthy one, but is used to turn the mind toward working of grace *from* us as it has come *to* us).

11. The Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles were not compromisers and betrayers of the gospel in receiving brethren with error of whom we read in the New Testament: we are the compromisers and betrayers of their gospel when we do not so receive one another.

12. The Holy Spirit as certainly commands not to own all those who come among us not of genuine faith in the whole mystery of Christ revealed in Scripture (2 John 7-11; 1 John 4:3, 3) or who are not of mind to consent to “wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is

according to godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3), as he does command us to receive the brethren of genuine faith.

13. It is hurtfully erroneous to try to make God speak in the field of necessary judgment— the circumstantial of the gospel left to the judgment of the brethren and the expediency of which changes through the centuries with changing means and agencies of society— as it is not to hear God in the great realm of faith where He does speak.

14. In all matters of faith a thing must be lawful before it can ever be expedient; in all matters of necessary judgment a thing is not to be judged of right or wrong but whether it is a good and useful means to attain the given end.

15. The use of any and all humanly accepted means and methods must ever be kept within the realm of enabling what God has commanded and never used upon a par with, as an addition to, as a part of, or exalted above the thing commanded or those appointed by God. (The use of uninspired literature to *enable* the teaching of God’s Word is one thing. But to make use of it as upon par with, added to, a part of, or exalted above God’s Word, is a grievous error not to be tolerated. The same is true of all things whatsoever that have been left to the judgment and wisdom of men.)

16. To charge a brother with an addition to the Word who uses uninspired literature to *enable* the teaching of the inspired word; or to “the cup” who but uses individual cups to *enable* the communion of “the cup;” or to sing who but uses the instrument to *enable* singing, decency, and order; or to the one organization of the New Testament who but uses colleges, missionary organizations, orphan homes, old folks’ homes, organized classes, and journalistic organizations to *enable* orderly obedience to the commands of God— this is false accusation against brethren and divides those who are of the same faith.

17. The adoption of any test of fellowship not clearly demanded in Scripture is to adopt a condition of salvation— a new and added commandment— unto the perversion of the gospel.

On Being Naive

Mission Messenger (February 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

The opposition to our plea for recognition and implementation of the fellowship in which all the saints of God are involved, is gathering momentum. We are being assailed in papers of national circulation and attacked in local church bulletins. The pulpits in certain areas ring with warnings against the “sin” of treating the rest of the children of the Father as our brothers. None of this moves us. We anticipated and girded our hearts and minds in full expectation that the forces of orthodoxy would react as they always do. So long as we equate the faction with which we are allied as the “one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God” we will resist any attack upon our party as an attack upon the church of God.

I can sympathize with all of the brethren who are vociferous in their pronouncements. They are no more factional in their attitudes now than I was a few years ago. They employ the same tactics now that I employed then. They misapply the same scriptural quotations in the same traditional fashion. Somehow I feel that a lot of these brethren would like to breathe the same air of freedom I now enjoy. Since I realize that fellowship is not endorsement and I do not have to agree with a person to love him, I am free to love all of the brethren, even those who find it difficult to love each other. I can go speak, upon invitation, to any group of interested listeners in the whole realm of Christendom without clearing it in advance with any preacher

or group. I no longer belong to any splinter, segment, fragment or fraction, but simply to my Lord Jesus Christ.

My appeal to the brethren all over the world is very simple. There is nothing complex about it. It is merely a plea that we recognize all of our brothers *as brethren* and treat them that way. Surely if a man is a son of my Father he has a right to talk to and call upon my Father. If he has a right to call upon God I have a right to call upon him to exercise what is his right. The thought that I should not call upon one of God's children to pray in a meeting which I am conducting is ridiculous and absurd. Just because a person disagrees with me about cups, classes, colleges, uninspired literature, the millennium, instrumental music, or orphan homes, gives me no right to abrogate his rights as a child of God.

I must be quite honest and frank with you. I do not recognize "The Church of Christ" as being the church of God in its fulness. God has children outside of the restoration movement. I have brethren who are not in either "The Church of Christ" or "The Christian Church." I will give them brotherly recognition also. I am joined in spirit with every other person on this earth who is joined to my Lord by the one Spirit. I simply disregard the walls which men have erected and see my brothers on both sides of these flimsy and artificial obstructions. It is not necessary that they be on my side; it is enough that they are in Christ Jesus.

Actually, all I am advocating is the application of the "golden rule" to brotherhood. I do not like for my brethren to cut me off or treat me with contempt so I shall not cut them off or treat them with contempt. I do not like for them to demand of me that to which I cannot subscribe in good conscience, so I shall recognize their own right of conscience. I do not like to go among them and be treated with coldness and disdain, so I shall treat all of them with warmth and courtesy. I do not have any half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. I will try to be fair,

honorable and upright in my treatment of all the brethren— not merely those who agree with me or belong to the same factional background as myself.

I suspect that this appeal is so homespun and natural that a great many will overlook the potential for real good invested in it. We are so conditioned to big programs, big promotions, and big projects, all drummed up by big preachers, that we tend to disregard anything which comes in a plain wrapper. When I was in California I learned through “the grape-vine” that the administrators of a certain college regarded our plea as *naive*, to use their own language. Recently the president of the same school took space in the journal of largest circulation within the ranks of the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood to warn against *naive* approaches to Christian unity, now being circulated.

Because we believe that it is imperative that we agree with all of our brothers when possible, we want to plead guilty to this charge. A great many folks, not knowing what the word means, may conclude that there is something frightful about “a naive approach.” This is all the more likely when the accusation is leveled by a college president. It sounds to some ears as if it might be sinister, baleful or malign. On the contrary, the word “naive” comes to us through the French, from the Latin *nativus*, innate, native. It simply means, “Having unaffected simplicity, artless, unsophisticated.”

One definition of “artless,” and the one most appropriate in this case is, “Free from guile or craft; simple and sincere; ingenuous.” The word “unsophisticated” means, “simple, ingenuous, innocent, genuine.” I would not know how to present a sophisticated approach if I wanted to. Such an approach requires a certain kind of ecclesiastical jargon which makes it unintelligible to the average person like myself. I rather suspect that many of our problems are created by worldly-wise debate which makes brotherhood seem like a highly complicated affair

that only preachers can understand. It is a pretty difficult thing to make it appear that you “love the brotherhood” at the same time you are defending the kind of partisan prejudice which will destroy it.

To be “naive” is to have a sort of “down-home” directness about things. I do not at all resent the fact that some of the more sophisticated brethren regard me as a “country cousin” and treat my plea for unity as they would an appeal for financial help from their poor relation. I’m just artless enough to confess our own errors as well as those of other folks, and this just isn’t done in polite circles, you know. If you reveal what is wrong with our “brothers in error” who use instrumental music you are being loyal to the Book; if you tell on those who do not use it you are ridiculing the Lord’s church. It is all right to be a spiritual Peeping Tom so long as you do not look in at our own windows!

I suspect that *naïvete* is sort of a synonym for “horse sense” and now that horses have been replaced by automobiles that kind of sense is about obsolete. I’m just *naive* enough to think we could still use of little of it. I know that in the old days when a man got drunk they could load him in his buggy and his horse took him home. You deposit one like that in an automobile and it will take him everywhere but home. He will tear up more landscape in three minutes than a repair crew can restore in three days.

It just seems like old-fashioned commonsense to recognize my brethren as *brothers*. We are all in the same family. All of us have the same Father. “Jerusalem which is from above is the mother of us all.” Some of my brothers believe Jesus is coming before the thousand years, some believe he is coming afterwards, and it will take others a thousand years to make up their minds what to believe. But they are all my brothers even if some of them seem to me to be a little warped in their thinking, even as I seem to them to be slightly off in some of my views. One thing

they will not do to me and that is to enlist me in any of their parties, programs or performances where I'll have to hate the rest of them. I'm through with the factional spirit either inside the "Church of Christ" or out of it. If some of my brothers seem a little difficult to love sometimes, I'll treat them as one of my aunts down home did one of her difficult neighbors. "I'll love 'em to death, if it kills me!"

If the brethren who think we are naive will suggest a better approach by which I can love and cherish all of God's children and go among them for their good and mine, I will gladly adopt it and labor with them. Unity in Jesus is more important than my approach.

Fear and Suspicion

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Volume 25

[Abstract]

One of the more apparent fruits of the party spirit is the suspicion with which we regard our brethren in other factions and often within the one with which we are allied. We are quick to impugn motives and impute evil designs. We always imagine the worst and surmise the sinister. It is difficult to see anything creditable or meritorious in those who are not in our segment of the disciple brotherhood. There is something about partisanship which breeds doubt and begets detraction. Most of us are victims of that type of false pride which covers with a mantle of charity the delinquency of those within our group while we vigorously oppose the derelictions of those who are not.

A short time ago I received a letter from a brother who is beloved in the Lord, although he grew up in a different faction of the disciple brotherhood than that in which I was nourished. He expressed regret that he could not attend a series of forums I was conducting not too far removed from where he preaches. He would have come if other arrangements had not rendered it impossible. He wrote, "I take it, since I received my invitation from a Christian Church that you will be speaking at a Christian Church. I think the Christian Churches throughout the country are trying to use your influence among churches of Christ to woo the churches of Christ into the Christian Church fold. I would not be completely honest with you were I not to tell you that I am sorry to see you permit yourself and your

influence to be so used.”

Because this frank expression may be quite typical of the reaction of many of my brethren in the several factions among us it affords an opportunity to make a declaration of my own views about the matter. I do this very humbly and with no intention of binding those views upon any other person on earth. The attitude expressed by my brother is not limited to those affiliated with the non-instrument subdivision of the brotherhood. Those “Christian Churches” which invite me to speak on fellowship and unity are also besieged by warnings of dire consequences which will result. By many of their adherents I am regarded as the advance guard of a fifth-column movement intended to infiltrate and capture them “lock, stock and barrel” and deliver them bound to the Jerusalem of the “Antis.” No one of our parties has an exclusive claim upon rank suspicion.

If the “Christian Churches” are plotting to use my influence in their wooing program they will suffer grave disappointment. In the first place, my influence is quite negligible and it is unlikely that I will make any great impact upon any specific group among us. I can make no justifiable claim to the kind of scholarship or ability requisite to those who would aspire to such leadership. I am not a Pied Piper and my brethren are not rats. There are so many different “Churches of Christ” that if someone set out to woo them it would be like a young man courting a different girl each night of the month. Each in turn would jilt him as it learned of his other amours.

Moreover, it is very basic to the approach I am making that each one remain where he is and share his newly-discovered truth with those whom he knows best and who do not have that truth as yet. I am not troubled by the “loyal church fallacy” which has plagued us with division in the past. In order to avoid creation of a new party among heirs of the restoration movement, let us face up realistically to the fact that this movement has been fractured and fragmented, and no splinter is

the whole log. In the final analysis, all fellowship must be upon an individual basis and it will not be produced by someone like myself acting from without on the various factions but by the Holy Spirit acting from within the hearts of all the concerned ones in every faction.

I have no desire or intention to try and unite “The Christian Church” and “The Church of Christ.” I doubt that it could be done and I am not sure it would avail anything if it could. If it were accomplished it would probably create another narrowly exclusive sect in Christendom and we have a fair share of those already. I am somewhat dubious of anything which men can create or coalesce in the spiritual realm. I would not even attend a meeting in a central location called by a group of “top men” for the purpose of devising ways and means of uniting two parties. I just have no confidence in such devices for they are always divisive. The unity of the Spirit does not work in any such fashion.

I do not intend to be wooed into the “Christian Church fold” and by the same token, I do not intend to woo anyone into the “Church of Christ fold.” I would not know which “Christian Church fold” to enter if I succumbed to the solicitation, nor would I know which “Church of Christ fold” to woo them into. We have about two dozen of the latter scattered around the country, each of which is “the loyal church” as you can readily determine by questioning their respective adherents. I do not believe there is any such thing as either “The Christian Church” or “The Church of Christ.” There are religious parties designated by these titles, but there is only one church. There never was but one. There will never be another. “The Christian Church” does not have all of the Christians in it, and “The Church of Christ” is not the church of Christ. Both of these are parties which have been allowed to grow out of an American restoration movement launched by some Presbyterian ministers in the early part of the nineteenth century.

The church is the body of Christ. It is a divine organism. Man can no more make another church than he can create another God. The church of God is simply the people of God. It is composed of the family of God. The family of God is made up of those who have been born again of water and the Spirit. The church for which Jesus died embraces many more than those involved in any human party or movement. Wherever God has a child I have a brother, and wherever I have a brother I will go and share with him what I have for his welfare. I will not woo my brother into anything else than the one body to which God adds him nor will I allow him to woo me into anything which men can create or devise.

I am frequently asked if I do not consider those in the “Christian Church fold” as “brethren in error”? Certainly I so consider them for I do not place them one whit above my brethren in the non-instrument segment. The only brethren I have on this earth are “brethren in error.” They are not all in the same error. Some are in one error, some in another, but all are in some error. For years I looked for a faction composed of those who were not in error. That was before I realized that our existing factions are proof that all of us are in error. I now realize that if I found a brother who was free of all error he would be very uncomfortable around me. We’d probably get in an argument about what constitutes error.

Now that I no longer equate fellowship with endorsement and recognize that one does not have to conform to my views on everything to be in Christ, I am free to love all of the brethren. It is amazing how the scales fall from your eyes the very moment you realize that while all of God’s children are in the church of Christ for which he died, they are not necessarily all in “The Church of Christ” in which you have always lived. At first this freedom is a little frightening as freedom always is to one who is exposed to it for the first time. One still retains his partisan suspicion and is inclined to shy away from actual contact with those of other factional backgrounds. As he gradually comes to

minge with them he learns that every party has the same problems of frustration, worldliness and sin with which to contend. He learns that there is a fellowship of the concerned ones in every faction and he actually has much more in common with these than with the cult of the indifferent within his own party.

The real sense of freedom comes when one realizes that he can go anywhere that he is invited and speak to any group on earth without being afraid of what will happen to him when he gets back. He is free to communicate with any sincere seekers after truth simply because they are seeking truth. What is more important, perhaps, he can acknowledge his debt for truths discovered by those in another party than the one with which he is identified. It is characteristic of the party spirit that it does not admit the achievements or accomplishments of those in another party. If grudgingly forced to do so there must always be the assignment of an ulterior motive. This makes for a false sense of values and renders all who engage in it immature and childish. “No man is an island” as John Donne so aptly phrased it.

It is very important that all of my brethren realize that I do not castigate those who do not see our current situation as I do. I no longer represent any faction or fragment among us and I am accountable to God and concerned with *all of my brethren*. This last is important, for so long as one feels a special tie to those in a certain faction he can “wash his hands” of responsibility for all others. The brotherhood of which I am now a part is not circumscribed by a specific view as to the millennium, cups, classes, colleges, orphan homes, instrumental music, etc. It is as wide as God’s love for His children and embraces every member of his family.

I do not agree *in toto* with any of the brethren so I am free to love all of them and to exhibit that love in deed and in truth as well as in word and in speech. When I speak “at a Christian Church” I am among brethren. They must receive me as I do

them— in spite of our differences. This is the way God has received us all. But if brethren in our various groups feel that they cannot even associate with each other or discuss their problems as members of the same family, I do not intend to lash out at them. These are decisions which they must make and for which they must be answerable to the Father of us all. I am driven by an inner compulsion to try and alleviate the division which is the scandal of the movement with which we are affiliated. I do not say that everyone must visualize this as I do or pursue the course which I have chosen after days of prayerful entreaty.

If I may charitably voice an opinion about my brother who wrote (and scores of others who share his views) I would suggest that he is the victim of a century of isolationism. It was a hundred years ago that the restoration movement began to disintegrate under the impact of innovations. The initial cleavage was attended by fiery debate, locked buildings, fist fights and lawsuits. The rancor and choler were so intense that earthly families were rent into warring clans and brethren would not speak to each other on the street.

Now, more than ten decades have passed into history. A new generation has arisen to take the place of those on all sides who feuded until death. There is a tugging of the Spirit of God in the hearts of gentle men and women in all of our factions, leading us not to our undoing, but to the undoing of tragic errors which have resulted in divisions multiplied. Satan will seek to keep us apart. It is his purpose to widen chasms and strengthen walls. The Spirit is interested in building bridges and removing walls. The greatest bridge of all was our Lord who spanned the awesome gap between divinity and humanity. "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility."

We have been conditioned by years of factional teaching and training. We have been shown how to hate instead of being

taught how to love. It will be difficult for us to reverse our attitude. We do not want to compromise conviction nor undermine the structure of faith. But someone must dare to do something or the mistakes of the past will be permanently embalmed. It is obvious that we will make additional blunders and be guilty of many more mistakes. This means that we must be ever ready to acknowledge error as we become aware of it. We must cease to equate error with evil for it is not necessarily evil unless deliberate and voluntary.

Let us not minimize our problems for they are great. They are wrapped up in our whole emotional makeup. Their magnitude is not lessened by years of traditional indoctrination. It is extremely difficult for most brethren to see how “fellowship” which was dissolved over introduction of instrumental music can ever be restored so long as the musical instrument remains. As you know, I am personally opposed to the use of instrumental music in corporate worship. I do not even sing with it when it is so employed. This is a matter of personal conviction, if I know my heart, and is not sheer stubbornness. But I have come to see that “the fellowship” into which we are called of God is not conditioned upon an attitude toward instrumental music, either pro or con. If it were, of course there could be no fellowship until the instrument was removed.

Fellowship is brotherhood and brotherhood is established by mutual parenthood. One is not my brother *because* he uses an instrument or *because* he opposes its use. If one who used an instrument ceased to do so it would not make him my brother; if one who opposed the instrument began to use it he would not cease to be my brother. I think that we must solve our problems inside of a recognized framework of brotherhood. This requires the exercise of a considerable degree of tolerance, which is not the endorsing of things that are wrong but the enduring of those who think they are right.

I think it is time that the concerned ones in every community begin to face up to our problems in realistic fashion. Others are not divided from us; we are separated from each other. Why can we not meet together to pray about our state of disunity and to talk with each other about our hopes for peace? “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Let us remove the partisan fear of proselyting so that it is not a question of wooing others to “our fold.” Let us all, upon our knees, pledge to God and each other that we shall constitute but one fold under one Shepherd. It may amaze us what areas of reconciliation will be opened to those whose gushing tears and contrite hearts show that their faces are turned toward Zion.

We have come a long way from the original goal and spirit of the restoration movement. When the editor of the *Baptist Register* charged that the Reformers were schismatics, Alexander Campbell replied to him in the May, 1837, issue of *Millennial Harbinger*, page 199, as follows:

That we are not on this topic, on which so much has been spoken, schismatical, is proved from the fact, that we never did refuse communion with any good man, nor with any church among the Baptists, because of their theories or preachings on this subject; nor do we now. Let the Baptists, if they doubt our sincerity on this subject, rescind their “Decrees and Orders in Council,” and invite us into their pulpits and congregations, and thus test who is schismatical, and see whether we will not reciprocate the same Christian civilities throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. And whether they call me weak or strong in the faith, I care not: one thing I know— it will be as great a stretch for my individual charity or forbearance (if anyone prefer either of the misapplications of the sacred terms) as it possibly can be to any orderly and Christian man in all their ranks. Yet such is my love of union and cooperation amongst all creditable professors of Christ’s gospel, that rather than make a party or a new

sect (I speak for myself, but I doubt not that all my intelligent brethren would go as far as I)— I would gladly bear with many infirmities and errors in opinion rather than hazard the evils that must grow out of the rivalries, and jealousies, and bickerings of a party and schismatical spirit.

No longer is our central problem one of association with those whom Campbell referred to as “our Baptist brethren” but it is now a question of association with the heirs of the Reformers. Perhaps his charge leveled against the evangelical sects of his day now applies to us. “Their error is, that they prefer the minor causes of division to the major causes of union, and give to their circumstantial or expediencies the weight, and reason, and authority due only to their own essentials. They would rather be sects because of the accidentals, than united in one great communion because of the essentials.”

What Is Heresy?

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Volume 25

[Abstract]

The word “heresy” deserves special study by members of “The Church of Christ” because it has taken on a traditional meaning among its adherents which is at variance with the word of God. Our brethren have borrowed a leaf from the book of Rome and are following Thomas Aquinas rather than the apostles of Jesus Christ. In effect we have gone the hierarchy one better for with many of our brethren the mere expression of a different view than the party line is branded as “heresy.” Thomas Aquinas was a little more charitable than the average preacher among us for as Addis and Arnold point out in their *Catholic Dictionary*:

St. Thomas adds that this rejection of Catholic dogma must be deliberate and pertinacious, so that his teaching, which is that of all theologians, may be summed up in the following definition. A heretic is one who, having been baptized, and still professing himself a Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts any of the truths that must be held by divine and Catholic faith.

The whole idea that heresy is something taught or preached and that it consists of an opinion at variance with the dogmatic norm is a witches’ brew from the smoking Romish cauldron. It resulted from the establishment of orthodoxy and creedalism, and was concocted to justify the gibbet, rack, stake

and cross, as a means of discouraging dissenters and enforcing conformity. It has remained for "The Church of Christ" to add the crowning touch of infamy by rejecting as heretics men who hold a divergent view about such innocuous matters as cups, classes, colleges, the millennium, and a host of other things. Self-appointed judges, revelling in their feeble usurpation of power, have pronounced the sentence of heresy and quoted, "An heretic after the first and second admonition reject." In every instance it is such a judge who is the real heretic, but in our mixed up mess, and messed up mix, we have lived to see the day when every member of "The Church of Christ" is regarded as a heretic by those in another faction wearing that name.

Frederic W. Farrar was a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster; and Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen of England. In his renowned work entitled "The Early Days of Christianity," he says:

The word "heresy" though it is used in the Authorized Version to translate the *hairesis* of the New Testament, has not the same meaning . . . In the New Testament it comes to mean "a faction," and the sin condemned by the word is not the adoption of erroneous opinions, but the *factiousness of the party spirit*.

Then this scholarly gentleman adds something which should make all of us think soberly and seriously.

The word "heretic" has indeed been shamefully abused. It has again and again been applied in a thoroughly heretical, and worse than heretical manner, to the insight and inspiration of the few who have discovered aspects of truth hitherto unnoticed, or restored old truths by the overthrow of dominant perversions. A church can only prove its possession of life by healthy development. Morbid uniformity, enforced by the tyranny of a dominant sect, is the most certain indication of dissolution and decay. Since Christianity is many sided the worst form of heresy is the mechanical suppression of diversion from

popular shibboleths. Every great reformer in turn, every discoverer of new forms or expressions of religious truth, every slayer of old and monstrous errors, has been called a heretic. When a new truth could not be refuted it was easy for the members of a dominant party to gratify their impotent hatred by burning him who had uttered it . . . But the real heretics were, in most cases, the supporters of ecclesiastical tyranny and stereotyped ignorance by whom these martyrs were tortured and slain.

No less illustrious was a contemporary of Farrar, also a Fellow in Trinity College— Dr. J. B. Lightfoot. He had the added assistance of two very personal friends, B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, who were engaged in a joint recension of the Greek Testament during his career. The latter, together with W. A. Wright, Librarian of Trinity College, actually gave suggestions and made corrections before Lightfoot committed his works to print. It is especially noteworthy, therefore, that Lightfoot defines *hairesis* as parties or sects, as for example, in Galatians 5:20, where he says of the word, “A more aggravated form of *dichostasiai*, when the divisions have developed into distinct and organized parties.”

In *An American Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Alvah Hovey, the occurrence of *hairesis* in 1 Corinthians 11:19, gives occasion for the following observation:

Heresies” is a transliteration, but not a translation of the Greek word, which has come over into English with a different meaning from its ordinary Greek, or New Testament meaning. It means, originally, a taking: then, introducing the idea of selection, the taking of what one desires and leaving the rest, election, choice; then, a chosen way of living or thinking; then a body of men choosing the same way of thinking or living; and finally, dissensions between different bodies of this kind. Its use in the N. T. is divided between the last two meanings, sects and their dissensions . . . In Titus 3:10, the word translated “heretic” means in the same way, “one who causes division, a

sectarian . . .

James Hastings, writes in his *Dictionary of the Bible* in the following words:

The word “heresy” is never used in the N. T. in the technical sense in which we find it by the first quarter of the second century, as a doctrinal departure from the true faith of the church, implying a separation from its communion. The usual N. T. meaning of *hairesis* is simply a party, school, or sect; and *sect* is the word by which it is most frequently rendered.

In *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Ernest DeWitt Burton, Professor of N. T. Interpretation in the University of Chicago, has this to say of *hairesis*:

In the N. T. it is always associated with the middle of the verb, and usually signifies a body of people holding a chosen set of opinions . . . The meaning “heresy,” a doctrine at variance with that of the general body is not found in the New Testament.

A heresy is a sect. A sect is a party formed for the purpose of separating some of God’s children from the rest. Sects are formed by factionalists, those under the insidious influence of the party spirit. No one who is honestly mistaken about some matters of scriptural interpretation is a heretic. To be a heretic one must make a test of fellowship out of his opinion or interpretation and attempt to establish a party to promote or protect that view. No one is a heretic merely because he endorses or opposes classes, colleges, or individual cups. But if he draws a line of fellowship and refers to “cups churches,” “Sunday school churches,” or “college churches,” as if those who hold such views are not members of the one body, he is heretical or sectarian in his attitude. The same can be said for the species of bigotry which leads men to brand as “Antis” those who are not members of their exclusive cliques and factions, and to disregard them as

brethren.

The current view of “heresy” held by a majority of those in the modern “Church of Christ” is not only without scriptural warrant or authority, but is inimical to the peace and harmony of the body of Christ, for many reasons, of which the following are but a few.

1. It brands and stigmatizes humble seekers after truth whose character is above reproach and whose only crime is that they cannot concur in every view or opinion held by those who have assumed the role of infallible interpreters of the sacred scriptures.

2. It assumes that each faction or party has an infallible interpretation of the word of God at the same time that it denies the possibility of an infallible interpreter. For example, no one has the right to enthrone as dogma any view of the millennium, and demand that all kow-tow to it in order to be recognized as loyal to Jesus Christ, in whose coming all believe. As an individual, one may retain any view of this matter which commends itself to his intellect and conscience, without sinning against God, but if he gives his allegiance to a party created to propagate that view in divisive fashion, he is heretical, not because of his view but because of his attitude and action.

3. It makes real communication and interchange of ideas with other sincere students of the Word in the Christian realm virtually impossible. So long as we regard all others as heretics we cannot meet with them for significant re-study of our areas of difference, but we must confront them only to admonish them before rejecting them. This renders impossible any genuine spiritual encounter for common good. Such an approach precludes *sharing* in research with other humble souls and makes us the proud and self-righteous dispensers of orthodoxy. Others must sit and listen but dare not rise and speak.

4. It breeds inconsistency of the worst kind. We are betrayed into rejecting those who have not attained unto a certain intellectual status at the same time that we receive those whose moral and ethical behavior is inferior. The result is that the criterion becomes one of concept rather than of conduct, in direct opposition to God's method of judging. Every faction tolerates and uses those who are far from exemplary in conduct at the same time that godly men are rejected simply because they cannot subscribe to partisan interpretations. It rejects those whom God receives and receives those whom God rejects.

5. It denies the validity of the only law bound upon those in Christ Jesus—the law of love. It limits and restricts the real applicability of this law to those who conform to the party norm, and thus reduces it to a factional dispensation. If you doubt this, all you need to do is to read the various journals to learn that each has its own circumscribed “brotherhood” and each of these brotherhoods is composed of those who conform to the party test. All “brotherhoods” in “The Church of Christ” test one's worthiness by what he is against rather than by what he is for. Depending upon the party, one is “loyal” if opposed to orphan homes, Herald of Truth, classes, colleges, cups, fermented wine, women teachers, etc. In the aggregate the only thing upon which “The Church of Christ” in all of its parties and segments is agreed is its opposition to instrumental music in corporate worship. While each party within the alignment brands as “heretics” those who belong to the other factions, all of the factions join in denouncing as “heretics” those brethren in the Lord who use instrumental music! This is the only basis of *unity* upon which all of the factions can now stand. It is apparent that every member of “The Church of Christ” is a “heretic” in the eyes of some other members of “The Church of Christ”!

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

Because of the intolerable condition into which our

thinking has brought us I want to suggest ten points of reason essential to *thinking ourselves out* of our current status. These are not offered in dogmatic fashion, nor are they intended to constitute a panacea for all of our ills. I offer them simply and humbly as “blazes” along the trail, which we may follow as we seek to free ourselves from the wilderness which has ensnared us.

1. Virtually every truth now accepted was once branded as “heresy.” We are willing to give our lives now in defense of those things for which our fathers were once willing to take the lives of those who held them.

2. *Heresy* is not the illegitimate child of truth but the unwanted offspring of orthodoxy. Truth never did produce “heresy” and orthodoxy never produced anything else.

3. The charge of “heresy” never measures the mind of the one charged by the mind of Christ, but by the mind of the one who makes the charge. Thus we have a fallible and erring judge demanding infallible and inerrant thought of others.

4. So long as philosophy and science reward men for thinking and religion, operating under the guise of Christianity, penalizes them for doing so, the first two will inevitably become the refuge of the brilliant while the latter becomes the resort of the mediocre.

5. Until we can conceive of the body of Christ as being of sufficient magnitude to encompass, absorb and assimilate, every member in Christ on earth, we have not yet outgrown first century prejudices. We are merely substituting our twentieth century class distinctions of “Liberal and Conservative,” “Pro and Anti,” for the earlier “Jew and Greek” and “bond and free.” In Christ Jesus none of these avail anything. It is the new creation that counts and that is all that counts.

6. It is not essential that those of us who are in Christ Jesus

resolve all of our differences; it is only necessary that we resolve all of our differences *in Christ*. Those who were in Christ were as much Jews or Gentiles, as much bond and free, as before, but none of these things availed *in Christ*. He is greater than any of our distinctions and differences. There was room in Christ for James, an orthodox Jew and a pillar of the church of the Messiah in Jerusalem, to teach Jewish converts to circumcise their children and keep the law, while Paul was teaching his Gentile converts among the churches of Christ to ignore both. The latter wrote that the three Jerusalem leaders in the synagogue of the Messianists “accepted Barnabas and myself as partners, and shook hands upon it, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles while they went to the Jews.” No problem that has ever plagued the heirs of the restoration movement can compare in explosive potential with that of circumcision.

The fact that there did not come into existence “a circumcision church” and an “anti-circumcision church” ought to shame us to tears with our glib patter and partisan jargon about “Sunday school churches” and “anti-Sunday School churches;” or “instrumental churches” and “non-instrumental churches;” or “white churches” and “colored churches.” God have mercy upon our tragic trifling with divine love and grace. We need to quit shaking fists at each other and shake hands as we go to our respective spheres of labor. It is far better to be known as brethren of the open hand, than to be regarded as brethren of the clenched fist!

7. Once the true nature of divine revelation *in love* is fully grasped, there can never be another “heresy trial” among the saints of God. Such trials are “witch hunts” and are never prosecuted by seekers after truth. They are the instruments of self-appointed defenders of orthodoxy. No child of God should ever be made to suffer indignity or reprisal for any opinion honestly held, regardless of how wrong it may ultimately prove to be. Such a person must be tolerated and not persecuted.

This does not mean there will not be heretics, for there will be, and these must always be rejected. But a heretic is a factional man and must never be thrust out for an opinion honestly held, but for factionalism. Such a man will not need to be tried for he is self-condemned. This is an essential feature of heresy as God regards it.

8. Congregations are made up of individuals and will reflect the divergent views and interpretations of those who compose them. These, in turn, have formulated their views as a result of instruction given by fallible men, as well as from their own limited and fallible personal investigation of the revelation of God. When, therefore, in conformity with honest personal and corporate conscience, based upon convictions arrived at through teaching and study, they adopt those means which they deem best fitted to enable them to implement the commands of God, we should not brand such congregations as “dens of digression” or “hotbeds of heresy” for they are not such at all. Our own intemperate language may be a worse offense against God and provide a greater stumblingblock than what the others are doing.

If we believe the means adopted are inimical to the revealed purpose of God, we have several areas of responsibility. First, we must personally resist the adoption of that which our own conscience condemns. Second, we will establish dialogue with brethren who employ such means, but do so on a fraternal basis within an atmosphere of brotherly love to avoid enmity and strife. Third, we will never allow such discussions, regardless of how prolonged, to dissolve brotherly regard and relationship. Fourth, we will not permit our disagreement about such means to negate our labors together in other areas where there is agreement. We are united with anyone up to the point of disagreement and we should make our unity as vital and vocal as our disunity. This is essential if we are to employ the full force of Christian witness in our impact upon the neo-pagan world which surrounds us all, regardless of our position on cups,

classes, colleges, orphan homes, or the millennium. We need to know who our real *enemies* are!

9. If we are to enact the role of peacemakers and thus be called the children of God, we must approach every case of division in the Christian realm with the attitude that we will not widen the gap if we cannot narrow the chasm. This means that if we discuss points at issue day and night for a week and reach an apparent stalemate, we must leave with at *least* as much respect for each other as we had at the outset. We must not only give men time, but allow the Holy Spirit an opportunity to penetrate and break up the fallow ground of our hearts with the plowshare of destiny. In many cases, this strategy of peace will necessitate postponement of initial discussion of controverted points until a more propitious occasion. In no case can the strategy work if we approach the conference with a view that the other brethren are heretics, for we are pre-conditioned by the scriptures to a rejection of heretics, and no ground of acceptance of one another can be found.

10. Partisan debates, such as are generally held, will not solve brotherhood problems. They are conducted in an atmosphere of tension more conducive to enlargement of differences than to lessening them. They seldom result in unification of brethren although frequently they encourage division through rivalry. If a man is a heretic nothing will be gained by publicly debating him; if he is not, everything may be gained by not doing so. However, since I intend to discuss this feature more at length in a subsequent issue, I will presently defer further expression relative to the subject.

We are guilty of loose and intemperate speech when we indiscriminately brand other saints of God as heretics, apostates and false teachers. This is not consistent with the admonition to “speak not evil one of another, brethren.” Let us employ the “cloak of love” to cover the imperfections of those who can do no better than they know to do.

To all who have been so patient and kind as to read thus far we express our gratitude and thanksgiving. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

My Defense

Mission Messenger (March 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

“This is my defense to those who would examine me” (1 Cor. 9:3).

Of all the contemporary leaders in the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood, no other enjoys a higher degree of respect than Dr. J. D. Thomas, professor of Bible at Abilene Christian College. Brilliant and erudite, this good brother has earned an excellent standing in the scholastic world. For this reason I personally feel that anything he writes deserves more than passing consideration, even when it is directed against my position. In this connection I mention the article by my esteemed brother which appeared in *Gospel Advocate*, January 31, 1963, under the title of “Brother Ketcherside’s New Fallacy.” In view of the fact that Brother Thomas labored under so many mistaken impressions of my views, I immediately addressed a letter to our brother in the Lord, B. C. Goodpasture, editor of *Gospel Advocate*, as follows:

My gracious brother: In your issue of *Gospel Advocate*, dated January 31, 1963, our brother in the Lord, J. D. Thomas, presents an article under the title, “Brother Ketcherside’s New Fallacy.” Since this presentation does not correctly portray in all or the particulars covered, my plea for unity among the dissident forces or the restoration movement, I humbly request the privilege of submitting for publication an expression of my

views. If this is granted through your Christian generosity I promise that I will write objectively and not objectionably, in love and not in rancor.

I am fully aware that you cannot grant every request for space but inasmuch as my name appears at least eleven times on less than two pages of your journal I am sure your sense of fairness will encourage the conclusion that I deserve a hearing. If my petition is granted, will you please indicate the length of manuscript permissible? With prayers and best wishes for you and yours, I am as always, Yours and HIS, *Carl*.

On the same day, February 3, 1963, I also sent a letter to Brother Thomas, which I share with you herewith.

My dear brother in HIM: Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have read with interest your article in the current issue of Gospel Advocate, entitled "Brother Ketcherside's New Fallacy." The fact that you do not concur with my views related to the fellowship of the saints in no sense lessens my reverence and respect for you as my brother in Him who died for the misdeeds of both of us. But your intellectual and spiritual stature, coupled with the irenic spirit manifested in your article, emboldens me to make a proposal, which I trust you will accord prayerful consideration.

Since I am sure that you believe in the right of sincere brethren who present their appeal in love, to be heard, can it be arranged that I come to Abilene for three sessions of two hours each, for public examination of my thesis? If so, I suggest that in the first two sessions I present objectively my position as to unity of the believers for one hour, and then submit to an hour of public questioning by a panel composed of three brethren, yourself being one and the other two being men of your

selection. I further suggest that in the third session, after presentation of my views, I submit to questions (either oral or written) from the entire audience, with yourself acting as chairman of the meeting.

It would be understood that neither yourself nor Abilene Christian College concurred in or endorsed my views, but simply that as free men we met in interest of truth. I pledge upon my honor, that I will conduct myself with gentlemanly courtesy to all of the brethren and if I cannot lessen areas of conflict I will not widen chasms that exist. I will come at my own expense with the only requirement that we give sufficient notice of the meeting through brotherhood papers that all segments of the restoration movement will learn of the meeting and feel welcome. In the interest of fairness and justice, coupled with charity toward all, I am, Your brother in the One Faith, *Carl*.

At the present time, February 13, I have not as yet received a reply from Brother Goodpasture, but Brother Thomas has kindly furnished us, under the date of February 9, the following:

Dear Brother Ketcherside: In reply to your recent letter inquiring about a public discussion of your present views, I wish to state that, for good and sufficient reasons, I would not be interested in trying to have such a discussion. Sincerely yours, *J. D. Thomas*.

It may be that I acted presumptuously in suggesting a series of studies in Abilene. If so, I humbly apologize to Brother Thomas and others of our brethren there who would be affected. I hold that only truth can gain when humble brethren meet in a spirit of mutual regard for each other and the authority of the blessed Lord Jesus. It is a firm conviction that we must cease to erect walls and begin to construct bridges across the expanses which separate the various parties. So long as we maintain an exclusivist attitude, isolated and insulated from the thought of other brethren, we will perpetuate partisan indifference. In

order to try to overcome this in my own life, I hold myself ready to go when possible to meet with my brothers in the Lord anywhere, or to converse with any other seekers after truth, be they Protestant, Catholic or Jewish.

In our next issue we will print the article from the pen of Brother Thomas as it appeared in *Gospel Advocate* and I will reply to it in order. Our hope will be that we shall reduce party tension, lessen areas of difference, and find as much common ground as possible upon which we may stand together. Our readers will appreciate the scholarly tone of our brother's article, and while I will not be able to reciprocate on that level I can at least write in that attitude of reverence and respect for our brother which I sincerely feel. It is indeed a pleasure to me to know that *we be brethren!* And I am sure you'll profit from reading the April issue.

Wishful Thinking

Mission Messenger (March 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

A good brother who is associated with one of the segments in the instrumental wing of the disciple brotherhood writes as follows:

I still say all this “plea” for “unity” is wishful thinking. As such (outwardly) there will be none before Christ returns. However, there is nothing to keep local congregations from conforming to divine patterns in the New Testament for the church, and for saints, if willing to get that way at all costs in accordance with 2 Corinthians 6:11-18.

I do not share this brother’s pessimistic outlook. A plea for unity of believers is no more wishful thinking than a prayer for unity of the believers by our Lord. We need to match His prayer with our plea, and we need to have confidence in both. Unity must be regarded from two aspects— the actual and the practical. The first is a gift of God and bestowed by the Spirit. It is real in spite of the fact that our attitudes keep it from appearing realistic. We are not told to achieve it or attain it but to maintain it. You cannot maintain what you do not have, nor continue always to have what you refuse to maintain.

Practically, we have not made the unity conferred by God a true working relationship. We are told by the apostle that we must “Exert an effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the

bond of peace.” We cannot create unity but we can make peace. “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” We have majored in *making pieces* of the body instead of making peace within it. We have called people out of the church instead of out of the world. Thus we have created organizations to the detriment of the divine organism.

If peacemakers are to be blessed it is evident their efforts will not be futile. If we took the stones which we hurl at each other and used them to build bridges toward each other we would see a great transformation in our lives. Of course, bridges must be built from both sides of the river! But the purpose of God must be fulfilled and if the “restoration movement” fails, He is still able to raise up from these stones, a people who will do His will.

One thing I do know. If we evaluate thinking about unity as wistful we still do very little constructive thinking. If we have thought ourselves into division why can we not think ourselves out? I refuse to regard division as the normal state of the body of Christ any more than I regard sickness as the normal state of my own body. A sick movement, like a sick person, needs doctoring. I have resolved to labor in answering the prayer of my Savior. I refuse to be discouraged. He who works for peace among the saints and unity among the believers has God on his side and as surely as heaven never lost a battle, this one will not be lost. The church has not reached its peak to start into a decline. It is just throwing off its swaddling-clothes. It has never yet attained to its full potential. The greatest era of all lies before us. Tomorrow will be better than today!

Reply to brother Thomas

Mission Messenger (April 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

We ask the kind indulgence of all our readers in view of the nature of this issue of our little journal. We especially crave the forbearance of those who are not allied with any segment of “the restoration movement” but who regularly read what we write. In the past we have sought to avoid as much as possible direct mention of those who differ with us, under the impression that greater objectivity was possible where no personalities were directly involved. The nature of the foregoing article hardly lends itself to review under such procedure and we reluctantly deviate from our regular course.

It is apparent that the editor of *Gospel Advocate*, our respected brother in Christ, B. C. Goodpasture, concurs with the author of the article that something must be done about my “enthusiasm for brotherhood unity” and my “disparagement of differences among us.” We appreciate the intention to examine what we advocate and the spirit in which it is done. It augurs well for the future when brethren can maintain an irenic attitude while discussing their differences.

Anything which is considered revolutionary should be subjected to close scrutiny and intensive investigation. I am honored that *Gospel Advocate* has been chosen as the medium for such an evaluation of my thinking. It is, perhaps, the journal of greatest circulation among members of the non-instrument

segment of the disciple brotherhood.

It is a pleasure to introduce to our readers one whom I have not met personally, but a brother in the Lord for whom I entertain tremendous respect. J. D. Thomas has for fourteen years been a professor of Bible at Abilene Christian College. He obtained his B.A. from the college where he now teaches, his M.A. from Southern Methodist, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Possessed of a brilliant and incisive mind, and wielding a facile pen, he is thoroughly capable of discovering any fallacy in reasoning, and of revealing it to others in unmistakable terms. Since I have no desire except to be right in the sight of God I count it a privilege to have this erudite brother review some of the things I have written.

It is my intention, if it does not prove unduly boresome to you, to share with you at some length, my impressions of the article by Brother Thomas. In doing so I can correct some of his mistaken impressions about my views and promote a better understanding. I must begin by pleading guilty to having been “the champion of a very legalistic attitude.” I grew up in a different faction of the disciple brotherhood than the one with which Brother Thomas was affiliated and there was a time when, if he had been gracious enough to attend one of my meetings, I would have been so ungracious as not to accord him the courtesy of even asking him to lead in prayer. I am ashamed of that attitude and I sincerely apologize to all of the brethren in the various parties for the way I acted due to my ignorance and spiritual immaturity.

As I look back on that era of my life, it appears to me that my “legalism” consisted not so much in believing that certain things were right or wrong, but in trusting in these, rather than in the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the basis of my hope. I have carefully catechised my own heart and I find that I have not changed my ideas on any of these things. Perhaps my traditional upbringing, environment, and early association enter

into this. But in those days I was one of those “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others” (Luke 18:9). I judged the worthiness of men, not by their relationship to our blessed Lord, but by their position on cups, classes, colleges, the millennium, or instrumental music. While I have not altered my views about these things, I no longer trust in myself that I am righteous and I no longer despise others. It has meant much to me to know that “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

I would be more perturbed about going “to the opposite extreme” if I did not know, from experience, that in our parlance every person is an extremist who does not conform in every particular to the party with which we chance to be affiliated. I get letters lamenting that once I was unduly exclusive and now I am unduly inclusive. The fact is that each party wants you to include all whom they do not exclude, and exclude all whom they do not include. Each group wants you to include only those up to themselves and exclude all above and beyond them. To avoid going to an extreme I have resolved to include no one as a brother whom God does not include as a son. I shall allow brotherhood to be determined by fatherhood. It will be affectional and not factional.

I am pleased that Brother Thomas has defined “liberal” as applied to men like myself, as not related to modernism. The term “liberal” is flung about so loosely by adherents of our various factions that every one of us is “a liberal” to some of the brethren. I try to avoid the labels we banter about so glibly because it seems to me that these are symptoms of our partisan attitude. Few of us realize that our tagging of our brethren in such a partisan spirit, automatically places us in a party also. But our brother is in error, when he says I am “unduly liberal in the sense of sanctioning denominational doctrines and practices.” I am opposed to all such. To “sanction” is to endorse. I have consistently refused to endorse in any fashion that which I

believe to be contrary to the words of the Holy Spirit. The thing I sanction and recognize is brotherhood, the relationship of all of God's children, in spite of the fact that some of them (perhaps all of them) still engage in some "denominational doctrines and practices."

Our brother uses the expression "full fellowship" at least six times. This common idiom in "Church of Christ speech" is not a part of the vocabulary of the Spirit. Its employment denotes, I think, a misconception of the term "fellowship" and so long as that mistaken idea exists we will maintain our divisions of the past and continue to create new factions in the future. Fellowship is brotherhood. The suffixes "ship" and "hood" indicate a state, condition, or relationship, in which we share or participate. Fellowship is that state or relationship with God and Christ into which we are called by the gospel, and in which all of us share as brothers. Fellowship in Christ is based on sonship, brotherhood on a common Fatherhood.

"God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). Fellowship is entered in response to the call of God. All who make the proper response are in the fellowship. The context shows that those in the fellowship are saints (1:2); brethren (1:10); babes in Christ (3:1); God's field (3:9); God's building (3:9); and God's temple (3:16). God's Spirit dwelled in them (3:16) and they were Christ's (3:23). I hardly think any one would conclude that Paul endorsed their "denominational practices" but they were in the fellowship. Any person who is in Christ Jesus is in the fellowship. He is not half in it but all in it. The fellowship is the creation of the Holy Spirit. It is called "the fellowship of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1). Any person on this earth in whom the Spirit abides is in the fellowship. I do not consider that the Spirit is half in and half out of some of God's children. "One who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9). Conversely, I conclude that every one who does have the Spirit does belong to him. This is the real

criterion.

I have no half brothers or stepbrothers in the Lord. Every person in the world who has properly responded to the divine call is “a blood brother of the Lamb.” “For thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). There is no partial state of being in the Lord so there is no partial state of fellowship. The fellowship is full and complete since it is in Him who is “the fulness of God.” Indeed I am in the fellowship with many of the saints despite doctrinal differences unless the doctrines are of such a nature as to separate the one who holds them from God. Any doctrine which severs one from “life in the Son,” that is, eternal life, severs that person from me if I remain in the Son. There are many differences that are occasions for discussion among brethren which are not grounds for division from brethren. Brother Thomas holds many doctrinal views which I cannot espouse but these are questions in the fellowship and not questions of fellowship.

Our good brother gives an example of what he thinks I advocate. “In other words, we should fellowship the instrumental music brethren and associate with them openly and freely, and if we try to teach them it should be in a way that would not interfere with full fellowship.” Our brother clearly misunderstands all I have written about fellowship. We do not “fellowship brethren” any more than I “companionship my wife” or “partnership my business associates.” Matthias was chosen to “the apostleship” (Acts 1:25), but he did not “apostleship the eleven.” I am glad that our brother refers to “the instrumental music brethren.” If they are brethren they are in the fellowship and there is nothing we can do about it. God has added them to the family and I must accept them. I do not need to accept all they do any more than I accept all Brother Thomas does, but they are in the fellowship. Any teaching I do should be in such a manner as not to interfere with the fellowship, for it is divinely created. I am earnestly praying as I

write these words that nothing I say in this article will be disruptive of the fellowship with those whom I love in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think I should make it clear that I do not say others should “associate with the instrumental brethren openly and freely.” I simply say that I must do so. When I was factional some good brethren persuaded me that I should not associate openly and freely with men like Brother Thomas; now I do not intend for Brother Thomas to persuade me not to associate with other good brethren. To do that would be to return to the factional spirit and thus grieve the Holy Spirit. Any person who is a child of my Father is my brother and it is unthinkable to me that I should refuse to associate with other members of the family of God. I do not agree with any of them fully so I am free to love all of them fully.

It is not a choice between “the instrument party” in error, and “the non-instrument party” with no error. The fact that there are two dozen factions in the non-instrument segment proves that we are not free from error. It is a question as to which brothers in error I will associate with openly and freely. I do not endorse any of their errors, nor do I expect them to endorse any of mine. Therefore, it is really a choice of brethren, and not of errors. But I have no choice of brothers. I can no more choose my spiritual brothers than I could my fleshly brothers. Brotherhood is established by fatherhood; fraternity is the result of paternity. I shall love all of my brothers and move among them as they will allow, sharing in what they can convey, sharing with them what little I have learned. I shall receive them as God received me, not because of perfection, but in spite of imperfection.

Our brother is mistaken when he writes that I think “that all of us ought to ignore all doctrinal differences.” That is the exact opposite of what I think. We could not ignore doctrinal differences if we tried to do it, and the harder we tried the less

possibility there would be of doing it. What I think is that conformity in opinions and interpretations is not essential to the fellowship but fellowship is essential to arriving at harmony. Not one admonition to “live in harmony with one another” (e.g., Rom. 15:5) was ever written by an apostle to bring people into the fellowship. All such exhortations were addressed to those in fellowship and because they were in it. So long as we try to restore “fellowship” by arguing our differences we will only create more division. We need to restore a proper sense of fellowship first and discuss our differences within this frame of reference. Then fellowship will not be disrupted every time we differ. Our present course is suicidal!

Again our brother is mistaken about why I am “vocal about this problem” of instrumental music. It is not because it “divides the greater majority of immersed believers” for I am not sure this is the case. It does divide the greatest majority of such believers who are heirs of the restoration movement. I do not think of all the immersed believers as within these ranks. But the reason we cannot evade this problem is simply because it was in dealing with it that our fathers first adopted the philosophy of “maintaining doctrinal purity by separation from brethren.” The truth is, as any student of our history can verify, that the restoration movement did not divide when instrumental music was introduced, nor for a long time afterward. It was not made a test of fellowship by those who opposed it until agitation climaxed years later in the reading of an “Address and Declaration” (1889) which specifically declared that those who practiced certain innovations would no longer “be regarded as brethren.”

It was this document which equated brotherhood with conformity that sowed the seed for all of the tragic divisions which followed. It is this philosophy of dissension and schism which plagues us to this day. My brethren in the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood would welcome anything I might do to heal the breaches which have occurred since the

initial disruption, but this would gain nothing of permanent value, for so long as we maintain the creedal inconsistency we will fracture and fragment ourselves every time a brother learns a truth which appears to be new. At present we have but one ultimate solution for differences— division; and but one ultimate approach to division when it occurs— partisan debate. The reason I am “vocal about this problem” is because I realize that until we go back to the place where we adopted and first implemented this harmful philosophy, we will simply be nibbling around the edges of our difficulty and division. We must restore “brotherhood” to its proper status— all brotherhood— or we will eventually end up with no brotherhood at all. If we continue to ignore this truth we will imperil our whole future.

It is my personal opinion that the new covenant scriptures are not clear-cut in the matter of instrumental music and most other things which we make “tests of fellowship.” We have been debating some of these things for almost a century. Both sides of the controversy have examined every angle as scrupulously and meticulously as the ancient Pharisees did their law. Surely, if the scriptures are so positive and plain someone would have come up with the specific scripture which would have settled the issue permanently for all honest men. We need to face up realistically to the fact that we have postulated a basis of interpretation in the light of which we regard the scriptures and that which does not conform to this basis is regarded by us as a sin. Other men, who are as humble and honest as ourselves, do not always see these things in the same light for they view them from a divergent angle or perspective.

It is certainly not my intention to “reduce all faith to being simply opinion.” What I have suggested is that when sincere brethren disagree as to which of these categories a thing belongs in, they should recognize that it is a matter of opinion, or judgment, as to whether it is a matter of faith or opinion, and should not divide over that opinion or matter of judgment. I cannot force others to categorize all things as I do. I must learn

to tolerate those who do not. A man who loves God must reach personal conclusions as to what is faith and what is opinion, in some cases, and for such conclusions he must be answerable to God and not to me. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth!" Many of our problems of division will be settled when we cease to play at being God.

Our learned brother is not the first to feel that he has a point in prophesying where he thinks my "basic argument really leads." He reminds us that "denominational people consider baptism by immersion to be only a matter of opinion." What is baptism by immersion? I have labored under the impression that the word "baptism" was a transliteration of the Greek word for "dip or immerse." Does any one consider that "immersion by immersion" is a matter of opinion? Or "baptism by baptism"?

Baptism is directly related to the new birth. By it we enter into Christ and thus into the fellowship. There is no room for difference about Christ Jesus or in the implementation of that faith which brings us into the family relationship. But in Christ Jesus there is room for differences. We are in different states of spiritual growth and development. Under the rule of our King we can receive no one whom he has not received, but we must receive all whom he has received. I do not have to "leave the unimmersed out of the unity program" for I do not decide the terms of admission. I simply accept those whom Christ accepts, and upon the same terms that he accepts me. "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

I do not think the Father writes the name of a newly-born spiritual son in the Lamb's book of life only to scratch it out immediately if he opposes cups or classes; or endorses orphan homes, the pre-millennial viewpoint, or instrumental music. That name is not recorded on the basis of an attitude toward any of these things and God will need to be very patient, longsuffering and merciful unto all of us, if our names are found

in that book when opened in its finality. I may be mistaken, of course, but since I have ceased to be “the champion of a very legalistic attitude” I find myself trusting more and more upon faith in Jesus and God’s grace, and less and less upon my intellectual attainment and spiritual perfection. I will do everything I can as nearly as I understand the will of the Master but I am resigned to being an unprofitable servant when I have done all.

It is probably fortunate that I am referred to J. W. McGarvey for the principle that can get me “back on the right track.” It could be enlightening for us to see how he personally applied that principle as relates to instrumental music. He was the first man in the restoration movement to write an article affirming that the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship is not legitimate. The initial article appeared in the *Millennial Harbinger* of November, 1864. His thinking was challenged by A. S. Hayden and for several years the discussion of “the organ question” was in the forefront of brotherhood journalism. So intense did the involvement become that the editor of *Millennial Harbinger*, W. K. Pendleton (twice Alexander Campbell’s son-in-law) wrote, “We note a growing heat under the discussion of this subject, but let us keep cool.”

I have carefully read every word that J. W. McGarvey wrote. His was a masterful presentation. I have never seen a single new argument against instrumental music since his day. The arguments for its justification have altered considerably in the interim. Brother McGarvey was a member of the Broadway Church, Lexington, Kentucky, when the elders decided on November 2, 1902, to submit the question of the organ to a vote of the congregation. On the same day McGarvey wrote a letter withdrawing his membership from the congregation. But W. C. Morro, in his biography entitled “Brother McGarvey” asserts, “This much is a certainty: McGarvey never allowed his position on the organ to become a source of division in the church. His soul recoiled from such a step.” Again he writes, “McGarvey

never made silence of the organ a condition of his participating in any service. . . . McGarvey would speak or worship in any church or assembly where a musical instrument was used, but if conditions made it possible, he preferred the singing be without the instrument.”

Brother Thomas did not cite McGarvey as an authority in religious matters, nor do I. Our authority is the same as that which Brother McGarvey always recognized and defended, the inspired scriptures. Still it is interesting to note the manner in which this earlier brother sought to cope with the same problem which confronts us in our attempt to maintain intact the fabric of fellowship in the face of crisis. It seems to demonstrate that each succeeding generation must confront the same problems and all of us must do our best, with fallible judgment, to please God and love each other. I suspect that my personal view of the fellowship of *persons* as related to *things* is much like that of J. W. McGarvey.

Our good brother mentions Romans 14:23. Does this mean that he places instrumental music in the category of things dealt with in that verse and the context? If not, I do not know why he introduces it. If so, is he willing to say, with regard to instrumental music, “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it is unclean” (verse 14)? The “faith” mentioned in verse 23 is one’s personal conviction of what is right and wrong, that is, what he thinks. It is the opposite of “doubt” and one who has no doubt is acting in faith, according to this verse. J. B. Phillips is close to the correct interpretation when he puts it: “Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God, and you are happy if you have no qualms about what you allow yourself to eat. Yet if a man eats meat with an uneasy conscience about it, you may be sure he is wrong to do so. For his action does not spring from his faith, and when we eat apart from our faith, we sin.”

On the basis of this verse, our good brother writes, “If I believe instrumental music in worship to be a sin, I cannot practice it, neither can I honor any one else that does it.” But the whole tenor of this chapter to which the verse cited is the conclusion, is that one dare not bind his personal faith on brethren who do not share his scruples or opinions. “Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind” (verse 5); “The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God” (verse 22); “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?” (verse 4); “Then let us no more pass judgment on one another” (verse 13). This entire chapter was written for the specific purpose of teaching us how to honor those “for whom Christ died” (verse 15) and who differ with us. It is a treatise on how to preserve unity in spite of diversity. Our good brother employs one verse in it to completely offset everything for which the apostle contended. That which was given as an instrument of unity becomes a weapon of division and dishonor.

Brother Thomas says, “One of Brother Ketcherside’s basic fallacies in this whole matter, I think, is his argument that he is reported to make that: ‘Full fellowship does not mean endorsement.’” The report of my argument is incorrect. All of the words are correct but they are misplaced. My argument is not that “*full fellowship* does not mean endorsement,” but rather that “fellowship does not mean *full endorsement*.” Fellowship in Christ is created by the Holy Spirit. Endorsement is an act of the mind by which one sanctions that which he approves. I do not fully sanction any brother in all he says or does, for to do so would be to give perfect endorsement to an imperfect being. The only persons on earth with whom I have been in fellowship (except the Spirit), are all imperfect. I am in the fellowship with them, not because of their perfection, but in spite of their imperfections.

If my brother is correct in his contention that “fellowship does constitute endorsement” I am guilty of a basic fallacy. I know that it must seem presumptuous for me, with my meager

knowledge and ability, to even imply that the fallacy rests with Brother Thomas. Very humbly do I submit that I think he is mistaken. I doubt that any of our readers would deny that the apostle Paul was in fellowship with the saints at Corinth. He positively states that they had been “called into the fellowship” (1 Cor. 1:9). He calls them “my children” (4:14) and tells them, “I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (4:15). He declares that they constitute “the body of Christ” (12:27) and that God’s Spirit dwells in them (3:16).

In the language of our brother, Paul wanted to “buddy-up” with the congregation and associate with them. He wanted to worship with them with “some degree of regularity.” He said, “I will visit you after passing through Macedonia . . . and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter” (16:5, 6). He declared, “I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits” (16:7). Not only did Paul want to be with them, but he encouraged other brethren to visit them. “As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren” (16:12). He sent Timothy and wrote, “When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you” (16:10).

Was such association in the fellowship an indication of endorsement? Did Paul endorse the denominational parties (1:11, 12); the arrogance in the face of immorality (5:2); the lawsuits against each other in heathen courts (6:1-8); the injudicious conduct of the sisters (11:5); the abuse of the love feast (11:18); and the disorderly conduct in public services? In all of my experience I have never yet found a congregation of disciples in the sad state of the one at Corinth. If my brethren of today had been in Paul’s place they would have rented the Odd Fellows Hall, on the corner of Tenth and Main in Corinth, and started a “loyal church” before next Sunday. Instead of urging young preachers to visit such a place, they would have urged them not to go near it, and would have “withdrawn” from those who did go. It has been done you know!

What was Paul's attitude? He simply acknowledged that because these were the called saints they were in the fellowship. He repeatedly called them "brethren." He commended them in every area where he could (11:2) and in those areas where he could not be said, "But in the following instructions I do not commend you" (11:17). I think that we need to face up to some real questions in the divided state of the "restoration brotherhood" and I would like to suggest a few queries to the non-instrument brethren with whom I am more directly associated and who cannot even associate with "brethren in the Christian Church" because "they have corrupted the worship."

Were those who composed the congregation at Corinth "brethren in error"? Is it any worse to "corrupt" one phase of public worship than another? Is it any worse to "corrupt" the song service than it would be to "corrupt" the Lord's Supper? Can a congregation be any worse by having an instrument play when they come together than one of which it was said, "When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse"? Can a congregation "corrupt the worship" more by having someone play on an instrument while they sing, than one of which it is affirmed, "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat"? If you had lived in the days of Paul would you have accompanied him to the congregation at Corinth? Would you have "fellowshipped them" as our brethren so quaintly phrase it? Would you have associated with them with "any degree of regularity"?

Lately, under pressure and to save their modern theory of fellowship, I have heard brethren affirm that they would no longer "fellowship" Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, or David Lipscomb. Will they now become modern Ebionites and cast Paul into the discard as well? The stark truth is that our brethren would have divided almost every congregation mentioned in the new covenant scriptures, and filled the ancient world, as they have the modern one, with dissident factions, all claiming to be "the Lord's church." Perhaps we need again the

admonition to Corinth, “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil but in thinking be mature” (14:20).

Is not “commendation” equivalent to endorsement or sanction? If so when Paul wrote, “I do not commend you,” did he mean that he was no longer in “fellowship” with the “beloved brethren”? If he could stay with and “even spend the winter” with brethren who did things he could not commend or endorse, why can we not visit such folk “with the other brethren”?

Beloved brethren, our attitude of partisan exclusivism is not consistent with our plea for unity as made to the religious world around us. Let us repair the breaks in the restoration wall and cement the rents in the fabric of brotherhood. Let us make character the test of worthiness among our brethren and cease to mistake conformity for unity. Let us meet upon our knees and beseech God to help us restore that which we seem to lack most — respect and regard for each other in Christ Jesus. We cannot untie ourselves into unity, fracture ourselves into fraternity, nor cudgel ourselves into comity.

If I have extended these remarks to too great a limit, please forgive me. I have an earnest desire to be understood and my lack of ability in expression may require more space for clarification than you deem justifiable. I am grateful for the patience of those who have read thus far. I appreciate the friendly spirit exhibited by Brother Thomas in his article. I revere and respect him as my brother in the Lord Jesus. I apologize for any apparent harshness which may appear in my reply and close with the fervent prayer that we may find the way to a greater and nobler peace. If I thought that we must achieve unity upon our own I would despair of ever attaining to it, but because I believe that the Holy Spirit is actively at work in this world to answer the prayer of Jesus, I hold no fear about the outcome. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Confusion of Tongues

Mission Messenger (April 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

The attempt to recapture a proper sense of fellowship among heirs of the “restoration movement” is hampered by the fact that it is now a semantic, as well as a spiritual problem. Brethren not only do not know what fellowship is but they do not know *what it is not*. They confuse fellowship with a great many other things to which it is not related, or in which the relation is remote and indirect. This only adds to the complexity and confusion of our day and hampers and hinders any serious effort toward genuine restoration.

It is not enough to use the words of the Spirit but we must employ them in the same way as did the divine Agent. We must not only “speak *where* the Bible speaks” but we must “speak *as* the Bible speaks.” It will gain us little if we condemn the modernist who denies the meaning of the scriptural terms while at the same time we define them in such a manner as to lose their significance. One can forfeit the truth by carelessness as surely as he can defeat it by conspiracy.

The word “profane” has as one of its meanings, “to debase by a wrong, unworthy, or vulgar use.” “To debase” means to reduce from a higher to a lower state or grade, as in dignity, quality, purity, value, etc. It is possible that we have fallen into indiscreet and improper use of the sacred word “fellowship” and have profaned it. If so, we need to correct our vocabulary and

lessen “the confusion of tongues” which keeps us scattered abroad and separated from each other. We have repeatedly pointed out that the Holy Spirit does not equate fellowship in Christ Jesus with absolute conformity in opinion, knowledge, or interpretation. To do so would be to render fellowship impossible among finite and fallible individuals.

It is just as necessary that we realize that much of what is called “fellowship” in these days is not fellowship at all. It has become all too common for brethren to announce that “After the service we will retire to the lounge in the educational building for a period of fellowship.” Those who remain and retire will find that “fellowship” consists of getting a cup of coffee and a doughnut or cupcake and standing around informally chatting about this or that light topic as a relief from the “heavy” sermon previously delivered. This brings up a question. Those brethren who bitterly oppose my suggestion that all sincere immersed believers are in the fellowship, will invite the whole audience to share in the “period of fellowship” after the service. Does this mean that when the unimmersed remain at their invitation and share in the coffee and doughnuts at their insistence, that they “fellowship” them, as they use the term? Or, do they keep their fingers crossed when they pass the coffee to “an outsider.”

“Fellowship” as the Spirit uses the term is not something you turn on and off periodically. If the brethren were not enjoying fellowship during the service, what they do after the service will not be fellowship either. It will be coffee and doughnuts they partake of and not fellowship! So widespread has this misconception become that a lot of folk have forgotten that fellowship is a state of the heart and not of the stomach. Paul was as much in the fellowship when he suffered “through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities . . . hunger” (2 Cor. 6:4, 5), as when he wrote, “I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent” (Phil. 4:18). He had learned “the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want” (Phil. 4:12) without the fellowship being affected one bit.

A feeling of sadness comes over me when I visit brethren who pay lipservice to restoration and then want to show me through “the sanctuary” and “the fellowship hall.” They are wrong on both counts. Instead of restoring the ancient order they have borrowed the first expression from the Roman Catholic Church and the second from the Protestant sectarian world. The only sanctuary God has on this earth today is the consecrated heart of a believer. Here is where the Holy Spirit dwells and not in temples made with men’s hands. Wherever a Christian is there is the temple of God. It was well for the poets of Judaism to say, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go up to the house of our God,’” but now we are the house of God. We do not go to the house of God, it is the house of God that does the going!

Christianity has no sacred places, no sacred days, no sacred rituals. Men can no more erect a “fellowship hall” than they can create “a sanctuary” from bricks and mortar. If we are in Christ Jesus we are in the fellowship regardless of where we may be. Paul was in the fellowship with the saints when he was in the Roman prison and they were in the fellowship with him. Mind you, I am not objecting to the erection of meetinghouses in which the saints may gather about the table of the Lord, nor am I opposing the gathering of the same saints around a table spread with the physical comforts of life. I only say that to confuse the great and majestic concept of “the fellowship of the Spirit” with such occasions and to feel that it is limited and confined to such times is to profane the word.

I seriously question the usage by the saints of such expressions as “a fellowship meeting,” “men’s fellowship,” “women’s fellowship,” “youth fellowship,” etc. The *koinonia* into which we are called of God cannot be divided, parceled out, or segregated in such a manner. None of these are scriptural expressions nor do I believe there are scriptural terms for the ideas they represent or convey. The fellowship is a creation of the Spirit and there is but one Spirit. There is not a men’s Spirit,

a woman's Spirit, and a youth's Spirit. When I meet with the brothers in a special meeting I am as much in the fellowship with the sisters and young people who are not there as with the men who are. There is only one fellowship because there is only one body. There are no separate "brotherhoods" in our Lord.

Every meeting of the disciples is a fellowship meeting just as every such meeting is a communion service. When brethren meet to sing, pray and study together on Wednesday night they have a communion service as certainly as when they gather about the Lord's table on the Lord's Day. The breaking of the bread is not *the communion* of the saints. It is just one phase of it. Whatever we do in union of heart and purpose is part of our communion with each other, because it is done within the framework of brotherhood. When we fragmentize and departmentalize our lives and Christian experience and designate that which is done "after the regular service" as fellowship—equating it with coffeemakers, "Coke" machines, or chocolate covered cupcakes— we profane the word "fellowship" and postpone the recovery of the spirit of the early saints of God.

Have we become inoculated with the spirit of this age until a call to genuine restoration is an offence? Do we really want to restore the word of truth to a place of authority in our lives, or will we heed it only in those areas where it does not cut across our thinking and practice? It will be exceedingly difficult to restore a true sense of fellowship until brethren know what it is that needs to be restored. May we all be humbled to the extent that we shall answer the call of God with the words, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth."

The Making of History

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

It is our personal conviction that history is being made among the heirs of “the restoration movement” in these days. We do not believe that future chroniclers can fail to take note of things which are now transpiring. After almost a century of schism and division, of debate and dissension, hundreds are beginning to hope the trend will be reversed. There are inspiring signs that the party spirit is losing sway over the hearts of men and the Holy Spirit is working mightily within our generation to promote and produce peace. To this revival of the spirit of unity we have been devoting our feeble talents and dedicating our meager efforts.

It is not easy to oppose a traditional attitude. All of us are averse to change. We are afraid of the unfamiliar. We shrink from the shock of modification of that which is hallowed by repeated practice. Some of the things we have been saying about fellowship and unity seem strange to the ears of those who have equated these with conformity and uniformity of opinion. They regard us as traitors to the cause. They think of us as enemies of “the Lord’s church.” It seems to us that you should be informed of this and should know what actions are being taken by us to placate and find common ground with our dissenting brethren. We are not working under cover and what we do is not being done in a corner. We shall share with you in this issue only one phase of the opposition.

The *Firm Foundation* is a respectable journal of wide circulation within the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood. It is edited by our genial and esteemed brother in the faith, Reuel Lemmons. Universally acclaimed for his knowledge and ability, his editorials are read with avid interest by thousands. His speeches and writings wield a powerful force in shaping thought and directing attitudes. His periodical provides a dynamic vantage ground for disseminating his views.

It was about a year ago in his issue of April 3, 1962, that our distinguished brother directed an editorial against my position. The title was “Blind in One Eye” and in it he charged that I had completely lost sight of any former truth I held. He said, “He has swung from the extreme of the narrowest of sectarian spirits to the broadest cover-everything-stand-for-nothing liberalism.” He described the plea that I make as “insidious error,” “gross error,” and “rank liberalism.” He declared that it stemmed from “an erroneous premise” and said in his closing sentence, “Brother Ketcherside is blind in one eye — and if the blind lead the blind they both will fall into the ditch.”

In the intervening months as other articles directed against me were published, brethren who read *Firm Foundation* urged that I write my brother-editor and ask permission to state my views and reply to some of the things being said. I resisted the impulse to do so, contenting myself in publishing notice of the articles and urging the brethren to read them. Finally, at the suggestion of a number of younger preaching brethren in Texas and California, I wrote Brother Lemmons, on November 16, 1962, as follows:

My dear brother in HIM: Recently in *Firm Foundation* a number of articles have appeared in which my name has been mentioned repeatedly. These articles have not been in review (except incidentally) of things which I have written in *MISSION MESSENGER*, but have purportedly been directed toward examination of a

Concourse on Unity in which I was invited to participate as one of the speakers in Denver, Colorado.

A goodly number of readers who are your friends and mine have suggested that I should request permission from you to set forth my views in Firm Foundation so that your readers may be informed of the things for which I contend. The articles which have been offered have not always represented me correctly. If you will permit me to file with you four articles on the subject of fellowship and related issues, I shall make no reference to any brother now living, but will deal with the matters purely as I see them. I will conduct myself as a gentleman and will write in love.

If you will allow me to write and state my own conviction in the same paper which has so often referred to me by name, will you inform me of the maximum length of article which is acceptable? Should there be any doubt about advisability of printing four such articles will you leave it to your readers as to whether or not I should be heard? Enclosed you will find a stamped envelope for reply. With best wishes to you and yours, I am, Yours and HIS. — W. Carl Ketcherside.

To the foregoing, our brother sent the following very gracious reply under date of November 27, 1962:

Dear Brother Ketcherside: In reply to your letter of November 16, I want to say that I will be happy to allow you to be heard in the pages of the Firm Foundation. I think you should be. You know no editor would commit himself unequivocally until he has seen the material you wish to present, but I know of no reason why it should not be welcomed.

Brother Ketcherside, your letter indicates that you feel you have been misrepresented in references to you in articles in the Firm Foundation. If you write these articles, I will expect you to point out where and how you have

been misrepresented. I shall expect them to cite the quotations which misrepresented you, and show that either (A) You made no such statement. (B) That the quotation is taken out of context. (C) That it has been given a meaning contrary to your own. (D) Explain what you did mean by the quotation.

Brother Ketcherside, you and I know that you could make in the Firm Foundation a very wonderful gesture saying a lot of good things and things which all of us believe. These things are well to say all right, but they leave the impression that anyone who would differ with you is out of his head. There are, I think, some very valid grounds for differences, and while one might agree with you on all the good things you could say, I shall not expect you to use the Firm Foundation for the same purpose as you use the MISSION MESSENGER. I will be happy to allow you to be heard concerning anything in which you think you have been misrepresented, but I would want you to deal with those points. That, of course, does not limit the articles to those things only, but it would not be profitable to give the articles entirely to things all sensible Christians thoroughly agree without facing up to the things on which we disagree.

As to the length of the articles, they should not exceed three pages double spaced with fairly narrow margins as this is what is required for one page in the Firm Foundation. I try to limit, as you know, articles in the Firm Foundation to one page in length.

I leave immediately for South America and will be returning December 20, if you need that information. Yours in the Faith, *Reuel Lemmons*.

I prepared the first two articles which I titled "The Scattered Flock" and "Walking Together." On December 20, I mailed them with this letter:

My dear Reuel: "Grace, mercy and peace, be unto

you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

According to your gracious letter of November 27, this is the day upon which you planned to arrive home from your long and arduous journey. I have been praying that His providence would so coincide with your program as to enable you to carry it out upon schedule, and I will be deeply grateful when I learn that such was the case. Realizing that you are returning to a desk piled high with mail, I am reluctant to offer a lengthy reply to yours of November 27, yet “I beseech you, of your clemency, to hear of me these few words” which I send in conjunction with the first two articles I am submitting.

I have sought to place myself in your position as editor and have written accordingly. It has been my intention to conform to the suggestions and restrictions set forth in your letter, without engaging in any reflection upon the brethren who have so frequently spread my name upon the pages of your esteemed journal. I want to lessen tensions, not promote them; to plead for peace and not for personal vindication. You suggest the possibility of my using the paper in such a manner that I would leave the impression that anyone who would differ with me was out of his head. To avoid any accusation of ulterior motive, I have tried to be frank and positive while, at the same time, maintaining that attitude of courtesy and restraint which seems to me to best become the profession we make.

Reuel, it is not necessary that you concur with what I write to be revered and respected as my brother in Him who died for the sins of us both. I love you very dearly in Him, and I want to labor with you, as you can permit in good conscience, to promote His will on earth as it is done in heaven. Because I am answerable unto Him I must be free in regard to conviction, and I am certainly willing to allow you the same freedom I claim for myself. There are areas of difference between us but there is nothing which either of us holds which is as important as the blood He shed and His love which holds us both.

I am not editing a rival journal to Firm Foundation. I would not expect to use your paper for the same purpose that I use MISSION MESSENGER. I am fully cognizant that we serve different areas and segments and that there will be some conflicts. But the circle of His love is great enough to encompass both of us with our respective missions without our being rivals. For that reason I cordially invite you to feel free at any time to submit any article which you deem to be profitable for the readers of our little periodical. We will gladly give it our earnest consideration. I recognize how meager and feeble is our effort in contrast with your own, but each of us must labor in the sphere and role in which divine destiny has cast him. I find it no problem at all to rejoice with joy unspeakable in that greater realm of service to which you have been called.

I shall, within the week, submit two additional articles, to make up the four to which I referred in my previous letter. I trust that they will meet the requirement for publication even though they may not merit your approval in content. Allow me to wish for you a happy and prosperous coming year and with very sincere good wishes and prayers for you and yours, to be as ever, Yours and HIS, *Carl*.

Within the next week I prepared the next two articles under the titles “The Concerned Ones,” and “Receive Him Not Into Your House.” These I mailed on December 29, with the following letter:

My dear brother in HIM: “Grace, mercy and peace, be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I have the honor, through your courtesy and graciousness, to submit the other two articles about which I wrote to you earlier. I have sought to present these in such a spirit as would commend them to your consideration and that of your readers, even those who

will disagree with what I have written. It has been my intention to imitate the apostle in giving “no offense to the church of God.”

You will recognize at once, I am sure, that these articles can lay no claim to greatness, either as respects content or literary method. I do not have the poignant power of expression, nor possess the trenchant pen, with which you have been blessed. I do have a great love for all of my brethren in the Lord who will be reading these things through your gratuitous spirit, and unseen and unknown as they will be to me, I pray ever so eagerly and earnestly as I post these to you that somehow, someway, the Holy Spirit may take this feeble effort and use it to the furtherance of His kingdom among men.

It may seem to you presumptuous that I should again suggest to you that if you ever have anything you should like to address to our readers the opportunity is tendered to you to do so, in love. I realize the fact full well that our little journal is quite insignificant in every way in comparison to Firm Foundation, and when I read of journals edited by the brethren which seek to increase their circulation by some 25,000 names, I think how honored I would feel if that were our total circulation. However, there is a possibility that we may reach a different audience than you do, small though it may seem to you, and if your heart burns within you with a message which you should like to convey to these which represent many different factions and segments of the Christian realm, I will be pleased to offer them what you have to say which will draw us closer to the divine ideal.

One word more. I trust there will be no serious repercussion from any because you have allowed me to be heard in your columns. It is my prayer that His Spirit will so infect our beings with the attitude of equity and mercy that we shall become increasingly more willing to hear each other as time goes on. I close with the hope that the divine blessing shall be granted you in the coming year,

and that all of us will be drawn a little closer to each other by being drawn closer unto HIM. May His grace sustain you in all good things unto His glory. *Carl.*

A good many weeks elapsed after I sent the first two articles, and finally on February 9, I received them all back, with the following letter:

Dear Brother Ketcherside: I have had your articles for a month now, and have studied them carefully. The more I study them the plainer it is that you have not complied with the second paragraph or my letter of November 27.

I am returning them to you. In the first place, you can write a much better series of articles. In the second place, these do not deal directly with the criticisms of you; but rather, state a host of good things with most of which every fair-minded person in the brotherhood would agree. On most of the points upon which you touched, you have never been criticized.

In accord with the third paragraph of my letter, I am still willing for you to be heard through the Firm Foundation. Both I and others have had critical things to say of your position. I most assuredly would not deny you the right of answering your critics. But when your articles appear in the Firm Foundation, I want them to be an attempt at least to answer your critics. If you wish to answer the "charges frequently made" in accord with paragraph 2 of my letter, then I will gladly give the space.

The articles I am returning leave the impression that some minor little points are, at most, all brethren could criticize you for. I will gladly give you space to say that you do not believe the things you have been charged with believing, and that you do not hold the positions you are charged with holding. All the brotherhood would be glad to see that.

The door is still open in accord with my former

letter. Yours in the Faith, *Reuel Lemmons*.

On the same day that I received the articles back, I again wrote to my esteemed brother as follows:

My dear brother in HIM: Thank you for your graciousness in returning the manuscripts. Due to the long interval elapsing I was reconciled to the fact that you did not intend to publish them, and was awaiting a communication stating why you would refuse to do so.

I have also carefully studied them again and the more I do so, the plainer it becomes that I did comply with the second paragraph of your letter of November 27. I set forth quotations which misrepresented me and I showed (1) that they were given a meaning contrary to my own; (2) I explained what I meant by the quotation. In the instance of the last article I actually answered a question proposed by a brother who was writing about my position on 2 John 9, 10. I feel quite certain that my articles did deal directly with criticisms of me and of my position.

Brother Lemmons, I sought in an amicable spirit to answer my critics within the space you gave me. It seems obvious that I must allow you to determine the nature of the defence I make, if I am to be heard in the columns of Firm Foundation. I cannot allow you to write my articles for they must be expressions of my own heart and life. I sought to make those I submitted just that, and wrote the best that I knew how to write.

I think the most significant statement in your last letter is that the articles I submitted "state a host of good things with most of which every fair-minded person in the brotherhood would agree. On most of the points upon which you touched, you have never been criticized." It is a genuine pleasure to me to know that these articles generally represent the thinking of the fair-minded members of the brotherhood, and hereafter when I find brethren disagreeing with most of what I expressed in the

articles I shall conclude that they are not “fair-minded persons” by your definition.

May the grace of God, the love of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship of the Spirit, abide with you and yours is the humble prayer of yours and His, *Carl*.

We are taking the liberty of presenting the articles rejected by our brother. We do this for several reasons. (1) We want the brethren who urged us to write to the *Firm Foundation* to know that we tried and to see what we submitted. While we regret that readers of the *Firm Foundation* will not see our replies, we believe that our own readers are entitled to see them. (2) Brother Lemmons says that these “state a host of good things” and we would not want you to be deprived of any good thing contained in them. (3) Our good brother also states that “every fair-minded person in the brotherhood would agree” with most of the things they contain, so they can be considered as a statement in general (not in every particular) of those things for which Brother Lemmons and other fair-minded brethren would contend. (4) The material covered in these articles is evaluated by our brother as containing “some minor little points” which have never been the subject of criticism. You will observe that the first article deals with the nature of fellowship, the second with a controversial Old Testament scripture, the third with the nature of the church, and the fourth with a controversial New Testament scripture.

For the benefit of our readers who would like to subscribe for the *Firm Foundation*, let us mention that the mailing address is Post Office Box 77, Austin 61, Texas. The subscription price is four dollars per year in advance, and the paper is issued weekly. We are certain that the editor would appreciate your reaction to the articles.

In recent months we have made it a subject of our entreaty at the throne of mercy that we might be so guided and influenced by the indwelling Spirit as to allow our “speech to be always

seasoned with salt so that we may know how to give answer to every man.” If we have fallen short of the ideal in this issue, will you please forgive us and join in prayer that we may grow in *grace* as well as in knowledge of the truth. We want to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. We can best serve our Father by being kind to His other children. Pray for us that we may be fair and just to all.

The Scattered Flock

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

For several months in the immediate past my name has appeared frequently in the pages of *Firm Foundation* as various brethren have taken issue with my views on fellowship and the unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. In one article, appearing in the issue of November 27, 1962, it was charged among other things too numerous to mention, that I am fathering a new sect; that I profess to travel the way of love for all and fellowship for any error; that I use, almost exclusively, the Authentic Version of the New Testament, by Schonfield; that I think I am another “Campbell,” etc. At the suggestion of many interested brethren I have made application to the editor and my esteemed brother in the Lord, Reuel Lemmons, for permission to submit four articles in which I shall briefly state some of my own views. To this he has graciously consented within certain limitations and restraints which I will earnestly attempt to observe and respect.

The statements I make will not be dogmatic or arbitrary. I will love and revere those who cannot concur with my expressions as much as I do those who agree. The readers of this journal have a right to know what one advocates who is publicly charged within its pages after the manner referred to above. I shall come directly to the point. It is my conviction that all sectarianism is sin. It is the *party spirit* as translated in Galatians 5:20 (RSV) and is a work of the flesh. It will debar from

inheritance in the kingdom of God. Instead of fathering a new sect I am dedicated to the destruction of all sects by grubbing out the root from which they grow—the party spirit.

The church of God is no sect, and no sect is the church of God. But we have become sectarian in our attitude. Our very usage of the term “Church of Christ” as employed to designate, in an exclusive sense, merely that segment of God’s people who do not employ instrumental music in the corporate worship, is sectarian. Every child of God on earth is in the church of Christ, but not every such child is in the “Church of Christ.” “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” but not all of these have been gathered into one corral. God’s sheep are a scattered flock, and not yet a gathered one. Some of them are caught in strange sectarian thickets. I shall gain nothing by denying that they belong to Him, or by assailing them because of the unfortunate chain of circumstances in life which led them into their present association.

I suffer from no illusions about being “another Campbell.” I know how very meager is my approach to our problems and how feeble is my ability. I freely confess my own factional attitude in the past and I am ashamed of it. I am thankful to be one of the humbler heirs of the restoration which Alexander Campbell said was “a project to unite the Christians in all the sects.” I do not consider that project as completed. Instead, we have fragmented the restoration movement until in many cities there are a dozen or more different kinds of “The Church of Christ.” Each of these proclaims itself to be “the loyal church” and refuses to call upon those from another splinter group to address the Father in their public meetings. In our present divided state, no segment or faction is “the faithful church” to the exclusion of all others. There are some in every segment who are as faithful as they know how to be; there are some in each who are a disgrace to their profession.

Our present state is the result of a mistaken concept of

fellowship. Fellowship is not endorsement. Paul did not endorse the attitudes or conditions at Corinth but he was in fellowship with those who constituted the church of God. Bad as they were, they were recruits from the pagan realm who had pledged allegiance to Jesus Christ. They were His representatives in spite of their human defects. The apostle called them saints, brethren, babes in Christ, God's building, God's temple, and beloved children—all in the first four chapters in which he deals with their divisive tendencies. He does this for the simple reason that they had been "called into the fellowship" (1 Cor. 1:9). Fellowship is that state or condition into which we are called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13, 14). As regards our relationship unto God, it is sonship; as regards our relationship to one another, it is brotherhood.

Every sincere believer in the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus, who has been immersed in validation of that faith, is God's child and my brother. He is a member of the one body by an act of God. He may, through ignorance, environment, previous training, or other cause, affiliate himself with something else, believing that in so doing he can best demonstrate his allegiance to the Lord. This does not mean he is no longer a Christian, but it may mean he is a Christian in an organization God does not sanction. A Christian is one "in Christ" and such a person in the United States, like some of those in Christ at Corinth, may be in a party of his own choosing. He is my brother in spite of this and I need to regard him as such, even as I deplore the partisan walls behind which he seeks refuge.

I am not, of course, pleading for "fellowship of any error." Fellowship is a relationship between persons. Our spiritual fellowship is the result of the indwelling Spirit. It is called "the fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil. 2:12; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is but one Spirit and if that Spirit dwells in me, I am united through Christ, with everyone else in whom that Spirit abides. The Holy Spirit does not recognize our artificial lines or barriers. He is

neither factional nor sectional. He dwells in none of us because we are free from all error; he sanctions no error at all of those in whom he dwells. It is unthinkable that I should avow love for one of my brothers in the Lord and then refuse to call upon him to pray to our Father, simply because he does not agree with me about the millennium, instrumental music, cups, classes, colleges, fermented wine, breaking the bread, uninspired literature, charitable institutions, national television programs, or all that motley host of things which have shivered us to bits.

Every child of God is my brother. I may not approve of where he is or of all that he thinks. I am not obligated to love the things he does or the opinions he holds, but I am obligated to love him because he is my brother and is, therefore, in the fellowship of which I am a part, through the grace of God. That love must not be “in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). To deny fraternity is an insult to our mutual paternity. It is a reflection against Him who is “the God and Father of us all.”

I must be tolerant toward my brethren who honestly differ with my views and interpretations. Tolerance is not *endorsing things* that are wrong but *enduring those* who think they are right!

Walking Together

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

“Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Although the prophet Amos was not even remotely referring to fellowship, the subject is seldom discussed in these days without this passage being introduced. This has become a traditional text for sermons on unity, although those who so use it are pleading for conformity under the mistaken impression that it constitutes unity. In the issue of November 27, 1962, a brother in Christ referring to me, wrote, “His interpretation of many texts, Amos 3:3 as an example, is at variance with many of the best and most capable scholars of the past and present.”

For more than five years before I wrote the first series of articles under the heading “Thoughts on Fellowship” I did voluminous research on the meaning of every passage I had previously used to justify my own factional position. No passage received more attention than the one now under review. I did not find a single scholar of reputation, either past or contemporary, who sanctioned the interpretation current among our preaching brethren. The mere reading of other versions than the King James, or even a careful study of the context, will demonstrate how far afield we roam in our attempt to find scriptural backing for pre-conceived notions.

Common experience teaches that two can walk together who disagree about many things. In my father’s family there

were six children. We did not always agree with each other or with our parents, but we did not destroy or dissolve the family relationship. Frequently a husband and wife disagree, and seriously so, yet they maintain their unity. I walk with many with whom I disagree on some matters of scriptural interpretation. If I did not, I would not walk with any, for I have yet to meet the person who sees everything as I do. There is not a congregation on the earth in which all of the members agree, but many of them walk and work together in harmony.

We are all willing to allow for wide divergency and disagreement except in the thing which is made the party test. This constitutes our unwritten creed and around it we construct our partisan walls. If it is an interpretation of Revelation 20, we will not walk together with those who do not agree on this point. If we belong to a post-millennial party we must proscribe and hound out those who do not concur. We will tolerate great areas of difference about the meaning of other chapters without dissolving partnership, but all must agree upon this one. If we belong to a pre-millennial party we cannot walk with those who are not agreed. Regardless of how spotless or stainless the character of a person may be, this counts for nothing unless he can bend and bring his mind into submission to the party norm. The same can be said of every partisan test of “fellowship” whether it be cups, classes, colleges, charitable institutions, or whatever else has been allowed to drive us into rival camps.

The ancient prophet was not writing to provide for us a basis of fellowship in Christ Jesus. He was a humble herdsman, summoned from his daily labor to carry the message of God to the luxury-loving and profligate court of Jeroboam II, ruler of the ten tribe kingdom of Israel. It was necessary to justify his reason for being at Bethel, in the king’s sanctuary. This he does by a remarkable speech on the topic of cause and effect. He asks a series of questions about matters with which his hearers are familiar. The one under consideration is the first in this sequence (3:3-8). The RSV correctly translates it, “Do two walk together,

unless they have made an appointment?”

A lion roaring in the forest indicates he has found prey. A young lion snarling in his den indicates he has food. A bird falling in a snare signifies the trigger was set. A snare suddenly springing up from the ground indicates the presence of an intruder. People in a city, running in panic, indicates the trumpet has sounded an alarm. Two persons walking together is an indication they have made an appointment. By the same token, the presence of a prophet in a community, is proof that God has a message for the people who reside there, since “the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets” (verse 7). “The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” It is as natural for the true prophet to speak what God reveals as for a lion to roar in the forest when he has taken prey.

The word “agreed” is from the Hebrew *yaad*, a primitive root, defined by *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, “To fix upon (by agreement or appointment); by implication to meet (at a stated time), to summon (to trial), to direct (in a certain quarter or position), to engage (for marriage).” The expression has nothing to do with intellectual or philosophic conformity. When you saw two people walking together you could assume they had made a prior appointment. They had simply agreed to meet but the purpose of the meeting was not under consideration. They might have met to discuss their *differences* as they walked together.

In our thickly populated areas one might easily run into an acquaintance and walk along with him. Amos did not live in such an area. J. R. Dummelow, M.A., translates with the words, “have an appointment,” and says, “If two people were seen walking together in the desolate regions with which Amos was familiar it might be assumed they had not met by chance. Nothing happens by chance. There is a reason and a cause for Israel’s calamities.”

We have rendered this passage in such a manner as to promote and defend schism and division among sincere brethren who could not conscientiously conform to the party norm. We have been betrayed into the false philosophy that doctrinal purity can be secured only by separation from brethren. Our fallacious thinking has led us to the point that we conceive of but one ultimate aim when differences arise— division; and but one universal attempt at solution when division comes— partisan debate. If we continue this reckless course we will divide ourselves out of existence.

I can walk together with those with whom I do not agree. I have resolved to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. If the Father can accept me into His fellowship in spite of my frailties, failures, and limited knowledge, I can recognize all others who are in His fellowship on the same basis. If they are good enough to walk with Him they are not too bad for me to walk with them. I can even walk together with those who *disagree* with me about the meaning of *agree*. Our unity is in Christ Jesus. He is our peace. I have resolved to walk together with all who are in Him in spite of our differences!

The Concerned Ones

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

There is only one church on earth. There never was but one, there will never be another. The church is a divine organism. It is not a human organization. It is the body of Christ and every saved person on earth is a member of it. There is really no such thing as The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, or The Presbyterian Church. These are parties created by men. They have been divisive because they are the outgrowth of the party spirit. Neither is there any such thing as The Christian Church, The Church of God, or The Church of Christ. There are parties wearing these titles, among the believers in Christ, but the church of God is greater than any of them and more majestic than all of them put together.

No sect, faction, or segment now in existence, can lay claim to exclusive possession of all the saints of God within its ranks. The Lord's church cannot be numbered. No census bureau can enumerate its adherents. Such a bureau can catalog the number of members affiliated with the various parties and can publish the statistics of such parties for comparative purposes, but only the Lord knoweth all that are His. We delude ourselves when we refer to the group of believers with which we are affiliated as "the Lord's church" to the exclusion of all others. This great truth, acknowledged and defended by all of our restoration forefathers is now labeled "liberalism" and branded as "new doctrine." This is an indication of how sectarian we have become

in the past few decades.

It is our growing sectarian attitude which makes it impossible for us to appreciate the magnificent scope of the kingdom of heaven, and renders our radio pleas for unity ineffective and invalid. Many of us are not really appealing for a unity of believers in Christ at all. We are simply trying to get everyone else to join our party. We confuse “the unity of the Spirit” with uniformity of interpretation and conformity in opinion. The day is past when such a puerile approach will make any impact upon the hearts of thinking people. There is a great yearning for oneness which cuts across all artificial barriers. The sheep of God, scattered over the sectarian hills, are lifting up their heads and hearing once again the call of the Shepherd for a closer walk with God— and a closer walk with men of a kindred spirit.

I think an injustice is done to my own feeble effort to promote “peace upon earth among men of good will” because of my apparent inability to communicate effectively my true convictions to my brethren. This gives rise to such statements as the following which appeared in *Firm Foundation*, November 27, 1962:

The creed advocates tolerance, fellowship, brotherhood, compromise, amalgamation and finally a loose federation with ‘Christians of all denominations.’ It is presently being called ‘the fellowship of the concerned,’ a term that appears often in Bro. Carl’s paper. Carl admits by his slogan, that he will reject the ‘unconcerned.’ He is therefore not in fellowship with all his brethren— some are not concerned with his new hobby.

I overlook the use of the term “hobby” because I have long ago learned that in our parlance a sectarian is one who has something we oppose, and a hobbyist is one who opposes something we have. I oppose our limited, provincial and traditional view of fellowship and its equation with endorsement.

I consider it to be divisive and factional. But I am in the fellowship with all of my brethren, even those who are not immediately concerned with my plea for oneness. Fellowship is brotherhood, and I can no more choose my spiritual brothers than I could my fleshly ones. Brotherhood is a product of mutual fatherhood.

I borrowed the expression “fellowship of the concerned ones” from Dr. Elton Trueblood. It relates to those in every faction, fragment, sect and segment, whose vision reaches beyond their partisan walls and whose horizon is not defined by traditional lines. This does not mean that the concerned ones are unconcerned about “the unconcerned.” I love and cherish all of my brethren whether they concur in my concerns or not. But it is only the concerned ones who will do anything tangible to relieve the scandal of division and alleviate the tragedy of schism. I think that the Holy Spirit is motivating the hearts of these all over the world to re-evaluate their positions in the light of God’s revelation. And I have something in common with all who are concerned about the problem of religious division. I love all of these and I propose to go among them whenever a door is opened unto me and lift up my voice with theirs in a plea for restoration of the spirit of the primitive saints of God.

I do advocate “tolerance, fellowship and brotherhood,” but I do not advocate “compromise, amalgamation and finally a loose federation with Christians of all denominations.” Instead, I advocate the destruction and abolition of all sectarian and denominational tendencies as being inimical to the eternal purpose of God. I simply plead for a *recognition* that there are Christians in the sects. God’s family is not all united in a practical and workable program of service, thus His will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven. We have allowed Satan to divide us into rival camps. We are expending our energies and resources in fighting believers with whom we should be united. If we can sit down and discuss our problems as *brethren* rather than as enemies; if we can cease to debate each other as aliens,

perhaps we can accomplish through love what we have never been able to achieve by partisan strife.

It will help us to remember that not a single apostolic injunction to be of one mind or to achieve harmony, was ever written to bring men into the fellowship. Every such admonition was given to those who were in the fellowship and because they were in it. A recognition of fellowship was to precede and help to produce unanimity of thought. "If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart . . . any sharing of the Spirit fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind and a common care for unity" (Phil. 2:1, 2). Fellowship is not conditioned upon thinking and feeling alike, but these are conditioned upon recognition of fellowship.

All of my brethren, beloved in the Lord, who read these lines, are in the same fellowship as myself. Not all will agree with what I say but this will in no sense militate against my love and respect for them. We are in the fellowship through an act of divine grace and all of us are striving amidst human weakness to come to a greater understanding of His will and purpose for our lives. Fellowship is a sharing with Him and a sharing with each other.

Receive Him Not Into Your House

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

In the *Firm Foundation*, Oct. 30, 1962, a brother in the Lord used more than a page to deal with my understanding of 2 John 9. After giving his own interpretation he asked, "Why then should any one think 'the doctrine of Christ' in 2 John 9 should be limited to mean the teaching concerning the deity of Christ?" I want to answer that question because I believe the meaning of this verse is relevant to reduction of factionalism and restoration of unity to the saints of God. The expression, "If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house," has been used as a basis for treating with cold disdain every brother who could not in good conscience conform to the party norm. "This doctrine" has been made to refer to varied views relative to instrumental music, missionary societies, the millennium, colleges, cups, classes, charitable institutions, radio and television programs, and every other unwritten creed compiled to harass and hamper the heirs of a noble restoration movement which was originally begun as "a project to unite the Christians in all sects."

It is my conviction that the apostle of love had no intention of handing us a convenient club with which to batter our brethren who sincerely disagree with us about these, or kindred matters. His purpose was to prevent the disciples from being exploited by those who would deny the very foundation of the faith rather than furnish a foundation for the strife and division

which today exists among believers in the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus. The limited space available to me will not allow a detailed explanation but I suggest the following points for consideration.

It is generally conceded that John wrote his gospel record and his first and second letters to combat Gnosticism. Ephesus, where he resided, was also the home of Cerinthus, leader of the faction which was dividing every congregation in the Greek world. Basic to every form of gnosticism was the belief that all matter was evil and the material world could not have been created directly by God. This led to a denial of the incarnation. Jesus was considered to have been the son of Joseph and Mary, and adopted as the Son of God at his baptism when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven to abide upon Him. It was concluded that, since God could not die, the Spirit returned to heaven before His crucifixion. The Docetics regarded Jesus as a mere phantom and without reality. John was spared to strike the death blow to this combination of Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism exactly as Paul had rescued the called ones from the narrow confines of Judaistic legalism.

In 1 John, chapter 1, he refutes the Docetics by affirming the visual, audible and manual proof of Jesus. Immediately he lays down the principle that Jesus is the eternal life, that he shared preexistence with the Father, and was manifested unto men. Incidentally, he affirms that it is this message which is the basis of our fellowship with the Father and Son, as well as with each other. In 2:18 the apostle refers to certain characters whom he designates as antichrists. In the following verse he shows they were schismatists and separatists. In verse 22 he labels them "liars" and in verse 26 "deceivers."

These are clearly identified. "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son." In 4:1, he proposes a test of the spirit motivating the teachers and proclaimers. In the following

verses the test itself is provided. “Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.” He adds, “This is the spirit of antichrist.”

The second epistle is addressed to an excellent lady accustomed to entertaining Christian teachers in her house. Perhaps the ekklesia of God convened there for worship. In verse 7 the apostle refers to the fact that “many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is a deceiver and the antichrist.” In the immediate context he declares that “any one who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” A comparison with 1 John 2:23 shows that “No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.” Thus, John equates “not abiding in the doctrine of Christ” with “denying the Son.” He shows that such denial has to do with the incarnation. He equates “abiding in the doctrine of Christ” with “confessing the Son.” This is the ground upon which one has both the Father and the Son.

John is warning against “deceivers who have gone out into the world” (2 John 7) whom he identifies as “false prophets that have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). In both instances these are identified as those who deny that Jesus has come in the flesh. He warns the elect lady, “If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.” Fortunately our brethren are better than their unwritten creeds. Those who take the position that *this doctrine* refers to divergent views about instrumental music, orphan homes, cups, classes, colleges, or the millennium, not only receive into their houses those who hold such divergent views, but will spend huge sums of money on advertising trying to get them to “come unto them.” When one does come, the ushers will run halfway across the house to “give him greeting” and hand him a songbook so he can “join in the worship” with

them. Of course, they would not call upon him to pray, but will encourage him to speak to God in “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

I think it is obvious that whoever is referred to in this passage must not be allowed to come into a Christian assembly. He must be met at the door of the house and turned back without greeting. If the brethren apply this passage to all who differ with them on matters of interpretation or opinion they sin every time they invite one of them to come into their house or grant him the courtesy of a greeting. As usual, our orthodoxy drives us to some strange and ridiculous evasions of plain teaching. Those who assert that “this doctrine” implies a correct view of everything the apostles wrote find themselves in the unenviable position of disobeying what the apostle wrote about what to do with those who disobey. Our mistaken brethren are not antichrists.

Doctrine and Doctrines

Mission Messenger (May 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

It is possible that many of our readers may become bored with our repeated insistence on the necessity of recapturing the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. Our emphasis stems from recognition of the fact that a direct relationship exists between an idea and the language used to express it. Words are but symbols of ideas. They are the bodies in which ideas become clothed and through which they exhibit themselves. It is difficult for one mind to project an image within it to another mind so that it will be reflected there in an undistorted impression. The purpose of language is to act as a means of communication to transmit through recognized symbols the ideas which exist in one mind, to other minds.

In his revelation of the divine mind to human consciousness, God made use of that means of communication adapted to and employed by rational beings. The divine agent of revelation, the Holy Spirit, conveyed the message of heaven in words. It is not necessary that we take time here to discuss all of the theories which men have devised to explain or account for the means of transmission. In their final analysis these are merely the words of men about the word of God. If we accept the fact of the revelation of the thoughts of God we must admit the employment of words, for this is the means by which thoughts are transmitted. In the same context in which God affirms, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts," he also says, "So shall my

word be that goes forth out of my mouth.”

If the thoughts of God are of sufficient value to man that God saw fit to reveal them, they must be of such worth to man that it is in his eternal interest to grasp them, or exert every rational effort to do so. In order to the accomplishment of this, man must discover and employ the vocabulary of the Spirit. He must know the terms the Spirit used and the significance attached to those terms when used. It is useless to argue that the important thing is to derive the idea and it is not important to consider the language. No idea can exist apart from the body of a word to clothe it. One cannot think except in words nor convey what he thinks apart from words. Our words are vehicles of thought.

Those who rebel at word studies not only reveal their current ignorance of thought processes but also doom themselves to ignorance in the future. Indeed, those who file objections to word analysis must use words by which to do so, and those who understand their objections can only do so because they have learned the significance of words. There are those who believe that we should purify our concepts and then our language will automatically become pure. This is “putting the cart before the horse.” If we begin to use the language of the Spirit our meditation will enable us to grasp the meaning of the Spirit.

Our carelessness in the use of words may be one contributory factor to the religious divisions of our day. I shall cite one example. It is common parlance to speak about “the *doctrines* of the new testament.” A short time ago I received notice of a lectureship, the theme of which was, “Great Doctrines of the Church.” I shall not deal with the palpable error involved in the expression “doctrines of *the church*,” but will limit myself to the word “doctrines.”

Even a cursory examination of the sacred text will show

that the plural form of the word was never used with reference to the divine revelation. The word “doctrines” only occurs five times in the sacred scriptures, old or new. It is applied to the “doctrines of men,” the “doctrines of demons,” and to “strange (foreign) doctrines.” The revelation of heaven is not composed of so many varied and divergent philosophies, theories or speculations. One will search in vain to read about “the doctrines of Christ,” or “the doctrines of the apostles.” There were a number of apostles but there was only one doctrine!

Herein lies the great danger in creedal forms and confessions. Men distil the word of God through finite minds and seek to bind their varied understandings and interpretations upon others as a rule of faith and practice. To deviate from the party creed is then equated with departing from the living God. Conformity rather than community becomes the goal. Fellowship must succumb to dogmatism. When the cycle has run its jaded course and Christian charity again begins to assert itself, all too often there arises the feeling that all of these forms and expressions constitute the “doctrines of the historic church.” A new creed is written which, in effect, embraces all of the old ones in a spirit of ecumenicity.

It is not the charity which produces this spirit that is wrong. It should have been exercised all of the time and would have prevented the original stifling of liberty in Christ Jesus by creedal shackles. Nor is it the goal of that spirit—the gathering of the scattered forces—that is sinful, because our blessed Lord prayed for that very thing. The error lies in enshrining all of the varied creedal forms as “doctrines of the church” and thus binding upon future generations a conglomerate creed which will grow into orthodoxy. Ecumenical orthodoxy is as serious a danger as any other!

It is indeed a strange anomaly when we divide the body by “the doctrines of men,” and then seek to heal our breaches by transmuting all of these into the doctrine of God. We are not

alchemists who can change base metals into gold. Let men who respect the authority of God, limit themselves in their conferences to the language of the Spirit. If the Spirit has used no language suitable to convey the idea, it must become evident that the idea itself was not revealed by God.

This is not equivalent to saying that the word of God is a meticulous and scrupulous revelation of every detail. It is simply a plea that if we are to be the people of God we demonstrate our fidelity by respect for the doctrine of God.

The Unequal Yoke

Mission Messenger (June 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

It is rather astounding to observe how we become victims of traditional explanations of the scriptures and transmit them to others with no real personal examination of their validity. Perhaps no better example can be found than the common application of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. We are constantly receiving letters in which good brothers and sisters cite this passage as the ground for their separation from those who differ with them about some of the things such as cups, classes, or colleges, which we have allowed to fragment the heirs of the restoration movement. I doubt that any faction has been formed in our generation whose members did not quote as justification for their action, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

Although we have commented at some length about this portion of Paul's writings in previous years, it seems that little we have said has made any great impact. At the risk of being repetitious we are going to ask you to study again with us the implications of the passage. Let us first read it together so we may know exactly what the inspired writer said.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

I think it is obvious that the expression, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” has no reference to the marriage relationship. Certainly it would not be advisable for a believer to unite in marriage with an unbeliever. Marriage is such an intimate relationship that it requires much that is held in common by the two participants in order to assure the success of the union. In view of the fact that our religious convictions are entwined with our deepest emotional constitution we disregard at our peril the warning signs which grace the entrance to the highway of matrimony. But while all of this is true, the passage before us has nothing to do with the subject.

To regard it as referring to marriage would be to violate two vital rules of logical interpretation. These are: (1) No passage must be so interpreted as to contradict the apparent meaning of another passage; (2) In any interpretation involving two passages, one of which is obvious and the other obscure, the obscure must always be interpreted in the light of the plain, and never the reverse. Whatever relationship is signified by “yoked” in verse 14, it must be culminated at once by action of the believer and the culmination must be abrupt separation (verse 17).

However, the apostle had shortly before this written to the

same brethren and instructed those who were married to unbelievers not to separate from them. He recognized that the unbeliever might leave and said, “If the unbelieving depart, let him depart.” But any separation must be the action of the unbeliever, for the instruction is, “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him” (1 Cor. 7:12, 13). That this has to do with marriage is obvious from the entire adjacent context as well as the usage of the terms “husband” and “wife.”

The “yoking together” in 2 Corinthians 6:14 could not refer to marriage for whatever relationship it signified must be terminated by the aggressive act of the believer. It would have been very confusing indeed for the Corinthian believers to receive one letter from the apostle telling them neither to put away nor leave their unbelieving spouses, and then receive another letter instructing them to separate from those to whom they were yoked. We must conclude, I think, that “unequally yoked together” has no relationship to marriage in this context. I believe that all such use of the passage has been misuse or abuse.

Perhaps this is as good a time as any to point out that the general tenor of the passage indicates a corporate action. The purpose of separation is to form a people for God and thus to compose the temple of God. To “touch the unclean thing” whatever it might be (and we shall refer to it later), would profane God’s temple. That temple composed of his sons and daughters, as living stones, is to be free from contact with defilement or pollution.

We will follow the text in the King James Version, not because it is the best rendering, but because it is the one most commonly followed by those who refer us to the passage as justification for division among brethren. Immediately it becomes apparent that Paul was writing about two forces in the

world which were antagonistic to each other. These had not one thing in common and for that reason no common ties should be sought between them and no alliances of any kind should be formed. There are two proper names used which have great significance— Christ and Belial. These are the leaders of the two great forces of righteousness and unrighteousness, of light and darkness. One determined where he stood by which of these he accorded his allegiance.

Notice that there are six terms used to define these two conflicting hosts and six additional terms descriptive of affinity. In five instances a question is posed which shows that these are opposite and not apposite and there is no basis upon which they can establish any mutual relationship. The six terms used to identify the one group are: believers (by implication), righteousness, light, Christ, he that believeth, and the temple of God. The terms employed to identify the opposition are: unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, an infidel, idols. The word “infidel” in verse 15 is the same in the original as that translated “unbelievers” in the preceding verse. The six words of relationship are: yoked, fellowship, communion, concord, part and agreement.

Let us now consider the conditions existing in Corinth which would give rise to Paul’s special concern that those who shared in the promises should cleanse themselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit. The city was so situated that it was “the mart of the Greek world.” If you will consult your map you will see that the southern part of Greece is joined to the remainder by a narrow neck of land only four miles across. All of the land traffic from north to south must pass across this narrow strip because there was no way to bypass it. The city of Corinth stood athwart this little neck which made southern Greece a peninsula instead of an island.

While north and south traffic was funneled through Corinth by necessity, most of the east and west shipping passed

through the city by choice. It was a little more than two hundred miles around Cape Malea from the suburban harbor town of Lechaëum on the west to the suburban harbor town of Cenchrea on the east. This was a dangerous and dreaded journey because sailing conditions were so hazardous around the cape that the sailors had a proverbial saying, "Let him who sails around Malea first make his will." For that reason most small boats were placed on rollers and dragged across the four mile isthmus, while the cargo of larger vessels was transported by porters and cartage companies to be loaded on other vessels.

All the rich luxury items of the ancient world passed through Corinth and since it was easier to sell at a reduction than to trans-ship their commodities, importers and exporters alike clustered in the city. Banking and exchange firms flourished. Money was easy to come by and easy to spend. Merchants, traders, salesmen and sailors, of every nation and color, congregated here, seeking pleasure and profligacy. Men had time and wealth to spare and to spend and the city administration did not hesitate to advertise Corinth as "the good time capital of the world." Gambling, vice and viciousness were syndicated, encouraged and protected by law.

The very name of Corinth came to be a symbol for loose morals. The expression "to Corinthianize" was universally used to describe drunken debauchery. When a Corinthian was depicted in one of the dramas he was always shown as a staggering drunk. This was bad enough, but to make matters worse Corinth was also the home of the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of passion and love. High on the Acropolis, jutting above the city proper, this famous (or infamous) structure could be seen from afar by the sailors, and it drew them as moths are drawn to the candle flame. Here there dwelt a thousand priestesses who were cult prostitutes, trained and skilled in the art of solicitation for their nefarious trade. Each evening at dusk they descended upon the city below and swarmed through the streets accosting all whom they met. The money they received

went into the temple coffers. Immorality was colored by religion until vice was translated into virtue.

It is not at all strange in such a place to hear the apostle say, “Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:10, 11). Nor does it seem at all incongruous that he should write to the congregation of saints in such a city, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?” (1 Cor. 6:15, 16). It is interesting that in the same conjunction he mentions that, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” The temple of God’s love is contrasted with the temple of pagan love. In one, a man joined himself to a prostitute and became one body with her; in the other he joined himself to God and became one spirit with him (1 Cor. 6:17).

Certainly it does not excuse the congregation, but it may help to explain why they continued arrogantly on their way while tolerating in their number one guilty of a type of immorality not even condoned by the pagans, “for a man is living with his father’s wife.” Those who were swimming in a veritable sea of vice and who “would need to go out of the world” to escape contact with “the immoral of this world” (1 Cor. 5:9, 10) could become so accustomed to immorality that it would make but little impression upon them, even in an aggravated form.

It is interesting to note that in dealing with the immoral man, Paul recognizes two realms to which men may belong. Over one Jesus is Lord, over the other Satan rules. In the two sentences in which the apostle affirms his decision and gives

instruction for enforcing it he uses the words “Lord Jesus” three times. The decision is that the man must be delivered unto Satan. One who does not recognize the lordship of Jesus over his life cannot continue to live with those who do. The judgment is pronounced “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” it is to be executed “with the power of the Lord Jesus,” and it has as its motive the saving of the spirit in “the day of the Lord Jesus” (See 1 Cor. 5:4, 5).

The pledge of allegiance to Jesus Christ implies the obligation to reproduce the life of Jesus in one’s own life, that is to “cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). There are two ways by which one can renounce such allegiance. He can declare as did the citizens in the parable, “We do not want this man to reign over us.” Or, he can live such a life of abandon as to show that he has abandoned the life of Jesus. In both instances he rejects the rule of Jesus and must be delivered to Satan. “If you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to righteousness” (Rom. 6:17).

What we have thus far written will prepare us in a meager way to appreciate the implications in the language of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. Let us analyze his expressions. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Who are the unbelievers? What does it mean to be unequally yoked with such? Let us examine Paul’s references to unbelievers as found in his letters to the Corinthians. We can thus determine what the saints in Corinth would understand by the term.

BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

Paul speaks about the litigation in which some of the Christians became involved (1 Cor. 6:1-8). He says, “But brother

goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” (verse 6). It is evident that the unbelievers are not brothers in Christ. In verse 1 this same group is referred to as “the unjust” and here they are contrasted with the saints. “Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” This proves that the unbelievers are not saints. The saints are those in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2) and composed “the church of God which is at Corinth.” Unbelievers are those who are not in Christ Jesus or in the church of God. This is proven by the context in 1 Corinthians 6:4-6, “If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed *by the church*? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the *brotherhood*, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?” No one who is in the church, or in the brotherhood, is an unbeliever, as Paul uses the word.

Let us pursue the matter a little further. In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 Paul deals with the marriage relationship. “If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.” It is evident that the “brother” and “sister” in this case are the believers and the unbelievers are pagans. The unbelievers are those who have not given allegiance to Jesus Christ, a term which best describes the state of the believer as it is understood in new covenant terminology. To put it in other words, the unbelievers are those who have never responded to the call of God and are not in the church. This is evident from the fact that Paul says in this connection, “Only let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches” (1 Cor. 7:17).

To phrase it another way, the unbeliever is one who is not a brother or sister in Christ, for the apostle contrasts them. “But

if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound” (verse 15). The unbeliever is the unsaved person. “Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?” (verse 16). Let us summarize what we have learned about “unbelievers.” They are outside of the church and are not saints or brethren. They are the unsaved, those who are not in Christ Jesus because they have never pledged allegiance unto him.

When Paul admonished the saints to be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, it is altogether possible he had in mind the provision of Deuteronomy 22:10, “You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together.” The ox and ass are distinct species. One is alien to the other and they can never be merged. They are incompatible. One may yoke two oxen together which are quite different in many ways— in strength, temperament, color, markings, size, etc., but the law did not forbid this because they were both members of the same family or species. The original word for “unequally yoked” is *heterozugea*. Heteros means “another of a different sort or kind.” The people of God are not to be yoked with an alien people, that is a people who have another god. “I will be their God and they shall be my people” (verse 17). But to treat others who have given their allegiance to the Lord Jesus as unbelievers, because they differ with us about some things, is to *paganize* them and is a grave insult to the one whom they recognize as Lord. A person who “sets at nought a brother” and discounts him as a pagan dishonors the Father!

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

The expression, “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” is a most interesting one. The casual reader would assume that one was simply the opposite of the other, but this is hardly the case in the original. The word for

righteousness is *dikaiosune*, that right relationship with God which is attained through grace by those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The opposite of this would ordinarily be expressed by the word *adikia*, but that is not the one employed here. The word “unrighteousness” is from *anomia*, and this is the only time it is translated thus. It literally means “lawlessness” and it has reference to the rejection of God’s rule, or to deliberate flaunting of God’s law.

It appears significant that the apostle in a table of antithetical words, would employ one which he nowhere else uses in exactly the same sense or circumstance. The exact opposite of “righteousness” would be that state in which one has not yet received a right relationship with Deity, but this is not sufficiently expressive for that type of paganism in which the Corinthians indulged. In Romans 1:21-32 the apostle describes the condition of those whose “senseless minds were darkened” and whom “God gave up in the lusts of their heart to impurity.” The “dishonorable passions” and “shameless acts” are there detailed, and a description of the “base mind” and “improper conduct” is graphically presented. This catalogue of criminal perversion which might well have been drawn from the daily behavior in Corinth closes with the words, “Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32).

The word “fellowship” literally means “to share a common life.” The one who was justified, for this is entailed in the word “righteousness” as here used, has nothing in common with those who “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Only contamination could come from any intimacy or association with those of whom it is said, “they were consumed with passion for the bodies of one another” (Rom. 1:27). The hope of avoiding the unclean thing lay in coming out from among them to live a separated and segregated life, shut off from the vileness and

malignancy of the profligate metropolis.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

“What communion hath light and darkness?” The superficial scholar usually demonstrates his lack of knowledge by the dogmatic assertion that light represents knowledge, while darkness typifies ignorance. Of course that is true in some cases but such a statement does not exhaust the metaphorical use of the terms. Indeed a great deal more is involved in this case. We must, if possible, look at the words as they would be understood by the primitive saints.

To the early disciples, the moral and spiritual domain was divided into two realms— the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. Over the latter Jesus exercised dominion while over the former “the rulers of the darkness of this world” presided (Eph. 6:12). Each of these states had its host of supernatural beings called “principalities and powers.” In the kingdom of righteousness these were celestial, the angels of light. In the other they were infernal beings, the demons. These latter had conspired to defeat the purposes of God by the death of the Son, but, “He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in the cross” (Col. 2:15).

By taking from them their one potent weapon— death— he made it possible for men to share in life in the Son. Those who were called were thus said to be “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). When in the domain of darkness they “obeyed the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit now at work among God’s rebel subjects” (Eph. 2:2). Having been freed from the immorality and indecency which characterizes the children of darkness they are told, “Let no one deceive you with shallow arguments; it is for all these things that God’s dreadful

judgment is coming upon his rebel subjects. Have no part or lot with them. For though you were once all darkness, now as Christians you are light” (Eph. 5:6-8).

There was a *koinonia* (fellowship) of darkness and a *koinonia* of light. Each of these had its god. In Corinth, the realm of darkness worshiped at the shrine of Aphrodite; the children of light at the throne of the living God. Each had its temple in which the Deity was believed to dwell. The one upon the Acropolis consisted of stones piled up by the hands of men; the other was composed of living stones purified by the blood of Jesus. And because *koinonia* was generally expressed by eating and drinking together, each had its table. The apostle declared, “The sacrifices the heathen offer are offered to demons and to that which is not God, and I will not have you become partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (1 Cor. 10:20, 21).

Demon worship was always accompanied by secrecy and sensuality. It featured indescribable acts of depravity and debauchery. Every type of degradation and perversion disgraced the fertility rites of the pagans. The saints at Ephesus are urged to “Give up living like pagans with their good-for-nothing notions. Their wits are beclouded, they are strangers to the life that is in God, because ignorance prevails among them and their minds have grown hard as stone. Dead to all feeling, they have abandoned themselves to vice, and stop at nothing to satisfy their foul desires” (Eph. 4:17-19). In the same context the apostle says, “Take no part in the barren deeds of darkness, but show them up for what they are. The things they do in secret it would be shameful even to mention” (5:11-13). The King James Version renders it, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”

The word “communion” has to do with that which is held

in common. The realm of light had nothing in common with that of darkness. They had their own objects of worship, their own temples, their own tables, their own rituals. Their initiatory rites were different. “When we bless ‘the cup of blessing,’ is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). “The sacrifices the heathen offer are offered to demons and to that which is not God” (verse 20). That which has not one thing in common has no communion, no common meeting ground, no community of interests. “Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.”

CHRIST AND BELIAL

“What concord hath Christ with Belial?” Observe that the apostle does not here contrast Christ with Satan, but with Belial. This is the only time the latter word occurs in the new covenant scriptures. It is worthy of consideration. In the old testament writings it is doubtful if it is a proper name at all and the majority of evidence points to the idea that it is not. It is simply a term meaning “worthless, lawless.” It is generally employed in a sense which refers to certain characters who were of the rabble.

In later classical usage the word was applied to the inhabitants of the underworld, to demons, Satan, and the invisible malign forces which inhabit the universe and carry out evil designs. As a proper name it is probably correctly spelled “Beliar” and this was the name of the “god of forests,” the imaginary deity supposed to protect the wilderness regions. Of one thing we can be certain, it is a name associated both with demons and with idolatry.

The apostle Paul knew there was only one God. “As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). But while he discounted the thought that the idol was anything,

he did believe that idolatry was demon-inspired. He held that the whole false system was the work of hell, originating with the cosmic spirits of the universe, resulting from “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). For that reason he writes to the Corinthians, “What say I then? that the idol is anything? or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

Here is a contrast between the *koinonia* of the Lord and that of demons. The two are utterly divergent. They have their own cup and table. They represent different “brotherhoods.” There is no concord between them. *Belial* is the name given to the whole secret idolatrous cult of infamy at Corinth. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, is correct when he says, “In the N. T.; in 2 Cor. 6:15, it is set in contrast to Christ and represents a personification of the system of impure worship connected especially with the cult of Aphrodite.”

TEMPLE OF GOD

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” This concluding question definitely establishes beyond dispute the subject of the apostle. It explains what has gone before and is the foundation for what follows. The topic of discussion is not related to matters of difference among those in Christ Jesus, but with the relationship of the saints to paganism. The apostle uses the word temple (*naos*) six times in his letters to the Corinthians. In five of these cases he refers to the temple of God, in the other he refers to “the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God.”

A temple was considered by the Romans and Greeks to be

the dwelling-place or sanctuary of the deity. So the apostle says, "For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The word "dwell" is from a word which signifies "to take up residence, to inhabit." It differs from the term used to describe a traveler who stays for a night or two. God will establish a constant residence with his people. He will live in them and among them.

God cannot share his glory with another (Isa. 42:8). He declared, "Thou shalt have no other gods in my presence." Those who are to be his people must choose him as their God to the exclusion of all other so-called divinities. They cannot continue in paganism and have God continue in them. For that reason the ultimatum is issued, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17).

What is "the unclean thing"? Perhaps we cannot be specific, but in view of what we have learned thus far, and of the context in which the word appears, I should like to make a few suggestions. The word for unclean is *akathartos*, impure. It is used twenty-one times in connection with the demons who are called "unclean spirits." In Luke 4:33, it occurs in the expression, "a spirit of an unclean demon." Is it too much to conclude that since the subject is "idolatry" and this is demon-inspired, that the unclean thing relates to the sacrifices made by the pagans to demons and the licentious practices in connection therewith?

Let us go a step further. Paul uses the word *haptomai*, touch, only one other time in writing to Corinth. The other occasion is 1 Corinthians 7:1 where he is dealing with sexual relationships or physical intimacy. To "touch the unclean thing" would be to engage in intimate relationship with the impure pagan rites. With these, God's children have nothing in common. There can be no fellowship, communion, concord or

agreement, with them. Only absolute separation can obtain where there is not a single item of spiritual approbation.

This brings us back to our original theme, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” The word *heterozugein* was a military term. It was used to describe one who left his own place or rank and joined himself to another company. If two opposing armies were marching through the land, this term was used to describe the man who deserted his captain and marched with the enemy. The “unbelievers” are the heathens. They constitute the opposing force of unrighteousness. To share with them in their service was to renounce allegiance to the Lord Jesus. A child of God had no business sitting at the table of demons.

MODERN MISAPPLICATION

Thousands of good brethren have wrested this scripture in our day, using it in such a manner as to defeat the very purpose of Paul in writing to the Corinthians. Let me explain what I mean. A short time ago I received a letter from a brother in Oklahoma who was embittered because I would not sanction division among brethren. Because he opposed Bible classes he thought that I should urge all who worshipped where they had “the Sunday School” to “come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.” A sister in Iowa wrote for us to discontinue her paper because I said that “God’s sheep are a scattered flock and some of them are found on sectarian hills.” She printed in large letters at the bottom of her card— 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

We must have no ill feeling toward those who thus behave. They are merely acting in conformity with what they have been taught. All of these good souls have my compassion. They have been reared in an atmosphere of party spirit and have been taught very little about the indwelling Spirit. Of course those

who refuse to read what we write cannot be helped by what is here said, but others who discover truth can share with those whom we cannot reach and the word of truth will be diffused in spite of adverse attitudes. I should like to make a few definite statements about the implications of this passage.

1. The Holy Spirit nowhere summons the “called out” to come out from among the “called out.” The called out ones are commanded to separate from the pagans insofar as any participation in the worship of other gods is concerned, but God does not deliberately and designedly divide his children among whom he walks.

2. In every instance in which division or separation among the children of God is mentioned, it is always condemned, and never sanctioned. The children are never commanded to divide and when they do so contrary to the will of God the Father, they are censured for such division and urged to repair the breach and to restore unity.

3. Dissensions and divisions are works of the flesh and will debar from inheritance in the kingdom. To teach that the Holy Spirit authorizes God’s children to separate from each other, and by the very act to create factions, is to charge the Spirit with advocating works of the flesh.

4. If the Holy Spirit were ever to justify separation from brethren and the formation of another congregation, there could have been no greater opportunity than in the case of Corinth. That congregation embraced those who were in error in doctrine, practice and attitude. In spite of this there was not one word said which would imply that any of the children should come out from among the other children and create a cleavage in the family.

The exact opposite is the case. They were admonished to “agree among yourselves, and avoid divisions; be firmly joined

in unity of mind and thought” (1 Cor. 1:10). They were told that, “Anyone who destroys God’s temple will himself be destroyed by God, because the temple of God is holy” (3:17). Again the apostle tells of the special dispensation of God, “that there might be no sense of division in the body” (12:25). His farewell message was, “Mend your ways; take our appeal to heart; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

No greater injury can be done to the cause of our Lord than to confuse God’s children with idolatrous pagans. The purpose of the command to “come out from among them and be separate” was to *unite* God’s sons and daughters into a single unbroken family to bring the full impact of the holy witness upon the dissolute forces of Beliar. The temple of God was not to be disfigured by breaks and cracks, but to be a structure in which the stones were cemented together in love. To apply this scripture in such a way as to create, condone or continue division in the ranks of the saints or holy ones is to wrest it from its meaning and purpose and “do despite to the Spirit of grace.”

The party spirit perverts and warps the mind, producing “the will to divide.” Those who are motivated by it will search the scriptures to justify their actions. The phrases “Come out” and “be separate” are made to order for those who are psychologically conditioned for adjusting, or maladjusting disagreements by separation. All that is necessary is to postulate that “the unclean thing” about which the apostle writes is equivalent to the controversial point at issue and the body can then be fragmented without remorse or compunction. To each faction “the unclean thing” is that which they oppose, and ridiculous as it may seem to the scholarly, it is nonetheless a fact that some have equated “the unclean thing” with cups, classes, orphan homes or instrumental music.

In actuality, not one of these has produced division. It is a false sense of thinking with regard to fellowship and

brotherhood which is the real culprit. It is difficult to determine whether this has sired the party spirit or is an offspring of it. However, the two have been combined to create a vicious cycle. Unless this is checked we will continue to divide brethren and try to justify it until the family relationship is completely destroyed.

It will help us to remember one salient truth which is all too often ignored. The new covenant scriptures were written for the specific purpose of promoting unity in the family of God and any use of these scriptures for the purpose of encouraging division in the ranks of that family should be eyed with grave suspicion. We can undo many of the currently existing divisions and eliminate the possibility of others in the future if we will here and now abandon “the will to divide” for “the will to unite.” Such an alteration of attitude will enable us to become peacemakers and assure that we will be blessed as the children of God. We can never be blessed so long as we un-Christianize and paganize the other members of the divine family by our misuse of the words of the Father of us all.

Repairing Lines

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Volume 25

[Abstract]

A few years ago I was in a town which suffered from the onslaught of a freezing rain and ice storm. All overhead wires were snapped under the increasing weight and soon all lines of communication with the rest of the world were cut off. It is a tribute to the efficiency of modern enterprise that within a matter of hours emergency repair crews were converging on the area from every direction. There was an awareness upon the part of all concerned that little permanent repair work could be accomplished until effective communication was again established.

Apparently human nature has not altered a great deal in the past two thousand years. It is still true that “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.” It might be a subject worthy of research to determine what factors cause the children of light, who were once children of this world, to forfeit their pragmatic and practical wisdom when their state is changed. That some of them become as “harmless as serpents and *as wise as doves*” none of us can deny. What is true of the “children of light” generally, is no less true of those who are heirs of the restoration movement.

This noble spiritual experiment undertaken originally to “unite the Christians in all sects” has bogged down in a welter of factional partisanship and is now one of the most divided

religious movements on the current American scene. The members of each splinter regard their own segment as the one holy, apostolic, and catholic church of God upon earth, and postulate that the blood of Jesus was shed solely to purchase the faction to which they are attached. This has created an attitude of sectarian exclusivism and self-righteousness which is hardly duplicated by even the most unrealistic denominations of our age.

Under the weight of dogmatic editorializing, pressure from self-appointed official interpreters, and fear and suspicion of the membership, the lines of communication have broken down. There is little exchange of thought on a high level between members of the several factions. The papers have a closed door policy, the lectureships present only men who are “sound,” i.e., who parrot the party line. Any attempt to rise above bigotry and intolerance is shouted down as “liberalism,” any recognition of brotherhood beyond the party confines is branded as “compromise.”

In such a time as this a statement of our own purpose and mission is again in order. We represent no splinter, split, or segment of the restoration movement. We are indebted to no faction, fraction, or fragment for our salvation, nor do we propose to allow any such to come between us and our debt to the One who died for our sins. Because we are not in bondage to any party we are free to love all of our brethren and to move among them as freely as they will allow. We will make nothing a test of fellowship which he has not made a condition of salvation. We shall treat as brothers all whom He accepts as sons!

There are many problems in the family of God to which we do not know the answer. We are simply dedicated to repairing the lines that have broken down so that in the future we may converse as brethren instead of debating as partisan enemies. What our brethren will say to each other when the lines are up again, only time will tell. It will probably not be as bad as the

things they have said about each other while the lines are down.

We propose to go wherever the Spirit opens up a door for sharing our thinking with others who are interested in the kingdom of heaven. We shall not be nearly so concerned about those who do not want us to go as we shall be with those who want us to come. One who belongs to Jesus can go anywhere and be safe; one who does not is not safe anywhere he goes. We shall be the slave of no man, but a servant to all men.

The Spirit and Unity

Mission Messenger (July 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

The Holy Spirit is a personality. He is not a nebulous mass of goodness in the spiritual atmosphere nor a gray cloud of righteousness floating about in the firmament. He is not a mere influence or disposition. He is the cause and not a result; a principal rather than a principle. These truths we have previously affirmed and committed to print in this little journal, together with ample scriptural documentation. It is not necessary that we rehearse them.

When Jesus was preparing to depart from this earth he comforted his sorrowing disciples with the words, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you.” One does not cease to be an orphan if you inaugurate a law for him to obey or give him a book of instructions to follow. He remains an orphan until adopted by someone who takes the place of the loved one who has gone away. So Jesus said, “I will ask the Father to give you another Helper to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: the world cannot receive him, because it neither sees nor knows him, but you know him, because he remains with you and will be within you.”

The term “for ever” is an idiomatic expression which means “unto the age” or “during the age.” The Holy Spirit has been sent to abide with the saints on earth during the age in which the Lord is absent. He does not replace Jesus as a savior

or mediator. “There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” The Spirit is our Helper, or Strengtheners, while the Son directs his rule of conquest from his place at the right hand of the Father. In his present capacity, the Spirit could not precede Jesus to earth nor be here during his presence on earth. The Son said, “I am telling you the truth— my going is for your good. If I do not depart, the Helper will not come to you; whereas, if I go, I will send him to you.”

The coming of the Spirit was not only to refresh the saints and make them flowing fountains of grace and truth, but also to assure them that what Jesus had promised while on earth had taken place in heaven. Since the Spirit was to act as the divine medium of proof of the coronation of the new king in a remote capital city, he could not come until Jesus had been coronated in His glory. This is in harmony with the words of John 7:37-39, “Now on the last day, the great day of the festival, Jesus stood and cried aloud, ‘If anyone is athirst, let him come to me and drink; he who believes on me out of his body, as scripture says, streams of living water will flow’ (he meant by this the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive— as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus had not been glorified yet).”

It will be conceded, I think, that the testimony to such an event as the transfer of power from God to His Son, must be presented in undeniable fashion. The two forms of credible human testimony in the order of their validity are visual and audible. Thus the Holy Spirit employed these two methods in his initial coming, so that Peter could say, “This Jesus God raised, as we can all bear witness. Uplifted then by God’s right hand and receiving from the Father the long-promised holy Spirit, he has poured on us, what you now see and hear.”

This is the dispensation of the Spirit so far as God’s elect on earth are concerned. At the foundation of the world the Spirit was associated in creation. God originated the plan, the Logos (Word) executed it, the Spirit hovered over the primordial earth

when it was waste and void, bringing order out of chaos. Before the advent of the Logos, who became flesh and dwelled among us, the Spirit motivated the prophets of God, enabling them to predict and describe in advance the coming reign of the Messiah. Now the Spirit has been sent by the Father to complete the divine purpose on earth. He now dwells among us as Jesus once abode with men to perfect the design of heaven. The Son must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The Spirit is not a *ghost*, but a holy *guest* among us, laboring to this end.

It is not our intention in this article to discuss the many facets of the work of the Spirit. Neither time nor space would allow of this. We shall restrict our theme to the responsibility of the Spirit in the divine imperative of unity and the furtherance of that fellowship of the saints who are made brothers by the blood of the Lamb. So intimately is the Spirit related to this fellowship that it is designated after him, and so important is it that it is associated with the two greatest themes of God's revelation— grace and love. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit— these embrace all that is called Deity. Grace, love and fellowship — this is the trinity which makes it possible for man to share in divine nature.

Any theory of Christian unity which ignores or minimizes the influence of the Holy Spirit in cementing the saints together must be rejected as inadequate. The *koinonia* to which we have been called of God is one of the Spirit. It is not a fellowship created by human agency. It cannot be legislated by a convention nor can it be conferred by a conference. It can be enjoyed but not enjoined. The Holy Spirit produces, promotes and protects this fellowship. Each of these is a different action and requires a different exercise of power. Our purpose in this article is to discuss each of these in order as revealed in the new covenant scriptures.

I. PRODUCTION OF FELLOWSHIP

The design of the Holy Spirit is to so operate on the hearts of sinful men as to bring them into one body, where all may be partners or joint participants in the grace of God. “For during the time that I was in prison as well as when I was out defending and demonstrating the power of the Gospel we *shared together* the grace of God” (Phil. 1:7). We must not overlook the fact that it is the grace of which we are joint partakers, otherwise we will reduce the noble concept of fellowship in the Spirit to the realm of the mundane and trivial. Let us consider the means by which this joint participation in the Spirit is accomplished.

1. While it is distinctly affirmed that the world cannot receive the Spirit (John 14:17), it is just as positively affirmed that He will convict *the world* of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). The first two of these have to do with character, the last with destiny. It is observable that the Spirit does not convict of sin by detailing a list of acts which constitute it. The same holds true for righteousness. Acts are fruits and these are produced from thoughts. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matt. 7:18). The divine order is “Clean the inside of the cup first; then the outside will be clean also” (Matt. 23:26).

Accordingly, the Spirit convicts of sin by striking at the very heart of that which destroys relationship with God—rejection of Jesus. “Of sin because they believe not on me” (verse 9). In the same vein, righteousness consists of acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus so that every walk of life is an act of faith and not of sight. “Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you see me no more.” Righteousness is the opposite of sin. If one is the rejection of Jesus, the other must be acceptance of Him. All sin is disbelief; all righteousness is faith.

The world is convicted of personal accountability in that the very ruler of the world is subject to trial. “Of judgment,

because the prince of this world is judged” (verse 11). If the world leader is brought to bay there can be no escape for any of his followers. All conversion is preceded by conviction. No one realizes the need of a Savior who does not recognize that he is lost. Man must make his choice between Jesus and the prince of this world. He must be confronted with the tragedy resulting from the wrong decision. The work of convicting the world is the work of the Spirit. It is the initial sifting of the wheat and chaff and the first step toward creation of “the fellowship of the granary.”

2. The Spirit provided the message of the envoys to an alien world. It was not decreed by human philosophy nor couched in brilliant language. “When I came to you, I declared the attested truth of God without display of fine words or wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1). God made use of a divine agent as well as human agents. It was the task of the divine agent to convey the mind of God to the human agents who, in turn, relayed it to the world of mankind. “When the Helper is come, whom I will send you from the Father— the Spirit of truth that issues from the Father— he will bear witness to me and you also are my witnesses, because you have been with me from the first” (John 15:26, 27). One of the envoys stated it thus, “We speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit.”

It must never be concluded that the Spirit merely gave the word and retired from the scene, or that the revelation of the message rendered him inactive. The Spirit operates through, and in conjunction with, the word, but *he* operates. Just as the surgeon operates with an instrument, the scalpel, so the Spirit operates with an instrument, the sword (Eph. 6:17). Any doctrine which minimizes or eliminates either the Spirit or the word falls short. It is not the *Spirit only*, nor the *word only*, but the operation of the Spirit through the word.

3. The Spirit introduces all of the obedient believers into

one body and thus forms an active fellowship of all who respond to the Good News. He does this without regard for national or social distinctions. He generates a vital unity of all who are regenerated. “As the human body which has many parts, is a unity, and those parts, despite their multiplicity, constitute one single body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by the Spirit into one body, whether we were Jews, Greeks, slaves, or free men, and we have all had experience of the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). The Spirit never inducts an obedient gospel subject into other than the one body. It follows that every sincere baptized believer is brought into the one body, and is in the fellowship of the Spirit.

4. Baptism can only change the state of a believer. It can transfer but cannot transform him. Any inward renewal must be the work of the Spirit. Since the fellowship is one of saints, or holy ones, it is obvious that, as a part of the saving process, the pledge of allegiance to Christ must be accompanied by a new creative act. So we read, “But when the kindness and generosity of God our Savior dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Peter wrote to God’s scattered people in Asia Minor, that they were “hallowed to his service by the Spirit, and consecrated with the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2).

The Holy Spirit creates the fellowship of the saved ones by convicting the world in pointing out the true nature of sin and righteousness and the certainty of judgment based upon accountability. He does it by bringing the testimony of Jesus to bear on human hearts, leading all who are obedient thereto into the one body by immersion and fitting them to be *partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light. Thus they share in the divine nature through a renewing of the mind in Christ Jesus. This introduces them into “fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). They become shareholders in

the divine purpose, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They share in the suffering of Christ here and in his glory hereafter (Rom. 8:17). This closeness of identification of God and the believers is described as a mutual indwelling. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The fellowship of the saints is "the fellowship of the Spirit" by right of creation.

II. PROMOTION OF FELLOWSHIP

It is one thing to create and a wholly different thing to sustain that which is created. In any divine creation the originating and the maintaining power must be the same. Thus the universe was created by the power of His word and is now upheld by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). "By the word of God the heavens were of old" (2 Peter 3:5) and "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store" (verse 7). The divine fellowship not only originated with, but is perpetuated by the Spirit. The means which he employs to further that fellowship form a thrilling subject for contemplation of all the redeemed ones.

1. The Holy Spirit makes the fellowship vital by bringing to each participant a real sense of "belonging." The very nature of fellowship demands that those involved realize a genuine feeling of togetherness, regardless of past relationships or present circumstances. Those who were children of disobedience and children of wrath, and who "in times past in the lust of the flesh, fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind" must know that He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). We are not only freed slaves but are adopted children. We are part of the family.

It is at this juncture that the indwelling Spirit provides assurance and gives certainty to our fellowship by making it possible for us to call out to our Father in our need. "The Spirit

you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry, 'Abba! Father!' In that cry the Spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children" (Rom. 8:15, 16). Our fellowship is based on mutual sonship. We are the children of one father and are brothers if we are in the Lord. Many of our problems of brotherhood are psychological. While we seem to be skeptical of the standing of others it is our own inner conflicts and doubts which bother us. These are caused by our legalistic approach which always produces slavery instead of sonship. The indwelling Spirit makes it possible for us to respect others by producing a proper evaluation of self. "To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba! Father!' You are therefore no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then also by God's own act an heir" (Gal. 4:6, 7).

Our disregard for our brethren, coupled with our judgment of them, is a reflection of our own state of insecurity. We imagine that we become more endeared to the Father by a self-righteous attitude which covers up our weakness by criticism of the failings of others. This is always inimical to fellowship and the Spirit within gives us a sense of relationship which calms our fears. "Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help" (Heb. 4:16). "Let us make our approach in sincerity of heart and full assurance of faith, our guilty hearts sprinkled clean, our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

2. Fellowship is a state in which we are bound together by a common tie, for which reason *koinonia* is sometimes translated "communion." The Greek word is from the root *koinon*, which means "common." Of the many attributes which we must possess and wear as an enveloping garment, there is one which has power to draw together divergent elements and hold them together. "To crown all, there must be love, to bind all together

and complete the whole” (Col. 3:14). J. B. Phillips translates this passage, “Above everything else, be truly loving, for love is the golden chain of all the virtues.”

Like so many requirements of the divine nature, this love must be supplied by God. He not only specifies the attribute essential to attainment of the human being but also provides the means of attainment. Man is not divine and can never become so while in the flesh. To expect divine nature of us is to expect what is impossible. But the Spirit which abides in us is divine and can project divine qualities through us if we surrender unto Him. One of these qualities is *agape*, love, and it is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is one of a catalog of attributes which can never be achieved by mere legalistic compliance. It is distinctly said, “There is no law dealing with such things as these.”

Those who have been justified by faith “have been allowed to enter the sphere of God’s grace” and in this sphere are enabled to exult “in the hope of the splendor which is to be ours.” Being still human and having often suffered from discouragement and frustration, there is danger that we may be filled with doubt about the fulfillment of our hope. Accordingly, we are given the assuring information that, “Such a hope is no mockery, because God’s love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Rom. 5:5). The deepest recesses of our inward being are flooded with love that drives out “envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies” (Gal. 5:20). None of these exotic plants can thrive in the full light of the warmth of love.

Without the Spirit there will be no outpouring of love to fill our hearts and without such love there can be no real “fellowship one with another.” “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). Love is realized and identified only as we recognize the significance of the sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf. We were precious enough unto Him while we were yet

sinners that He died for us. Paul says that in this, “God commended his love to us.” John says, “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

It is not by mere chance that the next statement reads, “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit” (1 John 4:13). Without his Spirit we cannot have his love. Without that love there can be no genuine brotherhood. Our divisions are not, as we so often think of them, testimonies to our faithfulness but indications of our lovelessness. We dare not wait until our brethren are sinless and free from error to commend our love to them, for God commended his love to us when we were yet sinners. This love is a love for the unworthy and it is a love that does something for them. It commends itself to them. It sacrifices itself for those who least deserve it.

Since Jesus gave his life to obtain the fellowship of the saints it will do us well to question what we have ever done to maintain it. We are distinctly told that he pleased not himself, and from this the apostle reasons, “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to edify him” (Romans 15:2). One cannot have God’s way by insisting on having his own way. Yet there are many divisions among brethren in the religious world which stand as shameful monuments to an inflexible will which often mistakes self-gratification for fidelity to God. We need to cultivate that love which is understanding and forgiving. “But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9) God did not teach us love by writing a letter but by sending His Son to die. The cross is the rallying standard of our fellowship.

3. The Holy Spirit promotes fellowship by revealing unto

us the true nature and status of Jesus and by transforming our lives from one degree of glory to another on an ascending plane to make us more like Him. One function of the Spirit was to glorify Jesus. “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it unto you” (John 16:14). When Paul “preached Christ crucified” in Corinth, he declared that it was “in demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor. 2:4). No one comprehended the thoughts of God but the Spirit of God (verse 11). These things “God has revealed unto us through the Spirit” (verse 10). The apostles received the Spirit of God to enable them to understand (verse 12) and they imparted these things in words taught by the Spirit (verse 13).

The gist of the message was that “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1:30). If Jesus is everything, then anything else apart from Jesus is nothing. All doctrine finds its relevance only as it is related to Jesus. Any discussion of doctrine for doctrine’s sake is useless and futile. It is powerless to make one righteous unless it leads to identification with him who has been made our righteousness. All study for the mere purpose of gaining wisdom is wasted unless it submerges and overwhelms our being in Him who has been made our wisdom. It matters little how many things in the Bible we know if we do not know Him. It is knowing Him that is “eternal life” (John 17:3).

The Christian system is not a philosophy. It was not propounded by philosophers nor couched in philosophic terms. It is not a systematic theology. It is personal and invested in a Person. He is not to be accepted merely because he is a better teacher of moral values and ethical standards than others, but because He is the Son of God. He is the center and circumference of God’s revelation. That which does not proceed from him has no authority; that which does not lead to him has no value. One of the outstanding causes of strife and division has been the undue emphasis on things of minor importance. As we

become engrossed in such matters Jesus is forced to fade into the background and we divest ourselves of his character to defend our concepts of his doctrine. When any point of argument becomes more important than the object of all faith our fidelity is misplaced.

There is no force in any religious system reduced to a purely rationalistic or legalistic code, which can hold all men—rich and poor, great and small, learned and unlearned—together in one body. It matters not if such a system originate in heaven or on earth. Only the magnetic personality of one directly related to our yearning and needs can ever accomplish the task. When Jesus is elevated and held aloft he draws all men unto him. The Holy Spirit, in the revelation, leads us into greater oneness by enlarging our concept of the fulness of his life. “For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him” (Col. 2:9, 10). In him we have “put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (3:9, 10). We are instructed to “put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving one another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

The apostles, filled with the Spirit, had not time for and gave no space to the discussion of the many trivial points of difference which must have plagued both the Jewish and Gentile disciples. Relative to all such they simply urged, “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you.” Such problems of difference were to be left to God to adjust since he alone understood the motivation. “Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?”

Doctrine which attacked the position and primacy of Jesus was rebuked with severity. Those doctrines which were of such

gravity as to separate from God were dealt with unrelentingly. These were doctrines of demons which caused men to give heed to seducing spirits. They were doctrines which scattered the sheep and drew away disciples after designing men, the kind of men who “denied the Lord that bought them.” Any point of difference among the disciples of the Master ought to be measured against the Master himself. If it is not as important as his blood it ought not be allowed to separate us from those who have been cleansed by that blood. We are blood-brothers of the Lamb. That which has been purchased by His blood should never be sold cheaply nor sacrificed for anything of lesser value.

That which separates from God is the opposite of that which unites with God. We leave God by a reversal of the procedure which brought us unto God. We come to God by an acceptance of His Son and by pledging our allegiance unto him. It is obvious that rejection of Jesus and refusal to longer give our allegiance to him will sever us from God. That which will not separate from God is not of sufficient importance to separate us from each other. When we allow any such thing to separate us it is obvious that we think more of it than we do of Jesus. In fact, we substitute a belief in that thing as a Savior for we postulate that unless a man believe in it he cannot be saved. Since Christ cannot be divided it is evident that those who are divided are trusting in something besides Jesus to save them. Frequently it is their own self-righteousness!

The Holy Spirit has revealed that Jesus is the center of our unity as well as its foundation. Obedience to Jesus is the only test of fellowship authorized by God and likeness to Jesus is the only test of character. We must be transformed to have the likeness of Jesus. Only through the indwelling Spirit can this be accomplished. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” As we become like Jesus we become richer in mercy, grace and kindness. Our perspective is changed until we have a

proper sense of value which enables us to make allowances for one another in love.

4. The Holy Spirit promotes unity by helping our weakness in prayer. Regardless of who or what may be to blame for our present divided state in Christendom, it is evident that we have failed to preserve peace among God's children. We have allowed ourselves to become fractured and fragmented until our schisms are a scandal and a shame. We must be humbled and humiliated by our tragic miscarriage of the divine purpose. Family ties have been disrupted and severed. We need to call upon the Father with broken and contrite hearts.

Unfortunately, we do not know how to present our petitions in an acceptable fashion. We fall short in prayer as we do in peace. It is in this emergency the Spirit comes to our aid. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26, 27). An analysis of the content of this verse will prove to be one of the most rewarding adventures of the spiritual life. It is like going down into a mine filled with gems and being told to help yourself to these precious treasures. Almost every word is rich with promise.

Do not forget that Jesus promised he would send another Helper to abide with us during His absence. This passage positively affirms that the Spirit helps us. One area in which he assists is mentioned. This by no means exhausts his help but is an example of what he does for us. There are things we ought to do. These constitute a responsibility as well as a privilege. Notice the expression, "We do not know how." It is true that in our weakness we do not know how to do some of the things we ought to do. One of our problems is how to pray. How can we convey our deepest inner desires and strivings unto God? How is it

possible to translate the soul-yearning into the language of the tongue?

All language is but a combination of sounds. There are no combinations adequate to communicate the deepest emotion which tugs at a broken heart. Such a feeling is too deep for words. "But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words." The Spirit cannot supply the yearning. He intercedes but does not interfere with the thought processes. It is our desire he conveys and he cannot intercede for a heart that is waste and void. That is what is meant by the expression, "He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit." It is obvious that the prayer must originate in the heart of man. God is able to search the heart. He knows the longing exists. He also knows the mind of the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 2:11 we are told that the Spirit knows the mind of God. In Romans 8:27 we are told that God knows the mind of the Spirit. This is infinite knowledge and it is also proof of the personality of the Spirit. He has a mind, he knows, and is known. "The Spirit intercedes for the saints." The saints are those in Christ, the holy ones, the children of God. The Spirit dwells in the heart of every saint. "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6). "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). "He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor. 1:22). The Spirit inhabits the hearts of the saints. He is in position to intercede for their needs because he is in the place where their desires originate. He knows our minds and God knows His.

The first real step toward securing of unity is a sense of personal remorse for our disunity. None of us is wholly guiltless. Those who claim to be are frequently among the most culpable of all. Their arrogant, loveless, and accusing spirit is the very thing responsible for strife and dissension. There must be

confession and this must be accompanied by a hunger for peace and a passion for brotherhood. If this is so intense and ardent that no words can be found to express it the Spirit will intercede in our behalf. It is at this juncture that the legalistic attitude defeats the divine procedure. It is thought that we must debate ourselves into agreement upon every matter of doctrinal difference before we can have unity. Every action of every faction must be argued out to the satisfaction of all; every contention of every community must be contested to a standstill before we can proceed. If it be true that our unity is “the unity of the Spirit” we need to surrender to the power of the Spirit and allow him the freedom to operate freely in our behalf. Those who truly desire unity should not meet to debate but to pray. The procedures of the past have only produced partition and partisanship. In their implementation lies no hope for a better day.

I have been anxiously awaiting that time when the divided heirs of the restoration movement in some community, would include in their programs for the year a “sweet hour of prayer” one Lord’s Day afternoon each month— twelve such seasons of prayer in a year. As I envision it such meetings should be devoted exclusively to prayer. The specific purpose would be confession upon our knees, and the imploring of the Father to lead us out of our present state of confusion and strife. There should be no songs, no readings, no talks. Invitations to join in the meeting should be sent to all segments of the brotherhood of saints. Those who gather before the hour should avoid collecting in groups to discuss but should go directly to their seats for silent meditation. Promptly at the hour appointed the one who presides should call upon all who are burdened and distressed by the state of the Christian world to “take it to the Lord in prayer.” When every one has prayed or when the hour is finished, the president should end it with a solemn benediction.

Those who leave the building should do so quietly and reverently. Any greeting should be soft and subdued. There

should be no refreshments served after such a gathering. Indeed it might be well if those who came to the hour of prayer would fast on that day until after the occasion and in preparation for it. Those who have the courage to inaugurate such a program would need the faith that knows no frustration. They must be prepared for only a few consecrated ones at the first few meetings. The meetings would not even be announced by the elders or clergy in many congregations. These often stand between their flocks and unity in Christ. Thus “the fellowship of the concerned ones” who meet to pray the first time would need to petition the Father for the Holy Spirit to surge through and work mightily in the hearts of those not present and to open up great doors and effectual by which to reach them.

Perhaps only one congregation in a community would be willing to make available their facilities at first but as others became interested and invitations were extended the meetings should be held in different places. The prayer band of saints should not be afraid to go anywhere to pray for peace. We may meet with any person or group upon our knees before that throne “where every knee should bow and every tongue should confess.” In a meeting where all cry out unto God from anguished hearts and do so voluntarily, there is no question of “recognition or endorsement” of others because no one has to call upon any other. Only the Father determines who is worthy and who is not. Only the Spirit knows whom to aid!

I might be mistaken about any prediction of results, but judging from past events, I would not be at all surprised if out of such throwing ourselves into the arms and upon the mercy of God, there would come a great revival. It could well be that in such an area where the prayers and tears of the saints mingled, all that was worthwhile in the restoration movement as a contribution to our contemporary needs would be reanimated and a fire be kindled by the winds of God fanning the dying embers, that would again sweep over a world thinking in terms of unity. The Holy Spirit has not lost his power. We have only

nullified and negated it in our generation by our prejudices and littleness. We have quenched the Spirit by thinking only in terms of partisan growth as opposed to genuine kingdom extension.

Such a prayer council of all “the concerned ones” carried on regularly, and augmented as other hearts were touched, would identify the attendants with Jesus on the night of his betrayal. It was then he prayed for all who believe in him through the testimony of the envoys, that they all might be one in the Father and the Son. Jesus was literally very close to the cross when he thus prayed. We would be able to draw near and “kneel at the cross” upon such occasions as I have outlined. We must never forget that our blessed Lord conditioned the acceptance of Him by those who believe not, upon the oneness of those who believe. The world will be won to believe in Christ, when those who believe are one in Christ! What good will it do, in the final analysis, for us to expand missionary budgets and send men to the four corners of the earth to plant rival parties to divide those who are led to believe in him? Humble men, with little finance, but backed by our united prayers and efforts could do a great deal more if we could wholly enlist the Spirit to act unreservedly through us to convict the world. But the Holy Spirit cannot promote the party spirit, for this is a work of the flesh.

Perhaps there are those who will object that as much could be done if each individual prayed alone in his own closet. Let me not be thought of as minimizing the value of private prayer. Indeed we need prayers at home daily in behalf of just such meetings as I have mentioned. But it is a part of God’s design that we accomplish the purpose of heaven in a *koinonia*, a fellowship of the redeemed and sanctified ones. A lone wolf policy is not adapted to sheep.

The *ekklesia* of God burst in upon the world as the climax of a prayer meeting. “They went up to the upper room, where they were staying, . . . All these with one accord devoted

themselves to prayer.” “They went to their friends and reported . . . And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God . . . And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” “When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary . . . where many were gathered together and were praying.”

God does not need a great prairie fire sweeping over the landscape in order to begin his work of answering the prayer of His beloved Son. If we can but unite our forces in prayer, this is a sufficient spark of unity with which to commence. If we are willing to confess our failure to keep the bond of peace and join in confessing that we have fallen short of the divine ideal, such casting down of ourselves will enable the Lord to lift us up.

Nehemiah began his work of restoration by reminding God that, while His people were scattered, He had promised that, upon their reformation, “though your dispersed be under the farthest skies, I will gather them thence and bring them to the place which I have chosen.” God’s people were powerless to return to the *place* He had ordained for them. But they could return to the *person* who had called them to be His own. When they did this He could “gather them” and “bring them.” In the same way we cannot see our way out of the Babylon of confusion in which we have become entangled. We do not need to do so. It is the divine task to gather and bring us home. It is our responsibility to turn to God from our factional ways. We do not need to know the way to return, we need to turn to the Way!

A good way for us to begin is like Nehemiah began. Certainly it proved to be effective in his case. “I now pray before thee day and night for the people of Israel thy servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Yea, I and my father’s house have sinned.” The fact that God’s people were where they should not have been was testimony to their sin. The fact that we are in a condition where

we ought not to be is proof of our failure. We need to quit defending the mistakes of our fathers. Their partisan attitudes afford no adequate foundation on which we should build among our contemporaries. Adding fuel to feuds may destroy the world but it cannot save it!

“The Spirit himself intercedes for us.” What a powerful prayer-helper we have. Why should we spurn this divine Comforter and Assistant? Why should we quench the Spirit any longer? “The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” Is it not the will of God that we be one in Christ Jesus? Is it not the will of God that there be “no schism in the body”? Is it not the will of God that we “all speak the same thing”? Is there anything too great for the Spirit to accomplish if we surrender wholly and unreservedly to him? If we could help ourselves out of our predicament why did Jesus send us “another Helper”? Is not the presence of the Spirit among us proof of our own helplessness? If the Spirit brooding over the primeval state of the world brought order out of chaos, why can he not do the same for the chaotic state of the new creation? He can! He will if we will allow him to work effectually in us. “The power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). As Alfred Lord Tennyson said, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

III. PROTECTION OF FELLOWSHIP

The Holy Spirit is active in this world today. The power which brought the universe into existence has not been minimized or lessened. Our God is a God of history. His hand can be traced in the affairs of the nations. There is a design which is divine and this design is being worked out by mankind. All men are servants of God, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Even those who think to thwart his purpose are made to fulfill it. It can be said of many more than the brothers of Joseph, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to

bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen. 50:20).

The sacred scriptures reveal that it was God’s intention to effect his will in our lives through a fellowship, that is, a community of the called out ones. These constitute the “life brigade” in a dying world. They are in the fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. They have accepted the testimony of those who saw “the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” They are children of light. They are addressed as “children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:15, 16). All of the called ones constitute one great fellowship, or body, as distinguished from those who have not responded to the call. They have not only been called out of something, but they have also been called into Someone.

The called ones are God’s own people. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10). God’s people have all been baptized into one body by the one Spirit and they all freely drink of that one Spirit. Thus the fellowship is created and maintained by the Spirit. There is but one Spirit and consequently there can be but one body of the called out ones. Jesus is distinctly said to be the head of the *soma* (body), the *ekklesia* (called out ones).

In the constant contact and conflict with the world there is an ever present danger that the called saints will forget their real sense of mission. This danger is intensified when it appears that the Lord delays His coming. Because of such delay some fall victims to the propaganda of false philosophers who assert the impossibility of termination of the present order based upon the

continuity of the past (2 Peter 3). Others return to their former state, “having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). Perhaps an even more prevalent problem is that members of the divine family get on each other’s nerves during the long interval. They fall out among themselves and look upon each other as enemies instead of as fellow servants of the same Lord. Some become dogmatic, assertive and arrogant, and disrupt the peace and order of the household. Jesus spoke of a certain type of servant who said, “My master is delayed in coming,” and who began to beat the menservants and the maidservants (Luke 12:45).

Since the divine plan of the ages cannot be overthrown permanently, and since it involves a *koinonia* of the *ekklesia*, that is, a fellowship of the called ones, the Spirit must protect and preserve this fellowship in spite of all of the attempts of Satan to destroy it. It is our personal conviction that the Spirit providentially directs the affairs of the kingdom of heaven on earth during the absence of our King. When the spiritual state becomes arid and dry, springs of hope are made to burst forth and create oases in the desert. When sectarianism and factionalism become rife and men despair of ever having peace again, there comes a period of “Great Awakening.” These are “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”

The Spirit works through men, the divine Agent collaborating with human agency. Every reformer and restorer who calls the people of God to return to their true sense of mission has been used by the Spirit. Often, because of the great darkness which covers the earth during their generation, these can see but dimly. We must never judge the reformers of one age or place by those in another era or locality. Progress can never be measured by how far one has to go but by how far he has come. One can only walk in the light that is available unto him. It would be interesting to know what would have been accomplished by some of our modern critics of Luther and Calvin if they had been reared in the identical circumstances of these men. Considering the little impact we make upon the

thinking of our own brethren in these days of mass media we should be humbled by the tremendous accomplishments of men in the past. We are warming ourselves by the fires that others have kindled.

We do not know all about how the Spirit works nor do we need to know. We can see the fruits and recognize the results. It is my own conviction that “the leaven concept” is vital to any understanding of the function of the Spirit in our age. Those who are wholly committed unto Christ Jesus radiate an influence that affects others whom they contact. We reproduce in our own lives in a meager way that which our great Example did in such magnificent fashion. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in order that we might translate the word into living flesh among those with whom we dwell. The Son of God became the Son of man that the sons of men might become sons of God. By his contact with the world of mankind, the world was transformed. We carry on the work of transformation in our age.

But with the passing of the centuries and the popularization of the Christian system, the line of demarkation between the world and the church becomes less clearly defined. The world assumes so much that belongs to the church and the church so much that belongs to the world, it is difficult to differentiate between the two. In the misty twilight zone which results there is ever the temptation to the faithful to withdraw from the social structure to preserve truth. In former days this was accomplished by creation of monastic orders. In these orders, rigid forms of discipline and self-denial were adopted to discourage the nominal professors and purge out the unworthy. In our modern day, although such orders still exist, the realm of Christendom has generally substituted the faction with its exclusivist attitude and closed door policy.

There is one difference between the monastic order and the factional system. The former was instituted in a time of loose

morals when even the clergy practiced and publicly sanctioned licentious behavior. The monastery was primarily a sanctuary from immorality and vice. Now that Christianity has influenced the world in the moral realm until civil governments generally prohibit and punish immorality, the urge to separate from society for the purpose of preserving moral purity is seldom present. There are few indeed who withdraw to caves to live as religious hermits. The feeling is prevalent that one possessed of high moral ideals should remain in contact with the social structure and battle within its framework for a realization of the code he believes to be beneficial for the well-being of mankind.

The result is a change of emphasis. In a world of moral overtones where intellects are highly trained and men have the leisure to engage in research, when universities are scattered throughout the world and thought transmission is universal in a matter of minutes, the great problem is preservation of mental integrity and purity of thought. It is one of semantics and dogmatics as opposed to one of physical relationships. Again the temptation to withdraw from what is deemed doctrinally corrupt is impelling! Factions replace the caves of the consecrated hermits and the monasteries of the loyal ones.

It is true that some sects practice a rigid behavioral code, making certain acts condoned or ignored by others, as tests of admission to or of the continuance in their society. In a majority of cases, however, the test is some doctrinal facet which acts as a barrier to separate the faction from those who do not regard it as particularly significant to the development of Christian maturity, and who are, therefore, branded as liberals, compromisers, or false teachers. The doctrinal test which may consist of a particular attitude toward cups, classes, colleges, or a multitude of other things, tangible and intangible, actually constitutes a form of discipline to hold the adherents "in line." As men have tortured their physical persons to drive out evil and promote chastity, so in an intellectual age they place their minds in a straitjacket of partisan conformity in the hope that

by sacrificing their liberty to think they may avoid licence and preserve purity of thought and doctrine.

It is not our intention or purpose to pursue the psychological aspects of the party spirit which make it possible for otherwise brilliant men to defend the most exclusivist type of sectarianism while they vehemently deny that they are sectarian at all. This field of exploration must await another time and occasion. Suffice it to say that the various forms of escapism, including the monastic and factional, are clearly the result of a misconception of the nature of truth. A goodly number of people hold to certain truths who are quite ignorant of the nature of truth. Just as it is possible within the physical realm for people to beget or adopt children who know but little of the nature of man, so they can conceive or adopt certain truths while wholly unaware of the nature of truth.

Truth is imperishable. It requires no defence or protection to insure its own survival. Its ultimate victory over error is assured. The Spirit operates in and through revealed truth to effect the divine aim. When truth is brought into contact with error its effectiveness is multiplied. Leaven cannot achieve its purpose or potential unless it directly affects the mass or lump. Jesus, as the truth, came all the way from heaven to make contact with sinful men. The partisan religionists of his day sought to “bottle him up” and keep him from directly encountering sinners. But he demonstrated the divine method of approach which is not at all one of sectarian bigotry or exclusivism. Jesus contacted both sectarians and sinners and associated with them without becoming either sectarian or sinful.

In our present state the religious parties, miscalled “churches,” require leavening. The constituents have made no real commitment to Christ Jesus. They do not respect his lordship over their lives. They have no true concept of that discipline which is the essence of Christian ethics. The

transformation must be from within. It can only be wrought by the fellowship of the concerned ones. These constitute the true leaven in any group. When they withdraw they abandon the group to its fate and place themselves in a position where they are ineffective. They also form another party. Leaven on the refrigerator shelf is inactive. Leaven is not intended to affect or transform leaven.

The Spirit works through the fellowship of the concerned. These are the real leaven and if forced to have a separate identity it is only temporarily so. The spiritual leaven is a small lump with universal vision operating within and upon a larger party with private and provincial interest. The fellowship of the concerned seeks to lose itself in the great ocean of brotherly love; the larger party or sect seeks to protect and preserve itself by building dams of confinement and concealment. The Spirit operates in these times of schism by *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (little churches within the church). Those who are called of God to work for unity of all believers must work within the framework of all believers who have been called. Many of these are factional in both outlook and outreach.

Leaven does not achieve its purpose by calling attention to itself. It does not separate to form one lump of leaven and another of dough. It can do nothing from a distance. It is not noisy, violent or abrupt. It does not agitate but permeates, its nature is to ferment rather than to foment, to inspire rather than to incite. It finds the greater life by losing its own. This is the true mission of the genuine ecumenical spirit. It is not to seek ways of salvaging denominational machinery from the tragic wreckage created by the tornadic winds of sectarianism. It is to affect the hearts of all who love the Lord with a sense of fellowship until all the members of the one body may function together in harmony and unison.

Life in the Spirit and with the Spirit is one of genuine adventure. In every adventure there is an element of risk but it

is this very element which provides the challenge that summons men from the mundane to the heroic. It is this which impels men who labor daily in an office to train and discipline themselves and then travel thousands of miles to inch their way up the wind-swept slopes of a mountain such as Everest. Such men are called foolhardy by those whose stereotyped lives offer no greater challenge than a change of cereal for their morning breakfast. These critics seldom know the surging thrill that comes from conquest of the elements.

Jesus was the greatest adventurer of all. He met the challenge of the cross and its attendant agony without a whimper. Postulating that it was possible for one to love his enemies, he put this philosophy to the supreme test. Gazing down from the rude tree, upon the ones who had driven the spikes into the torn flesh of his hands and feet, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Almost everything that God has done in creation has contained an element of risk. Certainly this was the case in making man a rational being with the power and right of choice for if it is possible for man to choose there is always the possibility that he will choose not to follow God.

We tend to fish too close to shore and dabble in the shallows because it is safer. The result is that we toil all night and take nothing. We need to launch out into the deep and let down our nets. We were not born anew to specialize in the superficial or to scratch the surface. Our destiny is not to joust at windmills nor box at fleeting shadows on the wall. Too often we have lived empty lives because we have suffered from empty hearts— hearts in which the Holy Spirit has been grieved and quenched.

There is no greater challenge in our century than that which comes from active identification with the prayer of Jesus for the oneness of all who believe in Him through the testimony of the apostles. That testimony is being circulated to the

remotest bounds of the earth. The printing press is the modern gift of tongues. Day and night, without ceasing, its whirling cylinders imprint the language of the Spirit upon the swiftly moving rolls of white. The trees of the forest, the rice straw from the fields, and the castoff clothing from our own backs, all are blended together into paper and made to bear the message of salvation until jungle-dwellers in the fastnesses along the Amazon and Orinoco, cry out again, "How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

But the unification of those who believe the message has not kept pace with its circulation. As a result, those who were united in paganism have often been divided in Christendom. The scandal of the church is that it has allowed the message which was given to unite to become the source of its strife and contention. The fault lies not with the message but with our false emphasis. We have forsaken the unity of the Spirit because we have forgotten the spirit of unity. We must recapture the latter so we can openly manifest the former. We must think peace, preach peace, and practice peace.

This will not be an easy decision to make in our present distressed and distorted condition. All of us have been reared in certain factions or have grown up and come into them. Regardless of which faction we are affiliated with, those who are in it regard it as the church of God upon earth to the exclusion of all others. To extend the fraternal hand to others is equated with forsaking the Lord. Loyalty to the party is confused with fidelity to the one body. To share your knowledge with other groups will bring the accusation that you "have gone over to them." This will mean that you will be maligned, misrepresented, and calumniated, by those who have always been your associates. You will become the target of sarcasm, invective and aspersion.

If you have a real concern for unity of all believers your heart will be torn between conflicting emotions. The call of far

places and great heights must be weighed against the inner clamor for conformity and orthodoxy. It is in such a strait that the Holy Spirit provides the answer. It is evident that divisions are created by those who deny the personality and indwelling of the Spirit. "It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 19). The real power to risk all you have to gain all He has to offer comes from the vitality of the Spirit.

In his majestic treatise on the unity of the body, the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12, asserts that there are varieties of gifts, service and working, but only one Spirit. He declares, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Whether supernatural gifts in the supernatural era of the church, or natural gifts in the natural age of the church, it is the Spirit which empowers and makes them effective. The same Spirit by which we are baptized into one body is the Spirit by which we are sustained and maintained in that body. The fulfillment of our Christian vocation is the work of the Spirit. The strength is supplied by God for any service we render. "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, *as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies*; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

We face a tremendous challenge in our age. There is evidence that there may be an impending break-through in the "unsound barrier" of division in the Christian domain. We have contributed much to the disunity of the past. What have we to contribute to the unity of the future? In a world filled with dissension we have added our parties and factions to augment the confusion. Can we measure up to the needs of a changing society in which the emphasis is upon unity? What do we have of a constructive nature to offer those who seek for oneness? Will we be content to plod along in our partisan exclusiveness,

hoarding behind closed doors and high walls that which should be shared by all? Will we continue to castigate, execrate and anathematize those noble souls whose horizons expand until they heed the admonition to “Lift up your eyes and look upon the fields”?

The crying need of our age is for men filled with the Spirit of God, men who dare break with tradition, and if need be, die for the vision which they have cherished, until now it nourishes them. The call of God is borne upon every whispering breeze to those who have been enslaved by partisan positions, fettered by fears of reprisal, shackled by bigotry and littleness. The world will not be won to the Christ of a national ideal, to a white man's God, a denominational dogma, or a parochial creed. Jesus is not the shepherd of a sect but of the whole flock of God. He is not the Lord of a faction but of the whole church of the redeemed ones. A concept which embraces anything less than the ultimate unity of all who believe in Him as one mighty army, is too meager to match His prayer, and will be self-defeating. There is no power in the universe by which we can reduce the body of Christ into a faction or expand any faction into the body of Christ.

We reject the spurious proposal that we must remain apart and at sword's points until we have argued every action of every faction, debated every detail of every dogma, and reached conformity on every conclusion of every complainant among us. This is the sectarian way. It is the way of prolonged strife and drawn out dissension. We are not called to feud to the death but to find the life that is in Christ Jesus. Our peace is not in a program, a proposition or a platform. It is a person. “He is our peace who hath made both one.” The way to have unity is to unite, not have a debate. We cannot argue ourselves into agreement nor debate ourselves out of division! In all of our decades of debate we have not overthrown a single sect but we have created a great many new ones!

Let us resolve to make way for the Spirit and we will find

the path of peace. We deny that the Spirit of God divides the family of God. It is men who are devoid of the Spirit who set up divisions. If we will allow the Spirit to have his way with us we will be united in the Way. Our problem is that we have been in the Spirit's way, rather than in the way of the Spirit. We have been hindering instead of helping, standing athwart the path instead of walking in it. We have gloried in our efforts, gloried in men, gloried in our partisan success. Let us now glory in the Lord— all of us! We can restore the spirit of the early saints if we return to the Spirit and allow Him to dwell in and motivate us. This is truly the great adventure of our day. It can be the crowning achievement of the twentieth century, overshadowing even the conquest of space. The Spirit challenges us to overcome our sectarian attitudes!

The Church Speaks of Discovering and Unleashing Hidden Powers

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[Abstract]

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A short time ago I drove into a filling station which was featuring a sale on automobile batteries. A huge advertising banner was flapping in the breeze. On it were the words "Power-packed for perfect performance!" The thought occurred to me that the angels could have unfurled the same banner when the church of God was introduced to humanity. The primitive *ekklesia* was a spirit-saturated, power-possessing, might-manipulating, energy-exercising organism, before which no enemy could stand.

You are familiar with the expression, "The Greeks had a word for it!" Their versatile language had more than one word for power, but whatever the legitimate form of power described, the church possessed it. There was *dunamis*— the power of dynamite and dynamo. There was *energeia*— operative power— the power of functioning energy. There was *exousia*— delegated power— the power of authority and activity. There was *ischnus*— endowed power— the power to produce and propel.

**What has happened to this magnificent spiritual body
which would prompt someone to write the parody which I
received in the mail several months ago, and which read,**

Like a mighty tortoise

Moves the church of God;

Brothers, we are *sitting*

Where our fathers trod.

We are not united,

All divided we,

Torn and rent asunder,

Lacking charity!

**I am to address myself tonight to the subject of discovering
and unleashing hidden powers. Let us be sure that we
understand the nature and scope of this investigation. Discovery
is not creation. Columbus discovered America; Balboa
discovered the Pacific Ocean; De Soto discovered the Mississippi
River. Neither of these men created what he discovered. We
create that which has not previously had existence; we discover
that which has been here all of the time. The power to turn the
wheels of factories and light a multitude of cities was always in
Niagara Falls, but it was useless until man discovered it and
harnessed it. I do not believe that a single atom has been created
since God rested on the seventh day but the power of nuclear
fission lay hidden in the buried heart of uranium until
prospectors brought it to light and scientists released it from its
elemental prison, to enable man to probe the far reaches of the
heavens and to prowl the depths of the sea.**

The church is not the source of power. Its purpose is not to create power but to channel it, not to crystallize it but to utilize it. The Psalmist declared, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11). The apostle said, "For there is no power but of God" (Romans 13:1). When David blessed the Lord before all of the congregation, he did so with the words, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" (1 Chron. 29:11). In the Hallelujah Chorus as recorded by John in Revelation 19:6, the voice of the great multitude chanted, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

"Omnipotent" is from the Latin. It is the equivalent of the Anglo-Saxon "Almighty." This word occurs fifty-six times in the Bible and every time it is applied to God. There cannot be two "Almighties." We must be careful that we do not think of omnipotence as merely a superlative degree of power possessed by God. When used of God it is not merely the sum of all power, but the all power of Someone. It is not the aggregate of potency but the attribute of a personality. Whatever power the church discovers or uncovers, it will be from God and belong to God.

When the church speaks of unleashing power it is evident that it has restrained, restricted and retarded the free movement of God's Spirit. That which has been suppressed must be expressed, that which has been stifled must be shared, that which has been held back must be held forth, that which has been sounded in must be sounded out. In too many instances the church is like Lazarus when he was raised from the dead, "bound hand and foot with grave clothes" (John 11:44). He was alive but powerless. He was all dressed up with no way to go. He was bound up, bound down, and bound around, until Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go!"

The musty smell of the sepulcher exudes like the aroma of death from our winding-sheet of prejudice, indifference, traditionalism, and the party spirit. But the message of God

concerning his people when they are powerless is always one of liberation. Whether Lazarus arrayed in ghostly garments, or Israel cringing under the lash of Egyptian taskmasters, the divine admonition is, "Let my people go." Whatever God wants done in any generation, he supplies the ability to do. The power to perform the divine purpose is present and available to the people of God. It is time that we free our feet from the fetters and face the future with full assurance that we need not fail. I want to suggest three areas of neglected power which would enable us like our Lord to go forth "conquering and to conquer."

1. THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, the monk of Erfurt, nailed his ninety-five theses to the great door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Each stroke of his hammer echoed through the corridors of the great stone edifice and also reverberated through the recesses of the hollow heart of a decadent church. Majestic principles of spiritual action were again discovered and brought to light. Hope surged afresh through the souls of the concerned ones. And of all the verities which were re-affirmed, none was more important than that of "the priesthood of all believers." It was like the blow of an axe laid at the root of the tree of priest-craft, shivering the trunk of arrogant pretense and scattering the evil fruit of pomp, pride and pelf.

The Bible teaches that every child of God is a priest and there is but one high priest, the Son of God. Every person on earth who has been called from darkness into light, every one who has laid hold of the mercy of God, is in the priesthood of God. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, and a people claimed by God for his own, to proclaim the triumphs of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. You are now the people of God, who once were

not his people; outside his mercy once, you have now received his mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10). The word “people” is a translation of “laos” from which we get “laity.” All of God’s laity are priests. The royal priesthood is composed entirely of the laity of God.

Let us go one step further. God’s laity is his clergy. The word “clergy” is from “kleros” which means “heritage.” This is the word used in 1 Peter 5:3 where the elders, or bishops, are instructed not to lord it over God’s heritage. The heritage is equated with the flock of God. The word of God knows nothing of a clergyman or layman. These expressions are a part of the “speech of Ashdod” and demonstrate how effective was our sojourn in Babylon and how close to its environs some of us still remain. The Protestant world soon forgot the implication of a universal priesthood of believers and there is every evidence that many of us are treading on the same dangerous ground. The spirit of professionalized service rendered purely for the fee involved, rears its head throughout the land, and betokens the fact that it still lives to quench the Spirit and to throttle the gifts of the many. Indeed, when we speak of “gifts” today we have reference to that bestowed upon the church by the people, rather than that bestowed upon the people by the Father to be used in edifying one another.

We need to examine our vocabulary carefully. It is not enough to speak where the Bible speaks but we must also speak as the Bible speaks. When we do we will come to realize that ministry is not something done to the church, but that which is done by the church— the whole church! Every Christian is a minister. One enters “the ministry” by coming into Christ. That which makes one a child of God makes him a minister of God. We do not go away to study to become ministers, although those who have become ministers may go away to study. You can no more make a man a minister of God by handing him a diploma than you can make him a priest of God by giving him a certificate. Men can make clergymen, and if they are made, men

will have to do it, but only God can make us ministers of God, and he makes all of us his ministers because he is no respecter of persons.

Because we have lost sight of this concept of the church we have forsaken the ideal of the Master for our lives. He said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." But the sons of God now come, not to minister, but to be ministered unto. The result is that the saints are no longer participants in the arena but spectators in the grandstand. The pulpit has become the sacred precinct of a professional dramatist and resembles the stage for a polished performance rather than a speaker's stand for sharing life and experience of others of like precious faith.

Thus the congregation is spoon-fed for years and never learns to feed itself. The fact is that we are delivering babies who never intend to grow, enrolling students who never intend to graduate, enlisting soldiers who never intend to fight, and registering racers who never intend to run. Our motto has become, "There he is Lord, send him!" The Ship of Zion is no longer manned by a volunteer crew working for sheer love of the Captain, but is steered by a pilot and an assistant pilot, while the remainder are paying passengers who are going along for the ride and complaining as they go. Many congregations are made up of half-converted individuals who think that when Jesus said we were to be childlike, he meant "childish" and they have to be petted and pampered to even keep them coming, much less to minister to others.

The tragedy of this is recognized when we remember that, in a world bursting at the seams with a population explosion, the preachers of the gospel who should be taking the message to the lost, are tied up and tied down, by having to salvage those who profess to be saved. Men spend years in preparing themselves to reach the masses with the Message and then are forced to become glorified "flunkies" at the beck and call of every petulant

member with some pettifogging and pusillanimous problem. By the time the erstwhile gospel proclaimer considers complaints, referees ridiculous ruckuses, rounds up recalcitrants, placates the members of the official board, and the unofficial members who are just plain bored, he has not only had it, but it has gotten him!

It is astounding how much dead timber and dead weight there is in the average congregation. Dead timber produces no fruit and dead weight must be dragged along. Somewhere along the way we have missed the very essence of the Christian concept and the result is that we have the greatest accumulation of unused talent and the richest deposit of untouched ability of any group of people on earth. If we are going to be honest in our plea for restoration it is time that we begin to revolutionize our thinking so that every soldier will don the armor and every child of God will be active in ministering.

The primitive church did not send out missionaries. It was missionary! One reason the missionary society problem did not trouble them was because there was no one who could attend a meeting to discuss ways and means of taking the Good News to the lost. They were all out doing it. The entire church was scattered abroad and all those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

Our greatest source of power is not in the pulpit but in the lives of those in the pews. We must meet the challenge of making every man of God a man of might. We must use our meetinghouses, not for parading profound pulpiteers, but for training soldiers in spiritual combat. We have moved the battlefield into the mess-hall and our brethren spend their time fighting each other. Let us discover and utilize the tremendous power in the priesthood of all believers, a power that is all too often siphoned off down the drain of disuse and discouragement.

2. THE SANCTIFICATION OF ALL BELIEVERS

God's people constitute a new creation. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). A man can no more create himself anew than he could create himself in the beginning. The creation of man belongs to the creator and not to the creature. So the very next verse says, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself." The purpose of salvation, as related to Christ, is described by Paul in the words, "He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

"A people of his own." This is the designation of those who pledge allegiance to God's Son. Again the apostle declares, "For we are the temple of the living God, as God said, 'I will live in them and among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (2 Corinthians 6:16). The conclusion is, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Sanctification and holiness are translations of the same word. To be holy is to be sanctified.

It is to be regretted that the word "saint" has fallen into disuse among us. It was used no less than sixty-two times in the new covenant scriptures to describe the believers in Christ, and every time but one it is in the plural. Being a child of God is not an exclusive relationship. God has no "only" children in Christ. There is no place for a "lone wolf" attitude in the flock of God. The world thinks of a saint as someone canonized after death by other men. But if you are not a saint before you die, what someone else does after you die will not make you one. We need to recapture that sanctification which alone can make saints.

Nothing is more startling than to contrast the lives of the primitive saints with those of our modern brethren who claim to

be children of the same Father. Theirs was a constant career of adventure in the Spirit. They lived recklessly and fought relentlessly on the frontiers of faith. They refused to be scared out, starved out, or stamped out. What could the world do with a man like Paul? They threw him in jail and a little after midnight he converted the jailer and his whole family. They sent him bound to the prison in Rome and he started a congregation in Caesar's household. When they threatened to cut his head off he declared that he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, when they agreed to let him live he declared he would die preaching the Word. What weapons are effective against people who regard death as the gate to glory, and who cannot be bribed into substitution, beaten into submission or battered into subjection.

Why were the early Christians different? I think it was because all of them were conscious that they had died and been raised again. Only new men can live new lives! I would not minimize the importance of baptism. No one can any more strongly affirm its essentiality than I do. But I wonder sometimes if our emphasis upon this subject, which is our reaction to the de-emphasis of the religious world about us, may not have conveyed a wrong impression to those whom we have led to Christ. Baptism can transfer us but cannot transform us. It can change our state but not our nature. Our spirits are made new by the Holy Spirit. "He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5, 6).

Our source of personal power is the indwelling Spirit. Paul prays to the Father that "he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). Our problem is the age-old one of those who begin in the Spirit but seek to be made perfect by the flesh. The way of "perfection by flesh" is the way of legalism with its deadening conformity and paralysis of conscience. It seeks to be good by pressures from

without, instead of by the divine presence that is within. “If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live” (Rom. 8:13).

No man can be made truly good by law, not even divine law, for there are some things law cannot do because of the weakness of the flesh. Law can keep one from doing things that are evil because of fear of penalty or reprisal. But merely abstaining from evil is not all that is involved in the good life, for goodness is not negative, but positive. One can be full of legal precepts who is not full of the Spirit. Some mighty wicked men believe some mighty good things.

The fact is that we are either under the reign of sin or the rule of the Spirit. We must either live for self or the Savior. The one who is under the dominion of sin is powerless; the one who is filled with the Spirit is filled with power. It is vital to our spiritual existence that we reaffirm the truth with reference to the indwelling Spirit, so that our lives may be purged, purified and purposeful. We can develop the divine nature only with divine help. The world has no potent weapon against the consecrated life. Men can debate theories of holiness but there is no argument against the life of holiness. When all of the believers are wholly committed unto Christ so he can convey his holiness unto us through the Spirit, we will become “more than conquerors.” We need to be purged from sin, purified from sham, and pledged to the Savior. Then we will be sheep led by a Shepherd and not cattle driven before a storm.

3. THE UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS

We are the heirs of a noble movement, inaugurated by brilliant but humble men, to “unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Their effort was launched at a time when sectarianism was rife and warring partisans called down heaven’s blessing upon their respective divisive establishments. We have lived to

see a complete reversal of that attitude. Schism is now regarded as the scandal of modern Christendom. The sectarian spirit is decried by the children of those who once defended it. There is an almost universal abhorrence of religious strife and this feeling is driving men everywhere toward unity.

It is the tragedy of our own history that, having begun so auspiciously, we have “fallen out by the way” and instead of becoming a catalyst to bring together divergent elements, we constitute one of the most divided movements in the contemporary American picture. We have contributed to the number of factions and fragments in the past; it remains to be seen whether we can contribute anything vital to the unity of the future. I do not hold with those who would abandon the ideal of restoration, but I am not so much concerned for “restoring the restoration movement,” as I am in recapturing that spirit which gave it incentive and impetus.

The movement was an outgrowth of the implementation of those methods and means which were considered to be best adapted to the needs of that generation in forwarding the purpose of God. The fact that it was regarded as a “movement” and not as the church, proves that it was not to become stodgy, staid or static. We should not be shackled by blind devotion to outmoded expressions or experiments, nor should we be stampeded by wide-eyed amazement into adoption of anything in our generation which will make the ideal of God unattainable. Our problem is intensified because we have inherited not only the feeling for fellowship which animated our fathers, but also the subsequent feuds which decimated their successors.

Our Lord prayed for the unity of all who believe in him. With the shadow of the cross falling over his pathway, he first prayed for his chosen envoys, and then said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for all those who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may

believe that thou hast sent me.” This is the foundation of all Christian unity. It is the point at which we must place our Jacob’s staff for any survey of the promised land of peace.

Observe that it is a universal unity. It involves all those who accept the testimony of the apostles. These were the divinely chosen and qualified witnesses. Those who reject their word do not truly believe in Jesus at all. He declared, “He that rejecteth you, rejecteth me.” In every test of the validity of faith, the assaying scales must be the apostolic word. In a great time of spiritual crisis when the foundations of faith were being assailed by antichrists, the apostle John wrote, “We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

Our unity must be personal. We are to be one as Jesus and the Father are one. Fellowship is a relationship between persons. It is not necessarily related to things, as the very word “fellow” proves. Fellowship is the sharing with others of a common life. It is not the sharing of the same opinions, ideas or interpretations. These things may present problems in the fellowship, and they may cause tensions among those who are in the fellowship, but they do not create fellowship, and by the same token, they need not destroy it. We are in the fellowship with each other because we are in Christ Jesus. It is not that we are all in the same place but in the same person that makes us one.

Our unity must be visible. If it is not exhibited practically the world cannot visualize it and it will have no impact for good. Jesus conditions the acceptance of himself by the world on the oneness of those in the world who have accepted him. The world will be won to believe in Christ when those in the world who believe in Christ are one. Those of us who are within the framework of the restoration movement have a dual task to perform. Now that we have allowed ourselves to become divided we must find the means of healing the breaches in our own walls

that we may again get on with the task of helping to unite the Christians in all of the sects.

The divided world of our day will never accept the testimony of one Lord from a divided church. Actually, however, we have a greater unity than we have realized, because unity is the gift of God through the Spirit. Our task is not so much to create unity as to recognize it. We are not instructed to attain unto unity of the Spirit but to maintain it. One attains to that which he has not previously had; he maintains that which he has previously held. A lack of recognition of this has produced tragic consequences on missionary fields where those who lived at peace with each other in paganism have been set to fighting against each other under Christianity.

The greatest challenge of this age is the one presented by our dissension and disunity. This is our worst foe because it is a hydra-headed monster we have created and nurtured and which will devour us and all we hold dear if we continue to defend its right of existence. If it be true that the world will be led to believe in Jesus by an exhibition of our unity, we seek in vain to conquer the universe for Christ by merely pumping finance into partisan programs abroad. What is to be gained in the long run by sending men to call the heathen out of darkness who cannot even call upon each other to lead in prayer to the Father?

We are divided because we have thought in terms of division. We are today just where our thinking has brought us. We shall be tomorrow exactly where our thinking takes us. If we desire unity we must think in terms of unity. We must proclaim unity instead of division. We must distinguish between the word of life and the strife of words. It is for this reason that I have resolved never again to encourage factionalism or division among the saints of God. I have dedicated my life to trying in my very feeble and meager way to restore peace among the adherents of all the dissident factions. I regard every sincere baptized believer in our Lord Jesus Christ as a child of God.

Wherever my father has a child I have a brother. I am convinced that he has many children and I have many brethren who have never even heard of the restoration movement. That movement is not the church and should never be confused with it. There is only one church now, there never was but one, and there will never be another. The church is a divine creation and a divine organism. It is not a human organization. A man might as well try to create another God as to create another church. The church is the body of my blessed Lord and is composed of all the saved of all the earth.

The church of God was on earth before Thomas Campbell read his "Declaration and Address" and before Alexander Campbell was born. Jesus has never been a head without a body, a king without a subject, or a shepherd without sheep, since the Pentecostal birthday of the church. Whether we would recognize and welcome some of the sheep if they came back among us now makes little difference, seeing that "The Lord knoweth them that are his." I am determined to receive all whom God receives, and on the same basis that he received me. He did not receive me because of my perfection in knowledge but in spite of my imperfections. I am no longer so much concerned that others believe all the things I think I know, as I am that they know Him in whom I have believed.

One can be wrong about many things if he is right about Jesus and still be saved; he can be right about everything else but if he is wrong about Jesus he will still be lost. I am determined to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Those who are good enough to be in fellowship with him are not too bad for me to be in fellowship with them.

Think of the power we have dissipated in the perpetuation of feuds and fusses. Thousands of reams of paper have been consumed in vitriolic attack upon other members of the family; millions of dollars have been expended to promote partisan

programs. If we had taken the finance used to sponsor debates and the travel expenses incidental to their attendance, we could have purchased a copy of the new covenant scriptures for every eternity-bound soul on the face of the earth. Why can we not generate as much enthusiasm for fighting with Satan as we can for skirmishing with one another? Why will men, who seldom contribute a cent for relieving the real needs of the world, spend many dollars to support the participants in a gladiatorial combat between brethren?

I am thankful that we can observe indications of a growing maturity among us. We are no longer as eager to deal with problems upon an emotional level and are seeking to combat them on a rational level. There is every reason to believe that, in spite of remaining areas of bitter factionalism in some localities, we stand upon the threshold of the brightest day in more than a century, for the heirs of the restoration movement. We are substituting association for assault, dialogue for debate, confession for challenges, and heart-cleansing for brain-washing. We can approach each other with open hands instead of with clenched fists. The chip on the shoulder has given way to the tear on the cheek and the tug at the heart.

We have many problems yet to be solved but we are coming to see that we can labor together toward their solution. Our differences may seem multitudinous but we know that differences are not occasions for division, but rather, for discussion. Our doctrinal disagreements can never be resolved by fighting as aliens, but only by loving as brethren. It is not necessary to be in the fellowship that those of us who are in Christ adjust all of our differences; it is only necessary that we adjust all of our differences *in Christ*.

To that end I pledge you my continued help in alleviating any of the distressing conditions which have arisen in the past. You are my brethren and I love you dearly. Call upon me when I can serve Him by serving you, to the end that when life is over

we may all be able to share that eternal togetherness where there will be no more separation, and heartaches will be forever forgotten. “And now, brethren, I commend you unto God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.”

Terms of Communion

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Volume 25

[Abstract]

The development of orthodoxy, accompanied as it generally is, by a dogmatic attitude, has been the bane of all reformatory efforts in the realm of Christendom, through the centuries. When men discover certain truths, or what they consider to be truths, they begin to take those steps which they think are best adapted to preservation of those truths. The first step is to exalt such discoveries to the degree that it is assumed that only by holding correct views regarding them, can one sustain a vital relationship with God. Spiritual life is thus conditioned upon one's degree of attainment in knowledge upon the point at issue.

The next step is to postulate that those who do not concur in the matter cannot be received into, or retained in the fellowship with those who hold the "correct" view, since it has been assumed that they are no longer in fellowship with God. This automatically develops a party in the Christian framework for the advocacy and defence of the discovery and a new sect is born. All such sectarianism results from pride and fear and from these twin evils most creedalism is born. We would not be so much concerned about such exhibitions of pride and fear, since most of us are proud of some things and afraid of others, but in this instance the whole Christian concept is at stake.

The danger in all such creedalism lies in the fact that it

creates another system of justification before God. It amounts to “setting up our own righteousness.” It predicates our hope of salvation, not upon faith in Christ Jesus, but upon conformity and uniformity in knowledge. It actually dethrones Jesus, and while clamoring loudly that we respect his authority, it substitutes the authority of the party for his divine prerogative. It is the “official interpretation” and not the revelation of God which becomes the real criterion.

This poses certain questions. Did not the apostles mean to convey certain specific ideas when they wrote? If so, does not the person who grasps these ideas correctly, understand the apostolic doctrine? If so, should he not teach these things and demand that others subscribe to them? If these others do not concur in them, should he not mark and avoid them, and urge others who correctly understand to do the same? This is the reasoning which is the foundation of all that sectarianism which is promoted by honest men. There is a difference between an honest and a dishonest sectarian promoter. The first strives to uphold the glory of God; the second is interested only in his own glory. The first is intellectually mistaken; the second is morally corrupt.

There is a fallacy in this chain of reasoning which betrays good men into becoming unwitting sectarians. Certainly the apostles meant to imply specific things when they wrote and the student who deduces the ideas they sought to convey from the things they wrote, grasps the apostolic doctrine. Surely he should teach what he understands the apostles to teach. But he “cannot demand that others subscribe to them.” To do so would be to substitute his authority for that of Jesus. Others must arrive at these truths as he arrived at them, out of respect for Christ, and not out of respect for a human exponent of truth!

No man has a right to bind *his knowledge* of any point of apostolic doctrine upon any other person who does not so understand it. To believe a thing only because you have

confidence in the judgment and wisdom of another man of superior intellect is to condition your faith upon the wisdom of men and not upon the power or authority of God. In the spiritual realm one is obligated to accept truth because of his relationship to God and not because of his relationship to men, regardless of how good and sincere they may be. The conscience is a sacred precinct reserved for God and no man has a right to invade the conscience of another and bind anything upon it which his own intellect cannot attest as truth. We must respect the consciences of others even while we deplore some of their ideas.

One who pledges allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ thereby obligates himself to respect and embrace *all truth*, and this obligation implies certain corollary obligations, among which are these: (1) To make a diligent search for truth; (2) To accept *as truth* those truths discovered as a result of such search; (3) To reject errors previously held and to correct one's thinking and behavior accordingly. In this process of acquisition we may help each other but no one can establish his own doctrinal knowledge as the measure of another man's acceptability with God. We differ in intellectual powers as much as we do in physical appearance.

We need to distinguish between evangelization and indoctrination. To accomplish the first we have "an evangel," or good news, to proclaim. To accomplish the second, a doctrine has been provided. We are begotten by the gospel and sustained by the apostles' doctrine. The first originates life, the second perpetuates it. The doctrine sustains the same relationship to the "evangel" as the daily food one consumes does to the sperm from which he was begotten. No one can eat enough food in a day to last him a lifetime, so the assimilation of food is a continuous process. But one can be begotten at once.

There is a difference between one who is deformed and one who is merely immature. It requires a complete gospel to beget

else one would be deformed when born. When Peter proclaimed the gospel on Pentecost he did so fully and those who accepted it obeyed it fully. But those who obeyed the gospel that day had not fully obeyed the apostles' doctrine. They were immature but not deformed. They were born of a proper seed but had not yet grown up. Not one apostolic epistle was written until twenty years after the gospel had been fully preached and it was written to those who had long since obeyed the gospel. Life is produced by the gospel and the gospel must be believed. It is good news and consists of facts. The wellbeing of the child of God is dependent upon his partaking of the bread and meat of doctrine but these no more originate or create spiritual life than the bread and meat upon our tables originate our physical life.

It would seem logical to recognize that the gospel is that which brings us into that relationship in which we are said to be saved, that is, to have life through the indwelling Spirit, by faith. Jesus instructed the apostles to "proclaim the good news to every creature. He who believes (the Message) and is baptized shall be saved." There is no indication that the apostolic doctrine was to be taught to every creature on earth. The epistles were addressed to the churches and written to the saints.

Superficial students are afraid to acknowledge this truth for fear that it will reflect a disregard for the doctrine. This is somewhat ridiculous. One does not speak derogatorily of bread and milk when he insists that he was not begotten by them. And no one ever thinks of judging one's right to be regarded as a member of the family upon the amount of milk and bread he can digest on any given day. Of course, refusal to eat any food, and going on a hunger strike, in revolt against the family authority, would bring about death, but even then there is a difference between such refusal and the inability to digest properly.

Our restoration ancestors clearly understood this and while they were exceedingly zealous for the doctrine of God's Word, they never once thought of making proficiency in doctrine

a criterion for fellowship in Christ. We commend unto all of our readers that portion of the “Declaration and Address” by Thomas Campbell, which contains the phrase which forms the heading for this article. Read it frequently, carefully and meditatively. It contains the formula for overcoming almost every one of our current divisions, and also the means by which we can avoid all such in the future.

That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church’s confession.

Thomas Campbell was not so ignorant as to affirm that the inspired writings did not need to be interpreted. He knew that every communication in human language requires interpretation. When one reasons fairly (that is, by logical rules of interpretation) upon the premises in the sacred writings, the inferences or deductions thus arrived at, constitute the apostolic teaching. Notice the expression “formally binding.” This is the most important distinction in the paragraph. All truths contained in the revelation recorded by the apostles are *naturally* binding upon every person under the lordship of Jesus, that is, they are obligatory because of *the nature* of that relationship. As one becomes convinced of them he must accept and implement them in his Christian walk or be responsible to the one Lord for his failure to do so. But no other person can formally bind them upon him as a condition of fellowship, because no one else can read his heart and determine the degree of his responsibility.

Study carefully the expressions “terms of communion” and “after and progressive edification of the church.” The contrast is vital and valid. It is the contrast between gospel and doctrine. The “terms of communion” are equated with “the church’s confession,” i.e., those things which are conditions of salvation, the things bound upon one in obedience to the gospel. What Thomas Campbell was saying was simply that we have no right to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

Since God has not made the arrival at a certain degree of doctrinal knowledge a condition of salvation, we have no right to make it a test of fellowship. Our brethren generally, in their growing sectarian arrogance and exclusivism, have made items belonging to “the after and progressive edification of the church” the “terms of communion” in their respective parties. One even has to believe “the right thing” about the millennium, or rather, believe what “the right people” tell him about it, to be in what is called “the fellowship.” Such persons have so forsaken the word of God and the restoration ideal that they would brand Thomas Campbell “a liberal.”

Perhaps it was a growing tendency to make fellowship contingent upon doctrinal correctness and attainment of knowledge, which caused David Lipscomb to write in *Gospel Advocate*, April 22, 1875, as follows:

So long as a man really desires to do right, to serve the Lord, to obey His commands, we cannot withdraw from him. We are willing to accept him as a brother, no matter how ignorant he may be, or how far short of the perfect standard his life may fall from his ignorance . . . We will maintain the truth, press the truth upon him, compromise not one word or iota of that truth, yet forbear with the ignorance, the weakness of our brother who is anxious, but not yet able to see the truth . . . Why should I not, when I fall so far short of perfect knowledge myself? How do I know that the line beyond which ignorance

damns, is behind me, not before me? If I have no forbearance with his ignorance, how can I expect God to forbear with mine? . . . So long then as a man exhibits a teachable disposition, is willing to hear, to learn and obey the truth of God, I care not how far he may be, how ignorant he is, I am willing to recognize him as a brother.

A Realistic Attitude

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[Abstract]

One sign of maturity is the ability to recognize problems, to ascertain the real causes producing them, and to deal with them realistically. If these problems lie within the religious realm it is obvious that the realistic approach will be the one sanctioned by our Lord. Only the unwise or unstable do not recognize threats and dangers to what they hold dear, or ignore them to their own peril. A false sense of security frequently betrays men into a dangerous and unenviable condition.

The greatest detriment to the effect of our witness in the Christian world today is the factionalism and division which exists among the heirs of the restoration movement. It is a sad commentary on our spiritual state that adherents of some factions are almost wholly oblivious of the sad and sordid spectacle we exhibit to the thinking world. Living within the “caves” they have hewn out of the rocks of orthodoxy for their respective companies, and equating those who have found refuge in each partisan hideout as the “loyal brethren” they live in the half-light and semidarkness of perpetual intellectual twilight, even as they assume that they have all the light there is.

Of course, not all are like “hermit souls who live withdrawn, in the peace of their self-content.” Many are genuinely aware of the cancerous danger of division. They know that we are sick. They realize that we are poor, and miserable,

and blind, and naked. They can see the inconsistency of preaching unity to others while practicing disunity among ourselves. They recognize the futility of trying to alleviate schism by schismatic prescriptions. Yet a goodly number of these are like a physician who attributes all disease to simple malfunction of the gall bladder, and who can diagnose for every patient without seeing any.

Our divisions are complex and they have an unseen root mass which reaches its tangled web out in all directions. They are entwined with the temperaments, desires, ambitions and strivings of men. Frequently those things which are credited with causing division did not cause it at all. Division, like every other sin, first exists in a human heart. No organ, or Bible class, or communion cup, ever divided a congregation of saints. No human institution ever did so. An organ has no power to divide God's people. Only men can do that. People are divided by people, not by things!

To assail things with a fury which drives one to intemperate accusation, while ignoring the basic motivations, accomplishes but one thing. It reveals the inability of the one who engages in such action to deal rationally with the problem at hand. This should cause good men to shy away from him. Unfortunately, many otherwise good men are bitter partisans and they elevate just this type of person to party leadership. From then on, instead of meeting the problem with warm hearts and cool heads they do so with cold hearts and hot heads!

It is frequently said by those of the disciple brotherhood who do not use instrumental music, that if the instrument had never been introduced, we would not be divided today. This is mere childish over-simplification and is not true at all. The fact is that those of us who do not use the instrument have had many divisions in which the instrument played no part (no pun intended). The brotherhood did not divide when the instrument was first installed. The difference in attitude toward the

scripturality of its use created some problems and much discussion. But division did not come until brethren separated, and they did not separate when the instrument was advocated. They separated when it was made a test of fellowship, and those who favored it were told that they could no longer be regarded as brethren.

The fact is that human nature being what it is, and with our current concept of fellowship, if we had not divided over the instrument we would have divided over something else. We have proved this by repeatedly dividing over other things since we divided over the instrument. The introduction of instrumental music provided for us the first real opportunity to exercise the will to divide, based on the false philosophy that the way to preserve doctrinal purity is to separate from brethren. When men are motivated by such an attitude they are doomed to division, and we will continue to divide, using first one thing and then another as an excuse, until we are divided out of existence as we already are out of effective influence in a number of communities.

Because things really did not divide us, we start at the wrong end of our problem of division when we assume that we must first determine and agree upon the status of all these before we are in the fellowship with one another. To pursue such a course will only create more division as it always has in the past. The thing we must do is to first restore, or recapture, a real sense of brotherhood. This does not mean the mere reluctant calling of each other, “brothers in error,” but correcting the real error of not treating each other as brothers. This is what caused the division. Schisms among God’s people are caused by their attitude toward each other. Things produce strains upon our relationship, but we produce the schisms within it. We separate when we quit loving each other.

Most of the brothers within the non-instrument segment of the restoration movement, would welcome any move which

would heal their many schisms. But they do not want to go back to the original cleavage where the false concept of brotherhood was first applied. They are content to have two sects among the heirs if they can solve the problems in their own side of the family. Such a proposal is superficial and worthless. Unless we deny the unscriptural philosophy of brotherhood based upon conformity instead of upon unity in Christ, we will only heal our sores in one part of the body today, to have them erupt in another part tomorrow.

We need to face up to the fact that we have a very grave and genuine problem of factionalism, sectarianism, exclusivism and intestine strife. The answer to it is not for the inhabitants of each cave to stand in the gloomy doors of their own caverns and try to persuade the occupants of the others to come over and join them. This will never be accomplished. Few there are who will leave their own factional strongholds to enter into a strange one inhabited by those who have bitterly fought them in the past.

The answer to our problem is for all of us to abandon our partisan caves and move out into greater light together. Not only can we see what our other brethren are like, when we have more light; but what is more important, we can get a better look at ourselves. What we see when we do may make us a little more charitable toward others who are not in such good shape either. We need to be honest with each other. The members of every faction quote, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," but their practical application of this shows that they mean, "If *you* walk in the light as *we* are in the light, we can have fellowship one with another." The "light" in which you must walk is the factional interpretation, the unwritten creed.

Our divisions are not caused by the inadequacy or failure of the first century gospel to meet the needs of modern man, but by our application of a nineteenth century mentality to twentieth century problems. We are perpetuating partisan feuds which

began a century ago, with the result that a movement which started out to “unite the Christians in all the sects” is now actually doing less than most of the sects to promote unity. We do not need to change the word of God but we do need to alter our approach to the problems about us. Undoubtedly we have learned something in the last hundred years. If so, it is high time that we awake out of sleep and begin to show what it is. Thus far, we are contributing more to the problem of disunity, than we are to the answer of unity!

Facing a Dilemma

Mission Messenger (September 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

Many of the heirs of the restoration movement are faced with a dilemma. The changing fortunes of history have conspired together to make their practice as vain as their plea is valid. This movement began, according to Alexander Campbell, as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” It was launched at a time when religious rivalry was rampant and sectarian adherents sought scriptural justification for their partisan establishments. The clear call for unity based upon faith in Christ Jesus instead of upon conformity in knowledge or opinion, was like a fresh wind blowing across an arid desert. One can only wonder what might have been the result if the same clarity of vision had been maintained by succeeding generations.

Now, however, the scandal of schism is almost universally recognized and the rest of the religious world is pleading for unity. This places the movement with which we are allied in an embarrassing position, for our brethren are still dividing while those we set about to unite have started uniting. The restoration movement had a real message for a divided church. What is its message to a Christian world seeking to unite? I am concerned about this because I know that the witness of my brethren will make no impact if it is not relevant to current needs. In this article I shall relate my investigation especially to the position of the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood, with

which I am best acquainted.

One of the recognized journals of this particular group is the *Firm Foundation* which is edited by our brother in Christ, Reuel Lemmons. Brother Lemmons is thoroughly qualified by virtue of association and experience to express the orthodox position of the largest faction of our brethren, and this he does in an editorial in the June 25 issue of his periodical. The title of the article is “Some Thoughts on Unity,” and we reproduce it in its entirety so that our readers may have access to it. This article appeared after three successive issues in which our brother wrote in contradiction to my own plea.

We think that responsible journalism requires that we examine what is said in contravention to our position, and that we allow the views examined to be expressed by the one who holds them. To all of those who regret the necessity of publishing this kind of an issue we express our kindred regret, but we feel there is no way by which we can be true to the cause we have espoused and to our inner conscience, and evade or avoid such confrontations. We only trust that this issue of the paper will be regarded as it was intended— a feeble contribution to that unity of all of our brothers in the Lord, a unity for which we daily pray.

Reply to Brother Lemmons

Mission Messenger (September 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

Brother Lemmons regards the stirring of the church by the ecumenical spirit as being good. He rejoices that every splinter of the Restoration movement is dealing with the subject orally and in writing. He affirms that unity is now possible. He concedes that all of the past approaches to unity may have contributed some good thing, although he believes they came to nought because of certain weaknesses inherent in them. We are concerning ourselves with his article because it came as the conclusion of three previous articles in which our brother attacked what he is pleased to call “the Ketcherside unity plan.”

We are serious about an attempt to restore a sense of unity to all of the saints in the shattered restoration brotherhood and to the children of God who may never have heard of the restoration movement. We have been writing, talking and conferring on the theme in many parts of the United States and Canada. We have answered questions by the hundreds in forums. It must be candidly stated that the one “splinter of the Restoration movement” which has done the most to discourage association of free men for honest discussion across partisan lines is the one represented by Brother Lemmons. These brethren have generally refused to participate in forums in which every other faction and segment has been represented. In some places they have threatened reprisals against those who attended and in others have exerted pressures to cause men who

promised to confer to withdraw and go back on their word.

I freely offer to give ample space to publication in MISSION MESSENGER of a plan submitted by Brother Lemmons which will be designed to secure restoration of harmony among all of the dissident factions which have grown out of the restoration movement. I am not committed irrevocably to any approach to our grave problem if a better one can be developed. I invite Brother Lemmons to take the space required to present a definite, positive, spelled-out approach without inherent weakness. Since he admits the possibility of having unity, and since he opposes the approach we are making we are ready to hear “a more excellent way.”

We will publicize in advance the fact that he will offer such a program and will do all within our feeble power and with our limited resources to assure him a hearing through the medium of this little journal. We will examine any such approach as objectively as possible. If criticism is deemed essential it will be made in love.

We believe that a realistic approach must rise above a narrow partisan appeal. It must preserve the inalienable freedom of all of God’s children to go to the word of God for themselves and to be accountable only unto him for their sincere and studious deductions from that word. It must provide a means for removal rather than for preservation of traditional barriers between brethren without indignity to any. Brother Lemmons has used *Firm Foundation* as the base for an extended attack against our plea. We invite him now to use MISSION MESSENGER as a medium for giving to us all a genuine objective and positive program which will lead to the unity of all without the sectarianizing of any. Let us have done with platitudes and generalizations and get on with the real task.

We think an examination of the article by Brother Lemmons is in order. He closes his first paragraph with the

statement that “Unity in spite of differences is not unity.” Of course our brother knows that unity is unity where men differ about many things. He has unity confused with conformity. Free men will always differ and the only way to eliminate differences is to surrender freedom to the rule of a dictator who can through coercion and fear make men outwardly conform.

A man and wife can have unity in their marriage relationship and be one flesh in spite of many differences. The truth is that the only unity possible to them is that which recognizes diversity. Does our brother think that those who give the flag salute lie when they say, “One nation under God indivisible”? None of us would be so foolish as to affirm that there are not differences among our elected representatives but these do not destroy the fact that we are united states.

I daresay that in the very congregation where Brother Lemmons attends in Austin the brethren do not concur on every interpretation. Must we conclude that he is a member of a divided congregation? If we cannot have unity in spite of differences can there ever be any unity at all? I do not agree perfectly with any man on earth. Who is going to be the universal regulator of what free men must think about everything? Can we have absolute conformity without creating a pope? Was it not this very type of reasoning coupled with a desire to secure conformity which led to the *pontifex maximus* of Rome?

Our brother quotes I John 1:7, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Every faction quotes that same verse and every faction thinks the members of every other faction are in darkness. Those who oppose cups, classes, and Herald of Truth, think Brother Lemmons is walking in darkness and they will not have “fellowship” with him. We have the ridiculous spectacle of some two dozen groups quoting this passage and applying it in condemnation of all the others. What each means is actually

that, “If *you* walk in the light as *we* are in the light, *we* will have fellowship with *you*.” In every instance the party interpretation is the “light” and if you do not kow-tow to it you are in darkness.

Brother Lemmons says, “we can do those in error more good by preaching the gospel unto them than we can by extending to them a synthetic fellowship.” He also says, “It is a painful thing to find we have no monopoly on the truth, nor are we immune from error.” We presume our brother includes himself in the statement. Now we are as confident that our good brother is in error as he is in thinking we are, but we cannot help him by preaching the gospel unto him. Nor can we help any of our factions by preaching the gospel unto them. They are all made up of people who have obeyed the gospel. Has not Brother Lemmons obeyed the gospel? Does he not claim to actually be “a gospel preacher”? How can one help a gospel preacher who is in error by preaching the gospel to him, the very thing he obeyed in order to become a gospel preacher? Our sinful divisions are not caused by lack of obedience to the gospel for the obedience to the gospel brings us all into *one body*. It was after we came into that body we became divided.

Our sinful schisms arise from mistaken views about “fellowship” upon the part of those who have heard and obeyed the gospel. Not only can we not extend a synthetic fellowship, but we cannot extend a genuine fellowship. The fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called of God (1 Cor. 1:9). Certainly it is “more than just a nice attitude toward every one.” It is the mutual sharing in the life of the indwelling Spirit by every child of God. It is a joint participation in the Spirit of the living God.

We agree that “a denial of reality is no approach to healing the schisms” and also that “we must correct the error that causes the schism.” But we do not believe that colleges, cups and classes have caused the schisms. The error lies in making brotherhood contingent upon these things and an attitude

toward them, and of assuming that the way to maintain doctrinal purity is by separation from brethren and division of the divine family. Our brethren are not divided because of Herald of Truth, but because we do not love one another enough to maintain the family ties of unity in spite of divergent views and interpretations. We do not need to agree about cups, classes, colleges, television programs, and the manner of breaking the bread, to be one in Christ Jesus. Anyone who says we do is just not realistic! Jesus did not die for a “cups party” or an “anti-cups party;” or for a “television party” or an “anti-television party.” He died for one body. All who have obeyed the gospel are in that body and I shall recognize and treat them all as my brothers in Him, in spite of our differences.

Our brother quotes 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27 and 2:2, but he does not apply them as did the apostle. Paul did not write a single admonition to “be of one mind” or to “be of one accord” in order to bring men into the fellowship. Every such admonition was written to those who were in the fellowship and because they were in it. Being of “one mind” is not essential to being in the fellowship, but being in the fellowship is essential to becoming of one mind. We are in the fellowship because we are in one person and because we are in him we strive to achieve harmony. Certainly we are not to ignore differences, and we are to seek to eliminate them, but we are not to divide over them. There will always be differences among free men but these are not as important as the cross. We should allow ourselves to be drawn together by the cross rather than drawn apart by our divergencies of viewpoint.

We are not pleading for “a loose federation of divergent beliefs” but for a close aggregation of devoted believers. The body of our Lord is not composed of beliefs, but of believers, and those who are one in Christ may differ without dividing as we learn from Romans 14. It is Brother Lemmons who substitutes a plan of unity for that proposed by Jesus. He predicates unity upon conformity and makes forbearance an unworthy or

unnecessary virtue. “The pattern of unity proposed by the Holy Spirit” makes allowance for differences. It forbids you to “pass judgment on your brother” or to “despise your brother.” The man who “sets at nought a brother” no longer walks in love. He destroys the work of God. Through love I can cling to my brother and hold my opinions.

Brother Lemmons repudiates “the authority of the scriptures” and makes a traditional partisan pattern his rule of faith and practice. The word of God does not authorize the rending and riving, the splitting and shredding of the fabric of brotherhood. Our brother is not pleading for unity but for the sanctification and maintenance of our divisions until every person sees everything as does the party with which he is identified. He seeks to justify division in the family of God but the Holy Spirit everywhere condemns it.

Our beloved brother demonstrates his “denial of reality” when he says, “Unity is not attained by the maintenance of these private interpretations of scripture, but by the abandonment of them.” How can a man abandon what he believes the scriptures to teach? Will Brother Lemmons give up his interpretations of scripture to have unity? Of course he will reply that he refers to interpretations that are “in error.” But who among us deliberately holds an interpretation that he believes is in error? Who clings to an interpretation after he is convinced that it is in error? Are we to allow our brother to become the sole arbiter as to whose interpretations are in error? Do the brethren who oppose classes think they are in error? Do those who oppose Herald of Truth think they are in error? Do those who believe in the pre-millennial return of our glorious Lord think they are in error? Of course, Brother Lemmons thinks they are all in error, but they all think he is. Who is to decide who must abandon what?

God never predicated our fellowship upon surrender of our private interpretations. A man can no more abandon his

brain-children than he can his children in the flesh. The word of God does not tell us to abandon such, but says, “Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God” (Rom. 14:22). Unity is not attained by abandoning our interpretations of scripture, for this is an impossibility for honest men, but by a proper sense of values which allows us to maintain our interpretations without placing them as obstacles or stumblingblocks in a brother’s way. We agree that “any attempt that offers pardon and heaven to those who have not met the terms of heaven’s King is not a scriptural attempt.” We have no intention to “convey the idea that there is a fellowship much more broad and vast than that defined by the scriptures.” But it is just as dangerous to confine fellowship to “narrowing little bands” with their “zealously defended barriers.” In an editorial appearing in *Firm Foundation*, April 21, 1959, under the heading, “The Deadly Narrowing,” Brother Lemmons wrote thus:

If the Restoration movement is to escape the inevitable fate of denominationalism we must hold fast the line against the “narrowing of our horizon of spiritual things.” Recent years has seen the division and subdivision of the forces of the Restoration into ever narrowing little bands of vicious and highly sectarian people. We believe it is high time that attention be called to the broad undenominational nature of the Christian religion . . .

This narrowing has produced different brands of Christians, and most of the groups have built “spite fences” separating themselves from all others. By what principle of Christianity do groups of brethren separate into camps with zealously defended barriers that prohibit the fellowship and co-operation of one group of them with another? Every division that takes place makes that group more narrow and more sectarian than ever.

As Christians all of us are members only of that broad, universal church for which Jesus died. If the undenominational view of the early church, and of the leaders of the Restoration, had continued until this day

there would not be the divided warring factions among us that spend their energies fighting each other rather than fighting the devil in a united, invincible army.

Does Brother Lemmons equate “the broad, universal church for which Jesus died” with that “sect of the splintered Restoration” with which he is affiliated? Could one believe in the pre-millennial interpretation as did Moses E. Lard and be a member of “the broad, universal church”? Could he accept those from the Baptist Church as brothers without re-immersing them as David Lipscomb did and be a member of it? Could he profess to be a Calvinist as did Thomas Campbell after his immersion and be a member of it? Could he believe there were Christians in all of the sects as Alexander Campbell did and be a member of it? Could he believe in universalism as did Aylette Raines and be a member of it? Could he refuse to make instrumental music in worship a test of fellowship as did John W. McGarvey and be a member of it? Could he oppose the idea of a triune Godhood as did Barton W. Stone and be a member of “the broad universal church for which Jesus died”? Has our good brother Lemmons “forgotten the Restoration principle entirely”?

Brother Lemmons believes that “the plea for unity first made by the pioneers of the Restoration movement was basically sound.” In the same paragraph he talks about “a highly inferior and absolutely counterfeit proposal for unity in spite of differences.” Yet it was “unity in spite of differences” which constituted “the plea for unity first made by the pioneers of the Restoration movement.” In one breath he calls it *basically sound* and in the next breath labels it as *absolutely counterfeit*.

In April, 1831, the Millersburg (Kentucky) Christian Church was constituted by a union of a congregation planted by Barton W. Stone and another planted by Robert M. Batson. The record says:

It was the practice of the brethren forming the two

congregations to commune together at their several meetings, and finally, finding themselves to be one so far as faith and practice are concerned, they agreed to meet together without regard to difference of opinions, acknowledging no name but that of Christian and no creed but the Bible.

A historian who was an intimate associate of Aylette Raines, writing of his acceptance with his peculiar views, says:

Early in the history of the Restoration circumstances occurred that put its principles to a severe test. Whether the disciples of Christ could be united in faith, and at the same time hold different opinions in regard to speculative matters, having fellowship together in the one body of Christ on this basis, became a question of absorbing interest and vital importance. It was not expected that all thinking minds would reach the same opinions on questions not directly explained or settled *ex cathedra* in the Scriptures . . .

If the disciples could not be united in faith and have fellowship with each other while holding contrary opinions as respects matters lying outside the circle of faith, then the movement was doomed to dismal failure. But if they could do these two things, the success of their plea could not be thwarted.

The “pioneers of the Restoration” all advocated unity in spite of differences of opinion, and Brother Lemmons declares that their plea was basically sound. Then he writes, “Unity can only come by our putting out of our hearts our own opinions.” Now listen to Alexander Campbell:

But men cannot give up their opinions, and, therefore, they never can unite, says one. We do not ask them to give up their opinions. We ask them only not to impose them upon others. Let them hold their opinions; but let them hold them as private property. The faith is public property; opinions are, and always have been,

private property. Men have foolishly attempted to make the deductions of some great minds the common measure of all Christians . . . It is cruel to excommunicate a man because of the imbecility of his intellect . . . I never did at any time exclude a man from the Kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of his intellect, or, in other words, because he could not assent to my opinions. All sects are doing, or have done this.

In the very same article, Brother Campbell wrote again:

Reason and experience unite their testimony in assuring us that, in the same proportion as individuals labor to be of one opinion, they disagree. The greater the emphasis laid upon opinions, the more rapidly they generate. The nearest approaches to a unity of opinion which I have ever witnessed, have appeared in those societies in which no effort was made to be of one opinion; in which they allowed the greatest liberty of opinion, and in which they talked more and boasted more of the glory and majesty of the great facts, the wonderful works of God's lovingkindness to the children of men, than of themselves, their views and attainments . . .

If I were to attempt to produce the greatest uniformity of opinion, I would set about it by paying no respect to opinions, laying no emphasis upon them, admiring and contemning no opinions as such. But if I wished to produce the greatest discrepancies in opinion, I would call some damnably dangerous, others of vital importance; I would always eulogize the sound, and censure the erroneous in opinions. We all know that strife is like the bursting forth of water— it always widens the channels; and many a broil in churches, neighborhoods, and families would have been prevented if the first indication had been sympathetically attributed to the infirmity of human nature.

Not only is our good brother in the Lord, who edits *Firm Foundation*, inconsistent with the word of God and the pioneers

of the Restoration in his contention for unity based upon conformity in opinion, but he is also inconsistent with himself. In his editorial, "The Deadly Narrowing," printed April 21, 1959, he said:

There are many things that most brethren consider to be matters of opinion. Yet they make the acceptance of their opinions the basis upon which they will withhold or extend fellowship. If others will have opinions which parallel theirs then fellowship is extended, but if others hold converse opinions fellowship is withheld. We have never believed that matters of opinion should be the basis of fellowship. We are loathe to see the horizon of our spiritual things narrowed to the limits of any man's opinions.

In 1959 our brother offered what he now calls "an absolutely counterfeit proposal for unity in spite of differences" and castigated the "division and subdivision of the forces of the Restoration into ever narrowing little bands of vicious and highly sectarian people." Now he thinks these "little bands of vicious and highly sectarian people" should remain divided until they can put their opinions out of their hearts. Our brother should have labeled his editorial "Some Thoughts on Disunity." He offered nothing constructive for promotion of unity among our divided brethren but simply rehearsed that traditional thinking which has shivered us to bits and tainted us all with the sin and shame of division. Instead of straightening *our walls* we should remove them as Christ did that other "middle wall of partition which was against us."

In conclusion, let us voice our sympathy for Brother Lemmons and all the rest of us within the present framework of the Restoration movement. All of our brethren mean well. They do not want to compose "little bands of vicious and highly sectarian people." They are only being faithful to a fatal philosophy which has fractured us into fragments and will continue to do so until we no longer equate it with the will of

God. We need to think boldly and act bravely if we expect to measure up to the demands of these stirring times. The noble pioneers of the Restoration movement met the challenge of a universal defense of division. Can we, as their sons, meet the challenge of a universal desire for unity?

Reviving Hope

Mission Messenger (September 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

There are increasing evidences that the long dark night of sectarian bitterness may be drawing to a close. The first gray fingers of the dawn are probing the religious firmament and pointing toward the day when the sun of righteousness may once again bathe the earth with gentle rays of understanding and compassion.

Even among the heirs of the restoration movement there are signs of awakening consciousness of unity. The winter of the deep freeze is slowly giving way to approaching spring. The first tiny rivulets of hope are trickling down the face of the formidable glacier of exclusivism and some of these will join to become a stream flowing with increasing velocity toward a better land and a brighter day. There are still grave impediments in the way, huge boulders of doubt and suspicion, but progress in the Spirit is inexorable. Our brethren are weary of strife and contention. They are sick of gladiatorial contests in which partisan champions hack each other to pieces in full view of a skeptical world. The bromides and cliches with which skilful debaters once drew applause now fall flat. There is a deadly seriousness apparent which can no longer be satisfied with slogans and sly innuendoes. The factional leaders who think in terms of their vested interests are frightened. They are trembling inwardly. They have learned how to capitalize upon disunity but they do not know how to cope with unity.

Some of them still reach up to the shelf and take down the old ware of conformity and offer it in lieu of unity. But it is shopworn and soiled from too much handling, and the dust rag is dirty and cannot restore the former luster. Our present generation will not be as easily fooled by a shoddy substitute. We have reared a new generation under the perpetual threat of world catastrophe. They can see through the glib answer and the superficial rejoinder. They will not be content with the misuse and abuse of scriptural quotations to sustain factional aims.

Our younger brethren are more capable intellectually, but they have not trained their heads at the expense of their hearts. They can respect their fathers for the contributions they made in their day without shackling themselves by their judgments which long since have proven to be faulty and divisive. Their minds are sharp enough to discern between revelation and interpretation. They know the difference between the will of God and party traditions. They will no longer equate the faction in which they were reared as the kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of all others. They no longer think that we have *arrived* while every one else has *departed*. For that reason they will not consider that those who get up and go on must of necessity get down and go off!

It would astonish our readers to know how many faculty members in the various religious schools sympathize with our aims and share in our general convictions as to the fellowship of the believers. And it might surprise the members of the faculty to learn how many students, especially on the graduate school level, rejoice that at last a meager attempt is being made to face up realistically to the sin of schism and the disgrace of division within our ranks. The casual reader may be led to conclude that a whole segment of brethren is violently opposed to our plea but do not be misled by attacks in partisan journals. Remember that those who think in terms of unity, rather than conformity, cannot be heard in such media.

Ours is actually a fight for freedom— the freedom to think, act and speak, without fear of reprisal from the self-elected “powers that be.” It is a battle for the freedom of being Christians only without being compelled and coerced into a factional alignment in order to be recognized and regarded as Christians at all. It is a campaign for the freedom to love all of God’s children and our brethren, to move among them freely and manifest our love in action, as opposed to the narrow provincial and parochial view that the *more* of God’s children you love, the *less* you love God.

Many of our brothers are not free as yet to speak their honest convictions openly. To do so would bring down upon their heads the maledictions of party leaders. They would be harassed by baying “hounds of heresy.” They would be excommunicated and driven forth, avoided by previous associates, shunned by former friends, condemned as traitors and rebels. This is the price demanded of those among the courageous who cannot concede that the “one fold” is identical with the “party corral” and who believe that the flock of God is not yet a gathered one, but is scattered over the sectarian hills. I am willing to pay whatever toll is exacted for believing that. It is my sincere conviction that the one body is greater than any of our factions, and greater than all of them put together. If this be treason, make the most of it!

It is an encouraging omen that so many are becoming tired of irresponsible journalism, a plague which has blighted the restoration movement for a good many decades. Letters from every section of the country protest the unfairness of those who hold one hand over your mouth while they slap you with the other, or tie your hands before they stab you in the back. The one-way, dead-end street type of editing which allows acrimonious and personal charges to be hurled at one in print and then slams the gate on him when he attempts to enter and speak for himself, no longer appeals to those who have studied morals and ethics. More and more brethren are coming to

believe that both sides of a story should be printed. They are nauseated by censorship and boycott. A good many of them feel they are quite as capable of making up their own minds as an editor is of making their minds up for them.

The increasing number of meetings in which brethren of all segments and splinters gather to explore their thinking as to the basis of fellowship augurs well for the future. Obviously, some who attend still regard the church for which Jesus died as the “Church of Christ” in which they have always lived, and they cling to the forlorn hope that they will be powerful enough in “logic” to convince all others that the way to glory is by switching from one faction to another. I venture to suggest that, after a few such meetings, many of the most rabid partisans will find their faith in God’s revelation increased to the same extent they find the faith in their own interpretations has decreased. It will be good when the faith of all of us rests in the power of God instead of in the wisdom of men.

It is much easier to hate brethren whom you have never met. You can conjure up an image, concocted of equal parts of your own suspicion and the suggestions of your fellow-partisans, and a quite genial person may be transformed into a mental ogre. Association tends to give us a better perspective from which to view men and it batters down a lot of imaginary barriers which have always seemed quite real to us. I think it is essential that we recapture the freedom to go wherever we want to go without having to secure permission from some self-imposed authority. The kingdom of heaven is not a police state and should not be under an army of occupation. I propose to move among all of my brethren and share in their insights and discoveries. “I will not fear what men shall do unto me.” I have learned that all of them are as human as myself and about as prone to weakness and error.

I am optimistic. I think the restoration movement heirs stand at the threshold of their greatest opportunity in almost a

century. I suspect that we will see a genuine breakthrough of the Spirit. The hard crust of exclusivism will be penetrated. The false notions about fellowship will be dispelled. Men who have never met will meet together and “sit together in heavenly places.” This will be the Lord’s doing and it will be marvelous in our eyes. This does not mean that all of this will be easily achieved. Some will be maligned and misrepresented, they will be pilloried and crucified, but this is ever the case. The battle for freedom is never won easily but the victory is worth the cost in sweat and tears and sleepless nights. No land was ever occupied that was not first explored by pioneers!

Peace must be waged even as others wage war. There must be a “strategy of peace” and it must take into account the forces of opposition and their strength in the field. While these are formidable, we must never become discouraged, because one who pleads for peace among the children of God will find that God is at his right hand. It is He who blesses the peacemakers! We must profit by previous efforts without perpetuating their mistakes; we must fight a battle in full recognition of our own frailty, willing to freely acknowledge error as we become aware of it. All of us have much to learn, all of us can learn from each other. None of us know it all.

The factional approach to the Christian way is outmoded and outdated. Increasing enlightenment has shown that we can never accomplish the purpose of heaven by dividing the family of God upon earth. No faction is “the faithful church.” Factionalism and faithfulness to God are incompatible. He only can be faithful who refuses to be factional, who loves all of God’s children and who refuses to make tests of fellowship which God has not proposed as conditions of salvation. In this day of rapid communication in a shrinking world, no parochial concept will even begin to meet the universal needs of teeming humanity. It is useless to “talk big” while we “think little.” The kingdom of heaven is greater than we think. It cannot be confined by sectarian walls or factional barriers, not even when we build

them. It is because so many are coming to realize this that there is real hope that tomorrow will be better than today!

Saying Nice Things

Mission Messenger (September 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

“So do let them, and all the churches see how genuine is your love, and justify all the nice things we have said about you” (2 Corinthians 8:24. *J. B. Phillips*).

This was written to the congregation in Corinth. There are indications that it followed the first epistle by just a few months. It is possible that the first letter was written in the spring of A.D. 57 and the second in autumn of the same year. The first letter reveals the state of the congregation which Paul had planted. We are made aware of the following irregularities, among others.

- 1. The existence of parties, or denominations, within the congregation.**
- 2. The presence of an aggravated case of immorality.**
- 3. Lawsuits between brethren prosecuted in pagan courts.**
- 4. Difference of attitude toward eating of meats.**
- 5. Defiance of custom by the women with resulting reproach.**
- 6. Disorderly conduct at the *Agape* or love feast.**
- 7. Rivalry in the use of gifts of the Spirit.**

8. A denial of the resurrection by some of the members.

It is such a congregation which the apostle urges to “justify all the nice things we have said about you.” Contrast this with the modern attitude of certain preachers and editors toward congregations of brethren which differ with their personal views about such things as cups, classes, colleges, orphan homes, instrumental music, and a host of other things too numerous to mention. The “faithful” are urged to “come out from among them,” and those who remain are assailed as heretics and apostates. They are assaulted in the religious press, attacked on radio, and blasted from the pulpit. They are treated as outcasts!

It will not do for those who seek to justify their uncharitable attitude to contend that Corinth had cleaned house thoroughly before Paul wrote the second letter. That is just not true, because he said, “For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as you would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, and lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed” (2 Cor. 12:20, 21).

How can we explain the difference between the attitude of the apostle toward Corinth and that of many brethren toward congregations in this day? The answer lies in the following considerations.

1. Paul could distinguish between the gospel by which we are begotten and which establishes our spiritual relationship in Christ Jesus, and the apostolic doctrine in which we must grow and mature (1 Cor. 4:15).

2. He could differentiate between the fellowship into which we are called and endorsement of the opinions and conduct of

those within that fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9).

3. He knew the difference between knowledge which can never be made the foundation of unity and love which must always be the basis of it (1 Cor. 8:2, 3).

4. He knew the difference between the faith in Christ Jesus which saves and justifies and the constant growth toward maturity of one within that faith (1 Cor. 1:30; 3:1-3).

If our modern brethren had lived in the days of Paul they would have divided the congregation at Corinth which he sought to unite. They would have urged brethren to separate whom he taught to love one another. The philosophy of maintaining purity of doctrine by separation from brethren would have shivered the Corinthian congregation to bits as it has the restoration movement in our day. The letters to Corinth stand as a stern denunciation of our false concepts of fellowship. Think of the sin of dividing brethren into rival factions over cups, classes, television programs, orphan homes, the pre-millennial interpretation, instrumental music, and the motley host of things which have been allowed such tremendous emphasis in our age, and compare these with the problems in doctrine and practice faced by the apostle in Corinth. We are victims of the party spirit which breathes hatred and bitterness under the guise of loyalty. We must become partakers of the Holy Spirit so that the fruit of “love, joy and peace” may reside in our hearts.

It is time that we determine whether or not the prophets of past centuries gave their lives to proclaim the coming of a party to uphold the doctrine of “one cup” or “individual cups.” We must decide if the divine purpose from the foundation of the world was to create a faction to defend or decry the use of classes in which to study the will of God. We must determine if the Son of God shed his blood to purchase a party to propagate the use of instrumental music, or one to oppose it. This has nothing to do with one’s personal conviction as to the right or

wrong of any of these things. It does have much to do with whether or not we create a sect or promote a party to defend or oppose them. It may be a case of mistaken judgment about the right or wrong of these things, but it is a sin to formulate a sect.

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” By the same token, the kingdom of God is not cups, classes, colleges, instrumental music, orphan homes, or a millennial viewpoint. Jesus did not hang on the cross and suffer in order to demonstrate his right to preside over a party which equates human opinions and interpretations with the great and abiding principles of divine relationship. He is not the sachem of a clan, the prince of a party, or the forerunner of a faction.

I do not want to live for something which Jesus did not die to purchase. I do not want to devote my life to the promoting of any religious organization, but I will consecrate it to functioning as best I can as a member of the divine organism, the one body. Parties are created by men to separate brethren. The one body was created by God to unite them. “Righteousness, joy and peace” never divided any group of people. To the extent we are divided we have missed the nature of the kingdom. We have emphasized what “the kingdom of God is not.”

When one looks at the body as did Paul it is possible to say “nice things about” a congregation of those who are in Christ, in spite of the disagreeable features which arise to trouble the saints because of immaturity and carnality. It makes a lot of difference when one realizes that people act as they do because they are infantile. One can say some pretty nice things about some pretty messy babies. This is especially true if they are God’s babies, and you love the father who begot them. To reflect against their paternity is to reflect against their father!

Our real trouble is that we have too many babies throwing things at other babies. It is plainly said that, “All the time that

there is jealousy and squabbling among you show what you are — you are living just like men of the world” (1 Cor. 3:3). We need to grow up in all things in Christ. It is no sin to have been a baby but it is a sin to remain as one. We have been quarrelling over our spiritual toys long enough. It is time that we quit crawling and start walking. Let the restoration movement outgrow its rompers! The world will not be led to Christ by fretful infants but by faithful servants. Let us cease to be bickering babies, let us be mature men!

Reply to Brother Lemmons

Mission Messenger (October 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

In the June 4 issue of the Firm Foundation, the editor presents an article under the heading, “Why We Did Not Run Ketcherside’s Articles.” He assigns two reasons: (1) The articles were not relevant to the objections made against my position; (2) My attitude as shown in the articles was different than that demonstrated personally in the Denver and California lectures. I am willing to allow the articles to speak for themselves and perfectly willing for the brethren who attended the public lectures to testify as to my conduct. Those who were present may wish to write Brother Lemmons who was not.

Our good brother says of me, “He bent over backwards in his public speeches to court the Digressives while throwing insults and slurs at what he calls the ‘non-instrument segment of the Disciples Brotherhood.’” The editor is wrong on three counts in this one statement. First, I conduct public forums simply for the purpose of sharing my views with brethren who are concerned about the divided state of the heirs of the restoration movement. I do not court any group, segment, splinter or fragment, for I never again intend to be allied with any faction or to be a spokesman for such. Second, I have a deep love for all of my brethren in the Lord, whether they use instrumental music or not. I have never intentionally hurled a single insult or slur at any of them. I believe the tapes of the meetings will show that I did not but if anything I said can bear such an

interpretation I herewith apologize freely and abjectly. To insult any brother would be detrimental to everything I hope to accomplish in pleading for peace among *all* the Israel of God.

Third, I have never used the expression twice assigned to me by the editor. I do refer to the instrumental segment and the non-instrumental segment of “the disciple brotherhood,” a term long used to describe the heirs of the restoration movement. The “Disciples Brotherhood” may be quite a different thing as all students of later developments in the restoration movement well know. I had hoped we had arrived at the state of spiritual maturity where we could dispense with such partisan designations as “the Digressives,” and am somewhat surprised to see this label affixed three times by our brother. Those whom he labels as “the Digressives” are my brethren for whom Christ died. I feel that we digress from the spirit of brotherly love when we thus corral and brand those who differ with us about the validity of certain things. This does not make any easier the tremendous task of trying to recover our lost oneness. Brother Lemmons writes that I am “a cunning manipulator of words and phrases.” This throws a shadow over my integrity and makes his readers look for some hidden and ulterior meaning in my words. It is regrettable that we must have such imputations. Our brother asks us to mark carefully that “Brother K. actually denies that there is, or can be, any visible manifestation of the Lord’s church.” This is not true at all as the careful readers of MISSION MESSENGER well realize. It is my contention that when the body is in schism, no part or segment is the whole body. Brother Lemmons is still enraptured with the myth that only those who subscribe to the interpretations on controversial issues set forth by the Firm Foundation, constitute the one body. These have arrived and all others have departed. The fact is that God has a people scattered through all of our factions and sects, and all of these people are members of the one body. Others have not departed from us but we are separated from each other. Not all of God’s sheep are caught in sectarian thickets, but most of them, including Brother Lemmons and myself, have

grown up in, or grown up and come into certain fractions or factions in the Christian realm. The *one body* will manifest itself visibly wherever any congregation of saints refuses to allow artificial barriers erected by men to keep them separated and segregated from each other. This does not mean to ignore our differences at all. It simply means that we cease to regard our differences as more important than the blood of Jesus and love the more intensely those with whom we differ.

Our brother declares that differences create sects. I deny this. Differences place strains upon relationships but do not sever them. This is true in the domestic, social, political and spiritual realms. We differ over many things about which we do not divide. The writers in Firm Foundation do not create a sect every time they differ with each other. Sects are created by the party spirit as unity is produced by the Holy Spirit. It is lack of love that results in division. So long as we love each other as we should we will not divide into factions. Our factions are not so much a witness of our faithfulness to Christ, who condemns them, as of our lovelessness to each other, and this will condemn us.

Our brother directly accuses me of making a plea for unity “that urges a loose amalgamation of various factions.” In this he reveals that he does not begin to understand that for which I contend. Of what use would an amalgamation of factions be? Such an amalgamation would not constitute the one body at all. Since, as he says, “Readers of the Firm Foundation have a right to know what Brother K. believes on this matter,” I think I am better qualified to state it than my esteemed brother editor. I am opposed to all factions and factionalism. A faction is a work of the flesh. A loose (or tight) amalgamation of factions would be but a conglomeration of works of the flesh, devoid of the Spirit. I am set for the eradication of all factions, including the two in which Brother Lemmons and myself grew up. I believe this can only be accomplished by crucifixion of the party spirit within our hearts.

I am branded an “All-factionist” despite my refusal to be a defender of any faction. It is charged that I “support and fellowship all factions,” but I steadfastly refuse to support any, and that is the real trouble. If I had left the faction in which I served and joined the one with which Brother Lemmons serves, I would have been regarded as being in “the Lord’s church.” I have been in the Lord’s church since the day I was immersed, for the Holy Spirit immerses one into no other. I was factional in that church for some years due to my ignorance and I am sorry for it. I do not propose to remedy the situation by switching to another faction.

Wherever my Father has a child, I have a brother. I may deplore his environment while devoted to his interests. My plea is that we restore a recognition of realistic brotherhood so that we can discuss our differences in a framework of fraternity, and not fight as “armies of aliens.” If we can substitute association for accusation, dialogue for debate, and charity for irresponsible charges we may be able to lessen the frightful gaps and chasms which Satan has created between us.

Reply to the Foregoing **[article by Lemmons]**

Mission Messenger (October 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

We are grateful that Brother Lemmons will publish our replies to his attacks upon our position. We earnestly pray that the exchange will be to the glory of our blessed Lord. We shall not trouble our readers further with what our good brother calls “personal remarks” but will come directly to the issue at hand.

Brother Lemmons admits that one need not subscribe to the interpretation on controversial issues as set forth in the Firm Foundation in order to be in the one body. It is evident, then, that the one body may have in it those who differ with the interpretations of our brother. This is an admission of the very thing for which we contend, i.e., that uniformity of interpretation or conformity in opinion is not essential to our oneness in the body of Christ.

Our brother is going to insist that I answer the doctrinal issues but I am pleased to do it without his insistence. It is not necessary that you concur in my answers to be loved and respected as my brother in the Lord. Let us look at his questions in turn.

1. *What about the “sincere sprinkled”?* Every person who believes with all of his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is begotten of the Father, but such a person is not born of

the water until he is immersed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is in the womb of “the free woman” (Gal. 4:31) and while there I love him because I love the one who begot him (1 John 5:1).

2. *Are they in the kingdom?* Not as I view it. They have indicated their desire to become citizens but have not completed the naturalization process.

3. *Since baptism is no part of the gospel, will the gospel put them in the kingdom, or does it take something more?* Baptism is the proper response of a believing penitent to the good news. This introduces such an one into the kingdom. The gospel is the good news proclaimed by a herald, baptism is the response of a hearer who believes the message.

4. *Will they be lost?* I presume our brother refers to those whom he calls the “sincere sprinkled.” I am unable to say what God will do with those precious souls who believe in the Sonship of Jesus but do not understand the implications of the word “baptism.” I must leave them in God’s hands to deal with individually on the basis of His love and mercy. I personally feel that there is a difference between those who are honestly mistaken while striving earnestly to obey, and those who deliberately rebel against that of which they have full knowledge. Since I am unable to answer, will Brother Lemmons answer his own question and tell us if they will all be damned.

5. *Do people become sons of God at the point of faith or only after having been baptized into Christ?* Life begins at the point of vital faith, when one is begotten of God and conceived in the new covenant “which is the mother of us all.” Birth is not for the purpose of procuring life but for its enjoyment. Baptism does not produce life but transfers us into that state in which we can enjoy our spiritual blessings and develop our faculties. Only those who are born are granted the privilege of becoming children of God. “But to all who received him, who believed in

his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Prior to this they were in an embryonic or foetal stage. Our brother continually misrepresents my position so to make it clear for him I shall spell it out. I hold that those who believe and have not yet been immersed are God’s children *in prospect* and my brothers *in prospect*.

6. *Is a sincere sprinkled Methodist part of that visible church?*
I do not think so, for one enters the church by a proper response to the gospel and this includes immersion upon the basis of faith. Let me ask Brother Lemmons if a sincere *immersed* person in the Methodist party is a member of the one body and if he recognizes such persons as his brothers in the Lord’s church.

I do not say that “*any barrier* to fellowship is an artificial barrier.” I said, “The one body will manifest itself visibly wherever *any congregation* of saints refuses to allow artificial barriers erected by men to keep them separated and segregated from each other.” God has erected certain barriers to fellowship. These are real. They must be respected. But I do not intend to be confined in any partisan pen by rails which men have thrown up to divide the flock. For instance, I shall not be the champion of a “one cup party” or a “multiple cups party,” an “orphan home party” or an “anti-orphan home party,” an “instrumental music party” or an “anti-instrument party.” Jesus did not die for any such party and I have brethren in all of them. I have convictions about all of these items but I shall build no party around them, nor let them or anything else build a party around me.

Our good brother thinks that Jesus commanded John to split the congregation at Pergamos. Read carefully what he says and you will see that this is exactly what he is arguing. It is just not true. Instead, our Lord commended the congregation because, “thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith.” He declared that he had a few things against them

because they had those who were corrupt in both *doctrine* and *practice*. Yet he declares that those who overcome in that congregation will be blessed beyond description.

It is possible to hold fast the name of Christ and not deny the faith even in a congregation where some hold doctrines which Jesus hates and practice things which he deprecates. Not one intimation is given that “the faithful” in Pergamos should come out and start a “loyal congregation.” Division of God’s family is not a divine solution to the family problems. Purity of doctrine cannot be achieved by division of brethren because such division is a sin! When Brother Lemmons justifies schism among brethren he runs counter to the Holy Spirit which everywhere condemns it. Not one of the seven churches of Asia was commanded to divide. In not one of these were the brethren told to come out and start “a faithful group.” We are not saved or damned as congregations, but as individuals.

We feel that our brother should address himself to certain questions so we can see just where he stands as to sectarianism and the party spirit.

1. Is the Lord’s church in our land identical in membership with the organization listed as “Churches of Christ” in the United States census?

2. Are there any of God’s children in other organizations listed in that census, such as the Church of God, The Baptist Church, Church of the Brethren, etc.?

3. Is absolute freedom from error on all doctrinal matters essential to being in Christ? If not, how much error can one entertain and still remain in Christ?

4. Must a man reach the personal conviction that instrumental music in the corporate worship is a sin before he can be recognized as a brother?

5. If a brother in one of our congregations arrives at the opinion that instrumental music in the corporate worship may be permissible and states it in class as an opinion, should the congregation drive him out?

6. Are honest differences of opinion and interpretation among God's children grounds for dividing the family into rival parties?

7. Does the Father of our spirits ever disinherit his children because they are honestly mistaken in their reverent attempts to obey His will?

I love the Lord who died for me. I love the church which he purchased with his own precious blood. I am going to live just as close to Jesus as I know how to live. I am going to recognize all of God's children as my beloved brothers and I am going to move among them all and share with them as they will allow. The walls they have built around their little factions mean nothing to me. I can see my brothers on both sides of them. They are not my brothers because they belong to *their faction* but because they belong to *my Father*.

Brother Lemmons is my brother, not because we are in agreement, but because we are in Christ. On that basis I have tens of thousands of brothers whom I once refused to recognize. They were my brothers all of the time but my vision was impaired and I was spiritually shortsighted. No one is going to build a fence around me and leave Brother Lemmons on the outside because he disagrees with me; neither is Brother Lemmons going to build a fence around me and make me "set at nought" my other brothers in order to love him. I am through with all factionalism. I am in the fellowship with all of my brothers in our blessed Lord. Don't fence me in except with the love of God!

The Optimistic View

Mission Messenger (October 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

Some of our brethren think we are too optimistic about the prospect for a saner attitude and a better relationship among the heirs of the restoration movement. They live in areas where my name is attacked from the pulpit and I am branded as a liberal, or castigated as a turncoat or an apostate, because I insist upon loving and respecting all of my brothers on a *family* rather than upon a *factional* basis. They point to previous attempts to breach the walls of exclusivism and prophesy that any effort in this direction is doomed to come to nought!

There are some salient factors they overlook. One is that a troubled corporate conscience is clamoring for correction of an intolerable situation. The hypocrisy of professing unity while practicing division is becoming recognized. It disturbs and troubles all of our factions from the most radical to the most reasonable. There is an inner sense of doubt creeping in that any of our party corrals are big enough to hold all of the sheep of God! Brethren are being forced to face the decision as to whether the divine purpose will be better served by expanding the corrals on one side or another, or by abandoning them in favor of “the one fold under the one Shepherd.” It is at this point the vested interests will make their last ditch stand to preserve their financial investments and concerns of praise! But there will be some “empty saddles in the old corral!”

Another thing that must be taken into consideration is that all of our brethren, especially those who are younger, are becoming better educated. There is a smoldering discontent because those who have been taught to think are not permitted to do so. There is a burning resentment against the pat answers and glib replies which do not furnish adequate solutions to the questions being raised. Our factionalism is the outgrowth of a nineteenth century approach to the situations existing on raw frontiers or in a backwoods environment. Our fathers who lived in constant personal danger and hardship were “quick on the trigger” in both their physical and spiritual relationships. They often divided first and sought to debate it out afterwards. There is no reason at all to assume that their philosophy of attempting to maintain doctrinal purity by division of God’s family was correct, and especially so since God everywhere condemns such division as a sin.

Every faction in our land today is sitting on a potential volcano. For instance, in every religious college demanding abject partisan conformity as a test of loyalty to Jesus Christ, there is a hard core of consecrated young men and women who rebel against the enforcement of such loyalty tests. They gnash their teeth in frustration when professors are summarily dismissed upon no other ground than their refusal to conform to the decrees of partisan political powers in the church. These young people will not always be young! Neither will they always be in school! They will not always be silenced by circumstances!

The things I mention are regarded as dangerous to the welfare of the church. I do not think they are so at all. Instead, I think they betoken the coming of a realistic re-appraisal of our standing before God and the world of mankind. Such an honest evaluation of ourselves can only bode good for the one body. They are dangerous to our factions and parties, and that is actually what is meant by those who forecast danger to the church. Our whole problem comes from equating the church for which Christ died with the faction in which we have always

lived. As thinking brethren leave their narrow factional background as an “outgrown shell by life’s unresting sea,” the church of God will mean more to them as their parties mean less. This is not bad. It is good!

For awhile we shall see the old pressure tactics of the past applied with new vengeance— boycott, threats, censorship, innuendoes and false insinuations. But these will soon lose their relevance because most of the brethren will see through them. Many now have enough light to pierce even the partisan smoke-screens which they once helped to create. It will become increasingly more difficult to hold people in line and to make them goosestep to the tune of dogmatism and authoritarianism. We live in a generation which has been reared in crisis. They will not frighten easily!

As I see our current condition, we need to cultivate not only a proper idea of fellowship, but we need to see it at work. We need to see someone who can move among all of the factions and love those who compose them all without endorsing the factionalism of any of them. This is, of course, merely another way of saying that we need an example for our day of someone who is just a Christian and a Christian only. This is the hardest thing one can attempt in a divided factional world. The pressures are always great to “line you up” and make you conform. There are always those who want to get you in and slam the door on you so they can work you over and make you in their own image!

It is what all of us hold in common that binds us to God. It is our peculiarities based upon deductions from the scriptures which bind us to our factions. I think it is worthy of sincere research to determine whether any such peculiarity can possibly be as important as the great reservoir of truth from which all of God’s family drink alike. In other words, can that which makes us a member of a party ever be elevated to the same degree of importance as that which makes us a member of the one body.

All truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important. Are our distinctions which bind us in factional alignments as valuable to our spiritual welfare and do they contribute as much to our soul expansion as that which binds us to all of our brothers in Christ Jesus?

Bertrand Russell has declared that the world must discover a moral alternative to war or humanity will perish. On the same basis, we must discover a spiritual alternative to division and schism or the new humanity will become sterile and its witness will perish. Surely God did not make men to slay one another and make the earth run red with gore, nor did he make the new humanity to fight and kill one another or to bite and devour one another. It is imperative that we find that common ground of faith upon which we can stand together in our Lord in spite of our differences of opinion and interpretation. To elevate any of these, or all of them, to a status greater than the blood of Christ, is to deny the efficacy of the cross.

I refuse to allow any wall which men can erect to become greater than the cross which was destined to break down walls and make us one. It is coming to the cross that unites us and there I shall meet with all who bow to Jesus. The cross will conquer.

The Manifested Life

Mission Messenger (October 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

(1 John 1:1-7)

Jesus was the embodiment of eternal life. As such he was from the beginning and was with the Father. He was manifested in such a form that eternal life could be tested by the senses. John says that the apostles heard, saw, looked upon, and handled the Word of life. These companions of Jesus had audible, visual and manual contact with him. They even looked upon the Word, which means they had opportunity to carefully and intently scrutinize the Word which was made flesh.

The apostle says, “For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” Observe the order of this thrilling array of statements. There was the fact of the incarnation, the act of observation and the testimony related to the fact. The design of the testimony was to manifest to others what had been manifested unto them. They were the revealers of that which had been revealed unto them. That which had been revealed was eternal life embodied in a person.

The purpose of the testimony was made quite clear. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The best definition of fellowship is “to share a common life.” The Father and Son had shared eternal life with the chosen witnesses. They had lived intimately with that life— hearing, seeing and touching it— and now they declared that which they had seen and heard in order to share with us the eternal life they had seen and heard. Thus we could share in the common life (eternal life) which they shared with the Father and the Son.

But we must distinguish between “the Word of life” and the testimony about him. The Word was with God and was God. The testimony was not “the Word of life” but the joy-bringing news about him. “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” You cannot reduce a person to writing. You can describe him, relate his sayings, tell of his doings, and men may come to know these things without ever knowing the person at all. It is not knowing what was written but knowing Him about whom it was written, which produces fellowship, that is, the sharing in eternal life. Eternal life does not consist of Jesus pointing to a book, but of a book pointing to Jesus— not as the source of life, but as life at its source.

Eternal life is an absolute. It leaves no room for death. If that life is light, and it is, then it must be perfect light even as it is perfect life. This leaves no room for darkness at all. We are not surprised to read, “This then is the message we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” Study the context carefully. The witnesses declared the eternal life which they saw and heard, that we might share in the common life, and the burden of their message was that Deity is perfect light, devoid of all darkness.

What is that quality called “light” which is identified with God in the absolute until it is said, “God is light”? John equates it with love. To love one another is to be in the light. To hate one another is to be in darkness. This is as true of God as of ourselves. “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which

thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling (no darkness) in him.”

If it be true that God is light, and if light is love, it follows then that God is love. This is correct. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (4:8). “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (4:16). Now note the statement: “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” This can only mean that when one professes to share the common life with God in whom there is no darkness (hate for his own), while at the same time walking in darkness (hate for God’s own), he is a liar. So we read, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (4:20).

“But if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This passage has suffered much abuse. To walk in the light is the opposite of “to walk in darkness” which is equated with hating a brother (2:11). “Fellowship one with another” has to do with fellowship between God and ourselves as contrasted with the previous verse. Let us paraphrase. “But if we walk in the light of love for our brothers, as God exists in the perfect love for us all, we will not lie when we say that God and ourselves are in fellowship, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son will continue cleansing us from all sin.”

Perhaps no other passage is more important to recapture a proper sense of our relationship to God and our brethren than this one. We shudder to think how often it has been used to defeat the very purpose for which it was written. It is time that those who are serious understand and affirm its significance.

Answer to Objections (No. 1)

Mission Messenger (November 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

In an editorial in *Firm Foundation*, June 11, 1963 Brother Lemmons writes about “Objections Brother Ketcherside Does Not Answer.” He says I am “in direct contradiction to the scriptures,” that my writings contain “a body of error,” and that they contain hidden poison. Our brother proceeds to list twelve objections which he affirms I do not answer. Here are my answers to them.

1. “Brother K teaches that the grace of God is wider than the authority of Christ, and that many may be saved by the grace of God who have never submitted to the authority of Christ.” I teach that the grace of God is greater than the church and existed before it. Grace is not a product of the church but the church is a product of grace. All who are saved must be saved by God’s grace. When the Father made Jesus the head over all things to the church, he specifically exempted himself. I am under the authority of Jesus and I have no right to offer salvation upon any other basis than that authorized by Jesus. The Father is not under that authority. If he chooses to save those who have never heard the good news, or those who have heard it and misunderstand some of its implications in their lives, he will not be acting in violation of his own will or of the authority of his Son.

I am bound by the decrees of Christ but I have no right to

try and bind the source of all authority by the restrictions he bound upon me. As J. W. McGarvey wrote: “It is not necessary, in order to contend for scripture teaching on baptism, to take the ground that God has tied his hands and put it out of his power to grant mercy to any who have been misled in regard to that ordinance. He has bound us, but he has not bound himself, except that he is bound to do what he has promised. He has not bound himself to do no more than he has promised. Don’t injure the cause of truth by taking positions which rob God of the power to be merciful.”

I do not think any will be saved who refuse to submit to, or rebel against, the authority of Christ. It is my opinion that some *may be saved* who have done all they know to do but have never learned about Jesus or have been honestly mistaken about some of his requirements. What is poisonous about this position which I share in common with all the pioneers of the restoration movement?

2. “Brother K makes a distinction between ‘the gospel’ and ‘doctrine’ which is foreign to the Bible.” There are two classes of persons as relates to any kingdom— aliens and citizens. As respects the kingdom of heaven there are two distinct messages adapted to the state of each. Both messages are the word of God. One is “an evangel” or “good news” designed to enroll students (make disciples); the other a course of instruction, or doctrine, for the purpose of instructing and edifying those who enroll. The gospel is to be preached to the whole world, or every creature (Mark 16:15). The apostolic doctrine was addressed to saints and congregations of immersed believers. The “euangelion” (gospel) was to lead men to enlist. You cannot evangelize saved persons. Alexander Campbell wrote: “We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians or those who have received it” (Millennial Harbinger, April, 1862).

The gospel is the seed by which we are begotten (1 Cor. 4:15); the apostolic doctrine is the food we eat (1 Cor. 3:2). The

gospel was proclaimed fully by Peter on Pentecost and those who gladly received his word fully obeyed the gospel. There was never anything added to the good news, but those who obeyed the gospel “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine,” and this was revealed as conditions warranted and they were able to digest it. The gospel is a message of victory in Jesus to an alien world. Suppose the audience on Pentecost had not asked Peter what to do and no opportunity had been thus provided to inform them they should be baptized. Would this have meant that he had not preached the gospel to them? Baptism is the enabling act by which we are permitted to share in the blessings of the message. We are brought into the fellowship of God and Christ through the gospel and we then grow up in Christ by learning the doctrine.

Dr. Carroll Kendrick wrote in Gospel Advocate (1890, page 373), “There is absolutely neither precept nor precedent for preaching to the church. Preaching the gospel is for the world.” Alexander Campbell wrote, “Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily for the church and the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all Protestant Christendom.” What is poisonous about this position which I share in common with the restoration pioneers?

3. “He teaches that after one has been made a child of God he may make all sorts of errors concerning doctrine, but none of these, regardless of how grievous, except for denying the Deity of Jesus Christ, can be a basis for withdrawal of fellowship.” I simply say, as did Brother J. N. Armstrong, late president of Harding College, “I will make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.” To be in error is not necessarily a sin unless it is voluntary, else all of us will be damned, for none of us know it all. Only those doctrines which separate from God should separate us from each other. One

comes into the fellowship of God and Christ through faith in the Sonship and acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus over his life. Only by renouncing that lordship through denial of Jesus in word or conduct is that fellowship broken. God never disinherits any of his children because they are honestly mistaken and we should not divide them.

Our differences in the fellowship of the saints are grounds for discussion and not division. To be specific, we sin against God and our brethren when we form parties on the basis of our belief in, or opposition to, colleges, orphan homes, Herald of Truth, use of tobacco, missionary societies, interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, leavened bread, the manner of breaking the bread, fermented wine, individual cups, Bible classes, uninspired literature, the one-man minister system, instrumental music, foot washing, the hour when we ought to meet, a head covering for women, and such like things. Certainly some are in error on all of these things but the greatest error of all, and a sin because it is voluntary, is forming sects about the “pro” and “con” of such things. We are one because we agree in Christ, not because all who are in Christ agree. It is a sin to be factious and one who builds a party around either aspect of these things is a factious man and will have to be rejected after due warning, not because of his position but because of his disposition.

My position on this matter is identical with that expressed in Propositions 6 and 7 of the “Declaration and Address” as read by Thomas Campbell. What is so poisonous about this position which I hold in common with the pioneers of the restoration movement?

Reply to the Foregoing [article by Lemmons]

Mission Messenger (November 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

It is apparent I will not be able to write in a manner to please Brother Lemmons. He is afraid I will get my thoughts before his readers yet he has devoted many issues of his paper to reviewing his own version of my views. Repeatedly he has asked me questions and then proven reluctant for his readers to see my answers. I am not editing a rival journal to *Firm Foundation* and I want all of my readers to see the views of Brother Lemmons. If he has the truth, then let the truth be known! We will review his article and answer his questions.

1. I do not believe that my obligation to take the good news of Jesus to all whom we can reach obligates God to damn all whom we do not reach. Our brother would not allow God to save a single Buddhist who had never learned of Jesus. But God regards no man as a Buddhist, Methodist, Presbyterian or Quaker. These are human distinctions. God regards every man on earth as an object of His love and an individual in his own right. Every person will be judged on the basis of his individual responsibility and on this basis God *may save some* who have never learned about Jesus. I have never thought of the good news as designed solely to keep us out of hell and I suspect it is to introduce us to a relationship which will help to keep hell out of us. To *save* means to make whole and we are obligated to share the message with all men regardless of circumstances. It does not

nullify the great commission to conclude that those who are not reached under it may be saved by the grace and mercy of the loving Creator and Benefactor of mankind.

Certainly I have no right to promise salvation to any person who is not immersed into our Lord, nor to regard those who have not been immersed as in the fellowship which I share by God's mercy unto me, but by the same token I do not need to conclude that every person who is sprinkled in infancy and whose opportunities for learning better are impaired will be dealt with in the same category as those who know better and deliberately spurn the will of God. I am in no position to either save or damn those who have not learned better for I do not know the degree of their personal responsibility.

I am not so sure that God's grace is limited by God's word, and certainly not by my brother's interpretation of it. It was God's grace which gave us both our Savior and the word. I do not deny that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to our Lord Jesus but I do deny that it has been given to Brother Lemmons. Jesus has his authority as *a gift* and the Giver is greater than the gift. When God put all things in subjection under the feet of Christ "it clearly means to exclude God who subordinates them" (1 Cor. 15:17). "While every man has Christ for his Head . . . Christ's Head is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). "You belong to Christ, and Christ to God" (1 Cor. 3:23). Bro. Lemmons concludes that because we have no right to promise forgiveness except upon terms prescribed by Jesus, God has not right to show mercy to those who have never heard of Jesus. "How can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" He thinks that because we are under Jesus, God is also. For God to administer grace outside the authority of Jesus is not wrong because God is not under the authority of Jesus. Nor does it circumvent the authority He gave to Jesus for the Father to do more than He promised. In attempting to defend his theory about the authority of Jesus over creation our brother wants to bind the Creator with that which He gave to bind us.

2. The gospel is to be preached to the whole *world* to make believers; the apostolic doctrine was addressed to saints and faithful *brethren*. It was specifically designed to instruct men how to behave *in the church*. Brother Lemmons says, “Jesus preached doctrine to aliens.” The word “teaching” can always be substituted for doctrine so our brother thinks Jesus preached teaching. Such a confusion of terms was not once made by the Spirit.

But were those whom Jesus taught aliens? Were they not in covenant relationship with God? If not, why did he tell them, “And you, like the lamp, must shed light among your fellows, so that when they see the good you do, they may give praise to *your Father* in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). They were told not to pray like the heathen and to address God as their Father in heaven, and they were promised that if they forgave others their Father would forgive them (Matt. 6:14). Our brother is hard pressed when he must resort to such an interpretation.

He does no better by his reference to Acts 5:28, when the High Priest who looked upon the disciples as merely another Jewish sect, that of “the Nazarenes,” accused them of filling Jerusalem with their teaching. Sergius Paulus did not hear Paul “preach teaching” but “When the Governor saw what had happened he became a believer, deeply impressed by what he had learned about the Lord” (Acts 13:12).

Certainly God was able to strengthen the Romans on the basis of the gospel which had been proclaimed unto them, which they had received and wherein they stood. But if the Roman letter was part of the gospel, why did Paul write to them, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel” (Rom. 10:16)? How could they have obeyed it if he was just then writing it to them? In view of the fact that he wrote several of his letters after the one to the Romans, why did he say he had already “*fully preached* the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum” (Rom. 15:19). Did he not know there was more to

come or could he distinguish between the gospel he proclaimed and the instructions he wrote to those who had obeyed it?

Our brother sadly misrepresents when he says I think one can obey the gospel without baptism. I do not believe any such thing. Baptism is the one act by which a penitent believer of the good news proclaimed by another demonstrates his personal faith in it and comes into the fellowship of our dear Lord.

3. Our brother has difficulty understanding what is meant by renouncing the lordship of Jesus in word or conduct. One comes into the fellowship by accepting the Sonship and Lordship of Jesus and he leaves it by denial of that which he affirms to enter it. Jesus says, “Whoever will acknowledge me before men I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; and whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven” (Matt. 10:32, 33). One either disowns Jesus by word or conduct. Bro. Lemmons says Ephesians 5:5, 6 contradicts this. Instead, it confirms it. One guilty of fornication, indecency or greed rejects the lordship of Jesus over his life and verse 6 says, “Let no one deceive you with shallow arguments; it is for all these things that God’s dreadful judgment is coming upon his *rebel subjects*.”

True God threatened to remove His candlestick from Ephesus but what our brother needs to find is where God commanded the brethren to remove themselves from the candlestick. Our brother also warps and wrests what Jesus said to the congregation at Thyatira. Jesus commended them for “your love and faithfulness, your good service and your fortitude; and of late you have done even better than at the first.” He did promise dire vengeance upon Jezebel, her lovers and her children. But to those “who do not accept this teaching and have no experience of what they like to call the deep secrets of Satan; on you I will impose no further burden.” Was the congregation at Thyatira a “faithful church”? If not, why did Jesus commend them for their “love and faithfulness”? In spite

of the doctrine of modern apostles of schism Jesus not once commanded division of either of His seven candlesticks. Isn't it surprising, with all of the division of congregations today, that despite all of the mistaken ideas and impure lives in those mentioned in the new covenant scriptures, not one was ever commanded to divide, and no one was commanded to split the candlestick in any community? Where did God authorize starting a rival candlestick?

Our good Brother Lemmons is in a real predicament. He does not know what to do with me. I *will not* count him as out of the fellowship because of his peculiar orthodox opinions and he *cannot* count me as out of his "fellowship," because, by his definition, I have never been in it. I never was a member of the faction with which Brother Lemmons is allied, and now that I have renounced all factionalism as sinful, I never intend to be, so he cannot "disfellowship" me as he so naively puts it. I regard him as in the fellowship because he is *in Christ* and he regards me as out of it because I am not in *his party*. I am free to love all who are in Christ, to move among them, and to commend what is good as I see it, and condemn what is not, as I see it!

Answer to Objections (No. 2)

Mission Messenger (November 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

(Editor's Note: This is the second article in reply to an editorial by Reuel Lemmons, which appeared in the *Firm Foundation*, June 11, 1963.)

4. "He teaches that every sincere believer in the Messiahship of Jesus is a child of God, whether he is ever baptized or not, and is now his brother or sister in prospect." This statement is not true. I teach that every sincere person who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God (1 John 5:1) and I must love all such because I love the one who begot them. Baptism is the delivery of such believers into the family of God. Before they enter the family relationship they are God's children *in prospect* and my brothers or sisters *in prospect*. They are no more children of God before they are delivered than any other embryo or foetus is a child. My responsibility toward them is to act as an obstetrician or midwife and bring them to birth, i.e., deliver them into the fellowship. What God will do with those who die in the womb, or are abortions or miscarriages, must be left to his mercy and judgment. He will no doubt deal with them as with all the rest of us, on the basis of individual responsibility.

5. "Bro. K teaches there must be diversity of belief among God's people in order for them to have unity." I do not teach any such thing. I do not say there must be diversity to have unity, but I do teach that to have unity it must be a unity in

diversity. There is no other kind of unity possible for frail, finite beings such as Brother Lemmons and myself. In the domestic, economic, social and political realms all unity is that of diversity. We are the “United States” but no one would deny there is considerable diversity between Alabama and New York, or between Texas and Missouri. God has not bound us to conformity but to unity and Romans 14 was written to show how to maintain that unity in diversity.

6. “Bro. K refuses to deal with the verb form of fellowship.” I have not refused to deal with it. I have said that the use made of the term by those like Bro. Lemmons is not sanctioned by scripture or linguistic research. In his next paragraph he asks, “Should we fellowship those whom God excludes from heaven?” We do not use other words ending in “ship” (signifying state or condition) in such fashion. We do not ask if elders should eldership each other, if apostles apostle—shipped each other, or if citizens should citizenship one another. Nor does anyone ask if a person companionships his wife, partnerships his associates, or sonships his father. Then, why ask if we fellowship this person or that?

In the Koine Greek there grew up an acquired usage in verbal form and Paul employs it in such places as Phil. 4:15; Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:14, etc., in the sense of “having fellowship,” i.e., sharing in the state, or in the common life. Richard Grant White in *Words and Their Uses* (pages 141-143) says: “Fellowship used as a verb is an abomination which has hitherto been regarded as of American origin. It is not often heard or written among people whose language is in other respects a fair example of the English spoken in ‘America;’ but Mr. Bartlett justly says in his ‘Dictionary of Americanisms’ (a useful and interesting although a very misleading book), that it ‘appears with disgusting frequency in the reports of ecclesiastical conventions, and in the religious newspapers generally.’ The convictions, however, and the newspapers are those of the least educated sects.” I just do not care to have MISSION

MESSENGER adjudged in that category.

7. “His idea that error in doctrine, except for that of the antiChrist, should never cause us to break fellowship puts him in opposition to Gal. 1:6-9 and Eph. 5:3-12. If God breaks fellowship with those who preach another gospel (or doctrine) why should not we? The latter passage excludes from heaven those who practice covetousness, envy, jealousy and such like.” Certainly we will not be in the fellowship with those who proclaim another gospel, for it is the gospel of Christ that brings us into the fellowship. We do not enter it by an understanding of all the apostle wrote to the churches, but by belief of the gospel they proclaimed to the world, for we are in the world until we come into Christ. Does Brother Lemmons intend to imply that those who differ with him about cups, classes or colleges, are preaching another gospel? Is our brother teaching a gospel of salvation by multiple cups and of damnation by instrumental music?

We should disassociate ourselves from all whom God has cut off and from no others. Those whose conduct denies the Lordship of Jesus over their lives prove themselves unworthy. I never knew of an anti-covetous party, an anti-envy party, or an anti-jealousy party. Our problem is making men’s views, opinions and interpretations the grounds upon which to form sects. Does God exclude from heaven a child of his who is honestly mistaken in judgment about Herald of Truth, classes, cups, orphan homes, instrumental music, or an organization for spreading the gospel? Covetousness, envy and jealousy are works of the flesh. Is an honest mistake in judgment or a misunderstanding of a scriptural passage a work of the flesh? Does our brother think God will damn everyone who does not see everything just like the faction with which he is allied?

8. “He teaches sectarianism is sin (which is true), but then urges complete fellowship of sectarians.” Our good brother uses “fellowship” in a way unknown to the scriptures, but I do not

urge “fellowship of sectarians” at all. I only say that I am in the fellowship with every child of God wherever he is. I am in the fellowship with such children of God because God has added them to the one body, not because they have added themselves to something additional. I am not in the fellowship with God’s children who may be in the Baptist party because they are Baptists, for I am not a Baptist. I am in the fellowship with them because they are Christians, that is, have come into Christ. One need not be sectarian because he is in a sect any more than one has to be a Russian because he is in Russia, or a Texan because he is in Texas. One is not a sectarian because of where he is but because of his attitude toward truth. Some members of the “Church of Christ” are very sectarian, some who are not in it are relatively free from the sectarian spirit.

I have urged those in the various factions of the restoration movement to stay where they are when they learn new truths and not switch factions. Above all, they should not come out and start another party on the basis of their newly-discovered truth, under the guise that it will be the “loyal church.” This troubles Brother Lemmons. One time he argues that I am going to start a new sect but the next time he condemns me for insisting that we all stay where we are and share our increasing knowledge with those whom we know best and who need it most. How can you start a new party if everyone stays where he is and loves all the rest. What all of us need to do is not to start a “loyal church” but quit our sectarian attitude toward our brothers and be loyal to Christ Jesus. I am not interested in an anti-party party or an anti-faction faction!

Reply to the Foregoing **[article by Lemmons]**

Mission Messenger (November 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

4. Our genial brother strives hard to indict me but I suspect that many of his readers share my views. Most of us are better than our unwritten creeds. One is begotten of God when the Spirit quickens him through the gospel upon his belief that Jesus is the Son of God. It is believing this which produces life (John 20:31). The period of gestation differs with the individual. When one is immersed he is born into the family relationship. Prior to that he is God's child *in prospect* and my brother *in prospect*. But there is a difference. God can call things that be not as though they were (Rom. 4:17). When one is conceived, even though not yet born, God can foresee his future relationship (Cp. Romans 9:10-12). He knows how those who have believed will further respond although I do not.

In the sense in which John uses the expression, those who are begotten "do no sin" because the divine seed remains in them and they renounce the practice of sin. In the sense in which Brother Lemmons apparently uses it they commit sin just as he does, for I hardly think he would affirm sinless perfection for himself. A believer receives the Holy Spirit when born into the family relationship and becomes a brother in fact instead of in prospect (Gal. 4:6).

5. Our brother now admits "there may be a diversity of

opinion and yet unity.” On June 25, he wrote, “Unity can only come by putting out of our hearts our own opinions.” He assailed what he called “a highly inferior and absolutely counterfeit proposal for unity in spite of differences.” Now he has accepted our thesis in a degree and is willing to “counterfeit” in a limited measure. I deny that *any honest opinion* when held as such by a humble child of God, can ever be made a test of fellowship because fellowship in Christ is not conditioned upon uniformity of opinion but upon oneness in Him. The greatest sin to which *diversity* of opinion can lead is schism in the body and that is the very thing our brother condones.

He says, “In matters where diversity leads to sin there can be no unity.” If a brother sincerely holds the opinion of the pre-millennial reign of Jesus but is not led into sin does Brother Lemmons consider him as in the fellowship? Will he use the *Firm Foundation* to urge acceptance of all the humble brethren who hold the pre-millennial view and are not sinners? Has the post-millennial view held by Brother Lemmons led him into the sin of dividing the body into warring parties over the coming of our glorious Lord who is the head of that body and of us all?

6. I did not say that fellowship used as a verb is an Americanism. I quoted from Richard Grant White, a distinguished linguist, who in turn referred to John Russell Bartlett and his “Dictionary of Americanisms.” In his book *Words and Their Uses*, Mr. White lists the verb “to fellowship” in a chapter entitled “Words that are no Words.” He declares that it is “the least educated sects” who use the word “fellowship” in this fashion. The passages cited by our brother do not obviate my position that fellowship is a relationship between persons. In Phil. 4:14 the brethren were commended for sharing with Paul in his difficulties; in 1 Timothy 5:22 the evangelist was warned against sharing with others in their misdeeds.

It is proper for our good brother to point out our own lapses into the factional speech we are striving to correct. We

regret our mistakes but rejoice when someone is gracious enough to point them out to us. We are surprised that our brother did not find more errors in his meticulous search of our writings. No doubt there are others which he overlooked. It is our aim, God willing, to free MISSION MESSENGER from error as we learn better and in the words of our brother to “clean up the sheet.” We invoke the prayers and help of all the brethren that we may edit a journal deserving of the consideration of every member of the concerned ones.

7. No, Brother Lemmons, those who have believed the facts of the gospel but have not been immersed into our Lord have not entered the fellowship. Will our readers note the statement that I cannot sidetrack the issue by calling attention to minor opinions? I mentioned “Herald of Truth, classes, cups, orphan homes, instrumental music, or an organization for spreading the gospel.” Are these minor human opinions? If so, will our brother give up his human opinion on all of them, to have peace? This is his recommendation with reference to opinions.

Certainly we are to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness” mentioned in Ephesians 5:3-12. But does Brother Lemmons classify all of God’s sons who use instrumental music with those who are immoral, impure, covetous and idolaters? We are not divided over such things. We are divided over cups, classes, colleges, etc. Why equate our brothers who disagree with us with the pagans of Paul’s day? Does God break fellowship with one of his sincere humble children over a misunderstanding relative to orphan homes or instrumental music? Does Brother Lemmons?

8. Our respected brother assumes that every one in a sect is a sectarian. But sectarianism is an attitude. It is the party spirit. A great many people are caught in the meshes of the sects who are not sectarian, just as a great many who are sectarian have been caught in the same faction as Brother Lemmons. I do not urge “complete fellowship of sectarians” at all. I simply

affirm that I am in the fellowship with the Christians who are in the sects. I am opposed to all sectarianism but I am not opposed to God's children wherever they may be. I deplore their errors as I do mine but I love them as He loved us all.

I am castigated as having a "far more liberal view of the essentials." Our brother mentions instrumental music and premillennialists. I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship. I do not hold the pre-millennial interpretation. What makes me a *liberal*? Simply that I love God's children and my brothers who disagree with my views about instrumental music and the millennium.

I will not drive them from me. I will not make a test of fellowship out of these matters because God does not. I will not subscribe to a creed of orthodoxy which makes a man's relationship to my blessed Lord depend upon his having a correct view of instrumental music or the millennium. I will not build a party around my opposing views and make membership contingent upon conformity to my interpretation.

I believe all sectarianism is dangerous and none more dangerous than that which develops an exclusivist attitude which attempts to cut men off from God because they will not bow to our unwritten creeds. I am through with factionalism—all of it! I am through with all parties and partisanism! I intend to be just a child of God and a brother to all of his other children. To deny their paternity is to insult my Father. Our brother applies to me the quote from *Henry V*, by Shakespeare, about "the valiant flea." It is an undeserved compliment. Instead, I have taken the advice of the immortal bard as suggested in *Macbeth*, "Take no care who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are."

Answer to Objections (No. 3)

Mission Messenger (December 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

(Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of replies to an article by Reuel Lemmons, in *Firm Foundation*, June 11, 1963, under the title, "Objections Brother Ketcherside Does Not Answer." For a complete copy of the article by Bro. Lemmons and our previous replies see our issue of last month.)

9. "Bro. K. thinks all the sons of God are in the church of Christ but they are not all in one corral. . . . Brother K should tell us what other corrals the Lord has sheep in besides the church of Christ." All of God's sheep are in the church of Christ but they are not all in the partisan corral or faction with which Bro. Lemmons is identified. The church is in a state of schism. The flock of God is scattered. Not all of God's sheep are in the corral that sponsors Herald of Truth or in the corral that opposes it. Not all are in the one-cup corral or with the individual communion service corral. Not all are in the non-instrument "Church of Christ." Not all are in the "Christian Church." Does Brother Lemmons think the church of Christ is confined to the restoration movement? Did Jesus shed his blood for the restoration movement? God's sheep, who have been received by him, have allowed themselves to be herded into many sectarian corrals, but they are still his sheep even though caught in strange thickets.

10. "The Roman Catholics, Mormons, Baptists, and scores

of others have ‘believed the report’ and have ‘climaxed the manifestation of that faith by baptism.’ Has God made them our brothers because we have a common father? Does ‘the fellowship’ include all these and more?” Every sincere believer in the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus who has been immersed into Jesus Christ as an implementation of that faith is God’s child and has been called into the fellowship of God’s Son. Regardless of who immersed him he is God’s child because he has been born again. He is my brother because he has the same father as myself. No one is in the family of God because he is a Roman Catholic, Mormon or Baptist, but because he is a child of God. There may be those in all of these sects who have been born again of the water and the Spirit. All such are my brothers. They need not leave the family and go out of what God brought them into, in order to come back in again. They need only to renounce that to which they aligned themselves which separates and segregates them from the rest of God’s children and be just Christians, and Christians only!

11. “His entire contention that unity is equated with brotherhood is false.” Our brother concludes that the fellowship may be equated with brotherhood in one sense, but denies they are equated with unity. My position is simply that “unity of the Spirit” is created by the fact that the one Spirit dwells in every son of God because he is God’s son (Gal. 4:6). This creates the “fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14). Since all of God’s sons are brothers and constitute the brotherhood, and since only one Spirit dwells in all of them, producing unity of the Spirit and fellowship, these are the same in the sight of God. I am *united* to every other brother in Christ and in the *fellowship* with them through the indwelling Spirit in every son of God.

12. “The brother’s position makes God responsible for unity, or the lack of it, because God is the author of ‘brotherhood.’ If he were right, then it would be as impossible for us not to have fellowship with each other as it would be impossible to be sons of the Father without the new birth.” I do

not understand Brother Lemmons' reasoning at this point. While I believe that God is the author of our fellowship I believe that we can so act as to have God disinherit us, and those whom he rejects from his family we must also reject if we remain in the family status. I do think we have made tests of fellowship which God has not made and does not sanction or recognize, and in doing this we have split and shivered the brotherhood into rival fragments. Since these walls are artificial and not created by God to divide his family I do not recognize their validity and I can see my brothers on both sides of all of them. I do not say that others must do this but I do say that I must do so, for I can no longer be factional with my present conviction leading me to love and respect all of my brothers in Him.

In closing, let me say that I believe we are victims of a factional philosophy that purity of doctrine can only be maintained by separation from brethren. We have mistakenly equated fellowship with endorsement and confused unity with conformity. As a result the restoration movement is one of the most divided religious movements on the contemporary American scene. I am earnestly trying in a very weak way to restore a sense of brotherhood and fellowship in which it will be possible for us to discuss our differences as loving brethren, rather than as warring aliens. To this end I beg the prayers of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with pure hearts.

Reply to the Foregoing [article by Lemmons]

Mission Messenger (December 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

9. I do not share the views of either sectarian preachers or Brother Lemmons as to the extent of the one body. They think it is composed of *all sects*; he thinks it is limited to *one party*, that is, to those heirs of the restoration movement listed in the United States Census as “Churches of Christ.” The body of Christ is neither a sect or a party. It is composed of every sincere immersed believer on this earth who is joined to Jesus as head. I do not attack the church. I love it as does my blessed Lord. The problem with my good brother is that when I point out the sectarian attitude of the particular faction with which he is allied, he thinks I am attacking the church. To him “the entire brotherhood” is composed of those only who oppose instrumental music and certain societies. True I once was associated with a smaller faction than the one which my brother now represents but since coming to “know where the boundaries of the church are” I have renounced all factionalism and factional alliances. I no longer intend to be hemmed up in any partisan corral, God being my helper.

10. I do not hold that any person is in “the fellowship” who has not been immersed into Christ. This I have repeatedly stated and many readers are disturbed about the motive which prompts Bro. Lemmons to misrepresent my position. All such should remember that our brother is editor of a party journal

and he must defend its orthodoxy at any cost. In other articles, when not directly attacking my position, he has conceded virtually everything for which I contend. He needs the prayers of all that he will be able to shake off the chains of orthodoxy and be a free man in Christ Jesus. Then he will not need to employ those tactics which place a false construction on the words of a brother with whom he disagrees. I do not contend that “the sincere sprinkled” or “the pious unimmersed” are in the fellowship. I never did do so. He cannot find any such statements in my writings!

The gospel is the good news proclaimed by one person, baptism is the act by which another, a believing penitent who hears the news, responds to it. It is the act of enrollment in the school of Christ by one who believes the report. Our good brother now concedes there are “people in the denominations who may have become children of God through satisfactory obedience to the gospel.” How can this be when he thinks the gospel includes everything contained in the new covenant scriptures? Are there any in the denominations who have given satisfactory obedience to every word the apostles wrote? For that matter, has Brother Lemmons himself done so? Our brother needs to be careful or he will be making a difference between the gospel which makes people “become children of God” and the doctrine upon which they grow. That is my position and he is learning rapidly. To God be the praise!

11. I do not deny the existence of disunity. I am devoting my life to helping overcome disunity among the saints. There is a difference between the actual unity conferred by the indwelling Spirit as a gift of God, and a practical demonstration of it by weak mortals such as ourselves. Every person in whom the Spirit dwells is united with every other such person through Jesus Christ. But we allow opinions, interpretations, and personal convictions to disrupt our corporate witness. My approach to the problem is to recognize that the unity conferred by the Spirit is greater and nobler, being of divine origin, than

any of the walls we have erected. I shall recognize that unity, stress it and allow it to guide my behavior until I can show to the whole world that I am one with every child of God in spite of mere human differences. I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We are actually united in Christ while divided from each other and that unity in Him is more precious to me than our disunity.

12. I am glad that every sincere Christian is in hearty agreement with my objectives. Of course, any viewpoint which differs with Brother Lemmons is an “unscriptural doctrine” because our brother mistakes orthodoxy for God’s word and his fallible interpretation for divine revelation. This is true of all of our factions. There are “accursed children” and the same verse describes who they are in this language, “They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have been trained in greed.” Does Brother Lemmons apply this to those who differ with him about cups, classes, colleges, Herald of Truth, orphan homes, or instrumental music? If not, why did he introduce it? What does it have to do with being in the fellowship with pure and humble saints who differ with us about the things that divide us into rival parties? I hold no brief for fellowship with “cursed children” but what I want to know is why Brother Lemmons is not in fellowship with those who are not cursed. I want the whole world to know that I am in the fellowship with every sincere immersed believer who trusts in the Lord Jesus and seeks to serve Him. I would suffer my right arm to be cut off before I would brand one of “these little ones” as being in the category of those alluded to in 2 Peter 2. If it is poison to plead that we love all of God’s children and our brothers then I have been poisoned on the love of God shed abroad in my heart through the Holy Spirit!

We can never unite all of the believers in Christ Jesus so long as we equate our own party with the one body. We must recognize that those whom we seek to unite, and with whom we seek to be united, are as much believers in Him as ourselves. The

exclusivistic attitude which assumes that God belongs *only* to us because we belong unto Him is wholly out of tune with the divine revelation and with the quickening spirit of our times. Never before have those within the restoration movement heritage had such a wonderful opportunity to share with other eager seekers the truths they have discovered. I have resolved at all cost to go wherever a great door and effectual is opened and share the little truth I have gleaned. I am willing to answer unto Him for doing so!

Reply to Brother Lemmons

Mission Messenger (December 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

In the Firm Foundation, June 18, 1963, Brother Lemmons presents his third editorial against my appeal for unity among believers in Christ. In it he directs some questions at me to which I presume he desires my answer. Lack of space will not permit an exhaustive reply but I am happy to submit the following. Our brother postulates that “the Ketcherside plan is nothing more nor less than the Ecumenical movement of the World Council of Churches boiled down and applied to the church.” He is wrong. The Ecumenical movement would preserve denominational structures; my plea is for a destruction of all the factions among us by eliminating the party spirit. I am not so unrealistic as to think this can be done in a day so I simply urge that all who are in Christ work together on the problem in a spirit of love. All factionalism is sin and we must overthrow, not defend or protect it.

Brother Lemmons asks, “If differences have destroyed fellowship, how can fellowship exist in spite of them?” Differences do not destroy fellowship. They only place strains upon the relationship. It is lack of love which destroys fellowship. Fellowship is that state into which we are called by the gospel. When we are called we have differences, and we always will have. We need not be divided over them. That “sect of the church” (to use his own terminology) with which Brother Lemmons is identified is composed of brethren who differ over

the war question, divorce and remarriage, method of caring for orphans, support of institutions, and a host of other things. Does Brother Lemmons consider these differences have destroyed their fellowship? It is the dogmatic attitude which makes partisan tests of points of difference which destroys fellowship. I refuse to recognize the relevance of these tests men have devised to divide God's family, and therefore, I am in the fellowship with all of my brethren in spite of them. It is easy to see how fellowship can "exist in spite of differences" when you learn to love your brothers more than you love your differences.

I am asked, "If it is wrong for the World Council to disregard error why is it not wrong to disregard it among the divisions of the Lord's church?" It is wrong to disregard error anywhere. I do not plead that we disregard error but that we *regard as brothers beloved* those for whom Christ died and who have been called into him, and that, in spite of their errors. I just do not have any brothers who are not in error, although they are not all in the same error. Error is not necessarily sin, unless all ignorance is sin.

I am asked, "If Brother K can accept the error that exists among the sects in the church, why can't he accept the error that exists among the denominations outside the church." I cannot accept error anywhere, not even in the Firm Foundation. I love the truth and am dedicated to seeking for it and accepting it. None of us are perfect in knowledge, so all of us are in error in some of our concepts. If any person on earth accepts me he has to do so in spite of my error. I do not consider that in so doing he accepts my error any more than I conclude that God accepted my error when he received me. Our trouble arises when someone dogmatically decides "which mistaken view" must be made a test of fellowship. I no more accept the lines that men draw against my brothers, than I accept their errors, for I think it is an error to draw such lines.

I am asked, "Why is error so important regarding how one

gets in, but unimportant after one gets in the church?" Error is never unimportant, but while all truths are equally true, they are not all *equally* important. One must believe a certain fact to have life. "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Freedom from error in Christ is not essential to life else one would have to be perfect in knowledge the day he was immersed. What our brother really asks is, "If a person can be wrong about anything after he was born and still be a child, why could he not be wrong about how he entered the world and still be a child?" God has conditioned life upon *belief of certain* facts related to Jesus, but he has not conditioned that life upon *knowledge of all truths* at a given time. A man may be right about Jesus and wrong about many other things and still be saved, but if he is wrong about Jesus he can be right about a lot of other things and still be lost. We should never confuse the process of birth with our digestive system.

Our brother affirms that "the entire restoration plea is surrendered in toto by K's unity plan." In this he reveals his lack of knowledge of both the restoration plea and my proposals. The fact is that the very point against which my brother inveighs in this editorial is merely a re-statement of the great principles enunciated in Propositions 6 and 7 of the "Declaration and Address" by Thomas Campbell. These propositions express my position exactly. It is their rejection that has fragmented and factionalized us.

It is charged concerning me that, "He means that he does not believe that instrumental music and other digressive practices are really any more than matters of opinion." What does our brother include in "other digressive practices"? Many good brethren in Texas affirm that individual cups, Sunday schools, and use of women teachers, constitute digressive practices. Some regard Bible colleges and the Herald of Truth program as in the same category with missionary societies. To them such things are matters of faith and they do not feel they

can “gloss over the errors” in that “sect of the church” with which Brother Lemmons is identified.

When other brethren oppose individual cups and Sunday schools, our brother insists that they are “matters of opinion.” He asserts the right of those *who have them* to determine how they should be regarded. But when it comes to instrumental music he insists that those *who oppose it* should determine its category. It all depends upon whether you have something you wish to defend, or other brethren have something you wish to oppose— in any event, you are to be the final judge as to whether it is a “matter of faith” or a “matter of opinion.”

I do not endorse instrumental music in the corporate worship of the one body but I propose to allow those who use it the same rights I demand for myself in dealing with those brethren who oppose what I feel is justified. I regard as my brothers all of those in what Brother Lemmons calls “the various sects in the body of Christ” and I propose not only to call them brethren, but to treat them as my brothers— every one of them! I think there might be hypocrisy involved in “calling” men brothers, and treating them as aliens. “My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action” (1 John 3:18).

Reply to the Foregoing [article by Lemmons]

Mission Messenger (December 1963)

Volume 25

[Abstract]

Our good brother Lemmons claims to have found “false doctrine” in our appeal for unity but he sets up a straw man to belabor. Our plea does not include those “who have never really become the children of our Father” and the fact that he must make such a statement in order to have a case against me proves he cannot deal with my actual position. He is troubled and uncertain. In one issue he accuses me of trying to create another faction, in the next he assails me for telling all those who learn additional truth to stay where they are and not switch factions or start a new one. He thinks this gives endorsement to “denominational structures.” It does not if one deplors such structures as I do and seeks to offset and overcome them. All reformation is wrought from within. One who separates himself from his brethren forfeits all hope of reforming them.

The trouble with Brother Lemmons is that he is thinking of reformation produced by one faction opposing another, or by one religious organization operating against another. We know that all fellowship is personal and individual. We are not concerned with one faction absorbing another, but with all lovers of truth in all of the factions acting as leaven where they are and thus gradually destroying all sectarianism from within. To call out all of the leaven in order to create a new “leaven party” will not destroy sectarianism. It will only augment it by

creating another rival and vindictive party. This has been our mistake for a century. We have only increased and multiplied our factions. Let the brethren stay where they are if they are *in Christ* and be faithful to Him. This is the true restoration plea and the only one that can ever achieve our goal.

Notice how adroitly and abruptly our brother switches from “differences” between those in the fellowship to “any sinful thing.” This kind of reasoning is unworthy of an editor of the caliber of our respected brother. What relationship is there between *differences* over cups, classes and colleges, to the *sin* of Adam? To unbelievers? To the impenitent? To perverters of the gospel? To one who deliberately adds to or subtracts from the word? To the works of the flesh? When I say that “we should love our brethren more than we love our differences” does any serious and unbiased person think this means we can overlook “any sinful thing”? Are our differences over perverting the gospel or over various opinions held by those who have obeyed the same gospel and love the same Lord?

If we love the truth will we not love all of our brethren as that truth enjoins us to do, even those who differ with our concept about the things which have troubled the family? When brethren sincerely differ with me about the Herald of Truth program, for example, must I choose between love for those brethren and love for the truth of God. I refuse to do so. I love them both! I am amazed to know that Brother Lemmons thinks Paul withstood Peter at Antioch over a matter of opinion. Peter “drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.” The party spirit is a work of the flesh. Separating yourself from other brethren is a sin. This was not a question about opinions. It is distinctly said that Peter acted insincerely! It is true that “love will not whitewash error” but it will embrace all who have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

I’m not certain that my brother is even fair in his

accusation that all denominations *foster sectism*. I have talked with a great many denominational leaders in the past two years and I have yet to find one who defends or condones sectism. All of them, without exception, regard sectism as the scandal of modern Christendom and the greatest hindrance to the Christian witness. They have concurred in my condemnation of sectism when I have addressed them, and although they do not all agree with the remedial steps I recommend, they do agree that something must be done and many of them are prayerfully trying to do something. I thank God for such an attitude and take new courage because of it. Brother Lemmons is apparently still living in the nineteenth century with its sectarian bitterness.

Does our brother really believe that all who have the Son have life? Does he not actually mean that “All who have the Son and agree with my interpretation on every point of scripture” have life? If not, why does he make tests of fellowship out of the opinions and interpretations of other sincere brethren? If so, then does he not make life contingent upon knowledge of the scriptures instead of upon faith in the Lord Jesus? Are our brethren reprobate who disagree with us about orphan homes and instrumental music? Does one no longer “have the Son” when he disagrees with us about Herald of Truth? Does he cease to have life when he does not share our views about Sunday Schools? Does a brother who reaches the conclusion that the scriptures teach the premillennial coming of our Lord Jesus become reprobate? Does this opinion make him “ignorant and unsteadfast”? Can a brother hold the premillennial position and “have the Son”? Brother Lemmons needs to be careful at this point lest he chop off the very pioneers of the restoration movement whom he so eagerly embraced a short time ago! The great danger of orthodoxy is that one who was “faithful” in one generation would not even be called upon to lead a prayer in the next.

Our brother is so perturbed about instrumental music that he again misrepresents what I said. I pointed out to him that

when certain brethren oppose classes which he endorses, he puts classes in the realm of opinion; but when he opposes instrumental music he does not allow those who use it to determine its category but insists it is a matter of faith.

I think the restoration movement is long overdue a definition and an analysis of “matters of faith” and “matters of opinion.” If you hand one hundred brethren each a sheet of paper and tell them to classify a list of one hundred things as matters of faith and matters of opinion, you’ll get back as many different answers as you have persons engaging in the test. We are in danger of being strangled by a slogan, mangled by a motto, and crucified by a cliché. Everyone agrees that in matters of faith we should have unity and in matters of opinion we should have liberty. But no two agree on what constitutes matters of faith and matters of opinion, so we know neither where to unite nor to allow liberty.

It is interesting to note that to Brother Lemmons “the antis” are those who oppose classes. To the Disciples the “antis” are those who oppose the United Christian Missionary Society; to the Independents those who oppose instrumental music; to the advocates of orphan homes those who oppose such homes; to those who have Bible classes those who oppose such classes. All of us are “antis” to some groups and “liberals” to others. Recently another Texas journal branded Brother Lemmons as a “liberal” and Brother J. D. Thomas as a “modernist.” Are we a bunch of “antis” fighting other “antis” or a group of “liberals” fighting other “liberals”? Or, are we all “liberal antis” or “anti liberals”? We are in a mess, aren’t we? And yet we propose to tell the world how to be one in Christ!

Brother Lemmons is even confused about Paul’s attitude toward circumcision. Paul did not say it was wrong in Galatians 5:24, or anywhere else. If he had thought it was wrong he would not have committed the wrong upon Timothy (Acts 16:3). Not once did he teach the Jews not to circumcise their children (Acts

21:21-24). He said that “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). What Paul opposed was the binding of circumcision upon the Gentiles *as a basis of justification*, instead of personal faith in the Lord Jesus. Circumcision as a national rite or as a matter of personal and family preference among Jewish Christians was a matter of indifference to the apostle, although it was not so to many of these Christians.

It was when men came from Jerusalem and taught *the brethren*, “Unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses, *you cannot be saved*,” that Paul and Barnabas rose up against them. Paul was not at all opposed to the Jews circumcising their children if they wished to do so, but he was opposed to a *circumcision party* in the church of God. It was “the circumcision party” which criticized Peter for taking the good news to the Gentiles (Acts 11:2). It was this same party which tried to make salvation contingent on this rite at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:5). I mention this because substitution of anything *as a basis of justification* before God, except faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in all that embraces, is sheer legalism and is an attempt to saddle upon God’s children a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

An “instrumental music party” or an “anti-instrument party” which makes one’s standing before God dependent upon abject conformity to the party line is just as sinful as a “circumcision party” and for the very same reason. Brother Lemmons does not stand with Paul in opposing things *as a basis of justification* before God. He is with those who say to *the brethren*, “Except you agree with us about the instrument *you cannot be saved*.” This assumes for the party the prerogative of God and this is really “a body of error and hidden poison.”

Our brother emphasizes that I have proposed “absolutely nothing new” in my appeal for unity. I think this is correct. The furore is not so much about what I have proclaimed but over the

fact that I am also practicing it. I refuse to allow any faction to restrict my efforts to any segment of the great brotherhood of saints. I shall move freely among all of God's children, commending what I can and refusing to commend what I cannot. I shall allow all of my brethren to be answerable to God who also will judge me in the last day. I intend to be a Christian and a Christian only and to share with every other Christian on the earth, regardless of his current factional or sectarian alignment. I am opposed to all sects and I love all Christians. Perhaps this is new in our age!

This concludes our arrangement with Brother Lemmons to publish in MISSION MESSENGER the articles he reproduced in *Firm Foundation*. We are grateful to him for publishing our four one-page articles in his paper and we pray for our brother and for all of our other brethren who read *Firm Foundation*. Better days are ahead for all of us. There are signs everywhere that attitudes are changing. Brethren are becoming more bold in their declarations against orthodoxy and legalism. Of course we anticipate further areas of personal attack and boycott, but this is a small price to pay for freedom in Christ Jesus. Be sure that we shall not allow ourselves to become embittered or cease to love. Our hope of sharing with Jesus over there depends upon our exhibiting love to all of the brethren over here!

To our readers who have been so patient and understanding during this published exchange we express our gratitude for your longsuffering and forbearance. As we now prepare to get on with the tremendous task of waging peace among all of our dissident forces, we "commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." We entreat you, true yokefellows, to pray for us!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1964)

Volume 26

The Brotherhood of Faith

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The Relation of Baptism to Fellowship

Mission Messenger (January 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

A speech delivered at the forum on fellowship, Hartford, Illinois, Dec. 26, 1963.

This is a forum for free men in Christ Jesus. It is not a partisan conclave nor a factional conference. The brethren who participate are not invited to do so because they agree upon everything but because they do not. The purpose of our discussions is not dogmatic or arbitrary. It is pragmatic and exploratory. We have simply met to share our insights into truth with each other and to do so in that attitude of mutual respect which should characterize mature children of God. But the very fact that we can meet together on such a program and in such an amiable atmosphere is indicative of the great gains that have been made in cultivation of the fraternal spirit, and betokens the brighter future awaiting the heirs of the restoration movement.

My theme concerns the relationship of baptism to fellowship. This requires, at the outset, a definition of the two major terms. By fellowship I mean simply that state or condition in which we have a joint participation with God, Christ, and the other saints through the Spirit, and into which we are called by the Father (1 Cor. 1:9). As respects our relationship with God our fellowship is based upon sonship; as respects the other heirs it is a brotherhood resulting from a common Fatherhood. The fellowship in Christ Jesus includes every person on earth in

whom the Holy Spirit dwells and is therefore designated the fellowship of the Spirit.

Baptism, as defined for this thesis, is the immersion in water of a believing penitent, in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. What relationship does this act have to admission into the fellowship of the saved ones? To offset any doubt and to make it easier for you to follow my presentation, let me inform you now that it is my conviction that baptism is the enabling act by which a proper subject is translated, or transferred, from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is the inductive act by which he enrolls in the fellowship of the saved ones. Before such an audience of informed students of the word of God one need only mention certain scriptures without giving the contextual setting. I shall briefly state some of my reasons for regarding baptism as essential unto entrance into the fellowship.

1. The fellowship embraces those who are in Christ Jesus. Whatever is requisite to bring one into Christ is essential to induction into the fellowship. "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27).

2. The fellowship embraces those whose sins have been forgiven and who have entered into covenantal relationship through the indwelling Spirit. "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). It is not by mere chance the record continues, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, . . ."

3. The fellowship embraces those who have been brought into relationship with the Godhood. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them into the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Note that the original does not bear out the idea of baptism *in the name* of the Godhood, but *into the name*. Jesus is not giving a ritual to say when performing the act of baptism nor did he mean to imply that in performance of the act the apostles would be doing so by the authority of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was telling them into what relationship they were to disciple believers of the Good News by means of baptism.

4. The church of God at Corinth, composed of those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus, that is who were saints by calling, was made up of those who were distinctly said to have been “called into the fellowship.” They were temporarily divided over men and for this reason the apostle proposed certain questions. Not one of these, however, related to whether they had been baptized. He did not say, “Were you baptized?” but “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Indeed, he affirms that all were baptized, and by this act brought into the one body. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

I think the scholarship of the world will agree that within the period of apostolic labor and teaching every congregation of saints on earth was composed only of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no record in the apostolic memoirs of any person being recognized or regarded as being in the community of the saved ones who had not been baptized into Christ. All such ideas are post-apostolic and, therefore, without scriptural warrant. While they may appeal to those who would construct a religious economy based on human wisdom and philosophy they can have no place in the thinking of those who are wholly committed to a restoration of the primitive order and who should have as their starting-point a recognition of the Christian scriptures as “the only rule and measure of Christian faith and learning.”

Our responsibility is not to reveal to God what we would believe, but to believe what God has revealed unto us. We should seek to recover what he has uncovered in His word and to abide therein regardless of cost. Our task is not to draw lines, but it is to discover where God has drawn them, and remain within them while urging others to do likewise, not out of respect for our views but out of reverence for His authority.

I have repeatedly said that I will make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Unthinking and casual critics have assailed this in an attempt to find some inconsistency. These critics have been of two sorts. One is made up of those who would remove the limitations God has set, the other of those who would set limitations God has not placed. The first would receive those whom God does not and the second would debar many of those whom God has received. To be quite frank and candid, I do not regard as being in the one body those who have not been baptized for the simple reason that this is a condition of entrance established by God.

I hold that entrance into the fellowship of the saints is conditioned upon belief of one fact and obedience to one act in validation of that fact. That fact is the only foundation of Christian union and communion. It is the only creed to which one must subscribe to fulfill the requirements as to the faith essential to justification. No man has the right to ask another to confess any less, no one has the authority to ask another to confess any more. That fact is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The one act is baptism on the basis of, and prompted by, that faith.

The reason I regard baptism as a test of fellowship is because God has made it a condition of salvation. Jesus said, in commissioning the apostles to proclaim the good news to the whole creation, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). It is not my prerogative to question why God proposed this condition. I must simply recognize it and abide by

it. The fellowship is constituted of those who are saved from their sins, belief and baptism are divine conditions for such salvation, consequently I regard baptism as a test of fellowship. Those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus are in the fellowship, those who have not been baptized into him are not in the fellowship.

Because of my attempt to be plain in stating my conviction I am charged with condemning many good people who are as sincere as myself. To this charge I plead not guilty. I do not question the goodness or the sincerity of those who differ, but freely acknowledge it. Nor do I condemn those who differ, for it is beyond my power to condemn them if I were inclined to do so, and I am not. My insistence that I must recognize and enforce the will of my Saviour as I understand that will, no more condemns those who differ with me, than their position condemns me. I do not change either their state or status one bit by what I recognize as the will of God. They are not answerable to me at all but to the same God as myself. "There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12).

If it should turn out in the day of final accounting that I was wrong in who composes the fellowship, and if the good and sincere folk who were not baptized, were in the communion of the saints all of the time, then my mistake will not affect their eternal welfare. If it should turn out that I was right, and God who knows the secrets of the heart is willing to accept them on the basis of their goodness and sincerity without their having been baptized, I will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My theme then, will be the same as my theme now, "Thy will, O God, be done!" In any event, right or wrong, I must cast myself upon His mercy and grace, and I must, like all others, prove my worthiness to plead for divine mercy upon my willingness to do His will as I understand it. And the question with which I am dealing is not the relationship to ultimate triumph and eternal salvation but to the fellowship of the saints

here and now. There may be a difference!

You will note that I have defined baptism as immersion. This presents another problem to a great many among my brethren in this day. It is obvious that my definition is much more restricted and limited than one found in a contemporary American or English dictionary. In view of the fact that thousands of people will rely upon the dictionary to justify sprinkling, and thus conclude that they have been baptized because they have been sprinkled, the spirit of charity would prompt many of the brethren to receive such into the fellowship, or, at least regard them as having been received of God.

Again, let me make it clear that I do not doubt the sincerity nor impugn the motives of those precious souls who are sprinkled under the impression that they are being baptized. Neither do I question or censure the charitable attitude of those who would receive such upon what I regard as mistaken views. But neither sincerity nor charity can change a fact, and the meaning of any word is a question, not of opinion, but of fact, and thus it must be ascertained by examination of credible witnesses.

The English Dictionary is not a proper criterion for judging the meaning of a term used by the Holy Spirit. A dictionary only purports to give the current or contemporary significance attached to a word at a given period in its history. Thus, we cannot be governed by Webster's Dictionary and the new covenant scriptures at the same time. We must decide which one we will accept as our rule of faith and practice.

It may be urged that common usage can so alter and amend the meaning of a term as to make it extremely unlikely that the average person will even doubt or question the validity of that meaning, and such person with the deepest sincerity will take the action suggested by popular usage in full conviction that he has done all that is required. This we freely and unreservedly

admit, and yet in the spiritual realm such reasoning may be of little genuine consequence. It overlooks the fact that our relationship to God is individual and personal, and that each individual is obligated to ascertain the will of God and to implement it in his life. If he is incapable of determining or understanding the will of God that is a wholly different thing.

The will of God could not be known by man until it was communicated to him and the method of communication had to be that which was familiar to man. Since the highest form of communication known to man is that which employs words as symbols of ideas or vehicles of thoughts, we must turn to the words of God if we would know the thoughts of God. It is affirmed that “No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:12). It is further affirmed by the same apostle that he did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, and the purpose of such reception was to enable him to understand the things communicated or bestowed by God. He then says, “And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things in spiritual language.”

No man can do what God requires by doing something else. That God requires one to be baptized as a means of entrance into the one body few of us would deny. The only problem which concerns us then is as to the action required by the word “baptism.” The question is not what a modern dictionary, a theological creed or an ecclesiastical compendium assigns as a meaning of baptism, but what significance was attached to it by the Holy Spirit. The apostle clearly distinguished between words as taught by human wisdom and those taught by the Spirit. It is just as essential that we maintain the distinction between what human wisdom suggests and what the Holy Spirit taught as that the distinction be made originally. Indeed, to do otherwise would place us in the position of sitting in judgment upon the apostles and prophets and declaring by caprice that what they wrote was of little consequence and could

be abrogated by subsequent denominational creeds and vagaries of opinion.

If the word “baptism” when used by the Spirit indicated a certain action, and if that action was regarded as baptism, then any other action is not baptism as defined by the Spirit. Such other action may be designated baptism by other authority and may even come to be regarded as baptism because of common usage, but it is not baptism at all when measured by the authority of God’s revelation. When I speak of baptism I must mean the same thing Jesus meant when he spoke of baptism. I must mean the same thing Paul meant when he spoke of baptism. I must mean the same thing Peter meant when he spoke of baptism. If I mean something else it is not baptism at all within the scriptural context, and I have simply substituted the words which human wisdom teaches for what the Holy Spirit taught.

Baptism is a positive ordinance and not a moral precept. God commands a moral precept because it is right, but a positive ordinance is right only because God commands it. That which makes a moral precept right is inherent in it and stems from its nature, but that which makes a positive ordinance right is the will and authority of the lawgiver. For that reason no moral precept can ever be a test of faith in God, for one who conforms to such a precept may do so because of his rational conclusion as to its utility, benefit or expediency, or a combination of these. Only a positive ordinance can truly act as a criterion by which to measure the depth of faith in the lordship of Jesus, because such an ordinance will be obeyed out of respect for His lordship, that is, His sovereign right to require it.

It would seem that, because of both its nature and purpose, a positive institution must be one which is specific and which requires a properly designed and exact action performed by a qualified subject. Since God does not act capriciously nor require that of us which is incongruous with Christianity as a

system, any action required to bring us into the fellowship of the saints must be compatible with what has been done by the Godhood to create and establish that fellowship. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and the ministry of reconciliation is based upon the announcement of three great facts, viz., that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. This is what one must believe to be saved, and by it he will be saved if he holds it fast.

To serve as a test of faith in these facts divine wisdom has ordained that each individual shall re-enact in his own life those acts which Jesus performed for all mankind. That which was done for all by one must be done once for all by each one. Every man must be a dramatic participant in the “passion play.” So the apostle declares, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Buried with him by baptism! This is the act God requires of us all and the purpose of the requirement is obvious.

Baptism is not an act we perform but an act performed with us or for us by another. It is the task of an administrator to baptize. The subject is passive, the administrator is active. The subject sustains the same relationship to the administrator as the corpse does to the mortician. While the subject is required to be baptized it is the administrator who is commanded to baptize. “Go you and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” One who is dead has no functioning will of his own, he is simply a subject for burial. No administrator has ever been authorized to do anything with such a subject except to bury him. An administrator who performs any other action has not baptized one at all. He acts with no authority except the dictates of human wisdom and the one who submits to the action he imposes has not actually demonstrated faith in the authority of Jesus, duly

arrived at by honest and impartial investigation into the requirements of the Sovereign. There is a great difference between faith in Christ Jesus and belief of the articles of a creed, confession or concordat. Baptism is a divine ordinance to test faith in the former and was never intended to be a test of faith in the latter. To make it so is to abuse it and abort it from its sacred purpose.

It seems to me that a great many of our contemporaries, in an attempt to evade the force of God's revelation, employ a very subtle form of sophistry. It is argued that dipping or plunging in water was universally recognized as a means of cleansing in the age when Jesus was on earth and that baptism was chosen as a symbol of our cleansing from sin because of its adaptability to that simple era. It is further reasoned that, in our more sophisticated age the symbol has lost its significance because of changing emphases and divergent patterns of thought. Accordingly it is assumed and even taught that other symbols may supplant the one authorized by our Lord and be just as effective in bringing one into the desired spiritual relationship. It is urged that it is the spiritual or inward cleansing that is important and that the outward symbol is of no real consequence except as an overt witness to it. To this reasoning we humbly beg leave to file the following objections.

1. There is no indication that the ordinance of baptism was to be either transient or transitory. Instead, it is in conjunction with the commission to baptize believers everywhere into the name of the Godhood that Jesus specifically says, "And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (Matt. 28:20). In view of the fact that baptism was a command growing out of the universal authority of Jesus, we may logically conclude that it will be operative while he possesses such authority, or until he exercises his authority to rescind it as specifically as he authorized it.

2. In his dealings with man the divine creator has made

our well-being and happiness dependent upon ordinances of his appointment. All blessing is dispensed in conjunction with ordinances. This is as true in the natural or physical as in the spiritual realm since the same God is author of both. It is not ours to question why, nor is it essential for God to tell us why this should be so. It is enough that we recognize and acknowledge it.

In neither the natural or spiritual domain can we even substitute one divine ordinance for another, much less substitute one of our own devising for the divine. Each ordinance has its own value and virtue. In the realm of nature there is no substitute for air, light, or warmth; in the spiritual realm there can be none for faith, repentance, or baptism. One cannot substitute the Lord's Supper for faith, nor repentance for baptism, without doing despite to the institutions of grace and suffering irreparable damage to his growth in Christian character. The substitution of another "symbol" for baptism is not the sign of inward cleansing but an open demonstration of presumption.

3. No man can substitute another act for baptism by divine authority. If he quotes any passage of scripture relating to initiation into Christ Jesus he must reckon with baptism. Thus, the real problem is not whether something else is just as effectual as baptism, a thing we can never possibly decide without another revelation from Jesus who authorized baptism, but whether we will respect the authority of Jesus. If we will not accept His authority as given in his revelation, on what ground do we conclude that one would accept His authority in additional revelation?

4. It is to be seriously questioned whether baptism is a mere overt symbol of inward cleansing. It is the language of the creeds which states that it is "an outward sign of an inward grace." Nowhere in the sacred scriptures is it called either a sign or symbol. Cleansing from sin is by an act of God and any sign it

has been effected should be given by God to the pardoned individual. The seal given to us is the indwelling Spirit. Baptism is an act of obedience by which we announce the acceptance of the lordship of Jesus over our lives and place ourselves under His authority, thus bringing ourselves into that relationship where pardoning grace can forgive us of our sins and free us from their guilt.

Lordship creates a master-servant relationship and one can only acknowledge it by *doing* what the lord requires or demands. Verbal assent is not enough. “Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of the heavenly Father” (Matt 7:21). “Blessed is the man whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Matt. 24:46). “Why call ye me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not the things which I tell you?” (Luke 6:46). It is only those who are willing to allow the Lord to reign over them who are entitled to the bestowal of blessings in Christ and who can thus be received as in Christ. Baptism is a test of one’s willingness to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.

5. We readily concede that it is the inner cleansing of the temple by God which is of supreme importance, but since God imposes His will upon no man and since acknowledgment of the right of Jesus to exercise sovereignty in our hearts is essential to the divine entrance into our hearts, and since such acknowledgment must be made in action and not in mere statement, is it too much to conclude that baptism is the key provided by which we open the door of our heart by faith? Is this not faith working by love to achieve the divine purpose in our lives?

For a long time we have been endeavoring to determine what motivation prompts men in our day to disparage or depreciate baptism in view of its sacred origin and the approbation given to it by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. Often its validity and essentiality are attacked most bitterly by

those who give lipservice to it. We have been forced to the conclusion that we have become victims of a plot by Satan to undermine the spiritual battlements and accomplish by gradual erosion what he cannot succeed in doing by frontal assault. Certainly if a plain ordinance connected with obedience to the Good News and the forgiveness of sins can be relegated to the realm of the indifferent, an effective blow has been struck at the authority of our Lord.

The real question is not whether we have a right to make the understanding of one word a test of admission into the fellowship but whether the Lord has established an ordinance as a condition of entrance into such fellowship and if such an ordinance is positive in nature, action and design. If there is but one door constructed by the builder of the house as a means of access to the blessings within, we argue in vain when we contend about whether we have the right to make access to those blessings contingent upon discovery of such a small thing as the right key. Our complaints are not actually against those who use the key and seek to get others to do so but constitute a reflection against the wisdom of the builder.

Perhaps because we are passing through an age of wisdom we have become imbued with “the wisdom belonging to this passing age” (1 Cor. 2:6). But in our reasoning that insistence upon clinging to the ordinance of baptism may make our plea appear foolish and weak to the theologians and philosophers, let us not forget that “Divine folly is wiser than the wisdom of man, and divine weakness stronger than man’s strength.” We will gain nothing by leading men together, if together they are not led to Christ. It is not simply unity that we seek but unity *in Him*. Whatever brings us into Him brings us into the unity for which He prayed.

We do not affirm the importance of baptism as related to fellowship because of the historical position of a reformatory movement. We do not assert its relevance because it is a

tradition within that background in which we have grown up. We have nothing that is “ours” purely because of historical or traditional emphasis that we would not gladly surrender in the interest of peace. All such matters we would cheerfully entomb that they might “rest in peace” and allow us to do the same. Our view of baptism stems from a firm personal conviction that it is the will of God and that we cannot be walking in His paths while weakening His words. Our Lord still sits at the right hand of the Father and must still rule in our own lives. The word of the absent King is precious to us and we propose to proclaim it as best we can and to implement it by our conduct. The love for others which does not stem from faith in Him will eventually supplant Him in our hearts with the worship of self.

Our History and Our Division

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[Abstract]

*An address delivered at the Fellowship Meeting, Rolla, Mo.,
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We are bound together by the common ties of parentage and historical origin. We are children of the same Father. Jerusalem which is from above is the mother of us all. Thus, we are brothers, members of the same family. We are also heirs of the restoration movement launched by worthy sires in the latter part of the eighteenth and the dawn of the nineteenth century and to us has been thrown the torch from the failing hands of those who bore it aloft in other days to guide men to the path of peace.

We have allowed ourselves to be rent by the winds of destiny and torn by the storms of strife. The sword which was to be directed against the enemy has been turned against brethren and has been bathed in fraternal gore. Our witness for unity has been negated by our disunity, our plea for oneness has often been stifled by our own schisms. It is time for us to see ourselves as others see us, or, what is more important, to see ourselves as God looks at us. In facing up realistically to our current status here are some guidelines which I suggest we may use as criteria.

1. Division within the family of God is not a whim to indulge, nor is it a luxury we can afford to perpetuate. It is a sin,

an offense against God and the majesty of heaven. Disguise it as we may, glamorize it as we can, it remains that it is still a matter for which we must give answer before the judgment seat of Christ. He who is indifferent to this problem or unconcerned about its existence is like the insensitive body which disregards the warnings of malignancy until the cancer has consumed his vitals.

2. Our schisms are signs of immaturity and carnality. They betoken that we have not grown up in all things in Jesus Christ and that we are still childish and jealous. They prove that the old man of sin has not been wholly buried and that we still keep the putrefying corpse of our lower nature hidden in the inner closet of our hearts.

3. The party programs which we indulge are a scandal in the far-flung mission areas of the world where the problems indigenous to one land and culture are transferred and transmitted to a soil not adapted to them, and are kept alive by forced growth, fertilized by open animosity and watered by unhealthy fear.

4. The spirit of exclusivism sired by the “holier-than-thou” attitude which makes contact with each other a sin to be denounced, instead of a virtue to be enhanced, is still a smoke in God’s nostrils as it was in the days of the prophet who cried out against it. It is a symptom of ingrown sectarianism and a snare of Satan intended to prolong the divisions which he has sponsored.

5. The categorizing of brethren by our epithets of convenience, the branding of men with our own labels, in order better to offset and overthrow any witness they may wield, is uncharitable, unwarranted and unholy. We should respect the dignity of every individual who has pledged allegiance to our King and not seek to corral him in order to curtail his efforts or kill his influence for good.

Our current status demonstrates beyond doubt that we have forsaken the ideal of the restoration movement and forged a body of traditional opinions and interpretations which we now equate with the faith once delivered to the saints. Each faction among us, with few exceptions, feels that it is the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of God, and beside it there is no other. Each such faction has its own test of fellowship, its own yardstick for measurement, its own criterion of party loyalty. One must measure up to that test regardless of what wide divergency may be allowed on other matters which can always be relegated to the realm of incidentals.

It occurs to me that it would be well for us to think again of the foundation upon which this historical movement began and proceeded until it wrecked upon the rocks of digression and disagreement. No one is better equipped to define the goals than Alexander Campbell. We make no apology for introducing to you once again his fifteen point thesis entitled, "Synopsis of Reformation." Perhaps it will serve in orienting those of us who live in this generation and it may well be commended to a religious world fascinated by its own roseate dream of ecumenism.

1. The restoration of a pure speech or the calling of Bible things by Bible names.

2. The Bible must be proposed as a book of facts, not of doctrines, nor opinions; it must be understood and regarded as arranged upon the principle of cause and effect, or that action is to produce corresponding action.

3. The Bible alone, instead of any human creed, as the only rational and solid foundation of Christian union and communion.

4. The reading and expounding of the sacred scriptures in public assemblies instead of text preaching, sermonizing and

philosophizing.

5. The right of private opinion in all matters not revealed in contradistinction from the common faith, without the forfeiture of Christian character or Christian privilege.

6. The church of Jesus Christ is constitutionally composed of those who have confessed their faith in the celestial proposition— that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the only Saviour of the world, and have put him on by a baptism into his death.

7. The administration of the internal and external affairs of the church is placed in the hands of bishops, deacons and messengers extraordinary.

8. The sanctification of the Lord's Day by meeting in honor of the resurrection of the Saviour, and especially with a reference to the celebration of the Lord's supper, is essential to the edification, to the spirituality, holiness, usefulness, and happiness of the Christian community.

9. The church not being of this world, cannot levy any contribution on those without for any religious or political purpose, neither ought she to go a begging to the world for aid to support or extend Christianity.

10. The gospel is the proclamation in the name of God of remission of sins and eternal life through the sacrifice and mediation of Jesus Christ to every one that obeys him in the instituted way. The gospel is not preaching about faith, repentance, baptism, regeneration, or any other word or phrase or thing in the Bible. It is rather the authoritative statement of pardon and eternal life from the philanthropy of God through the interposition of Jesus.

11. Three things are essential to a Christian— a peculiar disposition, state, and character. These must be changed from a

preternatural or fleshly state to that which is spiritual and heavenly.

12. The resurrection of the just, the coming of the Lord Jesus in his own proper glorified person, and eternal life, constitute the grand objects of the Christian's hope.

13. No theory of spiritual influence in conversion is the influence of the Spirit. Therefore, to deny any theory, is not to deny the influence of the Spirit.

14. As personal intelligence, purity and happiness is the end of all public and private, theoretic or practical reformation, the present standard of personal knowledge, faith, piety, and morality being too low, must be greatly elevated.

15. Family education and domestic religion must be greatly advanced.

No ardent lover of revealed truth can peruse this noble declaration of the genius and aims of reformation without feeling his heart burn within his bosom. Their author lived in a simpler social structure than that in which we reside. His mode of transportation was antiquated in comparison with ours, his facilities for transmission of thought more restricted. Yet these thoughts which wrestled within his mighty intellect until they were born in the inky fluid flowing from his quill, come as a distinct challenge to those of us who live in this space age. What a difference it would make in those halls of debate where theologians gather to grapple with problems of religious controversy if they could be drawn from their speculations to address their hearts to these proposals which first saw the light of day, and brought a new day of light, among the tree clad hills of a verdant Virginia countryside.

One could but long for the time to analyze and discuss them all with his brethren, applying minds filled with a desire for research to the hidden depths which beckon on to still

unexplored lodes where rich treasures of intellect remain concealed. The limitations of such an occasion as this will not allow more than a casual stroll along the path leading to a cursory examination of the points as made. It is as if one ambled through a beautiful garden filled with brightest blooms, with but time to stoop and catch the fragrance of one or two while a clear voice signals to keep moving. Let me mention briefly the first principle enunciated for it was not by chance that Alexander Campbell placed it foremost in his list.

When men sought to promote a unity project in the plains of Shinar contrary to the divine will, God chose confusion of tongues to enforce His demand that they scatter and populate the whole earth. Taking a cue from this, Satan has employed the same tactic to keep apart those whom God would have united. The entire religious spectrum of today is affected by virtue of the theological jargon which has developed and which makes the Christian system a mystery, unassociated with the life and thought of the average person.

The revelation of divine truth was never given to an exclusive group, for truth like the atmosphere we breathe, belongs to us all. It is no more to be doled out by an upper echelon than the air is to be metered to us for a physical existence. When the language of truth is smothered beneath layers of ecclesiastical linguistics it ceases to be a revelation and reverts to a secret unattainable to the man on the street. It is to this sad state we have been brought by the creeds of men which are distilled from the controversy of centuries on matters of opinion and abstraction.

It is true that Christianity suffers from the ignorance of the masses, yet its greatest foe is the wisdom of this world. It has endured more from philosophers than from others. When the apostle Paul came to ancient Corinth, it was not so much the ignorance of the populace which concerned him for light will penetrate dark recesses by its very nature. His challenge was,

“Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater— limited, all of them, to this passing age?” He declared, “As for me, brothers, when I came to you, I declared the attested truth of God without display of fine words or wisdom.” He said, “The word I spoke, the gospel I proclaimed, did not sway you with subtle arguments; it carried conviction by spiritual power, so that your faith might be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God.”

Just as the Russian overlords jam the “Voice of America” so our modern gnostics jam the voice of heaven. The message of grace is scrambled until men weary of trying to unravel it pass it by to follow the lure of the secularistic and materialistic age. Our first task is to recapture the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. It is reasonable to assume that if men become divided when their languages are confused, they can hardly become united until they have one speech and can communicate simply and freely.

The ideas of God were revealed in words which the Holy Spirit taught. If we grasp the ideas it will only be because we have attached ourselves to the vehicles in which they are conveyed. If there is no word in the revelation of God to express an idea, it is logical to conclude that the idea is not there. If I am to share in the thinking of God for my life I must understand the significance of the words of God. It is through my grasp of the words of God, that is, the testimony of heaven, that I am able to lay hold upon the Word of God who is eternal life. The place to begin in any reformatory or restorative attempt is with the word of revelation.

To recapture the vocabulary of the Spirit means more than merely mouthing or pronouncing the words of the Spirit. Words are like the intelligent beings who use them— they possess both body and spirit. And the body without the spirit is dead. We must not only embrace the form but also the signification, and having done this, it must frame and formulate our conviction. Those who do not stand for something will fall for everything

and the wishy-washy, languid, impotent and enfeebled lives of many who profess to be followers of the slain Lamb are a stern reminder of what happens when men have no rock to which they may fasten their trailing anchors.

Alexander Campbell wrote: “The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man what the sun is to the planets in our system— the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man independent of *the one best book*.”

It was on such a foundation of reverence and trust that the restoration movement was launched and its principles proclaimed. And it is because a chain of circumstances and their consequences have conspired to produce a generation quite ignorant of the spiritual values revealed in the sacred volume that we find ourselves in our current state. Perhaps no greater task could we perform in our generation than to aid in restoring the Bible to its proper place in the lives and affairs of men.

This means more than reading the Book as literature, even as sacred literature. It means more than dissecting it in the laboratory of linguistic research to analyze its structure and forms. It means more than the circulation of the volume in modern speech. All of these have their place. All of them contain value. But it is only as we regard the word of God as food to sustain life and partake of it regularly and freely that we may digest and assimilate it and build spiritual character from it, that it will do the most good. It is not a book held in the hand but its principles enshrined in the heart that will transform.

It is not enough to adapt the Bible to our needs. We need to adopt it to ourselves. We need to make it our guide, our staff and our strength. It is not a theory about the Bible, a philosophy

based upon it, nor a creed distilled from it, which will ultimately satisfy— but the Bible itself, the word of God, appropriated and apprehended. If this seems naive and childlike, let us not forget that it is just such an attitude which is calculated to receive the blessing and bounty of heaven. It was not in vain that our Lord said, “Except you repent and become as a little child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The place to begin a true reformation on earth is with the revelation from heaven. A correct attitude toward the word of God will pave the way toward settlement of most of our difficulties. It will mean but little gain indeed if we unite men only to separate them all from God.

There's A Difference

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[Abstract]

Not long ago I visited an old abandoned meetinghouse in a rural area. It was a dilapidated frame building. The siding was truly “drop siding” in some places and the paint had long ago flaked from the surface. The interior was both dusty and musty. A bird flew through a broken window as we entered. Wasps and “dirt daubers” buzzed about, angry at our unwarranted intrusion upon the domain to which they had filed claim. The seats were all gone and now occupied places on the back porches or under the shade trees of homes in the community. But the old speaker’s platform was still there with its faded carpet tacked upon it— a carpet from which the pattern had been worn away just behind the speaker’s stand. The brackets were still upon the walls indicating where the kerosene lamps had once hung to give forth a pitiable little yellow light falling upon the pages of hymn books held high to catch their dim glow.

The couple who took me to this site then drove to town to display the new brick structure in which the congregation was meeting. This was the second house which had been built since the old rural location was abandoned. The air conditioned interior provided welcome relief from the heat. The cushioned pews offered comfort to a fatigued body. My host broke the silence. “Quite a difference, isn’t there?” he said. I agreed but as we talked further it became obvious that there were differences which were not merely material. The more I thought about them

the more I wondered if the congregation had gained or lost.

The baptistery with its clever lighting arrangement, its heating element, and its gaudy depiction of the Jordan River for a backdrop, was certainly more convenient than the pool under the big sycamore down at the creek. But those who stood on the bank above the clear water filled with darting minnows and sang, "Shall We Gather at the River?" often found themselves unable to continue the song because of their unashamed weeping that a precious life had been born anew. And as they crowded forward to extend the hand of fellowship to the blanket-shrouded dripping figures there was a warmth of sincerity that all too often is lacking today among those who do not even trouble to catch the name of the one being immersed.

Granted that there are much larger audiences than there used to be, except at the "big meeting," but try to get them to visit the sick and you will be amazed at how many are really concerned. Gone are the days when the wife baked an extra loaf of bread or an apple pie, and the husband came in from the field for an "early supper" so they could have time to visit and sit with a sick neighbor and carry food to help the worried wife of the patient. Gone, too, are the days when friends gathered in to share the grief of those who sat huddled around a casket in the parlor—the room opened only when death or the preacher visited the home. Certainly we feel a sense of relief at a time of sorrow when a smoothly-functioning organization commanded by a suave mortician grabs our dead and whisks them out of sight, not to be seen again until time to debate solemnly whether to leave the glasses on the sightless eyes of the corpse or remove them.

But I am not so sure that our well chosen expressions of sympathy are not as shallow as an old-fashioned coffin.

I admit there is a difference in the amount of the offering as shown on the polished walnut board hanging on the front wall

to the left of the pulpit and that formerly scrawled in uneven figures on the cracked blackboard with a piece of white chalk in the country church building. There has to be if you are going to hire someone to do the things that were formerly accepted as a part of life and done freely without pay. Did one of the members become sick during the summer? All of the members suffered with him. On a chosen day they met to plow his fields, or to gather in his harvest and transport it to market, while the women cooked dinner for the whole group. Not luncheon— but dinner! You would have grossly insulted these people if you had offered them money. They didn't think of it as manifesting their religion or serving Jesus. They simply thought of helping a needy neighbor, and that's why it was really helping Jesus!

They had their troubles in the old days because they were human but they also forgot them in times of stress and need. They couldn't take time out to have a nervous breakdown and they didn't have the money to do it anyhow. It costs to do things like that. So they didn't get the "jumping jitters" when a baby cried at home or in meeting. I think sometimes that cushioned pews have softened one end of our anatomy and cushioned preaching has softened the other end. It seems that the larger our buildings grow the smaller our hearts become. We have cooled both our buildings and our spirits. Maybe we have sacrificed concern for comfort!

A Redemptive Society

Mission Messenger (May 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

The word “church” was hallowed as a translation of *ekklesia* by the revisionists appointed by King James to see that “there should be one more exact translation of the holy Scriptures into the English tongue.” In order to insure that it would not be too exact, the monarch issued orders in advance that they were not to use the word “congregation” as had preceding translators. Since James was authorizing a Bible to be read in the Church of England, of which he claimed to be the titular head, he did not want men to conclude that he was merely the ruler of a congregation.

The word “church” is actually not a translation of the original at all. There is nothing about it which signifies response to a call. It came to us from a wholly different source and has a quite different meaning in its origin. But long use has bred familiarity with it and any attempt to substitute a better word would create a general furore. Men ordinarily have their emotions entwined with their religion and by the time you cut through the jungle growth of tradition in an attempt to rescue them from a misplaced vocabulary they resent it as if you were trying to destroy God’s word. Inadequate or not, it appears that “church” is here to stay!

We are not so much concerned about it as we are the idea which it purports to convey and which the Holy Spirit wrapped

up in the word *ekklesia*. If we are mistaken about that we will have a warped view of our relationship to God and each other. It is very important that we understand the nature and purpose of the church. We can begin by pointing out that it is a community of persons united to a person, and united with each other because they are united to him. These persons are in him because they have been called. This implies a summons by the one who calls and a proper response by those who are called.

The called ones are those who were alienated from God by sin. The summons consists of a message to be proclaimed which is designated good news. It consists of facts and not speculative matters. These facts relate primarily to what God has done for us in our weakness and helplessness while under the tyranny of sin. The proper response to these glad tidings is faith and obedience. Those who act upon the basis of the good news to reform their lives and change their state are said to have “obeyed the gospel.” The church is simply the congregation of obedient penitent believers. All such persons on earth are in it. No saved person in the world is out of it.

No man can call another out of sin and remit his transgressions. Therefore, no man can create a church. The church is a divine organism. It can never be a human organization. Only God can call men out of sin, so only God can create a church. Since all whom God calls out of sin constitute the church, there can never be but one church. There can be no rival to the church with divine sanction for this would pit God against himself.

Identity of the Church

The church is not a sect. It is not a federation of sects. It is not even the aggregate of all the sects. Sects are works of the flesh but the church is the creation of the Holy Spirit. These are contrary the one to the other. The church is composed of all

whom God has called out of the world. Sects are composed of those who are called out from other believers. God seeks to separate the saved from the domain of sin, sects seek to separate those who profess to be under the dominion of Christ from each other. Satan opposes the first separation and initiates the second.

Just as the church is not composed of sects, so it is not composed of congregations. It is a fallacy to think that unity of the Spirit consists of getting all of the congregations of a given order to doing everything in exactly the same meticulous fashion. In its ultimate this would always amount to reducing every congregation to the status of the most reactionary one under a plea of false charity, and they would compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, a procedure which the apostle declares is unwise. Such a course is blind conformity and is not unity at all!

The church is the body of Christ and there is but one body. It is composed of individuals who are joined to each other only because they are joined to the same head. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). The church does not consist of those who interpret every point of doctrine alike, nor of those who agree in every matter of opinion. Parties exist on such a basis, but these are formed by men, and exist in contradiction to the will and authority of Jesus. The body is formed of members who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but parties are formed by those who are filled with the party spirit.

It is ridiculous to talk about the church losing its identity. This is a “scare tactic” used by factional leaders to hold their adherents “in line” and to assure that they do not learn from any other source and never grow beyond their present spiritual stature. My body can never lose its identity as long as it is joined to my head. If you can identify the head you can certainly know whose body is attached to it. Parties may lose their identity and all of them ought to. They should never have established a

partisan identity to begin with. They can lose their identity simply because they have created a synthetic fellowship consisting of those who agree upon a certain thing, or even a method of doing a thing. The party exists to propagate that thing or method. If enough of the members learn better their defection will eradicate the body.

A Witnessing Community

The body of Christ was not created for such a purpose at all. Its members constitute a witnessing community. They compose it simply because they are God's own people. They are His people because they have been called from darkness into marvelous light. A witness can only testify to a personal experience, that is, to what has happened unto him, or in his presence. He may be quite ignorant of all the involvements and implications of his experience, but these are separate and apart from the experience itself. "You are God's own people that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy" (2 Peter 2:9, 10).

The body of Christ was created through the blood of Christ. Those who compose it are blood-brothers— his blood, not theirs! By physical blood we are related to every son of Adam, by the blood of Christ to every person who is in the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. I sustain a fleshly kinship with every one who is born of woman; I sustain a spiritual kinship with every one who is born of the water and of the Spirit. "As was the man of the dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47, 48). Jesus did not die to form a party for the defence of particular or peculiar views within the family of God. He is not the head of any such party. He is Lord of the whole church, not of a faction within it. Factions must always choose their own

heads and generally these are their creators or benefactors.

There is no danger the church will ever die. So long as the head lives the body must live. Even the grave could not retain the head. Because “he ever liveth to make intercession for us,” the body is indestructible. It is true that parties and sects will rise and wane and will even die and disappear. If they all departed it would not affect the church. Scraping the barnacles from a ship does not lessen its power but may increase its ability to move more rapidly and freely on its way. Parties die because they are launched by dying men; the church lives because it is the creation of the living God. When you hear men speculate as to the fate of the church after their death you can be sure they are simply members of a faction while they are alive. No man can kill the church unless he can first destroy the Son of God who is its head.

Our witness is not to consist of “the wonderful deeds” we have done. We are simply to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called us out of darkness.” When we begin to tell of our accomplishments we always end up in partisan pride. The church is not to glorify itself but its creator. When the church worships itself it becomes its own god. When we parade what we have done we inevitably compare it favorably or unfavorably with what others are doing! We fail to realize that we are merely a group of “unprofitable servants” comparing ourselves with other “unprofitable servants” and there can certainly be no profit in such a procedure. While there is no profit, there is a reward. Jesus says that those who parade their piety before men to be seen by them “have their reward.” It is amazing how much time and effort is expended on declaring our wonderful deeds, our growth and our accomplishments. All such display is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Much of our modern “machinery” which was wholly unknown to the church in its age of greatest triumph, has been devised to pump life into the members. But one does not use a

pulmotor unless he thinks a person is dying. Artificial respiration is not administered to a healthy body. It follows, then, that what we point to as an indication of our strength is merely a symbol of our weakness. Nor does frantic activity always denote real accomplishment. The world will not be saved by our own fluttering about from one meeting to another. Some people attend so many meetings they have no time in which to really serve God. Certainly they have all too little time in which to meditate in quietude and solitude and contemplate “the wonderful deeds of him who called us.” Even spare moments must be given over to compiling statistics, drawing charts or making graphs to show our progress for the fiscal year. The artificial stimulants which we administer to keep those coming whom we can never get going, and which we prize and advertise so highly, are but tokens of our nearness to collapse. They may have betrayed us into forsaking the world of the Spirit for the spirit of the world.

A Redemptive Fellowship

The church is a redemptive fellowship! This defines its true nature and purpose. When we lose sight of this fact we are adrift without a rudder. We may do a great deal of good and accomplish a great many things but we will do so while floundering about and with no sight of our real goal. We may even mistake our lifeboat for the Ship of Zion and conclude that all who are not rowing with us are hopelessly doomed to be engulfed in the waves of destruction.

The church is a redemptive fellowship, first of all, because it is a fellowship of those who have been redeemed. Those who compose it are not in it because of their superior character, knowledge, or attainment. No one is in the church except sinners saved by grace. Not one of these came in by pleading his own righteousness but by trust in the righteousness of Jesus which caused him to renounce every other claim upon his life and to

pledge allegiance to the Son of God. All were equal before they crossed the frontier from death unto life and all are equal since. They had nothing to boast of then, they have nothing to boast of now. In their former state they were dead and the life they now have is a gift.

We do not enter into Christ *en masse*, or as a faction or party. We come into him as individuals. Every man who is born again is in Christ Jesus. No other person can add him to Christ, no other can remove him from Christ. Only God can introduce one into the one body and only God can discharge him from it. Men may “separate you from their company” (Luke 6:22) but they cannot destroy your relationship with God. Only the one who has power to include you in the community of saved ones can ever exclude you from it. The redemptive fellowship with one another grows out of the mutual fellowship or joint participation with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

Though we enter into Christ as individuals we come into a fellowship. We are not detached members but members one of another. So close is our relationship that “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” Our factional alignments have obscured the breadth of meaning in this statement. It does not mean that we are to suffer or rejoice only when an adherent of our faction or sect suffers or is honored. We are joined by the invisible bond of spiritual love to every saved person in the whole world. I cannot be unaffected by the suffering of an African or Chinese brother in the Lord even though our color differs and we live thousands of miles apart. Nor can I be unconcerned if such a brother is a member of another religious party than myself. The nerve that is struck when a brother suffers is not a partisan nerve, but one that runs from his heart to my heart through the person of Jesus, our head. “For it is from the head, that the whole body, as a harmonious structure knit together by the joints with which it is provided, grows by the proper functioning of individual parts

to its full maturity in love” (Eph. 4:16).

God made us and knows our basic needs. Sin brought disharmony into the world and into the life of each of us. It marred all of the basic and finer relationships of life. By separating us from God it deadened our sensibilities until “we all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition, we like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgment of God” (Eph. 2:3). In order to “transfigure us into his likeness, from splendor to splendor” (2 Cor. 3:18) we had to be introduced into a new environment where our selfish instincts could be transformed into social interests. This necessitated a fellowship in which each person was free and yet a servant of all others.

The Christian concept is one which is designed to deliver us from the effects of sin upon our personality and enable each of us to develop to his highest potential. Man is a social being. He is destined to share in an unbroken association with God and with the redeemed of all ages. The church of which he is an integral part or vital member makes possible the inauguration of this fellowship on the divine and human level. The fellowship provides an arena in which each participant can strive toward that perfect harmony which, while it can never be achieved on earth, must be sought as eagerly as if it could be attained. We must always rejoice in hope even while we labor in faith. The apostle writes to those in the fellowship at Rome, “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5, 6). He blazes the trail toward such harmony in the immediate context. We must learn to “shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others” (verse 11). “Each of us must consider his neighbor and think what is for his good and will build up the common life” (verse 2). We must “accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God” (verse 7). Fellowship can only accomplish its divine

purpose when a brother is valued above what he thinks. Jesus did not die just for brilliant men and the church is not a fraternity for philosophers nor an institute for the intellectually elite.

As a redemptive fellowship we are to be primarily concerned with persons. Jesus died for men. He did not die for a code of laws, a set of dogmas, or a compilation of doctrines. He did not shed his blood for us because we were worthy or deserving. “Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God’s own proof of his love for us” (Romans 5:8). We prove our love for each other when we do not extend it purely on the basis of worthiness but on the basis of need, even as God did. The purpose of God’s revelation through the apostles is, and that of our lives should be, the upbuilding of all who are in Christ Jesus. We dare not interpret the word of God or inject our lives into those of our brethren in such a way as to destroy them. Jesus died for these men. “Do not by your eating bring disaster to a man for whom Christ died” (Rom. 14:15). We need always be concerned that men may despise the doctrine of God, but we need also to be concerned that men may interpret the doctrine of God in such a manner as to divide or destroy brethren.

World Impact

The church is a redemptive fellowship, not only as a means for providing an atmosphere of spiritual growth for individuals but because of its impact on the world of mankind. It has both a personal and a universal aspect. The Christian world has been disturbed for centuries as to the role of the church. It is not an exaggeration to say that almost all of the disputes which have arisen within the framework of our religion have been the result of an inability to understand or define the nature and purpose of the church. Let us briefly refer to some of the ideas which have developed on the subject.

1. The church is an authoritarian structure for the defining of faith and morals, with the divine right to demand absolute obedience to her commands and unqualified subservience to her demands, under threat of condemnation.

2. The church is the repository of the doctrine of God and is the authorized interpreter of the same with power to determine what is orthodox and must be taught as the accepted and infallible word of truth, and with the power to condemn as heretics and excommunicate all who do not conform to such orthodoxy.

3. The church is simply a social welfare organization delegated by God to relieve inequities and adjust inequalities in the economic and political structure, and possessing the right to employ any legal means to accomplish this purpose throughout the earth.

Much of Christendom accepts one or the other of these, or a combination or modification of them, as the basis of relationship in the church. In so doing the groundwork has been laid for fracturing those who profess to be children of God into several hundred rival camps and tribes.

As to the first, the church possesses no authority. It is simply the body of Christ and all of the authority is vested in the head. In order to become an authoritarian structure the church would need to have an infallible interpreter on earth to whom all questions could be relayed and whose judgment would be final. Such an interpreter would require perfect knowledge or an unction of the Spirit without measure.

That no man possesses such knowledge is evident from 1 Corinthians 8:2, and that no man is authorized by the Spirit to “dictate the terms of faith” is evident from the apostle’s disavowal of any such intent (2 Cor. 1:24). As to the second, it must be observed that the doctrine of God belongs to each child

of God and not to a corporate structure which can dole it out to him at will and control his consumption of it. The sword of the Spirit belongs to every soldier from the moment of his enlistment. He need not secure permission to check it out of an arsenal when he wishes to use it. The bread of life has not been placed in a basket to be dispensed under centralized control or supervision. There is no “official interpretation” any more than there is an “official interpreter.” It is as ridiculous to assume that men can create an infallible interpretation as to suppose they can elect an infallible interpreter.

Certainly the word of God requires interpretation as does every communication employing human speech or words. Those who say it does not are always the most dogmatic in demanding that you concur with their viewpoints. The Constitution of the United States is interpreted by the Supreme Court. When so interpreted that interpretation becomes the law of the land. Whether you agree with it or not it becomes the standard by which you will be judged. What is the supreme tribunal for interpretation of divine principles? Is it the church? If so, is it the church universal or the local congregation? If it is the church universal, how will the decision be reached and how will it be enforced? If it is the local congregation what will be the result if congregations differ in their findings? Will we have the ludicrous spectacle of those who have no jurisdiction over others seeking to bind their will upon them as God’s will? Will we be subjected to the absurdity of one “autonomous” congregation “withdrawing” from another which will not be coerced into acceptance of its decretals?

The answer lies in the fact that the church in its local or universal aspect was never intended to be the official interpreter of apostolic doctrine, and its usurpation of this prerogative has involved the Christian realm in constant turmoil and strife. It will continue to do so until we correct our thinking. Who is the supreme court for determining what constitutes “matters of faith” and “matters of opinion” for every child of God on earth?

My reply is that the individual conscience is the sole monitor for every true saint. No one has the right to bind upon a fellow-disciple that which does not commend itself to him as correct. We are all “disciples” and there are no “masters.” The minds of men cannot be forced or coerced by other human minds.

There is a difference between the faith in Christ which justifies and which all of us must hold in common, and the personal faith or conviction of those who are in Christ, which must be altered or amended with increasing knowledge and understanding. In this realm one stands or falls to his own Master. No one else has the right to pass judgment upon him. How can unity be maintained under such circumstances? The apostle replies, “Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other because you love each other. Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another” (Eph. 4:2, 3). Because no human mind is infallible God did not commit the interpretation to any one, but allowed it to be the right of every one.

Will this not breed anarchy? Will it not create a state of chaos in which every man does that which is right in his own sight? God has wisely provided against this very thing by placing an effective restriction against exercising even that which we deem to be our right. But will not such a restraint need enforcement, and if so, does this not bring us back to the place of the external authority of the church? Not at all, for the regulation is not placed in the hands of others but in the hearts of each of us. It is not external and arbitrary but internal and voluntary. The restraining force is the only absolute quality in the Christian system, the epitome of all law, the golden chain which binds all of the other virtues in perfect harmony—brotherly love.

The Divine Governor

This regulatory power forbids my acting on the ground of superior knowledge in such a manner that I destroy a brother for whom Christ died (1 Cor. 8:11). It brands as a sin against Christ the sinning against brethren and the wounding of their conscience (1 Cor. 8:12). It requires that those who have a robust conscience accept as their own burden the tender scruples of weaker men (Rom. 15:1). Thus, while my conscience must be free to act without restraints imposed authoritatively by other men, it will always be throttled by the only principle imposed without limit upon us all— love for one another. Jesus has placed no control upon my growth, increase of knowledge, or rate of attainment but he has placed a governor on my spiritual speed, lest in my haste to grow closer to a spiritual ideal I ruthlessly destroy those for whom Jesus died, as he died for me. “If your brother is outraged by what you eat, then your conduct is no longer guided by love” (Romans 14:15). Conduct that is not guided by love is misguided and it is misconduct.

It is important that I understand doctrinal matters but it is just as important that I understand my brothers— their motivations, needs and fears. The very purpose of the doctrine is to teach me how to be at peace with them, how to live in harmony with them, how to avoid divisions and schisms. If I can quote every passage in the sacred scriptures and if I use them to promote or defend division, I have missed the whole purpose of the doctrine. To study doctrine for doctrine’s sake may make of me a legalistic disputant but it can never make me a peacemaker. It is only as doctrine changes life and conduct for the better, only as it enhances brotherly love, that it is lifted from the pages of a book and translated into a godly life. The apostle Paul only once became a philosopher when he wrote, “The aim and object of this command is the love which springs from a clean heart, from a good conscience, and from faith that is genuine” (1 Tim. 1:5).

The church was not created to be a monolithic structure with authoritarian claims. It was not brought into existence to be

the guardian of orthodoxy, or a social welfare agency. The church is a redemptive society composed of those who are “the people of God” and it has a task which no other institution in the world can imitate or duplicate. It is the exponent of the only power in the universe which can transform the world. Its very existence is proof of the reality of that power for nothing else could have created it.

This force can change the vilest criminals into the most useful servants of humanity. It can move men whose lives are sterile and futile to sell their earthly possessions and live in stinking jungles for the sole purpose of sharing their greatest treasure with naked, uncivilized savages, whom they covet as brethren. It can drive others with a consuming passion to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and minister to the sick and never ask a word of thanks in return. The church is the divine organism ordained by God to furnish an undeniable example of what that power can accomplish.

The world has to be shown. Men are conditioned to see power at work. They are accustomed to judging energy by its practical demonstration. Electricity is appreciated only as it lights homes, operates appliances and furnishes motive power. Magnetic force is best understood as it lifts huge loads of iron for transfer to train or ship. Atomic energy is comprehended in its fueling of submarines or in the firing of rockets which launch space vehicles into orbit. God understands human nature and he has furnished the whole world a clear demonstration of power at work in a timeless and ageless organism.

The church is a redemptive fellowship created to prove the transforming power of love. Jesus said to those who were to become the foundation of the church, “This is how all men will know that you are my disciples, because you have such love for one another” (John 13:35). *All men will know!* It is for this reason our souls are purified by obeying the truth and we are born again. “Now that you have, by obeying the truth, made your

souls clean enough for a genuine love of your fellows, see that you do love each other, fervently and from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22). Love satisfies every claim of law and sums up all law (Romans 13:8, 10). It is the royal law, the king of all laws (James 2:8).

The One Body

If we interpret the commands of God to permit us to bite and devour one another we defeat the very purpose of revelation. “Indeed this command comes unto us from Christ himself: that he who loves God must also love his brother” (John 4:21). We must learn the art of forbearance, forgiveness, patience and tolerance. We must “recommend ourselves by the innocence of our behavior, our grasp of truth, our patience and kindness; by sincere love, by declaring the truth, by the power of God.” We must “give pride of place to one another in esteem.”

Now is the time for us to recapture the real nature and purpose of the one body. In it we are all joined to the Lord who loved us and gave himself for us. Through him we are joined to every brother on earth. All of these are frail, faulty and feeble. None are perfect. They are all “brothers in error” but they are also, and this is more important, “brothers in Christ.” If he can receive them in spite of their error we can do the same. We no more endorse their error in receiving them than he does. Let our love for the brethren triumph over our differences. Let us not allow the things upon which we disagree to cancel the effect of his blood that makes us all one.

Let us not be stubborn and adamant, seeking and searching for flaws and failures upon which we can harp and harangue. Let us give all who love God credit for honesty and integrity in their sincere attempts to serve him. The world is weary and worn with our wars and janglings. They are sick and tired of debates and strife. Brotherhood is based upon

fatherhood, fraternity is based upon paternity, fellowship results from sonship. Factionalism can never present a perfect image of the church. We cannot divide ourselves into effective influence nor fracture ourselves into unity.

We are one body! Let us treat each other as members of the same body and not regard each other as allied with alien tribes or foreign clans. Our disregard for others of God's children is a reflection against him who is their father as well as ours. If he has bestowed such love upon them as to call them sons of God, let us bestow such love upon them as to call them "brothers in Christ." Wherever God has a child I have a brother. I shall love all of my brothers because of his love for all of us. "Consequently I will most gladly spend and be spent for your good, even though it means that the more I love you the less you love me" (2 Cor. 12:15).

Where Would Paul Attend?

Mission Messenger (May 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

Not long ago I saw an advertisement of “The Church of Christ” in the Saturday edition of a newspaper. The local minister announced as his subject for the following evening, “Where Would the Apostle Paul Attend Church in our Town?” This seems to be a favorite topic with a lot of the brethren. They assume that if Paul arrived in the city the first thing he would do when he walked to the city limits would be to make enquiry for them. The inference is that “The Church of Christ” as we know it is an exact replica of the *ekklesia* which Paul knew. This is no doubt wistful thinking and it would probably be nearer the truth to say that any likeness between the two is purely incidental— or accidental.

There is a widespread notion extant that we have restored the primitive order of things until Paul would feel quite at home among us. Some debaters, possessed of more brass than knowledge, affirm that the church of which they are members is identical in origin, name, doctrine and practice, with that of the New Testament scriptures. Occasionally we are treated to the sight of two champions of rival “Churches of Christ,” both of whom affirm this about their respective parties at the same time they deny the claim of each other. Both are right and both are wrong. They are both wrong in what they affirm and both right in what they deny.

The fact of the matter is that most of us have been considerably brainwashed. I use this term advisedly for I recognize it is only to be applied to those in other religious parties and should never be used with reference to “members of the Lord’s church.” However, at the risk of becoming decidedly unpopular, I would like to suggest that the organization currently denominated “The Church of Christ” is not actually a restoration of the first century church at all but is a twentieth century party growing out of the abuse of a nineteenth century restoration movement. The last thing that a majority of its members want to see is a real serious attempt to restore the primitive *ekklesia*. Nothing would surprise them more than to be transported back through the centuries and be taken to a meeting of the saints in Philippi or Rome. None of them would recognize it as a gathering of “the faithful church” and most of them would promise the Lord that if he would forgive them for attending this time they would never do it again.

The only thing I can think of which would equal their surprise would be the astonishment of the apostle Paul if he were to attend one of our meetings and hear his writings quoted as authority for some of the practices and performances. He would certainly be surprised at the “sermon” topic of “the minister” as announced, for several reasons. While Paul was on earth he did not “attend church.” The *ekklesia* (church) was composed of persons. One did not “go to church” but the church did the going! One did not “attend church” but the church did the attending.

However, the subject of the address would not sound any more strange to the apostle than the idea of “a sermon.” He never used the term nor did any of the other inspired writers. Origen was rightly designated “the father of the sermon” and he did not arrive on the scene until after Paul had been dead more than a hundred years. Origen was the third president of the first Christian College which was started in Alexandria, Egypt, about A.D. 180, and which the historian John Lawrence Mosheim said

became “the grave of primitive Christianity.” Apparently the primitive order was put to sleep by sermonizing, a form of sedation which is still quite effective, but an overdose of which (like most other sleep-inducing drugs) may prove fatal to the body.

Of course, the general supposition is that the apostle would be induced to attend by virtue of the name “Church of Christ” over the door of the building. This might not be the case at all. When Paul was alive the saints did not put signs on their meeting places and for a very good reason. They were afraid people would find out where they met. It was difficult enough to keep out of the hands of the persecutors without telling them where to locate you.

In any event a sign reading “Church of Christ” might not mean a great deal to Paul. He did not use the expression in any of the letters he wrote to congregations. Once he mentioned “churches of Christ” to the Romans but in the same connection (he did not divide his letter into chapters and verses) he also mentioned “churches of the Gentiles” and one was no more a title than the other. It just could be that he might drop in on a meeting of the “Church of God” because he refers to “the church of God” and “the churches of God” frequently. Or, in a large city he could get side-tracked and go to a colored “Church of God in Christ” because he would likely find it in a slum area and that is probably where he would be looking. When he was on earth “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called.” He might not know that God had changed since the world became more civilized. When he labored for God he said, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are.”

Even if he went to a “Church of Christ” it might not be “the loyal church.” There are now at least twenty-five different brands of “The Church of Christ” and while the members of each one think theirs is the “New Testament church” they also think all of the others are disloyal and apostate. They would feel obligated to warn the apostle to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” such as breaking the loaf before passing it or using unfermented wine in the Lord’s Supper. He would be cautioned to stay away from congregations that had classes or those that didn’t have them (depending on which one he fell in with first) and he would be shown how to mark brethren and avoid them. It would be difficult for him to associate this with anything he wrote to the Romans, but he would be informed that what he said was the basis for all of the division. He would no doubt think this very strange since he thought he was writing to offset division and promote unity.

It is commonly held by most members of “The Church of Christ” that the apostle would have to attend with them because of “the pattern.” This phrase has been adopted to describe the method employed in carrying out their various functions and services. It is borrowed from the writer of the Hebrews who related how God told Moses when he was about to make the tabernacle, “See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.” It is assumed that inasmuch as God gave Moses the most minute details about the earthly sanctuary he has done the same for us with regard to heavenly things. They seem to overlook the fact that the first tabernacle was to be constructed and pitched by man under divine direction, so nothing was left to judgment or conscience, whereas it is distinctly said that now Jesus is a high priest in “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.”

Disregarding this, various groups from time to time, looking at the new covenant scriptures as merely another legalistic code, take them and attempt to “pitch the true tabernacle” themselves according to the pattern. However, in

each instance “the pattern” is the interpretation which the group places upon the sacred writings and their opinions concerning what God means. All agree that the pattern is so plain that any person can understand it, but this is about as far as the agreement goes. Each group pitches its own “true tabernacle” and then they pitch into each other. When Moses built the first tabernacle all twelve tribes encamped around the one structure but now each tribe has constructed its own. There are more than two dozen “true tabernacles” called “The Church of Christ” with the priests in each going daily on the radio “accomplishing the service of God” by challenging the priests of the others to debate.

It is obvious that men can make “the pattern” mean just about what they want it to mean. Generally it is a reproduction of the group practices and procedures with which they became familiar in “the church down home.” If the congregation in which they grew up had three songs followed by prayer to open the service, they feel uncomfortable and out of place where the service is opened by reading from the sacred scripture followed by meditation and prayer. It isn’t “according to the pattern” to do it the other way.

If they have been accustomed to “an invitation song” at the close and they attend where the brethren conclude their public worship on a devotional plane without it they feel like they have “just not been to meeting.” They never stop to enquire on what ground a congregation suspends its praise directed to God and all begin to shout together in melodic strains to the sinners (if any) who are present: “Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore!” They may be wont to hear those who have just observed the feast in the Father’s house get to their feet a few minutes later and testify in unison and in four-four time, “I’ve wandered far away from God, now I’m coming home.” This must be taken with a grain of salt, of course, for if someone else would intimate that they are still a long way from home, he would be cast out of the synagogue. Such songs are

projected toward others, for this too is a part of the pattern. One wonders what the apostle Paul would think if he “attended church” where a part of the worship was directed toward aliens and where a man stood up in front waving and pumping his arms while the rest sang in D flat, “There’s a Stranger at the door, let him in!”

No doubt it would startle the apostle to no end if he fell in with one of our contemporary factions whose members have deducted from his writings that the “scriptural form of worship” requires that all of their corporate worship be opened with prayer and that they cannot regard any as “faithful” who follow any other *pattern*. It probably never occurred to him as he wrote to Timotheus, “I exhort, therefore— that, *first of all*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” that someone would come up with the idea that he was laying down a law governing the sequence of “the items of worship”— especially since he knew nothing about items of worship. The Holy Spirit neglected to use that phrase in his revelation, but that has not kept it from becoming a part of “the pattern.”

It would help us a great deal in these days in our approach to some of our problems if we would just admit that the pattern (or patterns) we follow is primarily a concoction of human judgment, sanctified in our sight by traditional observance and consecrated by partisan prejudice we have absorbed along the way. We know that it is difficult indeed to be so frank and honest in any appraisal of our own position. We have all been conditioned to believe that the way we do things is God’s will for this generation and for all people in all ages.

Because we tend to confuse our interpretation with God’s revelation, it appears that if we concede we may be wrong about some things it is the equivalent of accusing God of being in error. There is a difference. Revelation is what God actually said. Interpretation is what we think he meant by what he said.

The first is divine, it is the uncovering of the infinite mind. The second is human, it is the result of research and investigation by finite minds. The first is unalterable, there is no more to be said by God. The second is subject to amendment for there is much more to be learned by man. The sectarian spirit is always opposed to true research. It seeks to embalm what has been learned in the past and make this the body of truth by which all else is to be judged.

It is true that all of the factional leaders urge their adherents to study but they do not really mean it. Nothing is more dangerous or detrimental to any party than for its members to make an unbiased study and really search for truth. Study, as the word is used by partisan preachers, means to “search the scriptures” to work out additional arguments in defence of that for which the party contends. Since this is a purely prejudicial attitude no one who employs it can hope to arrive at real truth. He will have a slanted version which in his own warped mind will appear to be straight. The result of fear on our own conception of thought when we seek to drink at the fountain of knowledge can be seen in some of the ringstraked, speckled and spotted ideas so characteristic of our brothers.

No sect or faction can long retain within its number a truly honest and individual thinker. All history, without exception, demonstrates that every such person is eventually labeled a heretic and driven forth. To be a good member of a party one should abstain from study and content himself with mere repetition of the party line. To stifle freedom of thought and to provide a means of keeping the people in check every faction works out a pattern which is then bound upon the members as “the scriptural way.” Any deviation from this unwritten creed is looked upon as digression from the truth. This is punishable by banishment from the party. It is the thinkers who are excluded!

In order to enforce “the law” and to make it applicable to the body of believers, spiritual principles are reduced to a rigid

formula. This enables the average person to have a sense of security and well-being for by going through with the regulations he convinces himself that he has done the will of God and is safe. Every faction, sooner or later, makes “safety” its rule of faith and practice instead of the revelation of God. By doing so it can enforce its unwritten creed as a substitute in areas where God has not legislated. “But it is safe to do it this way” becomes an iron clad and inflexible law and is expected to silence not only any objection to that method but any suggestion of another method. The truth is that there may be more than one “safe” way of doing many things. The one who on the basis of safety, rather than upon the authority of revelation, enshrines his way as the only one, creates a creed as certainly as that can be done. Unwritten creeds produce cleavages!

Certainly no one should object to any group desiring to be safe, but it is very unfortunate that such groups also frequently desire to be dogmatic. It is one thing to be safe, a wholly different thing to become legislators and judges. Nor must it be overlooked that Christianity is a great adventure and there are certain risks involved. One can make safety his “god” and stay so close to shore he will do nothing but fritter his life away dabbling in the shallows. Faith does not choose the easy way and not always what is labeled the “safe” way. It recognizes that there may be more than one way to do some things. Faith risks all. We must always stay within the limit of God’s will and purpose. We must never transgress. But that will is not bounded or limited by areas marked “Safe” simply to gratify partisan practices or traditional procedures.

One of the tragedies of creating a purely ritualistic or legalistic approach to God lies in the fact that it makes spirit expansion impossible. The most intimate and inspiring relationships are reduced to cold formal transactions. A good illustration of what we mean is found in what is referred to as “the plan of salvation.” That moment when a longing soul makes contact with God through the Spirit should be of all the

experiences of which we are capable the most glorious and transcendent. "I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant." Unfortunately the glory of that encounter has been obscured by projecting a purely intellectual process which acts as a veil over the heart.

The approach to God is described by a rigidly prescribed set of stairs up which one may clamber in a hop, skip and jump procedure, the last step landing him safely in the kingdom. We have been treated to charts and diagrams with little kitchen step-ladders leading out of darkness into light, and with the steps labeled hearing, faith, repentance, confession and baptism. The inference certainly is left that we climb out simply by exercise of our own power and strength and all that the Father has done is to set a ladder up against the wall in the hope that we will stumble on to it while looking for Him. The legalistic attitude is seen when we remember that if a person takes two steps at once the final step does not land him in the kingdom at all but dumps him outside and he has to start over and make the climb under the guidance of one "of our preachers." If one does not fully comprehend what he is stepping into when he takes the last rung of the ladder, he merely steps off into space, and has to be put through the performance again or he will not be allowed with the rest of the people in "the Lord's church."

I suggest in all sincerity that if one wants to find a common, everyday illustration of how we have access by one Spirit to the Father, an escalator provides a much better figure than a ladder. In climbing a ladder one leaves the previous step each time in order to ascend to the next one. But one should never quit hearing God's word, nor should he ever stop believing what God has said. He ought always to repent of his sins when necessary. For those who have arbitrarily injected public confession as a formal step for an alien, without a shred of authority, it needs to be recalled that "profession" is a much better translation of the term.

In the case of an escalator one climbs on the first step and stands there in full confidence as an invisible power lifts him up to a higher plane. The unseen power in this case is the grace of God and the first step is faith. “By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” An escalator does not reach out and grab one and force him to go to a higher plane. A man will get nowhere on an escalator unless he exercises his will to take the first step. This places him in position where the power which is always there becomes operative in his personal behalf. By this means we do not climb and struggle up to the next shelf of repentance but we are led to it. “Do you not know that the goodness of God leadeth you to repentance?”

A man does not climb out of sin. If he could do so he would have just ground for pride. But the record says, “What room then is left for human pride? It is excluded” (Romans 3:27). We are liberated from sin, lifted out of it, and that by a person. The act of liberation is not ours, but his. “For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendour, and all are justified by God’s free grace alone, through his act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus. For God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through faith” (Romans 3:23-25). We are not saved from wrath by a plan but through a man. “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” This is the conclusion of Paul immediately following the statement, “And so, since we have now been justified by Christ’s sacrificial death, we shall all the more certainly be saved through him from final retribution.”

We do not climb up under our own power, but through humility and self-denial we place ourselves in that state where we can be lifted up. “Humble yourselves before God and he will lift you high” (James 4:10). It may sound treasonable to many of my readers but on the basis of the scriptural meaning of faith,

we are justified by faith alone, for everything else is merely a manifestation or perfecting of faith. It is distinctly stated that the only thing which avails in Christ Jesus is *faith*— faith which works by love! The purpose of works is to demonstrate or manifest faith. It is faith that must be shown. “And I by my works *will show you my faith*” (James 2:18).

Those who plot a legalistic course refer to the expression “who also *walk in the steps* of that faith of our father Abraham” (Romans 4:12). This is done to make it appear that these steps were works performed by Abraham for justification. But this is a positive contradiction of the very purpose of the apostle in introducing Abraham. His thesis is that “the promise was made on the ground of faith, in order that it might be a matter of sheer grace” (verse 16). For that reason he begins with the positive declaration “If Abraham was justified by anything he had done, then he has a ground for pride. But he has no such ground before God” (verse 2). The steps of Abraham did not consist of things which he did or of works he performed as deeds of righteousness. They were “steps of faith” and the RSV renders the clause correctly, “but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had.”

We are not saved by works although we cannot be saved without them. We are not saved because we work, but we work because we are saved. We are not products of our own workmanship. We are not self-created. We do not enter God’s family by what we do for him but by what he does for us. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” *The New English Bible* renders this, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us.”

In our attempts to simplify and systematize for sermon outlines, we have minimized and quenched the Spirit until the deep sense of personal encounter with God has been sacrificed

for a written code. The result is that our factions are loaded with unhappy, discontented, frightened men and women, who live in constant dread of what they will find in their *law book*, which actually is a compilation and collection of love letters which God designed to stimulate spiritual growth and togetherness. We have ignored the statement of the apostle, “But now, having died to that which held us bound, we are discharged from the law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the spirit, in contrast to the old way, the way of a written code” (Romans 7:6). Certainly reformation of life and immersion into Christ Jesus are essential, but they are of no avail unless they are demonstrations of faith which is motivated by love! Conforming to them as legal requirements will achieve but little except to make us frustrated and disappointed with ourselves!

What has here been said of “the plan of salvation” may be said of the various other formulae and rituals which we have created and developed by taking a passage here and another there and out of these weaving our party design which we henceforth regard as “the pattern.” This writer looks askance at the attempts to formalize and standardize the Way by pouring certain ingredients into the matrix of human rationalization which then becomes the unwritten creed by which we judge all men. It is certainly doubtful if any of the apostles ever delivered what passes today for a “Church of Christ sermon.” Certainly none of them ever offered an outline on “The Law of Pardon” or “The Steps to Salvation.” These are our modern trappings, adaptations of the Good News to the superficial tastes of our decadent world. Paul would be amazed at some of the dissertations based on popular sermon outlines. He would feel a revulsion against the cheap diatribes and sensational appeals.

We are a long way yet from the primitive simplicity in which the Good News was the message of grace to the unsaved and the apostolic doctrine was the course of instruction for the training and discipline of the saved ones. If Paul came to one of our meetings he would have to be oriented for he would find but

little resemblance between them and the meetings he knew in “the upper room.” He might conclude that we were a synagogue dedicated to the ignoble task of fostering ill-will among believers in the Messiah and of spreading division. He once gave instruction that the saints, the committed ones, were to endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He would be saddened and distressed by how far we have departed from that ideal. The fact of the matter is I just wonder where he would attend if he came to town.

Orthodoxy and Reform

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[Abstract]

History is a stern, unbending mistress who keeps a universal school attended by all of us. Few of us sit under her firm gaze or eye her chastening rod with pleasure. We have to be dragged reluctantly and against our angry protests to the place where we will listen at all, and after having heard, we resent the lessons and bitterly deny their application to our own life and times. In no other field of human existence is this tendency more manifest than in the religious, and someone has cynically said that “the only thing we learn from history is that no one learns from history.”

For example there are certain facts connected with the history of reformatory movements which are unyielding and undeniable. These facts are so hard there is no way of softening their impact, and so cold there is no way of warming them up to make them more acceptable. They simply have to be admitted. Every reform began as an attempt to find relief from a situation regarded as intolerable and had as its aim a way of life more presentable unto God. But every such movement in spite of its noble ideals in the beginning, has terminated in the formation of another sect or faction, often more intolerant and exclusive than the original. It may prove profitable to analyze the reason behind this seemingly inexorable tendency.

All religion is motivated by a sense of dependency and all

sectarianism by a sense of fear. While these are not necessarily related they are often confused. Under the impulse of the first, man seeks to come closer unto God; under the impulse of the second he constructs forms and fences as part of the truth, and often fights harder to preserve the forms than to defend the truth. Losing his sense of values and with his perspective clouded by partisan antagonism, he regards those who question the forms as enemies of religion and deniers of God.

The religion based upon faith in the claims of Jesus of Nazareth is ageless and timeless. It is obvious that it must be expressed, and it is just as apparent that such expression must be in a form adapted to the age, the culture and the place, but within the pale of God's revelation. It is a vain assumption and a myth that this revelation was intended to provide a meticulous and detailed method for meeting every need or expressing every passion for righteousness. Christianity is the relationship to a person, and through that person to God. The purpose of the divine revelation is to demonstrate how that person would react to the situations which confront us, and to develop within us that divine nature which will enable us to automatically and spontaneously respond as He would if present. Indeed He is present in every situation for He dwells in us.

It is inevitable that the forms through which faith is expressed must be flexible and expansive or they will become a straitjacket which confines and restrains. Under such circumstances repression is actually confused with expression. This chokes out all further reformation and those who arrived at their current position only because of daring changes made by their fathers, become complacent leaders of the *status quo* and brand all further change as compromise. They seem never to realize that the philosophy they espouse would have doomed them to continue in the same sectarianism from which their fathers extricated themselves.

The task of every true reformer is to breathe new life into

a people who have stupefied themselves by inhaling over and over the fetid atmosphere created by their own confinement. Every sect or faction becomes inbred in its thinking and this tends toward sterility and impotence. Those who once were able to meet the challenge of another day are no longer capable of measuring up to the demands of a new era. But all of us resist change. We feel secure in the old worn ruts which our traditions have created. We are frightened by the untried and fearful of the unfamiliar. We cling to the old phrases and cleave to hoary clichés long after they cease to communicate anything to those about us. This is the spirit which results in sectarianism, and like so many other things in the spiritual realm it is hard to tell where good ends and evil begins. Certainly we should be careful, cautious and concerned, and yet faith is not certainty, but a bold adventure into the unknown.

Reformers tend by nature to become impatient. They see those whom they regard as brethren held captive behind walls which have grown upward with the passing decades. They behold those whom they love building the walls higher in the mistaken notion that this is the way toward freedom in Christ. All true reformers are radicals for this word means “root.” A radical is one who gets to the root of things. He is not concerned about superficial details or lopping off twigs. Reformers are also non-conformists and this is a second strike against them, making impossible the attainment to any measurable degree of success during their lifetime. No society can stand radicals and non-conformists for these call attention to their own sins and shortcomings. The world must get them out of its sight as witness what happened to Jesus of Nazareth, Paul of Tarsus, Jan Huss of Bohemia, Jerome Savonarola of Italy, and an innumerable company of others who were gadflies in their day as was Socrates in his day in Athens.

It is after the present generation which has stoned its prophets has died, and another generation, and a third has arisen, that men can look back and see that there was a prophet

among their fathers. This does not argue that the approach of the reformer is always the best or that in prosecution of a justifiable purpose he always employs justifiable means. Reformers are human and while non-conformity is essential to their very nature, impatience should not necessarily be so. There is little to be gained by an intolerant attack upon intolerance. Reformers are also driven by fear. When they see their lifetime approaching the sunset and glance behind to see how lengthy the shadows have become, they occasionally become frantic and end up by destroying that which they set out to save. They would be helped by a realization of the truth that their responsibility is to plant or water and God will give the increase. Sometimes a man may die before he can harvest the crop from the seed he has planted, but those who remain after him can "enter into the fruit of his labors."

Reformation, in its initial stages, does not consist of tearing down walls from without. It is difficult to rescue those who do not regard themselves as being captives, and especially when they have been conditioned to believe that safety lies only inside the walls they have built. All reformation is from within and it consists not of chopping away at walls but of prying open rusty windows so that a fresh breeze may be wafted in to revive the fainthearted and weary. Men who have lived inside of walls for years are not qualified for sudden exodus to a world of greater freedom and may dash themselves to pieces in wild abandon.

It is enough if one can open up a window so that eyes long accustomed to gloom can adapt themselves to greater light. Man is not by nature an aquatic being, and water is not his natural habitat, so when one has been working in marine depths he must be brought back slowly to his normal environment lest he die from the effect of the sudden change. It serves little good to rescue a man from an abnormal condition only to have him die the moment he reaches his proper state. While it is true that all reformers are radicals, not all radicals are reformers. Many become both defamers and deformers!

Every generation is destined to see a struggle between the forces of reform and those of orthodoxy because reformation is a continuous process. It is not confined to one century or to one age. Orthodoxy seeks to maintain the form, reformation seeks to admit new and greater light. It is no wonder that reformers of the past have actually been designated “New Lights” on several occasions and within different movements. It is unfortunate that, in times of war, men often act intemperately upon both sides. While it is true that the orthodox confuse the truth of heaven with their partisan forms adopted to express it, it is just as true that reform forces often regard all such forms derived from past experience as evil and viciously attack them in an attempt to wipe them out.

There is a fallacy manifest on both sides of such a controversy. The orthodox defenders err in assuming that their forms for expressing the will of God, or the machinery created to enable them to implement the will of God, are part of the will of God. This drives them to seek for “a pattern” in the revealed will of God for the machinery they have already contrived, and as bad as some of that machinery is, it cannot be as absurd or ridiculous as some of the arguments made “from the scriptures” to justify it or find precedent for it. Actually, the forms of expression are an outgrowth in each generation of the anxious concerns of honest men for serving the needs of their generation, and whether they are the best or are inferior may be a matter of human judgment, but the binding of these upon men as part of the will of God, and demanding that they be supported as a test of faithfulness to the Almighty intrudes upon the divine prerogative and is an unwarranted usurpation of authority. It is astounding that those who search the scriptures for what they have developed in seeking divine authority for it, have no hesitancy in binding it upon the consciences of other saints contrary to all of the authority in God’s Word.

At the same time the forces of reform may err by assuming that because certain ones confuse the will of God with the forms

devised to express it, that all forms should be abandoned and thrown to “the moles and the bats.” While the forces of orthodoxy regard their forms as the will of God, these others regard them as idols and the works of men’s hands. Both are wrong, and because of this division has resulted in almost every case of reform and a new party has been born. The truth is that religion is emotional and rational, philosophical and practical. While it is true that the prime essential is to sustain a proper relationship to God, this must manifest itself in a proper relationship to mankind in its various phases as they touch an individual life. Religion must seek expression to be valid and it will do so in those forms which commend themselves unto us as being in harmony with God’s program for us in our situation. Those forms may or may not be right, but they will not be wrong simply because they are forms of expression.

With the kind indulgence of our readers I should like to make a direct and positive application to our day of the principles I have been discussing. In order to do this I shall use as an example the one group of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ with which I am most familiar, the noninstrument churches of Christ. What I have to say will be generally applicable to most other groups for neither our problems or attitudes are at all unique or different. When I speak of “one group” in this connection, I am using a relative expression. Actually there are some two dozen divergent factions among us in spite of the fact that we are heirs of a movement, the avowed purpose of which was “to unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

The intensely partisan members of each faction regard their own party as “the faithful church,” but there is a growing recognition among many of the more sober and intelligent thinkers in all of them that this entire branch of the restoration movement has not only entirely lost its original purpose but has become sectarianized. It is a denomination in that it has selected a specific title by which to designate itself and to distinguish it from other parties and the Christians who may be in them. It

has developed its own missionary, charitable, journalistic and educational organizations, and these vested interests exist to propagate and perpetuate the traditional interpretations and attitudes.

In reality the non-instrument brethren have at least three distinct *major* sets of vested interests. The more elaborate is maintained by what may be called the main line orthodox segment; another is supported by those who hold that the return of Jesus will be pre-millennial; a third, with the exception of missionary and charitable organizations, has the allegiance of a faction opposed to such institutions. All of these are rivals. Some of them carry on an almost continuous campaign of pressures against the others. In addition to these, practically all of the other factions have their own journals which serve to hold the members "in line" and to help discourage fraternization across the lines and prevent defections from the parties. All of these are bound in loose federation by mutual regard for immersion and mutual opposition to instrumental music, which is considered as giving them exclusive right to the title "Church of Christ." Most of them resent infringement of the title by those who use instrumental music. They regard this as an attempt of aliens to steal the name of "the Lord's church."

However, it is in the development of orthodoxy concocted from traditional slogans, opinions and interpretations, and mistaken for "the one faith," that the real sectarian spirit is manifested. Those who cannot, in good conscience, subscribe to all of the tests and shibboleths are rejected as being unworthy of Christ, while those who pay lipservice are accepted as "loyal." This means that conformity rather than character, becomes the criterion for measuring the validity of profession. Nothing is more deadening to the spirit than such lethal legalism.

At the risk of offence, which is wholly unintended, let me mention some of the forms which our orthodoxy has developed by which to express itself. Symptomatic of that over-

simplification which frequently characterizes the more legalistic sects is the reduction of all religious experience to simple formulae. Examples of these are our “five steps to salvation” and “five items of worship.” Neither of these expressions is scriptural nor is the idea they are intended to convey expressed in any other scriptural language. What they do to the majestic concepts of “salvation” and “worship” is evidenced in the frightful dearth of understanding of these noble terms in the hearts of many who have taken the “steps” and engage in the “items.”

The “access to this grace wherein we stand,” the acceptance of atonement and effecting of reconciliation, the reception of sanctification and justification— this is hardly to be confined to a little “kitchen stepladder process” as commonly illustrated upon sermon charts. One does not do a hop, skip and jump into the communion of the saints nor enter the New Jerusalem by a system which requires him to leave “the step of faith” in order to repent of his sins, or cease to repent in order to confess. The fact is that the “public confession” as a specific step may have been inserted into this “five finger exercise” without any scriptural warrant as demonstrated by the warping and wresting of unrelated Biblical passages to sustain it.

The grave danger involved in this kind of orthodoxy is that persons possessed of profound faith in the Lord and who have been immersed in implementation of that faith may be rejected because they did not take the “steps” in order or approved sequence, or because they were mistaken as to the exact point in the process or program where the remission of their sins was granted by a gracious God. It is not enough that one enter the relationship with the Father and Son but he must express it in the very words which have become the traditional pattern of our particular segment of a particular restoration movement. Yet it is not necessarily the form which is to be deplored, for unquestionably thousands of humble and contrite souls have entered into “the fellowship of the Spirit” and expressed their trust in God’s Son by taking the five steps in “the plan of

salvation.”

The wrong lies in the dogmatic spirit which binds this form of expression, even verbally, upon others as the will of God. This would un-Christianize the great army of those who were among the saved of all those centuries before members of a certain group “discovered” the “steps of salvation” and reduced the approach to the divine nature to a systematic sequence of actions taken by man. Not one of the twelve apostles would have understood what one was talking about if he had questioned them about “the five steps to salvation.” This is the language of crystallized orthodoxy in a certain age of the Christian era and among the heirs of a specific segment of a restoration attempt.

By the same token we have coined another expression of “Church-of-Christism” in our usage of the term “five items of worship.” It would amaze the average person among our various parties to learn how many debates have been held, how many divisions have resulted, and how many factions have been created by orthodoxy, rather than fidelity to the revelation of heaven. In each protest against orthodoxy a new party has been created and a new species of orthodoxy has been born to further confuse and confound, and to foster antagonism and rivalry. We become so attached to our forms that we cannot conceive of them as being other than the expressed will of God.

We are shocked when someone suggests that a congregation could “scripturally worship” on the Lord’s Day if the brethren merely met and observed the Lord’s Supper without any other religious exercise. Or, if it is suggested that “congregational singing” as we practice it cannot be shown by the scriptures to have been a part of the public “worship” in the days of the apostles. It would startle a great many of us to realize that such things as “the treasury” and “the budget,” and a lot of other things which are such sources of controversy in our day, were wholly unknown in the primitive community of the saints. The fact is that, of all the words translated “worship” in the new

covenant scriptures, the term is never applied to what we do on Lord's Day, and the expression "the worship" is not in the Bible. The sacred oracles know nothing of "the five items of worship."

Confronted with such unscriptural jargon and such a conglomerate mass of orthodox opinion and dogma, a reformer among our brethren might be tempted to strike out in all directions. Such intemperate action would only aggravate the situation. Since our forms are an outgrowth of a sincere effort to please God we must grow out of them by a continued effort to please Him. Merely ridding ourselves of the forms will leave us helpless in our effort to express the will of God. Our task is to restore a proper sense of values which will enable us to distinguish between the will of God and the form of expressing it. This is part of a maturing process and such a process is always educative in nature. But all education is slow and methodical. One does not become educated over night. We must "grow in grace and knowledge of the truth."

When a person falls fully clothed into a stream and is dragged from it in an apparently drowning state, it is not necessary to divest him of all his clothing before efforts at reviving him can begin. It is only necessary to loosen the clothing in those areas where it would hinder breathing. So it is with a body of believers whose corporate life is threatened by inhalation of the smoke screen of traditionalism. Such believers need not be divested of all outward forms in order to breathe new life into them. It would avail but little to save one from drowning or asphyxiation only to have him die from exposure because of your hasty and ill-advised procedure.

All reformatory movements as they develop into exclusivist sects suffer from addiction to the drug of their own orthodoxy. They must have regular shots of it injected into their corporate veins or they lose their inability to function. No food, regardless of how palatable, can satisfy their need for "a fix" and they lose their power of locomotion until they have a "revival" and are

exposed once more to the familiar opiate which for a brief period thrills and exhilarates until its effect wears off. Yet, the only effective cure for an “addict” is by slow and supervised withdrawal, with decreasing amounts of the drug being allowed until the unfortunate victim is free. Too sudden withdrawal results in a state of shock which may be as dangerous as the drug. Men must be led out of orthodoxy, not jerked out of it. Reformers need to be leaders, not drivers.

There are growing indications that those in all areas of our own restoration movements are starting to outgrow their particular brands of orthodoxy. Even those in the more extreme and exclusive factions are becoming aware that their forms and methods of containing and expressing the will of God are not adequate to the needs of our day. Much of this can be attributed to an increasing educational stature which enables us to see more clearly the truth revealed in the scriptures. We are coming to realize that expanding horizons do not necessarily betoken an increasing broad-mindedness, which is often a synonym for shallowness, but are rather the result of climbing higher on the mountains of faith. This enables us to give proper credit to all of our fathers in all of the factions who did their best in the age in which they walked. One is not expected to see as clearly in the grayness of approaching dawn as when the sun climbs to its meridian. One may appreciate what his father’s hand wrought without allowing the skeletal fingers to reach out from the grave to deter his own further progress.

The church of God must be adapted to meet the needs of those in all times and climes, for the simple reason that the church is composed of people, and those who compose it at any time in any part of the world, are those who are alive at that time and who live in that part of the earth. The church in the United States today is not made up of those who lived in the United States a century ago. Those who are the church now are exposed to different problems, tensions and fears. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is adequate to fulfill our needs in all ages.

The principles enunciated by the Son of God are unvarying and unchanging. But those who come to Christ now out of a sense of dependency must find “strength to help in time of need,” and the need may be such as our ancestors did not experience at all. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, but the times in which we live today are not the same as those of yesteryear.

The church in the United States *is not* composed of people in India or Africa, and we should be concerned that we do not think of Christianity as a white man’s religion *taken* to other people. When the gospel is proclaimed in Japan we are not sharing with the Japanese that which is *ours* but simply calling attention to that which is also *theirs*. And they do not need to conform to all of our occidental traditions and forms to be the people of God.

When we find indigenous groups who have discovered Christ we need not make them over into Texas-style or Tennessee-style “Churches of Christ” in order for God to accept them. They need not always be acceptable unto us to be acceptable unto Him. We are about as anxious to foist our interpretations upon others as we are to foster God’s revelation among them. That is why all of our factions send their own brand of missionaries. We must not only preach divine love but peddle our American divisions. Few of us would be willing to immerse believers into Christ and simply commend them unto God and the word of His grace in their own language. The sincere hearts of honest natives might not discover our factional slant.

Missionaries from among our brethren who use instrumental music can testify that they have planted congregations in numerous places where the instrument was not used and there was no indication it ever would be used in the corporate worship, but men whose partisan zeal exceeded their love for souls came into such areas and began propagandizing

against instrumental music on the radio and by tracts circulated promiscuously. They simply had to be sure that the converts understood the grave “sin” of sitting at the Lord’s table with those who had immersed them into Christ Jesus but who were supported by congregations in the states where a piano was played when the brethren met for public praise of the one God. Such factional tactics in a partisan attempt to plant a “South African Vocal Music Church of Christ” where only vocal music was used anyway, make about as much sense as an “Outer Mongolian Southern Baptist Church.”

Our factional tendencies have become so apparent they are nauseating and our sickness has caused brethren in all of the parties to abandon their self-prescribed home remedies and again consult the Great Physician. There is a great deal of hope for the future. Orthodoxy has worked its own rebuke. We need not castigate ourselves with the thought that our own orthodoxy is any worse than that of others about us. It is of the same nature although manifesting itself in different forms. We need reformation but it must be rational while being revolutionary. Since no faction among us is the church of God, we need not switch from one faction to another as we learn new truths. Let us stay where we are for that is where we are needed. Let us leaven from within and not leave and attack from without. We are on the threshold of a twentieth century restoration movement that will be every bit as vital and important as the one launched in the nineteenth century by Barton Warren Stone and the Campbells. Just as their efforts did not alter the church of Christ but affected those of it who were in the sects, so this one will not affect the church of Christ but it will affect those in the “Churches of Christ”— all twenty-five of them!

Orthodoxy creates new criteria of “faithfulness” with the passage of years so that one received as “loyal” while believing a certain thing in one generation would be rejected for believing the same thing in another and later generation. It steals into the throne room of the mind and carries captive conscience which

was given the divine prerogative of judging the propriety or impropriety of our personal thoughts and acts, under the supreme Sovereign of the universe. As a rude usurper it enthrones itself and appropriates the combined functions of judge, jury and hangman. It has been the bane of all reformatory movements.

With Simple Joy

Mission Messenger (June 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

The Mississippi River, as it flows past Saint Louis, is a muddy silt-laden body of water. Its “coffee color” which turns to amber or bronze in the dying rays of the setting sun is far removed from the pure clear depths near its origin in the distant north. On its meandering route through hundreds of miles it accumulates sediment and filth. Into its increasing volume other streams flow and deposit their own burden of muck and mud. At its source one may kneel and drink freely without qualm but farther along its route cities must spend millions to purify its waters from the corruption of other cities and the general terrain.

The stream of Christianity is like this. All religion, like a river, becomes tinged with the culture through which it wends its way. Religion changes men but men also change religion. Each tends to give to the other and draw from the other. If one wants to see Christianity at its best he cannot view it in the contemporary scene affected by almost twenty centuries of subjection to the debates and strife of human reasoning. He must return to the source and when he does he will find that like a mighty river it had a humble beginning. It was the very humility of this start which made it possible to be so pure and unaffected.

Who does not feel a sense of awe when he reads the

statement, "All the believers shared everything in common. . . . Day after day they met by common consent in the Temple; they broke bread together in their homes, sharing meals with simple joy." How the heart palpitates when we read such expressions as "shared everything," "common consent," "broke bread together," etc.

Sometimes we are asked if this was "communism" among the primitive saints. That depends, I suppose, upon the meaning attached to "communism," but some things are immediately evident. The spirit which prompted the saints was not a political ideology. They were not united to create a new economic structure in society.

The sharing with their fellows was simply an outpouring expression of that bounty which God shared with them. Jesus had come to partake of the flesh and make the supreme sacrifice for those who were powerless and helpless. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes, he became poor." Hearts that were hungry for salvation were filled to overflowing, personalities that were starved for recognition were satisfied. All of the pent-up longings and yearnings of the ages were fulfilled at the cross. Those who became one in him were in the very source of all goodness, righteousness and justification. Since they were all indebted to Him for spiritual life the sharing of their material blessings was but a natural outgrowth of such rich grace.

One of our problems today lies in the fact that it is easy to become a "Christian." It is also popular to do so. It carries a certain amount of social prestige. It is a mark of status. The temptation is to belong and live in mediocrity, sharing only in the superficial, scraping the surface and skimming the shallows. We need restoration but we mistake our real need when we think only in terms of ritual and "acts of worship." Our pattern is a person and we need to recapture the true sense of *being* in Him. Until we do we will be trying to get men to give money to a cause to which they have not given their hearts and to donate

time to a work divorced from their thought.

Only simple people can share in “simple joy.” And we need to be a simple people, fashioned not according to the world, but refashioning the world. Our Master lived a simple life among simple folk. Our world has a confused sense of values. We are spending our money for “that which is not bread” and our substance for that which perishes. It is time that we think seriously about such terms as “believers” and “disciples.” These are the words used most often to designate the saints in their early days— and their purest and best ones. Perhaps there is something about the relationships expressed in these words that we have lost in the intervening centuries.

It is altogether possible that we are more concerned about “raising our standard of living” than we are about raising “the standard of life.” It is not the “high cost of living” which is our difficulty but “the cost of high living.” The church was never so united as when its members met with each other and ate together with simple joy! If we recapture the simplicity we may help restore the unity!

Full Speed Ahead!

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

“Captain of the Queens” is the title of the autobiography of Harry Grattidge who spent more than fifty years at sea. As a boy he became an apprentice on the four masted bark *Osborne*, and this laid the foundation for his later service as an officer aboard almost every Cunard liner. He was promoted to Captain of the *Queen Mary* and ended his sailing career on December 21, 1953, as Commodore of the Cunard Steamship Company, Limited, and Captain of the *Queen Elizabeth*. Of his labors on the former vessel he wrote “Regardless of circumstances I was always happy to be aboard the Queen Mary, working eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. There was never a moment when you could say, ‘My job is done.’”

It seems to me that what is here said could be just as applicable to those of us who have enlisted on the Ship of Zion and who have assumed the responsibility that goes with such a position. “Service” was the guiding star of the career of Harry Grattidge and it should be our aim in life. The master of a modern passenger ship must be engrossed in the welfare of others. He lives not for self but for sacrifice and sharing. That he can accept this with a degree of joy and happiness and be constantly grateful that he is aboard is the one way to assure satisfaction in his relationship.

There are no holidays for those at sea. They must think in

terms of vocation rather than vacation. Just so, Christianity is not a one day per week proposition. We do not sail the sea of life only on Sundays. One of the most dangerous tendencies of our modern day is that of fragmenting and departmentalizing our lives. Instead of whole personalities we are human “pigeon holes” with this tucked away in one corner and that in another. Religious devotion is relegated to certain times or reserved only for ritualistic performance. We split our own personalities and lose the purpose and continuity of life. We become like ships without a rudder, running in circles on the high seas or at the mercy of every divergent wind that blows.

Even worse is our tendency to think in terms of retirement from the Lord’s service. We are imbued with the spirit of the labor union until we seek to apply its catchwords to our spiritual existence. We are obsessed with the idea of more leisure time and with social security. We look forward to the time when we can hang up our Christian uniform and don civilian clothes again, without recognizing that we fight in a war where there can be no cessation of hostilities to pick up the wounded and bury the dead. We either wear the armor or give up the fight to become defectors and turncoats. The civilian clothing we once wore was a product of Satan’s garment factory.

I like the thought expressed by Captain Grattidge that there was no moment in which you could conclude that your work was done. That is true of our life in Jesus. The need for constant alertness is acute, the time for service is ever present. We are engaged in a great crusade to bring peace to the harried and harassed sheep of God. This is not a task for the few but a responsibility of the many. There is no point at which we can rest on our oars and drift with the current. We need men who will pray unceasingly, practice unstintingly and proclaim unselfishly the hope that is in Christ Jesus. We need men who are alive and alert to the cry of our generation!

The religious world is looking for leadership. The barbed

wire fences of partisanship are no longer valid for our day. The intolerance of hate and animosity, nurtured in the mistaken view that it represented loyalty to Christ, is being tried in the balances and found wanting. The creeds which men have compiled and composed are being recognized for what they are — the synthetic product of truth mingled with opinion and filtered through imperfect and fallible minds. In this emergency those who have a firm grip upon the unity of the Spirit can serve a great need. But they cannot do it while plagued with their own divisions and hampered by their own schisms.

We must arise and arouse. We must shake off the lethargy which has smothered us and overcome the stupor which has caused us to stumble. Never have we faced a greater challenge, never have we had a greater opportunity. The Holy Spirit has flung wide open “great doors and effectual.” We have not finished our task. The restoration of the ancient order and spirit is not completed. There remains much land yet to be conquered and possessed. Let us signal “Full speed ahead!”

Prophet and Priest

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

Because of the nature of religion there are two roles which must be enacted by men within its ranks. Religion expresses itself in ritual and protects its devotional manifestation with certain forms. Its grave danger is ever that true worship will become confused with the forms of its expression and degenerate into empty performance carried out with punctilious precision while the heart of the worshiper is far removed. There must be those who call the minds of men back to their true status and urge constant reformation.

In days of yore these two functions were carried out by priest and prophet. The priest was concerned with the correct observance of the required ritual. He presided over the public phases of worship and was always alert to detect any deviation and to correct procedures which tended to vary from the norm. The prophet had a different message. He was not unconcerned with preservation of form, but he knew that even a corpse retains its form for awhile after the spirit is departed. He was primarily interested in *inspiring* men to serve God in a *vital* way, so his cry was always, "Turn ye, for why will ye die?"

The priest called for a constant examination of the service to see that no alien modification crept in. The prophet called for a constant examination of the heart to see that no alienating concept was retained. One called upon men to conform, the

other called upon them to reform. It was not necessary that their tasks conflict because men must express their worship and such expression must be made by use of formal means. However, men are averse to change, and they frequently find it difficult to distinguish between worship, which is an attitude of the heart, and the forms which are the external means of expression of such worship.

The prophet often found himself under attack by both priest and people. It has become axiomatic that no people can endure their own prophets. It was to the chosen people of God that the question was addressed, “Was there ever a prophet whom your fathers did not persecute?” Nevertheless, without the prophet, or reformer, calling upon us to consider our beginnings and ponder our present ways, we generally adopt such attitudes as will eventually lead us into exile and render our witness a sterile and static thing.

The present writer is neither a prophet nor a student of the schools of the prophets. For that reason it may appear presumptuous indeed for him to humbly call for an examination of the motives and methods of his brethren in the Lord. We must confess, however, to being driven by a strong inner sense of urgency to write as we do in the hope that God may use our meager appeal to stimulate and raise up men possessed of far greater qualification and who can approximate more closely to “the prophetic vision” needed for such days as these. If the brethren can endure what may appear to them as our rashness and immodesty, we should like to write very pointedly about the current status of the disciple brotherhood.

Having been reared in a Danish Lutheran background, we deserted that sect at a rather early age, being immersed upon an acknowledgment that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In the mining region where we first lived there was but one faction of the restoration movement and we were firm in our conviction that it alone was “the kingdom of heaven” which had

been spoken of by all of the prophets. There was little question but what we had restored the primitive church in its purity and constituted “the people of God” to the exclusion of all others in our humble community. Our attitude toward other sincere religionists in the neighborhood was that of native-born citizens toward foreigners who are poaching on their private preserve. They were either ignorant or dishonest in their claim to be Christians and we were called of God to “smite them hip and thigh” and drive them out of the land.

I am not sure when I first became aware that there were other factions which also claimed to be “The Church of Christ” but it was a great comfort to know that none of them constituted the “loyal church.” They were suffering under “strong delusions.” All of them were either hobbyists or sectarians, depending upon whether they opposed things we had, or had things we opposed. We were fully persuaded that those among them who were really honest would some day learn “the truth” and become identified with us, while the remainder would go farther and farther into the depths of stubbornness on the one hand, or of apostasy on the other, and we would judge them in the day when we also judged the angels. There was no question but what we would do the judging and we were constantly practicing up in anticipation of the last great day. We did not want to come to the task wholly inexperienced!

When we convinced someone in another faction that he was treading on dangerous ground and he “lined up with us,” we exultingly reported this as a conversion to the truth. But when someone left our party and aligned himself with another faction we quoted, “He went out from us because he was not of us; for if he had been of us, he would no doubt have continued with us.” He might have been preaching for us for years, but when he forsook the party we marked and avoided him as if he had the plague. We always rationalized as to what prompted such a person to defect, whether love of money, desire for prestige or pride of position. If none of these fit the case, we

concluded that he was temporarily out of his mind. It was just unthinkable that a sane person would not see everything exactly as we did or that he could learn something we had not taught him.

I do recall the first time that I heard of a “Christian Church” putting up a sign “Church of Christ” on their building. I was incensed and indignant that such a group would seek to steal the name of “the Lord’s church.” The “Christian Church” was composed of apostates and they were worse than other sectarians for two reasons. In the first place they had known the truth, that is, had been identified with us, and had deliberately departed in an unmitigated and unquenchable desire to be like the denominations around them. In the second place, they were more like us in some respects than others were, and the counterfeit which is most like the original is always calculated to deceive the most people.

As factions began to increase and multiply due to introduction of other innovations, we regarded their rise as a fulfillment of prophecy. “In the latter days perilous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of their own selves.” “The Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith.” “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Our responsibility was fulfilled when we “marked and avoided” if we were in the majority, or heeded the admonition to “Come out from among them” if they happened to outnumber us. We attributed to “hardness of heart” such questions from sectarians as, “Which Church of Christ should I join?” One did not join the Lord’s church and if he could not tell the difference between the genuine church with sound doctrine and the spurious imitations he would probably be saved on the basis of his imbecility.

Now, in a more mature state of mind, I can see how inconsistent and sectarian was our whole approach to the majestic revelation of the kingdom of heaven. I am sure that we

did not want to be arrogant, supercilious or intolerant. Certainly we always spoke disparagingly of the Pharisees in our lessons, although none of us ever equated their attitude with ours. We always thought of “the others” as being Pharisees. Others were contentious, but we were “contending for the faith;” they were stubborn while we were just steadfast; they were lax while we were loyal.

The party spirit plays strange tricks on one as do most of the other “works of the flesh.” It seeks always to hold you in as much of its grip as possible, knowing that so long as one is factional at all the tendency is to try and find security by building the wall higher. As one walls others out he walls himself in, and it is the one inside who is in prison. One must either break the hold of the party spirit completely or spend the rest of his life struggling for freedom while remaining in bondage. When I was a lad, before we had toxic poisons to spray for insects, we would place sheets of “Tanglefoot” in strategic places to ensnare flies. When a fly lighted on the sticky surface he immediately began to try and lift his feet. So long as one foot remained entangled his eventual death was certain, actually hastened by his efforts and activity.

It was difficult to ever arrive at that place where I could concede that the faction in which I had always been sheltered was not the body of Christ to the exclusion of all others. The mental struggle was intense, and heightened, as it always is, by the fear of being unfaithful to the memory of your dear ones whose struggle for righteousness led to the formation of the party, and to the instruction of godly men with whom you labored to promote and protect its interests. When I reached this stage of thought after long and bitter inner wrestling it was not so much the result of any prophetic foresight or insight, but more the result of projected hindsight. Many of us are like lightning-bugs. We have our headlights on the tail end and cannot see anything until we are already past it. A continued study led to the conviction that no party, splinter or segment of

the restoration movement was the church of God in its fulness, and never has been.

This led to a re-evaluation of the restoration movement itself and finally I was led to the very basis upon which it was launched, and which caused me to see that the restoration movement was not the church. When I became convinced that the kingdom of heaven was greater than any one of our factions, greater than all of them put together, and more extensive than any “movement” in history since the one body was created, I was in a position to love brethren beyond our walls. It was a revelation to find that even while walls are still standing, love makes them transparent, and you can see right through them and behold your brother on the other side. It was even more startling to find that, while imbued with this spirit, you could walk right through walls which others still regarded as firm and opaque and associate freely with those in all of the segmented groups without fear of what might happen to you.

I think it is this attitude of not waiting for the walls to be torn down which troubles a lot of brethren. If I had simply forsaken those with whom I had always been aligned and moved over into another faction they would know exactly what to do about me. All partisans must “pigeonhole” others, and I just do not fit into any of the contemporary holes for I am no longer any group’s pigeon! This “pigeon-holing” is for the birds! It is not that I have renounced our faction but that I have renounced *factionalism*— the whole grimy, tainted, reeking mess, that presents a problem. We can tolerate a man who pays lipservice to being a Christian only but it is not easy to trust one who practices it.

I do not propose to leave the brethren I have always loved, and I do not ask any brother to leave where he is and come to me. I am not interested in forming an anti-party party or an anti-faction faction. I happen to know that all of our artificial walls existed in men’s hearts before they were constructed and

they must be destroyed in our hearts before they will ever be removed otherwise. But nothing need serve as an impediment that is not in your own heart, and I have destroyed these walls in my heart. Having done this, I do not need to go anywhere else. I can stand where I am and see my brothers everywhere! And now, since I no longer see walls, but see only brethren, they are all in one body. It was our own jerry-built barriers which kept us from realizing this all of the time.

If it were not so serious it would be highly amusing to listen to brethren account for what has happened to me, even as we used to analyze and categorize others. Because I did not leave “our” faction and switch to “theirs” as practically everyone else in the past has done, it is difficult for them to see how I can be in the Lord’s church. The editors and philosophers among us always regard love for all of the saints of God as “liberalism” and it must be admitted that such love is much more liberal than a mere factional affection. They account for my willingness to regard all of God’s children as my brothers, not as an indication that the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Spirit, but rather as a sign that I have swung from one extreme to another.

Readers of periodicals are constantly reminded that I was once the champion of a narrow faction and that, in freeing myself, I have thrown all caution to the winds. The theory seems to be that if you grow up in a large orthodox faction you can probably always be trusted to remain somewhat factional, but if you grew up in a more restricted one you are liable to see farther when you get your eyes open. I doubt that it is any easier to get out of a small room than it is to get out of a big one if the house is on fire. I suspect that the gravest danger would be in losing your wits and running from one room to another in the mistaken idea that you had thus escaped danger. The thing that bothers my factional brothers is that when I jumped the fence I did not come down in their yard, but while up in the air and thus closer to heaven, I soared over all of the back fences.

But the party spirit is very subtle and I wonder if any of us will ever be completely purged from it. The “faithful church” fallacy constantly betrays us into trusting in our own righteousness and in appearing good in our own sight by contrast with others. No doubt at the end of the trail when we can stand on the heights and look back we will be amazed to see how winding and crooked is the path we have blazed and which we thought of as being so straight and direct. But we will have to await that time to prove it for none of us would be convinced of it now.

I can recall how we were always challenging *the sects* to debate and I rather think we felt less sting from our own shortcomings by revealing those of our neighbors. Perhaps we were not so much trying to prove to them that they were wrong as we were trying to convince ourselves that we were right. In other areas of the social realm one does not especially endear himself to thinking people nor demonstrate his own adjustment to life by going about with a chip always on his shoulder. Only a bully is expected to dare everyone for a fight and most bullies have been found to suffer from an acute inferiority complex. One who cannot meet people on their own level can always draw attention by picking a fight.

When propositions could not be signed on specific issues we could always drag one out which read, “The church with which I am identified is identical in origin, name, doctrine and practice, with the church of the New Testament.” There are several things wrong with such a proposition besides its manifestation of egotism, conceit and complacency. Of course the biggest factor is that it is just not true. Actually we were not defending the church at all but the party with which we were affiliated. Proof of this is found in the fact that representatives of two different factions of “The Church” would sign the same proposition and each labor arduously to prove that his faction was “it.”

The same spirit prompted such debates as motivated the brethren in one area where constant troubles arose and division resulted several times. A tourist driving down the highway saw a sign: "Church of Christ (Christian)." A mile or so further along the road he saw another building bearing the label: "Church of Christ (Vocal Music)." Still farther on he came upon one designated "Church of Christ (Old Paths)." But the fourth one simply read: "Church of Christ— This is it!"

In some cities as many as a dozen or fifteen different groups all calling themselves "Church of Christ" would affirm that they were identical with the church revealed in the new testament, but the members of one would not even call upon the members of any other to lead in prayer to God. One can imagine what distortions and contortions of the scriptures need to be indulged to "prove" all of them to be right, for no one has ever yet lost a debate. It is revealing indeed to read the reports of the same discussion in rival journals and to see how completely both opponents were swept from the forensic field and to note the solemn supposition of each that the other would never debate again while life lasts and the world stands.

As to our *origin* no one would want to question that the church of God began with the baptismal outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Pentecost. However, "the Church of Christ" as we know it in the United States is the result of an early nineteenth century restoration movement launched by honest preachers of various sectarian groups, primarily the Presbyterian. They had no intention of starting "a church" and would probably not recognize what we now have as what they once envisioned. Those brethren who put "Established 33 A.D." on the cornerstone of their buildings, not only reveal a great deal of wishful thinking but also a considerable amount of confusion, since they cannot distinguish between the one body for which Jesus died and the restoration movement which ought to still be moving, seeing there are a lot of things which have not yet been restored.

Unprejudiced historians among us are fully aware that the distinctive title “Church of Christ” as used to designate that segment of the movement which does not employ instrumental music in corporate worship, does not date back beyond the 1906 religious census. Before that time it was used interchangeably with other designations. We do no harm by admitting that, as a separate group of people, we came into history as the result of a restoration effort. We do untold harm to ourselves and the cause we represent by perpetuating the myth that there is no difference between the church for which Christ died, and the particular “Church of Christ” in which we have always lived.

Only the ignorant and ill-informed think that we can trace an unbroken chain of “loyal disciples” back through the centuries to the apostles. There is no evidence that there was a congregation meeting anywhere behind a signboard reading “Church of Christ” when Thomas Campbell read the “Declaration and Address” in 1809. The purpose of Campbell and his associates was to inaugurate “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” It is a wee bit ridiculous to think that when this movement split the first time that all of God’s children in the sects flocked in from their varied parties to take their place with us and constitute that movement exclusively the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God upon earth.

It has been a chastening experience for some of us to learn that the primitive church had no name except a common noun. I once wrote a tract entitled, “Whose Name Shall the Bride Wear?” and circulated thousands of copies. I also used this as a theme in all of my meetings. You can imagine my chagrin when I suddenly realized that Christ is not the name of God’s Son. That is his office and “Jesus” is his name. Few of the brethren would be willing for the church to be designated as “Mrs. Jesus,” yet the expression “churches of Christ” simply indicates possession like the term “house of Simon” or “kingdom of God.”

The primitive saints were described in corporate fashion

by various terms indicating relationship. As to origin, they were the church of God; as to constituency, churches of the saints; and as to possession, churches of Christ. In relation to unity they were the body of Christ; as to government the kingdom of God; as to relationship the family of God; as to heirship the church of the firstborn ones whose names are inscribed in heaven. None of these were specific titles and to take any one of them and make it the exclusive designation is merely to sectarianize it. The term “church of Christ” does not once appear in the sacred scriptures. It is true that “churches of Christ” is found in Romans 16:16 as is “churches of the Gentiles” in 1 Corinthians 16:4, but one is no more the name of the church than the other.

Actually we have lifted the expression “church of Christ” and made of it a sectarian designation just as others have done with “church of God” and “church of the firstborn.” Such a sectarian usage is unscriptural and utterly unknown to the primitive community of the saints. We have done with this expression the very same thing we castigate others for doing with other expressions. The wresting of the scriptures essential to establishing the title “Church of Christ” as the name of the church ought to prove to every thinking person how shallow is such a contention.

To argue that we are identical in *doctrine* with the primitive saints also appears somewhat ridiculous in the light of our currently divided state and our sinful schisms. Among those who oppose instrumental music I personally know of divisions over centralized control, colleges, orphan homes, Herald of Truth, breaking the bread, individual cups, fermented wine, Bible classes, uninspired literature, the pastor system, present status of elders, marriage of divorced persons, foot washing, a head covering for women, the time when we should meet and interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, to mention a few of the things. We are divided over everything from how to take the gospel to the heathen to how to pass the emblems to the saints.

Which group or segment is identical in doctrine with the scriptures? Each group will affirm that it alone is and will deny that all of the others are. In the absence of an infallible pope, who is going to identify the party with the exact identity? Obviously, thinking men will admit that all of us are imperfect and all have a lot to learn. When we become identical with the new covenant scriptures all study should cease at once. There will be no further scriptural research required for we will have arrived at an absolute knowledge of spiritual truth. All we will need to do is to parrot the discoveries already made and threaten those who propose to study beyond our creedal limitations.

Take for instance, the views related to the coming of our Lord. Which segment among us is identical in doctrine with the new covenant scriptures— the brethren who hold to the pre-millennial interpretation, or those who do not? That depends upon whom you ask, and the same is true of all of our other divisive elements. It would be far better to join with others in a mutual search for the truth, holding ourselves ready to accept all truth as it becomes clear to us, than to set ourselves up as the authorized dispensers of truth and the defenders of orthodoxy. We need to institute dialogue instead of encouraging debate.

So divergent are our practices that we make a spectacle of ourselves when we try to prove to the rest of the religious world that our procedures are all exactly like those of the primitive church. Who knows if Paul would speak over the “Herald of Truth” program and urge congregations to subscribe to it if he were living today? Who knows that he would sign a letter urging the congregations to raise a “Million for Manhattan” with which to build one big meetinghouse in New York City? Who knows if he would recommend the men we send to farflung mission fields to transport our divisions and schisms to pagan lands? Who knows if Paul would authorize a seminary for training “Ministers” or set up a charitable organization to care for the needy?

We are not now arguing the right or wrong of these actions and procedures. We are simply saying that our “practice” in many regards cannot be found in the account of the primitive church. Our authority for it lies not in the word of God but in our deductions from the word of God. It is not the revelation given by heaven but our interpretation of that revelation upon which we rely. We err in judgment when we devise means and then seek to find a parallel for them in the early church. It is not certain that some aspects about which we are most dogmatic have as clear a mandate in the written word as they do in our own minds. We are all victims of tradition and find it easier to think as we have been conditioned to think!

I am not at all averse to denying that the party with which I am identified is not identical in every particular with the church mentioned in the covenant scriptures. I doubt that it is identical in any particular. Because we are restoration-minded we are seeking to recapture and imitate the spirit which animated the holy apostles but we have not yet arrived. I do not think we will arrive during my lifetime. Once that would have worried and frightened me, but it no longer does. I do not rest my hope of eternal life on being a member of a perfect congregation or upon living a perfect life. I rest it upon my relationship to a perfect Savior. Praise His name! So while we have not attained to the ideal and will not do so in the flesh, we keep pressing toward it while we keep on trusting in Him for our salvation.

I can lay no claim to being a prophet, but I do venture to predict that we stand upon the verge of our greatest and most effective witness as a people. It will not come because of our attempt to prove that we are identical with the primitive church in origin, name, doctrine and practice. It will come because we are willing to recognize that this is not so, and that we also, like others, are only striving toward the goal. As we lose our party arrogance and come to feel a deep love for the scattered flock of God, we will find that the Holy Spirit can more effectively use us

and we will be able to gather the grain into the granary!

Spiritual Insight

Mission Messenger (July 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

It becomes ever more apparent that there is a conflict between brethren as to the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the written word. The problem does not concern the Spirit as an agent of transmission, for all those of whom we speak are agreed that the scriptures contain the revelation of God's will to man, and that "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The question relates to the present relationship of the Spirit to the revelation appearing within the sacred canon.

On one side are those who feel that, once the scriptures were completed, the Holy Spirit withdrew into the background as an impartial observer whose task has been completed and whose only interest now is to see what others will do with what he has supplied. These regard the Spirit as in the same category with a truck driver who deposits a load of bricks on a building site and then parks under a shade tree across the street to see what kind of an edifice the builders will erect.

At the other extreme (and I do not like the word) are those who imply, or so it seems, that the Spirit will reveal new truths unto them if they earnestly pray to the Father and seek His will. These think of the Spirit as a kind of mystical Western Union messenger who conveys to their inner consciousness the decision of heaven regarding their immediate and pressing points and problems. In between these two schools of thought are thousands

who know little of the revealed word and less about the Spirit, and who are milling about with no particular conviction on the subject. We do not think the matter should be ignored.

The danger in the two terminal concepts to which we have referred is the same— both of them oversimplify the situation. One makes the ascertainment of the divine will a mere human exercise in linguistics; the other makes it a divine involvement in every human enigma. Both seem to be derogatory of God, the first by elevation of man, the second by depreciation of divinity. I am not unaware that the gap may appear wider than it is and much of it may rest in the field of semantics. If we were able to communicate properly we might find that we had been shouting at each other across a chasm that we could jump over if it were not for the fact that we view each other through partisan telescopes held in reverse and which make others appear farther off than they really are.

With the kind indulgence of our readers I should like to share a few of my views with the understanding that I do not write dogmatically and will revere and respect as my brothers in Christ Jesus those who cannot concur in what I say.

1. God has revealed to us through the Spirit those things which could not be ascertained by sight, hearing, or rational processes (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). These things were “revealed by inspiration to his dedicated apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:5). One of these declared, “We speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by human wisdom but by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13).

2. The Holy Spirit is as interested that we grasp the significance of the words of inspiration as that we have them. He has not “thrown the book at us” and retired from the scene, but He dwells in us for good. “Do you not know that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Spirit is God’s gift to you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). “To prove that you are sons, God has sent

into our hearts the Spirit of his Son” (Gal. 4:6).

3. It is essential that, as we mature, we develop “the gift of true discrimination.” This enables us to distinguish between things that differ. It provides us with a proper sense of values. It is a gift of love that has become enriched by knowledge and insight. “And this is my prayer, that your love may grow ever richer in knowledge and insight of every kind, and may thus bring you the gift of true discrimination” (Phil. 1:9, 10). “We ask God that you may receive from him all wisdom and spiritual understanding for full insight into his will” (Col. 1:9). There is a difference between the written word and insight into the will of God about which the apostle wrote in that word.

4. We hold that the will of God has been revealed for this age. The last apostle closed his testimony with the words, “Come, Lord Jesus,” and nothing will be added to it until Jesus comes. The next time the voice of the Lord is heard will be when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” But man has not yet learned all there is to know about the revelation of God. There are unplumbed depths and unscaled heights. It is as appropriate for us to pray for “insight of every kind” as it was for Paul to write the prayer. And the Holy Spirit who “strengthens the inner man” and is our “Helper” will aid us in arriving at such insight into the will of God.

5. It is our conviction that the Spirit of God will not provide us with additional revelation. Revelation is exposure. The mind of God has been exposed and His will disclosed. Revelation is the uncovering for man by God that which man could not discover for himself. While the revelation is *for all* men, it was not *to* all men. It was to his “dedicated apostles and prophets.” Our insight into His will must come through His revelation to them.

6. It is also our conviction that insight comes from application of the mental faculties to truth and not from the

application of truth to the mental faculties. Insight is penetration and it is not achieved by dumping ideas on the mind independent of the will, but by digging into ideas as an act of the will. The Holy Spirit does not impose the divine will on the mind but infuses the mind into the divine will. If the first were the case, every person would have the same degree of knowledge regardless of aptitude or ability. It is obvious that no two persons have the same capabilities, but when men are completely and unreservedly surrendered to the Spirit they may be led to insights to the extent of their personal abilities to grasp and utilize divine truth. We can be led only as far as we are able to go.

7. God respects the sovereignty of the human will and does not violate its prerogative by arbitrary imposition of the divine will upon it. Our insight into His will is conditioned upon our own willingness. “Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own” (John 7:17). The Holy Spirit will exercise power over our hearts but will not overpower them. He will not commit His power to those who are not committed unto Him.

8. The depth of penetration or insight to be achieved at a given time is always conditioned upon a willingness to use to the fullest that which has already been attained. “Let us then keep to this way of thinking, those of us who are mature. If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you. Only let our conduct be consistent with the level we have already reached” (Phil. 3:15, 16). When one becomes reluctant to gain greater insight because of fear of the party or because of external pressures his growth halts at that point. We cannot live today on the level of yesterday. One cannot mine precious ore by allowing his drill to spin ceaselessly at the same depth. He can never attain the summit of a mountain by pacing back and forth in his tracks at the same level.

9. We do not gain insight at the same rate of speed. Each

individual is different. The Holy Spirit furnishes the power and drive but our mental perceptions are the machines and He must use us as we are. All of us have been conditioned by environment and previous training. Some are dull, others sharp; some are blunt, others keen; some are ignorant and others educated. We cannot measure others by ourselves nor compare ourselves among ourselves. Our hope of eternal life is not conditioned on keeping up with each other but upon keeping hold of Christ. We are not saved by knowledge but by faith. Still it remains that we are sharpened by contact with the Rock and the mental friction we endure makes the task easier day by day. We grow in grace as well as in knowledge of the truth.

10. It is apparent that many have been impoverished because they have never learned the meaning of the divine statement, "If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course" (Gal. 5:25). Those who approach the new covenant scriptures as a legalistic code will soon become lawyers; those who approach them as love letters from a kind Father will soon become lovers. The Holy Spirit cannot aid those who are spiritual lawyers, for the record says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." The fruits of the Spirit are borne in a realm which operates above law. "There is no law dealing with such things as these" (Gal. 5:23). Those who operate on the royal principle of love will be aided to insights which will transform their whole lives.

We realize that there are those who scoff at the idea of any aid rendered by the Holy Spirit. Smug and complacent as they wave their copy of the book in the air, they are content to believe that they have no further need of the Spirit. There are no depths beyond their human reasoning, no heights they have not scanned, no breadth beyond their reach. We would not deprecate the study of the sacred oracles for here the Father reveals His will. But many a man carries a Bible in his pocket who does not have Jesus in his heart. It would be a tragedy for a young man to become so enamored of the letters from his

sweetheart that he transferred his love for her to what she wrote. Eternal life does not rest in knowing the scriptures but in knowing Jesus. He said, “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life . . . but you will not come to me that you might have life.”

In this age of crisis we need to penetrate deeper and deeper into the life of Jesus. Under the impetus of the indwelling Spirit we must allow our hearts and lives to be involved in the spiritual until previously undiscovered truths burst upon our hearts with enlightenment that will permit exploration into treasures of wisdom and glory we have never before realized. Passages we have read and explained will glow with new meaning. Answers for our own lives and those of others will be found in unexpected places. Passages which once appeared in a shadow will be revealed in brightness. We do not need a new revelation. We do need a revolution in our hearts and lives created by new insights into the will of God.

The Rim of the Wheel

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

It is in our nature, I think, to seek for simple illustrations with which to explain those things which we cannot really define. Perhaps the word “explain” is a poor choice. We generally use it in the sense of making something clear to others. Actually, we are striving to understand, and that which we understand we do not so much explain, as we share our understanding with others. Our feet are still fast in the clay even as our minds roam among the clouds, and while we are heaven bound, we are still “earthbound.” In this state of things the metaphors, similes, and parables, which we use to try and capture the signification of heavenly attributes are always inadequate. The nearer to heaven we approach, the more inadequate do they seem, and when at last we reach the goal, we will find that the things we here regarded as intangible are the only tangibles, and that which we could not define is the only reality.

For this reason, you will pardon my apparent childishness, when I tell you that in my meditation upon the relationship of persons and things in the divine plan and purpose, my mind always reverts to the figure of a wheel. I suspect this is because I realize that a wheel derives its strength from both its center and its circumference. The spokes are drawn together at a common focal point, the hub, and they are closer together there than at any other point. But they are held together by the rim, and this circumscribes the length to which they may extend. They are

widely divergent at the rim, but this very divergency when properly confined is what gives strength to the whole.

The hub represents faith in Christ Jesus, that point at which we surrender self and become one in him. We are fastened together not by mutual attraction for each other but by our universal need for a Savior. At this juncture, “there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:22, 23). It is only because the spokes are incorporated in the hub that they sustain any relationship whatsoever to one another. They may previously have come from a dozen trees in a dozen scattered forests. They are one only because they have been brought together by a power greater than their own. Without the exercise of this power upon them they would have continued in their natural state.

The rim is love, the only factor which makes it possible for us to work together as a unit without flying apart. A rim serves three purposes. It holds the spokes in, holds them together and holds them apart. Love fulfills the same functions. It holds us to Christ at the point of greatest stress and weakest power. It binds us all together and makes possible a working unity in which each contributes a part. It also holds us apart, preserving our individuality and diversity so that the full benefit can accrue to the body. “To crown all there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole” (Col. 3:14). Let me apologize again for the poverty of such an illustration to portray the richness of faith and love. Forgive me, if like Ezekiel, “As I looked . . . I saw a wheel” (1:15).

The Inaugural Address

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[Abstract]

The term “kingdom of heaven” does not generally refer to a place or a people under the rule of a sovereign. This is demonstrated in the message of both John and Jesus who urged people to reform because the kingdom was then approaching. We may draw near to a place but it is not good form to speak of a place or territory coming to us. The kingdom of heaven is the rule of heaven. In the new covenant regime it is that rule exercised by the Son of God. Since it is the rule of God’s anointed, the kingdom in which it is our good fortune to be citizens is a Christocracy.

The inception of the kingdom was not the birth of the Prince of peace but his coronation. This event took place in heaven where the throne room is located. The first official act was to dispatch the Holy Spirit to waiting envoys in Jerusalem who had been previously called, qualified and commissioned. The arrival of the Spirit was a divine signal for them to begin their mission of summoning aliens to enroll as citizens under the banner of the newly-crowned King.

The annunciation of the coronation was made by a former fisherman, Simon Peter, who had been given the keys to the kingdom when he had previously properly identified the person and office of the King. In his inaugural address, with the guidance of the Spirit, Peter defined the nature of the kingdom

by specifying those materials essential to its constitution. In doing this he gave notice that a new dispensation had begun, of which all previous ages and dispensations were but tributaries. This address, delivered as it was at the commencement of the Reign, must constitute the touchstone by which the Kingdom is to be measured in all ages.

It is noteworthy that the rule of heaven over its citizens is not exercised upon the basis of a speculative philosophy or ideology. It is not their understanding of, nor subscription to a compilation of opinions or a written code or creed, that makes them worthy. The materials of Christianity are simply seven facts. These were announced on the natal day of the Christocracy and the acceptance of these, and these alone, by assurance derived from the testimony and immersion of the believers, constituted as citizens those who submitted and committed their lives and fortunes to the King.

The seven pillars upon which the Christian economy rests are the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification and coronation of Jesus *as the Lord of all*. These constitute *the faith*— the one faith— in which we must stand because upon them the Kingdom rests. In his opening speech Peter announced these astounding and earth-shaking facts. His demand growing out of them was that his hearers should know assuredly that God had *Christed* (anointed) as Lord the same Jesus whom they had crucified.

Those who accepted these facts, accepted *the faith*. They were immediately admitted as citizens when they submitted to the initiation ceremony of baptism. The seal of their acceptance was the indwelling Spirit who would act as a guarantee of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, i.e., the resurrection of the body from the grave.

Those who embraced the faith might become careless or indifferent about their citizenship responsibilities, they might

require correction and chastisement, but such instruction and reproof would no more be a part of the one faith, than bread provided for our fleshly children or punishment administered to them are a part of the birth process. Until we can distinguish between that which begets us and that which sustains us we will confuse aliens and confound the saints.

Preaching the Word in Writing

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[Abstract]

Address delivered at North American Christian Convention, July 10, 1964

Someone has offered the sage observation that by the time a writer discovers he has no talent for literature, he is too successful to give it up. It was Will Rogers, the homely humorist from Claremore, Oklahoma, who said, “In Hollywood the woods are full of people who learned to write but evidently can’t read. If they could read their stuff, they’d quit writing.”

In spite of the intellectual garbish which, in our day, is rescued from the trash can, and garnished with the recommendation of the huckster, to be served up as literature on the dining tables of the sophisticated, I still rejoice in the power of the pen. Not every typewriter is employed as a tripewriter!

It was a memorable day in the history of man when he began to use visible symbols of his ideas to augment those that were merely oral and audible. Eventually it would come to mean three things— that the ideas could be projected, perpetuated and perfected. The spoken word depended for its outreach upon two things, the number of hearers within the auditory range created by the volume of the speaker and the memory of those who heard. Both had their limitations. But the written message could be carried to the remotest part of the universe and affect

the lives of those who never saw its creator.

Moreover, the ideas would survive on earth the intellect which conceived them and gave them birth. Long after the fingers which wrote them down had crumbled to dust in some forgotten sepulcher, the thoughts which fired a now slumbering brain would again burst into flame in the intellect of another reader, and resume their impact in halls of parliament, or perhaps in the homes of the lowly.

Each succeeding generation could build its aspiring structure upon the foundation of previously discovered truth. The deductions of a century ago, or of ten centuries past, could be scrutinized, analyzed and criticized. Fallacies could be detected, flaws could be eliminated, and facts could be re-asserted. The accumulative wisdom of the ages would not only fill libraries with books but would also fill lives with hope.

Those of us who are assembled in this great auditorium owe a special debt to the art of writing. We are the heirs in succession of a noble movement motivated by a salient ideal. Sired by a yearning for rest amidst the turmoil of religious confusion, born into a world grown weary with bickering over creeds, and rocked in the cradle of American liberty by the hand of freedom of speech, this movement gave promise of answering at least in the new world the plea of the Saviour for unity in the whole world. And it received its impetus from writing—unsurpassed and unparalleled in its day.

Alexander Campbell launched the *Christian Baptist* on August 3, 1823. The first paragraph read, "Christianity is the perfection of that divine philanthropy which was gradually developing itself for four thousand years. It is the bright effulgence of every divine attribute, mingling and harmonizing, as the different colors of the rainbow, in the bright shining after rain, into one complete system of perfections—the perfection of *glory* to God in the highest heaven, the perfection of *peace* on

earth, and the perfection of *good will* among men.”

Dipping his trenchant quill in the inky fluid, he attacked the abuses of the religious Establishment of his era. He punctured the proud pretensions of a presumptuous priestcraft, indicted the insinuations of insolent institutionalism, and deflated the swollen corpse of creedal confessionalism which had long since deceased but which was still enshrined and thought to be alive because of the whispering and murmuring of those theological divines who sought refuge behind it.

In a short time this periodical had the greatest circulation of any religious journal on the American frontier. It was read by successive presidents of the United States. It was a part of the literary diet of many of the most eminent congressmen. But, even more important, it was read by shopkeepers and artisans in every village and hamlet and it became the topic of conversation in log cabins erected in remote clearings in the dense forests which covered the land. Soon other papers began to be published by advocates of the restoration principle and the citadel of sectarianism trembled upon its insecure and unscriptural foundation.

What has happened to this once virile movement to curb its creativity and to make it founder in the literary doldrums? That a transformation has taken place there can be no denial. Not only are we not producing the kind of writing which penetrates the hard crust of contemporary society, but many of those who pay lipservice to the prophets of restoration and garnish their tombs, refuse to be drawn from the crass, cruel and childish portrayals on their television screens to read anything which will make them think. One of the most common apologies we hear is, “Our brethren are just not readers.” One of our own psychologists has said, “We have produced very little worth reading for a good many decades and there is no indication we will do so for a long time to come.” It is not difficult for the world to keep down those who do not keep up!

I would like to face up frankly to our current dearth of challenging composition and to the manuscripts of mediocrity which attempt with such little success to fill the vacuum. What forces or factors have combined to stifle suggestions at their source and to inhibit imagination in its inception? Why is the pitcher of thought broken at the fountain, or the wheel of meditation broken at the cistern, so that we have nothing with which to draw from the depths and no container in which to retain even that which is skimmed from the surface?

My reply is simply that, as a people, we have lost our original reason for existence. We have ceased to be a movement in history and have become a monument to it. We praise pioneers whom we would not allow to preach from our pulpits if they were present. We parrot party slogans which we make little pretense of practicing. We give lip-homage to restoration when we really practice retroaction. Our literary status is a reflection of our spiritual stature. We write *little* because we think *small*. Only free men can write freely and we are no longer free. We are victims of a tragedy which struck a hundred years ago, and the fears and frights which it engendered linger to haunt and harass us to this very day!

When our fathers were faced with the problem of what they were pleased to call innovations they were forced to make a decision as to how to meet the problem. I need not remind you that they chose division. I shall not here assess the right or wrong of those things which created the problem, nor shall I attempt to fasten the blame for the result upon one side or the other. It is possible, and even probable, that the attitudes of all contributed to the ultimate disaster.

I am concerned, however, with the far-reaching effect of the division, and its relation to my subject of the hour. As I view it in retrospect, and in the light of our contemporary corporate life, it seems to me there are three tragic results which have accrued from our initial division.

1. We rendered our plea for the unity of all believers impotent and ineffective, and laid the foundation by which it would be regarded as a sham and pretence by the remainder of the religious world. If there is not a sufficient dynamic magnetism in a principle to *hold together* those who exist to promote unity, upon what ground can it be assumed that it contains the power to *draw together* those of other dissident groups? And to which of our parties will they have to be drawn to be united with Him who declared, "I will draw all men unto me."

2. We were betrayed into adoption of the fallacious philosophy that purity of doctrine can only be preserved by separation from brethren, and that differences among the children of the divine family can only be solved by breaking up the family relationship. We have proven far more faithful to that philosophy than we have to the prayer of our Saviour and our attempted implementation of it leaves us today one of the most estranged and divided movements in the whole American religious spectrum.

3. We became inoculated with the deadly virus of the party spirit and often devoted our energies and resources more to the promotion of parochial rivalry than to proclamation of the universal gospel. Our heroes became the forensic champions and debaters. We gloried in gladiators who could justify our position. Our unwritten creeds became the criteria by which faithfulness to God was measured. We set up our Procrustean beds of conformity on every highway and stretched or shrunk men to our own dimensions. And even at this very hour many are more interested in creating and projecting a party image than they are in conforming to the divine image.

The word "ought" is made up of the last five letters of "thought," and the word "ink" is composed of the last three letters of "think," and what one *ought* to reproduce in *ink* he must first produce in thought. No message will ever come *from*

the typewriter which did not first come to the heart. The best writing fluid is not a bottle filled with ink but a heart bathed with tears. It was Longfellow who said in his *Voices of the Night*, "Look, then, into thy heart and write." The thing that makes so much modern writing hopeless is that it is heartless!

As the bed of a stream can become choked by the accumulating sediment and debris carried by its own waters so the current of religious thought can be dammed up by the traditions and partisan interpretations borne along from one generation to another. In both cases stagnation is the result and the green scum of neglect and decay gives little evidence of the torpid flow beneath, within the turgid and murky depths. When the lumberjacks of the north send their freight of timber down a swollen, frothing river, it is essential that a clear channel be maintained. If a jam results and the logs pile up like jackstraws so they cannot be unscrambled with pike poles, it is frequently necessary to resort to dynamite to free them for further unhampered journey to their destination. Perhaps all of us within the restoration movement framework need to be jolted from our complacency so we can get on with the task of helping "to unite the Christians in all of the sects."

When the restoration plea was first enunciated the religious world was hardly ready for it. But a great change has been wrought in a century and a half. Now, faced with fears within and foes without, in a rapidly shrinking universe, the consciousness of all who love Jesus has been impregnated with the conviction that we dare no longer advance partisanship at the expense of peace. The same sectarianism which was defended as harmless, and even helpful, diversity in the nineteenth century is indicted as the scandal of our own generation. The maturing vision of mankind has made possible for us a rendezvous with destiny.

If our plea was launched upon the sea of human thought in the days of sailing ships by writing, it can be placed in orbit in

the space age by the same medium. But that writing must be relevant. It must command and hold the attention of those who live now. We do not live in the day when Alexander Campbell stood at the type case in the little printing shop on the banks of Buffalo Creek, laboriously setting type by hand. We have at our command great machines which can do in minutes what men once required hours, and even days, to accomplish. But machines cannot think, and what we think will determine what we write, what others read, and what they in turn, are inspired to think.

Centuries ago, the Roman poet Horace, said, “Knowledge is the foundation and source of good writing.” Let me suggest what I believe to be some essential component elements in that foundation of knowledge.

1. We must know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And we must know how to present them to a society distracted by the discord of alien voices and the clamor of strange tongues in the very temple dedicated to God. Ecclesiasticism and clericalism, like all closed-door professions, have developed their own exclusivistic vocabulary. Cleverly concealed behind innocent-appearing verbiage the hand of the assassin is perpetually poised with pen of poison to stab faith dead at our feet while appearing as a benefactor to an age of intellectualism.

For example, three times I have read “Honest to God,” by John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich. Each time I have been more convinced it is incorrectly titled. He should have called it “Honest to John.” I have no right to question that it is a fair statement of the opinion of the bishop, but in my opinion there is a real question of whether the statement is fair to God. In his attempt to get rid of God “up there” he has also created a vacuum “down here” and “in here,” leaving a burning world and a yearning heart groping for a guide and grasping for a guardian.

Twice I have read, "The Depth of Existence," by Paul Tillich, in which he suggests you may need to forget "everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself." I have studied his thesis that God is simply "the ground of our being" instead of the Being who brought us from the ground. And I cannot escape the dread feeling that we are being made unwilling spectators as the Son of God is crucified afresh and subjected to open shame. Our method of crucifixion may be more refined than that of crude barbarians but the linguistic thorns are just as sharp as the acanthus thorns, and the literary nails are just as cruel as the literal nails of yesterday. Remember that it is the same Christ who is under attack. And as I see the ragged rents and jagged wounds I want to banish my doubts as did Thomas of old and fall at his feet crying, "My Lord, and my God."

2. We must know the regal visitor from heaven who dwells with us as a constant source of strength to the inner man. Not a holy ghost, but the holy guest, the Spirit who abides with us during the absence of our King is moving us with relentless certainty toward the fruition of the eternal purpose and the fulfillment of the divine plan. When this royal tenant inhabits our frail tenement of clay we have at our command the rich resources of creative energy which formed the universe.

It might be startling for us to realize how many periods of dearth in our achievement come from quenching the Spirit. Perhaps we shall never know what a toll has been exacted of the movement of which we are heirs because our evasion of extremism and fear of fanaticism drove us to deny the presence of the Spirit or to confuse Him with His message. Legalism supplanted love as the basis of our relationship with the Father. Spirituality gave way to sterility and vitality to the invalidism of division and dissension.

It is the Holy Spirit who seals us unto the day of redemption. It is the Holy Spirit who is our guarantee of the

inheritance at the redemption of the purchased possession. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to call God our Father. It is the Holy Spirit who helps our infirmities. It is the Holy Spirit who crucifies the deeds of the flesh. It is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us with might inwardly. Can we ignore His influence or minimize His motivation and still produce those fruits in life or literature which will endure against the ravages of time? Can we expect help from any other source to be as powerful as that which can come from the Helper whom Jesus sent to abide with us in His stead?

The kingdom of heaven does not move by machinery and is not propelled by paraphernalia. Its ministers are not expected to be engineers nor its servants mechanics. We are so involved in the intricacies of our inventions, so wrapped up in ways and means, and so consecrated to our contrivances and appliances, that we exhaust our energy keeping all of the gears lubricated. Yet most of our strongest areas owe their existence to a few humble Spirit-filled men who went forth with meager means but with unfailing fidelity to the Cause and conquered because of their trust in God rather than in gimmicks. It is possible that we have been betrayed into deserting the world of the Spirit for the spirit of the world.

3. We must know the revelation of God for no one can preach the word of God in writing who does not know what is written in the word of God. For one who would disclose the will of God the supreme school for study is the sacred scriptures. He may be versed in all the subtle nuances of theology, be conversant with texts on comparative religions, and have a healthy familiarity with hermeneutics, but if he is ignorant of the Word, he will serve only to confuse and confound, rather than to conduct men in paths of righteousness.

It is essential that men read the Bible. We are being exposed to a generation of teachers who have read a library of books about the Bible but seldom read the Book of books. One

can no more feed his soul by reading about the scriptures than he can feed his body by reading cookbooks. One does not become an expert in the use of weapons merely by reading magazine articles about them but by practice in their use. You cannot fight the devil by swatting him with magazine articles. Only the sword of the Spirit is effective to this end.

It is important that you receive the right word but it is just as important that you receive it in the right way. There is a statement made by Paul to the Thessalonians which needs to be repeated again and again in our modern society. “We thank God continually, because when we handed on God’s message, you received it, not as the word of men, but as what it truly is, the very word of God at work in you who hold the faith.”

There are two grave errors that men can commit. One is to accept the word of men as the word of God. This is the mistake of the followers of Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen G. White. The other is to accept the word of God as the word of men. This is the sin of miscalled “liberals” who regard the Bible as a mere product of the times.

The first of these open a gate to false roads, the others close the gate to the right road. The first enthrone human wisdom, the second dethrone divine wisdom. We do not object to unbelievers examining the Bible. We do object to them posing as believers when they write about it. We would not curtail the right of free speech for any unbeliever. We do affirm that all such are dishonest when they parade in the pulpits as gospel proclaimers. It is a poor surgeon whose only remedy for an ailing body is to cut the heart out of it. One should not be received as a good citizen who brands the ruling monarch as a deceiver and usurper. There is room for those who do not believe in the divinity of Christ to be tolerated in the world, but there is no place for them to be received or retained in a society that is founded upon faith in the confession that he is the Christ, the Son of God. Potatoes may be all right in the dirt but I shall

object strenuously if anyone insists upon putting dirt in my potatoes.

We need men with the pen of a ready scribe to present the message of salvation to a neo-pagan world. There is need for historians who can record the unfolding drama of world events with due regard for the fact that our God is a history-making God. This means that there is no such thing as an unrelated event. The same power which spoke the universe into existence sustains and perpetuates it with providential guidance. The attempt to rule God out of the world He has made is a conspiracy of literary blackmail and blasphemy which should be revealed in its true light.

We need writers of prose with the dramatic touch, men and women who can make use of all of the facets of human emotionalism, and employ the fascination of suspense and mystery without degrading their characters or maligning religion. The best-sellers have wallowed in filth and slime and muck long enough. The nauseating portrayals of perversion and deviation need to be countered with the ennobling view of sex as an expression of love and not a gratification of lust. There is a crying need for those who can tell a story without crawling and groveling in the gutter, and who can do it without using language borrowed or stolen from dope dives or jive joints.

We need playwrights who can construct scenes of normal behavior which will touch the emotions. The strings of the heart need to vibrate once again with honest humor and sincere sorrow. We need to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. There is drama in the simple virtues of faith, hope and love. We need an antidote for the malignancies which eat at the heart of our civilization today. The soul must be turned back toward its Creator.

We need poets who can pluck a melody out of the air and set our inner beings to pulsating and throbbing with the pure

rhythm that is unforgettable and which helps us by day and haunts our dreams by night. We live in a sordid world. Our spirits are constantly exposed to the friction with an alien clime. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. We need to feel that we are heaven bound even while we are “earthbound.”

We need commentators who can make the word come alive for our day. We need expositors and expounders who do not supplant the Spirit but supply an understanding of His language. When men can delve into the background, dig into forgotten treasure-troves, dip into the depths of history, and share with us those insights which make our own outlook brighter, they serve a great purpose in our generation. God’s word is perfect; there is nothing more to be said. Our knowledge of revelation is imperfect; there is much more to be learned by all of us. We should welcome any assistance that we can get.

We need men of courage and ability to storm and recapture the surrendered bastions of literature. We have abandoned as lost provinces such fields as science, higher education, and literature. We need to regain them all with well-planned strategy. Almost every major journal in our country was once slanted in the direction of faith and morality. Those which have abandoned their previous commitment to pander to the perverted tastes of a secularistic society are testimonies of the weakness of adulterated Christianity. It is good to write to our safe and sound “brotherhood periodicals” and exchange thoughts with each other, but these do not reach the masses and we keep pouring in prescriptions to the well, while the sick get sicker. Let us take advantage of forums, letter columns and every other means available to us, to bear witness of our faith that right makes might, and not the reverse.

In books and brochures, in tracts and treatises, in papers and pamphlets, in articles and apologies, let us send forth the Message. It has been said that the printing press is the modern gift of tongues. Through this medium we can cover the world of

printed language with the word of life. We can sow the seed over the face of the whole earth and place in the hands of men that which will give them a new lease upon life today and a new hope for life tomorrow.

Let us employ the finest techniques available through scientific research to impress upon the minds of men the provisions of a gracious God for their salvation. Let us bring into useful subjection to our Lord every legitimate skill of those who love him, every discovery of our age which is also the age of the Spirit. We do not exhibit our faith by allowing Satan to capture the media of communication by our default, nor by concluding that the servants of God must ride in carriages while the emissaries of Satan travel by Jet-powered planes. We are not called to fight television, but sin! Our task is not to ignore the press, nor to destroy radio and television from the earth, but to make them tributaries of the King, so that “the whole earth shall be full of the glory of God.”

In these days of crises we need that prophetic vision which looks beyond the present with its strife and turmoil and sees the future with its eternal peace and tranquility. And, if it becomes our lot to share some lonely Patmos, free from the clamor of those who would stifle our message of hope to frustrated humanity, may we refuse to be silenced, but in the words of the banished seer of yesteryear, say, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write!”

The Ultimate Conquest

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

Michael could see the geardee, for though he was invisible to mortal eyes, the celestial beings are not limited by time or space. As the prince assigned to direct the affairs of HIS people during their earth span, Michael was interested in every move of the geardee. He knew his diabolical cunning, intensified by a supernatural knowledge of those motivations which make intelligent beings act, whether in heaven or upon earth. And Michael knew, as the geardee knew, that pride was the most universal of all the forces which drive those beings who can choose.

The war was not over between Michael and the geardee. It had only been transferred from one site to another. The feeling was unabated. The wrath was not assuaged. And it never would be until the geardee was confined to his ultimate fate in the Lake. This was what the mortals called it because they had no real concept of it and thus no words to designate it or adequately describe it. There were a lot of things the mortals could not grasp. And not the least of these was the truth that they were the pawns, and therefore, the victims of the war which raged back and forth across Esoteris, that portion of the universe so well known to angels and demons, but hidden from the eyes of the dust-born.

It is true that the mortals were not always the stake in the

conflict. The war began before HE made the first image. The initial battle was fought in Ouranos and at that time it was the Right Hand which was the goal of conquest. The strife was not wholly unexpected. For a long time (to speak after the manner of mortals) a subtle transformation was observable in one of the seraphs. Others of the Messengers were visibly affected. Then the Challenge was issued. The Prince demanded the privilege of occupying the Right Hand. He was informed that it was reserved for Logos. The Prince was enraged and declared a state of war.

With this pronouncement HE fixed his eyes upon him. In the full light of HIS eyes only Truth can prevail. All sham, all pretence, all unreality melts away because Truth is Reality—naked and open! Suddenly the Prince was seen to be what he had become— the geardee— hideous and horrifying. Michael and his Messengers fought against the geardee and his Messengers. All of the combatants fully understood that there could never be a truce. They knew, too, what the outcome must be. There was no Separation such as thanatos, which only the mortals can experience. The Separation for Messengers is banishment from Ouranos in full knowledge that this is irrevocable and aeonian. The geardee and his Messengers were finally driven to the very edge of Celestia and with one final thrust were thrown over the Precipice.

When the Pneuma brought order out of the Chaos, the geardee resolved to capture this domain for himself. When HE made the first image, and then made a counterpart for him from part of his own person, the geardee heard with interest that the image was given dominion over all the Order. He could gain control and wrest the power from HIM merely by seducing the two images. And he knew the proper appeal to achieve his end. Possessed of the power of morpheo, by which he could transform himself into any shape, he appeared upright, brilliant and scintillating, going first to the secondary image. The task was easier than he had anticipated. And the images were cast out of Paradisia as he had been thrown out of Celestia.

Thereupon, the geardee took possession of Atmos, the sphere surrounding the Earth. And he proclaimed his sovereignty as prince. From this region he proposed to govern the images and thus to defeat HIS purpose. But he reckoned without the principle of Agape, a force of which he knew nothing. When he became aware that HE was manifesting Agape toward the images, even in their degenerate condition, and that HE had promised them that it would culminate in Logos sharing their estate, to rescue them from the power of the geardee, he set about immediately to thwart the coming of Logos.

His chief weapon was thanatos. By this the pneuma (the conscious) could be separated from the soma (the substance) and the image be rendered incapable of performing any function, especially that which resulted in reproduction. To the delight of the geardee HE narrowed the field by limiting the coming of Logos to one family strain. This meant that the geardee could concentrate his efforts on disintegration of this one line while satisfied that the remainder of the images would be under his dominant control. He carried on the campaign to eliminate the succession smoothly and efficiently. Once by clever manipulation of thanatos he had reduced the possibility to one tiny infant, and another time to one man upon whom HE pronounced thanatos despite the fact there would be no descendants. But each time he was defeated by Agape. In the first case an aunt stole the infant away and he was preserved by some priests. In the second instance the subject humbled himself so abjectly that HE granted a fifteen year respite from thanatos. And during this period of reprieve a son was born.

When Gabriel passed through his realm, disdainful of his authority, the geardee knew that the battle to keep Logos from sharing with the images was a lost cause. He hated Gabriel because he had spurned him when he tried to enlist him in the Great Revolt. He hated him all the more for his deliberate invasion of the Order as though it still belonged to HIM and the Ouranian Messengers could come and go at will. Upon learning

that Logos was to enter among the images as an infant, the geardee moved one of his obedient subjects, a half-Idumean usurper, to decree thanatos for every infant in the region. All were Separated except the Right One.

The geardee bitterly resented the name Jesus as applied to Logos. He knew what it meant. And he fully understood its implications. It was this knowledge which finally drove him to risk the Confrontation. The circumstances were all favorable. Forty days of fasting had taken their toll of Jesus. The geardee had whetted the keen dagger of temptation until it was well-nigh irresistible. The least penetration would enable its being thrust in to the hilt. He began with his potent "If"— half-statement, half-query, which cast doubt and called insistently for demonstration to prove or disprove. Three times he moved in for the kill and three times was driven back by the weapon drawn from the scabbard of Moses— that Moses whose body had occasioned such a violent dispute between Michael and himself. He had lost the argument with Michael. And he lost the present temptation. Moses had foiled him again.

There was but one thing left to do. The ultimate weapon must be called into use. The mortals called thanatos the King of terrors. They were frightened by the Separation more than by anything else. The effectiveness of Jesus would be destroyed by the Destroyer. The plot was laid well. There must appear to be a national rejection for nothing would insult HIM more than to realize that centuries of preparation were a total loss and worthless. The religious leaders must be the ones to cry out against Jesus. One of his own circle would betray him. He would be subjected to insult, ignominy, and finally exhibited as a spectacle of shame in the most cruel form by which the Separation could be affected. He who had stretched out his hands to create trees would now have his hands stretched out on one.

Everything proceeded according to the Plan. The

sepulcher closed upon the soma. And then it happened! Two Messengers flashed through the realm of Atmos. The Order was in violent upheaval. The sepulcher was opened. Jesus emerged from the gloom. For the first time thanatos had met its master. The geardee was deprived of his most fearsome weapon. Jesus returned to Ouranos and took the Right Hand, the coveted position which had caused the original overthrow of the geardee. Logos had begun his reign of conquest.

And the geardee knew that he must work swiftly and furiously to salvage what he could and to satisfy the bitter hatred which gnawed at him continuously like a living flame. He had long been aware that HE had breathed HIS nature into the mortals who pledged their allegiance. He also knew that by HIS breath the first image made of dust became a living being. Taking a cue from this the geardee resolved to breathe his own nature, the poison breath of acrimony, into Atmos. When absorbed by mortals this produced alienation and estrangement among those who should have been filled with fondness for each other. The brain became bewitched. The mental faculties were deranged. The sense of balance was lost. The mortals became convinced they were doing HIS will when in reality they were working against the Purpose and in behalf of their own selfish ends.

Hidden from mortal eyes behind the Veil, the geardee took advantage of every opportunity. By breathing first upon one, then upon another in the Ekklesia, he kindled and enflamed the spirit of Party. The disciples of Logos turned the keen sword, which had been provided for defence, against each other. The Ekklesia developed rents which continued to widen until they created Parties with aversion and antipathy toward each other. The language became confused. The mortals lost the true sense of words they employed— such words as fellowship, tolerance and brotherly love.

In their bewilderment each Party came to believe that its

adherents alone constituted the Chosen Ones and that the shibboleths and passwords which they employed were the keys to HIS favor. Some adopted titles drawn from the Oracles, thinking to sanctify the party by claiming exclusive right to interpretation. In the resultant confusion and strife the enmity was encouraged and the hostility heightened by partisan strictures and debates. It appeared that HIS purpose would be thwarted by those who claimed to love HIM most, but whose brains were addled by the noxious fumes of the breath of the geardee.

Then someone discovered that Agape was the effective antidote. Prejudice, partiality and pessimism could not withstand its purifying influence. It drove back the winds of bigotry. It cleared the air of suspicion and skepticism. Under its benign influence hearts yearned for one another. Broken ties were mended. With magnetic influence it drew mortals from selfish motivation to the person of Jesus. They ceased to regard the Party as the Ekklesia. Walls were broken down. Barriers were removed. Lives were filled with joy and with koinonia of the Pneuma. Happiness replaced discord and discontent.

Against Agape the geardee had no efficient counter-measure. He knew that every mortal who allowed this principle to reign in his heart was lost to him. But plotting and planning, while hidden in the Shadow, he resolved to pit his power and his Messengers against all who loved HIM until the lake opened to receive them. As Michael watched him he felt secure in the knowledge that ultimate victory— the triumph of Agape— would be final and complete.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: The discerning reader will have already determined that the *geardee* is a designation we have coined from the initial letters of "the great red dragon"— Rev. 12:3).

Pentecost

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[Abstract]

When God drove the heathen out of Canaan he established His “chosen ones” in it as an agrarian society. Jerusalem was designated the capital and here the religious worship centered. To promote national unity and solidarity, as well as to preserve intact a proper reverence for Jehovah, it was decreed that the males must go up to Jerusalem thrice annually to appear before the Lord. They were not to go with empty hands. So the three festal occasions were made to coincide with harvest seasons in the land of “corn (grain) and wine.” It was providentially arranged that they would also celebrate great events in national history.

The first feast occurred at the outset of the barley harvest. It was called “the Passover.” It memorialized both the deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the land of promise. The people fled from Egypt on the night of the Passover and crossed Jordan on the same day that the passover lamb was selected, forty years later. The lamb was killed on the fourteenth of Nisan, the feast of unleavened bread began on the fifteenth day, and on the day following, the sixteenth, the first-fruits of the barley harvest were waved before the Lord in the form of a sheaf gathered from the field of ripening grain. This was the first day of the week.

The day of Pentecost occurred fifty days after the waving

of the first sheaf. The Hebrews called it “The Feast of Weeks” because it occurred seven weeks after the Passover. It was determined by counting seven sabbaths from the sixteenth of Nisan, and designating the day following the seventh sabbath, as the holy day. On this day in the month of Sivan, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were waved before the Lord in the form of two baked loaves containing leaven. This feast celebrated the giving of the law at Sinai, which occurred fifty days after the exodus from Egypt. It also memorialized the birth of the nation which began with the granting of the legal constitution.

The theocracy began on Pentecost at Mount Sinai. The Christocracy began on the same day at Mount Sion, a spiritual mount not subject to human touch. A theocracy is a rule of God. A Christocracy is a rule of God’s anointed. At the time of the slaying of the Jewish passover lamb, Christ, our passover, was slain to free us from the bondage of sin. Forty days afterward he returned to heaven to be *Christed*, that is anointed. There could be no *Christian* ekklesia and no *Christian* worship until the *Christing* of Jesus, in whose name every word and deed must be offered to God.

On Pentecost, announcement of his inauguration was made in Jerusalem by the Holy Spirit. This announcement was accompanied by visible and audible signs— cloven tongues like as of fire, and the speaking in other languages by the envoys of the King. One of the envoys explained the phenomena thus, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and *hear*.” He concluded his address with the assurance that Jesus had been coronated and anointed, i.e., made both Lord and Christ. Pentecost was the beginning of the Messianic Reign. It was the birthday of the church. And it was on the first day of the week.

From time to time, men who are disturbed by periods of

apparent sterility in the history of the church, speak of recapturing the “Pentecostal experience.” These seek for a reproduction in their generation of the phenomena which graced the advent of the Spirit in conjunction with the Good News. But there will be no additional Pentecostal demonstration. This marked the gathering of the firstfruits and the first fruits come at the beginning of the harvest and are not scattered periodically through it.

Institutions, like the men who compose them, have but one birthday, although each succeeding year marks another anniversary. An anniversary is not a birthday, despite the faulty vernacular which so designates it. It is a celebration in memory of the date of birth, and memory is always related to past happenings and events. Our Lord is not coronated over and over. He was given his position but once and Pentecost provided the occasion for annunciation of it. “Christ offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat at the right hand of God, where he waits henceforth until his enemies are made his footstool.”

I am reluctant to sit in judgment upon the motivations of any who are sincere and even more reluctant to appear in a role of limiting the Spirit by my interpretation of his own words. I am frank to confess that, while I think I may know how the Spirit will manifest his power in this age, he may do otherwise and exhibit phenomena wholly unexpected to me and beyond my present comprehension. But I am certain of one thing, and that is that in whatever dramatic manner he may choose to appear there will be no repetition of Pentecost. To have it otherwise would make the Holy Spirit inconsistent in his own testimony.

To those who tell me that if I believed the scriptures I would look for a Pentecostal experience, my reply is that it is precisely because I do believe the scriptures that I do not look for such an experience. The church can no more return and experience its birth into the world than I can return to be born

from my mother's womb. In each instance there is something to be remembered and not to be experienced anew or afresh.

The Three Births

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[Abstract]

Those responsible beings who would be heirs of eternal life must enter three domains to share in the salvation which will be revealed at “the end of time” (1 Peter 1:5). These may be designated the natural, spiritual and eternal kingdoms. Each one is entered by birth, and since birth requires a coming forth, the process by which we enter each in turn is called delivery. We are delivered from the body of the mother, from the body of sin, and from the body of earth. We come forth in turn from the womb, the baptistery and the tomb.

Birth does not produce life. One is begotten before he is born. The purpose of delivery is not to secure life but freedom for one who is living. It releases him from confinement and translates him into another state where he can enjoy the blessings and privileges and fulfill the responsibilities for which life was designed. The living organism in the womb must be set free at the proper time to develop its full potential. It cannot remain in the state in which it was conceived and fulfill the purpose of the life with which it has been endowed.

In the spiritual realm baptism does not produce life. Life begins at the point of trusting faith. Baptism is the end of the period of spiritual gestation and not the beginning. There is a difference between life *through Christ* and life *with Christ*. Life through Christ, as the source or means begins when we trust in

him completely. This is the point of conception. Life with Christ is the state into which we enter at baptism. This is the point of birth. The first occurs when we acknowledge Jesus as our only Savior. This is the act of a *sinner* filled with a sense of guilt and remorse. The second occurs when we acknowledge Jesus as Lord of our lives. This is the act of a hopeful and penitent *believer*.

One passage in the new covenant scriptures makes this clear and points up for us the relation of our baptism to recognition of His Lordship. "Every power and authority in the universe is subject to him as Head. In him also you were circumcised, not in a physical sense, but by being divested of the lower nature; this is Christ's way of circumcision. For in baptism you were buried with him, in baptism also *you were raised to life with him* through your faith in the active power of God who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:10-12).

It is while one is in the natural realm that he is begotten by faith. But one cannot remain in the state where he was begotten. He must be born into a new state and this involves delivery from the former. When one is baptized into Christ he puts on Christ. He is freed from the domain, or dominion, of sin. It no longer reigns over him. He is under the dominion of another and better sovereign. "But now, freed from the commands of sin, and bound to the service of God, your gains are such as make for holiness, and the end is eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

In conjunction with the preceding it may be said that eternal life does not begin with resurrection from the dead. This simply frees us from the confining elements of flesh and blood and makes possible the fullest enjoyment and expansion of the redeemed personality. Just as one is begotten in the natural realm for delivery into the spiritual, so one is begotten unto eternal life while in the spiritual. We are in possession of eternal life now. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is found in His Son. He who possesses the Son has life indeed; he who does not possess the Son of God has not that life. This letter is to

assure you that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

Ours is now eternal life in an embryonic state. It must continue thus so long as we are in our physical bodies, subjected to pain and sorrow, and limited by time and space. It is the design of the resurrection to free us from these confining elements because “flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and the perishable cannot possess immortality” (1 Cor. 15:50). Our spirits have been redeemed but our bodies have just been purchased for a possession of the Spirit. Their redemption will come at the resurrection when we are born into a new and eternal state. This will culminate our glorious adoption as sons of the Eternal One. At that time “the whole created universe is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendor of the children of God.” These shackles force the created universe to writhe in pain and agony as if in the throes of travail at childbirth. It is not by mere chance that the apostle refers to travail in this connection, for travail leads to birth. He continues, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).

“What is sown in the earth as a perishable thing is raised imperishable. Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown as an animal body, it is raised as a spiritual body.” “This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of the Scripture will come true, ‘Death is swallowed up; victory is won!’” (1 Cor. 15:53, 54).

The Father of us all has indicated His desire to have us share eternal life with Him. For that reason he sent eternal life in the person of His Son to share with us. The Son of God became the Son of man that the sons of men might become sons

of God. That Son was delivered of an earthly mother that he might be partaker of our flesh and blood. We must be born again that we may be permitted to partake of his flesh and blood, that is, to share his life. “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” This had no reference to partaking of the Lord’s Supper, but to participating in the Lord’s life, that is, eternal life. To share in that life, the Lord said, “Marvel not that I said unto you, ‘You must be born again.’”

The Two Great Foes

Mission Messenger (September 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

An address delivered to a State Convention of Christian Churches

“When the fulness of the times was come God sent forth His Son.”

The universal message of the crucified Christ burst upon the world of mankind at a time foreseen by God to be the most propitious in the whole history of the human race. That race, both by divine and human calculation, was divided into two great ethnic groups— Jew and Gentile. The apostle Paul uses the expression, “Every soul of man . . . the Jew first and also the Gentile” (Romans 2:9, 10). In the same context it is declared that “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

It was neither expected nor ordained that the gospel should accomplish its purpose without opposition. The word of God is a sword and a weapon of conquest. It is mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. When the simple message of the cross is brought to bear upon any alien concept or culture it must first battle for a beachhead and then continue to fight for survival. The arch-fiend against whom we struggle is clever beyond description. His is a policy of containment and compromise. He knows our weaknesses better than we know

them ourselves and he can gain by attrition what he cannot secure in open combat.

The natural time limitations upon such an occasion as this make it imperative that I come directly to the point. It will be my thesis herein, that regardless of the generation in which the Good News is proclaimed, and regardless of the people to whom it is announced, the opposition to it always grows out of the background and experiences of those whom it encounters, and falls into one of two categories. These diverse facets of opposition sometime appear in one guise, and sometime in another; occasionally they may join forces in a confusing manner, but in the final analysis their true nature can be seen and it will again be revealed that what appeared to be a strange and new foe was but one of the two age-old enemies of the cross.

It is our personal conviction that the wisdom of God ordained that these two should be met in face-to-face combat in all of their power and strength during the very lifetime of the apostles of our Lord. This would provide for all succeeding generations an inspired example of the proper use of the divine manual of arms in gaining the victory. It is essential to remember that these opposing forces had to be exemplified in the ultimate of their might, else it might be reasoned that the success in their overthrow by the envoys of the Master was accomplished, not by the superiority of the weapon employed, but by reason of the weakness and inability of the opponents.

That we may be even more direct in laying our foundation, let us be specific. The two great foes to the preaching of the cross in all ages are Legalism and Liberalism. "When the fulness of the times had come" the stage was set for these to reach their zenith. In its encounter with the Jews the Message clashed head on with legalism in its most virulent form and propagated by the most ruthless and relentless proponents. All legalistic programs since that day have been but weak and watered-down versions of the one advanced by the Judaizers of the first century. In the

same fashion, the confrontation with the Gentiles brought the Message into direct opposition to human philosophy in its most exalted, and therefore, most deadly and sinister form. It is no exaggeration to say that liberalism in every century has been but Gnosticism attired in a garb attractive to the time and place.

Since the Message has not changed, and since our real foes are the same, it would seem that the tactics used by the original messengers are the ones we must employ in every age to triumph. Unfortunately, the passing of the centuries has dulled our sensibilities and blunted our discernment until few are able either to correctly identify the enemy or properly direct their weapons against the foe. The result is that we frequently kill off those who are allies, or cripple ourselves by turning our weapons in the wrong direction. It is my purpose in this little talk to help us orient ourselves on the field of combat so we may be able to use all of the strength available to us in our present time of crisis.

The gospel was preached to the Jew first and it had to contend with legalism as its first opposition force. For fifteen hundred years the law of Moses had served as a fence around the vineyard of Judah and Jerusalem. It hemmed God's people in and hedged all others out. It was designed as an instrument of separation and segregation. Its sacred ordinances and festal occasions were reserved only for the circumcised. The inauguration of the Passover at the very threshold of national identity was accompanied by the divine fiat, "No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof," and by the divine instruction, "If any stranger will eat thereof, let him and his males first be circumcised, then let them come near and keep it." Circumcision of the flesh was the external mark of the covenant people.

The original concept of many of the Jewish converts to the gospel was that the called out ones were to constitute merely a synagogue of Messianic Jews. There was no thought of discarding Judaism. Those who accepted Jesus were expected

first to come into covenant relationship with God through circumcision. In their favor was the fact that Jesus had declared that he had come, not to destroy but to fulfill the law. The law had been given by God. It was admittedly holy and just and good. They regarded any offer of justification upon any other basis than deeds of law as being an affront to God and inimical to all they had been taught in the past.

What they could not comprehend was that the law was a child-conductor to bring men to Christ. Having fulfilled its mission it had also fulfilled its destiny. When God broke through the flesh curtain, a new covenant was inaugurated which involved a person rather than a code of precepts. They failed to grasp the significance of the prophetic utterance, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The grace of God is not contrary to the law of God. It simply operates upon a higher plane, the level of the Spirit. Upon this level there is no law but that of love. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14).

The advocates of legalism were fervent and untiring. They had firmly resolved not to surrender an inch of uncontested ground to those who offered eternal life as a gift instead of as a wage. Firm in their contention that man must earn the right to glory by works of righteousness which he performed, they bitterly resisted every attempt to exalt divine grace above human efforts. In this great emergency God raised up a man to spearhead His forces. A legal student in the great Hillel school, brilliant above all the contemporaries of his own age, Saul of Tarsus, who began as a persecutor of the saints, was called to the task. More than any other man, he deserves credit for preserving the primitive church from division into Jewish and Gentile segments. In personal confrontation, in oral discussion, and in written documentation, he met the Pharisaical party throughout the world. The record of his victory remains for all

of us to read and share.

What method of reasoning was employed to offset the inroads of the legalistic spirit with its deadening influence and its cold intemperance? To reply in full would be to analyze in detail such letters as the ones written to the Romans, Galatians, and Philippians. Since we cannot do this, let us summarize in seven propositions, the points essential to our recapture of the will of the Spirit.

(1) All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (2) By deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. (3) We are justified fully by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (4) Access into that grace wherein we stand is gained by faith. (5) In Christ Jesus nothing avails anything except faith which works by love. (6) There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (7) You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Wherever legalism rears its ugly head, the most effective antidote to its toxic poison which paralyzes the body, is the re-affirmation of the basis of justification and the sign or seal of relationship with God. Justification by faith and the possession of the indwelling Spirit, not in a sectarian or creedal interpretation, but in the fulness of their meaning as found in the sacred oracles, these are the principles which strike deep at the very heart of all legalistic tendencies. And these great truths need to be again examined in all of their glorious possibilities by the heirs of the restoration movement, many of whom have been unconsciously betrayed into creating tests of fellowship where God has made none, and who have frequently driven out those whom God has called in. Every person in whom the Spirit of God dwells is a child of God and wherever God has a child I have a brother. And I have brethren who may never even have heard of the restoration movement.

The legalist constantly warns about the danger of the broad road and this is well. But we must not overlook the fact that to narrow and restrict the road of life to confines which God has not made is just as dangerous. Liberalism seeks to remove the bounds which God has placed and thus encourages men to walk where God has not ordained; legalism seeks to create undue restraints and thus discourages men from trying to walk where God has ordained. The first allows no place for the grace of God to function; the second provides no place for the mercy of God to function. All legalism overlooks the divine dictum, "The man who makes no allowances for others will find none made for him. 'It is still true that mercy smiles in the face of judgment'" (James 2:13— J. B. Phillips). We are not to destroy fences which God has constructed, but neither are we to erect fences of our own. The greatest weapon against legalism to be found in the divine arsenal is that of "justification by faith" as the Spirit uses the expression.

In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed after a lengthy and harrowing siege by the Roman army under Titus. Long before, Jesus had prepared his disciples for this fearful event by giving them instructions for evacuation of the city and the establishment of refugee camps in the mountains. Among those who probably abandoned the city when news came of the advancing invasion forces, was the apostle John. This aged saint transferred his residence to Ephesus. I choose to believe he was providentially directed to this site as the chosen vessel of God to meet the next great threat to the Message.

Before the aged John, only survivor of the twelve, was allowed to meet a merciful death, a boon which had long been withheld from him despite cruel persecution, an enemy had arisen within the bosom of the church, which threatened its existence, and was far more subtle than Judaism. The word Gnosticism has been used to designate that system of thought which acted like a cancer in the body of the Lord. It must not be thought by the historical researchist that the use of this single

term implied a unified code of belief. The Gnostics were both divided and divisive, but they all held certain things in common. It is both impossible and foreign to our present purpose to discuss the philosophic deficiencies in the various schools of rationalists. We would like to mention some of the things common to most of them.

The forerunner of Gnosticism was probably Philo, a Jew who lived while Jesus was on the earth. He laid the foundation for the inroad of this synthetic philosophy into the Christian domain by his interpretation of the old covenant scriptures. Acknowledging the beauty of the language and the lofty imagery of the prophets, he substituted salvation by means of knowledge and the contemplative life, for the moral reconciliation with God to be accomplished through the Messiah. With the extension of the Message to the pagan world, those philosophers who had long sought after wisdom, wove a pattern of four strands of thought— Judaism, Hellenism, Orientalism and Christianity. They soon began to contend that pagan poets as well as Jewish prophets were mouthpieces of Deity, and in many cases, were superior to them in their contention for higher idealism.

Running like a recurrent note through their divergent views was the thought that all matter is evil, and that God could not have revealed himself in human flesh. Two things had to be rejected at the very outset— neither the incarnation nor crucifixion of the Son of God could be accepted as actual fact. These had to be explained away to sustain their theory, and the resurrection denied, except as a figment in the minds of the sorrowing disciples whose grief brought images to their minds which, because of poignant longing, came to be proclaimed as reality. The idea of the pre-existence of the Logos, who made an advent in the flesh, was repugnant to these aristocrats of the intellect.

Those who clung to the testimony of the chosen witnesses that Jesus was corporeal, were airily dismissed as being

uninitiated into the real mystery of the faith. Since sin was not a reality there was no room for sacrifice. Illumination, or enlightenment, became the goal, instead of redemption. Man could think himself out of his predicament by sheer use of logic and the employment of his rational powers. The fall of man was simply an obscuration, produced by matter, so salvation is merely a return to the light. Matter was darkness, spirit was light, so to “walk in the light” was to attain unto superior knowledge, to be “in the know.”

Because there was an apparent conflict between the Messiah revealed in the old covenant scriptures and Jesus who came, one of the Gnostic leaders, Marcion, drew up a list of antitheses between the God of the old covenant scriptures, and the God of the new. The God of the old covenant was national and local, a sort of tribal deity, while Jesus was universal in his appeal. The old covenant promised only earthly rewards of accumulating wealth and victory over enemies, while the new covenant speaks of heavenly blessings for those who endure hardships and persecution on earth. The old covenant allowed the fleeing Israelites to carry away the treasures and jewels of Egypt, while Jesus told his disciples not to take an extra staff. The God of the old covenant sent bears to devour the children who mocked Elisha, and called down fire from heaven upon the enemies, whereas the Good News is a message of kindness and forgiveness.

The old covenant God was presented as an instrument of vengeful wrath, the new covenant God as one of great love. The modern theologian, taking a cue from Marcion, and who called the God of the old covenant “a bloody butcher” was neither modern nor a theologian. He was a twentieth century Gnostic and his invective against the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was not, as some of the critics hailed it, “a fresh breath for this age.” It was but the expelling again of the fetid breath of the cynics and schismatics of yesteryear.

When John arrived in Ephesus, he was in the very center of the dissemination of Gnostic propaganda in Asia Minor. This was the home of Cerinthus, a Jew who had studied philosophy at Alexandria, and who had already gained a reputation as an advocate of the idea that Jesus was begotten by Joseph and born of Mary, and did not become the Messiah until the Holy Spirit descended upon him at baptism. So widespread was the acceptance of this and related ideas that many congregations were in an upheaval and turmoil. Religious strife was the order of the day.

It becomes our duty now to examine the means by which the aged apostle sought to save the church from disintegration under the impact of the synthetic wisdom of the pseudo-intellectuals. I hold that the gospel record of John, as well as his first and second epistles, were all written primarily to accomplish this task. There was a condition which had to be met and they were written to meet that condition. This will serve to explain the great difference in nature between the gospel record of John and those written by Matthew, Mark and Luke. This is the reason for the great assertion that "The Logos became flesh and dwelled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth."

But it is in his epistles that John demonstrates the means by which the church in all ages, must rescue itself from the clutches of those who deny the foundation truths upon which we must be built if we are to survive. He identifies the real enemy. It is not those who are honestly mistaken as the result of earnest study of revelation. The enemy is composed of those who are antichrists and whose false philosophy, if adopted universally, would mean the end of all that belongs to faith. When the church confronts antichrists, it is facing its final hour if the wrong decision is made. "My children, this is the last hour! You were told that Antichrist was to come, and now many antichrists have appeared; which proves to us that this is indeed the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

The antichrists were first infiltrators and then schismatics. “They went out from our company, but never really belonged to us; if they had, they would have stayed with us. They went out, so that it might be clear that not all in our company truly belong to it.” They were liars. “Who is the liar? Who but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist for he denies both the Father and the Son: to deny the Son is to be without the Father; to acknowledge the Son is to have the Father also.” They were deceivers. “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not acknowledge Jesus as coming in the flesh. These are the persons described as the Antichrist, the arch-deceiver.”

What is the remedy when the church is confronted with such a problem? There must be a re-affirmation of the testimony of the witnesses upon which faith is predicated and life is enjoyed. But even before this, the credibility of the witnesses must be established. John begins by showing how he knew Jesus was not a phantom. He demonstrates how ridiculous is the surmising of the Docetics. The apostles had visual, audible and manual proof of the reality of Jesus. They heard the Word of life, saw him with their eyes, scrutinized him intently, and handled him with their hands. They were as sure of Jesus as of their own existence. Note that it was eternal life which they saw, heard and handled, because it was manifested. Eternal life is not an extension of time. It is not a prolongation of existence. Eternal life is a person, the Son of God. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life.”

The purpose of this testimony is to produce fellowship. “That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” A correct understanding of fellowship is the most important thing when the very foundations of the faith are threatened. When the liberalistic philosophy of his day threatened to sweep away the saints from their moorings, John addressed to them a letter

urging fellowship, and literally filled with admonitions to practice brotherly love. So long as the people of God walk in the light of love as God is love, they have fellowship one with another. They share in the common life of the Spirit. They are joint heirs with God. The blood of Jesus goes on cleansing them from their sins.

In our days of present crisis nothing is more important than a recapture of that sense of fellowship which is ours because we are in Christ Jesus together. We have been raised up together and made to sit together, but we have allowed ourselves to become alienated because we have confused community with conformity, fellowship with endorsement, and have exalted opinions above the cross of Calvary. We have slugged it out toe-to-toe when we should have been fighting shoulder-to-shoulder. We have specialized in partisan debate when we ought to have engaged in precious dialogue. We have been more concerned about flinging challenges at one another than in flinging down the gauntlet to Satan!

Because we have forgotten that we have a common enemy we have forgotten that we have a common faith. That faith is to be our test of fellowship because it is the medium by which we come into the relationship with the Godhood which produces life. John has written, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name." This is the divine foundation for all Christian unity. When the apostle Paul rebuked the sin of factionalism in Corinth, he declared, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." Our hope of peace lies not in a plan, a program or a precept, but in a person. "He is our peace who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of partition."

The Gospel is the Good News of what God has done for us

in and through Jesus. The Message is one of victory in Jesus. Wherever the Message is announced and men believe in his name and are immersed in it, they become children of God. He who instructed the envoys to preach the gospel in all the world, said quite simply, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I accept that statement without reservation just as he made it. In spite of the conflicting theories of systematic theology, the complexities of creeds and confessions, the confusion created by strife and schism, it is still true that every sincere believer who accepts the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus in faith and by obedience, is born again, and I am akin to him through the Spirit. He is my brother! We are in the fellowship. Both of us may be ignorant about many things and wrong about a lot of them, but we are one because of faith and not because of superior knowledge. If a man is right about Jesus he may be wrong about many other things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus he may be right about everything else and still be lost.

Sometimes I think that in spite of the warning of Jesus we have majored in the science of gnat-straining and the fine art of camel-swallowing. I do not deny that we have had, and still have, serious problems of interpretation. I do not minimize our differences nor suggest that we ignore them. I do not affirm that our doctrinal discussions are unnecessary or unwarranted. I do assert that when we split and sever, when we fragment and fractionalize the body into splinters and segments, and thus weaken our mutual testimony, we are "disobedient unto the heavenly vision" and we do "despite unto the Spirit of grace." Nothing which is not of sufficient importance to sever us from God should ever separate us from each other.

In the darkest days of the American Revolution, when it appeared that the cause of freedom would be lost due to the selfish jealousy among the bickering colonies, the venerable Benjamin Franklin sounded the warning, "We must either hang together or we shall all hang separately." How much longer can

we afford the luxury of factionalism while surrounded by a ruthless enemy which would rob us even of a recognition of God? I freely acknowledge that all truths are equally true but not all truths are equally important at a given time. And no problem which confronts us as humble seekers after truth is as important as the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin and welds us together in the body of Christ.

Before we even approach many of our questions in the fellowship we must first settle the question of fellowship itself. That fellowship is not conditioned upon conformity of opinion, unanimity in every interpretation, or equality in knowledge. We are not brothers because we see everything alike but because we have the same Father. Fellowship is based upon sonship, brotherhood is based upon fatherhood, fraternity results from paternity. Unless we recognize this we will expend our energies and dissipate our strength upon things which, though they may be virile, are not vital, until “the overflowing scourge” sweeps over and destroys us all. It is no time to be critical of a haircut during an Indian raid in which we may all be scalped. It is no time to tack a stray shingle on the garage roof when the house is on fire. It is no time to clean a sparkplug when your automobile is stalled on the tracks and an express train is bearing down upon you.

Factionalism is not the answer to legalism and liberalism. Faith and fellowship constitute the only satisfactory refutation to both. The faith that brings us together in Christ and the fellowship which holds us together in him— these constitute our only real hope of victory. If we allow faith to erode under presumption and fellowship to explode under pressure, we have little left to do but to pick up the pieces and bemoan the wreck of a once glorious movement.

It will help us to realize that legalism and liberalism are more closely akin than most of us realize. They have the same father although they were conceived by different mothers. Both

have been sired by pride, but legalism is the offspring of fear while liberalism is the child of fallacy. Their relationship is revealed by their nature. Both limit the efficacy of the blood of Jesus and both deny that they do. But legalism seeks to lift man up to the level of God by his own bootstraps, while liberalism seeks to pull Jesus down to the level of man by its own bookstraps. Neither one really respects the authority of Jesus. Liberalism denies that he has any authority, and legalism interposes its own as a substitute for it. In both instances man eventually becomes his own God.

We are the heirs of a noble movement, but we have inherited the feuds and divisions by which our fathers thought to preserve truth and perpetuate purity of doctrine. We now know that the methods they adopted will not accomplish the desired end. It is time for us to reverse the process before we divide ourselves out of existence as we have already divided ourselves out of influence in a great many places. We must avoid the extremes of legalism and liberalism, but we must also avoid the extreme of factionalism. It is an unscriptural and an anti-scriptural approach to our differences. Our first task is to restore a true sense of brotherhood as a framework in which to labor at lessening our differences. The restoration of fellowship will not remove our differences but it will make it possible for us to correctly evaluate them and to labor toward more harmonious relationship.

It is not necessary that we be in harmony upon every matter to be in the fellowship; it is necessary that we be in the fellowship if we are ever to achieve harmony. Not a single admonition to agree with one another, or to live in harmony, was ever given to bring brethren into fellowship. All such commands were given to those in the fellowship and because they were in it. We need not sacrifice or compromise a single truth that any of us has ever held to restore a proper sense of brotherhood, and this is the place for us to begin. The way to have unity is to unite and not have a debate. Our foes are mutual foes. We cannot

overcome them by acting as mutual enemies. If we can ever attain to the crucified life so that our partisan pride with its snobbery and arrogance can be replaced by that genuine humility which loves a brother more than it loves the things we cling to, a brighter day will dawn for the restoration movement.

It is my firm conviction that we face such an era. Tomorrow will be better than today. We are beginning to face our problems with a greater sense of maturity. Lines of communication are being repaired. Your graciousness in inviting me to address you, your hospitality while I am among you, coming as I do from a divergent segment of the restoration brotherhood than that in which the majority of you were reared — these are signs of the times which betoken that the fierce fires of partisanship are burning themselves out. I am grateful to you for your generosity and magnanimity of spirit and “I commend you unto God and the word of his grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified.” I am happy to be your brother in Him who died for the sins of us all.

The Moment of Truth

Mission Messenger (October 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

I must begin this presentation by asking you to excuse my language. Some of you will deem it inappropriate to mention bullfighting in connection with a serious spiritual dissertation, but you must bear with me this once for introducing a term related to the sport. I am not an *afficionado*, as an ardent enthusiast for bullfighting is designated. The truth is I have never seen a bullfight, and like the poem about the purple cow (since we are talking about bovines anyhow), “I never hope to see one!” But there is an expression characteristic of the contest between man and beast that I want to borrow.

When the specially bred bull trots into the arena, he encounters the matador who uses a large cape to execute a series of *veronicas*, provocative actions to induce the animal to charge. When a number of preliminary passes have been made, the *picadores* enter on horseback and prod the shoulders of the bull as he charges against their lances. When the president signals for them to retire, the *banderilleros* enter to thrust their gaily colored darts into the neck and shoulders of the infuriated animal. Again the matador returns and bracing himself with sword in hand summons the animal to him.

As the bull makes his final charge the matador waits until he is almost upon him, then leaps to the left, lunging over the right horn and driving his sword deep into the heart and lungs

of the animal, seeking to produce instantaneous death. This climactic moment is called “the moment of truth.” It is the instant of peril when the bull by the slightest upward toss of his head can impale the body of the man and bring about his agonizing death. The “moment of truth” is that time when one man pits his all— his life, his fortune and his sacred honor— on the outcome of a single thrust.

I labor under the conviction that “the moment of truth” has come in the struggle to pry certain segments of the restoration movement out of the bog of partisan thinking to resume the trek toward the original goal of this great project. I know the personal risk involved in such a decision. I am aware of the price that will be exacted. I know what censorship and boycott, false accusation and misrepresentation, can do to one who dares to suggest reformation of the religious movement of which he is a part. Every reformer is eventually dubbed a “heretic” and hounded out. But the heroes whom we laud today are the heretics of yesterday. In the full confidence of vindication by future historians we press toward our objective in the present. We are strangely unafraid of what men may do unto us. With holy truth as our aim and the Holy Spirit as our guide we refuse to be frightened off our course or deterred from our purpose.

I have grown up in that segment of the restoration movement launched by Barton Warren Stone and Alexander Campbell, which rejects the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship. In spite of the denials of the better informed among us, the great majority of these brethren have adopted the title “Church of Christ,” and they use it in a purely sectarian sense. They employ it in exactly the same sense as do those who speak of “The Baptist Church” or “The Methodist Church.” It is of these brethren with whom I am allied that I specifically write in this article, but what I say will be appropriate to other segments and fragments of the restoration movement, for none of these are wholly purged from the spirit of factionalism.

Five Specific Indictments

I am going to file certain indictments against “The Church of Christ” as it exists in this nation. I do this without the slightest bit of animosity toward those who compose it. They are my brothers in the Lord. I love them with an abiding affection— all of them! I make these charges simply to show how serious is the problem we face. I do it as a prelude to a disclosure of what I intend to do to meet the problem head-on in the arena of contemporary existence.

Members of many congregations will be warned not to read what I write. They will be given veiled threats from the platform and will be suspect if they are seen with a copy of the paper upon their person. Already, at home and abroad, there are those who have sought by every devious means to kill the influence of *Mission Messenger*. We are honored to notice that in church bulletins and periodicals our plea for fellowship has been labeled “the most dangerous threat to the church in a hundred years.” I say we are honored because I know that those who thus write, confuse the faction in which they live with the church for which Jesus died. This paper is intended to wage war against factionalism and the party spirit and we are humbled before God that notice must be given to that war by those who sought so long to ignore it and act as if nothing was happening. I intend in this issue to offer to face the opposition openly and unafraid. I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of men in our age. I face the future fearlessly, content to believe that my Father will work with his children who work for the unity of all of their brethren. Here are the indictments.

1. The “Church of Christ” has abandoned the very purpose of the restoration movement which was “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” A great majority of its members do not believe there are any Christians in the sects. They think that all Christians are in the “Church of Christ” and that the sincere *believers* in Christ in other organizations are

“unbelievers.” Many of them are so sectarian in attitude that they insist that those in other segments of the restoration movement be re-baptized to be recognized as “true Christians.” Since exclusivism is the very essence of sectarianism it is obvious that “The Church of Christ” is more sectarian in attitude than those whom its preachers condemn.

2. “The Church of Christ” is wholly out of tune with the spiritually intellectual climate of this generation. In the midst of a world seeking and searching for the solution to schism, it has little to offer except worn-out cliches which have been proven by their purveyors to be impractical and unworkable. The non-instrument Churches of Christ are split into some two dozen separate warring factions of various sizes and intensity, each of which feels that the only approach to unity is for the whole world of mankind to come and abjectly conform to its partisan interpretations. There is absolutely no concept of an association of free men in Christ Jesus drawn together by their mutual love and regard for him and held together by their love for each other, and nothing else. The surrender to Jesus must be accompanied by a greater surrender and commitment to the party program. Men are not simply called into Christ but are also forced to be “like us” if they stay within the framework of the partisan “brotherhood.”

3. The “Church of Christ” is a victim of its own parochial and provincial philosophy and even its most prominent advocates dare not engage as equals in the ecumenical discussions of the day. They cannot accept invitations to share in dialogue with others for fear of being labeled “Liberals” and falling under the stigma of “guilt by association.” They are frightened at the thought of inviting anyone who does not parrot the party position to speak in their own lectureships. All of these are loaded with “sound men” who will project the party image.

This attitude breeds an unhealthful state of fear in which the feeling of inferiority must be compensated by blatant

trumpeting of successes purchased by huge expenditures of money or by favorable comparison of attainments in promotional activities with other recognized sects. As a result, many are beginning to defect from an indefensible philosophy with its closed-door policy and its one-way streets which make talking with ourselves a virtue and talking with others a crime. It is a safe prediction that there will be an exodus of hundreds possessed of more scholarly bent within the next few years. The current status of orthodoxy is intolerable for men who have been taught to reason and think objectively. They will be forced to abandon their position to get out where they can breathe freely and recapture their own integrity.

4. Our brethren profess openly to deplore creeds but are among the most creed-ridden of religious movements in this age. The fact that their creeds are unwritten makes them all the more dangerous. Every test of fellowship is a creed. Whatever one must believe to be recognized and regarded as “loyal” is the creed of the faction that requires it. That we have at least twenty-four creeds is proven by our two dozen parties with their “loyalty tests.” We have forsaken the divinely ordained justification *by faith* in Christ Jesus and postulated a humanly devised system of justification *by an attitude* toward music, societies, cups, classes, colleges, charitable institutions, unfulfilled prophecy and a whole host of other things which are elevated to a place of greater importance than the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. To this very day men are driven out of “The Church of Christ” for no other “sin” than association with brethren who do not pass the party test!

5. Every one of our more than a score of factions claims to “speak where the Bible speaks.” Every one of them denies that any of the others do so. The truth is that we have accumulated and compiled a mass of traditional explanations and interpretations which we have crystallized into a form of “unsystematic theology” and it is according to this, and not the word of God, that we speak! If the ideas distilled from the Bible

and molded by the thinking of John Calvin constitute Presbyterianism; and those distilled and molded by the thinking of John Wesley constitute Methodism; by the same token those we have adopted and adapted constitute Church-of-Christ-ism. And just as all theological forms seek to make Christianity over after their own image and according to their own likeness, so we also do!

A New Reformation

Every religious movement must eventually be brought to face itself in the mirror of reality if it is to be saved from itself. This is the greatest salvation for any movement. The one who holds up the mirror may be assaulted and attacked, not because he held it up, but because of what it reveals. Most movements would prefer not to see their splotches and blemishes in true perspective. Certainly they do not want the mirror held at such an angle that their neighbors can also see the truth about them.

I am firmly convinced that “The Church of Christ” must reform if it is to return to basic Biblical principles and those of the restoration ideal and regain a sense of relevance for this age. I propose to devote my efforts and these columns to promoting such reform while I maintain contact with all segments of the restoration movement, and with men of good will in every other movement, throughout the whole earth. I shall be a Christian and a Christian only, free to go where I feel called of the Spirit to go, but also free to remain where I am without going anywhere else.

Our task will not be easy. Most members of “The Church of Christ” suffer from the illusion that this outgrowth of nineteenth century restoration attempts is the church for which Jesus shed his blood and that no one has been cleansed by that blood, or shares in its protection, except those who are within the membership of a non-instrument party. The problem is

heightened by the childish notion that the work of restoration has been completed and that the “Church of Christ” has arrived while all others have departed. It is not made easier by the fact that the membership equates the mass of traditions and partisan interpretations to which they cling, with the will of God and the word of God. We challenge at the very outset all of these assumptions and the partisan structure which has grown out of them. Please consider the following.

1. Jesus came to break down walls of partition and weld into one body divergent elements which found their peace in him. He is our peace. The purpose of God was for living stones of various colors, conditions, cultures and circumstances, to grow together into a holy temple. Any interpretation of the scriptures which creates and erects barriers between believers and separates and divides them is contrary to the *purpose* of Jesus.

2. Jesus prayed for all those to be one who believe in him through the testimony of the apostles. Any use or application of apostolic doctrine which makes impossible the oneness to be achieved by the apostolic gospel is contrary to the *prayer* of Jesus.

3. Jesus came as the central figure in God’s “plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). Any use of the new covenant scripture to create, cause, condone or continue schisms among the saints is in plain defiance of the *plan* of Jesus.

Our brethren are guilty of substituting orthodoxy for God’s revelation and of making their own views, versions and variances, tests of fellowship. Honest brethren in Christ, whose present knowledge will not allow their consciences to conform to current party norms, are driven forth or treated as stepbrothers and second-rate citizens of the kingdom of heaven. The course we have followed is divisive and not unitive. It fragments instead

of cements. It splinters instead of splinting our breaches and breaks.

I do not charge that our brethren do not love the Bible. I unhesitatingly say they warp and wrest its sacred teaching to justify a partisan course. When any man employs the written word to defeat the plan, purpose and prayer of the Living Word, and to shatter what he came to unite, that person is acting in opposition to God in spite of all his claims of fidelity and protests of loyalty. When men cannot distinguish between their brethren in Christ and the enemies of Christ and seek to drive out and destroy the former it is time for a restudy of our whole profession.

Men are being branded as apostates who dearly love Jesus. They are being labeled as unbelievers even while pledging undying fealty unto him. They are being harassed as heretics for even expressing a dissident view. Any interpretation of scripture which results in such a distorted perspective and such an uncharitable position is contrary to the whole purpose and design of God.

Let me be specific. When men are assailed as preaching “another gospel” simply because they cannot concur in our conviction as to the use of instrumental music in corporate worship, their accusers reveal that they do not even know of what the original gospel consists. And regardless of the division caused over the controversy about instrumental music such a mistaken view of the gospel is a thousand fold more dangerous and divisive. When men are accused of departing from “the faith” simply because they disagree with us about cups, classes or colleges, their accusers reveal that they do not know what constitutes “the faith.” Such ignorance is fraught with much more danger to the cause of our King than any opinion about cups, classes or colleges, could ever be.

It is ridiculous for those who hold such twisted views to

talk about uniting upon matters of faith while being tolerant on matters of opinion and charitable in all things. Matters of faith are simply the things the party emphasizes as necessary to be recognized as a party member. Matters of opinion are those things which they have decided are inconsequential in preserving the party image. Hand one of these partisans a list of a hundred issues which have troubled the heirs of the restoration movement and ask him to catalog them in two columns labeled “Faith” and “Opinion” and he will not dare do it. He cannot risk an *opinion* as to what constitutes matters of *faith* in every instance. How can men plead for unity upon matters of faith when they cannot submit a list of such matters?

The Ground of Conflict

It is obvious that the battle to save the restoration movement from itself must be fought upon the ground of scriptural interpretation. This is as it should be. If the scriptures justify division among God’s children as a solution to the problem of differences let us get on with division until every man constitutes his own private “brotherhood” and each is in fellowship with no one but himself. If division of the family of God is not the divinely authorized solution for differences among brethren let us quit seeking authority for it in the words of the Father who begot us all. Let us cease to bend and belabor the scriptures in our misguided attempts to give validity to our sorry, sordid and shameful state of scandal and schism.

Because we believe that “the moment of truth” for the forces of orthodoxy has arrived, we are completely revising our plans for the coming year. Many of the issues of the paper for 1965 had already been long prepared and would have constituted a revolutionary volume to be entitled “The Living Pattern.” These will now be held in reserve and we shall deal directly with those scriptures which are quoted and applied for the purpose of separating and segregating brethren from each

other. We shall be writing from an expository standpoint. It will be our intent to prove conclusively that every scriptural passage used to sanctify our divisions is abused and misused. The MISSION MESSENGER for 1965 will be one great volume of exegetical material on disputed passages and controversial interpretations. All will be gathered in one valuable volume at the close of 1965 under the title "The Twisted Scriptures."

It will be our intention to write in love and with compassion, but to bring the truth to bear with such force and power that these articles cannot be ignored. We intend for them to become the theme of discussion in lectureships and forums, in seminaries and symposiums. We shall prepare an arsenal of ammunition for peace-makers and place the stigma of trouble-making where it belongs, upon those who wrest the revelation of God to justify partisan prejudice. We shall write carefully and considerately, knowing that what we say will be read after our voice is stilled and our pen is stopped by death, and realizing that we must face every word in the Great Confrontation with him "whom having not seen we love."

We invite those who disagree with what we say to discuss it openly in their own journals and to attack it in their meetings either in our presence or absence. To those who are of a disposition to place the quest for truth above partisan politics we make this proposal. We will appear at our own expense on the platform of the annual lectureship at George Pepperdine College, Abilene Christian College, Lubbock Christian College, Harding College, David Lipscomb College, and Florida College, and submit to open public questioning by members of the faculty, or if permitted, by the entire audience. We pledge that we will conduct ourselves with proper Christian decorum and love those who disagree as much as we do those who agree with our views.

This article constitutes our personal permission for any freedom-loving alumnus or group connected with any of the

colleges mentioned, to petition the administrative heads of their *alma mater* for a fair hearing on our position. We have been the subject of discussion *in absentia* in every one of these schools in classes or on the public platform. We await with interest the outcome of this offer to see if a single one of them will dare to face up to the greatest challenge of the twentieth century— that of offering a real basis for Christian unity which transcends all partisan, sectarian and factional considerations.

Summary of Our Plea

For the benefit of those who may wish to petition for a just and open hearing of our contention for fellowship, and who may be new to MISSION MESSENGER, we offer the following ten-point program as a mere skeleton of our plea.

1. Fellowship in Christ Jesus is a state or condition into which we are called by the gospel. Every person on this earth who properly responds to the gospel by belief in Jesus and immersion in his name is in the fellowship.

2. Fellowship of those in Christ is not contingent upon agreement or conformity. We are not in the fellowship because we are in harmony, but we strive for harmony because we are in the fellowship. It is a sin to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

3. The flock of God is still a scattered flock rather than a gathered flock. There are children of God dispersed among the various sects. To deny that they are his children is to reflect against their paternity and insult the Father.

4. In our present divided state no sect, faction, or party among us, is the “loyal church” to the exclusion of all others. We must establish association and communication across all of these lines in order that our lives be leavened and leaven others. And we must associate as brothers in the same family.

5. Men and women in all of our parties must be granted and guaranteed their freedom in Christ Jesus. This means freedom to read what they wish without censure, freedom to attend any meeting or forum without attack, and freedom to participate in any conference or conclave without fear of partisan pressure or factional exclusion.

6. We must not expect to arrive at recognition of brotherhood by settling all of our problems and differences first, for brotherhood is not based upon seeing everything alike, but upon having the same father and mother. We must begin with brotherhood, which means love for all of our brethren, wherever they are. And we must demonstrate that love openly and unashamedly, recognizing their equal right to communicate with us and with our common Father.

7. To achieve unity we cannot wait until all of us reach maturity and usher in an ideal state. We must begin where we are and work together where we can. Unity is a command of God, not a matter of choice with us. Certainly we can work together up to the point where we disagree, and by ardently laboring together to that extent when and where we can, our area of disagreement may shrink and the time of our distinction be postponed.

8. We must reject partisan debate by professional “disputers of this world” as offering any hope for producing unity in our day. Such debate widens the chasm instead of reducing it. We must substitute dialogue for debate and meet as equals in our failure to keep the peace. In debate one is thinking what to say to the other man, in dialogue he is thinking of what the other man says to him. We must approach our problems looking for a solution and not seeking for vindication. Bridges must always be built from both ends!

9. We must purge our thinking of the basic fallacies adopted by our fathers when confronted with innovations. These

fallacies have fragmented us into fighting factions. They are two in number. The first is that purity of doctrine can only be maintained by separating from brethren; the second is that division is the God-ordained way of dealing with differences in the family. These two vicious horns have been used by religious opportunists and politicians to gore the body into a shameful and bloody mess.

10. We must re-examine and scrutinize carefully and critically every passage of the written word which we have used to divide brethren from one another. Those who trust in Jesus were meant to be one. He died to make that unity possible. We need always to be reluctant to apply the scriptures in such a manner as to defeat the very purpose of their author.

Our Plan and Purpose

It is our intention as announced herein, to devote the whole of MISSION MESSENGER in 1965 to a study of "The Twisted Scriptures." We expect to make this a compendium of investigation which will place in the hands of every lover of truth such factual material as will enable him to withstand the disciples of division and salesmen of schism. This will not be a book for preachers alone but for every saint. We mention it in advance so you can be sure your own subscription is in order and can subscribe for others who need it. We trust that you will urge every elder of every congregation in this land to read all of the issues for 1965. New light upon old passages will surely flood your soul. The meaning of God will be made clear upon many points which have been obscured by the mists of tradition.

There will be some repetition from past issues but we feel this will be justified because it will make it possible for all of the exegetical and explanatory material to be contained in one volume which will be issued at the end of the year. It will be thoroughly indexed. It is our intention to strike at the very roots

of the party spirit— the twisting of the word of God. Let the battle be fought upon the basis of what God said and what he obviously meant. The “moment of truth” has arrived in the encounter with orthodoxy. Let the truth be known!

In the meantime, our last two issues of this year will be the most challenging and interesting of any we have yet produced. They will be devoted wholly to answering questions we have received. Some of these questions deal with how we propose to work a reform without creating another division or sect; how we propose to implement our thinking practically in communities where division exists; how we hope to achieve a working unity as long as some use instrumental music; and what results, if any, are being seen as a result of our crusade. Other questions deal with our view of the nature of the church; with the problem of whether one who is in the one body can be a member of a denomination at the same time; whether baptism is to be made a test of fellowship; how those shall be regarded who have been sprinkled in all sincerity while thinking it constitutes baptism; how I regard the pious unimmersed; whether the validity of baptism depends upon one’s understanding at the time of immersion that it is for the remission of sins.

You need not concur with all I say about these things to be loved and revered as my brother. I can assure you that after reading the November and December issues there will be no question in your mind as to what I think about these matters. I intend to face up to them without evasion or equivocation. It is our honest opinion that if you miss the next two issues your loss will be tremendous, and if you miss the issues for 1965 it will be irreparable. Again we urge you to see that these issues are placed in the hands of every member of “the fellowship of the concerned ones.” Will you do your part to help share these vital messages in a world— and a religious movement— that so sadly needs them?

The Divine Provisions

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

As a functional being man operates in three realms— faith, knowledge and performance. The scope of the last will be determined by the other two. That which one believes and that which he knows will govern what he does. There is a difference between faith and knowledge. Knowledge is based upon personal experience, faith is based upon the experience of other persons. Both are based upon testimony, but knowledge is derived from the testimony of our own senses, while faith is based upon the testimony of other witnesses. If such witnesses meet the criteria of credibility demanded by our rational processes we proceed upon the basis of their testimony as confidently as we act upon the basis of our own experience. I *know* there is such a place as Saint Louis and I *believe* there is such a place as Beirut, but I would buy a plane ticket for either with the same degree of confidence.

God's design for man is to bring him into a fellowship perfected in love. He does not want a part of man but the whole man. In order to accomplish this he has provided all that is essential to a man's salvation and growth in grace. He has given him a perfect object of faith, a perfect source of knowledge and a perfect sphere of labor. This does not mean that man in his limitations of the fleshly nature will ever attain unto perfect faith, perfect knowledge or perfect performance. The provision is perfect, being divine; the apprehension of it is imperfect, being

human. The supply will always be greater than the capacity. The wells of salvation will not be drawn dry by our human buckets. But we can quench our thirst and sustain life by what we daily assimilate.

1. The Person of Christ

The object of our faith is not a proposition, a dogma or doctrine. It is a person. All life, traced back to its source is personal. The ultimate of life is a person. It is not belief of a truth about Jesus, nor belief that a proposition related to Jesus is true, that produces life, but belief *in Him* as God's Son. It is not belief that he will show us the right way, but that he is the Way; not belief of a truth about him but that He is the Truth; not belief that He will give us life, but that He is the Life. When we give ourselves to Him we give ourselves to life. Life is not a thing given to us but a person to whom we give ourselves. "In him was life." When one of the apostles asked, "How can we know the way?" Jesus did not point to a book, an outline, chart or map. He simply said, "I am the way; I am the truth and I am the life; no one comes to the Father except by me."

It is a difficult thing for many to distinguish between the Savior and the scripture, since both are a divine revelation. The danger is that we will trust in the wrong one for salvation and this amounts to substituting knowledge for faith as the basis of our justification. The distinction lies in the fact that scripture is a revelation *from* God but Jesus is a revelation *of* God. There is a difference between a person and his thoughts. The scriptures reveal unto us what God thinks. Jesus reveals unto us God. It is the difference between what and Who! In the scriptures God communicates His thinking, in the person of Jesus He communicates His divine Self. He is Immanuel, that is, God with us!

The purpose of the scripture is not to give life but to point

to Jesus as the Life. It is not through diligent study of the scriptures (although this is very important) that one has life, but by coming to Jesus. Jesus did not condemn study of the scriptures, but he placed the scriptures in proper perspective when he said, “You study the scriptures diligently, supposing that in them you have eternal life; yet, although their testimony points to me, you refuse to come to me for that life” (John 5:39, 40).

2. Perfection of Divine Communication

The scriptures contain a perfect revelation *from* the divine mind. I use the word “from” because I think the word “of” conveys a wrong impression. The perfection lies not in the idea that God has completely uncovered for us every thought in his mind. This would have served no purpose for the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, nor the limited embrace or encompass the unlimited. The perfection lies in the fact that every requirement essential to fulfillment of the divine purpose related to our salvation and spiritual growth has been met in the new covenant scriptures. All that man needs to know in his present state in order to please God he may learn from this revelation.

The new covenant scriptures set fourth *a new way* of serving God. The old way was by law. This was adapted to the state of men before faith came. Law exercises custodial care. It keeps men confined by prescribing limits. But grace holds us in by love for Christ. It keeps us together by drawing us to a common center. One acts as a police force, the other as a magnetic force. “But now having died to that which held us bound, we are discharged from the law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the spirit, in contrast to the old way, the way of a written code” (Romans 7:6). The greatest problem in every generation is with men who want to make the new covenant scriptures a written code. This is a sign of immaturity. There is a psychological basis for it.

Adolescents crave freedom and yet are frightened by it. Fearful of their inability to apply self-discipline, they crave inwardly for arbitrary discipline imposed by parents even as they appear outwardly to resent it. When God's people were minors he ruled them by law. "And so it was with us. During our minority we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe, but when the term was completed, God sent his own Son . . . to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the stature of sons" (Gal. 4:3-6). Many apparently do not know that "the term was completed." They regard the old law as nailed to the cross and a new law as tacked on to Christ.

The new covenant scriptures are not a law of God imposed, but the will of God exposed. Our pattern is not a written code but a living Person. The scriptures tell me what God thinks and thus how Jesus would react if he were in my place. Their purpose is to help me develop that divine nature which will freely and automatically respond in every situation with the divine answer. God is not law but God is love. He has not given us a law but He has given us love for He has given Himself. His purpose is not to make of us great lawyers but great lovers. Law achieves its aim by crushing the spirit. Love fulfills its ideal by breaking the heart. The holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation by pointing us to Him who "became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

3. Purpose of Divine Community

God's called ones constitute a body. Every saved person is a member of this divine organism, a living, vital, functioning part of it. All that one needs to do to please God he can do as a member of this body. He need not create another organization, constitute another body, nor join a club, clique or clan, to further the purpose of God on earth. There is one body because there is one head. It is not the body which gives validity to the head, but the head which gives validity to the body in the service

of God. “He is the head and on him the whole body depends” (Eph. 4:16). There is no spiritual validity in any body of which Jesus is not the sole head.

It is not as one works in conjunction with some of the members of the body in an exclusive organization that he fulfills God’s purpose, but as he works in harmony with all of them in the divine organism. The one body has parts, not parties. One need never join anything after God adds him to the church in order to function acceptably and walk well-pleasing before his God. All that God wants done in converting sinners and sanctifying the saved can be done by the one body. That which cannot be done by it is something God does want done in these areas. That which is not entered by baptism is not the one body and is not created by God to fulfill the divine purpose. “For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink” (2 Cor. 12:13).

The *ekklesia* is the brotherhood of all God’s children, the temple built of all the living stones, the flock containing all of the sheep, the priesthood embracing all of the priests, and the body containing all of the organs. “For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body” (1 Cor. 12:12). Ponder long upon that statement, “Christ is like a single body.”

The Peaceful Harvest

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of an honest life as a peaceful harvest. An honest life is one which does not recoil from nor tremble at the thought of scrutiny or examination from God or man. It is one in which the books are in balance and the accounts are in order. It appears the same color in the full glare of the sunlight as in the shadowy recesses of a room. Nothing is more conducive to peace and tranquillity than such a life. It enables one, like Longfellow's Village Blacksmith, to "look the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man."

That such a life is called a harvest presupposes at least two things— sowing and cultivation. An honest life must begin with the seeds of honesty, that is, with the aim to walk uprightly before God and man. But it is with the cultivation that we are primarily interested at this time. The entire passage reads, "Discipline, no doubt, is never pleasant; at the time it seems painful, but in the end it yields for those who have been trained by it the peaceful harvest of an honest life" (Hebrews 12:11). It is implied that the upright life is not a voluntary growth, it does not grow wild.

The process of cultivation is called discipline, and it is important that we note the expression "trained by it." It is unfortunate that the word "discipline" has come to have the

connotation of punishment. We generally think of it as related to censure for some infraction of the law, or, at best, as a corrective measure applied in case of error. But the word means training. It is closely allied to disciple, a learner, and has to do with instruction given to develop a well-balanced life.

A soldier undergoes discipline as certainly when he is taught to stand erect, to go through the manual of arms, or to salute his superiors, as when he is assigned to kitchen police duty for a minor disobedience or oversight. The record declares that “discipline is never pleasant.” It is easier to slouch than to straighten up the back. “At the time it seems painful.” It would seem more pleasant to lie in bed than to be on a forced march or on the drill field, but soldiers can only be made through discipline. And the value of training is seen when men are under fire from the enemy. Many an army has been saved from defeat by respect for the word of an officer, or by fear of breaking rank. Heroism in a crisis is often but a natural reaction resulting from proper training.

There is a contrast between the expressions “at the time” and “in the end.” All true discipline looks toward the future. It is never the end but always the means to the end. Training, for training’s sake, becomes a hardship and a bore. One cultivates, not because he likes to work in the field but because of the crop which results from his labor. The inconvenience, the denial of self, the sacrifice of present preference for future good, all of these are justifiable only because of the coming reward.

All of this leads us to conclude that the approved life is “the disciplined life.” Jesus declared, “He that will come after me must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Denial of self has to do with the negative phase of discipline, the daily resumption of the cross burden has to do with the positive side. Neither one is pleasant. Both seem painful at the time. But both are essential to the disciplined life. One should practice discipline to master his feelings and inclinations.

Paul said, “I run with a clear goal before me; I am a boxer who does not beat the air, I bruise my own body and make it know its master” (1 Cor. 9:26, 27).

If one is inclined to doze when he reads the scriptures in the evening he should fight sleep and resist the temptation to always lay the book down. A walk in the night air, a dash of cold water on the face— any justifiable measure to keep from giving in to self will be profitable. One who has formed the practice of sleeping late on the Lord’s Day should set the alarm and rise early for study and meditation. Discipline is practical in the regulation of diet, in the overcoming of habits, in resistance to the appeals of desire and appetite. One who always gives in will find it easy to give up. He who does not stand for anything will soon fall for everything. One cannot be a soldier for Christ and keep his civilian status. “Come, then, stiffen your drooping arms and shaking knees and keep your steps from wavering” (Hebrews 12:13).

Queries to the Editor

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Volume 26

[Abstract]

Experience has taught us that a great many people in the disciple brotherhood have questions about our plea for unity among the members of the various and dissident factions which have grown out of the restoration movement. Generally these questions follow a certain pattern and thus betoken a kindred concern. We think that brethren should be encouraged to question and even to doubt until they have seen convincing proof of the rightness of that for which we contend. We need to recapture the right to think without fear of reprisal and the right to differ without threat of derision. Here are a few of the questions we receive and our replies to them. Be certain that these replies are not delivered in a dogmatic spirit. You must feel no compulsion to agree contrary to conscience.

1. Why are you so concerned about the unity of believers in Christ?

Primarily because I consider myself to be incorporate with Christ so that which affects the extension of his kingdom on earth directly affects my life and thinking. In his prayer offered just before “he was delivered to death for our misdeeds,” he besought the Father that all who believe on him through the testimony of his chosen envoys might be one. He conditioned his acceptance by the world of mankind upon the unity of the believers. The world will be *won* to believe in Jesus when those

who believe are *one* in Jesus.

It is unthinkable that those who love the Lord will not be actively engaged in promoting peace among all of God's children. This means the repairing of past breaches, elimination of present tensions, and provision against future schisms. It is the peacemakers who will be called the children of God. The apostle says, "Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your hearts: to this peace you were called as members of a single body" (Col. 3:15). Until we learn the secret of oneness in Christ most of our efforts on the far-flung mission fields of the earth will be wasted. The misguided world will not accept the message of the one Lord from a divided church.

2. Do you think the prayer of Jesus can be answered by restoring the restoration movement?

No, I do not. The restoration movement launched by the great heroes of the faith in the early part of the nineteenth century was simply a means to an end. It was never intended to be an end in itself. Alexander Campbell wrote, "We only profess to work and walk by the rules which will inevitably issue in a pure speech, and in right conceptions of that pure and holy, and celestial thing called Christianity—in faith, in sentiment, and in practice." It is too much to expect of these noble pioneers that they would be able to either discover or translate into practice all that was essential to the accomplishment of their aims. The restoration movement was vital precisely because it was a movement. To return to it at any given point and assert we had "arrived" would be folly. When a movement ceases to move it becomes a monument to past accomplishments and dead hopes.

Alexander Campbell did not believe he had all of the answers. He freely admitted that to enter some areas of consideration "we should have to launch upon a wide and tempestuous ocean, for which our slender bark is not at this time sufficiently equipped. This may yet deserve the construction of a

larger vessel in a more propitious season.” Our task, as I conceive it, is not to restore a movement inaugurated by men but to recapture the ideal of God. We believe that in this we may be aided by restoring to our generation *the spirit* of the restoration movement. Even this must be regarded as a means to an end.

3. Is it correct to say that you are leading a movement to recapture the spirit of restoration?

No, that is not correct. I am not fitted, either by knowledge or native ability, to lead any type of movement among the disciples of our Lord. I have no ambitions in that respect and suffer from no illusions about the matter. I realize my personal shortcomings in education, talent and expression. Being sick of my previous factional attitude and experience, and realizing that the wranglings and bickerings of the party spirit as exhibited among the heirs of the restoration movement constitute a reversal of the purpose of that movement as well as a rejection of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have resolved to oppose all factionalism as a work of the flesh.

I no longer represent or defend any faction, fragment, splinter or segment of the disciple brotherhood as “the faithful church” to the exclusion of others. I recognize that the brotherhood includes all who belong to the Father, wherever they may be. I accept as my brothers all whom he accepts as his children. I accept them upon exactly the same basis as he does. I simply state my views about these things as an individual. I do not seek to bind them upon anyone else. I love those who disagree with me as I do those who concur. So I’m not leading a movement, I’m simply walking with those who believe that the church of God is greater than any faction, segment or sect, and that we should recognize God’s sheep even when they are caught in strange thickets. I’m a sharer and not a leader.

4. Why do you feel so strongly that the spirit of restoration is essential in our present condition?

It seems only just and proper that we should apply to ourselves under the same circumstances the remedy which was recommended for others. In his *Declaration and Address* Thomas Campbell said, “We would desire to be at rest, and were it possible, would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brothers throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God. This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair to find for ourselves or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions; nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere but in Christ and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

The restoration spirit was born of a firm desire to unite God’s children who were scattered among the sects. Alexander Campbell wrote, “A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolation and joys, the holiness and happiness, of Christ’s religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculation and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union— upon having a ‘thus saith the Lord,’ either in express terms or approved precedent, ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.’”

Today the heirs of the restoration movement constitute the most divided religious movement on the current American scene. If the restoration was the answer to the schismatic condition in 1809 it must also be in 1964. Unless we regain the spirit that motivated those who labored for the unity of all Christians we will divide ourselves out of existence as we have already divided ourselves out of influence in many places.

5. How do you account for the disintegration of the restoration movement?

We are exactly where our thinking has brought us. Those of us who live in this generation are victims of a philosophy adopted by our fathers which has now become traditional, sanctified by both time and practice. When confronted with certain innovations they devised a strategy of opposition which consisted of attempting to maintain purity of doctrine by separation from brethren. This was written in documentary form and read in 1889 under the title, "An Address and Declaration." It stated that those who did not renounce certain things would no longer be "regarded as brethren." This rejected paternity as the basis of fraternity and enthroned conformity in its stead. From this time forward one who differed with the party norm either had to be brought into subjection or be driven forth as a "heretic."

Eventually it came to pass that there was only one ultimate solution when differences of opinion arose and that was division. After division occurred there was but one approach to the problem and that was partisan debate. This created a vicious cycle. When brethren inside the movement began to debate with each other, their divisions increased the debates and the debates increased and deepened the divisions. In many localities so much bitterness and animosity was created that those on both sides could not treat others with common courtesy or civility.

6. You have engaged in a good many debates in the past. Why do you no longer regard debating as a proper method of approach to our problems?

It is true that I was once recognized as a sort of "champion" for that segment of the disciple brotherhood in which I was reared. Some of my good brethren insist that my debates accomplished a great deal of value to the cause. I think, however, that such public clashes between brethren have a great deal more potential for harm than otherwise. As a student of various reform movements I note that all of them seem to pass through this phase of rather violent encounter. It seems to be

part of the “growing up” process until men can arrive at a degree of maturity where they can discuss differences in a calmer and more relaxed atmosphere. There are at least five reasons why I believe the type of confrontation generally referred to as “public debate” is inimical to our spiritual growth.

a. Such debates where two party champions are selected and thrown into the forensic arena serve to intensify party feelings instead of destroying them.

b. They tend to be divisive in their very nature as exhibited by the common question, “Which one are you for?” Those who have attended such debates are aware of how the adherents of each party even sit together, holding themselves physically aloof from their brethren who disagree.

c. They tend to make real, objective search for truth difficult, if not impossible. Each party expects its man to emerge a winner and no one ever loses a debate according to reports in partisan journals. This means that the word of God has been made a repository of controversial texts with which skilled men belabor each other to the applause of their partisan followers.

d. All such debates proceed on the fallacy that each faction is “the loyal church” which is a ridiculous assumption in the light of our many sections and cross-sections today. Actually, all debates engaged in by various splinter groups are simply skirmishes between factions and not wars between the church of God and armies of the aliens.

e. They demonstrate their futility to achieve the purpose of God by their fruits. Do not forget that this is the method we have employed for almost a century. Instead of promoting oneness it has made us one of the most divided movements in existence. If you would see the fruit of debates look at the divided state of brethren in the areas where they have been held. I have never known a difference to be settled by partisan debate. Shall we

continue to prescribe a medicine which always makes the condition grow worse?

7. Do many of the brethren share your views about the inefficacy of debates?

More of them are beginning to do so. They are sickened and shocked by some of the spectacles to which they are subjected by partisan controversialists. They have seen reports in the papers filled with ridicule and half-truths and have witnessed communities of the saints blasted apart by men called in to “discuss” propositions. They are growing weary and ashamed of the whole sordid mess.

However, a great many think we cannot be “in fellowship” until we argue out every angle of every wrangle. They contend there can be no fraternity until we have first debated every action of every faction. This warped view results from the mistaken concept that one party is “the loyal church” and must “convert” all others to its every view and opinion before they can be regarded as “the Lord’s people.” This is a very childish idea but it is still held by some prominent men. It stems from a legalistic approach to God’s grace and as long as it is retained men will regard brethren who differ with them honestly as being pagans and unbelievers.

I do not want anyone else to represent me and I do not want to represent anyone else. No one else can answer for my views before the judgment seat of human opinion any more than before the judgment throne of God. I’m just not allied with any party or faction as a front man. No one is responsible for my convictions except myself, and I’m not seeking to get anyone else to “line up.” I shall not allow myself to be thrown into the arena as a party gladiator. I believe that thinking people in all factions are growing disgusted and sickened with the tactics of those who pose as debaters and are actually defenders of partisan orthodoxy!

8. How do you feel about the success of your efforts to promote peace among members of the various factions?

I rather suspect that I am inclined toward optimism but it seems to me that we are standing on the threshold of a brighter day in many areas. Several congregations which were divided have repaired the breach which existed and are now presenting a united witness in their respective communities. In a good many places brethren of various segments are meeting regularly for calm and measured discussion of differences on a local level. We have renounced the attitude that we have “arrived” while others have not. We now know that none of us has done so. This makes it possible for us to sit down as equals in our failure to maintain the peace. We are no longer concerned so much about “who split the log” as we are with how we can get it back together. We have shifted from the accusing “Who?” to the enquiring “How?”

One cannot measure the success of any effort by looking at a given area which is affected by it. He must survey the field as a whole. The factional spirit is much more entrenched in some places than in others. But brethren everywhere are being stimulated and challenged to think. We need not fear so long as men think. We should only fear when they quit thinking. Perhaps there has never been so much discussion of “fellowship” as there is right now. This is good for it is much better to discuss such a vital theme than some of the trivialities which have engaged our attention in the past. Out of the ferment of thought will come a better day for all of us. It is not possible that the progeny of peace be produced without the pangs of labor, but it is worth all that it costs.

I do not work for “success” at all. I simply plant or water and leave the matter of growth and increase to God. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit from seed sown by peacemakers. There is a difference between a *pacemaker* and a peacemaker. I’ve no inclination to set the pace. I’m content simply to sow the peace. If brethren concur with me I am grateful to them; if they do not

they are still my brethren and I love them as such and am grateful to God for brotherhood which includes all that are in him. My whole philosophy is summed up in the remark about David, "After he had served God's purpose in his own generation he fell asleep." I cannot serve God's purpose in preceding generations. Our fathers did that the best they could. I cannot serve God's purpose in succeeding generations. That must be left to our children. I can serve that purpose in this generation and am content to leave it to future generations to profit by my failures and mistakes. I'm sure they will find many things to justly criticize. I think I can best serve by plucking up the thorns of dissension which have been sown and planting flowers in their stead.

9. What is the attitude of those with whom you have personally labored in the past?

We should remember that the reaction toward any revolutionary thinking is always the same in every faction or religious group. A study of history will reveal that no reform has ever been won easily. All of us are resistant to change. Most of us prefer the security of partisan walls and dogmatism to the freedom of the Spirit. We have been conditioned to life within the boundaries of orthodoxy. Those good brethren with whom I have always labored are no better and no worse than those in any other segment. For that reason their attitude toward me is what you'd generally find elsewhere.

All revolutionary thought— social, political, economical, or spiritual— produces both action and reaction. The latter develops as the first becomes evident and generally in proportion to it. Frequently the reactionary is more vocal as he wants it known that he is a "defender of the faith," i.e., of the partisan program of orthodoxy. All factions equate their partisan interpretations with the will of God. Very often those who amend their lives and thought as the result of the impact of new concepts say very little. In not a few cases it would be dangerous

for them to make an open avowal and it would not avail a great deal under local conditions. But no external force can stifle thought.

The reaction of the brethren with whom I have always labored depends upon their attitude to the party with which we are affiliated. Those who regard that party as the one body to the exclusion of all others regard me as a dangerous heretic. They are frightened at the thought that the church may lose its identity. Of course they regard our faction as the church. It never occurs to them that there can be no possible means by which the church of God can lose its identity. Those who have caught a vision of the majesty and power and glory of the kingdom of heaven regard my own feeble efforts to explore the greater fellowship of the Spirit with a considerable degree of real joy. Many write that we are simply giving expression to the thoughts which have been welling up in their hearts for years.

I am not disturbed by opposition and I pray that I shall not be distracted by those who concur. I did research for six years after I became convinced that we had made another sect out of the restoration movement, before I ever wrote an article on fellowship. During that time I sought to steel my heart against the bitter attacks I knew would follow from many with whom I had labored. But one cannot always suppress truth in his heart and finally I began to write.

The reaction is not nearly so great as I anticipated although in some areas there is bitterness. I have been publicly assailed as a Judas Iscariot, a Benedict Arnold, and a messenger of Satan. These are extreme statements made by men who proceed from prejudicial motives. Most brethren are very kind and considerate even when they cannot agree. They realize that one must state his honest conviction and they would not want me to be a hypocrite just to stay in good with the party.

10. Are there not many who are reluctant to promote

reform for fear that another division will result?

I think there are many such brethren and one cannot blame them a great deal. Every attempted reform in the past has produced another division and those reforms were urged by men who were much better and brighter than ourselves. It is a strange phenomenon that we seem to be grateful for reformatory cleavages of *the past* which paved the way for our existence but all of us want the reformation to stop with us. "This far and no farther shalt thou come!" We regard the severance created by Martin Luther as a noble and heroic step. Those whom he was trying to reform did not share that view at the time. We do not deplore the gulf created by Stone and the Campbells when driven from the Presbyterian and Baptist communions, but rather seem grateful for the result.

The real question, of course, is whether we shall maintain the *status quo* at all costs, even at that of suppressing truth, or whether we can really develop a sense of freedom and assume the responsibilities which go with it. Most people would prefer to be in bondage *just a little*. We like to be in green pastures but we want to be tethered in them so we can be brought up with a jerk when we reach the end of the partisan rope. We fear what lies beyond so we merely tread water close to shore so we can rush back to the factional beach if we are threatened. This kind of life does not appeal to me. It depresses the real spirit of adventure inherent in the Christ way. I am not afraid of the fellowship of the Spirit or where it will lead. I ask only for strength to follow for we need "fellowship" as well as fellowship. However, I do not envision another division over a plea for unity in Christ.

11. What is there about your proposal which you think will avoid division?

For one thing we are presenting our appeal for restoration of brotherhood in an age conditioned to laboring toward unity. The whole pattern of religious division has been reversed. The

news media which once reported cleavages and splits as news are now giving great space to describing attempts to unify divergent sects. I grew up in a Lutheran background and when I was sprinkled by the Rev. Mr. Petersen in that communion, there were seventy different Lutheran groups in the United States with little fraternization between them. Today this has been reduced to eleven. There is a feeling of peace and unity in the air. None of us are wholly unaffected by circumstances surrounding us regardless of the attempted insulation of our life and thought.

The thinking world is sick and tired of religious squabbling and wrangling upon the part of those who claim to follow the Prince of peace. The littleness and bigotry which characterized the past cannot be tolerated in a world threatened by holocaust. It is in such a frame of reference we are granted the privilege of presenting the hope of genuine fellowship in the Spirit with all of God's children and our brethren. Never has there been a more propitious season for sharing with mankind the fundamental message of the Spirit. It is to be regretted that so much time must be spent in calling back together the divergent forces of restoration but we cannot well proclaim peace effectively while we practice division. I am sure that most of us would be happy to see our brethren united.

However, there is one vital factor about our proposal that can avoid formation of another party and preclude division within the ranks of the heirs of the restoration movement. We are urging everyone to stay where he is. When one learns a new truth let him not desert those brethren with whom he has grown up and go join a party which holds his view. Let him stay and act as leaven in that area where he is best known and where he has influence. Let him remain with his brethren and not become arrayed against them.

Previous attempts at restoration of fellowship have been based on the fallacy that one of our factions is "the loyal church." This is a myth. It has no foundation in fact. So long as

men hold that fallacious view they will move from party to party seeking “the faithful group.” Generally, when they become disillusioned they will create another faction of their own in the vain hope that they are “restoring the true church.” They only add to the confusion.

So long as we are divided no faction is the faithful church. When one is in schism all are in schism. One can be in a faction without being factional. He can be in a sect without being sectarian. We urge no one to leave where he is except those who are out of Christ Jesus. We invite no one to come into anything except those who are not in the one body. Let us stay where God has called us in that body and be a part of “the fellowship of the concerned ones.” If our brethren are wrong about some things they need us most. It is a poor doctor who deserts the hospital to spend all of his time with the healthy members at the country club. No one can start another party in the restoration movement framework if everyone just stays put. In time the parties now existing will melt away. An iceberg can be removed much more easily by the sun than by men with ice picks!

12. If every person remains where he is will we not always have our present quota of factions?

Indeed not. When we reverse our past procedure and cease to divide in the vain attempt to protect doctrinal purity by such means, not only will there be no new factions formed but the old ones will gradually cease to have relevance for our time. We have been victims of “the will to divide” and when we crucify this attitude we will find a tremendous change taking place. The very recognition that we can remain together in spite of differences will act as a tremendous catalyst in our lives.

All reformation is effected from within. When we withdraw from a party with which we have been affiliated we lose our influence for good in that party. After that any attack against their partisan spirit by ourselves will be from without

and regarded as on a partisan basis. This will create a spontaneous resistance. Our task should not be to win men to “our side” but to take them by the hand and move with them closer to the side of Christ. No man can take another by the hand while his own is a clenched fist. If the fellowship of the concerned ones will retain their concern for unity and remain where they are and let their influence radiate forth they will be much more effective than if they all withdrew and formed a new “radiation party.” We need to learn how to differ without devising parties to promote our differences. If we do this the factional spirit will die out and our factions will dissolve and disappear. When men learn how not to be factional there will be no more factions.

13. Does this mean that divergent congregations in a locality will all drop their differences and come together to form one large congregation?

I am not sure what pattern will be followed in every place. I doubt that it will be universally uniform. It will depend a great deal upon temperamental and psychological factors as well as traditional attitudes. We should not seek to bind a procedure upon every locality regardless of its circumstances. I am of the opinion that in most places it would be better for the congregations to continue meeting where they are and to carry on the corporate worship in the manner to which they are accustomed or which commends itself to their consciences in the sight of God. Let the congregations respect each other as brethren and not regard themselves as bitter rivals. A proper appreciation of the autonomy of the congregations will enable us to do this without sense of compromise.

If a congregation prefers to use one cup under the conviction that this best enables them to implement the Master’s design for the Supper, let them continue to do so without discrediting those whose sincere convictions lead them to do otherwise. If a congregation prefers to carry on their teaching

program without Bible classes let them do so but abstain from harsh judgment of their brethren who feel it is no violation of the spirit of Christianity. Above all else let the peace of God rule in our hearts until we will not carry on partisan attacks against each other publicly by radio or otherwise. We have a common enemy to fight which threatens us all. We ought not to waste our energies and expend our resources in fighting each other. It is noticeable that many of our points of difference have to do with matters pertaining to the Lord's Day service. There are many other meetings in which all could participate and present a united witness to the world and we ought not to cut ourselves off from mutual sharing in these. All of our current factions have something of value to contribute to the others. We need to cultivate occasions in which such mutual sharing may take place. At such times we might well avoid controversial issues and "follow after the things which make for peace and wherewith one may build up another." Certainly this is a scriptural injunction!

14. Do you apply this same reasoning to congregations which use instrumental music?

Indeed I do. I would not know how to be consistent and do otherwise. Those who use the instrument in their corporate worship are my brethren in Christ. We are all children of the same Father. From my study I have become convinced that I cannot conscientiously make the plea I do and condone the use of the instrument. Their study leads them to an opposite conclusion. If a congregation of disciples chooses to use the instrument as an aid I must respect their right to make a choice based upon their study, although I may not personally endorse the choice they make. But they are not answerable to me nor to the congregation with which I am affiliated and they enjoy the same autonomy as we do.

Brotherhood in Christ is not based upon instrumental music, classes, cups, or upon an attitude toward any of these

things. I am obligated to love all of my brethren. I am not obligated to love the things they adopt. The Bible does not say, "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, unless one believes in instrumental music." I hold myself free to join with any of my brethren in those areas of service where I am not required to violate my personal convictions. I shall not allow brotherhood to be negated or destroyed by something to which it is not related. I shall not refuse to aid my brethren in Christ Jesus in any respect simply because we differ in some respects. I have no half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. We have paid lip-service to local autonomy while rejecting it in practice. Our motto seems to be, "Each congregation has a right to make its own decisions provided they are identical with the ones we make."

15. Are there any indications that members of the various factions are actually re-thinking their positions?

Yes, there are. Our mail indicates that many thinking people in every segment of the disciple brotherhood are intensely interested in what is being written. Many of these have been conscience-ridden for a long time over the substitution of orthodoxy for the freedom of the sacred scriptures. They have chafed under the narrow restraints of the party and looked upon the "holier-than-thou" attitude as being repugnant to their own Christian idealism.

It is obvious that a transformation of a cultural and intellectual nature is taking place in the more extreme segments. There was a time when the visiting preacher who held the annual meeting, defective as he was in scholarship, was still better educated than any others within the congregations. Now, with our change from an agrarian to an urban society and with a migration from rural to metropolitan areas, children are receiving a better education. College training is now available to most all of those who desire it. As a result, the preacher who holds "the meeting" is often one of the least educated in some

congregations. Minds trained to reason by logical formal process can no longer accept without question the dogmatic wresting of scriptures to fit partisan sermon outlines. Things which seemed of such vital importance in a simpler day lose their relevance in a complex society threatened with destruction. Splitting hairs is hardly a rewarding occupation for one who is about to lose his hair by being scalped. Losing one's head over a fine point of theological discrimination does not appeal to one who may literally lose it by nuclear explosion.

I think it is not unjust or unfair to state that in many instances the "professional" preachers will be the last to alter their views. The congregations will generally seek to "hold the line" against any tendency to enjoy a wider fellowship. Such a participation in the Spirit will be termed "liberalism" and "compromise" and those who derive their livelihood from the party treasury will be afraid to give voice to any real charitable feeling for others. But in every congregation there will arise noble and generous souls who will quietly and effectively work as leaven to usher in a more benevolent spirit. These are the real heroes and heroines for Jesus in our day for they must endure the maligning of their motives by those whom they love in the Lord.

There is no question but what "the fellowship of the concerned" now has adherents in every faction. Many of these, because of local circumstances, are doomed to silence temporarily. The day is coming when they can be heard. What we are experiencing is the first thaw after a long winter of icy partisanship. The first drops from a glacier warmed by the sun seem inconsequential until one sees tiny rivulets from every direction worming their way around obstacles and flowing toward each other. When enough of these meet they form a mighty river refusing to be held in check by artificial barriers. We are fortunate enough to be able to see the initial gathering of those forces which will some day become a broad river of fellowship flowing toward the distant sea of destiny. This I

believe!

16. If there is merit in your proposals for fellowship why do not the educational leaders and teachers in the colleges endorse it?

I think that a goodly number of these brethren are in sympathy with much that we are saying and doing. There are several reasons why they do not openly commit themselves. Some of them are skeptical about me and my motives. They find it difficult to believe that I am sincere. They have known of my previous factional disposition and they are still fearful that I have “something up my sleeve.” They are afraid that we are simply employing a ruse or stratagem to eventually divide and disrupt the brethren over other issues. The fact that I refuse to align myself with any party as a factional tool creates a problem. It is hard to deal with one who loves all of his brethren and simply refuses to recognize any of the lines they have drawn or the barriers they have erected against each other.

Another thing that may have some bearing on the question is that I do not employ the specialized terms with which textbooks in philosophy and advanced education are filled. I write in simple language because I would find it difficult to do otherwise. This type of writing is also best adapted to achieve our purpose which is to stimulate the thinking of all of our brothers and sisters and not that of a specific caste. I suspect that those who are accustomed to a more profound and erudite approach consider what we are doing as rather naive and unpretentious. Perhaps they regard it as relatively harmless and insignificant. But all reforms and revolutions begin at “the grass root level.” They can never be effected merely by an appeal to a higher echelon. Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” He did not say, “Feed my giraffes.”

Too, we must remember that religious seminaries and parochial schools are not created primarily for education but for

indoctrination. They are supported by a certain segment to defend a partisan concept or position. Even among the noninstrument brethren there are three distinct kinds of schools. Those who have adopted the pre-millennial interpretation, those who make a test of fellowship out of opposition to charitable organizations and brotherhood propaganda devices, and those who represent the orthodox “Church of Christ” viewpoint— all of these have their own brand of colleges. Not only does this make for rivalry but it also limits the academic freedom of the teachers in all of them. A great many brilliant and consecrated men and women must sublimate their own scholarship and personal convictions to conform to the party norm or be subjected to dismissal.

The schools are ever in a precarious position as are all party organs. They are subject to whispering campaigns and veiled attacks. They are faced with “foes without and fears within.” The teacher who will not be content with enforced mediocrity but who dares to rise above the partisan confines and restraints in his teaching will eventually be hounded down and out by “heretic detectors”— generally preachers or editors, the self-appointed censors of the faith. In such a state of affairs the administration must tread carefully. The men who form the administration have been hired to do a job and it consists of keeping the school “safely in line.”

It is obvious that many of the original thinkers on the faculties of all of these schools have long since banished from their minds the idea that “The Church of Christ” is the one body to the exclusion of all other persons on earth. They realize that the kingdom of heaven is more majestic and mighty than our strife-torn factions. However, they are dealing with students who are often immature. Their classes are drawn from every type of home and community and the teachers dare not disturb the *status quo* which the parents demand and for which they pay. In spite of this, principles can often be enunciated which will enable the students to reason themselves out of narrow orthodoxy as

they mature. I suspect it is only upon this basis that some instructors can gain the consent of troubled conscience to remain within the partisan framework.

Although I am personally skeptical about seminaries and parochial schools, seeing they must inevitably contribute to the parochial and provincial viewpoint by their very nature and purpose, I must acknowledge a debt of gratitude to a great many fine and wonderful brethren who have been in administrative and faculty posts within them. It was, for instance, from Bro. J. N. Armstrong, former president of Harding College, that I borrowed the trenchant statement: "I am resolved to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation."

I am indebted to M. C. Kurfees for the following concept which he enunciated in the *Abilene Christian College Lectures*: "In the present divided state of the church and under the influence of parlance growing out of a denominational environment, it is difficult to avoid being sectarian or denominational in our speech; and hence there is a growing tendency today to sectarianize even the term 'church of Christ.' This is invariably the case when it is used, as it frequently is nowadays, to mean merely those people of God who do not work through missionary societies and do not use instrumental music in the worship, and to exclude other children of God who make the mistake of working and worshiping in the said ways. The church of Christ in any city today, using the term in accordance with Bible usage, includes all the children of God in the said city; and until these principles are observed, the primitive church, in its constitution, its doctrine, its faith, and its practice will never be restored."

No doubt there are brethren in all of the schools who share the views expressed so forcibly and well by Bro. Armstrong and Bro. Kurfees. I'm certain that all such rejoice in the tenor of the plea we are making although they are not in a position to

publicly declare it. It is not necessary that they do so. We are not seeking to build up a personal following. We are content when men shall believe the truth and implement it in their lives according to their own dispositions and determinations. We cannot all work the same way and God does not intend for us to do so.

I am confident that many of the educators are often embarrassed by the narrow and provincial image of the church projected by self-appointed “guardians of orthodoxy” who rush into print or burst into vocal declamation with all of the old cliches, outworn slogans and misapplication of scriptures, which they have inherited from partisan fathers. But a better day is dawning. Hundreds of younger men and women are thinking for themselves. There will be a revival of the spirit of free investigation. We welcome it and it is long overdue. Truth has nothing to fear from research. Let the truth be known! Let it be followed regardless of where it leads, for one cannot go wrong who follows the pathway of truth.

17. Do you anticipate any increased active opposition to your plea for unity and fellowship?

Yes, I think we may expect such opposition. There are indications of a growing antagonism to the suggestions we have made. In the final analysis this will prove to be good. There should be a careful scrutiny of all that is said or written on such a vital and important theme. We are not unaware of the implications of what we have been saying. These things either contain one of the brightest rays of hope for the distressed and divided church today, or they pose one of the greatest threats to its survival.

If the church of God includes all of the people of God; and if it is composed of all the sincere immersed believers in Christ Jesus on the earth; and if all of these should recognize each other as being in the fellowship; what we are writing will make it

possible for us to recapture the glory of the kingdom as it affects our lives in this generation.

But if the church for which Jesus died is to be equated solely and exclusively with an outgrowth of the American restoration movement operating under the title “The Church of Christ;” and if fellowship with God is to be conditioned upon a certain attitude toward instrumental music, cups, colleges, or classes, what we say will destroy the church. It is our intention to lift fellowship out of the realm of opinion about *things* and place it on the plane of sharing in the life of the Spirit.

We refuse to regard the one body as a modern faction or complex of factions. We esteem the kingdom of God over which Jesus rules as being greater than any sect, denomination, faction, fragment, splinter or segment, currently in existence. It is greater than all of them taken together.

Because we believe that the purpose of God will be fulfilled and the prayer of Jesus will be answered, we are content to labor and to wait. The impact of what is now being said will not be fully felt in this generation alone. We are willing to allow the history, as yet unwritten, to bring in the verdict as to its validity. That is why it is possible to love those who disagree with us and regard without rancor those who oppose what we suggest and recommend. In God’s tomorrow, the hope of all of us for unity will be realized and the prayer of all of us for increased knowledge of fellowship will be answered. Then all of us will be able to see more clearly what He knew from the very beginning.

Editor’s Note. We have received a number of questions recently asking for a clarification of our position as to who may be considered a child of God. Although we have considered this matter frequently and at length in the past, we recognize that there are many new readers who have not seen our position in print, and many older ones who have difficulty in understanding. Accordingly, we shall continue to answer questions in our next

issue, and especially questions relating to how we should regard baptism, and how we should treat sincere believers who have never as yet been immersed into our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust that you will share this issue and the next with friends and brethren who are in “the fellowship of the concerned ones.”

Questions to the Editor

Mission Messenger (December 1964)

Volume 26

[Abstract]

In our previous issue we attempted an answer to a number of questions related to the plea which we have been making for the unity of the believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have deemed it appropriate to continue this form of writing that we may publicly reply to other questions which we frequently hear. Our purpose in doing so is simply to clarify our own viewpoint. We have no intention of being arbitrary or dogmatic. We do not seek to bind these ideas upon others. They represent our individual approach to some of the problems of our day based upon our feeble knowledge of the inspired word. That we will give an account for what we write we do not doubt and so we speak in reverence for God and with utmost respect for those who differ with us.

1. What do you believe about the constituency of the church?

The word “church” is a translation of *ekklesia*, a combined form which means “called out.” The church consists of all who are called out of a life of sin and into Christ. Anyone who has heard the call and responded to it is in the church. The call is issued in the form of Good News or Glad Tidings. The term generally used to designate it is “the gospel.” Paul declares that “God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he

called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13, 14).

Everyone who is called is a member of the one body. “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body” (Col. 3:15). Because the one body consists of the called ones it is the *ekklesia*, the called out, the church. The church is composed of all the “holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call” (Hebrews 3:1). Every saved person on earth is in the church, being added to it in response to the call of God. The church is not an organization but a divine organism created by God. It is the corporate existence of God’s own people who have been called out of darkness. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Every person who has forsaken the realm of darkness and crossed the frontier into the domain of light in response to the divine call is in the church. All such persons are God’s own people.

2. Do you make a distinction between the church and “The Church of Christ”?

It is regrettable that such a distinction is necessary but in this age of sectarianism it must be made. The term “Church of Christ” in many localities is applied only to those of God’s people who do not use instrumental music. It is an exclusive title adopted to distinguish its adherents from other members of God’s family. The word “church” as used by the Holy Spirit was never so employed. In a universal sense it was used to include every sincere immersed believer on earth. In a local sense it was used to include every such person in the city or district. These might be divided and fall short of God’s ideal but they still constituted the church of God. As defective in principle and practice as were the members at Corinth they were still “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2).

“The Church of Christ” is a twentieth century outgrowth of a nineteenth century restoration movement. Originally, the members engaged in the movement were known simply as Christians, reformers, or disciples. They were designated by those around them as the Christian Church. When division occurred among these as a result of the introduction of the missionary society and instrumental music, those who opposed these things began to use the term “Church of Christ” to distinguish themselves from the others. This was given official recognition for the first time in the government census of 1906. It is evident that not all of those called by God are in “The Church of Christ” but they are all, without exception, in the church of Christ. When I speak about the church in Saint Louis I include in my concept every sincere immersed believer in the Lord regardless of the unfortunate circumstances which have divided us. The church of God is the kingdom of heaven on the earth and it is much larger than any segment, splinter or portion of our tragically divided world.

3. Do you consider that there may be Christians in the various sects?

Indeed I do. God’s sheep still constitute a scattered flock insofar as physical unity is concerned. They have not all been gathered into one corral. A Christian is one who is “in Christ” and those who have been immersed into Christ are in him. Unfortunately, not all of them are Christians only. Some are “special brands” of Christians. God no more wants us to be “Church of Christ Christians” than any other kind. It is because of our sectarian and exclusivist attitude that we have not been more successful in uniting all of God’s people in a working relationship.

David Lipscomb said, “There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches

who are baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches that they think they are all alike.”

None of the early leaders of the restoration movement doubted that there were Christians in the sects. Alexander Campbell called it “a project to unite the Christians in all the sects.” Benjamin Franklin wrote, “That there are Christians among the sects, a people of God in Babylon, we have believed and admitted, and committed to print many years ago, and we believe the same now. That these have a right to commune and enjoy in common with all Christians, all the blessings of the house of the Lord, we presume is not doubted by any brother.”

Jesse P. Sewell, in a speech entitled “Our Plea Stated” made at the *Abilene Christian College Lectures* said, in reply to the accusation that we claim to be the only Christians in the world, “We do not; we claim to be Christians only, and our plea is that all believers should be Christians only, and not denominational Christians.” We quote from these men, not because we recognize them as authorities in religion, but for two very good reasons. In the first place, they were qualified to state the purpose and attitude governing our brethren in the inception of the restoration movement; in the second place, they prove that the modern, novel and unique view that there are no Christians in the sects is a development of late twentieth century Church-of-Christ-ism. Incidentally, it is proof of how far we have come in the acceptance of a sectarian attitude.

4. Does the new testament ever imply that anyone who was a member of the church of Christ belonged to a denomination at the same time?

Yes, indeed it does. Nothing is more clearly taught. Of course such action was condemned as it ought always to be but it

shows that one can be in the one body while in a denomination. We ought to distinguish between “a denomination” and “a sect.” Our English word sect is probably from the Latin *secta*, which is derived from *sequi*. This is the root word from which we get “sequence” which means “to follow.” In our Bibles the word “sect” is a translation of the Greek *hairesis*, a party. The word “denomination” is from the Latin *denominare*, to name, to give a title to, to denominate. Any religious group which adopts a specific name or title as a means of distinction is a denomination.

There were four denominations among the saints in Corinth. There were parties of Apollosites, Cephasites, Paulites and Christ-ites. That these called themselves after the names of men, and were therefore denominations, is evident from the question, “Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” The Christ-ites formed an exclusive party to separate themselves from the other saints but it is just as sinful to create a sect under the name of Christ as any other name. It was to the members of this party that Paul wrote, “Look facts in the face. Someone is convinced, is he, that he belongs to Christ? Let him think again, and reflect that we belong to Christ as much as he does” (2 Cor. 10:7).

Now all of the members of these denominations were in the church of God (1 Cor. 1:2) and constituted the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). They were saints of God (1:2); brethren (1:10, 11); beloved children (4:14); and Paul’s “workmanship in the Lord” (9:1). They were babes in Christ (3:1); God’s field and building (3:9); the temple of God (3:17); and they were Christ’s (3:23). They had received the gospel (15:1); they had been called into the fellowship (1:9); and they were inside the church (5:12). The apostle commended them for remembering him in everything and keeping the traditions he had delivered to them (11:2), and at the same time condemned them for their schismatic state and sectism (11:17).

It should be noted that in 11:18 the apostle says, “I hear there are divisions (*schisms*) among you,” while in the next verse

he says, “For there must be factions (*sects*) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” The members of the church of God in Corinth were in denominations of their own creation and these denominations were sects. They were trying to divide Christ up and parcel him out among themselves. The apostle asks, “Is Christ divided?” The word “divided” is from *meros* which means, “to apportion out, to distribute, to share with.” It is used in Hebrews 7:2, “And to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything.” Since Jesus is the head of the one body he cannot be made a tribal chieftain or party prince. The denominational attitude of the saints in Corinth reflected their immaturity and sensuality (3:1-4).

There is one good accruing from sects in the church of God — those who are genuine among you may be recognized. Who are the genuine ones in the midst of a sectarian condition? I take it that Paul would be one of these and from him we learn that to be genuine is simply to ignore the party walls and barriers and to recognize all of the members of the church of God as beloved children and brethren. Paul did not ally himself with any of the denominations among the saints at Corinth. He remained free of all of them. He did not allow one party to pit him against another. That is exactly my position and I intend to adhere to it by the help of God. I will commend what I can among all the brethren. What I cannot commend I will not. But I will not allow myself to be separated from any of God’s children and my brethren, regardless of what sect or denomination they may be in.

5. What must one do to become a child of God?

He must be born again. We have already said that the *ekklesia* is composed of the “called out ones.” The call is issued through the gospel and when one hears the gospel and responds to it, he becomes one of God’s people, a child of God. The proper response to the gospel is the same as it has always been to any divine message— faith and obedience. The fact which one must

believe is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Belief of this fact enables one to enter into that state where he has life through the name of Jesus (John 20:30, 31). The one act of obedience required to validate that faith and transfer one into that state is immersion in water. Thus when Jesus commissioned his envoys to take the Good News to the world he declared, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

It seems to me that Galatians 3:26, 27, is very explicit as to what is required to be a son of God. "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." I accept this at its face value and must conclude that as many as have not been baptized into Christ have not put him on. To think otherwise would be to deny the very force of the language employed by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, I am obligated to accept as a son of God every person who by faith in Jesus is led to be immersed into him. I dare not deny either the necessity or the validity of baptism conditioned on faith in Jesus. To do the first is to become broader than God's word; to do the second is to become narrower than his word. I accept the fact that "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:12) and I regard as a member of that body every sincere immersed believer who has been baptized because of his faith in Christ, regardless of who baptizes him. Such a person has "obeyed the gospel."

6. Do you regard as in the fellowship those who have been sprinkled under the sincere conviction that this is scriptural baptism?

No, I do not. This problem never occurred in the primitive *ekklesia*. It is post-apostolic and is the result of substituting the authority of man for the revelation of God. I have a very deep love and respect for all those who are earnestly seeking to do the will of God and have mistaken views about the implementation of that will. I do not say that all of these will be lost for I do not know how God will judge those who are walking in the light that

is presently available to them. I hold some opinions relative to the matter. If God sees fit by extension of mercy to grant unto all of them an eternal abode with him I shall rejoice with joy exceeding and full of gladness.

However, all that I say and do must be under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). He has conditioned discipleship in him upon belief and baptism. It is one thing for God to receive a person into heaven, a wholly different thing for us to receive him into the fellowship on earth. Baptism was not announced as a condition of entrance into heaven but as a means of access to the one body. The record says, "So those who received his word were baptized . . . and they continued devotedly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship . . ." (Acts 2:41, 42). I shall recognize as in the fellowship all who have been baptized upon reception of the Message. Since these all continued in "the breaking of the bread and in the prayers" I will break bread with the baptized believers and pray with them and call upon them to pray.

Now when I speak of baptism I mean identically what Jesus meant when he enjoined faith and baptism. I mean exactly what Peter meant when he told those who heard to repent and be baptized. I mean precisely what Paul meant when he said we were buried with Christ in baptism. If I mean something else then it is not baptism at all, but something else. Sprinkling is not baptism. Baptism is from *baptizo*; sprinkling from *rantizo*. One who is sprinkled is not baptized at all. He is rantized, and nowhere are we instructed to receive those who believe and are rantized as being in the fellowship.

I do not wish to be harsh and uncharitable. I love every sincere soul who is seeking to do the Master's will but I do not believe that we can do his will by doing something else. I do not believe that time sanctifies error nor that confusion transmutes wrong into right. The will of God is precious to me and I would gladly recognize as his children all who have not been baptized if

I became convinced that he did so. I know his will by his word. It seems to teach plainly that only those who are baptized into Christ are sons of God. I accept that humbly and sincerely.

7. Is it possible that a sincere person who is sprinkled in the belief that it is baptism is a Christian in essence?

Obviously the answer would have to depend upon the meanings attached to the words “Christian” and “essence.” One of the tragic things about our age is that we have taken the vocabulary of the Spirit, and modified, amended and extended it until we have attached ideas that are utterly foreign to the words used by the Spirit. It is not enough to recapture the language but we must also restore the meaning conveyed in such language by the Spirit. A good example is the word “Christian” which we use so freely as a modifier. We talk glibly about a Christian nation, Christian schools, Christian baptism and Christian commitment. To imply, therefore, that a sincerely religious person may not be a Christian is an insult and an affront. We equate the term with a certain kind of character or life. God forbid that I should be discourteous or uncivil to any person who seeks to follow my Master.

But the word “Christian” in a scriptural sense refers to one who is in Christ. It designates a citizen of the kingdom, one who has been naturalized and adopted into that relationship which is called “the fellowship.” No one was ever regarded as a Christian in the new covenant frame of reference except an immersed penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to apply the term to any others in any fashion we must do so without scriptural sanction. It is a grave question with me whether we can be true to our commitment to the Master if we “water down” the language of His word in order not to appear tactless or illiberal. We should follow “the pattern of sound words.”

The word “essence” as used in this question is a term of

scholastic philosophy derived from the Latin *essentia*. I must confess to a natural suspicion of such words because they are generally “plausible words of wisdom.” Paul declared that his speech and message were devoid of these. “Essence is employed to denote the constituent qualities which go to make up an object or class of objects without which they would not be what they are. Hence it denotes the character which belongs to the class or common nature as distinguished from the accidents or individual varieties in the members of that class.” Since fellowship in Christ is a definite state or condition into which we are called one does not enter it by exhibiting a certain quality of character, but by obedience to a positive command. This in no sense undervalues such character but simply places it in its proper position. We should rejoice at every manifestation of the ethical and moral values announced and exemplified by our Lord. The fact that these are exhibited by those who are not in him only serves to show the universal recognition of the value of the life of the Son of God.

An alien who resides in America may pattern his conduct after “the American way of life” and some may refer to him as “an American in essence.” However, he is not entitled to the right of franchise nor to any other right or privilege accruing from citizenship. If, in his eagerness to become a citizen, and as a result of mistaken advice, he does something other than that required to attain unto citizenship, he still is not a citizen. He will never become one until he follows the procedure prescribed by the sovereign authority. It is not Christians *in essence* but Christians *in fact* who form the one body. It is a point worth considering whether one is a Christian at all who is not one in fact.

8. Are you not inconsistent in drawing a line of fellowship at baptism?

I am not drawing a line at all. I simply recognize the line which God has drawn. There must be a point at which one

crosses the frontier from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is my conviction that only God can specify that juncture at which sins are remitted and one is raised to walk in a new life. I have no right whatsoever to dictate or suggest where the crossing is located. It is the divine prerogative to do this and when it has been done all I can do is to point men to the place and conditions authorized by God. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Peter said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins."

I have never said there was no line at which fellowship begins. That would be ridiculous. I have only said that I would make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. I believe that God has made baptism a condition of salvation from our past life of sin, otherwise the words of Jesus in the apostolic commission would be meaningless. I do not think there was a single unimmersed person in any congregation of the saints referred to in the new covenant scriptures. God has drawn a line between his children and the world. We need to recognize it and respect it. But he has forbidden his children to divide and draw lines against each other in Christ. For that reason I refuse to recognize or respect the validity of those lines which have been drawn by their various opinions and human interpretations. It is one thing to be separated from those who are not in Christ Jesus and a wholly different thing to be separated from those who are.

9. How do you regard those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God but who do not as yet understand the necessity of being immersed?

I regard them as having been begotten but not yet born. They are still "in the womb" but they have not yet been delivered. The gospel is the seed by which we are begotten and under the law of principal and agent one may be regarded as a father who first implants this seed (1 Cor. 4:14, 15). The offspring of God exist in embryonic and foetal form before they

are children unless we conclude that belief of the gospel and baptism are one and the same act, or that they occur simultaneously in every case. All who believe the Message but have not yet been delivered through baptism, are God's children in prospect and my brethren *in prospect*. My work, as regards them, is to act as a spiritual midwife or obstetrician. I should stimulate and encourage their foetal growth until they reach the proper time for birth, and then aid in their delivery, through immersion, into the family relationship.

I will gain nothing by assaulting them or abusing them because they have not yet been born. This might tend to an injury resulting in an abortion or miscarriage. I should admit their paternity and create a proper atmosphere of respect and love in which they may be gently led to fulfillment of God's program for our lives. They can no more participate in family activities, deliberations and decisions, than any other foetus, but they should be nourished and nurtured in kindness and tenderness. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God and he that loves the one who begets loves those who are begotten of him" (1 John 5:1).

10. Does not the word for "begotten" in this verse embrace the whole process of birth?

Not at all. Some superficial scholars of our day may so interpret it but the idea that one is "born of God" is not in the original Greek scriptures at all. In 1 John 2:29, the King James Version reads, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." Dr. James Macknight renders the passage, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone who worketh righteousness hath been begotten of him." In explanation he says, "This is the literal significance of *gegennetai* from *gennao*, I beget. Accordingly our translators have so rendered the word, chap. 5:18. Besides, *born of God* is an idea nowhere else found in scripture."

Consistent with this statement and proper Greek usage, he translates 1 John 5:1, “Every one who believeth that Jesus is the Christ, hath been begotten of God; and every one who loveth the begetter, loveth also the begotten of him.” One is begotten by his father but not born of him and the begetting precedes the birth, else he is born dead. Birth does not confer life, it simply changes the state of the subject.

The whole problem of exegesis stems from the fact that we have separate English words for two phases— *beget* and *bear*. The Greeks had only one word, *gennao*. But they did not use the word indiscriminately nor did they confound the distinctions as do a lot of casual readers today. The Holy Spirit used *gennao* 97 times and it is translated *begat* or *begotten* 49 times, and *born* 39 times. In Matthew 1:1-16 it is found 39 times and is translated *begat* in every instance. To substitute the word *born* in either of these would be to make the rendering absurd and ridiculous.

The first place in the new covenant scriptures where it is translated *born* is Matthew 1:16, and the change is obviously necessary. In this verse *gennao* appears twice. Once it is rendered *begat* and once *born* and neither rendering can be substituted for the other. “And Jacob *begat* Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was *born* Jesus, who is called Christ.” It would be incongruous to read this, “And Jacob *born* Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was *begat* Jesus who is called Christ” One is not born of the person who begets him, nor is he begotten of the one who bears him. We should not confuse language in our zeal to uphold a partisan and traditional position.

Since this matter seems of such interest in certain sections where men are laboring ardently to refute our position we ask your kind indulgence as we pursue it a little further. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt. 2:1) but he was *begotten* in Nazareth a city of Galilee (Luke 1:26). In Luke 1:57 we read, “Now Elizabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she *brought forth* a son.” The italicized words are a

rendering of *gennao* and it is evident that “beget” would no more apply than it would in Matthew 19:12, “For there are some eunuchs, which were so *born* from their mother’s womb.” There is a difference in the time as well as in the act of begetting and birth, and the former always precedes the latter. One who is begotten and not yet delivered is a *prospective* child of the one who begets him and a *prospective* brother of all others who have been sired by the same father.

A careful study of the implications of *gennao* in every occurrence of the term will enable us to enunciate proper rules of interpretation. These will be found to be three in number.

a. When the word refers to the action of the Father, or to the inception of life, it cannot be rendered *born* and must be uniformly rendered by some form of *beget*.

b. When the word refers to the induction into a state, condition or relationship, or when it has to do with bringing forth into a visible existence, it cannot be rendered *begat* or *begotten* and must be uniformly translated born, delivered, or brought forth.

c. When the entire process, including both the phases of begetting and birth, is described by one word, the final or consummating act may be put for the whole, as in John 3:5.

The means employed in our salvation are defined in Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” I take it that the washing referred to is baptism, but this does not change *the nature* of the gospel subject. This is effected by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit operates upon and quickens the heart of the alien through the good news and leads him to repentance by testimony of the goodness of God through the Word, he is begotten of God. In order to change his state he

must be led to the washing of regeneration which completes the birth process and makes him a child of God. Many who have been begotten will never be born into the fellowship because of our complacency and cruel disregard of their innermost feelings. I love every person who has been begotten of my Father. I long to see them all in the visible fellowship of the family. God help me to help them all to this end.

11. Do you think that every person who has not been immersed into Christ will be lost?

That is not for me to determine. God has revealed to us what we should proclaim to the world of mankind and the response we should make to those who enquire of us what they must do. He has not revealed what he will do in every case with reference to those who do not hear, or whose hearing may be impaired. He has forbidden me to judge those who are without. The apostle says, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? God judges those who are on the outside" (1 Cor. 5:12). Since judging has to do with rendering a decision or passing sentence, I would usurp the prerogatives of God if I were to pronounce a sentence upon others. It is one thing to instruct men what to do in order to enter the fellowship of the saints, a wholly different thing to decide the eternal destiny of those who do not enter. It is one thing to be assured of your own salvation and a wholly different matter to be just as sure of the damnation of all others.

We operate under the authority of Christ Jesus but God is not under that authority (1 Cor. 15:27). We dare not bind him with the rules he gave to bind us. We cannot subject to authority one who is the source of, and superior to, all authority (Romans 13:1). God's grace existed prior to and is greater than the church. He is "slow to anger and full of mercy." He will judge each individual on his own merits, taking into account every longing, weakness, and yearning, as well as every motivation. He declares that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." How he will regard those who do not know or

whose perception is faulty, I cannot say. I do know that love for God will make up for deficiencies in knowledge and judgment. “If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing as yet, in the true sense of knowing. But if a man loves, he is acknowledged by God” (1 Cor. 8:2, 3).

I also know that it will be “more tolerable in the day of judgment” for some than for others, based upon opportunities afforded to acquire a knowledge of God and his will. One can only walk in the light available to him and defective vision may limit his scope and his ability to discern. We have no right to assume that all of God’s children have 20/20 spiritual vision. There are some who are quite nearsighted. God will take all of this into consideration and will render a verdict of justice tempered with mercy, and mercy triumphs over judgment. The only man who cannot claim mercy is the one who has shown none. “In that judgment there will be no mercy for the man who has shown no mercy” (James 2:13).

12. Is this not the same as implying that God may save some in their disobedience?

Of course not. A lot of people cannot make the distinction between failure to obey from lack of knowledge of what is required and wilful rebellion against God. There is a difference between one who wants to see but is blind and one who deliberately closes his eyes to keep from seeing. Not all lack of knowledge stems from deliberate or malicious resolution not to know. Voluntary ignorance is a sin but involuntary ignorance is merely a misfortune. If it were a sin we would all be lost because none of us know all there is to know. One is not saved in disobedience who is *obeying* all he knows to do. He is saved by *obedience* based upon present knowledge and that is the only way any of us can demonstrate faithfulness unto God. It is evident that a lot of people are about as much concerned with damning others as with saving them and take about as much delight in one as the other. It seems to me to be a dangerous

tendency for us to search the scriptures in an attempt to find something by which we may condemn men. All of us will be saved by God's mercy and grace and not by our own perfection. We will fulfill our purpose on earth by proclaiming the *Good News* and offering salvation on the basis of the promises. If God wants to do more than he promised he has a perfect right to do it. Let His will be done!

13. Do you think one must know at the time of baptism that it is for the remission of sins in order for it to be valid?

I do not. When one believes that Jesus is the Christ and God's Son and is immersed because of that faith it is for the remission of sins, whether he knows it or not. Baptism is an act of transition in which one is transferred from one state to another. A proper subject complying with such an act is not only transferred to the new state but is made a recipient of all the blessings and privileges of that new state even though he may be ignorant of what they may all be. Remission of sins is a judicial act of divine clemency which takes place in heaven in the mind of God. A proper subject is a penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. When such a person validates his faith by obedience to the command of baptism God awards him remission of sins. "For the remission of sins" is not a part of the command. It is a statement of the result accruing from obedience. The command is to "repent and be baptized." It is not faith in baptism but faith in Christ that saves. Our forgiveness depends not upon our knowledge of the blessings we will receive but upon our trust in Jesus as our Saviour.

14. Is not "remission of sins" the design of baptism?

It is God's design, not man's. It is man's design to obey God which prompts him to be baptized; it is God's design to forgive the sins of those who thus obey. David Lipscomb wrote: "I do not think anyone was ever baptized because his sins were remitted. They may have believed their sins were remitted

before they were baptized, but the remission of sins was not the moving cause. There is nothing in remission of sins as a motive to prompt one to be baptized. They may have thought, inasmuch as God had forgiven their sins, they ought to obey his command to be baptized; but in that case the desire to obey God was the moving cause. When a man is baptized to obey God, he is led by a proper motive; and I believe when he does this to obey him, God will forgive his sins, whether he knows the act in which God forgives or not. Man cannot be led by a holier or more acceptable motive than the desire to obey God and so ‘fulfill all righteousness.’”

The truth is that there are at least nine designs of baptism. We are baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15); to enter into relationship with the Godhood (Matt. 28:19); to secure remission of sins (Acts 2:38); to obtain the gift of the indwelling Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32); to share in the likeness of the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3); to enter the one body (1 Cor. 12:13); to have the answer of a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21); to be saved (Mark 16:16); and to put on Christ as a garment (Gal. 3:27). On what ground do we select one of these and make it the criterion of validity? No man can baptize another *for the remission of sins* because he cannot read his heart and does not know his motives. It is absurd for one to raise his hand in priestly fashion and intone, “I baptize you for the remission of sins.” He does not know whether the sins of the person will be remitted or not. All any of us can do is to immerse one upon his profession to us of his faith in the Lord Jesus. Only God knows whether he really believes or not. Too many preachers act as if they believe in baptismal regeneration and can personally perform an act which in and of itself secures remission of sins. This is clericalism and sectarianism gone to seed. It is time for us to grow up!

When “The Church of Christ” began to exhibit symptoms of its growing sectarianism its members started to emphasize the doctrine of “knowledge of the design” instead of faith in the Lord Jesus as the ground of acceptability for baptism. This

caused the preachers to hold a “coroner’s inquest” over every case of baptism not performed by one of their number. Men were actually rejected who would not submit to re-immersion in order to please the party. This was not the attitude of the early reformers. Tolbert Fanning wrote, “If a Baptist were to present himself to me stating that he was satisfied with his baptism, but still would be baptized again to please the church, if required, I should be certain that man was a hypocrite, or lacked the gospel knowledge and faith.”

Those men saw the proper relationship of baptism to Christ Jesus and thus to salvation. A. T. Anderson, an eminent student, wrote in *Christian Review* as follows: “I can never believe that God will withhold the act of pardon because I may not have understood that my sins were forgiven in the act of baptism; knowing that my whole confidence was placed in his Son, and his death for my sins, at the time of my immersion. Christ is greater than immersion. Though I believe with all my heart in Christ, and have the disposition to do whatever he bids me; yet I cannot be saved from my sins, because I have not been taught that he will forgive me just at that time. If this doctrine be carried out, it would make baptism a savior, or I know nothing of reason. This makes immersion the greater and Christ the less. This makes our salvation to depend not on our faith and obedience, nor on the faithfulness of him who has promised.”

When a man is motivated by any of the “designs” of baptism to obey God, then Jesus is the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” There would be no more efficacy in “Church of Christ baptism” than in “Baptist baptism.” Both would be for the purpose of pleasing a party. When a man is baptized to please God, or to obey a command of God, that is not party baptism at all. He has done what God requires and “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” A misunderstanding about God’s part in the procedure will not negate the promise to one who has done his part as commanded.

15. Can one become a child of God who does not believe God's word about baptism for remission of sins?

The problem with those of whom we have been speaking is not rejecting of God's word. They love the Bible as much as any of us. It is not arrogant disbelief but misunderstanding as to when God grants forgiveness. The Bible does not teach that we receive life by believing that baptism is for the remission of sins but by belief that Jesus is the Son of God. If the opposite were true we would need to question each candidate, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that baptism is for the remission of sins?" It is not faith in the design but faith in the designer that makes our obedience effective. Every person on this earth who is immersed has many mistaken ideas but these do not invalidate baptism.

God joins remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit as blessings conferred upon the obedient believer. Many have a false conception of the Holy Spirit and some even deny his personality. If they needed to be re-immersed every time they learned something new about this divine gift "the waters would be troubled" regularly. But mistaken views about the gift of the Holy Spirit do not render baptism useless. It is a dangerous tendency when people cease to trust in the living God and begin to trust to their own degree of knowledge and legalistic goodness. We need to quit accusing honest believers of being guilty of disbelief when they simply do not understand some things. This spirit of unjust criticism and censoriousness is not becoming in those who would lead men to a closer walk with God.

16. What do you recommend we should do to restore a proper feeling of unity among the believers?

We should confess to one another that we have been partisan and sectarian in attitude and pray one for another that we may be healed of the ravages upon our hearts of this work of

the flesh. We should be brought to our knees in tears over our growing sectarianism. We should set the table of the Lord for every sincere immersed believer and invite all such to sit down around it as our brethren. We should call upon all of them, recognize and regard them as children of our Father.

It is time for us to throw off the childish attitude which has characterized the brotherhood and start acting like men. The idea of categorizing those who differ with us as “brethren in error,” with the implication that we are wholly free from error and know all there is to know, is a little silly when you think about it seriously. The truth is that we are all brethren in error. Not one of us is perfect in knowledge and we all have a great deal to learn. We do not accept one another because we are free from error but because we are free in Christ— free to receive one another even while we try to work out our problems together and seek to arrive at a greater understanding. The brethren who accept me will have to overlook a lot of things just as God had to make allowances in order to receive me. I am willing to receive others on the same basis as he received me.

17. Is it possible to retain one’s spiritual integrity and participate in meetings sponsored by various factions?

It is if you do not equate any faction as the church of God and keep your conscience pure by abstaining from that which violates your personal conviction. So far as I am concerned, none of our factions is “the loyal church.” All of them have brethren within them who are as devoted to Jesus as they know how to be; all have some who are a disgrace to the Christian profession. I do not endorse any faction for I am opposed to factionalism as such, but I do recognize and regard as my brothers those who compose the various parties among us.

I want to share with all of my brothers, not alone because of what little I may teach them, but because of the great deal which they can teach me. It has been a very ennobling

experience to find that I can learn from all of my brethren. I am a Christian only. I bear no man's brand upon me. I belong to Jesus who bought me with His blood. I do not intend to sell out to any group or clique. This makes it possible for me to move freely among all of the brethren without having to look back over my shoulder to see how the party reacts to my freedom.

I do not see how I could retain my spiritual integrity without regarding all of my brethren as brothers. If I began to measure our relationship to each other by an attitude toward various items and things I would become inconsistent. I do not regard brotherhood as a matter for political jockeying or pettifogging hanky-panky. I have resolved to never again allow any faction to entice me into a partisan corral where I will be loved by them only if I hate others. Wherever I go it will be as a disciple of Jesus and not as a dissembling partisan.

18. Is this an indication that you have become "soft" and chosen the easy way out?

Indeed not! This is the most difficult thing I have ever attempted in my life. It is not easy to love all of your brothers. The "soft" person should stay in the nice secluded shelter of a narrow faction. The high walls of exclusivism will protect him from contact with any alien element. He can hide in the shadows of his monastic structure and peer through little slits to watch the rest of the world go by.

If he does sally forth he can challenge for debate and load the propositions, or make them so ambiguous that he can inwardly congratulate himself that he has won a battle when neither his opponent nor himself ever got within striking distance. He can draw himself up to the full height of his midget stature and declare that he is "just going to preach the gospel" and not become involved with the problems of a sick, sorrowful and saddened brotherhood. This is the easy way out and the easy way to stay in— with the faction!

Have you ever tried to go wherever the Spirit opened up a door— to go by yourself into a strange environment where you stood alone and where your personal convictions were regarded as queer quirks or stubborn scruples? Have you ever submitted your views and opinions to open question in an audience where some had come merely to destroy your influence and assault your philosophy to protect their partisan programs? I hardly think this is an assignment for the timid soul, or for one who “holds with the hare and runs with the hounds.” The strategy of love is the hardest of all to execute. It took the life of Jesus. It meant death to thousands of his saints. The easy way is the way of the contracted creed, the compressed compassion and the condensed concern.

The Christian life was never intended to be staid, static or stagnant. It is an adventure of faith. It is a conscious risk of all that one has or is, in the firm trust that love is an unconquerable force against which no weapon can prosper and no power can stand. It is a firm commitment to the concept that love is imperishable and abiding. To invest one’s whole hope of survival upon this principle in a world conditioned to strife and schism as the gateway to God’s grace is not easy. It is no task for one who is soft and weak, or fragile and feeble.

19. What do you consider to be our most serious problem today?

I have no hesitancy in saying it is the traditional misapplication of the scriptures to justify division in the family of God. When we interpret the written word to deny and defeat the prayer and purpose of the Living Word there is something wrong with our interpretation. Brethren are taking passages intended to enjoin separation from pagans and heathen and applying them to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are quoting statements written to debar Gnostics who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh or affirmed he was a mere phantom, in such a manner as to proscribe honest saints who differ with

them about instrumental music and the millennium.

Such imperfection in scholarship and inadequacy of thought earns for us the disdain of thinkers who rise above the level of mediocrity. We need to restore the spirit of real research which delves for deeper truth and does not concern itself with parroting partisan phraseology. The age of crisis in which we exist demands that we offer more to the world which asks for the bread of life than the polished stones of factional controversy. It is because of this crying need for restudy that we propose to devote the next twelve issues of this paper to an examination of “the twisted scriptures.”

Ours will be a critical investigation of those loaded phrases which are glibly handed out to the unsuspecting masses as the answer to problems to which they are wholly unrelated. We will not be satisfied with the scriptures extracted from their setting, wrenched and wrested from their context, then bent and battered into place to sustain Church-of-Christism or any other “ism.” We invite every honest soul who is concerned about truth to go on a scriptural exploration with us during the coming year. Invite your friends to accompany us on this reverent walk through the corridors of revelation. At the end of 1965 we shall gather our findings together in a book of explanation and exposition of “The Twisted Scriptures” which will be made available to you at moderate cost. In the meantime this concludes our theme for 1964, and all of the issues for this year will be issued in a book called “The Brotherhood of Faith.”

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1965)

Volume 27

The Twisted Scriptures

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Another Gospel

Mission Messenger (January 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.

Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-8).

This has become one of the “twisted scriptures.” It was written to summon back to trust in the grace of God those who were being bewitched into placing their confidence in works of the law. It was intended to be unitive in a context which condemns “strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit,” as works of the flesh. It is now employed to promote and defend schism and division among the children of God. It has been captured by the partisan proponents of orthodoxy and re-forged into a weapon to carve the one body to bits.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that men would thus treat the writings of the apostle Paul. We have the testimony of another apostle indicating we should expect it. “As indeed our beloved brother Paul has written to you, out of the wisdom vouchsafed to him, speaking of this as he has done in all his

letters— letters containing some knotty points, which ignorant and unsteady souls twist (as they do the rest of the scriptures) to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3: 1— Moffatt). “There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures” (RSV).

I do not think this implies that everyone who wrests a scripture from its context is wilfully ignorant and unsteady. No doubt men can do this innocent of any evil motive and in a firm belief that their application is the will of God. If they are ignorant, it is involuntary and not deliberate. Such men, when shown the more excellent way, will at once amend their thinking. It is because of my firm conviction that the good and honest heart will receive the seed of the word and not reject it, that I address myself to those brethren who are shivering the kingdom of heaven to fragments under the delusion that by so doing they best serve the interests of the King.

Those who mistake unity with conformity and who predicate fellowship upon endorsement, brand as “another gospel” every view, opinion and interpretation, which is divergent from their own. Under the fallacious notion that every religious concept which they enunciate is “gospel” they pronounce an anathema upon every person who dares to question their orthodox procedures in any respect. Thus they splinter the family into fragments unless all are willing to make them the inviolable and inerrant interpreters of the sacred oracles. Every party within the spectrum of orthodoxy thinks it alone has an infallible interpretation and men must stifle their thinking and bow in humble subservience to the unwritten creed, or else be hounded out as having “perverted the gospel of Christ.”

One faction accuses those who defend the use of individual cups as preaching another gospel; a second accuses those who employ Bible classes as preaching another gospel; a third labels

those who support “Herald of Truth” as preaching another gospel; while those who support this international propaganda medium denounce those who believe in the premillennial coming of Jesus as preaching another gospel. The non-instrument segment of the restoration movement has disintegrated into a group of clamoring camps and clashing clans, slashing at each other over radio and from behind paper curtains, all blasting away at the others as having “perverted the gospel.”

Within the past year I have personally read that advocacy of missionary societies, instrumental music, centralized control, Bible colleges, institutional orphan homes, sponsored radio programs, unfermented wine in the Lord’s Supper, individual cups, classes, Sunday school literature, the pastor system, and a host of other things constitute “preaching another gospel.” In all kindness I say that those who thus write may not be unstable but they reveal their ignorance of what constitutes the gospel, in no uncertain fashion. In the same spirit of kindness I say that, regardless of whether all of these items are right or wrong, they are not related to “the gospel of Christ” and one does not pervert that gospel if, in all sincerity, he advocates any of them, or, in the same spirit, opposes all of them.

That you may not think we are falsely accusing our brethren in the Lord, let me cite you a documented case of what I mean. In April, 1964, I received an appeal for funds for Herald of Truth Radio and Television Program, from one of the elders of the “Fifth and Highland Church of Christ” at Abilene, Texas. The letter containing the appeal boldly asserted that there was “no church of the Lord” in some areas, and since I had but recently visited some of those places and found a lot of God’s children (although they did not share my views about instrumental music and some other things) I concluded that my good brother in Abilene was equating “the church of our Lord” with the particular faction supporting his program and conforming to the policies of the congregation of which he was one of the bishops.

I addressed a letter to him asking him to define “the church of our Lord.” I received a very gracious and ecumenical reply to which no one who loved Jesus could take exception. In closing, our brother wrote, “We urge men and women to join us in accepting these immortal truths as the basis and only basis of Christian unity, and we plead, Brother Ketcherside, that you will join hands with us in standing for and preaching only that which will unite the brotherhood as mentioned above.”

Perhaps I am too suspicious, but I know how the factional spirit works. I learned it from experience, a fact of which I am properly ashamed. So when my brethren use such terms as “the only basis of Christian unity” and “that which will unite the brotherhood” I want to know what they mean by Christian unity and who all is included in the brotherhood. I certainly want to join all in accepting immortal truths but I’ve seen very mortal restrictions placed upon them. For that reason, I addressed another letter to my brother who made the plea to me, in which I wrote among other things, the following:

I am deadly in earnest about what I am writing because I feel that a false image of the one body is being projected from many sources these days. In your printed literature you speak of the places where there is no “church of the Lord” and somehow I get the impression that you equate “the church of our Lord” with that segment of the restoration brotherhood which conforms to the “Church of Christ” of which Highland is a congregation, and you imply that the New Testament church is limited only to those who thus conform to the exclusion of all others.

1. Do you consider that those humble and sincere saints who have been immersed into our Lord Jesus Christ, and who cannot conscientiously see that the use of instrumental music is a sin, are members of the one body and, thus, are in the Lord’s church?

2. Do you consider that those sincere and

consecrated saints who have been immersed into our Lord Jesus Christ and who conclude from their study of the new covenant scriptures that Jesus is going to return to this earth and do so before the millennium are members of the one body, and thus of the Lord's church?

3. If you do consider that they are, then it is quite apparent that the "Lord's church" is in some sectors which you have said are devoid of it; if not, it is apparent that you must inform us of what such persons must do to come into the Lord's church.

This matter is of interest to me because I have recently met several brethren in the Independent segment of the instrumental branch of the restoration movement who are helping to support your program. One such brother and his good wife drove all the way from _____ to _____, to attend the fellowship forum in which we discussed our mutual problems of brotherhood. He informed me that he had been to Abilene and had conversed with you personally. He feels that you certainly regard him as being in "the Lord's church" even though he attends with the brethren who use instrumental music at _____. Is he mistaken in his impression of what you believe? Certainly this man is my brother and I consider him a member of the one body, although I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship, as I am to the pre-millennial view. Will you kindly address yourself to these questions?

As I had anticipated, our brother, when confronted with these pointed queries, revealed the true spirit of orthodoxy, which makes use of "loaded passages" and "twisted scriptures" in the hope that the unwary will not see that they have no connection with the subject at hand. He said he would give "a Bible answer for everything for which we stand and teach." This has become another "loaded term." Our brother used only two scriptural passages, neither of which was remotely connected to the question at hand. Here is what he said:

I want to first notice the closing paragraph of your letter of May 2 in which you say, “I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship, as I am to the premillennial view.” I am glad to hear you make that statement for I, too, agree with you and oppose the mechanical instrument in worship as well as the pre-millennial view. I believe that we both can prove on the same grounds that they are both contrary to the teaching of the Bible— that’s my basis for opposing them and I feel it is yours. Now in view of that fact, I think we have a quotation from the apostle Paul in the Galatian letter— chapter one beginning with verse six— “I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God, or do I seek to please men? For if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

Brother Carl, there is not a doubt in my mind but what these brethren who use instrumental music and the pre-millennialists are both preaching a perverted gospel, and if that be true and your statement quoted from the May 2 letter would lead me to believe that you believe it is true, then they are to be “. . . accursed . . .” according to the passage from the Galatian letter.

Of course there was nothing in my letter to lead our brother to think that I believed that “the humble and sincere saints” were preaching a perverted gospel. This conclusion was reached because he did not know of what the gospel consisted, and because he was unable to distinguish between honest differences of understanding and a perverted gospel. The tragedy of this resides in the fact that brethren are being asked

for millions of dollars to preach the gospel to the world and those who propose to do it do not know of what the gospel consists. They use the money to promote Church-of-Christism. They can never secure unity on this basis. They will but serve to divide the saints in the future as they have in the past. Even now there is a pro-Herald of Truth party and an anti-Herald of Truth party, each accusing the other of preaching a perverted gospel. The scholarly world looks with disdain upon such childish antics. I wrote our brother as follows:

My reason for writing you again in replication to your letter of June 4, is to be certain that I make it clear that I do not share in your application of Galatians 1:6 to the problem of association with brethren who do not concur with our views relative to the coming of our Lord and the use of instruments in the corporate worship of the body. You will pardon me for speaking thus plainly, and I certainly do not mean to be unkind, but I think your application of the scripture to which allusion has just been made is more divisive and will be productive of more strife than instrumental music or the pre-millennial question could ever be.

These brethren with whom we are concerned are not preaching a perverted gospel. They are announcing the same Good News as we are and that news is about the same Christ. They are affirming the facts concerning him that the apostles affirmed and in the same way as did the apostles—actually quoting the apostolic texts as effectively as you or I could ever do.

And those whom I know are telling men to implement their faith in the Lord Jesus exactly as you tell them to do, and thus men are obeying the gospel exactly as you insist that they should. Undoubtedly you have their misunderstanding of certain aspects of the apostolic doctrine mixed up with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If these brethren who are mistaken about the

coming of our Lord are preaching a perverted gospel then every man who is honestly mistaken after being born again is accursed of God. Can you state positively that you are correct in every understanding and every interpretation of the book of Revelation? If not, you damn yourself with the same passage with which you pronounce them accursed.

Certainly I am opposed to the theory of pre-millennialism and to the use of instrumental music in the corporate worship, but I do not charge my brethren who honestly have arrived at their conclusions with perverting the gospel as you do. I am sure that, holding your view, you will only augment division and strife instead of lessening it.

I have not cited this case at length because I think it is unique, but because it is typical of the thought pattern which cripples "The Church of Christ" today. The brother to whom I wrote is no better and no worse in his reasoning than thousands of others. He is a victim of that sectarian attitude which eats like a cancer at the heart of a great movement and fetters it with the chains of bondage in what could be its finest hour. Unless there is a re-examination made of the implication contained in scriptures parroted to prove partisan righteousness our brethren are doomed to perpetuation of puerile mediocrity and the thinking world will pass us by as we wallow in the mire of our misguided zeal and legalistic attitudes.

Any interpretation of the written word which defeats and makes impossible the fulfillment of the plan, purpose and prayer of the Living Word is wrong. Any use of the revelation of God to fracture the family of God is abuse and misuse. The purpose of the scripture is to point to Jesus and not to prod us into hatred of our brethren. It is sinful to falsely accuse brethren. It is sinful to "set at nought a brother" for whom Christ died. But brethren are falsely accused when their honest mistakes in understanding are transmuted into "another gospel" and they are set at nought by those who think they please God. No one can be more

mistaken than that!

What is the gospel? Before one can designate a thing as “another gospel” he must be able to identify the original gospel. The gospel, by etymology, is good news. It is not a system of doctrine, a philosophy of life or a code of ethics. It is good news about a person and what that person has done for us in our helpless, hapless and hopeless condition. It is not a message for the saved but for the lost. It is never addressed to the church but to the world. It is designed to make believers instead of providing food for them. The word gospel is a translation of *euangelion*. It is an evangel and you cannot evangelize saved persons. It is sadly amiss to talk about preaching the gospel to the church unless the church is composed of those who have never come to Christ, that is, have never obeyed the gospel.

The gospel which Paul proclaimed in Galatia did not originate with man (1:11). It was not the presentation of borrowed “sermon outlines.” It was the “gospel of Christ” (1:7). It consisted of “preaching Christ among the Gentiles” (1:16). It was “preaching the faith he once tried to destroy” (1:23). And what was that faith? “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in thee’” (Acts 22:19). It was belief in Jesus which Paul sought to destroy. It was faith in Jesus which he later proclaimed.

The careful student of the Galatian letter will at once see that the good news was a proclamation that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by works of law (2:16). There was no good news in a reign of law. Those who rely on works of law are under a curse (3:10); no man can be justified before God by law (3:11); if justification were through law, Christ died to no purpose (2:21); if inheritance were by law, it was not by promise (3:18). The utter futility of law lies in the fact that it must leave man dead. “For if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by law” (3:21). There is no

such law, either divine or human.

Law confines and keeps under restraint. It binds but cannot free (3:23). It makes a person under it “no better than a slave” (4:1). Men had to be redeemed from it before they could even receive adoption as sons (4:5). It is impossible to be justified by faith in Jesus and to try and be justified by law at the same time, because one binds while the other frees. One cannot be both a slave and a son, because the adoption as sons frees from the bondage of law. One who thus seeks to be justified by law, or by legal conformity, severs himself from Jesus. “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (5:4). Nothing is plainer than the statement, “You are not under law, but under grace.” You cannot be under both at once. The attempt to be will make of us schizophrenists in the spiritual realm.

Salvation is a state of right relationship with God. Jesus did not come merely to keep us out of hell but to keep hell out of us. He came to reconcile us unto God. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” We do not enter this relationship by bargaining with God. We cannot earn it, purchase it or deserve it. We cannot bid on it or for it. If we did all we could we would still be unprofitable. It is not what we do for God that brings us into this relationship but what he has done for us. We are saved by grace through faith. It is not of ourselves. It is not by works. Study Galatians 4:1-7. “We were slaves . . . but . . . God sent forth his Son . . . God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” We could not adopt ourselves into his family. We had nothing by which to purchase our redemption from the slave pen. “So through God you are no longer a slave but a son.”

Our response to the grace which sent a person to become sin for us, and to reconcile us, is faith in that person. This is what justifies. Justification has to do with freedom from guilt. We are not justified because we are guiltless for all of us are

guilty. We are not justified because we have done something to free ourselves from guilt for no one can ever undo an act he has committed. Not even God can do that! We cannot “take back” what we have done. But Jesus is guiltless. He is the sinless one. If we are in Jesus we are not in a sinless state but in a sinless person. If we trust in his righteousness, that faith or trust is reckoned unto us as righteousness, or justification. Justification must always be a gift of God. We cannot give anything to God to meet a need of his. We must be always on the receiving end.

To one who works, what he receives must be counted as wages, and not as a gift. One who works has something coming to him, but no man has anything coming from God. He cannot be placed in our debt. We cannot keep books on God or “figure our own time.” “To one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Romans 4:5). To be in Christ does not mean we have not sinned. It does not mean our sinful acts have been undone. It does not mean that we are guiltless. It simply means that in him God can treat us as guiltless. He can, through Jesus, reckon our faith as righteousness and not reckon our sins.

The gospel is the good news, the glad tidings of that justification by faith in Christ Jesus. It is the welcome communication from heaven that by trusting in Jesus in complete surrender and commitment, God will regard us as if we were without sin, since we are in one who is in that state. This is the gospel which Paul proclaimed in Galatia. It was the good news that Jesus was not as powerless as Greek wisdom and Jewish legalism. Salvation was not hinged upon coming into wisdom or coming under the law, but upon coming into a person! God has made him “our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Paul declared that the message brought to Galatia was “Jesus Christ publicly portrayed (or placarded) as crucified” (3:1). The *truth* of that gospel, that is, the essence, the basis, the

central theme, was justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Truth is reality, stripped of all extraneous matter and naked of all artificial covering. The glad tidings to the world consisted of announcement of the most tremendous, magnificent and earth-shaking principle in the universe— that justification is by faith in the Son of God. This is the core of the message. This is “the truth of the gospel.”

Shortly after Paul had gone from Galatia, members of the circumcision party came and taught those who heard the good news that something else was required, that faith in Jesus was not sufficient. No doubt their message was the same as that which they promulgated at Antioch, “Except ye be circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to consult the brethren. They took Titus along as a test case. They encountered “false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage— to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you” (2:4, 5). If Paul had yielded on this occasion, the principle of justification by faith, *the truth* of the gospel, would have been washed down the drain by the flood of legalism.

When Peter went to Antioch he ate with the Gentiles, until certain men came from James at Jerusalem. “When they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party” (2:12). This was a repudiation of the principle of justification by faith in Jesus and an adoption of the tenet of the party— you must believe in Jesus *and something more* to be in the fellowship. Peter caused a division with his unwritten creed. Others were drawn into the faction, including Barnabas. Paul saw that “they were not straightforward about *the truth* of the gospel.” Do not be mistaken. Peter still believed in Jesus. So did Barnabas. But they lent their influence to those who insisted that this was not enough to be justified.

Paul proceeds to define the truth of the gospel in one of the most sublime passages in the Galatian letter. "We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified" (2:15, 16). To profess this as the marrow, or kernel, of the gospel, and then, under partisan pressure, to tack something else on to it as a condition of salvation, is to act insincerely and to be "not straightforward about the truth of the gospel."

Those who were in Christ in the days of the apostles were in error on many points. They were mistaken about a lot of things but they were not charged with "preaching another gospel." Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation else all men would be damned. We are not saved by attainment to a certain degree of knowledge but by faith in Christ Jesus. It is by belief of facts related to him, and not by grasp of abstract truth, that we are justified before God. Certainly it is not by performance of meritorious deeds nor by legalistic conformity. When we postulate a program of justification by knowledge we hang ourselves on the gallows we have constructed to rid ourselves of others, unless we are prepared to make ourselves even more ridiculous by affirming that we know as much as God.

There were saints in the congregation at Corinth who still had not been able to completely shake off the notion that there might be something to idols. The apostle wrote, "As to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that 'there is no God but one,' . . . However, *not all possess that knowledge*. But some through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered unto an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled" (1 Cor. 8:7). Paul did not call their honest ignorance, conditioned upon their past teaching and association, "preaching another gospel." Instead,

he forbade the one with superior knowledge to act upon it if it would ensnare the weak. “And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.” Shall I act in such a manner with regard to cups, classes, colleges or instrumental music that I destroy my brothers for whom Jesus died? Shall I use any of these as a battle-axe with which to chop my brothers to pieces?

There were some in the same congregation who were in error about the resurrection. “Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12). Were these among the “beloved brethren” whom Paul addressed in the last verse of this chapter? The Corinthians were in error when they tried to settle their grievances by impleading each other in heathen courts, yet Paul said it was “brother going to law against brother.” He did not call their error “perverting the gospel.”

Even the Galatians, troubled as they were by some who wanted to pervert the gospel of Christ, were far from perfect. They were below the standard which Paul desired them to obtain. They had come into Christ but Christ had not yet been formed in them. Yet they were his “little children” as evidenced in his words, “My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (4:19). He did not accuse them of preaching “another gospel” because they had not matured. Paul knew the difference between the seed from which life came and the daily bread upon which the children fed. He knew the difference between gospel and doctrine, and between faith and knowledge. He knew that the gospel brought us into being while the doctrine was essential to our growth and wellbeing and he did not make a test of fellowship out of spiritual digestion.

No honest opinion held by one who is in Christ Jesus and who respects his lordship, is “another gospel.” Since it is the gospel which forms the basis of the fellowship with the Father,

the Son and with one another in Christ, such an opinion can never be made a test of union or communion in Christ. A man may hold a view as to the perseverance of the saints, the manner of the resurrection, or the second coming of our Lord, and he may prove to be as wrong as one could be, but he cannot be debarred from citizenry in the kingdom of heaven by the other subjects, any more than one can be disenfranchised in the United States because he disagrees with the government space program or holds the view that it is impossible to reach the moon.

No man “preaches another gospel” simply by being mistaken about some aspects of the will of God, otherwise one would need to know perfectly the divine will or be a perverter of the gospel. It is absurd for those good brethren (and they are numerous) who oppose the centralized control represented in the Herald of Truth program, to brand those who defend the program as “preaching another gospel” and “apostatizing.” Those who do so, regardless of motive, reveal that they are ignorant of what constitutes both gospel and apostasy. The brethren who present Herald of Truth are not guilty of “preaching another gospel” simply because they support the work through a manner which some believe to be without scriptural authority.

Whether it is right or wrong to send contributions to support the program of the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas, the doing so and the defending of the alleged right to do so, is not preaching “another gospel.” To quote Galatians 1:6-8 and make such an application is to wrest and twist the scripture. Those who separate themselves from their brethren and set up rival parties, pro or con, are guilty of “setting at nought their brethren.” I have some definite convictions about the Herald of Truth program, and about the principle involved in its method of support, but neither side will enlist me in their factional attitude where I must set at nought my brethren on the other side. They are all my brethren and they are all right on some

points and all wrong on others. I propose to recognize them all as my brothers and treat them that way, regardless of how they treat each other. They did not become brothers by an attitude toward Herald of Truth, but by the blood of Jesus applied to their hearts, and no attitude toward a radio or television program will ever be as important to me as that blood. I just refuse to allow an *attitude* toward things to cancel the *relationship* created by the cross.

But by the same token those who defend Herald of Truth act with an equal degree of absurdity when they accuse the brethren who hold the view of the pre-millennial return of Jesus, of “preaching another gospel.” Regardless of how or when Jesus comes, or what men think about the time and method of his coming, to set at nought a brother over such matters is to sin against Jesus. It is as wrong to create a post-millennial party, or an amillennial party, as it would be to create a pre-millennial party. We are one body. This is true regardless of our varied views, opinions or interpretations. The brethren who promote Herald of Truth are as factional and divisive about unfulfilled prophecy as those whom they castigate for opposition to Herald of Truth.

I have some definite ideas about the millennium and the coming of our Lord but I refuse to make these tests of fellowship. I shall not drive out the children of my Father because they do not concur with me as to the time when our elder brother will return, or the circumstances under which we will all live with him. I shall not smite my fellowservants because my Lord delays his coming. It is not a correct understanding of the time, manner and place of the second coming which makes us members of the same family, but belief in the One who was incarnate almost twenty centuries ago and died for our sins. There is room in his kingdom for men who dearly love him to hold either view of his return. There is also mercy enough to extend to those who prove to be mistaken about it. I refuse to be a “millennial partisan” of either kind. Neither segment is going

to capture and corral me so that I cannot associate with the others and love them as my brothers.

The same can be said for those brethren who think that the use of instrumental music as an aid in corporate worship can be justified by proper interpretation of the scriptures. I do not belong to a vocal music party nor to an instrumental music party. It is just as factional and sectarian to put up a sign “Church of Christ— Vocal Music” in order to separate from brethren as to put up one reading “Church of Christ— Instrumental Music.” Brethren who do either reveal much more about themselves than they do about others. I belong to Jesus and not a faction. Every person whom God welcomes as a child I shall receive as my brother. No group upon this earth will ever again build a partisan wall to enclose me and shut me off from others of God’s children. I shall be shut up only by the love of Jesus.

We need to give serious thought to this problem of “another gospel.” There is a grave danger that those who are most vociferous in their accusation that others are preaching “another gospel” are treading on thin ice and may be guilty of the very thing of which they accuse others. Actually there is no such thing as another gospel and cannot be. The gospel is the good news that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. Anything else is just not gospel. That is why Paul said, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel— not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

To offer justification, or right standing with God, upon any other basis than trust in Jesus, may appear to those who hear it to be “a gospel.” They may regard it as such and even accept and designate it as such. Ultimately they will learn that it could not deliver what it offered, that there is only one basis for right relationship to God. Then that which appeared so plausible and

convincing, which seemed so rational and documented, will be shown to be empty and frustrating, and not good news at all.

Let us imagine a person standing at a crossroads, deliberating upon a journey and carefully scrutinizing his map. An affable stranger steps up and enquires as to his destination. Upon learning where the man is going he declares that he can show him a shortcut which will require but half as much time and effort. "That is good news to me," replies the other as they start out. Soon they come to a place where a bridge is out, and in an attempt to find another crossing, they become entangled in a swamp and finally the guide is forced to admit that he is lost. The "good news" proves to be not good at all. It seemed like glad tidings when first offered but it left the traveler in a worse state than before he heard it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the offer of a right relationship with God through faith in Christ—that faith which works by love—not by law! There may be many responsibilities growing out of our relationship to the Father, but these do not beget that relationship and the relationship is not created by them. It may afterwards be affected by them and by our attitude toward them, but the relationship itself does not originate in them, and to make it contingent upon them is to come dangerously near to promoting another gospel.

Let us be specific. When brethren make a test of union and communion out of an attitude toward a specific method of breaking the bread in the Lord's Supper, and refuse to recognize as in the fellowship those who do not concur in their special brand of orthodoxy, they hinge justification upon faith in Jesus Christ and *something else*. The "something else" is agreement with their understanding, inference or deduction from scriptures, as to the method of breaking the bread. Their creed is no longer simply Christ but conformity with a factional pattern. Whatever any party makes a test of fellowship is its creed. Whatever one must accept to be regarded as loyal is a

creed.

When brethren make a test of union or communion out of an attitude toward distribution of the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper, whether in one container or several, and refuse to recognize as in the fellowship, those who do not concur in their orthodoxy, they hinge justification upon faith in Jesus Christ and *something else*. The "something else" is agreement with their understanding of the relative importance of the container to communion in the blood of Jesus. Their creed is no longer simply Christ but conformity with a factional pattern.

When brethren make a test of union or communion out of an attitude toward propagation of the message through such media as Herald of Truth, their creed is no longer simply Christ Jesus but conformity with a factional pattern.

When brethren make a test of union and communion out of an attitude toward the millennium, their creed is no longer simply Christ, but conformity with a factional pattern.

When brethren make a test of union and communion out of an attitude toward the use of instrumental music in expression of praise to God, their creed is no longer simply Christ but conformity with a factional pattern.

To make one's right standing with God depend not upon surrender of himself to Jesus, but upon standing right on other things, is dangerously near to perverting the gospel. This was the mistake of the circumcision party in the days of Paul. Let it be understood that Paul did not regard either circumcision or lack of it as of any avail in establishing that relationship. "For in union with Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor the lack of it counts for anything; but only faith that is spurred on to action by love" (Galatians 5:6).

One may be in Christ Jesus in spite of his attitude toward individual cups, classes, colleges, Herald of Truth, the

millennium or instrumental music. He may be in Christ and never even know that these issues have troubled the saints. He does not enter this relationship by an attitude toward any or all of these, but if he sets up his attitude on any one of them as a test of fellowship, he makes that attitude or that thing equal with Christ and the cross. When he says, "Except you adopt our attitude concerning one cup (or classes, or colleges, or Herald of Truth, or the millennium, or instrumental music) you cannot be saved," he sits down in the seat of the Pharisees. Many quote Galatians 1:6-8 and apply it to others when they are actually the ones who set up other unwritten creeds and pervert the gospel with their partisan terms of fellowship and justification.

Not every divergent view is "another gospel." Not every area of disagreement makes the one who disagrees with us a perverter of the gospel. Why do those who profess to love God seek so eagerly to brand their brothers and apply hurtful and prejudicial epithets? Why are they so anxious to set at nought their brothers for whom Christ died? Why are they bent upon smiting their fellowservants? Is this the more excellent way? Is this the royal road to unity? Will this accomplish the purpose for which Jesus shed his blood? Will it answer his prayer for the oneness of all believers? If God deals with us at the judgment in the same cold legalistic fashion that we deal with his other children, will any of us be saved?

In closing this little review of one of the "twisted scriptures" I would like to insert two quotations from yesteryear. The first is from the "Declaration and Address" as read by Thomas Campbell at Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1809.

That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith must not stand in the

wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.

The next quotation is from the pen of Alexander Campbell, the worthy son of the man who wrote the preceding lines.

The present partyism is a disgrace to our profession. It is fatal to the progress of piety and truth . . . The key of knowledge is virtually taken away, and ages of darkness are again spreading sable wings over a slumbering world. We must awaken from this sleep of death— this fatal lethargy that has seized the body ecclesiastic. Men are fighting about chimeras, loving and hating, approbating and disapprobating one another for reasons they do not comprehend, and, if comprehended, they would blush to see the illusions and phantoms that have bewildered them.

This is the first of a series of reviews of “The Twisted Scriptures.” Others will appear in this journal each month of this year and then be bound in a book bearing that title at close of the year. Be sure and read next month's issue.

Gospel and Doctrine

Mission Messenger (February 1965)

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[Abstract]

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15, 16).

This has become one of the “twisted scriptures.” As a result, that which was ordained to save the world is used to divide the church. That which was designed to be glad tidings to hungry sinners has become sad news to harassed saints. All of the confusion stems from the fact that our brethren generally have lost the scriptural distinction between the gospel, the Message to lead men to believe in Jesus as the Son of God; and the doctrine, which is a course of instruction for the training, development and growth of the children of God.

There is as much difference between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine as there is between the sperm from which a child is begotten and the food which he eats after he is born. The purpose of the gospel is to enlist men in the army of Christ; the doctrine constitutes a manual of arms and book of discipline to develop the soldiers into a fighting force. The first is an announcement that the school of Christ has been opened and eligible scholars will be accepted for enrollment; the latter is the curriculum for daily study by the students, or disciples.

Before we deal with the scriptural connotation involved let us understand why the traditional interpretation is conducive to division and destructive of unity. The common fallacy assumes that all of the apostolic epistles are part of the gospel of Christ and any exposition of the doctrine contained in these letters is preaching the gospel. Since Jesus makes salvation contingent upon believing the gospel, and superficial students generally confuse belief with knowledge, it is further assumed that those who do not subscribe to the orthodox interpretation placed upon every passage “reject the gospel.” Each sect, party or faction, thus makes its traditional explanations and deductions “the gospel” and we end up with as many “gospels” as we have parties.

It is easily understandable that the ones who so reason will conclude that only those are saved who are allied with the party, and all others are outside the pale since they have not “obeyed the gospel” (that is, subscribed to the unwritten partisan creed). But we learn from observation, experience and the sacred scriptures, that we do not all have the same degree of knowledge. God has made us all to differ in the intellectual realm as we do in the physical. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. No two of us upon earth attain to the same identical degree of knowledge about everything at the same moment. As Will Rogers remarked, “We are all ignorant, but just about different things.”

Any attempt to secure unity upon the basis of uniformity of knowledge or conformity in deductive or inferential processes (i.e., doctrinal interpretation) is doomed before it begins. It must inevitably end in dividing that which it seeks to unite. For this reason, those who make such attempts must always resort to creation of external authoritarian power structures in order to compel conformity. This is generally done by investing a person or group with an aura of infallibility so that all non-conformity with the orthodox creed can be equated with rebellion against God. Every individual who desires to be regarded as “loyal”

must surrender his right to reason and think upon God's revelation to the "power bloc" and "unity" is maintained by legislation handed down as well as by fear of social rejection by the group accompanied by reprisal for dissent.

Power Structure

In one sect the power structure is invested in a "universal father" whose pronouncements when made *ex cathedra* (from the chair) are accepted as dogma. This means that this one individual decides for all other individuals in the group what God meant by what he said, or did not say, and such decision must be accepted as the will of God. Other sects, finding it repulsive to their Christian concept to exalt one man to such cosmic importance, reduce the power structure from a universal to a diocesan level, where the bishop becomes the final court of appeal. Still other sects set up a parochial or congregational "power bloc," often consisting of a board of elders. Members of such groups are taught that to differ with the elders is to differ with God. The motto is, "Vox presbuteros, vox Dei" (The voice of the elders is the voice of God). Every sect which confuses community with conformity is forced to recognize either an infallible interpreter or an infallible interpretation. Of course, the procedure is not always as systematized and clearly recognized as those we have mentioned. Sects are like those who compose them and are inclined to be systematic or slipshod according to the nature and temperament of their constituents. Thus, in some cases, the editor of the recognized journalistic mouthpiece may arrogate to himself the mantle of infallibility and be allowed to wear it by default. His office becomes the clearinghouse for all problems and his decision must be accepted as final.

The attempt to make conformity to the party norm the basis of unity is further complicated by the fact that the rational processes cannot be stopped at a given level. Men who are

capable of doing so will continue to investigate and will reach conclusions differing with their own orthodox views of the past. When they refuse to succumb to threat or coercion they will be driven out and division will result. Since it is only the more eager students and researchists who labor to improve their intellectual grasp it is evident that the thinkers will be excluded, while the guardians of the status quo will be retained to man the party machinery. Every faction seeks to freeze knowledge at an arbitrary partisan level, and every such faction does it by skimming off the brains.

It is an outstanding achievement of divine wisdom that salvation is made contingent upon *belief of facts* incorporated in news, rather than upon knowledge of abstract reasoning or deductions drawn from doctrinal truths. The gospel is a unitive force because it consists of facts proclaimed by credible witnesses. These facts must be accepted or rejected. If accepted at all, they must be accepted as facts. All who so accept them are brought together in the one to whom they relate, regardless of ignorance about matters, immaturity, or lack of understanding of what will be further entailed. No subject should challenge a divided church more than the nature and content of the gospel. We propose to examine the word from the standpoints of etymology, scripture and scholarship. We make no apology for the length of our treatise because of the importance of our theme.

Meaning of the Word

Our English word “gospel” is from the Anglo-Saxon “gode spel,” good news, and was chosen as the best equivalent of the Greek *euangelion*. This was formed by adding the prefix “eu,” good, to a root meaning “message, tidings, or news.” The gospel is an evangel and one who proclaims it evangelizes. One cannot evangelize saved persons, for the evangel is a summons to the lost. Its purpose is to lead men to a state of salvation or

righteousness. One who believes the gospel and is baptized will be saved from his past sins, his unregenerate state or lost condition. The gospel precedes faith and produces it. It is not a fruit of faith but the seed of it. It is addressed to unbelievers and not to believers.

The difference between the gospel and the apostolic doctrine is readily seen by application of simple logic. Jesus said, "Go into the world and preach the gospel unto every creature." The gospel is to be taken to the world. It is to be proclaimed unto every unsaved person. But the apostolic doctrine was addressed to churches composed of the saved, or to individual believers. Not a single epistle was addressed to the unsaved in the community, although the obligation to take the gospel to them was referred to in one instance (Romans). The apostolic doctrine was to "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2), "to all the saints in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:1), and "to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). It was not to lead men to believe and be baptized but to tell them "how to behave themselves in the house of God" (2 Tim. 3:15).

One of the clearest passages showing the difference between the gospel which begets as a precedent to birth into the family, and subsequent instruction given to the sons is found in 1 Corinthians 4:14, 15. "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." The gospel is the spiritual sperm. The one who deposits it in the heart is the father, on the basis of principal and agent. Those who are born are sons. Others may teach or instruct them, but they receive life through the evangel, or gospel.

This is borne out by another apostle, Peter, who writes, "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable by the word of God which is living and indestructible." The writer identifies the seed thus, "This word is

the gospel which was proclaimed unto you” (1 Peter 1:25). The King James Version leaves the wrong impression by translating, “This is the word which by the gospel *is preached* unto you.” The Revised Version is more accurate. The gospel had been preached unto them before the new birth and in order to produce it. The gospel was for the world, the apostolic doctrine for the church.

With that keen sense of discrimination which characterized many of the pioneers of the restoration movement, Alexander Campbell wrote:

There was teaching, there was singing, there was praying, there was exhortation in the Christian church, but preaching in the church, or to the church is not once mentioned in the Christian scriptures!

Paul once, in his first letter to the church in Corinth, said he would declare to the Corinthians that gospel which he had preached to them, which also they had received and wherein they stood. We preach, or report, or proclaim news. But who teaches news? Who exhorts news? We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or those who have received it (Millennial Harbinger, April, 1862).

William Hurte, in A Catechetical Commentary, remarks about Acts 5:42 as follows:

The apostles rejoiced and went on with their work; but why does Luke use the two words “teach and preach Jesus Christ”? The words simply indicate the two classes to whom they were daily ministering. To the unconverted they preached, and to this class this word is strictly applicable, while believers were taught all things needful for life and godliness. To the former it is, and always must be, proclamation— i.e., preaching— while to the latter it must always be instruction concerning the Lord’s will.

Every kingdom must stand in two relationships to the people of the earth. There are aliens and citizens. The kingdom of heaven is no exception. Since it is the design of heaven to enroll as many aliens as possible into citizenry, and to train those who are inducted to become worthy citizens, there must be two separate and distinct messages from heaven. Both messages will be the word of God, but they will differ as to subject, content and aim. The first will be proclaimed to all men who have not entered into Christ and it must consist of such facts as will motivate the world to accept His sovereignty over their lives. The second must be a course of methodical instruction calculated to develop those in Christ from spiritual infancy to maturity.

The word of God informs us that there are such distinct messages and there are specific terms used by the Spirit to designate them. Since the messages are distinctive the bearers of the message are also distinguished by terms growing out of the nature of the messages. The announcement of news in the Greek world was made by a herald. The word for such a proclaimer was *keryx* and his message to the populace, that is, the thing proclaimed, was the *kerygma*. A herald might announce either victory or defeat, that is, either good news or bad. Thus, there is nothing in the word *kerygma* which indicates the nature of the tidings.

But the *kerygma* of the followers of the Messiah was universally and uniformly good news. So an additional term was used to describe it. That term is *euangelion*, which means "glad tidings." The bearer of this message was called *euangelistes*, that is, a bringer of good news. This good news proclaimed (or preached) by the herald, was announcement of victory in Jesus. It must be remembered that news has to do with facts and facts must be preceded by acts to which the proclaimer bears witness or of which he has knowledge. In view of this, the *kerygma* took on a definite form. It was "the thing proclaimed" and that thing was called the gospel, or good news.

In 1950, the eminent C. H. Dodd, Professor Emeritus in the University of Cambridge, England, was invited to deliver the Bampton Lectures in America, at Columbia University. He chose as his general theme "Gospel and Law." Dr. Dodd is best known to most of us as Director of the Committee on Translation, which produced the New English Bible New Testament, and which is currently translating the Old Testament and Apocrypha. We offer no apology for a rather lengthy quote from the Bampton Lectures.

According to the evidences of the New Testament, the earliest exponents of the Christian religion worked out a distinctive way of presenting the fundamental convictions of their faith, in a formula which they called "the proclamation." The Greek word here is *kerygma*. Our translators of the Bible commonly render it "preaching;" but in its current implications at the present day it is misleading. Kerygma properly means a public announcement or declaration, whether by a town crier, or by an auctioneer commending his goods to the public, or by the herald of a sovereign state dispatched on a solemn mission, to present an ultimatum, it may be, or to announce terms of peace.

The Christian preacher thought of himself as an announcer of very important news. He called it quite simply "the good news," or in our traditional translation "the gospel." It was this good news that was imbedded in the "proclamation," the kerygma. It was essentially a public announcement of events of public importance.

The form and content of the proclamation, the kerygma, can be recovered from the New Testament with reasonable accuracy. It recounted in brief the life and works of Jesus Christ, His conflicts, sufferings and death, and His resurrection from the dead, and it went on to declare that in these events the divinely guided history of Israel through long centuries reached its climax. God himself had acted decisively in this way to inaugurate His kingdom upon the earth. This was the core of all early

Christian preaching, however it might be elaborated, illustrated and explained.

The preacher's aim was to convince his hearers that they were indeed confronted by the eternal God in His kingdom, power and glory; that they, like all men, stood under His judgment upon what they had done and upon what they were, and that this judgment was now immediate and inescapable, further, that those who would put themselves under God's judgment would, through His mercy, find an opportunity open to them to enter upon a new life; that actually, as a result of these facts which they proclaimed, a new era in the relations between God and man had begun.

Those who responded to this appeal and placed themselves under the judgment and mercy of God as declared in Jesus Christ, became members of the Community, or church, within which the new life could be lived. These members were then instructed in the ethical principles and obligations of the Christian life. This course of instruction in morals, as distinct from the proclamation of the gospel, is covered by the term "teaching," which is in the Greek *didache*.

Now we have no desire to become boresome to our readers but it is time for us to grow up in our thinking and throw off the garments of mediocrity and superficiality. We must be vitally concerned about and involved in the struggle to learn what the Spirit meant in the words he chose to convey the thoughts of God. It will gain us nothing to talk about "speaking where the Bible speaks," if we do not speak *as* the Bible speaks. We are not interested in pampering spiritual infants but in providing food for growth. Bear with us then as we quote from Alan Richardson, M.A., D.D., Canon of Durham, on page 172 of "Theological Word Book of the Bible."

In the N. T. we find three words used: Euangelizesthai, to preach good tidings; katangellein, to

declare, announce; and *kerussein*, to proclaim as a herald. The fundamental idea of these words is telling of news to people who have not heard it before— “evangelization.” In the N. T. preaching has nothing to do with delivering sermons to the converted, which is what it usually means today, but always concerns the proclamation of the “good tidings of God” to the non-Christian world. As such it is to be distinguished from teaching (Gr. *didache*) which in the N. T. normally means ethical instruction, or occasionally apologetics or instruction in the faith. When the preachers (originally the apostles, later the accredited evangelists) had attracted hearers by their proclamation in the marketplace of the gospel of the cross and resurrection they handed them over to the accredited teachers for further instruction in the faith and preparation for baptism. Evangelists and teachers seem to have been distinct ministries in the early church.

We plead your kind indulgence as we select one more statement from the scores of confirmatory quotations within the files which have grown out of our research. This one is from Martin R. Vincent, Baldwin Professor of Social Literature, Union Theological Seminary, New York, in his “Word Studies in the New Testament,” Vol. 1, page 30:

Matthew 4:17. To preach (*kerussein*). Originally, to discharge the office of a herald (*kerux*), hence to cry out, proclaim. The standing expression in the New Testament for the proclamation of the gospel; but confined to primary announcement of the message and facts of salvation, and not including continuous instruction in the contents and connections of the message which is expressed by *didaskein*. Both words are used in Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1.

From investigation we learn that the chosen envoys of Christ had a special message for the alien world. This was a proclamation of victory in Jesus. It consisted of the news of what God had done for those who were his enemies. Since it was

contingent upon authority vested in Jesus, it could not be proclaimed until the heralds had proof that he had been “Christed” (i.e., anointed) and elevated to a position of lordship. The proof came visibly, audibly and experientially on the Pentecost following his ascension. Immediately the message was proclaimed! The gospel was fully announced on that occasion and fully obeyed by all who accepted it. This was not a partial seed and those who were begotten by it were not born deformed. They were fully formed as God’s children, although immature.

Nothing else was ever added to the gospel after that date, although doctrinal truths were revealed as required or when circumstances demanded. These doctrinal truths were not a part of the gospel and no one whose life was corrected or enhanced by understanding them was ever said to have obeyed the gospel again. Obedience to the gospel is an act once for all, while partaking of the bread of life is a daily performance. The gospel produced life, the doctrine was for the training and discipline of the children after they had been born.

Careful study of the historical accounts of the proclamation indicates that it was a specific message as to content. It did not depend upon rationalization, deduction or inference. It was not a compilation of laws, a code of ethics, or a collection of abstract propositions. It was a simple recounting of facts which, taken together, formed the *kerygma*. At this juncture we may correct a mistaken view of a familiar passage. We refer to 1 Corinthians 1:21, where the false concept is created by the rendering in the King James Version, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

That this is important is evident from the fact that our hope of salvation depends upon it. Many interpret the word “preaching” to be the act of proclaiming. But God has not offered to save those who believe in the act of announcing something. The word for “preaching” at this place is *kerygma*. It has to do with the message and not with the action of the

messenger. God has chosen by *the thing preached*, which appears as foolishness to the worldly-wise to save those who believe. The later translations are more accurate in conveying the thought.

“It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (Revised Standard Version).

“He in his wisdom chose to save all who would believe by the ‘simplemindedness of the gospel message’” (J. B. Phillips).

“He chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the Gospel” (New English Version).

Content of the Message

What were the constituent factors of the gospel? There were seven of these as follows: the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification of Jesus of Nazareth. All of these are centered around the person of Jesus. All are designed to create faith in him. Thus the apostle says, “We proclaim Christ— yes, Christ nailed to the cross” (1 Cor. 1:23). Again, “I resolved that while I was with you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ— Christ nailed to the cross” (1 Cor. 2:2). It was by this message God chose to save those who believe and those who believe these facts and demonstrate the lordship of Jesus over their lives by obedience in baptism are saved.

The gospel is epitomized in the three saving facts— the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. There was no saving virtue for the world in the life of Jesus upon earth, sinless as it was. The ascension, coronation and glorification were essential to his acquisition of authority. It was the ransom and redemption purchased by his blood which made salvation possible, and the resurrection which brought life and immortality to light. Accordingly, the apostle, in reasoning with the Corinthians about the resurrection, reminds them of the gospel which they had heard and which gave them life. The

resurrection was a vital part of it.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

An analysis of this passage will show that the gospel had been preached, received, believed, and that it constituted a foundation upon which the brethren stood. It was now a matter of memory, something to be recalled. It is observable that the Corinthians were saved by the gospel. The saving facts which Paul enunciated were three in number. Obviously the first epistle to the Corinthians was not part of the *kerygma*— the gospel.

It was *a letter* written to those who had already received the gospel and were saved by it. The letter was not an evangel but a course of instruction. It was not for sinners but for saints. It was not to make believers, but to make believers better!

Not all who had believed the gospel were equals in knowledge. Some still thought there might be something to idols (1 Cor. 8:7); some thought there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12). Some were men of knowledge (8:10); others were weak brethren (8:11). There were those who were feeble, less honorable and uncomely. There were parts that lacked (12:23, 24). Paul hesitated to visit the saints because he wanted to spare them from personal censure (2 Cor. 1:23). He was afraid he would find “debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults” (2 Cor. 12:20). Yet all of these persons had been begotten by the gospel, and Paul introduced the catalog of things just mentioned with the expression, “We do

all things, dearly beloved, for your edification.” Those who confuse chastisement of a child with begetting and cannot distinguish between correction and conception are in a sad predicament.

To this reasoning and the abundant findings of scholarship, orthodoxy has but one pat objection of any consequence. An appeal is made to Romans 1:15, which reads, “So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” Assuming that the apostle intended to proclaim the good news about Jesus to those who had already heard and long since accepted it, this is taken as proof positive that the gospel is designed for saint and sinner alike, and that it includes everything which should be taught to the church. It is hardly that simple and those who reach such a conclusion demonstrate that they are much more interested in justifying their pre-conceived notions than they are in unbiased exegesis. We propose to face up to this passage so glibly parroted by many who have never thought below the surface and who have fallen into the grievous error of searching only for a proof text.

The Letter to the Romans

Simple logic will demonstrate that the Roman letter was not part of the gospel because Paul desired to go to Rome personally to preach the gospel. This would not have been necessary if it was to be preached to the church and if this letter was the gospel. It would seem strange indeed to write, “I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome,” if he was doing it at the very moment with his pen. Moreover, in Romans 10:16 he says, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel.” If the letter to the Romans was part of the gospel, none of them had obeyed it, for it was just then in the process of being written. Yet before the Holy Spirit had revealed to him the content of the Roman letter, Paul had already “*fully preached the gospel of Christ*” from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:19). Did he give

each of these places a copy of the Roman letter before he wrote it to Rome? If not, one can fully preach the gospel of Christ without reference to, or inclusion of, the Roman letter.

Did Paul intend to preach the gospel to (that is, evangelize) the saved in Rome? Careful analysis does not indicate any such intention. In the first place, this letter was not addressed to the congregation, or church in Rome, but to the saints as individuals. In this respect it differs from the letters to Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, et. al. In his *Commentary on Romans*, Moses E. Lard, says:

In other words, and briefly, it was written to all Christians living in Rome at the time. But it was written to them as individuals, and not as a body or church. This is a remarkable difference between the present Letter and some others written by Paul. They are addressed to churches as such; this is addressed to individuals as such. Indeed, church unity or organization is not once alluded to or recognized in the Letter, unless it be implied in chapter 16:17.

These individuals were addressed from two aspects: as saints in Christ and as citizens in Rome, as the called of God and as Gentiles. Paul expressed a desire to visit Rome for two different reasons.

He wanted to impart unto the saints some spiritual gift and share in comfort derived from mutual faith (1:11, 12). But he had also purposed on numerous occasions to come “that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (verse 13). There can be little doubt that the “fruit” Paul sought consisted of persons won to Christ, and he wanted this “among you” on the same basis as “among other Gentiles.” Christ wrought in Paul “to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed” (Romans 15:18).

One purpose of the Roman letter was to inform the saints

at Rome that Paul was specifically called to bear the glad tidings to the Gentiles. He wrote boldly about it so they would not forget his special mission. “I have written to refresh your memory, and written somewhat boldly at times in virtue of the gift I have from God. His grace has made me a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles; my priestly service is the preaching of the gospel of God, and it falls to me to offer the Gentiles to him as an acceptable sacrifice, consecrated by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:15, 16).

Then why had Paul not come to Rome to win Gentiles? This would certainly be an important question to the struggling saints in the capital of the Empire. The answer is given. “It is my ambition to bring the gospel to places where the very name of Christ has not been heard, for I do not want to build on another man’s foundation, but as Scripture says, ‘They who had no news of him shall see, And they who never heard of him shall understand.’ That is why I have been prevented all this time from coming to you. But now I have no further scope in these parts, and I have been longing to visit you many years on my way to Spain; for I hope to see you as I travel through, and be sent there with your support after having enjoyed your company for awhile” (15:20-24).

Paul wanted to bring the evangel to the Gentiles in Rome. He was not so ignorant as to try and evangelize the saved. He wanted to have fruit among the inhabitants of Rome, as among other Gentiles. He said, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”

Why did the apostle use the expression, “To you that are in Rome”? There is every indication that he intended for the recipients of the letter to share its contents with their unsaved neighbors— both Jew and Gentile. This would be a natural reaction to an apostolic letter in an area where no apostle’s voice

had yet been heard. This will also serve to explain the content of such portions as the entire second chapter, which is addressed to the Jews who make their boast of God and rest in the law, and yet dishonor God by breaking the law. It will also explain the inclusion of material in the last half of the first chapter. This portion of the letter was written to convince the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of the need for justification by grace rather than by philosophy or law, both of which always end in a blind alley. Surely no one is so foolish as to think these portions are addressed to the saints in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not a mere personal opinion of the editor. It is shared by many who are eminent theological scholars. Space will not allow us to cite all of those we have in our files, but we must limit ourselves to one. We have selected Dr. James Macknight, whose *Apostolical Epistles* is universally known and highly regarded. In his preface, on page 51, he says:

From the pains which the apostle took in this letter, to prove that no Gentile can be justified by the law of nature, nor Jew by the law of Moses, from his explaining in it all the divine dispensations respecting religion, as well as from what he says, chap. 1:7, 13, 14, 15, it is reasonable to think that it was designed for the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles at Rome, as well as for the brethren; who therefore would show the copies which they took of it to their unbelieving acquaintance. And inasmuch as the apostle professed to derive his views of the matters contained in this letter from revelations, and from inspiration, it certainly merited the attention of every unbeliever to whom it was shown, whether he were a Jewish scribe, or a heathen philosopher, or a Roman magistrate, or one of the people; some of whom, I make no doubt, read it.

In his comments on Romans 1:15, Dr. Macknight supplements the above statement in these words:

In regard that Paul, after acknowledging he was

bound to preach the gospel both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, adds, I am ‘ready to preach the gospel even to you who are in Rome,’ the idolatrous inhabitants of Rome were certainly included in the expression ‘you who are in Rome.’ This verse, therefore, as well as the following, is a proof that the epistle to the Romans was intended, not for the Roman brethren alone, but for unbelievers also, to whom copies of it might be shown.

The Righteousness or God

But we will be asked about Romans 1:17. “Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” Does not the righteousness of God include all God has revealed, and does not this embrace the whole of the new covenant scriptures? If so, does not “the gospel” refer to everything in the new covenant scriptures? It is a common resort of orthodoxy to quote, “For all thy commandments are righteousness” (Psalm 119:172), and then take this passage from the old covenant scriptures and apply it to the letter of Paul, and reason that the gospel includes every commandment of God. Aside from the honesty and integrity involved in such devious maneuvering of texts as pieces on a chessboard, there is another factor which must not be overlooked. Those who make such an argument must rely solely upon the King James Version for the validity of their “logic.”

The Revised Version reads: “My tongue will sing of thy word, for all thy commandments are right.” It is a fairly safe rule that any argument which must depend for its whole strength upon the rendering of only one version should not be given much prominence, to say the least.

What does Paul mean by “the righteousness of God” which is revealed in the evangel? The Greek word here is *dikaio syne*, and it is a favorite of Paul. He was versed and grounded in the old testament scriptures, having been at the head of his class in the rabbinical school of Hillel, in Jerusalem. He knew that the

old covenant scriptures constituted a primary and elementary school to provide a vocabulary for the school of Christ. The Hebrew terms which corresponded to *dikaio syne* were all derived from a verb— *tsadhaq*. The idea most frequently contained in these terms was that of vindication or justification. The meaning of the words does not imply that a righteous person is one who is right about things, but that he is “in the right,” that is, in a state of righteousness, or justification. He is not infallibly right because of his actions, but wholly *in the right* by an act of God. That is why it is called “the righteousness of God.”

Remembering that this is the word for “justification,” we can readily see that no sinner can ever justify himself. He can never undo a single act nor recall a single word in order to become guiltless. He can never be justified by law because this would entail perfect conformity in every minute and meticulous detail, and the least infraction would mean death without mercy. Justification is an act of divine clemency, accorded not because of worthiness, nor because of anything that the guilty person may do to earn or deserve it. It is a manifestation of grace, a divine act of undeserved kindness.

We can now begin to appreciate what Paul meant in the memorable passage before us. In the gospel, that is the Good News about Jesus, is revealed the ground of God’s righteousness, or justification. It is shown to be by faith in the Person of the Message. And the reason for revealing in the Message that God’s righteousness is by faith, is simply to produce faith in us, for even the prophet had declared that the source of life is faith—not law! Those who are justified are those who are in contact with the source of life. Righteousness is a state of right relationship with God, and God is the fount of all life.

We are not justified, or in God’s righteousness, because of superior knowledge, or because we have figured out all the riddles and solved all of the problems of life. Salvation and sophistication are not the same. We are not justified because of

intellectual powers or theological attainments. We could never know all there is to know if our life depended upon it. We can be thankful that it does not. Our life depends upon being in the only person from whom all life comes, and our being depends upon sharing his life. Years before the Christ came, the prophet had declared, "The just shall live by faith." Paul contends that this life is now available. It has come. It is revealed in the Good News of Jesus. It is no longer future. It is present. The age of which the prophets spoke is a reality. Bear with me then as I paraphrase for you Romans 1:15-17.

Brethren, I should like to have you know that I frequently planned to visit you at Rome so that I could gather in converts to Jesus as I have done among other Gentiles. Because of my indebtedness to all tongues and classes, I am eager to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Good News about Jesus, seeing that it is God's dynamic to produce salvation in all who believe the News, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in this Message God has revealed that justification is by faith, and this revelation is made to produce faith as our only hope of life, for even the prophets declared that faith was the key to life for all those who are justified.

Certainly this is a "free translation" but, after years of study in the implication of these words of the Spirit, I am convinced that it best conveys the mind of God as I understand it to be revealed. It will also be observed that it preserves the basic core of the gospel which is justification by faith. This is what Paul calls "*the truth* of the gospel," that is, the essence of the Message (Galatians 2:5, 14). For a more thorough discussion of this feature we urge you to read the preceding issue of this paper (January, 1965). The glad tidings about Jesus constitute a revelation that justification is by faith, in the full meaning of "faith" as Paul uses the word. It is only the apostolic usage with which we are concerned, everything else is useless.

The Gospel Dynamic

The careful student will also detect at once the connection between Romans 1:16 and Mark 16:16 with which we began this article. In the commission Jesus sent the apostles into all the world to proclaim the gospel to every creature. He declared that those who believed the Message and were immersed would be saved. Now, Paul affirms that the Message is God's dynamic to salvation to all who believe, whether Jew or Greek. Thus, the gospel is God's unitive force for mankind. It is the gospel which brings Barbarians and Greeks, wise and unwise, together in one body.

It is a tragedy to interpret the apostolic epistles in such a manner as to negate the apostolic gospel. It is a travesty on the spiritual walk to interpret the apostolic doctrine in such a way as to divide those who are united by the gospel of Christ, and thus make "the cross of Christ of none effect." Orthodoxy has exacted a fearful toll on the body of our Lord and will face a frightening responsibility for hacking that body to pieces with the axe of partisan animosity.

It is belief of the facts about Jesus by which all of us are saved, if saved at all. This belief acknowledges his lordship over our lives, and thus commits us to acceptance of all the truths by which we grow as we become aware of them. No man will be saved who deliberately rebels against any doctrinal truth which he understands and apprehends. No one will be lost because of merely mistaken views or human inability to grasp all of these doctrinal truths. The basis of our hope lies in sustaining a right relationship with God through Christ Jesus. If one is right about Jesus he may be wrong about a lot of things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus he can be right about everything else and still be lost.

Our brethren are not actually proclaiming the gospel of Christ as the hope of salvation. They are projecting a system

composed of traditional interpretations, opinions and ideas, often conflicting with each other, and demanding conformity to this system as gospel. Such a course will always be divisive. It contains the germ of strife implanted within it. This is not to say that apostolic doctrine is not important nor does it argue that we should not seek to agree upon interpretation. It does mean, however, that our hope of life is not contingent upon arriving at such harmony of understanding, and that it is, and always will be, an ideal toward which we must strive. Our differences about doctrinal matters that do not relate to the facts of the gospel, are occasions for discussion, and not for division. Until we learn what is the content of the gospel we shall lose the learned and confuse the unlearned.

Not one of the apostolic epistles was written to bring men into the fellowship. They were all addressed to those who were in it. Never an admonition to live in harmony or to be of one mind was written to bring men into the fellowship. Indeed, it was because they were in the fellowship that these exhortations were invariably given. Harmony is not essential to entrance into fellowship, but fellowship is essential to any satisfactory striving toward harmony. It is because we have a common relationship that we labor toward a better understanding.

To condition fellowship upon conformity in all of these phases is not to encourage unity, but division. To attempt to enforce conditions of growth as conditions of family relationship is to defeat the purpose of the Son of God and to disturb the peace of the One Body. This is the indictment of that orthodoxy which blinds men and makes them think they are loyal to Jesus when they are chipping, chopping and carving his body to bits.

Our brethren need that grace which enables them to “distinguish between things that differ.” The cause of pure Christianity suffers among the masses because men who pose as teachers, and even would-be theologians, stand before audiences and make disparaging remarks about any distinction in such

words as “gospel” and “doctrine.” If the only harm done was to prove the immaturity and mediocrity of their own scholarship one might keep still and allow them to bask in the feeble glow reflected and diffused through the veil which they wear in their reading of the Word, but they hinder the progress of reformation and remove the contest from the arena of universal thought to confine it to their own little restricted corrals where none dare question and all must conform. It is for this reason that an examination of the scriptures in objective fashion is long overdue. There is a difference between the authority of the sacred scriptures and the authority of human interpretations placed upon them to maintain a traditional pattern and to perpetuate a partisan program.

Those of us who expect to be worthy heirs of the restoration movement should rejoice that the religious world is again becoming aware of the principles long since enunciated by the pioneers of this noble effort. If the eminent C. H. Dodd now receives laurels for ideas long since discovered by Alexander Campbell— ignored by his contemporaries in the sectarian world and forgotten by his successors in the movement he helped to spark— we can be grateful to Him who raised Jesus from the dead that He has revived these truths in our day. We will gain little by joining those modern chief priests and scribes who deny the revival and seek to bribe the guards into silence. Let the truth be known!

Peace or Sword?

Mission Messenger (February 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Matthew 10:34-36).

We have before us as we write this a letter from a brother in Kansas, who plaintively writes: "You constantly stress peace in every issue of your paper and emphasize that all division is a sin. Have you forgotten that Jesus declared he did not come to send peace, but a sword? Why do you not emphasize that?"

It is apparent that our brother is perturbed because someone has come who preaches "peace to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh." He must find a scripture which makes it appear that Jesus is the prince of strife rather than the Prince of peace. He is as careless in reading what we write as he is in reading what the apostles wrote. We do not believe that all division is a sin. It would be a sin not to be separated from those with whom one has nothing in common— no fellowship, communion, concord or agreement. We are specifically told to,

“come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).

We say that *division among brethren* in Christ is wrong. It is a sin for the members of God’s family to be divided. Jesus did not come to unite us to the world but to call us out of it. We are not to be one with the world, but we are to be “one body in Christ and members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). Division among believers is contrary to the prayer of Jesus (John 17:21), it violates the apostolic doctrine (1 Cor. 1:10), and it is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It is a symptom of carnality and immaturity (1 Cor. 3:1-4). It is produced by those who are sensual, and have not the Spirit (Jude 19).

The kind of wisdom that produces envying and strife is not from above. It is earthly, sensual and devilish. It results in confusion and every evil work (James 3:15, 16). We are to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that we may with one mind and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6). Brethren who engage in strife are not “walking honestly as in the day” (Rom. 13:13).

What did Jesus mean by the expression, “Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth?” This statement occurs in the context of a speech made to the apostles when they were launched into a hostile world. They were sent forth as sheep among wolves (Matt. 10:16), and they were to beware of men. They could expect to be brought before governors, delivered up to councils, and scourged in the synagogues (17, 18). They were to be hated of all men for the name of Jesus (22), and hounded from city to city by persecutors (23). They were to overcome fear of those who can only kill the body but are not able to kill the soul (28).

When a hate-filled world is confronted with the claims of Jesus and his demand for unconditional surrender to his lordship, unbridled passion and unreasonable antagonism will

know no bounds. “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death” (21). Yet there can be no compromise. Jesus must be accepted or rejected. He did not come to give us a way out of persecution but a way into life— eternal life! And the choice is not easy. It is difficult to accept Jesus when the dearest friends on earth oppose and the fondest ties must be broken.

Literally, the words of Jesus mean, “I did not come to cast peace on the earth,” that is, as men cast seed into the ground. Peace was not to be sown broadcast. It was to be the product of personal faith. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus came to send a sword, which simply means to inaugurate war between those who choose him as Lord and those who deliberately enlist under the banner of the prince of the power of the air.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.

What spirit prompts men to take these words and apply them to the saints, as if the mission of Jesus was to rend and tear the fabric of brotherhood bought with his own blood? It cannot be the Holy Spirit because “variance and emulations” are described as works of the flesh and contrary to the Spirit (Gal. 5:20). Did Jesus come to “sow discord among brethren” and thus become an abomination unto God? Surely he would not set us against each other when he said, “When you stand praying, forgive, *if ye have ought against any*” (Mark 11:25).

What would be thought of a father who, while sitting at the

table with his children, would hand a sword to his eldest son and tell him to cut the other children to pieces before his eyes? Would he not be regarded as having gone insane and become berserk? Did the Father of mercies send Jesus to teach us how to smite and slay his other children. Is he so devoid of parental regard and affection that he rejoices when we slash each other and spill the fratricidal blood at the common table? What kind of distorted, warped and twisted reason prompts men to take comfort in our sad, sorry, sinful state of division and factionalism, by making it appear that it was the mission of Jesus to create such a state of tumult, turmoil and pandemonium?

I emphatically deny that kind of thinking which implies that my blessed Lord is pleased and happy when we set at nought our brethren over their opinions relative to cups, classes, colleges, orphan homes, the millennium, instrumental music, or any of that motley multitude of transitory things which have fragmented us in this generation. I simply refuse to transfer his right to rule over my life to any preacher, prelate or priest, or to any group or faction composed of men no better than myself—a mere sinner saved by grace! No faction was crucified for me. I was not baptized in the name of any party. My Lord is not divided and I shall recognize no division in his body which he did not create and does not condone.

Let me serve notice, here and now, to factional leaders and promoters who may wait for me to weaken so they can “line me up,” that they wait in vain. I have hitched my wagon of spiritual hope to a star—the bright and morning star—and I never intend again, so help me God, to be either a partisan promoter or a party puppet. I am dedicated to the fight against the factional spirit. I am not interested in engaging in the petty and puerile battles of one faction against another, but in the warfare against the spirit that produces them all. I intend not to be turned back from the long and arduous battle to make His blessed prayer come true and be answered among the sons of

men.

There is burning within me a fierce determination not to be deterred by fright of my enemies or flattery of my friends. I intend to labor to expose every misuse of the words of the Holy Spirit sent from God, and to let men see the raw, bare and naked ugliness of that body of orthodoxy which proclaims unity and practices division. To me there is no greater sin than to wrest the words of my precious Lord in such a manner as to make it appear that he was a dissembler and double-dealer who would pray for the oneness of all who believe in him and then assert that he came to cleave these very ones asunder with the sword. The crime is not mitigated by the fact that I once thought I served Him loyally by misuse of these same passages in my own biased and bigoted attempt to make all men conform to my views in the mistaken and fallacious notion that I was "leading them to Christ." I freely confess the sin of such inconsistency and pray that I shall live long enough to undo a part of it, even while others pray that I do not!

I glorify God that all over this great land, in every faction and splinter of the strife-torn restoration movement, there is a stirring of hearts, a striving for recapture of integrity and probity. Men are tired of traditional trumpetings of irrational and irrelevant explanations that do not explain, and of interpretations that do not interpret. Alarmed factional leaders brand this revolution as the "gravest danger to the church in a century," but thoughtful men now know they confuse the church with the faction of which they are a part. Be of good cheer, the word of God is coming into its own, and we shall see great things!

Contrary to the Doctrine

Mission Messenger (March 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

There are a great many tasks which appear to be easier than that of editing a paper like this one. Our readership is very diversified. A goodly number of men with advanced scholastical degrees receive the paper, but it is also read by many more of our brethren who had no opportunity to secure more than an elementary or high school education. Busy housewives and public school teachers are alike exposed to what we write. It is difficult to arrange a format or present a study equally impressive to, or informative of, all who graciously consent to allow the time from busy lives, essential to perusing our articles.

We have had a few letters deploring the length of the articles and expressing a wistful longing for us to chop them down and condense them so they can be read in snatches of time. We sympathize with the dear friends who have thus written. Even some college professors tell us we give them too much to digest in one sitting. They would like a little more soup and salad and not quite so much meat on the plate. I suspect, however, that this once all of you will have to endure our method of serving, faulty though it may prove to be.

For one thing, we think a lot of us have pampered our spiritual organs with pre-digested food in capsule form until the thinking processes have become a little rusty from disuse. The restoration movement has suffered from a dearth of original

thinkers for many decades. We must stimulate studies in depth which will encourage brethren to search below the traditional surface which has been scratched and sifted repeatedly through partisan screens. The subjects with which we are dealing are important and do not lend themselves to entertaining little squibs.

Moreover we must recapture a sense of our integrity in the intellectual world. This does not mean setting up a false god of human wisdom or bowing at the shrine of philosophy. It does mean an unrelenting and unceasing quest for truth, and that for truth's sake, regardless of what that truth may do to our cherished positions of the past. The retention of any dross for fear of losing some gold is contrary to the basis of true scholarship and subversive of honesty. We should not hesitate to deposit what we have in the crucible of the present, for that which does not stand the test today was not right yesterday, even though we thought that it was. The gold must be tried by the fire, not just in one generation but in every generation.

It is in this spirit of freedom and fearlessness that we are examining again those scriptures which have been twisted to create, condone or continue division. Our thesis is that any use of the written word to defeat the plan, prayer and purpose of the Living Word is an abuse. This calls for a restudy of the bearing and implication of those scriptures. When our application of the word of God produces the very opposite condition of what that word was intended to produce there is something faulty with our application. Thorough study requires time and thought. It cannot be accomplished in a moment and it does not always make for light reading.

Romans 16:17

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.

Of all the scriptures which have suffered from wresting, twisting and distortion, this is one of the most prominent. Written for the very purpose of protecting and preserving the church from division, it has become one of the chief instruments of such division. Ignoring the greater context in which it is set as a frame of reference, glib partisans apply it without modesty or reservation to every honest dissenter from their factional programs.

What did Paul mean by “the doctrine which you have learned?” The man who was taught that it is a sin to have Bible classes thinks of this as the doctrine he has learned, and feels called upon to exhibit his loyalty to the Word by marking and avoiding all who have classes. The man who was taught that it was a sin to have individual cups in the Lord’s Supper must mark and avoid all who have them. The use of multiple containers is contrary to the doctrine which he has learned. The one who is convinced from what he has been taught that institutional orphan homes are not justified by the scriptures must mark and avoid those who think they are justified.

Those who oppose such propaganda media as “The Herald of Truth” consider themselves obligated to mark and shun those who support it. Those who grew up under the tutelage of a party which decried the pre-millennial interpretation of the scriptures as a sin of the first degree must mark and avoid those whose study has led them to believe that it is proper. The same thing is true upon the part of those who have been taught that instrumental music in the corporate worship is wrong and sinful. In every instance the factional test is “the doctrine learned.”

It is almost unbelievable that thinking men and women could ever be led to believe that the apostle Paul would even condone such a mishmash or hodgepodge, much less deliberately create it by his admonition. Actually, such a position freezes knowledge at the partisan level and makes ignorance a virtue

and further learning a crime. If we are to listen only to those who agree with us in every particular we can never acquire additional knowledge. If we are to mark and avoid all who do not parrot our own particular party line we must continue at our present level of ignorance. Surely the apostle did not have in mind the creedal and dogmatic interpretation of each faction by the expression, “the doctrine which you have learned” for that would perpetuate the very factionalism which he wrote to prevent and offset. It would seem that all rational and sensible persons could see such an obvious fact.

The Doctrine Learned

What is “the doctrine you have learned?” What had Paul been teaching the Romans which would cause them to avoid those who were divisive? The entire frame of reference, the context both adjacent and remote, shows that it is the teaching that division among brethren is a sin. Briefly summed up, the doctrine they had learned was, “Do not cause division or place an occasion of stumbling in a brother’s way.”

The content of the four preceding chapters is directed toward advocating, exemplifying and enforcing this doctrine. The basis of the teaching is, “Let us therefore follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (14:19). Anyone who disregards this doctrine and insists upon making tests of fellowship where God has not made them (i.e., over days, meats, etc.) should be observed and isolated so his factional attitude cannot divide the body into rival camps over such issues.

The argument of Paul related to Jew and Gentile, and the universal need for justification by faith, concludes with the benediction and “Amen” of Romans 11:36. In chapter 12 he begins his dissertation on the conduct becoming the saints, especially as related to unity and oneness. His doctrine is that

God's family should not be divided and its members should not be occasions of stumbling to one another.

Although many members, yet are we one body in Christ, and every one members one of another (12:5).

We are to love each other without hypocrisy (12:9); be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love (12:10); and be of the same mind one toward another (12:16).

We are to owe no man anything except to love one another (13:8), for love is the fulfilling of the whole law (13:10).

We are not only to deprecate strife and envying, but actually to abhor them, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for the flesh and the exercise of any harmful passion (13:13, 14).

There will be differences among the members. Past environment, the present degree of knowledge, various temperaments, and other factors, will enter in to make adjustment difficult. Chapter 14 is an inspired treatise on those attitudes essential to preservation of unity in spite of differences. The foundation of the approach is laid in verse 1.

A man who is weak in his faith is to be welcomed. "Without attempting to settle doubtful points" (New English Version). "Not with the idea of arguing over his scruples" (J. B. Phillips). "Not to determinations of reasonings" (Young's Literal Translation). "Not for controversial arguments" (Authentic New Testament). "Not in order to pass judgment on his doubts" (Weymouth). "Not to pass judgment upon his scruples" (Moffatt). "Not to criticize their views" (Charles B. Williams). "Do not discuss his opinions" (Charles Kingsley Williams). "Not for the purpose of deciding doubtful points" (Centenary Translation). "Not for the purpose of passing judgment on their scruples" (Twentieth Century). "Not for disputing opinions" (Rotherham).

We are neither to despise nor judge one another (verse 3), but allow each to stand or fall to his own master (4), and reach a personal conviction in his own mind (5). We dare not set at naught a brother, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (10). Each will give account of himself to God (12) so I am not accountable for my brother's conviction, nor am I accountable to my brethren for my own conviction. My brother is not answerable for me and I am not answerable to my brother, but to our God.

The brotherly relationship must be more important to me than any thing upon which we disagree, and must be more important than all those things which threaten its disruption. Under no condition am I to allow any opinion, scruple or personal conviction to destroy a brother for whom Christ died (15).

The kingdom of God is composed of values which transcend all matters of argument over things which disturb its citizenry. It is made up of majestic qualities which are universally accepted within the body— righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit— and to elevate any secondary considerations to an equality with these qualities is neither acceptable nor approved (17, 18).

Jesus died for persons and not for their opinions or ideas, right or wrong, and those for whom he died must be more important to us than anything for which he did not die. It is good to do nothing by which a brother stumbles, or is offended, or made weak (21). A man must not do that about which he has personal qualms or doubts, "because his action does not arise from conviction, and anything which does not arise from conviction is sin" (23).

The strong must accept as their own burden the tender scruples of weaker men and not consider themselves (15:1).

Each must consider his neighbor and think what is for his good and will build up the common life together. We are all to accept one another as Christ has accepted us, to the glory of God (15:7). As God accepted us in our weakness, with mistaken ideas, warped views and unhealthful attitudes, so we must accept each other in the same state or condition. We must not make the kingdom of heaven to consist of our convictions, attitudes or opinions, but of citizens who must be tolerant of each other in such matters, else there can be no kingdom of heaven at all.

Factional Persons

After having given this extensive teaching on avoidance of division and offences, the apostle recognizes that there will be those who will not heed it. Even God cannot provide a doctrine that is proof against dishonest hearts or unscrupulous motives. There will always be some who refuse to serve Christ, but in their egotism and selfishness will create a factional atmosphere and seduce the minds of innocent people with smooth and specious words. What should be done with those who disregard the teaching about preserving peace and insist upon having their own way, regardless of the consequences? The answer is forthright.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

A careful analysis of this passage in purely objective research does not indicate that the apostle is advocating public or corporate action at all. Indeed, the Roman letter differs from other epistles in that it was not addressed to a congregation, but to individual saints. (See this discussed at length in our issue of February, 1965). The “avoiding” recommended here to the

brethren is individual. They are simply told to steer clear of those who would create division and to stay out of their way.

The factional spirit is like a flame. It must always have additional fuel or it will eventually flicker out. It is like a cancer. If it cannot reach additional healthy tissue it will subside. It is obvious that no one can ever create a faction without followers, and if all of the brethren will simply hold at arm's length a smooth talker who advocates pulling away, he cannot harm the body. Factions begin when members start fraternizing with factionalists. It will help us to remember that every factionalist seeks to carve out a body after his own image, and it is easier to carve soft wood. When a factionalist starts wooing you to join in a movement to pull away he has chosen you for the same reason that a termite chooses its timber—you are easier to work on! One is complimented when a factionalist passes him by!

The word “mark” is from *skopeo*. This is the form of the word which appears in telescope, microscope, etc. It has to do with vision. It means “to observe, watch, keep an eye on.” There is nothing in this word which indicates any action whatsoever upon or against an offender. The action is all upon the part of the observer. It consists simply of keeping another under surveillance.

“Divisions” is from *dichostasia*. This is a combined form composed of a word for “apart” and one for “standing.” It literally means “standing apart,” and here it refers to “alienating one from another.” It can be used to designate “divided loyalties” or to describe the condition that occurs when one segment of those who should be together allows a breach to occur which holds them aloof from others. Such a condition is a result and it proceeds from a cause. It is contrary to the will and purpose of God and one who produces the condition disobeys God.

“Offences” is from *skandalon* from which we get our

English word “scandal” and “scandalized.” The original has an interesting history. At first it referred to the trigger of a trap, the part to which a bait is fastened, and which tripped or sprung the trap or snare when the intended victim took the bait. Later it came to apply to the contrivance or instrument as a whole. It is essential to the efficient functioning of a snare that it be not recognized for what it is and that its real nature be concealed. W. A. Vine says, “Always metaphorically used in N. T. of that which arouses prejudice, becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way.”

“Avoid” is from *ekklino* which means “to turn away from, to hold aloof from, to stay out of the way.” There is nothing in the word which implies any organized action, or formal discipline of the congregation. The brethren are urged to avoid involvement with the person under consideration by keeping aloof from him or staying out of his way. If there is no congregational action implied in the terms “mark” and “avoid” there is none to be found in this verse at all and those who employ the passage to separate themselves from another congregation of saints over some point of difference are the perpetrators of division. There is a great deal of difference between keeping an eye on a brother who would make a partisan out of you and staying out of his way, and refusing to have anything to do with another congregation whose members sincerely disagree with some partisan interpretation. That is, there is a difference in keeping an eye on a diseased member and taking a meat cleaver to the body.

J. B. Phillips translates the passage, “And now I implore you, my brothers, to keep a watchful eye on those who cause troubles and make difficulties among you, in plain opposition to the teaching you have been given, and steer clear of them.”

Adam Clarke says, “Let them have no kiss of charity nor peace, because they strive to make divisions, and thus set the flock of God at variance among themselves, and from these

divisions, offences are produced, and this is contrary to the doctrine of peace, unity and brotherly love which you have learned.”

James Macknight paraphrases thus: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who set up separate assemblies for worship, and who occasion the weak to fall by false doctrine, or by enjoining things indifferent as necessary, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned from me in this epistle, and avoid them.”

In explaining the passage, Macknight says, “The apostle had in his eye the Jewish teachers, who in many churches set up separate assemblies for worship of God (see Jude, ver. 19), on pretence of greater orthodoxy and sanctity than others, and who would admit none to their communion but such as joined them in their peculiarities, and who represented all others as erroneous and impious.” It is apparent that the “Jewish teachers” of this kind are not all dead.

How Division Is Caused

There is no more prolific cause of division than the orthodox interpretation placed on this passage. All who equate “this doctrine” with a partisan interpretation and dogmatically demand conformity to it are destructive of the peace of the one body and are the chief offenders against unity at the very time they quote the passage to exclude or excoriate others. The church of God has suffered indescribable harm from such prejudicial expositors who have split the disciples asunder under the guise of loyalty to Jesus, and driven out humble saints by their arrogant and papistical decrees. Eternity alone can reveal the damage done to the body of Christ by the unscriptural and unscrupulous application of Romans 16:17. Let us consider one way by which such harm is accomplished.

A humble brother in the Lord prayerfully peruses the

sacred oracles and in his study becomes convinced that the Son of God will return to the earth prior to the thousand years spoken of in the Apocalypse. He shares his views with the brethren and learns that others as sincere as himself do not reach the same conclusion. They continue to meet together around the common table with mutual respect and regard for each other. Then a preacher comes into the community and learns that the brother has arrived at a premillennial interpretation which seems to him to best explain what the scriptures express concerning the return of the Lord. The preacher visits the man with a view to “setting him straight on what the Bible teaches,” but finds that the other insists upon being his own interpreter and refuses to abdicate his right to search the scriptures for himself.

The preacher then begins a series of lectures on “The Millennium” in which he has free rein to express his understanding of the subject without opposition. The other brother must merely sit and listen in silence. After having set forth his interpretation for several months from the pulpit and on his weekly radio program, the preacher informs the congregation that they have learned from him that the premillennial interpretation of the scriptures is not from God, and it is “time to take a stand for the truth.”

He gleans occasional statements from individuals who have espoused the premillennial view, lifts them out of context and applies them to all who believe that Jesus will return before the thousand years. When the brother whom he opposes denies certain extremes he declares that all who adopt the premillennial view are cut from the same pattern and tarred with the same brush. He implies that all of these think more of their premillennial view than of anything else and have more in common with denominational “premillennialists” than they do with the Lord’s church. He insists that one cannot be in “the Lord’s church” and disagree with the orthodox position on the millennial reign.

The trap is now set. The trigger is baited for “scandalizing” the body of Christ and destroying a brother for whom Christ died. But how can this brother be set at nought? The preacher informs the congregation that “the loyal churches” will cut them off if they “fellowship premillennialists.” He declares that if they do not “put away such wicked persons” the time will come when they cannot even get a “faithful preacher” to conduct a funeral service for their dead. He calls for the congregation to “line up with the faithful brotherhood.” Then Romans 16:17 is used as the stick with which to throw the trap. “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them.” Now a humble brother whose only sin is that of thinking for himself is hounded out along with those who refuse to bow their knees to such despotism, and who regard no one as high priest except Jesus.

Does someone insist that this description is exaggerated? I deny it! The truth is I am describing actual cases of which I have been aware. Who caused the division? Who caused the offence, that is, baited the trap? Is it a crime for one to study the word of God for himself? Is it a crime to reach a conclusion from such study? Is it a crime to retain a conviction until one is personally convinced that he is in error?

Who was at fault when the hierarchy demanded that Galileo, under threat of torture, retract his theory that the earth revolved around the sun? Was the position which obtained at the time— that no person has a right to hold an opinion without consent of the church— a correct one? Is that position correct now? I charge without hesitancy that those who make of the church a mere party to uphold any millennial position as a test of fellowship are the ones who cause the division.

A man may be in Christ and know nothing about the millennium. One can be in Christ and be mistaken about the millennium. He can be in Christ and interpret the scriptures

from an amillennial or premillennial viewpoint. This does not say that both views are correct. It merely argues that being in Christ Jesus is not contingent upon either view. One is not in Christ because he is right about the millennium, but because he acknowledges Jesus as Lord over His life. It is absurd and asinine for people who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to fall out over how and when he will come again. This is an event over which neither group can exercise control. It will occur in God's time and manner regardless of our ideas about it.

To form parties around our interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy and set at nought our brethren is sinful, sensual and scandalous. It shows that we are babes in Christ, that we are yet carnal and walk as men. It reveals that we are still partaking of the works of the flesh. We are stupid and shortsighted when we allow men to use us as partisan pawns about such things and herd us into their factional alignments.

My Position

The doctrine I have learned is that division in the family of God is contrary to the will of God. My Father does not want his children shivered into splinter groups or warring tribes. He loves all of his children as I love both of mine. For that reason I positively refuse to allow any man or group to put a party brand upon me which will separate or segregate me from any of my brethren. I shall keep an eye on those who try to enlist me in their exclusive little segments and avoid them. I'll keep out of their way when they try to get me to be a front man for their little cliques and clans. I belong to Jesus Christ. He bought me with his blood and I do not intend to sell out to anyone else for anything less. No one can make me believe that I can best love God by mistreating his other children. The ones I shall mark and avoid are those who try to get me to mark and avoid all others outside of their little coteries and circles. I know that they are factional and divisive.

It is true that I have learned a lot of other things which commend themselves to me as the doctrine of Christ but I do not intend to create a party to defend or denounce them. Having learned the doctrine that division is a sin, I shall mark and avoid all who create schisms and offences contrary to this doctrine. No man can be sound and sectarian at the same time. My aim is to save souls and lead them to Christ. It is not to increase or enlarge any party or faction as such. It is enough with me if the Lord adds men to the one body without my trying to entice them into some party or faction. I intend to stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has set me free. And I shall defend in others the same freedom I demand for myself! I am not for sale!

I am asked if this will not create some problems for other brethren in their attitude toward me. It will for those who are not free. Any free man in Christ is a problem to those who are factional. Every faction has to corral and brand all others and one who does not wear a party label of any kind presents a serious problem. The problem is not created by my freedom but by their factionalism. Let them become free and the problem will be solved. Let them tear down their corral fences and remove their artificial barriers and keep an eye upon those who would build them up again and remain aloof from them and all of us can be happy in Jesus and with each other.

In the past, instead of marking those who were divisive, it was generally those who were divisive who did the marking, accompanying it with such cutting and slashing as rendered the body a spectacle of shame and disgrace to an unbelieving world. It is time to stop this form of insanity which makes us bite and devour the body of which we are a part. Jesus died to make Christians— not cannibals!

The apostle describes the characters to be marked and avoided. “Such creatures are no servants of Christ our Lord, they are slaves of their base desires; with their plausible and pious talk they beguile the hearts of unsuspecting people” (verse

18). Have we become so hardened against our brethren that we regard those who differ with us about cups and classes as “no servants of Jesus Christ our Lord but slaves of their base desires?” Are we so callous that we will thus brand God’s children who differ with us about the method of caring for orphans? Are we so benumbed in spirit and frigid of heart that we conclude that every brother and sister who expects Jesus to come in advance of the millennium is “no servant of Jesus Christ our Lord?” Are we mere spiritual robots of steel, case-hardened and unfeeling, so that we can drive out any saint who differs with us about the utility of instrumental accompaniment in praise service to God?

If these do not fall into such a category as Paul describes, why do we twist and wrest this scripture as applicable to them? Have we been chloroformed by our own orthodoxy and paralyzed by partisan prejudice until we cannot see that to employ this passage to project division makes of us the aggressors and the ones to be marked and avoided? Why do factional promoters quote this verse and apply it to others? Is this the way to add brotherly kindness to godliness and love to brotherly kindness? Is this how we fulfill the admonition to speak not evil one of another, brethren? Is this the way to eliminate envying and strife and to overcome confusion and every evil work?

I know not what course others may take, but as for myself I have resolved never again to be brought into serfdom to any man or made the slave of any machine. I shall steadfastly refuse to be made a cat’s paw for any clan or a carrier pigeon for any party. I will be answerable to God for my thoughts and actions and will allow no one to control my thinking *down here* who cannot assume responsibility for it *up there*. If I must answer for it alone in heaven I shall reserve the right to do it for myself on earth. I can best face the head of the one body by cherishing and nourishing every other member attached unto him. I can best serve the Shepherd by associating with all of the sheep rather

than by foraging with a few of them in the arrogance of isolation from the flock.

I shall value a brother in Christ Jesus more highly than I value what he thinks, knowing that the blood of Jesus makes him priceless even while his thoughts are inferior. All of the brothers I have are “brothers in error” because there are no other kind. Those who think they are not are in the worst error of all. But if they were good enough for God to accept they are not too bad for me to acknowledge. They can be my brothers on the same basis they are his children, and I will not stigmatize them as causing division when they are simply victims like most of the rest of us.

Not of Faith

Mission Messenger (March 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

This issue of the paper provides a proper forum for expressing my view concerning the abuse of Romans 14:23, by controversialists who appear more interested in winning arguments than in serving the cause of truth. I am reluctant to mention this, knowing in advance that my motives will be misjudged, but my reticence is overcome by a firm resolution to maintain integrity in interpretation, regardless of personal cost. If the fallacy was committed only by novices I would be inclined to ignore it, but since it crops up in other journals under the signatures of college professors who are sure that they are “a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a corrector of the foolish,” a few words on the matter seem to be imperative.

Although the illogical argument has been used in opposition to various things— cups, classes, colleges, and collectives for the care of orphans— it is more frequently employed as the culminating barrage against instrumental music in corporate worship. The argument customarily proceeds along the following lines. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Instrumental music does not come by hearing the word of God, because the word of God is silent concerning its use in the church. Therefore, instrumental music is not of faith. After concocting this syllogism, which hardly deserves to be so designated, a second phase is introduced. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Instrumental

music in worship is not of faith. Therefore, instrumental music in worship is a sin. Those who regard individual cups, classes, colleges, or institutional orphan homes as a sin, merely slip the words “instrumental music” out and drop their own issues of the moment in the vacant slots and they have a ready-made argument as incontrovertible proof of the utter sinfulness of whatever it is they oppose.

One does not have to be especially adept in either the sacred scriptures or science of dialectics to point out at least three loopholes in this compound of propositions. However, we must confine ourselves to one which twists a scripture and spins a web of sophistry. We are not thereby entering into an examination of the right or wrong of cups, classes, colleges, clarinets or concert pianos. This is aside from our present pursuit. Our point of investigation centers around the meaning of the expression, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” We think that, correctly understood, this passage might convey exactly the opposite meaning to that intended by orthodox debaters.

The 14th chapter of Romans is devoted to showing us how we can live together in spite of differences and varied concepts. This difficult assignment can be achieved only by mutual recognition of and respect for the following principles which are elemental to the Christian structure.

1. The basis upon which God welcomes us all. He receives us with our varied scruples and opinions (14:3), and we must “welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you” (15:7).

2. The absolute and universal lordship of Jesus (14:9), which makes him the sole judge of all as to motive and practice (14:10), and removes such judgment from our sphere of action.

3. The inviolability and sovereignty of the individual conscience which determines for each saint the validity of any

action or thing at a given time. Even that which is not unclean of itself becomes unclean to one who thinks it is unclean (14:14).

4. The law of relative values which makes a man for whom Christ died more important than any thing for which Christ did not die. Incorporated in this is the truth that a man is of more value than his thoughts (14:15, 16).

5. The nature of the kingdom of God which consists of universals of such magnitude as to transcend mere transitory things, and which provide a foundation upon which all of us can stand (14:18).

6. The reciprocal obligation devolving upon all to pursue only what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding (14:19).

One who does not predicate his approach to this chapter upon these considerations will be like a ship without a rudder or a plane without radar. We are now ready to consider the meaning of faith in verses 22, 23. "The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God; happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves." Obviously Paul is not talking here about the faith which saves, about which he spoke in Romans 10:17. That faith is to be proclaimed and shared. The faith here is a personal conviction as to whether one in Christ can engage in certain things which others do in Christ. It is a private persuasion. "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind" (verse 5). As Phillips very aptly translates it, "Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God, and you are happy if you have no qualms about what you allow yourself to eat." One must not inject this faith, or impose it upon others. He must cherish it in the full realization that God knows he is right even if some brethren do not think so.

One must never act against personal conviction. Even if a thing is right one must not violate his conscience and do it if it appears wrong to him. If he has doubts he must resolve them or

overcome them before he proceeds. “But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin.” Since this faith is one’s personal conviction or opinion, will the brethren who employ the statement in opposition to the use of instrumental music, concede that it is not sin for those to use it whose consciences do not condemn them and who act in “good faith.” Will they agree on this issue to “let every one be fully convinced in his own mind?” Will they cease judging those who do and let them stand or fall to their own Master? Or, will they pilfer the passage from its context and rob it of its setting to make an argument?

Now comes a strange paradox. When we begin to ask such questions, the reply is that this chapter is not dealing with such things as instrumental music at all, and it does not fall into the category of eating meats and respecting days. Then why do these brethren appeal to the final verse as the major premise in their syllogism? The height of inconsistency was reached by one brother writing in a prominent partisan journal published in the Southland. In one issue he employed the final verse of Romans 14 to prove that instrumental music in the worship was a sin, and shortly thereafter devoted a page to proving that the chapter had nothing to do with such matters. “Surely the legs of the lame are not equal.”

It is right, and even obligatory, for our brethren to oppose that which they conceive to be detrimental to the sacred scriptures, but they should not need to rewrite those scriptures in order to do so. Those who propose to quote from Romans 14 need to decide which side they will take. One cannot pitch on both teams and be the umpire too. He cannot operate both ends of the see-saw at the same time! It is astonishing indeed how the defenders of partisan programs will warp and wrest the very word they claim to recognize as authority.

Are You a Liberal?

Mission Messenger (March 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

The brethren in Christ who grew up in a narrow and intolerant faction which they were taught, from earliest childhood, to regard as the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth, and who were encouraged to think of all others outside the partisan pale as “heathen and publicans,” find themselves in a state of shock when someone dares to question whether their faction, or any other faction, so conceived and so dedicated, is the sole constituency of the body of which the Son of God is the head. That there should be saints in Christ who are not in the party is unthinkable. The rest of the world may be wrong about many things, and is wrong about most everything, as they view it, but that their leaders can be wrong about anything, is unthinkable.

Under these conditions, when someone suggests that the party walls are arbitrarily constructed by men and do not represent the limits of God’s acceptance, and that there are sons of God outside “the brotherhood” created by allegiance to a certain journal or its viewpoint, he is liable to be branded as a *liberal*. This convenient term is used to frighten those who would be disposed to climb up on the top rail and investigate beyond the limits of “the old corral.” There is something about the word “Liberal” which connotes denial of things basic and fundamental to the Christian concept. The mere mention of it conjures up the form of a spectral evil genius, garbed in the robe

of a philosopher, who plots and plans, in conjunction with Belial, the seduction and destruction of all we hold dear. To designate a person as a "Liberal" is equivalent to warning all of the folks that when he is in the neighborhood, they should put the dogs under the porch, call all the children in, lock and bar the door, and draw the shades before crawling under the beds.

This is of interest to me because I have before me as I write, three papers, each produced by a different party in "The Church of Christ." One is edited in California, the other two in Texas. The California journal has an article designating as "liberals" the folk who subscribe to the viewpoints of both Texas papers because they espouse and defend Bible classes and individual cups. The congregations which have these things are referred to by the rather fantastic and slightly amusing caption, "Sunday School and cups churches." But one of the Texas journals designates the followers of the other as "liberals" because they endorse what is called "centralized supervision." This is a term coined to describe the method of support of "Herald of Truth" which is a propaganda device specializing in the employment of radio programs.

The third paper has an editorial referring to me as "a liberal." Members of the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood have much in common, one of them being that all of them are tagged as "liberals" by some of the others. One does not need to be much of a logician to reach the conclusion that if every one is a liberal no one is, and that which loses its power of distinction can no longer distinguish. Before the word "liberal" can possibly define a man's position in these days, the one who uses it must define the word "liberal." As a label it is so indistinct that one cannot tell the content without opening the container. It is a little like the dear old soul who wanted to tell her pies apart and marked some of them T. M. for "'Tis mince," and the rest of them T. M. for "'Tain't mince." We may all be liberal and not know it. On the following grounds I cheerfully plead guilty to the charge of my fellow-editor in Texas, who

would like to see me hanged but always gets tangled in his own rope while trying to throw it across a limb.

1. If reception of all who are children of my Father as my brothers, on the same conditions as he accepts all of us, makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

2. If reverence for the Lordship of Jesus over the whole body, and recognition that every sincere immersed believer in His divine Son is in that body makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

3. If regard for the authority of the new covenant scriptures in every particular, as well in fellowship and unity as in repentance and baptism, makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

4. If registering one's love for all the brethren, sharing with them and associating with them, calling upon them to pray to the Father, and defending their right to be answerable to a common Master, makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

5. If refusal to make anything a test of fellowship or of union or communion, which God has not made a condition of salvation, makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

6. If the resolution to be just a Christian and a Christian only, and not some special brand or type of Christian, not even a "Church of Christ Christian," or a "Christian Church Christian," makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

7. If respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the individual conscience, coupled with the steadfast refusal to allow my thinking to originate in or be regulated by any pressure group, in Texas or California, makes one a liberal, then I'm a liberal.

On the same grounds I suspect we are developing more

“liberals” all of the time. Not all have been “liberated” yet and cannot allow it to be known for fear of reprisal. But better days are in the offing. The sun is starting to break through the clouds. In the meantime I am trying to overcome the factional tendency to label others in the family. A man is not so much of a liberal or extremist because of where he stands as because of where I stand as I look at him. One might be on my left and still be “right,” or he might be on my right and still be “left.” I am concerned that all of us be in Him and that He abide in us. If we remain in the right person it will be difficult to stay in the wrong place!

Analysis of Apostasy

Mission Messenger (April 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

It has long been a slogan of those affiliated with the “Churches of Christ” that “We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” Actually this statement is more of a cliché than a governing principle. It is apparently not taken too seriously by those who parrot it. There may be some question as to whether it is possible to literally implement the import of the statement, but in any event each faction makes it sufficiently elastic to include what it wants to include and to exclude what it wants to deny. We are treated to the ridiculous sight of two dozen parties “speaking where the Bible speaks,” and all saying something different; and “remaining silent where the Bible is silent,” while openly denouncing the silences of each other.

Apparently a goodly number of the professional preachers and teachers in the various segments give more concern to speaking where the Bible speaks than they devote to speaking as the Bible speaks. If we intend to be true disciples, in the real sense of that word, we must not merely quote texts and repeat words used by the Spirit, but we must mean the same thing the Spirit meant when he used the terms. To do otherwise would be to wrest or twist the words of revelation. Words are signs or symbols of ideas and we must convey the proper ideas of the words we use or else we will confuse the hearts of men.

It is obvious that we have developed a great many ideas foreign to the sacred scriptures which we try to sanctify by clothing them in scriptural verbiage. We assume that what we now have is the primitive church restored and we conclude that by applying Biblical designations we prove that these things are of divine origin. It is demonstrable that almost every scriptural term has been abused by attaching it to something, or by attaching something to it, which is foreign to the sacred writings. A few examples are bishop, presbytery, church, worship and sanctuary. One of the most critical abuses is that of the word "ministry." Whereas the Spirit applies this to every form of service compatible with the Christian ideal, our brethren now speak of "the ministry" in a specialized and exclusive sense. In the new covenant sense one enters the ministry when he comes into Christ by an act of God; in the decadent modernistic sense he "enters the ministry" by completing a curriculum outlined by men. Until we recapture the vital significance of the priesthood of all believers, and the ministry of all the saints, we will be only nibbling at the edge of restoration.

It is in the field of human relationships and attitudes toward each other, however, that we often exhibit our dearth of those qualities essential to the survival of any movement based upon common faith. Even the most casual observer can see that when the strength of a cause is dependent upon the separation of its adherents from an alien world, to apply those epithets to one which belong only to the other, will weaken those who should be strengthened, and strengthen those who should be weakened. The hope of the survival of the Christian faith lies in our ability to manifest such love toward others as will transcend all else.

When Satan can take advantage of those differences which will naturally arise and tempt us into treating each other as aliens, he has injected a venom into the blood-stream of the body which will eventually paralyze it. In spite of this, many of our brethren think they prove their loyalty to Jesus when they brand other members with designations belonging only to the

unregenerate. Passages demanding that Christians be not unequally yoked with pagans are quoted to keep Christians from being yoked to each other. Those written to encourage the saints to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness are employed to keep the saints from having fellowship with others in the light. Those written to forbid a greeting to men who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh are quoted to keep apart those who firmly believe this salient truth.

Apostates and Apostasy

One word which we believe is misapplied is “apostate.” Every deviation from the orthodoxy of every faction is labeled apostasy; every honest non-conformist is an apostate. One who cannot conscientiously see any violation of the divine purpose of the ages in the use of individual containers to distribute the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper is called an apostate by those who regard this as an innovation. The same thing is true of those who have Bible classes for teaching the word of God to different ages, those who have chartered homes in which to rear and care for orphans, and those who hold that the coming of our Lord will be pre-millennial.

I have before me, as I write, a periodical published by those brethren who oppose the method of producing and financing “Herald of Truth.” This international propaganda medium is presented under direction of one congregation in Texas. The elders of this congregation solicit and receive funds for the program and it is supervised by them. This is designated “centralized control” by a large segment of the brethren in the non-instrument wing of the disciple brotherhood. They regard it as being in the same category as a missionary society and have coined the word “institutionalism” to describe the philosophy of those who support Herald of Truth and certain types of orphan homes. In the journal to which I allude is an editorial attacking those who espouse the philosophy, and three times they are

referred to as “liberals and apostates.”

It is not our intention here to enter the ranks of the contenders on either side, nor to attempt to determine for any of our readers the right or wrong of the thing under discussion. We do not suppose that anyone would be so foolish as to try to show that the primitive saints had anything comparable to “Herald of Truth.” No one would expect to find it in what our brethren call “the pattern.” Those who support it do so on the basis of deductions and inferences, that is judgmental interpretation of the scriptures. Those who oppose it do so on the same basis. All of them want to respect the authority of our Lord, but both groups confuse their interpretations with the scriptures, and argue for the authority of their opinions as scripture.

Like every other serious person who loves the Lord, I hold some views relative to the validity of the things under discussion. I suspect that both factions miss the real dangers to Christianity involved in their contentions. However, my present purpose is to point out that neither those who support or those who oppose “Herald of Truth” are apostates. The spirit which prompts brethren to so categorize and castigate each other is infinitely more harmful to the cause of our Lord than the methods they employ for implementing their work. The divinely ordained means of impressing the world with our discipleship is not related to programs, methods or promotional schemes, but is to be by attitude toward each other. If we are tempted by Satan to allow things to disturb or destroy this attitude we have no other means of drawing or attracting mankind. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” It is not likely that many will be attracted to a movement in which all are branded as apostates by others in the same movement.

What Is Apostasy?

The word “apostasy” does not appear in the King James Version, but the Greek original is found twice. Once it has to do with the untrue accusation against Paul that he taught “all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses” (Acts 21:21). Literally the word means “to fall away,” and the tenor of the context shows that Paul incurred the animosity of the orthodox Jews because they mistakenly concluded that he was advocating utter abandonment of Judaism, “saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.” This would amount to an absolute defection from the revelation they had been taught to revere.

The other occurrence is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, where Paul assures the saints in Thessalonica that the return of the Lord was not imminent because it had to be preceded by a “falling away” of such magnitude as to result in the enthronement of “the man of sin, the son of perdition.” The defection would be the culmination or result of the mystery of iniquity, and would be characterized by one “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

The one editorial to which I referred uses the word “apostates” more times than the Holy Spirit employed it in the whole of the new covenant scriptures. It is a striking fact that, in spite of all the problems at Corinth, not once in two letters addressed to the saints in that city did the apostle refer to any of his brethren in Christ as apostates. The truth is that the Holy Spirit never once labeled any brother in the Lord by the term so frequently bandied about today by aspirants to factional leadership and control. Our brethren who are thus stigmatized are not apostates. They have not deserted Jesus. They have not fallen away from the faith. They have not defected from the Christian walk.

One who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is not an apostate

simply because he cannot conscientiously concur with the orthodox position of a party. No one becomes an apostate because of his view on cups, classes, colleges or collectives for the care of homeless children. It is a reflection against the Father to stigmatize his children who love him by accusing them of apostasy because of personal peculiarities of sentiment. It is also an indication of the deep infiltration of factional bitterness into the hearts of those who engage in such accusations. Honest disagreement about the relative value of methods and manners under controversy does not make apostates of those who are either pro or con on such things. Men can be mistaken without being malicious. They can fail to understand without falling away from Jesus.

The extreme harshness toward sincere brethren holding dissident views is working its own rebuke. It is helping to arouse brethren everywhere to the true nature of the factional spirit. There is a revolution taking place. It is making an impact upon some in even the most reactionary parties. For the first time in a century which has been marked by splits and schisms there is a notable change occurring. Brethren are becoming weary of misrepresentation by partisan leaders. They are tired of the sin of over-simplification which makes the adherents of one faction "the good guys," and everyone else "the bad guys." They are sick of silly charges and countercharges in orthodox partisan journals which specialize in challenges to debate but which contain nothing challenging to live for. There is a deadening sameness, a paralyzing mediocrity, in the material presented in these factional mouthpieces. This is apparent when one considers how much all are aroused by an occasional thought-provoking article which slips by the editorial desk.

The current revolt is strongest in the college and university group, but it is spreading to all classes and conditions of saints. Brilliant young men and women who have been trained to think are exercising their right to do so in every department of existence. In the spiritual realm they have associated with some

who have been branded as “dangerous” and have even been labeled “heretics” and they have found them to be the real salt of the earth. Indeed a “heretic” in some circles is one who has not lost “his savor.” Many are no longer content with a passive role where you never dare to question the interpretations of the preacher, and must swallow the party regulations related to fellowship without protest.

This gathering of the forces of reform, and the crystallization of antifactional thinking, has frightened the defenders of orthodoxy. Veiled threats are being issued. The three familiar factional weapons— innuendo, ostracism and boycott— are being unsheathed. But they are not working as effectively as they once did. A new day has come! A new generation has arisen! Those who are leading in the current reformation have been publicly assailed as posing the greatest threat to the church in a century. But the force of this is blunted when it is recognized that those who make the charge have confused the party in which they live and from which they draw their financial livelihood with the church for which Jesus died. Men will resist anything which threatens their financial standing and social prestige.

It is being said that the revolution is making capital of emotional, unsettled and unstable youth, but the truth is that the college men and women who are involved are the most serious, studious and sanctified ones on the campus. They can no longer make one’s test of relationship and loyalty to the Lord Jesus hinge upon an attitude toward cups, classes, orphan homes, the pre-millennial viewpoint or instrumental music. They place the relationship in Christ Jesus ahead of the things about which the children argue. They think brethren can fall out with each other without falling away from Christ. They know the difference between an intellectual approach to a problem and apostasy from the one Lord.

I am not afraid of the spirit of challenge and adventure.

The fresh breezes now blowing across the restoration movement are invigorating and healthful. We cannot lose by re-thinking our course in the light of the sacred oracles. Let the searchlight of examination be turned on in full glare against any position we have held in the past. Let the word of God be critically studied anew and every passage be analyzed afresh. We want to know the truth regardless of cost or suffering. No price is too great to pay for this “gem of purest ray serene.” Only the party is endangered by such a course. The church of God will be unscathed and will reflect more brilliantly the glory belonging only to God. Let the truth be known!

The Unrecognized Unity

Mission Messenger (April 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

Did it ever occur to you that the unity for which Jesus prayed might come and we would not recognize it? “The wind blows where it wills; you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from, or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Could this also be true of that unity which is born of the Spirit? “You cannot tell by observation when the kingdom of God comes. There will be no saying, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘there it is!’ for in fact the kingdom of God is among you.” Is it possible that the unity of the kingdom will be like the kingdom itself? Will it be in us and dwell among us in a very real sense but free from show and overt demonstration?

Perhaps the Christian world is like the Jewish world when Jesus came. Here were people who had the word of God. They revered it, studied it and discussed it. Jesus said to them, “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life.” They were familiar with every Messianic hint and prophecy. They had built up great commentaries containing the text of their debates and disputations. But when Jesus came they did not recognize their Messiah. They knew the plan of the scriptures but they did not know the Man of the scriptures.

Out of their interpretations they built up an idea of how Christ must come and how he must act. But the revelation was

one thing and their interpretation was another thing. Jesus came “according to the scriptures” but not according to their ideas of what the scriptures meant. They could quote the scriptures by rote to prove they were right. Of them it was said, “You rely upon the law and are proud of your God; you know his will; you are confident that you are the one to guide the blind, to enlighten the benighted, to train the stupid and to teach the immature, because in the law you see the very shape of knowledge and truth” (Romans 1:17-20).

The retort to every question would have been, “It has to be this way because that is what the Book says!” And when he appeared he came according to the volume but not according to their version. He fulfilled God’s revelation but failed in their expectation. They knew only one solution. When there is a seeming conflict between the law and the Lord, the first must be glorified and the other crucified. “We have a law and by our law he ought to die.” The law they had was the law of God and they used the law of God to kill the Lamb of God. Clever legalists can legalize anything. They do not deny the cross; they simply nail men to it. To them it is not a means of ridding themselves of sin, but of a Savior.

When Jesus came “the people were on the tiptoe of expectation” (Luke 3:15). They are that way now on the subject of unity. Interest is at fever pitch. The ecumenical council at Rome and the ecumenical movement in Protestantism— these have kindled thought and sparked hope in a prospect so vast and magnificent that men whisper their very dreams in awe. Organizations that once seemed indispensable are now ready to be offered upon the sacrificial altar, traditions which were deemed vital are now ready for the scrapheap. This is a period of restlessness, transition and upheaval. New structures are being debated, old structures are being demolished, re-structure is being deliberated.

In the midst of the maelstrom of activity with the hum of

party machinery and the buzz of political maneuvering, I seem to hear the whisper of a still small voice from the bygone centuries, warning as of yore, "If they tell you, 'He is there in the wilderness,' do not go out; or if they say, 'He is there in the inner room,' do not believe it." The unity for which Jesus prayed is not a project of conventions nor a product of councils. It cannot be drafted, dictated or documented. It cannot be voted in, voted out, or even voted on. There will come no hour when men can affix their signatures to a declaration and say, "This is it!" It is true that a cessation of partisan hostilities can be thus arranged, and tired combatants can lay down their factional arms, but this is as far from "the peace that passeth understanding" as the east is from the west.

We are trained and conditioned to think only in terms of organization. We can do nothing without conclaves and charters, laws and by-laws. And we are tempted to think that because we have been imbued with the spirit of organization that our structures are organizations of the Spirit. In reality we have not been organized to live but we have been organized to death. We have forsaken the simplicity of the One Way for the complexity of our own ways. We have forfeited affection for affectation. Increasingly we hear about "the community image" of the church, little remembering that those who make an image generally end up worshiping it.

Unity will never come by legislation. It is not the child of conventions nor the seed of synods. It is not sired by sessions nor born of boards. Unity cannot be enforced externally; it must be enjoyed internally. It is a fruit of the Spirit and fruit grows naturally from the substance absorbed by deep roots. It is not explosive or exhaustive.

When hearts yearn for each other with a deep and abiding affection, when brotherhood is conditioned upon common Fatherhood and fellowship is recognized as the result of mutual sonship, unity will flow forth as a broad and tranquil stream

whose crystal waters are furnished by the bubbling springs of thousands of quiet hearts. Then we will not need to argue every action of every faction, nor debate every minor deviation of every dissident party, but love will triumph over trouble and we shall grow together in the bundle of life with the souls of all the brethren, and we shall be tied with the scarlet line that flowed from his lacerated side. This is unity of the Spirit!

It is on its way! You can sense its throbbing, pulsating presence in the growing revolt against narrow intolerant orthodoxy on the campus of every college in this land. Men are growing tired of bickering over trifles in a world at crisis. They are weary of insane feuds bequeathed from generations past which have no relevance in this day of decision. They are sick of being pawns in party struggles for power promoted by jealous preachers. The futility of proclaiming unity while practicing division is freely acknowledged. The parroting of scriptures with partisan prejudice is working its own rebuke. The childish competition and ridiculous rivalry at the rim of Armageddon are being rejected by rational minds. The folly of a church militant against herself is being seen in true perspective in the light of burning “heretics” who were the truest friends of truth.

The “fellowship of the concerned ones” is growing. The factional defenders of partisan orthodoxy are frightened. A few years ago they laughed among themselves and cautioned each other to ignore what was happening. They comforted one another with the thought that no reform had ever made any impact upon them. The organization was iron-clad and every dissenter was doomed to waste his life away without affecting those inside the wall. They no longer laugh. The hollow echoes of yesterday haunt them like ghosts of the past.

A new movement is gathering force— a twentieth century restoration movement— linked by kinship to the restoration movements of long ago and yet destined to meet realistically the needs of our contemporary era. Already the roots of the plea for

fellowship have penetrated every partisan fence and barrier. Hearts are beating in unison of purpose even while minds are still disturbed by varying opinions.

Such unity will continue to grow, although unrecognized by factional proponents who dogmatically insist that it must come only by surrender to them instead of to Jesus. It is a unity in depth and will not be attained by shallow compromise. It is a unity of maturity in vision which will offset the childishness of division. It is a unity which will call with compelling voice to the scattered sheep grazing upon the barren slopes of a sterile sectarianism, and they will lift up their heads and listen and hear, and move toward the Shepherd, realizing as they draw closer that “there is one flock and one Shepherd,” and there can never be more than one. It is the natural unity which belongs to a divine organism and can never be created by a human organization. It is the spirit of unity produced by the unity of the Spirit— and these can never be reversed!

The Pervading Silence

Mission Messenger (April 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

A brother writes from Saskatchewan to enquire if our offer to various colleges has received an answer. Another brother, who lives in Texas, writes, "I have been watching your columns anxiously to see if your courageous offer would receive a favorable reply and an invitation from my alma mater. I will be grievously disappointed if they do not accept your proposal." Both of these men refer to the following statement which we published in our issue of last October.

To those who are of a disposition to place the quest for truth above partisan politics we make this proposal. We will appear at our own expense on the platform of the annual lectureship at George Pepperdine College, Abilene Christian College, Lubbock Christian College, Harding College, David Lipscomb College, and Florida College, and submit to open public questioning by members of the faculty, or if permitted, by the entire audience. We pledge that we will conduct ourselves with proper Christian decorum and love those who disagree as much as we do those who agree with our views.

This article constitutes our personal permission for any freedom-loving alumnus or group connected with any of the colleges mentioned, to petition the administrative heads of their *alma mater* for a fair hearing on our position. We have been the subject of discussion *in absentia* in every one of these schools in

classes or on the public platform. We await with interest the outcome of this offer to see if a single one of them will dare to face up to the greatest challenge of the twentieth century— that of offering a real basis for Christian unity which transcends all partisan, sectarian and factional considerations.

Thus far only a deathlike silence has greeted our offer insofar as college officialdom is concerned. But a faculty member of one of the colleges wrote that some of his colleagues had agreed that if one of the professors in Abilene Christian College had presented my position on fellowship and unity he would have been hailed as “the savior of the restoration movement,” although they did not dare acquiesce in it now, for it would be “the kiss of death.”

There is a grassroots movement gathering momentum which will not always be squelched. Students and faculty members alike are growing tired of the projection of a partisan image in a world calling for relief from the burden and scandal of the sectarian spirit. Who knows but what the time may yet come when I shall be allowed to set forth my own position and defend it before audiences which have heard attacks made which were unfair and unjust? Our brethren cannot always hide from the truth for “the eternal years of God are hers.”

Walking in the Light

Mission Messenger (May 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

No discussion of fellowship can ignore this statement. It is apparent that the fellowship mentioned is conditioned upon “walking in the light” and doing so to the extent that God is in the light. But what is the light? What is darkness? What is it to “walk in the light?” An objective analysis of this passage and a proper answer to these questions produces a real surprise to partisan defenders who have merely accepted a traditional explanation without study or investigation.

It is not our present intention to outline at length the background of this epistle. That belongs more appropriately to our forthcoming discussion of 2 John 10, 11. It will suffice now to say that, at the time of this writing, the last survivor of the apostles was living in Ephesus. Here he came into direct contact with the sect of the Gnostics who had infiltrated and disturbed every congregation in the Greek world. These factionalists pretended to special insights and claimed to have knowledge of the mystical and elemental structure of the universe. They took their title from *gnosis*, knowledge. They were the “knowing ones,” those on the inside, as opposed to the uninitiated.

Although there were various schools of gnostic thought, all were basically agreed upon the idea underlying their synthetic philosophy, that all matter is essentially evil. On this basis they concluded that God could not have personally created the world because he could have no contact with or relationship to evil. By the same token they concluded that Jesus was either a phantom, or that he was born of Joseph and Mary and elevated to Sonship with God at his baptism by John. Under the leadership of Cerinthus and other advocates of that day, this philosophy wormed its way into every congregation in Asia Minor. Wherever it went it destroyed the faith of many in the fact that Jesus had come in the flesh.

Prevalent in the theory was the idea that there could be no possible union between the human and the divine. The former was material and, therefore, evil; and the possibility of fellowship between them was regarded as absurd and ridiculous. God was so far above the universe which had been created by a demi-urge, one of a series of emanations which had gone out from the divine essence, that he was wholly unconcerned about anything on earth and completely without interest in mankind. There could be no bridging of the chasm between deity and humanity, and from this stemmed two conclusions. Jesus was not deity manifested in a body of flesh and there was no such thing as a stage of fellowship between God and man.

John counters this theory with his gospel record. This will account for the difference between it and the “synoptics.” This term is applied to Matthew, Mark and Luke, because their contents can be charted in parallel columns and synchronized. A synopsis can be made which will be true of all three. The gospel according to John does not lend itself to such treatment. It was written for a distinctive purpose and to meet a wholly different need. The first two epistles of John were written for the same purpose. Both specifically deal with the treatment to be accorded those who “deny that Jesus is the Christ” (1 John 2:22), that is, “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (2 John 7).

An analysis of 1 John in the light of its background and the circumstances which called it forth, is one of the most rewarding experiences which can come to the dedicated Bible student. John begins by affirming that eternal life, which was with God from the beginning, was manifested and made visible unto men, and that he was one of the selected witnesses who beheld that life embodied in a person, and could testify to it. “We have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life.” Since eternal life was with the Father from the beginning, and was not merely extension of time, but possessed the quality of personality, the pre-existence of the “Word of life” was thus asserted.

Nature of the Testimony

The fact that prior to the manifestation, the Word was in a different state, does not argue against existence. It serves only to demonstrate that the incarnation revealed to human eyes what previously had been hidden from them. Once accepted, this would deal a death blow to elemental gnosticism. But there was a group of gnostics called the Docetics, from *dokeo*, to appear, to seem. These alleged that Jesus possessed no reality, that he was immaterial, and a phantom (or phantasy). For their benefit the apostle shows that the Word not only became flesh, but was actually subject to examination by the senses.

He argues against the possibility of the witnesses being deceived or deluded upon the basis of their intimate personal association with the embodied Word. From the standpoint of time, proximity and conscious interest, they had ample opportunity to examine the validity of his claims. They were with him long enough and were associated with him closely enough that they could not be misled. Their own careers and very lives were staked upon his veracity. They had left all and followed after him.

Their examination was audible, visual and manual. “We have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.” The best proof is visual, and this is stressed. Not only did they see Jesus with their eyes, but they “looked upon” him. This has to do with studied investigation or prolonged scrutiny. Theirs was no mere passing glance. They did not simply *look at* Jesus as he passed by, but they *looked upon* him. The apostles were qualified witnesses. Their testimony met all of the requirements essential to proving a point of fact.

Their experience with the manifested Word made possible a fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Eternal life became incarnate in Jesus, and when Jesus took up his abode in them, eternal life became incarnate with them. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:11, 12). When the Word of life became embodied, that Word was designated the Son of God. When eternal life dwells in us we are also called sons of God. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (3:1).

The declaration of what the apostolic witnesses had seen and heard was to make possible the extension of the divine-human fellowship unto their hearers, and thus provide for them fulness of joy. The essence of the message which had been conveyed unto them by God and which they, in turn, conveyed to others, was summed up in the words, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Since the declaration was to assure fellowship of the human with the divine, and since it consisted of the statement that God is light in the absolute, it is obvious that nothing can be of greater importance than identification of the light. Fellowship is conditioned upon walking in that light.

Fellowship is not by word but by walk. It is not the testimony of the lips but of the life. The word “walk” means

more than merely making progress in a given direction, or placing each foot alternately before the other. It involves experience and sharing of thought and life. “And Enoch walked with God, and he was not (found); for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). Inasmuch as God is light, to say that one is in fellowship with God, while walking in darkness, is to lie and do not the truth. Darkness is the opposite to light.

Identifying the Light

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

What is the light? In this context the light is what God is, for God is light. The word “light” is used as a symbol for various qualities or things in the inspired scriptures. Sometimes it is used for divine revelation, and the unrevealed is darkness. Sometimes it is used for reverence of the living God, and idolatry is darkness. More frequently it is used for knowledge and ignorance is darkness. Only by studying the frame of reference in which the term is employed can one be certain of its meaning.

In this connection, we can eliminate from consideration anything which it is not possible for man to possess in the same degree as God, that is, in an absolute or perfect degree. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all . . . If we walk in the light *as he is in the light*.” This immediately excludes knowledge of God’s will from consideration. It is obvious that none of us can have the same degree of mental perception as God. The finite mind cannot embrace the scope of the infinite. To walk in the light cannot mean either to perfectly understand God’s will or to perfectly do it. This would require something we do not have in the flesh.

Fortunately, we can determine from this brief epistle what light is, as John uses the word. *Light is love*. It is not, however, affection, sentiment or passion. This love of which John speaks is *agape*, the love which God had for us which prompted him to send Jesus to die for us. It is that active and energetic good will which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object. It must be expressed. It can never be passive. It is apprehended in its demonstration which is always outreaching and outgoing. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (3:16). It is this in which we must walk.

Light is love and since the opposite of light is darkness, the darkness must be hate. Once this is grasped every sentence in the epistle falls into place like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle and a beautiful picture results. Let us proceed with the proof of our assertion. To abide in the light is to love the brethren. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" (2:10). If this is correct, hatred for the brethren will be darkness. "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now" (2:9). This last is the equivalent of saying, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie" (1:6). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (4:20).

It may be urged that the completing phrase of verse 6 is "do not the truth." This is correct for if we walk in darkness "we lie and do not the truth." But it is by brotherly love that we know we are of the truth. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (3:19). To the Greeks, truth was the reality which was at the basis of all appearance. It was the ideal which was behind every semblance. It was the genuine. John is saying that those who are "in the truth" are obligated to walk according to it, and the reality behind God's whole purpose is love. If we say that we share in the divine nature (have fellowship with God), and walk in darkness (hate our brethren), we lie and do not the truth (miss the reality underlying the whole Christian structure).

Personification of Love

On what premise can we conclude that John introduces the theme of love in conjunction with his affirmation that the Word of life was personalized? The answer is simply that it was the love of God which made eternal life manifest unto us. Because he loved us thus, we ought also to love one another. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (4:9). "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (3:16). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (4:11).

The Son of God was "God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself." But that which was manifested was the Word of life which was with God in the beginning, and which was also God. But that light which was manifested was eternal life (1:2). It was this Word of life personalized which constituted the basis of the apostolic message. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Eternal life is not extension of time but expression of love! Read the following carefully. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light" (1:5). "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (3:11). "This is the message . . . God is light." "This is the message . . . that we should love." There are not two messages. There is simply *the message*. It defines the nature of God and outlines the expression of that nature in those who are his sons.

And if it be true that light is love, it must follow that, if God is light, God is love. On this the record is positive. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (4:16). "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love" (4:8). To the serious student nothing else should be necessary to identify the light. When a writer says, "God is light," and in the very same connection twice explains what he

means by saying, “God is love,” it should require little intellectual ability to determine that in the context of that writer, *light is love!*

Perfection of Love

We come now to the chief intellectual hurdle and the greatest challenge to the scholarly mind. If light is love, does this not imply that we must possess love in the absolute, that is, in perfection? Whatever light is we must experience it, that is, walk in it to the same degree as it is manifested in God. “If we walk in the light as he is in the light.” That this is absolute is proven by the statement that “God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” If we walk in the light as he is in the light there can be none of the opposite effect in us.

We have already eliminated knowledge from consideration because all of us are ignorant in some degree, of the will of God. No one knows as much as God. To assume that light is knowledge of God’s will and darkness is ignorance of it, is simply to make us liars. We would then have to read, “if we say that we have fellowship with him and are ignorant of any part of the divine will, we lie and do not the truth. But if our knowledge is absolute and perfect, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” No sane reasoner would want to hinge his hope of being cleansed from sin upon knowing as much as God does.

But do we not face the same problem if we regard light as being love? Can we love as God? Can we walk in *this* light as God is in the light? I unhesitatingly affirm that we can. This was the very purpose of John’s epistle. It was written to tell us why and how we must do so. The thing that disturbs many is that they regard love as something to be achieved rather than something to be experienced. But no one achieves light. It is a creation of God, a blessing to be bestowed and enjoyed. And that

love which is equivalent to light is not something to be attained by human striving. It is a gift of God. It is a commitment unto us of the divine nature. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (4:7).

When the love of God was personalized in Jesus, God revealed the possibility of incarnating the divine nature. That nature had always existed but was never expressed before as it was in Christ. "In him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). In him the world could see love manifested. The nature possessed by God could now be incorporated in man, for true love was now available. "A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (2:8): The true love was now reality in flesh.

The love that God requires he supplies. It is a fruit of the Spirit. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us of God (Romans 5:5). It did not originate with man but with God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1. John 4:10). "We love because he first loved us" (4:19). When God dwells in us his love is perfected in us (4:12). "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (4:16, 17). As he is, so are we— and in this world!

This does not minimize our responsibility. It does not mean the human factor is eliminated. The provision of love is God's part; the expression of it is ours. God never forces us to act contrary to our will. It is his will to make love ours, it is ours to will love to others, and to be like him. This is proven by the fact that sometimes love is regarded as light which man cannot create, while at the same time man is commanded to walk in that light, that is, to exercise it in his own life. A man can love his brother or he can hate him. The manifestation of love is

contingent upon the will of the individual, but one who is completely surrendered and committed to God will spontaneously and naturally walk in love. The secret is the surrender of the will absolutely to God so that the divine nature is incarnated in us as it was in Jesus. The Word must become flesh in us!

Loving Our Brothers

God is light. God is love. One who walks in love walks in light. One who dwells in God dwells in light. One who dwells in love dwells in God. God dwells in such a person, so he is in the light and the light is in him. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (4:16). It is as we love our brothers that we walk in light and move out of darkness— the darkness of hate and animosity. Let us note the things affirmed of such love.

1. To love the brethren is to abide in the light (2:10). The word “abide” is not the word for a temporary dwelling. It is not used of transients who merely stay overnight. The light is the fixed residence of those who love the brethren. They do not merely pass through the light enroute from one area of darkness to another.

2. Love for the brethren is one of the two distinctive marks of sonship with God. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (3:1). “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (3:10).

3. Love for the brethren is a way-mark to identify the area into which we have come as that of life. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (3:14). The expression used here has to do with crossing a frontier. It was used of those returning from an alien country to

their native land. When one is able to love the brethren unreservedly, because they are brethren, and not upon other conditions, he can know that he has left the territory where death reigns. He no longer breathes the noxious fumes of hate, he is in a purer atmosphere. He does not wade through the murky swamps of animosity. His feet are on solid ground.

4. Love for the brethren is a criterion by which we can determine we are of the truth. It is useless to contend we are of the truth when we do not love our brethren. We can memorize the scriptures and be able to quote whole chapters but this does not demonstrate we are of the truth. “And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (3:19).

5. Love manifested toward brethren enables God to dwell in us, that is to be in fellowship with us. As we love, the divine love is perfected in us. We must love as God loved. His love was not conditioned upon our sinlessness, our perfection in knowledge, or our freedom from error. The love of God is different from all other forms of love. Love which is composed of sentiment, affection or emotion, is extended to those who are deemed worthy. The love of God creates the worth in itself. The first loves those who are precious; the others are precious because they are loved.

When we tolerate or endure those who disagree with us and love those who do not, we are no better than the despised and outcast publicans (Matt. 5:46). They loved those who reciprocated in kind. Theirs was the mutual sharing of misery. Our love is to be creative and outgoing. It expends itself because only in so doing can it live. In loving we see God in our own hearts. “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us” (4:12).

6. When we are partners in Brotherly Love, Unlimited, we are freed from all torment of fear. This is not true of those who are restrained and restricted by a legalistic concept of the Way.

All who seek to live by law, or love by law, will spend their time on earth “bound in shallows and in miseries.” Who knows if he has learned all he could learn, done all he could do, or climbed as high as he could by exertion of his own power or ability? There will always be doubt and suspicion, fear and distrust, under such a system. God changed the world by turning love loose. When we do the same we lose all fear of men on earth and judgment after death. The secret to the carefree life is love unbounded. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (4:17, 18). Notice that it is only perfect love that can cast out fear. Imperfect love is always frightened and fearful.

Hating Our Brothers

In the context love is a positive, active, energetic and energizing force. It is creative. But hate is negative. Because of its nature love must express itself in positive fashion, but hate need not necessarily do so. It can be simply lack of love. Man was made with the ability to love and thus to be like God, who is love. When he fails in this respect he does not cross the frontier. One must do something to leave where he is but he need not do anything to stay where he is. Not to love is to hate! This thesis would be incomplete if we showed the nature of love without studying the nature and results of hate.

1. Hatred for the brethren (that is, lack of love) leaves one in darkness. Regardless of how one may assert he is in the light, if he does not love, he lies. “He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now” (2:9). Darkness is simply absence of light. God did not create darkness. He created light.

2. Hatred of our brethren blinds us and makes true

perception impossible. No man can ever grasp the import of God's revelation until he loves his brethren as God loves them. To assert that one sees the truth while hating his brothers is like a blind man claiming to view the beauties of nature. "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes" (2:11).

3. Lack of love for the brethren is proof of the fatherhood of Satan in our lives. The realm of hatred is presided over by "the prince of the power of the air." Those who operate in the area of hatred and animosity are on the devil's territory. It is useless to affirm we are sons of God if we do not love God's other sons. "In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the devil" (3:10).

4. Those who do not love the brethren are still in the domain of death. They dwell like lepers in putrid sepulchers, and like the evil spirits of old "abide in the tombs." It is by love that we cross the frontier from death unto life. He who has not learned to love has not learned to live (3:14).

5. One who hates his brother is a murderer. Under the regime of Christ, thought and intent may be taken for the act. Jesus pointed out that those in olden times said, "Thou shalt not kill" but now to be angry against a brother without cause, or to slander or falsely accuse him, might result in losing one's soul. One who hates lacks only the opportunity to do violence to a brother who is the object of his wrath and spite.

6. One who does not love does not know God. He may know about God and be able to catalogue the attributes of deity. But there is a difference in the ability to identify a person and in being identified with him. It is one thing to describe another; a wholly different thing to abide in Him. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

The Fallacy of Orthodoxy

It cannot be denied that the average preacher of “The Church of Christ” regards the light of which John speaks as his own creedal interpretation of the new covenant scriptures! To “walk in the light” is to live up to the traditional factional explanation of the party of which he is a member. To “walk in darkness” is to deviate in some particular, especially that of the special party emphasis, from the unwritten creed. There are some two dozen factions in the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood. Each one thinks that it alone is in the light and all of the others are in darkness. Since “fellowship one with another” is conditioned upon “walking in the light,” and since the light is the legalistic code of the faction, fellowship is regarded as ordained of God to be limited to fellow-partisans.

It would be a matter of compassion if only the ignorant and unlearned were victims of such philosophy, but it becomes tragic when it is realized that this type of exposition is advocated by editors and journalists who have a reputation in their parties. It is even advanced by college professors responsible for teaching the young. The situation would be regrettable if such teaching was given without intent to unduly influence others; it is even more so when it is done with the deliberate design of maintaining division in the family of God, and keeping apart those who should recognize each other as brethren. When the humbler saints indicate a desire to exhibit love for those on the other side of a partisan wall they are discouraged by misapplication of the statement, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Actually the revised factional version should read, “*If they will walk in our light as we are in that light, we will have fellowship with them.*”

The apostle John wrote in a time of crisis to stimulate believers in the Word of life and to encourage fellowship in love. His letter is a majestic treatise on brotherly love, unsurpassed in the whole realm of literature. In spite of that, men under the

guise of loyalty to Jesus single out a passage and interpret it in such a manner as to make fellowship impossible and to render every claim of the epistle upon our better selves null and void. I deny that the light in this instance is a written code. God is light but he is not a written code. Not a letter that John wrote was either life or light. If the third epistle was either one, the apostle deliberately withheld life or light from Gaius, for he declared, "I had many things to write, but I will not with pen and ink write to thee." If the second epistle was to be life or light, it was imperfect, for John wrote, "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink." That the first letter was not intended to convey life is evident. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (5:13). Eternal life is not having a copy of the Bible, but having the Son of God. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (5:12).

Where is the congregation of believers which will brazenly affirm that it is composed only of those who know as much about God's will and purpose as God himself? If the light in which we must walk to have fellowship, is knowledge of God's revelation, we must either be as perfect as God or we cannot be in fellowship. "If we walk in the light *as he is in the light*, we have fellowship one with another." "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." If darkness is ignorance we cannot be ignorant at all. We must know all there is to know, and be as wise as God, or else we walk in darkness. If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness—if we are ignorant about anything—we lie and do not the truth.

The absurdity of this lies in the fact that we will have to immerse people in the morning and exclude them from our fellowship in the afternoon, for if they do not come to a perfect knowledge as soon as they are immersed they are walking in darkness. If the champions of orthodoxy say that we must allow them time to learn, then we ask how long can they walk in

darkness and be accepted? How much of the Bible must one be able to grasp perfectly before he is walking in darkness? How much of it can he misunderstand and still walk in the light?

It is time to quit playing around with such puerile proponents of partisan positions. Where is the preacher who quotes this passage to debar saints and discourage fellowship among brethren, who will dare affirm that he is as wise as God and as good as God? If he dare not say that he is, by his own admission he is not in the fellowship. Like Haman, he is hanged on the fatal gallows which he constructed to destroy others. I consider the traditional orthodox interpretation placed upon 1 John 1:7 as one of the most dangerous ever palmed off on unsuspecting men and women. It is subversive of the Spirit and a scandal to the church of God. It dooms the body to disintegration and can only damn us all to destruction.

Let us recapture the valid meaning of this warped and wrested passage and use it to promote fellowship, not pervert it. God is light. God is love. If we walk in the light we walk in God. If we walk in love we abide in God. If we love our brothers we abide in the light. You cannot separate light and love. Neither can you separate those who love one another. We quit living together when we quit loving each other. The road to togetherness is the path of love. “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:21). When we heed this command, and only then, can it be said, “As he is, so are we,” and it can be added— “in this world.”

Ecumenical Encounter

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[Abstract]

Alexander Campbell declared that the restoration movement was inaugurated as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” At the time of its inception the sectarian spirit was running high. Campbell and his contemporaries spoke to members of all religious parties whenever invitation was extended or opportunity afforded. It is doubtful that these men ever turned down an invitation to address any convention of earnest men. Frequently they encountered resentment upon the part of those who regarded the divergent sects as a fulfillment of the divine purpose on earth.

In our day the situation has changed. Many leaders in sectarian circles deplore division in the Christian realm. Extensive research is being prosecuted into the grounds for unity. The entire religious fabric is being colored by ecumenical thought. If Campbell were alive now he would undoubtedly rejoice at the altered attitude everywhere manifest. One wonders to what extent that attitude may reflect some of the ideas he dropped as seeds in the whole field of Protestantism.

What about the heirs of this noble experiment which made such signal gains against such frightful odds in the early part of the nineteenth century? Are they entering the ferment of dialogue to point seekers for unity to the restoration ideal? Strange as it may seem, they are conspicuous by their absence.

Other restoration groups of different national origins are participating directly in the current exchange. They are bringing to bear the thinking of their fathers and there is some evidence that they are making an impact in stemming the tide of liberalistic philosophy.

It is with a sense of regret, mingled with shame, that I confess that most of those within the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood hardly know what is transpiring in the world immediately about them. Even the occasional articles (always critical and negative) dealing with the current confrontation of our religious neighbors betray a sad deficiency of understanding upon the part of the writers. These must be governed wholly by hearsay. They have never attended one of the meetings which they denounce, they have never met the men whom they castigate. Most of our brethren have never exchanged correspondence with the leaders in other areas of the religious spectrum.

Ours is a most unrealistic situation. We claim to have the very cure for which others are searching. We boast that the restoration principle is the answer to the problems of strife and schism. But our factions are monasteries into which we have retreated and isolated ourselves from the mainstream of thought. We spend our time talking to ourselves about others. The balm of Gilead is applied only to those we consider to be whole and well. We do not go to those whom we regard as sick.

It is observable that even in schools professing to be Liberal Arts colleges, no one can appear upon the program who does not parrot the party line. Only “sound” men are invited to participate and a “sound man” is one who can be trusted to say what the promoters want to hear. Our brethren dare not listen to another angle. They cannot share thought with others. They can only unload their thinking upon others! They can only offer a monologue, never a dialogue. Lectureships devoted to a study of “restoration” are loaded in advance. There are no real forums

or exchanges between divergent groups. Any such exchange has to be on the purely partisan and childish level of debate.

What would happen, for instance, if Abilene Christian College would rise above the narrow confines of orthodoxy and measure up to the stature of bold leadership demanded in our day, by inviting representative men from all segments of the restoration movement to share in a program where the varied viewpoints would be heard and discussed? Would not the school be hailed as a pioneer in a noble endeavor even by the thinkers outside the ranks of the restoration movement? Of what are our brethren afraid?

In 1866 David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning took the lead in urging conferences everywhere between the Baptists and the Disciples. Lipscomb wrote, "Will not our brethren then invite the Baptists, either as a body or as individual churches, to meet them, and prayerfully consult, to see if they cannot come together, and labor and worship as one people in Christ the Lord?" Both editors signed a statement which said, "The idea of a meeting for consultation, as suggested by Dr. Broaddus, is certainly in harmony with the spirit of the Christian religion and at all times must result in good to those who engage therein with the proper spirit. What say our brethren, Baptists and Disciples of Tennessee and the South? Will they speak out freely on the subject? Whether for or against the pages of the Advocate will be open to them."

Those brethren were made of real stuff! Most of their heirs are unworthy of such spiritual sires. Not only will their successors not meet for consultation with the Baptists but most of them will not even meet with their fellowheirs of the restoration movement to "prayerfully consult, to see if they cannot come together." Not only are the pages of their journals closed to real discussion encounter, but they will not even announce a meeting when the brethren come together. I charge that if David Lipscomb were alive today he would not be allowed

to teach in the school that bears his name. He would be excluded from any “Church of Christ” in Nashville and denounced as a Ketcherside-ite. We have become sectarian, factional and frightened! We would not even let our “restoration fathers” in the door!

But an individual can rise above all of this. He can throw off the shackles! He can blot out the partisan brand with the blood of Jesus. As a free man in Christ Jesus I am ready to go anywhere, to meet with any group and to discuss with them the deepening insights into truth. I am also a seeker! What a thrilling thing it is to be just a Christian and a Christian only, without obligation to defend anything except the one body of which He is the head. What a source of power to recognize as your brethren all who “by one Spirit are baptized into that one body.”

If it be urged that the ecumenical machinery is so complex that only an organization can survive among it, or that its concerted sound is so great no voice can be heard above it—disregard such notes of failure. Go as Paul went in his penetration of the Greek world with its maze of philosophy! Go in the faith of Him who opened up the Red Sea when destruction appeared imminent. Go in the power of the indwelling Spirit who has never lost an encounter.

I feel driven by deep inner compulsion to share the little I have gleaned with all who love Jesus, in spite of the unfortunate circumstances which have conspired to separate us from each other. I have resolved to belong to no one but Him who bought me. I have pledged allegiance to a person and not a party! I solicit the prayers of all those in “the fellowship of the concerned” that I may conduct my life with reverence and godly fear. I do not subscribe to the defeatist philosophy that we can best help the world which Jesus left heaven to visit by remaining in our own little heavens and refusing to visit and share with them. Fortunate am I indeed that I am controlled by no vested

interest and have nothing to lose but my soul!

Receive Him Not

Mission Messenger (June 1965)

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[Abstract]

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 10, 11).

This is one of the “twisted scriptures.” It has become the handle for every factional tool used to pry apart the living stones in the temple of God. It is the murderous knife employed to dismember the body of the Lord. It was written by the apostle of love to protect the flock of God from prowling wolves who sought to seduce them through denial of the foundational fact that Jesus has come in the flesh. It is now used to convert the sheep into snarling dogs, snapping at each other over every stray scrap of doctrine. It has substituted the law of the pack for the love of the flock.

No other passage so well illustrates the danger inherent in ignoring the context. That the leaders of thought in the “Church of Christ” should have been betrayed into adopting an interpretation which makes unity impossible and renders ridiculous their vaunted claim to respect for the authority of the word of God, is one of the amazing developments in the restoration movement of which we are heirs. Any use of the written word which makes impossible the fulfillment of the prayer and purpose of the Living Word is abuse and misuse. We

can never regain our integrity as scholars until we repudiate the current partisan explanation which makes every vagary of thought and dissent an occasion to destroy fraternal relationship and stab love dead at our feet.

What is “the doctrine” which is so transcendent that one who does not attest to it, must not be allowed to enter the house, nor be given a greeting on the street or in the marketplace? Or, looking at it from the opposite position, what is it that, when advocated is so heinous and so poison to the fellowship, that to merely salute its proponent is to make one a participant in his vicious works? The use of individual cups in the Lord’s Supper, says one. Bible classes on the Lord’s Day, says another. Chartered homes to care for orphans, says still another. Advocacy of the pre-millennial coming of the Lord, or of instrumental music, or of missionary societies— all of these are added to the motley list by partisan voices raised to high pitch in the clamor for debate.

The depth of one’s love for the family of God can be determined by the relative value of those things for which he is willing to sacrifice or break it up. The triviality of those views elevated to a higher station than the family ties created by the blood of the cross is indicative of the shallowness and superficiality of thought eating like a pernicious cancer at the heart of a great restoration movement in our day. Who can really believe that the apostle who wrote more about brotherly love than any other man, would recommend that we refuse entrance to our homes to those saints who disagree with us about cups, classes, colleges, or collectives for the care of orphans? What sane reasoner can actually conclude that to greet a brother who differs with us about the millennium or instrumental music is to become a participant in some “evil deed”? The very absurdity of such a conclusion renders obnoxious the common usage made of the passage by “Church of Christ” expositors.

I do not hesitate to say that so long as these men maintain

such an unrealistic attitude toward the sacred scriptures they can never make any impact upon the thinking world. They will only be purveyors of prejudice, agents of animosity, and disseminators of distrust. Such explanations are exercises in eisegetics, not exegetics. They inject a meaning into the holy oracles rather than extracting one from them. And while there was a time when dogmatism held men and women in line because the masses could neither read nor write, that day is over. We face another “Great Awakening” in the religious realm. Enlightened people are growing less satisfied with the dry husks thrown out to them by factional debaters.

To what did John refer by “this doctrine”? Who were the wandering teachers who were to be refused entrance when they applied for hospitality? What condition existed at the time which made it imperative that the “elect lady and her children” refrain from giving a greeting to certain teachers? Who were those who “went beyond” and did not remain in the doctrine of Christ? Surely what they denied must be related to the very fundamental and essential facts upon which Christianity was predicated to require such drastic measures to preserve it inviolate.

General Observations

Every reputable scholar known to us believes that John was writing to counter-act the pernicious effects of Gnosticism. Upon no other ground can we account for the approach of his gospel record and first two epistles. Who were the Gnostics? What did they teach? Why were they so dangerous to the Christian concept? How did John become involved in the controversy? It is not our purpose here to analyze this synthetic philosophy, interesting though it might be. We shall be content with supplying our readers with sufficient background material to enable them to see the purpose and intent of John and to recognize how modern “interpreters” among us have warped and wrested what the apostle wrote. For your own convenience

and to aid the reviewers of what we write, we will number the various observations.

1. The word “gnostic” is from gnosis, knowledge. The Gnostics were “the knowing ones.” It was believed by the Gnostics that all matter is inherently evil and only spirit is good. Since the spirit was imprisoned in the body, and the body is composed of matter, the chief aim was to free or liberate the spirit. Taking their cue from the Greek mystery religions they taught that only by probing the depths and ascending the heights of knowledge, could that which was real be delivered from the material. This required an elaborate secret ritual coupled with painful, arduous and disciplined investigation and research into the mystical infinite wisdom of God. All men were not equipped to do this, either from lack of time, inclination or ability, and the majority of these would continue on a mere animal plane. The Gnostics were in a class by themselves in that they could “go beyond.”

2. This idea of a spiritual aristocracy made up of specially endowed thinkers who were on “the inside” would wreak havoc upon the idea of fellowship. For this reason John emphasizes over and over that all of the saints have access to, and possess, knowledge. The word “know” appears in its various forms eleven times in chapter two. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (2:20). “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth but because *ye know it*” (2:21). The one who doesn’t know where he is going is the one who hates his brother (2:11). In chapter three “know” is found 8 times, in chapter four 7 times, and in chapter five 7 times. In every instance the disciples are comforted with the thought that knowledge is not the special privilege of the few. Note the recurrence of “we know” and “ye know.”

3. The Gnostics held that matter was evil. On this basis they speculated that God could not have created the earth because it is material. By the same token the idea of the

incarnation was unthinkable. One group held that Jesus was simply an ethereal person, a mere phantom. They insisted that he never had a real flesh and blood body, that he was pure spirit. These were called Docetics, from *dokeo*, to appear. John attacked this speculation by affirming that the apostles had heard, seen, scrutinized and handled Jesus with their hands.

4. Cerinthus was the first Gnostic leader whose name has come down to us. He lived in Ephesus where John apparently wrote his epistles. According to Eusebius, the father of church historians, John knew Cerinthus for what he really was. Cerinthus made a distinction between Jesus and the Christ, or Logos. He taught that Jesus was human, the son of Joseph and Mary. But Jesus increased in wisdom and in favor with God, which he could not have done if he had been God, according to Cerinthus. (See Luke 2:52). When Jesus was thirty years of age, he had lived in such a state of purity that God adopted him, publicly announcing that Jesus was his Son in whom he was well pleased. Upon this occasion the Christ (anointing) descended upon him in the shape of a dove. Cerinthus reasoned that Jesus could not have been God prior to this as he did not have the Spirit of God until it descended upon him. The Christ came upon him at John's baptism.

He further contended that the Christ (Spirit) could not be killed or made to suffer pain. The human Jesus was nailed to the cross and endured agony but the Christ had withdrawn as he came, and was beyond the reach of men. It is for this reason John insists that, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood" (1 John 5:6). It was not just Jesus who came to be baptized but Jesus Christ; it was not just Jesus who was crucified but Jesus Christ. He did not come by water (baptism) only, but by water and blood (crucifixion).

5. The crux of the whole matter as it affected Christian faith lay simply in the fact that a Gnostic could not believe in the

incarnation. It was impossible for such a person to admit that the preexistent Logos was made flesh. This provided a real test. If one, upon being asked, “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?” answered in the affirmative, you could be sure he was motivated by the Spirit of God. If he denied or hedged, as the record says, “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:1-3).

Specific Observations

Having given this meager outline of Gnostic philosophy we turn to consideration of the group of Gnostics against whom John sought to protect the saints. Let us list some of the things about them which we can learn from his writings.

1. We know that these men pretended to have access to a source of knowledge which made them superior in wisdom to the average member of the body. It was their aim to make the Way intellectually acceptable to the philosophic schools by expressing their concepts of Christ in the language of Oriental mysticism. They belonged to an arrogant cult of philosophic aristocrats who claimed to have the ability to *go beyond* and penetrate the veil of true learning. The idea that Jesus had come in the flesh was spiritual pap for infantile mentalities but could not be countenanced by the advanced reasoner. John declared that the true *gnosis* was the apostolic testimony and the test of *knowledge* of God was willingness to receive that testimony. “We are of God; he that *knoweth* God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby *know* we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

2. We know the Gnostics were respected and received by many and that they were numerous. They were regarded as possessing visionary insight and revelatory power because they were accepted as prophets. For this reason the apostle cautioned

the saints to test the spirits “because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). John labels them antichrists and says, “Even now there are many antichrists.”

3. We know these men were traveling from place to place as did many of the philosophers and teachers in the Greek world and they no doubt depended upon the homes they contacted in each community to extend them hospitality. Any such home would then be used as a base for their efforts. It is significant that John says, “Many false prophets are *gone out into the world.*” The false prophets were doing what Jesus commissioned the apostles to do.

4. We know that the Gnostics were separatists and schismatics and that they abandoned the body of saints to create a sect of their own. The unity of the body is based upon acknowledgment of the great fact that Jesus is the Christ. When men no longer are willing to accept this foundation upon which the community of heaven was planted they become antichrists. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us” (1 John 2:19). It is interesting that, in this context, John shows the one creed which can bind us together, repudiation of which will fragment us. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son” (2:22). So long as one accepts fully the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, he remains upon the foundation upon which Jesus said he would construct his community. When he forsakes that foundation he forsakes all that is Christian.

5. We know that even though the Gnostics withdrew they still sought to influence those who allowed that which they had heard from the beginning to remain in them, and who continued in the Son and in the Father (2:24). These false apostles were proselytizers. Under the guise of teaching advanced truth they wormed themselves into any home which would receive them, and led those who dwelt there to deny that Jesus was the Christ.

It was to warn against such teachers that John wrote, “These things have I written you concerning them that seduce you” (2:26).

The reply of those who were solicited by these “advanced thinkers” was to be simply that they did not need any man to teach them, but having been anointed by the Holy Spirit they had access to all truth, and that truth was always consistent. The additional truth must be measured by what they had formerly been taught by the apostles. “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (3:27). Those who were taught by the Spirit would abide in Christ, that is, in what they had been taught by the anointing. The Gnostics “went beyond and abode not in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

All history bears out the truth that during the lifetime of John, and in the very area where he resided and wrote, this synthetic philosophy was presented with ruthless disregard for the unity of the congregations. False prophets insinuated themselves into every company of the saints and promulgated their unhallowed speculations. It became necessary to issue blunt warnings to the saints against extending a welcome to such teachers, or allowing their homes to be used as bases from which to launch war on truth. This brings us to an analysis of the short epistle known as Second John. It contains the passage with which we are concerned in this article.

The Second Epistle

We shall not enter into the controversy as to identity of the addressee of this letter. It is my personal opinion that it was written to a Christian sister and her family. It is altogether possible that the congregation of saints met in her home. It will

be observed how John speaks of truth and love in the same connection. He does not regard truth as being composed merely of facts which have been verified. Truth is a relationship which transcends human relationships. John loves the elect lady and her children in the truth (verse 1). All others who have known the truth exhibit the same love (1). The truth dwells in God's children and is age-lasting (2). The trinity of divine blessings—grace, mercy and peace—these are shared in truth and love (3). We walk in truth as required by God (4).

John approaches the primary purpose of his letter of admonition and warning with familiar language. Certain phrases are at once associated with certain writers. One of these phrases used by John is “a new commandment.” Every such phrase should be considered in the light of its other appearances. That which John wrote to the elect lady will be correctly understood only in conjunction with what he wrote elsewhere upon the same topic. We must never forget that the gospel record and first epistle of John are *general*. They were written to meet a condition faced by the community of saints at large. The second epistle is *specific*. It deals with the same condition on a local basis and provides a specific approach to it. But the specific must be understood in the light of the general. One is not qualified to diagnose and treat a specific cancer until he knows the nature of cancer in general.

1. John filled his gospel record and first two epistles with a dissertation on love (*agape*) but these were not written primarily to be treatises on love at all. They were produced to offset a dangerous philosophy which threatened dissolution of the community by destroying the foundation upon which it was built. Love is the antidote to such a condition because it cements and holds the hearts of the saints together in times of greatest stress. One who reads the writings of John about love will derive much pleasure from the observations of the apostle but he will never understand why John injected the teaching as he did until he remembers that love was a prescription for the body at a time

when certain errors were becoming epidemic.

2. John besought the elect lady to remember that he wrote no new commandment. He simply reminded her of the commandment heard from the beginning. He identifies that commandment— *that we love one another* (5). Only if we recall constantly the nature of this commandment which was had from the beginning can we ever understand John properly. In 1 John 2:7, the brethren are told that John will write no new commandment unto them, but an old commandment which they had from the beginning. They are told that the old commandment is *the word* which they heard from the beginning.

The word is not the new covenant scriptures. They did not have this from the beginning. The new covenant scriptures grew out of needs created by later circumstances. Philemon was a letter of commendation for a runaway slave, Onesimus, who was returning to his master. Philippians was a letter of thanks for assistance to Paul when he was in prison. First Corinthians was written to deal with a demoralizing state of affairs disclosed by the visiting family of Chloe, and to answer queries in a letter brought by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. All of this came later. The word which was heard from the beginning was “Love one another.”

From the beginning Jesus said, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Again, “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (15:17). John wrote to the elect lady, “This is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6). Those who regard the Way as being a legalistic system lay great stress upon this, but they fail to grasp the significance of the following sentence, “This is his commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.” The previous verse tells us that what we heard from the beginning was to love one another. This is the commandment of Christ. What John is here saying is, “This is love, that we walk after his commandments, and his

commandment is that we love one another and walk in that love.” But why does John use “commandments” (plural) and “commandment” (singular) in the same sense? The answer is found in Romans 13:9, where we are told that all the commandments are summed up in one word, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This lifts the commandments of Christ above the level of law to the plane of love. This is the word we had from the beginning.

3. The reason for the admonition to the lady and her children to continue to walk in love is that, “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (7). Here John pointedly identifies the kind of traveling false teachers against whom he warns the recipients of this epistle. This letter was written to counter the efforts of the Gnostics. “The many deceivers who have entered into the world” are “the many false prophets who are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The deceivers of whom he now writes are the seducers of whom he has written. “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (1 John 2:26). The things written identify the personages as antichrists (1 John 2:18).

The Fundamental Doctrine

4. The elect lady and her children are cautioned, “Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you (or we) have worked for, but may win a full reward” (8). The purpose of the apostolic message was to build men in love on the Christhood of Jesus, so that the eternal life they possessed by having the Son might eventually terminate in fulness of joy in his presence. Those who face up to the fact of his divine Sonship in the flesh will be rewarded with fellowship face to face in the future. If we abide in him here we may abide in his presence over there. But if antichrists seduce us to forfeit our faith in the greatest fact in the universe we will lose all. So fundamental is this fact of faith that

rejection of it is the fundamental falsehood of this age. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” (1 John 2:22). There is one foundation of salvation and one foundation of damnation. Both are directly concerned with the same fact. “He that believeth . . . shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” (I trust that no carping critic will conclude that I have intentionally devaluated baptism in making this point).

5. “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

To whom does the apostle relate the expression, “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ?” What is “the doctrine of Christ”? Let us notice some of the other translations.

“Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God” (Revised Standard Version).

“No one has God who goes too far and fails to stay by the teaching of Christ” (Charles B. Williams).

“Whoever goes beyond, and does not remain within Christ’s teaching, will not possess God” (Authentic Version).

“Anyone who runs ahead too far, and does not stand by the doctrine of the Christ, is without God” (New English Version).

“Anyone who is ‘advanced’ and will not remain by the doctrine of Christ, does not possess God” (James Moffatt).

“The man who is so ‘advanced’ that he is not content with what Christ taught, has in fact no God” (J. B. Phillips).

It will be noted that these substitute for “transgresseth”

(King James Version) such expressions as: goes ahead, goes too far, goes beyond, runs ahead too far, and advanced. Both Moffatt and Phillips indicate by usage of quotation marks that the term “advanced” is used in a special sense. Those who are under consideration are not really advanced thinkers; they just flatter themselves that they are. These later versions are more nearly correct than the King James Version. The word “transgress” is a translation of *parabaino*, and it is true this is found in a few manuscripts. But all of the best copies have *proagon*, to go ahead, to advance beyond.

This was the very claim of the Gnostics. They looked with disdain and contempt upon “the common herd” who thought of Jesus as being the Word (Logos) made flesh. In their intellectual arrogance they had advanced to the place where they could see that Jesus was not the Christ. Jesus was human. The Christ was spirit. These two were not the same. They did not deny that Jesus existed nor did they deny that the Christ existed. They did not even deny that for a period the two had been invested in the same person. But they did deny that Jesus was the Christ or that the Christ was Jesus. Jesus was not the word (Logos) and had no existence prior to the incarnation, as they viewed it. Therefore there was no incarnation. Jesus did not *come* in the flesh.

The apostolic declaration was that Jesus had come in the flesh. This was basic, elemental and fundamental. The spirit which confessed this was of God; the spirit that did not confess it was not of God, but was antichrist. This was the test proposed by which to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1-3). This was the foundation. One who was on that foundation might be mistaken about many things and all of them were, but they dare not be mistaken about the foundation. It is noteworthy that one was built upon this foundation by a positive action—confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (1 John 4:2). The opposite is not denial, which is also a positive action, but simply “not confessing.” “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God.” This eliminates not only positive

denial, but also neutrality. One cannot occupy a neutral position as to the identity of Christ and be built upon the foundation. The foundational fact must be confessed— *as a fact!* One cannot be either a gnostic or an agnostic.

6. We can determine what “the doctrine of Christ” is in this sense by the effect of “going beyond” or “abiding in it.” One who *advances* has not God; one who “abides in it” has both the Father and Son. The doctrine of Christ, in this case, does not consist of *the things* Jesus taught, but of *the thing* taught about Jesus. The ethical and moral values of Jesus are very important. Nothing we say here must be understood as minimizing their value. One must “keep the commandments of Jesus” (John 15:10), and if he loves Jesus, he will keep them, naturally, automatically and spontaneously, for this is the only possible reaction of love. Only one who does not love Jesus will not keep his sayings (John 14:24). Yet we must all, without exception, place some qualification upon living up to the requirements of Jesus. “As far as we are able,” “to the extent we understand them,” “as we learn what he wishes,”— these are all our own qualifications to explain how we can have God, and how He can have us, while we fail to live up to His perfect example. We often transgress, and often disobey. If we did not the Father would not need to administer chastisement. Yet we are told that all of us are partakers of such chastisement, and without this we would but demonstrate that we are bastards, and not sons.

But “the doctrine of Christ” about which John wrote cannot be qualified. It cannot be governed by mitigating circumstances. One who does not abide in it has not God. It is just that plain. It is just that positive. What is “the doctrine” one must have in order to have God? Whatever it is, it was possessed by all who have God while the apostles were still alive. It was possessed by “the lady and her children” and by “all others who are in the truth.” It could not have been a copy of the new covenant scriptures, for no person on earth possessed that, not even the apostle John. It could not have included the Second

Epistle of John for those to whom it was written were already “walking in truth” before John wrote it. This epistle could not have been a part of “the doctrine of Christ” for there were those who had already gone beyond that doctrine when this epistle was written.

Fortunately John identifies the doctrine essential to having the Father and the Son. “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. . . . No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23). *Jesus is the Christ!* This is the foundation of the community of saints, the colony of heaven on earth. *Jesus is the Christ!* This is the only confession we may scripturally require of any penitent seeking admission to the fellowship of the redeemed. *Jesus is the Christ!* Every spirit which confesses this is of God. *Jesus is the Christ!* This is the only creed essential to overcoming the world. *Jesus is the Christ!* The one who believes this has the witness in himself.

But what of the “advanced thinker” who denies this great fact? How was the Gnostic teacher to be treated? How was one who did not abide in this doctrine to be regarded by those who did abide in it?

“Receive Him Not”

7. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (10, 11).

“Do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting, for he who greets him shares his wicked work” (Revised Standard Version).

“If any one who comes to you does not bring this teaching, do not receive him under your roof nor greet him; for he who

greet him is a sharer of his evil deeds” (Weymouth).

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not admit him to the house— do not even greet him, for he who greets him shares in his wicked work” (Moffatt).

“If anyone comes to you who does not bring this doctrine, do not welcome him into your house or give him a greeting; for anyone who gives him a greeting is an accomplice in his wicked deeds” (New English Version).

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your homes, do not even bid him welcome; for he who bids him welcome shares in his evil deeds” (Authentic Version).

In the face of what has gone before, I would not presume upon the intelligence of my readers to further identify “the doctrine.” Only those who ignore background, setting, contemporary issues and context, could ever mistake it. The application to other matters could only be made by those with a party axe to grind— those who would fasten upon the phrase “receive him not,” to deny their relationship with the very brethren whom Jesus taught us to love. The warping and wrestling of this scripture by factional defenders should serve as a warning to us of what happens to those whose hearts are filled with the party spirit and who search the scriptures for a means to separate and segregate themselves from other brethren in the Lord.

Inconsistency of Orthodoxy

I have heard the expression “this doctrine” applied to every item of controversy among the various factions calling themselves “The Church of Christ.” Depending upon the particular party whose champion quoted it, the expression has been related to individual cups, Bible classes, colleges, orphan

homes, the pastor system, fermented wine in the Lord's Supper, a method of breaking the bread, the pre-millennial viewpoint instrumental music, missionary societies, and a diversified host of motley issues which have made "the restoration robe of righteousness" a Joseph's coat that puts the rainbow spectrum to shame.

In every instance these partisan exponents have shown themselves to be utterly inconsistent. They have slashed themselves with one side of the knife which they have sharpened in eager anticipation of stabbing others. But their very inconsistency proves that each is better than his unwritten creed. These brethren dare not apply practically what they claim to believe. Take for example the preacher who quotes 2 John 10, 11 in condemnation of one who cannot see that instrumental music as an aid in corporate worship is a sin. Does not the one who deplores the use of the instrument receive the other into his house— either the public meetinghouse or his private dwelling?

The fact is that all of the non-instrumental groups I know, not only receive into their houses those who disagree with them, but go to great lengths to try to get them into their houses. When they hold a meeting they spend money on radio and television programs, as well as newspaper advertising, all beamed at the very ones whom they condemn as "bringing not this doctrine." They go from door to door, greeting and saluting all and sundry, and when they find someone who does not agree with their position they urge him to come. They meet him at the door, welcome him warmly, and give him a "chief seat in the synagogue." Of course, after the meeting is over at night and the "faithful ones" remain behind to congratulate themselves upon the success of the personal work and the fact that "the Christian Church preacher attended," if one asks if it would have been a sin to call upon the visitor to lead prayer, the evangelist will quote, "If any man come and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house nor give him any greeting."

If 2 John 10, 11, applies to “a Christian Church preacher” as my factional brethren so childishly designate those who use instrumental music, I charge that to even allow him to enter the house (much less invite him to come), makes them “accomplices in his evil deeds.” It is such absurd, ridiculous and puerile reasoning which will keep thinking people from seeing the real force and beauty of a plea which began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” The very essence of sectarianism is exclusiveness, and if anyone is more exclusive than those who twist this scripture to justify their sectarian prejudices I have yet to meet him. Our brethren should be ashamed to live and afraid to die!

Every party among us, even the most reactionary, will greet any person who attends their meetings— after they get over their surprise. Of course they would not call upon him to pray to the Father but they will run halfway across the house to provide him with a songbook already turned to the right page, so he can praise the Father. He cannot pray out loud by himself, but he can pray as loud as he wants with others, if the prayer is set to a tune. I am thankful that literally hundreds of our brethren are becoming embarrassed by the imbecility and senselessness of the preposterous position in which they find themselves. The party spirit has driven them so far down a blind alley that at last some are trying to scale the fence at the other end and get back on Main Street again. This is good and I intend to give them a hand when I can.

My Position

I propose to regard all of God’s children as my brothers. I intend to treat them as brothers. I have resolved to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. I shall accuse no one of being an antichrist who is built upon the one foundation simply because he differs with me in understanding of such things as cups, classes, colleges, the

millennium, or instrumental music. I shall not allow our divergent views upon these things to keep me from associating with any of my brothers, or helping all of them.

I shall go visit any group to share what I have learned, and to share in what they have learned. I shall go with none of them in partisan alliance, for my allegiance is to Jesus Christ. I am joined to Him and through Him to all others who are joined unto Him. Never again will I be a champion of any party, faction or clique. I refuse to be affiliated with any clan in which my love for *these* precludes my love for *those*. I belong to nobody and no body but the body of Christ!

Under no circumstances will I apply to those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, those passages written to condemn those who do not confess this fact. My brethren are not Gnostics. They have not gone out from us even though we differ about many issues which have disturbed our tranquillity. When brethren come where I am speaking, I shall not seek to determine how they stand on instrumental music, the millennium, or Herald of Truth, before I call upon them to pray. These are matters between them and our Lord. If they can explain their position to his satisfaction, they need not try to satisfy me with their explanation. I am not so much interested in where they stand as I am in the direction they are facing. I shall recognize their right to pray because they are in Him and not because they are in some party. I have no party and no party has me! This last is even more important than the other. I know a lot of brethren who claim to have no faction, but a faction has a claim upon them. They stand in jeopardy every hour!

Upon the one foundation living stones are builded together. These stones are not all the same size, shape, texture or variety. A stone house must be built with the stones available in the area. Since stones vary from one area to another, a house in one location may not look like that in another. The house of God is not made of stones that are uniform in knowledge, perception,

ability or aptitude. It is composed of those who are joined together by mutual faith in Jesus and cemented by love. The foundation for all is the eternal abiding principle in confessional form, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." "If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting."

Conformity or Diversity

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[Abstract]

Some of our brethren who mistake conformity for unity appear to be startled when they first learn that we suggest there may be unity in diversity. Actually we go much farther than that. We assert that if there is any unity at all it must be unity in diversity, if it is to be enjoyed by free men. There is no other kind of unity. Our opponents themselves are proof of this for not one of them is a member of a congregation where every person understands every scripture alike. Each party agrees upon the factional test which it has singled out and made the supreme issue. Upon every other matter the greatest latitude is permitted.

For this reason every group which contends for the conformity of every member is inconsistent. Those who quote scriptures urging the saints to live in harmony under the delusion that unity and harmony are identical, misunderstand both human nature and the scriptures. There is a widespread notion that because the primitive saints were together and had all things common, and because they were “of one heart and one soul” this means they all had exactly the same opinions and views of every thing related to the Christian walk. Nothing could be more remote from the actual facts.

God made men so that as long as they are in the flesh they will be divergent in opinions. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. There is as much variety in our

mental, as there is in our physical makeup. This is not an evil. It is good. It stimulates study and research. It is the soul of all discussion and investigation. Without it forbearance would be an unnecessary virtue and patience would become a lost art. Of even greater significance is the fact that if unity came by intellectual agreement rather than as a grace-gift from God, it could never produce a peace that *passes* understanding. No one will deny that our human understanding is frail, fallible and faulty. Peace that originated with it would always be imperfect. A stream cannot rise above its fountain or source.

Our unity is in a person, not in our personal opinions. We are one *in Christ*. Ours is the unity of the Spirit. Nothing is more clearly taught in the word of God. The Spirit of God dwells in every child of God. There is but one Spirit and every one in whom the Spirit dwells is one with every other such person. Of course every one in whom the Spirit dwells will exert a conscious effort continuously to promote harmony and good will. He will be a peacemaker because only such can be called the children of God. But he will also recognize that harmony is a fruit of unity and not the reverse.

God no more expects all of his children to be exactly alike than I do my children. Nor does he “tighten the screws” on them to enforce conformity any more than I would do so in my physical family. The truth is that his revelation teaches us we are different from each other, and it is because of this that we are able to fulfill His purpose and carry out His will upon the earth. Mere likeness in every detail would make this impossible. A man is able to be one flesh with his wife, not because they are alike, but because they are not. Oneness is not exact likeness. Harmony cannot be produced by harping on one string but by blending the sounds from various instruments.

Areas of Diversity

1. In the primitive community of saints there was a diversity of *gifts* (1 Cor. 12:4-6). “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.” The variety is in the saints, the sameness is in the Godhood. To eliminate the variety among the members would make the purpose of God of none effect. It is only when they recognize the source of their oneness that they can achieve a common purpose. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (verse 7). What was said of gifts bestowed supernaturally will also be true of gifts derived naturally.

2. There was a diversity of *functions*. “For as in one body we have many members, and all members do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:4, 5). There is one question proposed by the Spirit which we need to face. “If all were a single organ, where would the body be?” (1 Cor. 12:19). The divine arrangement is expressed in the next verse. “As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” Our very diversity in function makes it possible to have unity in an entity.

3. There was a diversity in *understanding*. Some had to be addressed as babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1). Their grasp of truth was elemental. “I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready.” Others were mature. “Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:6). The impartation of wisdom was always on the basis of the ability to grasp what was taught. There was a difference from person to person and from congregation to congregation.

4. There was a diversity in knowledge. The apostle Paul pointed out that all knowledge was relative (1 Cor. 8:2). God’s revelation is perfect for the purpose for which given. Man’s knowledge of it is not perfect. In the community of saints at Corinth there were those who were fully aware that “an idol has

no real existence” and “there is no God but one.” There were others who were not so positive. “However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak is defiled.” Thus the saints were divided into “men of knowledge” (verse 10) and “weak men” (verse 11). Yet they were both men for whom Christ died and to sin against one of these brethren was to sin against Christ.

5. There was a diversity of customs. It was true that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek, but it was also true that there were Jews and Greeks in Christ Jesus. These statements are not contradictory. The gospel did not require a Jew to become a Greek, nor a Greek to become a Jew, in order to be in Christ Jesus. It was only in Christ they were one. This required adjustment to local conditions upon the part of one who traveled from one area to another visiting the saints (1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:31-33).

Ragnar Bring writes, “They were all one in Christ. This unity was far more profound than a fellowship between those who hold similar views, or who think alike, or who are brought together because of social fellowship and equality. The unity in Christ Jesus was a unity which remained in spite of external inequalities, just as the unity of Christ with God remained and did not in any way become less when Christ emptied himself and became man, ‘born of woman, born under the law’” (*Commentary on Galatians*, page 187).

The nature of the unity in the early Christian communities was what made them so effectual. The world of that day was accustomed to the unity of exclusiveness which existed in fraternities and burial societies. Here people were brought together through mutual regard for each other and because of common secular interests. There was nothing strange about a synagogue composed of Freedmen, even in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9), but to find a congregation made up of men of different habits,

customs, racial origins, etc., laboring as a unit because of a common love for Jesus— this was impressive indeed. The deepest unity can never be that of conformity. It must always be a unity that exists in diversity.

6. There was a diversity in *opinions*. The apologists for “the cult of the rubber-stamp” can never successfully negotiate the depths of Romans 14. Here is a chapter deliberately designed by divine direction to tell us how to maintain unity in actual diversity. It forbids contempt on the part of one group for another, and forbids censorship on the part of the other. It begins with a flat statement that we must welcome men who differ with us about matters of opinion, and not for the purpose of involving them in disputes or debates about the differences. “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.”

The very next verse shows that those whom God has welcomed need not see everything alike. There is room in Christ for men to believe different things and still be one. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. What reply is made to this by defenders of orthodoxy? One Colorado brother who is the champion of a legalistic code of conformity as God’s ideal for his family, declared in print that there was no room for varied beliefs among those in Christ. He asserted that the only believer was the man who could eat anything, while the weak man acted through lack of faith. His predicament only becomes greater for he has God welcoming men who act through lack of faith, or without faith. The record says, “He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God” (verse 6). Will our brother have people honoring God in and through their lack of faith?

Note that expression “in honor of the Lord.” This is the key to many of our problems. When men cease to regard the Lordship of Jesus over their lives, what they do is not

acceptable. But those who act “in honor of the Lord” may differ greatly and may be exactly opposite in their views about many things and still be accepted. No legalist can ever grasp this! He will argue that “One of them has to be wrong.” Granted! Perhaps they both are wrong. Then how can they be accepted? The answer is that the basis of our acceptance is not that we are right about everything. This would require no grace to save us. Why is this not the basis of acceptance? For the simple reason that the kingdom of God does not mean being right about such things. It is in a wholly different sphere and upon a different plane. Being correct or mistaken about such things as observing days and eating meats does not affect our standing in it. There can be “diversity of opinions” about all those things in which the kingdom does not consist without affecting the constituency of the kingdom. “For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (verse 17).

When I think of the implications of this revelation from God, I am startled to realize how we destroy the work of God over matters wholly irrelevant to the kingdom of God. What we are doing, of course, is trying to make the kingdom after our own image. By seeking to become lords over the faith of others we end up being our own God. Each conformist uses himself as a criterion. Men must know as much as he knows, see things as he sees them, interpret passages as he explains them, hold the opinions that he holds. Divergency is a sin, not because of disagreement with the party, for the party is but a projection of the partisan. It is a “sin” because it does not recognize his infallibility. To question him is to question God.

When another “infallible leader” arises in the party there must be a division. The party is the world— the religious universe— of the factionalist, and there cannot be two infallible interpreters in the same world while they differ with each other. In case of difference each must have his own world. Every factional leader thinks of his party as the one, holy, catholic and

apostolic church of God on earth. This is the position of the Roman pope as respects his party. It is also the position of all the lesser *papas* in all of the orthodox parties of our day. Yet there comes to us in all of the controversies over means, methods, and measures, the solemn warning, “Do not for the sake of food, destroy the work of God” (Romans 14:20). Does this principle apply to that which sustains a factional body as well as that which feeds the physical body?

One Voice

We want to refer to one matter in connection with this which is so apparent that only those who are blinded by prejudice can fail to see it. Let us remember that when Paul wrote to the Romans the questions relating to eating of meats and observance of days were of tremendous importance and significance. They seem inconsequential to us now because they are not our problems. They have been displaced by other issues which may some day seem as trivial to others as questions about eating of meats seem to us now. But brethren were destroying each other over these matters when Paul wrote. The church was being shattered. These matters were made tests of fellowship and communion. If one had told the first century saints that the time would ever come when these would no longer trouble the body they would not have believed it. It will help us to remember the conclusion of the apostle.

The entire chapter (Romans 14) is given over to showing that men should respect and treat each other as brethren in spite of differing personal convictions upon these issues. The word “brother” occurs over and over and the expression “your brother” is of special importance. The theme is that brotherhood is a relationship created when God receives us (verse 3) and we need not agree with each other upon everything either to become brothers or to continue as such. After showing that we may maintain our divergent views and emphases, and be answerable

unto God for them, the apostle concludes, “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in *such harmony* with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with *one voice* glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:5, 6).

Harmony with one another, and accord with Christ Jesus, are not contingent upon seeing everything alike. We do not have to settle all of our differences to be in harmony with one another. Harmony does not consist of seeing everything alike on the *understanding level*, but of welcoming one another on the *faith level*. This is a higher level upon which peace that passes understanding is created by the death of Jesus. He did not die to create a union of philosophers, but a family of brothers. To predicate unity upon understanding is to sublimate faith to human knowledge, that is, to destroy the greater with the lesser. This makes the cross of Christ of none effect. Those in Christ do not have to settle all of their differences. All they need to do is to settle their differences in Christ, that is, to make the relationship he created by his blood greater than anything about which they differ.

Notice again the expression “one voice.” It would be foolish for the apostle to devote a whole chapter to proving that men did not have to hold the same views or express the same ideas about a great many troublesome things, and then end up by saying they must all speak the same thing about every point of controversy in order to please God. We conclude that a community of saints can “with one voice glorify God” even while holding various opinions. The King James Version reads, “That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.” To be of the same mind and to speak the same thing— as Paul uses the terms — cannot possibly mean to think alike or talk alike about every issue arising to trouble the saints, else the apostle made a serious mistake in writing the chapter of which this statement is the actual conclusion.

The harmony of mind is on the faith level, and so is the harmony of speech or testimony. It is “the faith of the gospel” which produces our oneness of thought and speech, not faith in our understanding or interpretation of doctrine or dogma. Men may strive together in the clouds who would strive against each other in the valleys. The battle of faith must be fought on higher ground than that of opinion, speculation, or mere human acquisition of knowledge. The tragedy of our age is that we have been so busy hacking each other to pieces on the lower slopes that we can never gather enough united strength to storm the ramparts. “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” I have resolved to fight by the side of any child of God who battles for that faith. I shall not stop to kill my brother before I attack the enemy.

Basis of Conformity

Since every faction in the Christian spectrum exists on the basis of a special emphasis, either upon a particular scripture or a specific idea, what is the basis for the cult of conformity and order of orthodoxy within the restoration movement of which we are heirs? I think it can be said without fear of denial that the basis of operation centers around 1 Corinthians 1:10. It is a twisting, warping and wresting of this scripture which leads them astray. It is astonishing that a passage written to offset division should be given an interpretation which can only produce and promote division, and which will open and aggravate numerous festering wounds without ever closing a single one.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

What does this mean? To what did the Holy Spirit allude by the expression “all speak the same thing”? What is it to be perfectly joined together? To be “in the same mind and in the same judgment”? The quest for truth demands objective research into this language. We dare not evade it regardless of where it leads us. We can begin by observing that when Paul admonished the Corinthians to “speak the same thing” he was not plotting sermon outlines nor planning Sunday school lessons.

The expression occurs within a setting and must be understood in the light of its context if properly interpreted. The family of Chloe had informed the apostle that the church of God at Corinth was divided into four segments— a Pauline party, a Cephasite clan, an Apollosite auxiliary and a Christite cult. Each person was affirming aloud his affiliation to one or the other of these factions. The apostle wrote, “Every one of you says,” and proceeded to show that they were saying they were not of the same party, or for the same leader. His exhortation to speak the same thing simply meant to desist from these factional identifications. It was given to cure a condition and must be understood in the sense of its application to that condition. The statement has no reference to conformity of opinion or interpretation. One did not have to speak the same thing about eating of meats, or keeping of days, for instance. There was room for differences in such a sphere.

William Barclay catches the proper spirit by translating the expression, “You should make up your differences.” He says, “The phrase he (Paul) uses is the regular phrase which is used of two hostile states or parties reaching agreement.” Weymouth has it, “to avoid disputes.” James Moffatt translates it, “I beg of you all to drop these party cries.” The New English Version renders it, “agree among yourselves.” Hugh J. Schonfield, in *The Authentic New Testament*, puts it, “all hold together.”

The apostle is not regulating expressions or voicing of ideas among those who are walking together in love. His injunction is

designed to heal a breach or bridge an existing gap. "To speak the same thing" stands opposed to controversy or contention. "It is reported that there are contentions among you . . . I beseech you to speak the same thing." Those who quote the passage to apply to enforced conformity and stereotyped expression are always inconsistent. They must leave broad areas where their partisans can say different things and remain in the factional fold. It is only upon the humanly formulated test of loyalty, the party shibboleth, that all must pass muster and walk the verbal chalk line.

In that segment of the restoration movement which does not use instrumental music in corporate worship, there are some twenty-five separate and distinct factions. Every one of these parties allows the greatest latitude in opinion (and frequently in ethical and moral behavior), except in the test of partisan identity. For example, there is a rather large group dedicated to crusading against what is called "centralized control," especially as evidenced in "Herald of Truth," a propaganda device using radio and television media. It is demanded that, if one is to be regarded as "sound in the faith," he must "speak the same thing" on the issue around which the party rallies as its standard.

However, many of the brethren in this party of the opposition differ on a great many things. They do not agree upon divorce and re-marriage, Christians bearing arms in war, the qualifications of elders, and many other things. All of these are considered as grounds for discussion while support of certain institutions is regarded as a basis for division. Who makes the decisions as to which things are vital and which ones are not? Who draws up the list of things that are immune and exempt, and formulates the limitations and restrictions? Who surveys the extent of the yard to be enclosed by the fence inside of which the children may argue and fight while composing "the brotherhood"?

Perhaps the most glaring demonstration of inconsistency is found among those who regard themselves as “the mainstream” of the non-instrument wing. Here are found men in Liberal Arts Colleges maintained by members of the segment, who exercise some personal independence and license. It is generally known upon every campus that certain teachers do not share the views of others. Conflicting and contradictory explanations may be given of certain passages from one classroom to another. Yet, as a body, these have reached an official interpretation of Revelation 20, and one who holds the pre-millennial view is excluded and often not regarded as in “the Lord’s church.” It has been decided by “the powers that be” that the authorized and infallible interpretation of Revelation 20 shall be deemed, and is hereby decreed to be, opposed to the pre-millennial coming of the Lord, and this dogma shall be a test of fellowship, and of union and communion among the saints. Greater legalism hath no man than this!

The flagrant inconsistency of college professors in the “main line orthodox” branch of the non-instrument segment is seen in the fact that they laud as “giants” of the restoration movement, men who were avowedly pre-millennial in their interpretations. The books written by these worthies of another generation are required reading, yet if the men who wrote the volumes were alive today they would not even be allowed to lecture to a class composed of those who must pass an examination on what they wrote. Since their day certain views have become part of the dogma. Fortunately, hundreds of alert young men and women in college are seeing through the incompatible and incongruous attitudes imposed by factionalism. A revolution has begun. Although it is still forced to be an underground movement to a great extent, it is the most hopeful sign of returning sanity in more than a century of bitter and unmitigated strife.

Thinking men and women can never be satisfied that all must understand Revelation 20 alike, while they may differ on

every other chapter in the Bible. Who determines the “musts” and the “mays”? It is only those who wrest such expressions as “all speak the same thing” into tools of conformity who must muzzle men’s minds in one area of revelation, while allowing them to run at will in other sectors. Of course, this all stems from a legalistic attitude which results from fear, not from faith. Men know they will not see every point of interpretation alike. They never have. The libraries of thousands of volumes on religious themes prove it. If it were not so, no theological school would require more than one set of commentaries. It is interesting to see the variety of commentaries offered for sale by bookstores operated in conjunction with journals whose editors unrealistically declaim that “we must all speak the same thing.” There seems to be a lot of money made from the fact that we do not!

Fruit of Inconsistency

The factional tendency which asserts itself when men realize that they do not always infer the same thing from what they read, is to fasten upon a particular item of belief, and elevate it out of proportion to other items, and even exalt it above the cross of Christ. On this matter they take a positive and definite stand, and judge every person by whether he “speaks the same thing” on this issue. The tragedy of such procedure is found in the fact that it is destructive of integrity, both in the intellectual and behavioral realm. When one becomes convinced that his relationship with Jesus is established and sustained, and that his loyalty is determined, by his position on some item of controversy, every other consideration is relegated to secondary status.

The folly of attempting to secure unity by conformity in opinion, interpretation, or mutual understanding can be seen by observing “The Church of Christ” today. Here we have two dozen factions all clamoring that we must speak the same thing,

and all speaking something diverse from the others. It is not that these brethren are ignorant or illiterate, or stubborn or unprincipled. They are good men who have been misled as to the meaning of the scriptures which they regard as authoritative. How much better it would be for them to give an exhibition of what they mean by “speaking the same thing and having no divisions.” Virtually the only time they speak the same thing is when they quote this passage *at each other*.

A great many students are perplexed by the statement “that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Surely if conformity is taught anywhere it is taught in this verse. Again, the problem is one of context. The expression “Be perfectly joined together” is *katarizo*, which carries with it the idea of restoring to original state or condition. It was used as a medical term for reducing a fracture, or setting bones in a joint or socket. We still talk about bones “knitting together.” A good example is found in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should *restore* him in a spirit of gentleness.”

It is employed in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19 for mending nets. In these cases it is apparent that the idea is to correct a situation so that proper functioning can resume. This is the reason for setting a broken bone, for restoring a member discovered in a trespass, and for repairing a net. The appropriateness of this term will be seen when we remember that the word for “divisions” in 1 Corinthians 1:10 is *schisma*. This denotes “a tear or rent, as in a garment.” It is used in Matthew 9:16 for the rent which occurs when unshrunk cloth is used to patch a hole in an old garment. The corresponding verb *schizo*, occurs in the word schizophrenia, a type of psychosis resulting in a split personality.

With this background we can grasp the significance of what Paul is saying to the Corinthians. The fabric of brotherhood had disintegrated through cleavage and the

formation of parties. It was impossible to discern the one body even when they met together in one place, because they maintained their exclusive partisan associations (Cp. 1 Cor. 11:18, 29). It was necessary to repair their grievous state so that the body could properly function again in the midst of a pagan society. Allow me to paraphrase the passage so you may understand what the apostle is saying to correct the situation.

“I implore you now, my brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you stop your party cries so that the fabric of brotherhood will not be further rent and torn, and that you mend those rents which already exist by cultivating the same mind and the same judgment.”

The Repair Tools

We recognize that it is difficult for those who have been reared and trained in a legalistic attitude to surrender sermon texts and outlines which have grown hoary with repetition. They will fight to hold on to such heirlooms in spite of their lack of value, simply because they have been in the family so long. Accordingly, when full explanation is made in an open forum of the meaning of the apostle, someone who must make “a last ditch stand” always arises to demand what is inferred by the expression “the same mind and the same judgment.” Brethren who have long postulated unity based upon conformity and scoffed at “unity in diversity” find it a difficult thing to swallow their partisan pride and say, “I’ve been wrong about this scripture all of my life.”

I know from experience what happens to an honest man who has been defending an outpost under the mistaken concept that it is the whole territory, when he comes face to face with his captain who demands that he haul down the partisan banner from above his walled fortress which he has so proudly defended. I also know the trauma which occurs when one must

surrender his stock of ammunition, the scriptural passages with which he has been bombarding various camps of the saints on the other side of the hill. I suspect there is ever the temptation to want to retain your side arms and continue to do a little partisan “bushwhacking” in your leisure time. So it never surprises me when a preacher in my audience digs in his heels, wraps the factional rope around his hands and hangs on for dear life while it slowly slips from his clutch and he looks wildly around for reinforcements, hoping the cavalry will come dashing down the slope at the last minute to save the party flag.

However, in this case, my own integrity will not allow me to compromise my conviction. I must insist that the apostle is not advocating conformity across the whole Christian spectrum as essential to oneness. Instead, he is dealing with a specific situation. The community of saints had disintegrated into four warring tribes, making the community of saints militant against itself. The apostle commands a repair job. He begins with an emergency measure calculated to halt the growing cleavage. “Stop these party cries!” (all speak the same). He then proceeds to the method of repairing the damage already done. “Mend the rents in the fabric” (Be perfectly joined together).

A repair job requires tools. These instruments must be adapted to the task to be performed if the end is to be accomplished. The tool which Paul hands to the Corinthians for their work of restoration is labeled, “the same mind and the same judgment.” No other device could fit a situation such as there existed. They must have the same mind as to what they were to try to do. They must have the same judgment as to how to accomplish it. The first refers to purpose, the second to method.

To assume that what was absolutely essential in correcting a critical emergency is normative for daily living and survival is indicative of shallow thinking. It is like insisting that one should throw away food and live on penicillin shots because this was

prescribed when one had pneumonia. If all members of a household are aroused at 3:00 o'clock a.m. to rush one to a hospital with a ruptured appendix, we do not conclude they must all arise at that time each morning to demonstrate that they are still members of the same family. Nor do we assume that because they functioned in such perfect unison under special stress they may not disagree with each other about many things and still love each other dearly.

There is room in Christ for differences. There is no room for division. It was division which Paul sought to *eliminate* in Corinth, but he only sought to *palliate* differences in Rome (Romans 14). You eliminate disease by curing it, you palliate a condition by easing it without curing it. The treatment for division is rejection of the condition. The treatment for differences is forbearance of your brethren. To differ with brethren is not a sin, to divide the family is a sin. We oppose division because we hate sin, we seek to reduce tensions and lessen areas of difference because we love brethren. We must regard division with intoleration while we treat differences in a spirit of toleration. Toleration is not *endorsing* something which you think to be wrong, it is simply *enduring* one who thinks it is right. It is a relationship sustained to honest brethren and not to their ideas or thoughts. A brotherhood is composed of thinkers not abstract thinking.

So long as division exists in the community of saints we share in its shame even while laboring to overcome it. If we condone or defend it we also share in its scandal. No one in the family of God can be wholly free of disgrace as long as the strife in the family is exposed to the open gaze of an unbelieving world. Not one individual can justifiably adopt an attitude of indifference or unconcern when the Lord has laid upon all the burden of being peacemakers. This requires much more than being a passive peace lover. It demands an actively pursued campaign to restore peace—to make peace. It is not enough to boast that you have never caused division. You may not have

caused anything else, either! If division exists in the community where you are, regardless of who created the situation, you are obligated by the authority of God's word to do something to repair the breach.

This involves much more than a halfhearted invitation to another partisan preacher in the community to "Drop over sometime and we'll talk about our problems over a cup of coffee." It includes being able to drink the cup that He drank, and being baptized with the baptism He experienced. Peace must be waged. It must be relentlessly pursued. "Seek peace and ensue it." There must be a strategy of peace in which temporary defeats are never confused with a lost cause and skirmishes are not confounded with the war. Division must be seen in its true nature— as a damnable, destructive, defiant sin against God and the Majesty of His Fatherhood. The campaign for peace among our divergent elements is not a game of tiddley-winks. It is an endurance contest which is not a struggle for men with weak hearts and sickly stomachs. Peacemakers must be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

The Baptism of John

Mission Messenger (August 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

The city of Ephesus provided the site for many interesting experiences in the life of Paul. Some of these are related in Acts, chapter 19. One of them had to do with immersing about a dozen men. When the apostle first encountered these, he asked them, “Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed”? They replied, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.” He asked them, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” They said, “Unto John’s baptism.” Paul informed them, “John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Why were these men immersed again? Does this passage furnish scriptural authority for baptizing a second time all whose knowledge of the ordinance and the blessings accruing therefrom, was imperfect at the first? Because of what we believe to be a palpable error contributing to the promotion and perpetuation of the sectarian spirit we propose a thorough examination of the nature of John’s baptism and its relationship to this event. We are convinced that this passage is wrested from its context and is bent and forced to fit a situation to which it has no reference. We are also persuaded that many of our brethren negate and nullify the work of John and make his labors and death appear a little ridiculous and of no consequence.

We hold that John's work was divinely directed and that it was effective. To better share our views we shall make a few preliminary remarks and then ask a series of questions which we will allow the word of revelation to answer. When a house is to be built, or a nation to be born in one day (Isaiah 66:8), the material to be incorporated into that house or kingdom must be prepared in advance. The house of God is composed of living stones (people) and the work of John was to go before, or in advance of Jesus (Mark 1:2) and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). It is our conviction that he did this and when the king was inaugurated, those who were previously prepared and acknowledged were given the privilege of becoming citizens in that kingdom which they had heard proclaimed in "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). Let us bring this out in answer to certain definite questions.

1. Under whose authority was John commissioned?

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6).

2. How was he empowered to fulfill his mission?

"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord . . . and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

3. What was his specific mission?

"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

4. How was he to prepare them?

"To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:77).

5. Did he accomplish this by preaching?

“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it” (Luke 16:16). “In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea” (Matthew 3:1). “And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people” (Luke 3:18).

6. Did he announce Jesus as the Son of God?

“John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke” (John 1:15). “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

7. Did John require faith in Christ Jesus?

“John verily baptized . . . saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (Acts 19:4).

8. Did he command repentance?

“And saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

9. Did this entail reformation of life?

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8). “And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat let him do likewise. Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely: and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:10-14).

10. Was repentance followed by confession?

“Confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:6).

11. *Did John baptize the believing penitents?*

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance” (Matthew 3:11).

12. *Was this baptism for the remission of sins?*

“John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

Careless students have sometimes made a play on the term “baptism of repentance” in an endeavor to show that it could not have produced salvation and prepared those who were baptized for citizenship in the approaching kingdom. This is done to enforce the contention that only “baptism into Christ” can establish covenantal relationship. But it must not be forgotten that all of those whom John immersed were already in covenant relationship with God under the legalistic system then in vogue. John baptized no one but Jews, but he baptized them in preparation for a new order where relationship to Abraham would not be the controlling factor. He said, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham unto our father” (Matthew 3:9).

No amount of cavilling will set aside the facts. John was to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins (Luke 1:77). God sent him to “baptize with water” (John 1:33). His baptism was distinctly said to be “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

13. *Did all of those whom John made ready for the Lord receive him when he came?*

“He came unto his own and his own received him not” (John 1:11). “His own” were not Jews as contrasted with Gentiles, but “his own” as contrasted with the rest of the world.

The world of mankind did not recognize him; many of his own did not receive him. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” John preceded Jesus for the specific purpose of making ready “a people prepared for the Lord.” If the disciples of John were not “his own” any more than the rest of the Jews who were not prepared, why were they called “the people prepared for the Lord?” Moreover, the inspired record makes a clear distinction between “John’s disciples and the Jews” (John 3:25).

14. What happened to those of his own who did receive him when he came unto them?

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

Every Jew on earth had been born of blood, the will of the flesh, and the will of man. But his own to whom Jesus came had been born of the will of God. Some of these did not receive him after they had been prepared for him by repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 7:66). Some of his own did receive him and believed on his name. To them he gave power (the privilege) to become sons of God. Why did he have to give to these who had been born of God the privilege of becoming sons of God? Why were they not sons of God automatically? The answer is that at the time of birth the family had not yet been set up. The kingdom was yet in preparation. These living stones were made ready in advance and on the day when Jesus was granted authority and coronated to sit at God’s right hand they were incorporated into the kingdom. From that day forward that only had validity which was done in the name, that is, by the authority of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17).

15. Were the twelve apostles baptized before Pentecost?

Yes. Not only were they baptized to become disciples of Jesus, but they baptized others during the lifetime of Jesus (John 4:1, 2). Some of the apostles were disciples of John before Jesus was identified to them. When they learned that he was the one for whom they were prepared they immediately followed him. “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (John 1:35-37). “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:40-42). The disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus, before the death of Jesus, were baptized by the authority of God with the baptism which John described by saying, “He that sent me to baptize with water. . . .”

16. How could these be baptized and prepared as members of the body before the body existed?

In exactly the same way the head was prepared for the body prior to its inception. Jesus was baptized by John and so were those who were “charter members” of the body. When he became the head they automatically became members for a body does not consist of a head alone.

17. Were not the people immersed on Pentecost the first members of the body?

Certainly not. The record specifically says, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). It was not those who were added but those to whom they were added who had the priority. Certainly the apostles who

proclaimed the message were already part of the body unless you conclude that the gospel was first proclaimed by those outside the body of Christ.

18. *Do we have any idea how many who were prepared under John's baptism automatically became members of the body by divine privilege?*

All did who received Jesus and believed on his name (John 1:12). We can be certain that the number of disciples in Jerusalem approximated a hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15). That there were more than this is evidenced by the fact that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred at one time (1 Cor. 15:6).

19. *When did John's baptism cease to be valid?*

When all authority was bestowed upon Jesus by the Father, "for he hath put all things under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:27). John's baptism was performed under the authority of God and was valid until God transferred that authority to the Son. Since that time baptism (as well as all else we do or say) must be in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, in recognition of his Lordship over all. John baptized by the authority of God, but he baptized no one in the name of Jesus, because Jesus had not received the authority. Those who were baptized by John were required to believe in Jesus as a coming Lord, not as a present sovereign (Acts 19:4).

20. *Were there any who continued to proclaim the baptism of John after it was invalidated by the transfer of authority to Jesus?*

No doubt all did who knew of the baptism of John but did not know of the ascension, coronation and glorification of Jesus. Lines of communication were not as well established then as now. A good many years after Jesus was "by the right hand of God exalted and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" we have an example of one man who did not know that

John's baptism had been superseded by that in the name of Jesus Christ. "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts 19:24, 25).

The expression "mighty in the scriptures" indicates that Apollos was thoroughly conversant with the law, the psalms and the prophets (the Torah, Hagiographa, and Haphtarach of the Jews). Certainly there is no relation here to the new covenant scriptures, for not a word of these had been written when Apollos was eloquently declaiming. The term "instructed in the way of the Lord" is typical of one who was recognized as a teacher in the synagogue because of familiarity with the discussions of the scribes and expounders of the Torah and its implications. Through his knowledge of the scriptures, Apollos had come to expect a forerunner of Jesus who would prepare a people for the Anointed One. He recognized John as a precursor of the Messiah, and baptism as a means of preparation, but he did not know that the Anointed One had taken the seat of authority.

21. Were there those who were baptized unto John's baptism after it had become invalid by transfer of divine authority?

Yes. The twelve at Ephesus of whom we previously spoke were in this category (Acts 19:1-7.) In all probability they were baptized by Apollos, for it was in Ephesus that he eloquently and fervently spoke and taught, urging the baptism of John (Acts 18:25). Obviously, since it is the authority of Jesus which validates any act performed under the Messianic regime their baptism was irrelevant and incompetent.

22. What test was proposed by Paul as to their status in the Lord Jesus?

He asked the logical question, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” This was certainly the proper query, since all those who were immersed in the name of Jesus were promised the Holy Spirit as a gift (Acts 2:38). Those who were baptized by John in preparation for the kingdom did not receive the Holy Spirit at the time of baptism, since the Spirit could only be given to believers after the glorification of Jesus. “But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).

Of course all who were previously prepared by John the Baptist, and who received Jesus, were given the Spirit at the time when they were given the privilege of becoming sons of God, having already been born of the will of God. The indwelling Spirit is a mark of sonship. “And because you are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). The apostles were of this number and were given the Spirit on the day when Jesus was made head of the body. They were a part of the charter membership of that body. We can determine when the body became a functioning unit by determining when the head and members were united by the Spirit (Cp. Acts 2:33).

We should not pass on without calling attention to some undesigned factors about Paul’s question and the circumstances growing out of it. He did not ask if they had received the Holy Spirit since they had been baptized, but since they had *believed*. Upon determining that they were unaware of the Spirit’s existence, he asked, “Unto what then were ye *baptized*?” This demonstrates that the apostle had no concept of believers, as disciples, who had not been baptized. There was no such thing with the apostle as “unimmersed believers” in the fellowship. Indeed it was he who wrote, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 4:27). When Paul found a believer whose faith did not produce the fruits of union

with Christ, he wanted to know instantaneously unto what he was baptized. Here is evidence that belief in Jesus is made effective by obedience in baptism.

23. What made the original baptism of the twelve disciples at Ephesus invalid?

We can best determine the answer to this by ascertaining what was done to provide valid baptism for them. It is at this juncture that modern partisans who regard baptism as a factional rite or tribal initiation fall down in their assumption and reasoning. Their baptism was not invalid because of their personal ignorance of the blessings or results intended to accrue from it, or because they did not understand when such blessings were bestowed. It was not even because they did not know they were to receive the Holy Spirit at the time for the evidence is that this blessing (as well as others) spontaneously resulted when baptism was performed under the proper authority. That is why the absence of this gift indicated that the baptism was performed under the wrong authority, which is no authority at all in things spiritual.

In view of the fact that when the Ephesian disciples learned the facts about Christ they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, we can conclude that it was being baptized under another name or commission which rendered their baptism ineffective. It was not a mistaken idea about baptism nor a wrong view about the blessings to be received from it that was at fault, but a defective concept of the status of Jesus.

It is not faith in baptism, but belief in Christ which makes our obedience acceptable. When a man believes that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," he may be ignorant about a great many things, and so may the one who immerses him, but this will not affect his acceptability with God. We are welcomed because of faith in Jesus, not because of perfection in knowledge of God's ordinances. A man may hear the good news of Jesus

from a preacher who, because of faulty knowledge, tells him his sins are forgiven prior to baptism, but if the believing penitent does what God tells him to do, the fallacious view of a mistaken preacher will not cancel the promise of God made by grace.

I suspect if you were to enquire of baptismal administrators in most of our contemporary religious parties, as to the name in which, or the authority under which, they immerse, they would unhesitatingly affirm that they acted in the name of Jesus. We need to regard baptism as a universal means given by God for implementing our faith and not try to make it a mere factional gate. It is my honest conviction that Acts 19:1-7 did not give rise to rebaptism as practiced in our day, but men adopted a narrow and exclusivistic pattern of thought and sought for a scripture to sustain it. I regard every sincere immersed believer who was baptized in the name of my Lord as God's child and my brother. I am in the divine fellowship with all such in spite of the ignorance of all of us!

I have nothing to conceal and I refuse to cavil or quibble. If it be asked whether I believe that I have brethren scattered among the various sects and parties now in existence, the answer is emphatically that I do! God's sheep are still a scattered flock. Our task is to help gather them. We will not accomplish it, either by denying that they are sheep, or by creating another narrow sect into which to lead them. The body of my Lord is greater and nobler than any party or faction. It is greater than all of them put together!

Our Abiding Heritage

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Volume 27

[Abstract]

An address delivered at The World Convention of Christian Churches, San Juan, Puerto Rico, August 10, 1965

The death of Omri, and the succession of his son Ahab to the throne of Israel, launched the hapless people of Samaria upon a period of twenty-two years of constant crisis. The new king had the dubious distinction of exceeding all his predecessors in the practice of wickedness. In 1 Kings 16:31, we read, “And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.”

Jezebel descended upon the northern area of Palestine with an insatiable passion to banish the worship of Jehovah and install the pagan fertility cults with their orgies and excesses. She inaugurated a blood purge of the prophets of God and vowed to exterminate them. The hero of the age was Elijah. Upon the brow of Mount Carmel he confronted four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal in a public test of sacrificial fire, and when he was proven victorious, he ordered the seizure of the pagan priests and slew them all on the banks of the brook Kishon, at the foot of the mountain.

Jezebel was enraged beyond measure. She sent a servant to

Elijah with the message, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Elijah fled for his life, stopping in the wilderness of Beer-sheba only to gain strength to press on. Forty days later he reached his destination at Horeb, the mount of God, where he abode in a cave. This was the mount where the law had been given years before. Upon that occasion the precipice was wreathed in thick smoke. The thunder reverberated through the crags, the forked tongues of lightning illuminated the eerie scene, and an earthquake caused the mountain to shake as the whole earth trembled.

Perhaps the lonely prophet, who thought the last altar had been toppled by ruthless heathen, and every other witness for Jehovah except himself had been murdered, returned to the source or point of origin of the national religion, for assurance of the power and permanency of the promises of God. He may have been like many in our day who are disturbed by the clamor of dissident voices, and distressed by the chorus of discordant partisans, until they long to return to Pentecost and experience anew the thrilling inauguration of the new covenant. But covenants are like persons who enter into them, they have but one birthday. The rest are anniversaries. You experience birthdays but you celebrate anniversaries.

Surely the prophet thought he would recapture the glory of ancient Sinai when God ordered, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And truly the phenomena began as at the first. "And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave."

A great wind— an earthquake— a fire! These are the most powerful forces in nature. All three were present when the covenant was given and God was in them. Now he was not in them, but after they swept on there was “a still small voice.” But it was the voice of God and it commissioned Elijah to return to active service and to pursue a course which would shake Israel and Syria to their very political foundations. The voice of God may not always be heard above the raucous ravings of the prophets of Baal. But it is there and it speaks with as much authority in a still small voice at the mouth of a cave as it does with the sound of a trumpet from the summit of a mountain.

The question of the authority of the Bible can never be divorced from that of the authorship of the Bible. Before one resolves to respect, or agrees to avoid, the authority of the Book, he must confront three questions in proper sequence. Is there a God? If so, has he communicated his thoughts to men? If he has done so, is that communication contained in the volume called “The Bible”?

This is not an assembly of atheists, an association of agnostics, or a society of skeptics. It would presume upon your patience and tamper with your time to present proof of the existence of Deity. The very title of the convention affirms it to be Christian, and assumes, if it does not assure, that those who come to it, as those who come to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The longer I live and the more I meditate upon things divine, the more absurd it seems that there could be a personal God who did not communicate his wishes to the rational beings whom he designed and created to fulfill those wishes for their own happiness and his glorification. For if he did not communicate his will it would seem reasonable to deduce that either he would do so but could not, or, that he could do so and would not. But if he purposed to do what he had no power to perform he *could* not be God, and if he possessed the potential

but preferred to preserve us in ignorance of the essentials to our wellbeing he *would* not be God. A God of consolation must be a God of communication!

If it be agreed that God, as the absolute good, would reveal to man those things which are for his ultimate good, it would appear further logical that this revelation would be preserved for the good of all mankind, until the ultimate is achieved or the destiny attained. Otherwise, God would exhibit partiality toward, and prejudice in behalf of, certain peoples and certain ages. The preservation would demand no greater demonstration of power than the revelation.

The highest form of communication known to man is by words which are adopted as symbols of ideas and vehicles of thought. Words may be either spoken or written, but when the original ideas are to be made accessible to future generations, in their primitive purpose and pristine purity, they must be consigned to documents which are subject to constant research as source materials. Traditions which are continually filtered through fallible memory processes soon forfeit any claim to authority based upon origin.

To one who accepts the premise that there is a body of writings properly designated the holy scriptures, or sacred writings, and that the constituent elements have won their place in the canon because of recognized authenticity and genuineness, the question of whether God has communicated with man presents no further occasion for doubts. That the Bible claims to contain a revelation from God is apparent even to the cursory and casual reader. If it does not, it is apparent that no such revelation is available, for no other book can approximate the credentials offered by the Bible for confirmation and collaboration of its claims. We either regard the Bible as containing a message from God, or we admit that we have no word of God, and insofar as divine communication is concerned our God has been as mute as the dumb idols of the heathen.

That there may be no uncertainty as to my own attitude, let me state unequivocally that for me the Bible contains the word of God. It is authoritative in my life. Its stories of faith and courage thrilled my heart when I was a lisping babe at my mother's knee. Its gentle rebukes rescued me from reckless rebellion in the days of my youth, and when I refused to hearken, its stern reproof rendered my nights sleepless with the agonizing torment of a burning conscience. Its demand upon my soul tugged me from the old handmade pew in a simple rural meetinghouse to tearfully confess my faith in him "whom having not seen I love." And its command led me into the clear waters of a flowing creek to be buried with him in that act of surrender in which I pledged allegiance forever to his sovereignty over my life.

Upon those occasions when I shivered and trembled in the cold wind blowing across the cemetery, as I gazed for the last time upon the coffin containing all that was mortal of him who begot me, or of her who bore me, it was the blessed promises they had taught me in our rude, poverty-stricken home, where the mantle of love was thrown over the harsh facts of life, which dried away my tears and gave me the courage to continue the battle. And now that I have personally reached the point in my earthly pilgrimage where the sun has passed its meridian, and I face the soft afterglow while the shadows lengthen behind me, I have, like Jacob of old, returned to my Bethel to renew my faith in "the God who answered in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." I have resolved that I will not cast away his rod and staff as I approach the dark valley. I want his word to lean upon when I

. . . feel the fog in my throat,

The mists in my face,

When the snows begin, and the blasts denote

I am nearing the place.

I am fully aware of the charges which will be leveled against such artless and unreserved faith by our sophisticated society. One who thus trusts in the Father of life and the life of the Father, will be labeled as naive, simple and childish. To this indictment before the bar of human wisdom I cheerfully plead guilty, although I would prefer to substitute the term “childlike” for childish. It is precisely this attitude which must be adopted if one is to grasp the divine revelation. This is the wisdom of ignorance as opposed to the ignorance of wisdom! Before we may be filled of God we must be empty of self. God sends none away empty except those who are full of themselves!

When Jesus upbraided, for their unrepentant arrogance, the great urban centers where most of his mighty works were performed, he said, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.” When the disciples asked him to referee their verbal contest over who would be greatest in the kingdom, he set a child in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Those who confess their inability to “understand all mysteries and all knowledge,” and, as a consequence, must resort to the age-old formula, “Speak Lord, thy servant heareth” must enter at “The Children’s’ Gate” if they enter at all. And those who stoop low enough to find access by this route, will learn that they have already bowed the knee in recognition of the Lordship of Jesus.

Jesus is Lord! This is not a mere shibboleth or vacuous cliché to be bandied about in theological dialogue or ecclesiastical discussion. It is not a mere passkey to unlock the multitude of doors and gain access to the variegated cells of a complex schismatic structure called “modern Christianity.”

Jesus is Lord! This is not a verbalization of the least common denominator discoverable as a loose tie to hold together feuding factions. It is not an island jutting out of the turbulent waters of sectarianism to afford the only solid place to which those who have made shipwreck of all other aspects of faith may repair for consultation and conference. It is the only ground of our trust and confidence, the very universe of our hope.

Jesus is Lord! This is a fact, demonstrable as all facts must be by credible testimony. The divine witness was the Holy Spirit shed abroad upon the chosen envoys of the King on Pentecost. The human witnesses were those ambassadors sent forth into an alien world. Their testimony was to reach the uttermost parts of the earth, and His abiding care was to be with them to the end of the age.

There is a difference in confessing that Jesus is the Savior and acknowledging him as the Lord. The first may be an intellectual assent growing out of an emotional need; the second is an act of commitment in recognition of sovereignty. One may be by consecrated lips; the other must be by dedicated life. To accept Jesus merely as a Savior may be purely selfish; to admit his Lordship is an act of surrender. One places man on the receiving end, the other on the sacrificial end, of the Christian concept. We accept Jesus as Savior when he hears what we say from a sincere heart; we acknowledge him as Lord when he sees what we do as an expression of faith.

Lordship creates a master-servant relationship. Lipservice can never be a test of it. His own words are adequate proof of this. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). "Blessed is that servant who when his Lord comes, he shall find so doing" (Luke 12:43). When Peter asserted that Jesus had been raised up and made both Lord and Christ, the natural

question was, “Men and brethren, what must we do?” (Acts 2:37).

This is the reason that in response to the Good News both belief and baptism are involved. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Since the gospel is intended to produce a community of believers bound together in a body, under a head, who is over all, these two factors are essential and valid. The belief of one fact commits us to recognition of his divine Sonship. The obedience of one act in implementation of our faith commits us to the acceptance of his lordship over our lives. It is a proof of divine wisdom that these two guard the portals of a community whose citizens must depend for their survival upon their trust in and obedience to an absent King.

It is obvious that we cannot show that Jesus is Lord unto us unless we do what he says. It is just as obvious that we cannot do what the Lord has said, unless he has spoken, and unless we know what he said. If we reject the new covenant scriptures as containing the word of the Lord, we have no other source to which we may repair to know his will. If we receive these scriptures as an expression of his will, they are authoritative—not because of their literary value, or their moral and ethical influence— but because they constitute the word of the Lord. If we do not accept them, we cannot affirm that he is Lord, because it is upon the basis of their declaration and confirmation that we confidently make such affirmation. If we depend upon the scriptures for information relating to our Lord, it would seem incongruous to reject them as a source of information for regulating our lives in that Lord.

We are aware that this simple childlike thesis is questioned by contemporary scholastics. Many of these have adopted the conclusion that the new covenant scriptures represent only a collection and compilation of the traditions of the church. They contend that the work of the church did not result from the scriptures, but that the scriptures resulted from the work of the

church. It is argued, and correctly so, that the church existed prior to the new covenant scriptures. But the church did not exist prior to the word of God, for it was not the church which produced the gospel but the gospel which produced the church. Jesus said, “The seed of the kingdom is the word of God.”

Did the apostolic doctrine flow from the same fountain as the apostolic gospel? Did the bread upon which the saints were to feed come from the same source as the life it was to sustain? Were the children of God turned loose at birth to forage for themselves, or were they provided with “the sincere milk of the word?” Were the new covenant scriptures written *by* the church or *to* the church? If they were produced by the church, why did not the church also preserve as holy all of the other letters and documents then extant? If they were written to the church, by whom were they written and upon what authority? Was that authority accepted as legitimate at the time by the body of Christ? If so, upon what ground can that same body reject that authority in our day?

It will make a great deal of difference whether we regard the new covenant scriptures as the voice of the Shepherd or the bleating of the sheep; the providential provision of a loving Father or the accidental discovery of curious children. What a cruel irony of fate would result if the Bible were shown to be mere tradition and those martyrs whose bodies were burned at the stake because they resisted tradition as equal with God’s revelation, would prove to be not “fools for Christ’s sake” but simply backward idiots in their own right. It seems to me that I can envision a mighty host of spectral forms rising out of the gray mists of the ages of ignorance, pointing skeletal fingers of accusation— and condemnation— at those of us who use the rays of our own enlightenment to burn and destroy our greatest source of strength and hope.

I do not plead for rigid “patternism” nor for conformity that is either blind or bland. I do not regard the new covenant

scriptures as providing a meticulous method or regimented routine for every exigency which may arise. But I do entreat that we recognize our continued need for a compass as we sail the untried ocean on our way back home. We will not demonstrate a superior wisdom by ceasing to make the written word a means to an end, nor by considering it as an end to all means. There is a difference in the compass and the pole star to which it points. The Christian concept is not one of Jesus pointing us to a book but of a book pointing us to Jesus.

In our spiritual odyssey it is not enough to fill our ears with wax or lash ourselves to the mast so we may steadfastly resist the siren song luring us to the islands of mediocrity where the sands are strewn with the bleaching bones of those who began with high hopes and ardent ambition. We must also steer safely between the Scylla of liberalism on the one side and the Charybdis of legalism on the other. In mythology one of these monsters lifted men up and destroyed them, the other sucked them under to their fate. But if safety depends upon remaining in the vessel it little matters whether we are doomed by elevation or by gravitation.

When I received from the Program Committee the gracious invitation to address you in the context of this particular session, I prayed long and earnestly for the help of the indwelling Spirit in the choice of a theme and the words with which to express my deepest concerns to you, my beloved brothers and sisters in Him “who through Christ reconciled us to himself.” As I read the words of the longest chapter in the Bible, this expression of the “sweet singer of Israel” seemed to leap from the page and burn its way into my consciousness: “Thy testimonies are my heritage forever; yea, they are the joy of my heart.”

Our enduring heritage! Kingdoms rise and fall. Civilizations flourish and fail. The sound of tramping armies shakes the earth and then fades into oblivion. Philosophers have

their day and vanish from the arena. Books become best sellers and then collect dust on forgotten shelves in darkened corners. Leaders are brought into the spotlight with a fanfare and disappear into the curtained wings of life's theater almost before the echo of the trumpet dies. But the word of God lives on according to his unswerving promise, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

Sustained by the spade of the archeologist and supported by the searches of the archivist, the word of God lives on in spite of changing cultures and flagging faith. He speaks from the summit of Palomar through the lens of a telescope as he did from the brow of Sinai through the lips of Moses, and his message is the same, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The still small voice heard by Elijah in an ancient cave echoes from the musty scroll of a Dead Sea cavern in our own day, and summons us anew to the unfinished task of the centuries. A stumbling illiterate goatherd can bring discoveries to light which awaken the profoundest scholars to frenzied zeal.

Our enduring heritage! My entertainment in infancy, my instruction in youth, my inspiration in manhood, my invigoration in approaching age, my illumination on the journey through the valley of shadows! Oh, may I never forget it, but love it, revere it, and through it be faithful unto Him whose word it is. And amidst the clamor of disputed claims, the shouts of sharply separated scientific scholars, and the propositions of antagonistic professors and pundits, may I never forget that it is better to know the Rock of Ages than to know the ages of the rocks.

Withdraw Yourselves

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Volume 27

[Abstract]

Thessalonica was a city of pride. Location, history and status all contributed to the feeling of self-gratification. But some of it was false pride.

The hot springs gushing from the earth in numerous places gave the city its original name of Therma. The rivulets from these, emptying into the sea, came in contact with the colder water and created a cloud of vapor through which sailing ships appeared as argosies of the skies. It was for this reason the body of water was designated as The Thermaic Gulf. The harbor bustled with the activity created by vessels of lading from many ports.

It was Cassander who changed the name of the city. The son of Antipater, he married the daughter of Philip of Macedon. The latter had won a great victory on the very day that a runner brought him news of the birth of the baby girl. He returned word that she was to be called Thessalonica. After she married Cassander, he was assigned the task of slum clearance and modernization in the city which had not carted away the rubble of preceding wars. Not only did he alter the city, but changed its name to that of his wife. In honor of her he issued new coinage on which the form of “Victory” was imprinted. It was no dishonor for a city to bear the name of the sister of Alexander the Great.

In our own United States of America, Highway 66 has long been recognized as the chief thoroughfare from coast to coast. Chambers of Commerce have advertised their towns along this route with the slogan, "On the Main Street of America." There is some evidence that publicity groups for various municipalities functioned even in apostolic days. If so, the advertisers in Thessalonica could have adopted the phrase, "On the Main Street of the Empire." The famous *Via Egnatia*, main artery through which life flowed from the heart at Rome to the remote extremities of the Asian world, passed directly through the center of Thessalonica. It was the largest and most influential city from Dyrrhachium to the Hellespont. Every pulse beat of the empire was felt as it surged through the political and economic veins of the district.

Most important is the fact that Thessalonica was a "free city." This cherished status was granted to but few places in the Greek world. Sometimes it was bestowed as a political gesture because of an illustrious past, as in the case of Athens. Again it was given as a reward for assistance to the armed forces of the empire in a period of crucial struggle, as in the case of Tarsus. This was true also of Thessalonica. After the assassination of Julius Caesar by the republican conspirators, a civil war began which culminated in a decisive battle on the plains of the River Strymon, between Philippi and Thessalonica. These plains have been called "The Deathbed of the Roman Republic." Here the imperial forces led by Augustus and Mark Antony completely overwhelmed the army led by Brutus and Cassius.

As a result, Philippi was made a military colony (*colonia*) and Thessalonica a free city (*urbs libera*). There were four distinct privileges accorded a free city. (1) The citizens were self-governing and not subject to a district administrator from Rome. They could determine their own form of government and were wholly responsible for its application. The local magistrates held the power of life and death over the citizenry. (2) No armed Roman guard was stationed in a free city and the citizens were

not subjected to the sight of an occupational force. (3) No Roman insignia, either political or militaristic, could be displayed. This avoided frequent revolts and outbreaks which occurred elsewhere when the hated symbols violated places held sacred by the populace. (4) In most cases freedom from taxation (*libertas cum immunitate*) was granted, and descendants of original families were supported by the dole if they registered and requested it.

If time and space permitted it would be a genuine privilege to show our readers how this background is woven into the very language in Acts describing Paul's encounter in the city, and how it also provides an understanding of many of the very phrases appearing in his two epistles. However, we must forego the pleasure to be derived from such a course in the interest of a more limited pursuit. We shall begin by investigating the general effect upon the inhabitants of a city of the declaration of *urbs libera*.

Obviously the decree would eliminate a great deal of personal responsibility and provide much time for leisure. In a cultural environment like the one at Athens this afforded the average citizen opportunity for listening to the various philosophers, most of whom conducted their dialogues in the Forum, or marketplace. At Thessalonica, devoid as it was of such scholastic opportunities, the tendency was for many of the men to degenerate into lazy louts and loungers, ready for any excitement which might be aroused. This type of character is depicted in the references we have seen to the Thessalonians in the literature of the times, and the rabble might well be described in the words of Epimenides concerning the Cretans—"liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons" (Cp. Titus 1:2). This will explain what happened in Thessalonica as described by Luke.

But the Jews, in a fury of jealousy, got hold of some of the unprincipled loungers of the marketplace, gathered a crowd together and set the city in an uproar. Then they attacked

Jason's house in an attempt to bring Paul and Silas out before the people. When they could not find them they hustled Jason and some of the brothers before the civic authorities, shouting, "These are the men who have turned the world upside down and have now come here, and Jason has taken them into his house. What is more, all these men act against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king called Jesus!" By these words the Jews succeeded in alarming both the people and the authorities, and they only released Jason and the others after binding them over to keep the peace.

A congregation of saints exists within an environment and cannot be wholly unaffected by it. Those who compose it are also victims of their own past conditioning. This will serve to explain why Paul laid such emphasis upon the necessity of securing honest employment, holding it, and earning one's own livelihood. He did this in three ways.

(1). By personal command while with the brethren. In his first epistle he directs them to "look after your own business, and to work with your hands, *as we commanded you*" (4:11). In his second epistle, he says, "For even during our stay with you we laid down the rule: the man who will not work shall not eat" (3:10).

(2). By personal example in their midst. "Remember, brothers, how we toiled and drudged. We worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to anyone, while we proclaimed before you the good news of God" (2 Thess. 1:9). "You know yourselves how you ought to copy our example. We were no idlers among you; we did not accept board and lodging from anyone without paying for it; we toiled and drudged, we worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to any of you— not because we have not the right to maintenance, but to set an example for you to imitate" (2 Thess. 2:7-9).

(3). By special admonition in both epistles. "Let it be your

ambition to keep calm and look after your own business, and to work with your hands, as we ordered you, so that you may command the respect of those outside your own number, and at the same time may never be in want” (1 Thess. 4:11, 12).

These letters grew out of life situations. They were written to cover actual conditions. The favors for which they express thanks were real. The behavior which was commended was genuine. The rebukes administered were not for imaginary wrongs nor the corrections prescribed for fictitious ills. We can visualize the state of the brethren from that which was written to and about them. This fact lays a foundation of a scripture which has been wrested and contorted— 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.”

On the basis of this passage honest dissenters have been hounded out of every faction. Every disagreement with “the powers that be” and with “those who appear to be somewhat” has been labeled a “disorderly walk” and action has been taken to “withdraw fellowship.” In our own days of factional adherence and bigotry, we misused the passage as justification for refusal to recognize our brethren in the Lord. We were wrong! We are ashamed of the spirit of intolerance which we sought to excuse by abuse of the verse. We are convinced from unbiased research that what is commonly called “withdrawal of fellowship” is not countenanced in the verse and corporate action resulting in excommunication of a brother is not even a consideration in it.

The problem of interpretation centers around the meaning of “walking disorderly.” The word for disorderly is *ataktos*. It occurs in this form as an adverb twice (2 Thess. 3:6, 11). It occurs in the verb form *ataktein* once (verse 7). When applied to

the military it means “to break rank, to get out of step.” When applied to another orderly arrangement such as a school or business, it means “to play truant.” It has to do with a slack and irresponsible attitude. Dr. Barclay mentions its use in the papyri, “in an apprentice’s contract in which the father agrees that his son must make good any days on which he absents himself from duty or plays truant.”

The context clearly shows that Paul uses it to designate the idleness into which the brethren had drifted. Having reached the mistaken view that the return of Christ was imminent, they saw no further need of working. They gave up their jobs and decided to live off of the other brethren, even prying into their personal affairs and becoming busybodies in other men’s matters. Paul defines “disorderly” by showing both what it is and what it is not. In verse 11 he shows that it consists of “working not at all.” In verses 7, 8, he demonstrates that he did not behave disorderly because he did not eat any man’s food without paying for it, but supported himself by secular labor engaged in by day and by night.

To walk disorderly, in this context, is to live in idleness and sponge off of the other brethren. To read anything else into it is to ignore the setting entirely and twist the scripture to fit a preconceived idea or notion. But what should be done to a person who simply will not keep a job and earn his own bread? The teaching is plain.

(1). The brethren are commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Withdraw yourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly,” that is, who falls into idle habits. Note that this is not congregational or corporate action. It has no relationship to public or formal discipline. It is individual. No action is taken on the idle person. Nothing is done to him. He is simply left where he is while the brethren step back from him. Observe that the one from whom they step back, or from whom they hold themselves aloof is a *brother*, although a lazy one who

is living in idleness.

“Withdraw” is from *stello* which means “to gather up.” It was used for gathering up and binding one’s loose outer garment to keep it from coming in contact with that which would soil or contaminate it. It was used for furling the sails of a ship to keep them from striking together and suffering damage. It is the term which would apply when a mother called her children into the house to protect them from threatened danger. It is easy to see how it came to mean “to avoid, to hold aloof.”

The brethren in Thessalonica were simply commanded to refrain from extending hospitality to loafers and slackers. They were not to feed them for the command was that “if any would not work neither should he eat” (verse 10). If one of these dawdling drones appeared at the front door just before mealtime he was to be offered a job instead of food. If he refused the former he was to be refused the latter. One who shunned honest toil was to be shunted from the table. It was just that simple.

(2). The idle busybodies were commanded and exhorted to get a job. “That with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” The term “busybody” is especially interesting since it is a play upon words. In the original it incorporates the word for “work.” In verse 11 Paul uses the verb *ergazomai*, to work, and follows it with *periergazomai*, busybodies. Those who neglected their own work, which should have been central in their own lives were flitting and buzzing around telling others how to conduct their business. The prefix “peri” means “around” as in periphery. W. E. Vine says a free rendering of the passage would be, “Some who are not busied in their own business, but are overbusied in that of others.”

“Quietness” is from *hesuchia*. It implies that tranquillity which arises from within and causes no disturbance of others. The Greeks had a different word for that serenity which

proceeds from without but it would not have been as appropriate here. The idle brother was to secure a job and earn his own keep, without creating problems and complications for others in the congregation.

(3). “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (verse 14). “Note” is from *semeioo*, of which W. E. Vine says, “In the Middle Voice, to note for oneself, and is so used in 2 Thess. 3:14, in an injunction to take cautionary note of one who refuses obedience to the Apostolic word by the Epistle.”

The phrase “have no company with him” is intended to forbid the extending of hospitality. It would preclude the social gatherings to which the idle might flock and at which they would eat at the expense of others. The word “ashamed” is from *entrepo*, and refers to “a wholesome shame which involves a change of conduct.”

(4). Although the offender is to be noted and hospitality refused while he persists in his idleness, the record says, “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” Refusal to furnish food for such a person does not mean he is to be treated as a heathen. He is simply a lazy and indolent brother, who must be shunned to be saved from his course. When a man cannot be reached through appeal to his heart he may have to be reached through appeal to his stomach. So long as his head is empty and his stomach is full little can be done.

It is almost impossible to imagine how the tangled maze of disciplinary action— boycott, excommunication and congregationalism exclusivism has grown out of this passage. We can only conclude that when men seek for justification for their sectarian attitudes they will find it. The expression “Withdraw yourselves” provided the handy passage to satisfy their partisan needs and they swooped down and appropriated it as a new weapon in the arsenal of factionalism. Perhaps the King James

Version is partly responsible and if some of the other versions had been used the brethren might have been saved the embarrassment of confessing their mistaken application. Here is the way it reads in *The New English New Testament*:

These are our orders to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: hold aloof from every Christian brother who falls into idle habits, and does not follow the tradition you received from us. You know yourselves how you ought to copy our example: we were no idlers among you; we did not accept board and lodging from anyone without paying for it; we toiled and drudged, we worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to any of you— not because we have not the right to maintenance, but to set an example for you to imitate. For even during our stay with you we laid down the rule: the man who will not work shall not eat. We mention this because we hear that some of your number are idling their time away, minding everybody's business but their own. To all such we give these orders, and we appeal to them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly for their living.

My friends, never tire of doing right. If anyone disobeys our instructions given by letter, mark him well, and have no dealings with him until he is ashamed of himself. I do not mean treat him as an enemy, but give him friendly advice as one of the family.

Statement of Aims

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Volume 27

[Abstract]

The demands of justice have certain claims upon the editor of a periodical such as this. If brethren and friends are expected to continue to read what we write they have a right to know our aims and the methods by which we propose to attain them. It would be unfair to allow them to stumble along in our journalistic wake with no sense of personal direction or destination. We offer no apology for this re-statement of our purpose and prospects.

1. We are devoting our life and active service to pleading for the unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. We consider this the most essential and challenging need of our generation, simply because we are divided, but dare not remain in that condition. Unity is not an end but a means to an end. The greatest end in the universe is to bring the world into a state of allegiance to Jesus, but he makes this contingent upon the unity of those who believe in him. Since the world cannot be won to believe in Christ until those who believe in Christ are one we must unite or fail in our ultimate mission.

2. We propose to those with whom we are most closely allied, as a basis for consideration of the unity of all believers, a recapture of the spirit of restoration which characterized such men as Barton Warren Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and their contemporaries, a century and a half ago.

This is not an attempt to revive or restore their movement. It was a historical expedient adapted to the needs of its day and called forth by the circumstances of that generation. We acknowledge no slavish subservience to the movement but seek only to bow before the Christ whom the movement magnified. Many heirs of this noble experiment think they are being loyal to the first century proclamation, when they are really trying to face twentieth century reality with a nineteenth century mentality. This only increases the problems without offering any solution.

We accept all truth discovered and enunciated by the restoration fathers. But we refuse to close our minds against additional truths uncovered in our own time. We will not freeze the interpretation of the Spirit at the level of 1809, nor use the deductions of our worthy predecessors as a criterion by which to assay the value of the ore we mine from the veins in the lode of truth which death forbade them to continue to explore. It is their spirit and attitude we need to spark a new movement in our day as powerful as was the one which they placed in orbit.

3. While we no longer confuse the restoration movement in its time with the church of God which is timeless, we propose to continue within that frame of reference in our plea for unity for several reasons. Any reformer must begin where he is, because there is no place else where he can start. He must never confuse his dreams with his duty, nor confound his vision with his vows. But there is a deeper reason for our decision. We believe in the restoration principle. We accept it as vital and valid. We hold that our hope of true unity is dependent upon a proper definition and implementation of that principle.

4. Our immediate emphasis shall continue to be brought to bear upon the numerous splinter parties growing out of the restoration movement. Unity, like charity, should begin at home. The day we first divided among ourselves we lost all relevance as a "unity movement." We must undo that tragic mistake and

renounce the train of errors resulting from it, else we will never regain our integrity, and will continue to divide ourselves out of existence as we have divided ourselves out of influence in many communities.

The fact that we labor primarily among the various factions of the restoration movement must not be construed as evidencing any lack of concern for others. We will, upon invitation, attend and converse with those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, regardless of their current alignment or affiliation. We will address them in love and submit to open questioning and grilling without rancor.

5. It is our contention that within the restoration ranks we did not divide over those *things* which we credit with having created our catastrophic condition. We separated when we ceased to love one another. Our differences were occasions for discussion and should never have been made occasions for division. To differ is not a sin. To discuss differences is not a sin. But division among brethren is a sin. It is childish, carnal and a work of the flesh. We can differ and discuss until Jesus comes and still go to heaven, but if we cause, condone or continue division we shall all go to hell. It is as dangerous to perpetuate sin as to perpetrate it.

Our approach is not to debate every action of every faction until we reach agreement on every controversial matter. That is not our real problem. We seek to stimulate love for all of the brethren which will enable us to receive them as God received us — in spite of our ignorance, fallibility, weakness and error. Since this love must be in deed and in truth, not merely in word and in speech, we will go among all of our brethren, commending our love to them in Christ even while we cannot commend many of their ideas and practices. This does not mean that discussion of differences will be forever banned or outlawed, for that would not be feasible or desirable. It simply means that we must develop a proper atmosphere in which we

may discuss without falling into the sin of division. We hold that “the more excellent way” is the only way by which our cruel rents can be repaired.

Our strategy for the recovery and repossession of the lost province of oneness is fourfold in nature and is summed up in the words— Affection, Association, Consultation and Consecration. I must begin with love for my brothers, then associate with them because I love them, then discuss problems with those with whom I am in association, and with them enter more deeply into relationship with Christ Jesus. This latter is essential to preclude our “falling out by the way” over other things that may arise to trouble us. I think these must occur in sequence, or, they must do so in my life. This is why partisan debate offers no solution. It places consultation or discussion before association. The participants are not conditioned for the encounter. They come together to debate and do not debate to come together. They meet as warring tribes and not as yearning brothers.

Debate is too shallow and superficial. Any unity which endures must be a unity in depth and that depth must be gained by penetration— the heart and life of Jesus. As men hold hands and walk more deeply into Christ they enter a realm where spiritual affinity welds them together, not upon a basis of knowledge but of faith. Dialogue is the approach of the open hand; debate is often that of the closed fist. No man can lift his brother with a hand clenched with hate.

6. Our hope of recovery from and of halting relapse into division in the future lies in our ability to recapture a proper sense of relative values. All truth is equally true but it is not all equally important. The body of truth is like the physical body. Some of its constituent elements are essential to being; others are only essential to wellbeing. The latter must never be elevated to the same category as the former.

The relationship created by the blood of Jesus is greater than any mistaken view held by anyone within that relationship. The family tie must not be severed because of the peculiarity of some of the children. Jesus did not shed his blood for our views of opinions, but for ourselves as persons. We should never allow anything for which Jesus did not die to negate or destroy that for which he gave his life. To reduce the kingdom of heaven to the level of our controversial issues dishonors Jesus by making it appear that he died to purchase a mere party to project and propagandize for some particular method, mode or means.

The value which one attaches to the relationship which we share as a family in Christ can be determined by those things which he allows to disturb or destroy it. The quality of his love can be measured by whether or not he regards persons as being of greater importance to heaven than human interpretations, deductions and opinions. We have resolved to be a brother to all of God's other children and extend to them every possible expression of love in a tangible fashion. We believe that love is the most powerful weapon to overcome hostile attitudes.

7. We seek to encourage congregations to rise above the narrow sectarian attitudes and assume a posture of courage and spiritual breadth commensurate with citizenship in a kingdom designed to be universal. This would entail rejection of all false tests of fellowship and acceptance of brethren of moral stature and integrity regardless of divergent opinions honestly held. Men who are not factious should be recognized and invited to participate in the services so that all might profit from their insights. This provides a public witness to our unity in Jesus.

Brethren who do not use instrumental music need not compromise their position nor alter their practice in order to give respectful attention to a brother from that camp of the saints which uses the instrument. Those who are not pre-millennial need not sacrifice any truth they have ever held to listen to a brother who does not concur with them on the

interpretation of Revelation 20. We hold no brief for instrumental music or the pre-millennial concept but we will resist any attempt to condition brotherhood or fellowship upon either.

Bishops of congregations ought to be men of valor, unafraid of the clerical domination which has fastened upon every faction amongst us. We face two real enemies in every generation, standing athwart the road to progress in unity— the clergy and the vested interests. These have everything to lose if the saints unite, while the saints have everything to gain. Only when congregations of the holy ones adopt a “declaration of independence” and cease to be frightened by editors or controlled by forces or factors outside the congregation, will we ever be able to give the world a demonstration of unity in depth and diversity— the only unity possible to thinking men.

We urge our brethren to make congregational autonomy more than a mere factional catchword. Instead of using it as a means to debar worthy brethren it can become our greatest tool in building bridges across chasms in the community. In the final analysis all unity must be manifested locally. It will accomplish little real good to talk about it theoretically on a universal scale if it never becomes practical enough to demonstrate to the friends in our own areas. When the day comes that even a few elders will gain the courage to truly be bishops and assert their freedom from dogmatism, the factional defences will crumble rapidly. We know what it means to be with a congregation whose members are both free to speak and free to listen without fear of reprisal. What a thrill! What an adventure in the spirit!

8. If we be asked about our own course in the future the answer can be simply given. We are irrevocably committed to helping answer the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ for the unity of those who believe in him through the apostolic message. This automatically places us in opposition to every attitude, sentiment and view which is partisan, divisive and factional. It is our

intention to seek peace and pursue it, and to relentlessly oppose the sensual and ungodly spirit of the party which shatters and scatters the people of God.

We will go wherever the Spirit opens up a door for sharing with our brethren. Whatever their views as to instrumental music, the millennium, colleges, orphan homes, classes, cups, order of worship, or any of the rest of those things which have been problems to us, we shall go among them and help them to a closer walk with God even as they help us. We intend to be neither frightened by our foes nor flattered by our friends to the extent that we shall relax our battle. If we cannot help our brothers we will not hinder them.

We shall join no clique, clan or conclave. We refuse to court any sect or woo any faction. We will not be maneuvered into an alliance with any group of brethren where we will be forced to deny ourselves the privilege of association with any other group. The price of factional allegiance is too great a cost and we will not defraud our soul to pay it.

There seems to be an occasional wistful hope expressed by some that we may tire of the struggle or be discouraged by the misrepresentations and attacks of misguided partisans. We hasten to assure all such that they entertain such hopes in vain. We have enlisted for life. We intend to continue until the unseen hand reaches from the pale shadows to clutch our throat or until the pen is dropped by nerveless fingers already growing cold. We are deadly serious about the struggle to unite the forces of right and we shall press the crusade to the last disputed barricade. It is a source of rejoicing to see so many others entering the list for freedom's cause and we thank God and take courage, but if the time ever comes when we must stand alone in the war against orthodoxy and dogmatism, we shall continue it in the firm belief that we wrestle for his cause "whom having not seen we love."

End of an Era

Mission Messenger (September 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

The American Christian Review has announced suspension of publication after 110 years in the field of religious journalism. It was started in 1856 by Benjamin Franklin, and later purchased by Daniel Sommer who changed its name to *Octographic Review*. Another change produced the title *Apostolic Review*, but finally, having made full circle it returned to the original name. Katherine Way Sommer acted as editor for many years, but before her death in 1924 made D. Austen Sommer editor. When he declined she placed it in the hands of C. W. Sommer (another son) and Bessie K. Sommer (a daughter). In recent years the masthead has contained only the latter name, although much of the work has been done by Allen R. Sommer, only surviving son of Daniel Sommer.

If it should appear strange that, in these days when so many papers start and die, we should give so much space to the discontinuance of one, we offer pure sentiment as our justification. In the rough mining area where I was born, Daniel Sommer was the first representative of the restoration movement whom I remember seeing. At the time I was a barefoot boy, less than six years old. When the little congregation of 18 or 20 souls, most of them relatives, purchased an old saloon building, moved it to a new site, put a belfry on it and converted it into a meetinghouse, D. Austen Sommer was called for the first meeting.

In our rude mining shack “the Review” took an honored place beside our only other literature— the Holy Bible and the Sears Roebuck catalog. In those days the pages were newspaper size and contained an exchange column for boys and girls edited by Emily Baker. I wrote to it and there first saw my name in print. When I obeyed the gospel, although I did not then realize it, my thinking was regulated by the faction of which the paper was the recognized mouthpiece. Its editor wielded a tremendous influence. If he endorsed a man, that one had an inside track to any congregation in “the brotherhood.” If one was debarred from reporting through the paper it was equivalent to excommunication.

I do not blame Brother Sommer or the paper for my own Pharisaical or factional attitude. I do thank God for the amazing grace which delivered me from it. I am unable to think of very much worthwhile which our faction contributed to the solution of problems, despite our honesty of motive. But now that the paper has expired and become a part of brotherhood legend we say “requiescat in pace.”

The One Faith

Mission Messenger (October 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

It is very difficult for most of us to grasp the real essence of Christianity. We are conditioned by environment and experience to resist its simplicity, and to try and mould and make it into a pattern to fit our preconceived notions. We live in a world of automation and systematization. We are dominated by monster machines of our own creation which have, under the guise of making life easier, robbed us of our freedom and individuality. We have become statistics instead of persons, we have numbers instead of names, we are slaves to punch cards which rule our earnings and regulate our disbursements.

It is not to be wondered at, that in such a world, we should be seduced into an attempt to reduce our most intimate relationships to standardized procedures, properly classified and codified. Nor should we be amazed that men forget that the relationships always suffer a tortuous and agonizing death, throttled by monotony and tormented by a sense of duty and a fear of forgetfulness. A man who draws up a code of marital responsibility in which he agrees to kiss his wife three times per week, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, at 7:00 o'clock p. m., Central Standard Time, will soon have no wife to kiss. There are areas in human existence which must be left free for spontaneous expression. There are crannies of the heart which are too sacred for the prying eyes of other administrators to explore in an attempt to legislate what shall occupy them. An

effort by another to thrust himself into them will serve only to shatter the fragile vessel.

Our gracious Father in heaven fully understands our needs and yearnings. He knows the manifold complexities of human personality because He made us. In all ages He has adapted His revelation to the needs and conditions of men in their own day. He sent the world of mankind to school for hundreds of years, providing able teachers in the persons of the prophets, who labored in the primary and elementary eras of the world to bring that world to maturity. In this last age He has spoken unto us through His Son.

While preparing the world for the coming of this dispensation, God acted through law. At the very outset He provided a constitution for Israel, specific in detail and meticulous in its provisions. It is evident that any commonwealth in which justification is to be attempted by law must have that law fully and completely spelled out at the very inception. The commandments cannot be given piecemeal as the people violate the spirit of the arrangement, else men will die because of ignorance of that which has not yet been given.

The advent of Jesus marked a great change. “Christ is the end of the law” (Rom. 10:4). “The law was our custodian until Christ came. . . . we are no longer under a custodian” (Gal. 3:24, 25). Law was supplanted by faith, but faith is neither a law nor a custodian. If it is Christ died in vain. “For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law” (Rom. 3:28). “But now that faith has come we are no longer under a custodian” (Gal. 3:25).

Christianity has always faced the same problem which has plagued society. Maturity cannot be measured by the calendar. A great many who should be mature by reason of age (or the age) reveal that they still have infantile or adolescent traits. At Corinth Paul could not address the brethren “as spiritual men,

but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ.” But he wrote, “Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:6). The writer to the Hebrews faced the problem. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God’s word. You need milk, not solid food; for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

One of the basic needs of the human being is a sense or feeling of security, and from infancy until death, he acts or reacts in such a manner as to provide for it. Some of the reactions may be unconscious, or appear to be unrelated to the need but are governed by it nonetheless. The adolescent, who is conditioned to expect security in the home and as a member of the family, because of the father-child relationship, finds security in specific laws and strict enforcement. He inwardly craves restraint and secretly regards it as a token of affection. Arbitrary laws are essential to his wellbeing.

On the same basis, God’s children, having grown up in an age when they are to be treated as men, but suffering from immaturity, seek for security in a legalistic code. Unable to truly exercise the freedom to love and exist on the plane of the Spirit which is above law, they must take the provisions of grace and warp and twist them into a written code, and then exercise police powers over their brethren who are more humble than themselves, to enforce their code in ruthless disregard for the conscience of the others. This is equated with being loyal to God and faithful to the Bible when actually it is detrimental to the whole Christian revelation and utterly disruptive of the fellowship which Jesus came to create.

The Relationship of Faith

It is obvious that our relationship in this age is founded upon faith. In Christ we are justified by faith (Romans 5:1). We walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). We live by faith (Gal. 2:20). We receive the promise of the Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:14). Indeed it is true that “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.” Any misunderstanding of the relationship of faith can be fatal to the whole Christian structure exactly as an entire building can be endangered by weakening the foundation.

This leads us to the examination of what we believe to be a palpable error in the thinking of many brethren in our day. It is manifested in their treatment of the term, “the faith,” and is especially exhibited in their conclusions concerning Ephesians 4:5, where the apostle informs us there is “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” The “one faith” is frequently explained as being the entire collection of new covenant scriptures, and what is worse, those scriptures as an intended written code, or legalistic system.

The advocates of orthodoxy seem not to realize that the very scriptures they regard as a written code, themselves declare we have no such arrangement. One of the chief writers of the letters embraced in these scriptures, a man who wrote more of them than any other, declared that God “qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit, for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). Again he writes, “But we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit” (Romans 7:6). Jesus did not nail one law to the cross and hand another one down!

It is a common thing to hear *the one faith* described as “the system of faith including the whole New Testament.” Nowhere in the scriptures is our relationship to Jesus defined in such language. No one who speaks as the Bible speaks can justifiably

employ this kind of terminology. Our relationship to Jesus is a personal relationship. We are joined to him in an intimate embrace in spirit as a man is joined to his wife in the flesh. “But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6:17). You cannot reduce a person to a system. In reality there is no such thing as a systematic theology or systematic Christian relationship. These are creations of men. They are responsible for most of the spiritual ills in the world.

We have no inclination to verbally assault our brethren who are guilty of trying to cling to the Judaistic philosophy of legalistic justification, and live B.C. lives in an A.D. world. Instead we feel a sense of compassion as we always do for those who still exhibit juvenile tendencies when they are grown men. We realize that all of these carried-over adolescent traits result from fears and frustrations which are unresolved in their hearts. Rather we seek to deliver them from their ingrown inhibitions and partisan impediments so they may grow up in Christ Jesus and act like men.

We have an abiding confidence in the power of truth to dispel error as the dawn drives away the darkness. We do not lose heart when months of repetition are required before our brothers gain a faint glimmer of what is being said. We are content to labor and to wait, to plant and allow God to provide the increase. It is in that spirit we again examine the expression “the one faith,” to determine its nature and content. We shall seek to provide certain guidelines for our study as we proceed.

Faith and Doctrine

1. The faith by which we are justified was fully proclaimed on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Nothing was ever added to it as a basis for justification. It is “the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27) and the gospel was announced in its fulness and perfection by the

heralds of the King on that day. Those who obeyed its demands did not obey an imperfect gospel.

2. In the early days of the Way, “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to *the faith*” (Acts 6:27). The faith to which the priests became obedient was the faith to which the penitents on Pentecost became obedient. There was but one faith. Thus men embraced the faith twenty years before the first letter was written by an apostle. It is evident that the collection of letters constituting the new covenant scriptures were not a part of the faith.

3. When Paul landed at Cyprus on his first preaching tour, about 48 A.D., he was summoned by Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, who was anxious to hear the word of God. “But Elymas the magician withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from *the faith*” (Acts 13:8). This was four years before Paul wrote his first epistle and there is no indication that he ever addressed one to Cyprus. Thus it was possible for men to be obedient to the faith, and to be turned away from the faith, years before any part of the new covenant scriptures was written.

4. On that same tour which reached as far as Derbe, Paul returned through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22). Thus men were in the faith and able to continue in it before even one apostolic letter was penned. But the faith in which they were to continue was that which Paul had brought them. Fortunately we can learn what it was. At Antioch he referred to David and said, “Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23). Again, “And we bring you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus” (verses 32, 33). Again, “Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed

from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (verses 38, 39).

This was the faith which was proclaimed, the faith which they embraced, the faith in which they were to continue. This is the one faith. Paul defines it as “my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages.” He says that this is “made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to *the faith*” (Romans 16:25, 26).

5. Not one of the apostolic epistles was written to introduce men to the faith, or to induct them into it. Every epistle, without exception, was addressed to those in the faith and because they were in it. For instance, in 1 Corinthians (16:13), the sanctified in Christ Jesus are urged to “stand fast in the faith.” In 2 Corinthians (13:5) they are given the instruction, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.”

6. If the apostolic epistles constituted the one faith, no congregation of saints on earth, during the lifetime of the apostles, could have the faith in its perfection or completeness. These letters were written to different congregations and individuals and were not compiled or collected until long after the apostles were dead.

7. If the epistles constituted the faith only one of the apostles could possibly have had the faith in its fulness. All of them, including Paul had been slain thirty years or more before John wrote the last of the sacred canon. Some of the apostles may never have seen or read a single letter included in the new covenant scriptures, yet all of them proclaimed the faith. Not one of them, except John, knew anything about his three letters or those addressed to the seven churches of Asia.

8. The first epistle of which we have record is 1 Thessalonians, probably written about 52 A.D., from Corinth.

Yet, the year before that, “the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily” (Acts 16:5). Before the epistle was sent the Thessalonians were in the faith, for they had “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” The apostle said he thanked God continually for the fact “that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13, 14).

The one faith is not a compendium of moral principles, a code of ethics, or a compilation of laws. It is not a collection of letters, even though divinely authorized and produced by agency of the Spirit. It is the firm conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and that he “was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25). The very next statement is, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Upon no other basis of justification can such peace be secured.

We must honor with our attention the passages cited by the honest brothers under the mistaken view that these support their legalistic claims. In doing so we are not attacking men but simply investigating their use, or misuse, of the sacred scriptures. It is amazing how men, motivated by partisan considerations, can unwittingly bend the word of God to justify the sin of division and scandal of schism.

Like Precious Faith

It is urged that 2 Peter 1:1 condones the idea of conformity and uniformity as God’s demand, in the expression “like precious faith.” The letter is addressed “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” The like precious faith is considered to be agreement with the partisan position on such

matters as instrumental music, orphan homes, cups, classes, colleges, and a host of other controversial issues. Although this will seem utterly ridiculous to real students of the Bible it must still be dealt with because of its propagation by sincere, but misguided advocates of a partisan approach to Christianity.

The second epistle of Peter was written to the same persons as the first (2 Peter 3:1) and these were God's chosen ones who were scattered throughout Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). They believed in God who raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory, so that their faith and hope might be in God (1 Peter 1:21). They had purified their souls in obeying the truth and had been born again of the gospel which had been preached unto them (1:22-25). But Peter declares that in time past they were not a people, but were now the people of God (1 Peter 2:10). Peter was a Jew as were all of the other apostles. The gospel was first preached to the Jews, and later the Gentiles were admitted to the faith.

It was natural for Peter as "a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" to address his letter "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God." James Macknight in his *Apostolical Epistles* paraphrases thus, "Symeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to all, both Jews and Gentiles, who have obtained like precious faith in the gospel with us believing Jews . . ." The word for "like precious" is *isotimos*, which is a term of quality or nature. It is from *isos*, equal; and *time*, value, honor. The faith obtained by the Gentiles through the righteousness of God was in no sense inferior to that obtained by the Jews, although the latter had primacy in proclamation. It was a faith equal in value or honor. The term has not one thing to do with those *in the faith* agreeing upon every detail of understanding and interpretation, desirous as that might be. It is not even related to our being alike. The statement is that all who enjoy the righteousness of God have obtained the same precious faith. There is one faith for both Jew and Gentile.

It is a startling commentary on the destructive violence of the party spirit when one realizes that otherwise good and gentle men are betrayed into equating the faith which all of us share in Christ Jesus with narrow partisan tests of communion. To Peter it was a source of rejoicing that others were included in the like precious faith; to orthodox factionalists it is a matter of loyalty to Christ to use the same passage to exclude believers from their “fellowship.” Betrayed by the use of the word “like” in the King James Version the cult of the rubber stamp gleefully raises the banner of conformity over rival institutions, demanding that all who enter bow to the party mandates. One need not be a scholar of reputation to question the partisan usage of the verse. Even a reading of other versions would be enough to make the party application suspect.

“To those who through the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ share our faith and enjoy equal privilege with ourselves” (New English Bible).

“To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours” (Revised Standard Version).

“To those who have been given, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, a faith as precious as our own” (The New Testament in Plain English).

“To those who by the beneficence of our God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ have obtained a faith equal in privilege to ours” (The Authentic Version).

The Faith Once Delivered

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

It is argued by factional leaders that “the faith” here spoken of is the entire body of new covenant scriptures. In addition, each party includes in “the faith” the particular and peculiar traditional interpretation and deductions which separate and segregate it from all other believers, sects and parties. Thus when one debates the validity of cups or classes, he is contending for “the faith.” When another engages in heated discussion over support of orphan homes or Herald of Truth, he is contending for “the faith.” When another argues about the use of instrumental music, either pro or con, he is contending for “the faith.” When another goes on a radio station and delivers an attack on the pre-millennial interpretation he is contending for “the faith.” The content of the faith which was “once for all delivered to the saints” differs with each contentious party of the saints. No two have the same faith. Instead of “one faith” there are as many faiths as there are factions.

To differ with the party on the one item which is its distinctive and exclusive test of union and communion is to deny the faith and thus to bring upon one the treatment accorded to “a heathen and a publican.” If a congregation divides over the use of individual cups or glasses, one who contends for them in the opposing party denies the faith. Regardless of how much one loves Jesus and believes in him, or how pure his life and how fervent his spirit might be, he has denied “the faith” when he cannot in good conscience truckle to the edicts and pronouncements or kowtow in abject submission to those “who seem to be somewhat.”

Jude was not even speaking of the apostolic letters, much less of the fanciful, farfetched and fitful interpretations placed upon them. The faith once for all delivered had been received before he wrote his letter so it is evident the epistle of Jude was not part of it. We can determine from the immediate context the nature of the faith and the reason for the exhortation to contend for it. The word “contend” is a term of combat. It is *epagonizomai* in the Greek. W. E. Vine says it “signifies to

contend about a thing, as a combatant.” We can ascertain the nature of the faith for which contention must be made by the character of the opposition.

The opposers were ungodly men. They had secretly infiltrated the camp of the saints. They perverted the grace of God into licentiousness. They denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Against such characters, long ago designated for condemnation, “the sanctified, preserved and called ones” (verse 1) were to battle intensely for preservation of “the faith which was once for all delivered.” It is obvious that *the faith* was related to the proper concept of grace and its function, and the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These were the things being perverted and denied which made the earnest contention so essential.

One can hardly think of anything more detrimental to God’s purpose or to Christ’s prayer for unity than to apply such scriptures to the differences arising between brethren. Are our brothers who differ with us about individual cups ungodly persons? Are those who do not share our ideas about classes designated for condemnation? Do those who hold a divergent view about instrumental music pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness? Do the brethren whose views about orphan homes disagree with our own deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ? The truth is that regardless of the right or wrong of any of these things they are not a part of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. To confuse them with the faith is to confound sinners and mobilize the saints for savage civil strife. It is also to reveal the meagerness of our own scholarship and the dearth of our love.

The faith delivered once for all is that which produces our common salvation. It is that which initiates us all into the majestic covenantal relationship with the Father and Son. It is that which inaugurates fellowship with Deity and adopts us into the heavenly family. It is this faith based upon grace which

severs us from the old life of sin and gives us access to eternal life “the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest unto us.”

Denying the Faith

The acceptance of the revolutionary truth that Jesus is the Son of God and our Master and Lord, by its very nature obligates us to imitate his life as partakers of the divine nature. As truth becomes available unto us we must embrace and apply it to our own life and conduct, or we deny the faith which brings us into relationship with the truth. To deliberately rebel against the life demanded by the relationship we sustain in the faith is to disown that relationship and the faith which creates it.

Faith is the foundation of the Christian life and love is its embodiment. In Christ Jesus “faith which works by love” is what counts. Love is the fulfilling of the law. All the commandments are summed up in it (Romans 13:10). Love must be in deed and in truth, not in mere word or speech. “But if any one has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

This will explain a passage which is urged against our thesis in this article. In 1 Timothy 5 the apostle gives instruction relating to the case of widows. The community of saints is ordered to sustain real widows, that is, those who are left all alone, and bereft of all immediate relatives. Those widows having children or grandchildren are to be supported by their offspring. The record says, “If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (verse 8).

Many unbelievers, motivated only by natural affection, would not allow a widowed mother to suffer. A Christian has the additional motive of belonging to Christ Jesus, whose ministry

was summed up in the words, “He went about doing good.” To refuse to love others is to deny the working principle of the faith which is intended to bind us to Jesus. It is to make our profession empty, shallow and senseless. Rowland Hill was wont to remark that when a man becomes a Christian even his dog knows the difference.

Birth and Growth

The faith relates to the life and death of Jesus; the apostolic epistles relate to our own life and death. The faith portrays what Jesus has done and will do for us, and we accept it; the doctrine portrays what we must do for Jesus and we attempt it. One comes by proclamation; the other by indoctrination. Both are the word of God, but the gospel has to do with our begetting, the doctrine with our development. One may be begotten in a minute but continue to grow for a lifetime. One does not digest all of the food God has provided on the day he is born.

To confuse the faith which all must have to be in Christ with knowledge of the word which all must acquire as they grow in Christ is a tragic error. To make fellowship contingent upon uniformity in degree of knowledge is a fatal fallacy. If fellowship is based upon the faith, and the faith consists of every epistle in the new covenant scriptures, then one must fully know every passage or he cannot be in the faith. Yet Paul declares, “If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2). This proves we are all deficient in knowledge, and the one who imagines that he is not is worse off than the others.

Those who plead for uniformity in knowledge of the word of God as a basis for fellowship must either demand perfect knowledge or else they must designate the areas in which one must know to be in the fellowship, as distinguished from those

areas in which he may be ignorant and still be justified of God. How much in God's word can one be mistaken about and still be justified? What percentage must he be right about before God no longer recognizes him as in the family? How much must one grow in intellectual attainment in order to continue as a brother? How sick must one become from spiritual vitamin deficiency before the Father disowns him as a child?

To postulate that one must have perfect knowledge of every detail of revelation is to require inerrancy and infallibility and to demand that he be God. This is what I call "the Haman's gallows argument." If it is affirmed that fellowship with ourselves is contingent upon knowing all we know and understanding everything as we do, then our fellowship with God is dependent upon our knowing all that God knows and understanding everything as He does. Since no one is rash enough to claim this for himself, he admits he is not in fellowship with God, and damns himself by the argument he concocted to deny others. "By what judgment you judge you will be judged."

On the other hand, if he concedes that others do not need to agree upon every matter of doctrinal interpretation in order to be in the fellowship, he must exercise his human judgment as to what portion is essential. When he binds this upon others as a term of communion he exercises the prerogative of God. Was not the revelation of God given to all of the saints? Do others not have the same freedom as ourselves to make those emphases which are commended to their own intellects and consciences as important and relevant to the Christian walk? If, in the physical life, we must recognize the difference in digestive ability and capacity, shall we not do the same in the spiritual realm? Is not growth in the family of God progressive and individual?

Life is more important than food. "Is not the life more than meat?" (Matt. 6:25). The whole purpose of food is to sustain life. Bread which comes from the earth is the staff of physical life. The bread which came down from heaven is the

staff of spiritual life. Any use of food to impair life, or any application of a theory of nutrition to destroy life, is criminal. If our emphasis upon physical food is such as to destroy human life and its relationships we have a warped view of the place of both life and bread. In the same manner we must regard the sacredness of the life in Christ Jesus as superior to the given means of growth. Our sense of values must never become so distorted that we sacrifice life for doctrinal correctness, especially when that correctness is determined by our own deductions and interpretations. Bread has not been given for the purpose of pounding the other children over the head. No one but the Great Physician can determine the proper amount of spiritual food intake and rate of growth for each of God's children. Those who berate others may themselves be deficient. Our problem is that we have too many "doctors" practicing without a license, each heading his own little clinic and dispensary.

The true basis of our continuance in corporate unity can never be predicated upon an arbitrarily determined degree of knowledge at a given time. If it is, we shall need to exclude from our fellowship in the afternoon those whom we immersed in the morning. If it be argued that when men come into Christ, we must give them time to grow, the same principle will force us to continue to be patient, forbearing and tolerant with them as long as they are growing in Him. Thus the basis of the corporate functioning in Christ is the faith which creates the state, and a proper attitude toward truth of those within that state. One may love truth and know little of it, or he may know a great deal and have but little respect for it. In the final analysis *attitude* is the determinant factor between true discipleship and sectarianism. One is not a sectarian because of where he happens to be at a given time, but because of his attitude toward truth regardless of where he is. This must never be forgotten, for if we forget it we will probably be sectarian.

Doctrinal Values

What relationship has the apostolic doctrine upon which we feed, with the faith which produces our life, or for that matter, is our life? To phrase the question in another fashion, what relationship exists between the germ by which we are begotten and the food of which we partake after birth? What relationship exists between the pasture upon which a sheep forages and that which makes it a sheep? We propose to face up to these matters frankly, fully and fearlessly. In order for you to follow our reasoning with greater facility we will present our views in numerical sequence.

1. Both the gospel (Good News) which brings us into affinity with eternal life and the apostolic doctrine which sustains us, are the word of God. Paul commended the Thessalonians because they accepted the gospel “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13). To the Corinthians he wrote, “If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (1 Cor. 14:37, 38). We accept without question or quibble that the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus and the means of Christian growth are both from the Father of lights.

2. The apostolic letters do not constitute the new covenant, or new testament, and are nowhere said to do so in the sacred writings. The new covenant is not a written code (2 Cor. 3:6). It is not even written with ink (2 Cor. 3:3). The apostolic letters were written with pen and ink (3 John 13). The new covenant is an individual and personal Agreement by which one commits himself to, and is adopted by God into his family, as a child. This covenant is written on human hearts by the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10). This divine-human Compact cannot be effected by any other person on earth for another. Neither can it be affected by any other person. Read those two sentences

again!

3. Those who heard the Good News on Pentecost, and accepted its implications for their lives entered into the new covenant relationship as fully as any persons ever did since that time. At the moment, they knew nothing of the apostolic doctrine which was gradually revealed over a period of many years as need arose and abuses were created by those in the covenantal relationship. The gospel which produced the covenantal relationship had to be announced prior to that relationship which it was to create and which grew out of it; while the apostolic doctrine was revealed as a need was felt for information as to conduct and behavior in Christ. The entrance into the life relationship was not contingent upon knowledge of subsequent doctrine. The gospel was to make children of God; the apostolic doctrine was to make the children of God better.

4. The Good News was never proclaimed to any person with any other intention or objective than to bring him into covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. No apostolic letter was ever written to any person or group to bring such person or group into the covenant relationship. All letters were written to those in covenant relationship and because they were in it. The very first letter Paul wrote was addressed to those who were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The second letter was addressed to the same identical ones.

5. The apostolic epistles are not a pattern or blueprint. There is a difference between a love letter and a blueprint. One may contain advice but the other sets forth specifications. A blueprint must always be available in full and in the hands of the builders before construction starts. There were many in Christ Jesus who actually suffered death for him before the first epistle was written. Congregations of saints had been planted and grew in spiritual stature before letters were ever written to them. Our pattern is a person! Our life is unity with that person! "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life" (1 John

5:12). “He is our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Our pattern is not external but internal. Our lives are shaped and transformed by the Spirit and not by an external code. We “are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

6. The purpose of the apostolic epistles is to provide, by our assimilation of truth as revealed, for our growth in the divine nature in order that we may automatically and spontaneously act and react to given situations as Jesus would under the same circumstances. It was when congregations responded as Jesus would that Paul wrote them letters of thanksgiving and commendation as he did to Philippi, “let your bearing toward one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus” (2:5). It was when they did not that he wrote them of the dangers attendant upon such a course. “But that is not how you learned Christ” (Eph. 4:20). Christianity is not Jesus pointing us to a book as a pattern, but a book pointing us to Jesus as our pattern.

This will make all of the difference in the world in our attitude toward each other. Every sincere person thinks he understands and does just what the book teaches. His stock-in-trade remedy for disunity is the platitude, “If everyone will just take the Bible for what it says, and do just what it teaches, we will all be one.” This old cliché has been proven unrealistic and unworkable. Those who mouth it the most are the most strife-torn and divided. In spite of the sincerity of each, what is actually meant is, “If everyone will just take the Bible for what I say it means, and do just what I teach it requires, we will all be one.” All of our confusion stems from the fact that every one who regards the Bible as our pattern, thinks he perfectly grasps that pattern while others labor in ignorance, stubbornness and stupidity. All of us have seen communities where there are five or six different groups who say that if everyone will take the Bible for what it says, unity will result, and yet none of the six have anything to do with any of the others. The world is catching

on to such childishness and inconsistency.

Once we recognize that Jesus is the pattern, it follows that the greater our sincerity the more humbly will we admit that we fall far short of this example, and the easier it is to recognize that none of us are perfectly following the pattern. Then we can receive each other in Christ as equals— not in knowledge, understanding or perception— but in our need of grace to save. It creates a lot of difference in attitude if we think that some of us are already on higher ground tossing a rope to those who are floundering about in the waves, or if we recognize that all of us are still in the deep and are all struggling together to reach a goal or ideal. We need to be careful that we do not secretly pride ourselves that it is by *our grace* others can be saved.

The real criterion is not at all our knowledge of a code or book, even though divinely given. It is love for a person. In the school of Jesus it is not mastery of a text but affection for the teacher which brings recognition. Knowledge inflates self, but love inspires imitation of another. As the apostle puts it, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one love God, one is known by him” (1 Cor. 8:1-3). Of course if we truly love him we will want to hear what he says and do what he asks us to do. We will not do this because of legalistic demands but because of loving commands.

7. Nothing we have said herein is intended to derogate the apostolic epistles. It is written simply to place doctrine in proper perspective, to enable us to regard it as God intended. To say that life does not originate with bread is not to speak disparagingly of bread. To observe that family relationship is not created by food is in no sense to undervalue food. The man who truly grasps what we are saying will find the revealed word of God growing more precious unto him day by day. This has been our personal experience in the freedom we enjoy from the pettifogging trivia which legalistic attitudes convert into tests of

communion. “Christ sets us free, to be free men. Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again” (Gal. 5:1). We intend to study God’s precious truth for ourselves. We shall allow no one to do our thinking on earth who cannot answer for us at the judgment. And this very resolution makes every word within the sacred pages pulsate with life and glow with the light of new meaning and relevance in our own life.

Doctrine and Fellowship

Every person who truly loves the Father will want to know all that the Father has said. While it is true that one who commits himself to Christ obligates himself by that very act to familiarize himself with all that God has taught, he will not do so out of a sense of obligation but as a joyful privilege. It is one thing to study to be a shrewd lawyer, and a wholly different thing to study to be a loving and affectionate son. Such a son will be as tolerant of others in their deficiencies as the Father is of his weaknesses. He will not set up a standard for others which God has not set up for all. This warrants the following observations.

1. The word of God has a meaning and the doctrine of God can be understood. Such understanding can only result from diligent investigation by earnest students who examine the text of the revelation and apply to their research those rules of logical interpretation which govern such matters. When proper examination has been made, free from preconceived bias, the result must be conceded to be the doctrine of Christ as given through his holy envoys, the apostles.

2. In view of the fact that such conclusions must depend in part, or in whole, upon the deductions made from the sacred scriptures, and thus represent the sacred oracles as filtered through human rational processes, the conclusions cannot be constituted conditions of union or communion, or tests of one’s relationship to the Father. They must not be regarded as the

basis of life but of growth and that rate differs with each individual in Christ.

3. The deductions from the sacred revelation as made by one individual, or a group of individuals conducting research in concert, are not formally binding upon any other individual, unless commended unto such individual by his own investigation, perception and conscience. They can be shared with others but not saddled upon them, for they can be binding only to the degree and in the measure that they are personally grasped and comprehended. If this be not true the following evils will result.

a. Individual responsibility will be destroyed and men will be subjected to creedal tests and criteria arbitrarily imposed.

b. Those who concur with such imposition upon themselves will repose their faith in the wisdom of men rather than in the wisdom of God.

c. The supreme court of appeal will be “the infallible interpretation” of each party, a thought as reprehensible as “an infallible interpreter,” or pope.

4. No opinion, honestly held by a child of God, can be made a basis for fellowship or a test of it. Such an opinion must never be bound upon others as a creed, nor must others threaten excommunication of one who holds such opinion if he does not relinquish it. The sword of the Spirit must never be used to kill or destroy those who are indwelt of the Spirit. Separation upon the basis of opinion must never be condoned. The called out ones are never called out from among the called out.

My Personal Position

All of God’s children are my beloved brethren. I have no brothers who are not beloved. I have no half-brothers, step-

brothers, or brothers-in-law in Christ Jesus. Some of my brothers believe that instrumental music is justified by the apostolic doctrine, some do not. Some believe that the pre-millennial coming of Jesus is taught, some do not. Some think that institutional orphan homes are authorized by the scriptures, some do not. Some believe Bible classes are condoned by Jesus and the apostles, some do not. On every controversial issue which has disturbed our tranquility some of my brothers take one position, while some take another.

They are all my brothers, not because of any of their views but in spite of all of them. I shall recognize them as brothers publicly and privately. I will call upon them to pray and participate in meetings. I will love them and cherish them. I shall maintain my personal convictions about all of the troublesome problems— instrumental music, the pre-millennial concept, orphan homes, classes, colleges, cups— but I will not allow these to negate or deny the sublimity of our relationship.

We are members of the same body. We are branches of the same Vine. We are sheep of the same flock. We are children of the same Father. No one will ever again herd me into a party corral where I must set at nought or mistreat some of my brothers to be recognized and used by a group of others. I value the love of my Lord too highly. The price one pays for factionalism is too great. The Christ whom I serve is not a party chieftain but Lord of the whole church. He is not the president of a faction but the head of the whole body— every member of it!

I have no perfect brothers. They are all brothers in error. All of them are as weak and fallible, as helpless and remiss, as myself. Some are in error on some things, some on other things, but none of them know all there is to know, and none are free from error. No, not one! It is foolish and arrogant for brothers in error to label others as “brothers in error” as if those who slapped on the label were free from all error. Such men,

knowing their own failures and shortcomings should be ashamed to live and afraid to die!

If I am in the fellowship with any brothers at all they are brothers in error. This does not bother me because it is this kind of persons to whom grace is extended. Those who are perfect as God will not need the blessings of grace. I do not love error. I simply love my brothers and I do not intend to deny brotherhood on the basis of imbecility, lack of understanding or mistaken views. If life in Christ consisted of being right about everything and every point of doctrine, I would have to confess that I have never lived, and the “I” of today would have to sever all relationship with the “Me,” of yesterday.

I do not plead that my brethren accept instrumental music, pre-millennialism, orphan homes, classes, cups or colleges. I simply plead that they quit playing God and accept all of God’s children as their brothers. God does not tell us how to treat the lengthy catalogue of disturbing items. He does tell us how to treat our brothers. I might be right about all of these things and go to hell because I did not show love for my brothers, or, I might be mistaken about a lot of things and go to heaven because I love my Father and all of His children.

We live in Christ through the faith, the one faith, the faith once for all delivered. That faith is created by the cross. It is not a faith based upon being in the right position about everything, but upon being in the right Person. I shall elevate nothing higher than the cross. I will allow nothing to overshadow it. I will permit the blood of the cross to blot from my life those things which hinder, but I will permit none of these to blot out the blood of the cross. The life is in the blood. I will use the cross to batter down walls between brethren but I will not use it to batter down brethren. This is my position!

Except They Be Agreed

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Volume 27

[Abstract]

Solomon was the last monarch of the twelve tribe kingdom in its undivided state. In the days of his son and successor, a revolt occurred because of the oppressive taxation required to maintain the opulent splendor of the regal family. Ten of the tribes seceded and set up the Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. He immediately introduced calf-worship at Dan and Bethel and plunged his domain into idolatry from which it never recovered. In 220 years nine different dynasties succeeded each other to the throne as a result of suicide, conspiracy and assassination.

If the reign of Jeroboam II in the fifth dynasty seemed an exception because of its outward prosperity, it was deceptive. The undercurrent of degeneracy continued unchecked beneath the surface. Because of it God called a prophet to denounce the open sins of the people. The man whom he selected was not a recognized prophet. He had not gone to one of the schools of the prophets which had flourished since the days of Samuel to train young men in the prophetic role. He was a simple farmer living in the wilderness serenity of the little village of Tekoah, six miles south of Bethlehem and twelve miles south of Jerusalem. His livelihood was derived from the rustic pursuits of herding cattle and caring for his sycamine fig orchard.

Since he lived in Judah, the commission to go to the king's

court in Bethel, was a call to invade a hostile region. The message he was to deliver was calculated to make him more unpopular. In addition to his denunciation of corruption he was to foretell the captivity and exile of the people under a rapidly growing alien power. Amos lifted up his voice against the immorality, injustice and intemperance which characterized the people with such effectiveness that something had to be attempted to thwart his effort.

The local priest was Amaziah, a fawning sycophant on the king's payroll. He began his attack by telling Jeroboam that Amos was a conspirator, an implication that he was an infiltrator collaborating with the Davidic regime in Judah, and sent up north to create unrest and dissension. He then confronted Amos and ordered him off the property and out of the country, closing with the words, "Never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

But the country preacher was not easily frightened. He pointed out that he was not a professional making his living out of prophesying nor was he a seminary graduate. He was actually following the flock at the very time the Lord said, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel." He then told Amaziah that his sons and daughters would be slain, his wife would have to become a prostitute in the city to support herself, his real estate holdings would be parceled out to strangers, and he would become a captive and die in a foreign land.

Because of the fearlessness of Amos we think the first part of his prophecy deserves some attention, especially since sermon text hunters (scriptural scrap-doctors, Alexander Campbell called them) have abused one of his statements to make him mean something he never even implied. The passage referred to is Amos 3:3 but we shall start at the beginning. Chapter 1 begins with a specification of the time when the prophecy was uttered. It was "two years before the earthquake," a tremor of such

magnitude that the people in Jerusalem fled from it as they would the day of the Lord (Zech. 14:5).

It is important to note that the Lord is referred to as a lion whose den, or place of abode, is Jerusalem in Zion. So powerful is his voice and so certain its fulfillment that the pastures dry up and the dew-covered summit of Mount Carmel withers. The roar of God is expressed through his prophets. There follows in regular succession pronouncements against Damascus, in Syria; Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Ekron, in Philistia; Tyre in Phoenicia; Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel.

The utterances against these last two bring the prophet to the point where he addresses all of the tribes as a whole. They are more responsible than any other nation for two reasons, viz., God formed them as a nation by delivering them from the womb of Egypt, and he claimed them for his own out of all the nations of the earth. Now he speaks against them, because the day has come when their iniquities and their judgments have met. Throughout all denunciatory prophecy runs the thread of certainty that God will bring to judgment every evil work. The divine appointment is that inevitably the sin and its punishment must meet.

Since this is the very nature of divine justice the prophet appeals to natural reactions to illustrate it. He exemplifies it by two people walking together because of a previous appointment to meet, a lion roaring because he has captured prey, young lions snarling in a den over their food, a trap or snare springing shut because a victim has hit the trigger, or people in a city running for shelter when the official trumpet signals an alarm. His argument is simply one of cause and effect. He reasons that for every effect there is a cause and you may determine the cause by observation of the effect.

He concludes by pointing out that God does not visit his wrath upon a city without revealing his secret to the prophets.

When the prophets speak it is the voice of God and the populace should react accordingly. The prophet cannot resist speaking the word of God; the hearers should not resist obeying it. "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" With this introduction we are prepared to look at the prophetic message itself.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The art of sermon-making, a skill wholly unknown to the new covenant scriptures, has led its practitioners far afield in their ardent pursuit of texts. When one is found which seems to suit the propaganda purpose of the hour, they operate and remove it from the contextual body, and by injections of their own intellectual distillate seek to make it develop into a new body of its own. No creation of homiletic fantasy better illustrates this than the use of Amos 3:3 by modern advocates of unity based upon conformity. The proponents of the cult of the rubber stamp have seized upon this passage as the one stone which will grind their grist, and wherever they speak the sound of that millstone is heard in the land.

As any person of even slight scholarly bent can ascertain for himself, this is an absurd abuse of the prophetic intent. Not only was Amos not providing a text for a sermon on unity but the passage is not even remotely connected with the use made of it by solemn clerics who weave from this one little filmy thread a gossamer web of tissue to cover all the saints in all of their association with each other.

Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Do two people have to agree upon everything in the world before they can walk together? If so, no two people on earth will walk together, or ever have done so. Shall we interpret God's word to forbid and make absolutely impossible the unity it commands? But I am told that this does not mean they must be agreed upon every thing. This surrenders the whole argument. Either two people must agree upon everything in order to walk together or else two people can walk together who are not agreed, and you will need to find a new text for the ridiculous doctrine of unity based upon conformity.

The utter absurdity into which people are driven by forced exegesis to sustain a pre-supposition and partisan position was observed not long ago in the home of a certain preacher. He contended that two could not walk together unless they were agreed, but his wife challenged that statement. She mentioned that she had never agreed with her parents on their attitude toward her brother but they still all continued to walk together as one family. She and her husband then got into an argument and could not even agree upon what it meant to be agreed, but the last I heard they were still walking together— and arguing as they walked!

The only unity possible on this earth *to thinking people* is unity in diversity. This is true in the *domestic* realm. My wife and I could not be one flesh at all if we were alike. It is our very diversity which makes our union possible. We are not uniform in our mental and intellectual attainments. We sometimes disagree

in our understanding of the import of certain scriptures. We are held together by love and respect for each other as persons.

The same is true in the *governmental* realm. We are a part of the United States, but these fifty states which enjoy unity and constitute one body of people have a considerable diversity. Those who postulate unity upon conformity and deny that it can obtain in diversity, lie every time they give the flag salute and murmur, "One nation under God, indivisible." Can we walk together as citizens of the same republic if we disagree?

The only fellowship possible in the *spiritual* realm which involves fleshly men at all, must be unity in diversity. How could I be "in the fellowship of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ" on any other basis? How else could I be in the fellowship with any of my brothers, seeing that I do not concur fully with any of them? No, not one! I am joined to my Lord and I am one spirit with him. But I am not as good as my Lord and I am not as wise as my Lord. The union of the perfect Lord Jesus with our imperfect selves while in the flesh, forever gives the lie to the fallacious notion that there can be no unity in diversity where the spirit is concerned.

But what did Amos mean? We will be helped in our understanding by consulting other versions. First, I shall refer to the translation by Robert Young, who was the author of various works in Hebrew, Chaldee, Samaritan, Syriac, Greek, Latin, etc., and who is best known to most of us as author of an Analytical Concordance. Dr. Young was quite critical of the King James translators for laxity in translating and compiled a lengthy list which he designated "Lax Renderings," and which we have found most interesting. He translates Amos 3:3,

"Do two walk together if they have not met?"

Many of our readers possess, or have access to a Revised Standard Version, and can easily ascertain that it renders the

passage, “Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?” It will readily be seen that if these are correct the use of this passage as descriptive of the nature of unity is forever barred to honest men who use integrity and do not “handle the word of God deceitfully.”

This brings us to a study of the word *yaad*, a Hebrew primitive root, which is defined by Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance thus, “To fix upon (by agreement or appointment); by implication to meet (at a stated time), to summon (to trial), to direct (in a certain quarter or position), to engage (for marriage).” The word translated “agreed” has not one thing to do with the attitude, purpose or nature of two people while walking together. The agreement is to meet and walk together, and is not related to walking together in agreement. The agreement or appointment precedes the walking together as the cause precedes the effect. The word *yaad* is not marriage, but engagement to marry; not occupying a position, but directing one to it; not a trial, but the summons to appear; not the state of walking together, but the appointment to meet for the walk.

The word occurs in the same form and tense 19 times in the Hebrew scriptures. It is translated “meet” 9 times, of which six (Exodus 25:22; 29:42, 43; 30:6, 36; Numbers 17:4) refer to God’s appointment to meet his people in the tabernacle. In Joshua 11:5 it relates to meeting together by appointment of a number of kings at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. In Nehemiah 6:2, 10, it refers to the attempt of Sanballat, Geshem, and others, to meet with Nehemiah, to work mischief. The meeting never occurred.

Even more revealing is the usage of the word in Job 2:11 concerning Job’s three friends who came every one from his own place, “for they had *made an appointment together* to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” The emphasized words are the translation of *yaad*. Any student of the book of Job knows that these three men did not share the ideas of God, Job,

or one another, yet they were “together” with each other. There is no use of multiplying other usages of the original for to do so would be the equivalent of flogging a dead horse.

After all, we should not need to do profound reasoning to show that the controversial passage in Amos does not relate to unity based upon conformity. The inconsistency of those who affirm that it does is sufficient to prove the unworkability of their contention. Those who declaim the loudest that two cannot walk together except they be agreed are forced to walk with those with whom they cannot agree upon many things. They resort to the subterfuge of selecting some partisan test of fellowship which is elevated to a status above the cross and demanding agreement upon it, while allowing liberty upon most everything else. Each party has its own point of emphasis, its own unwritten creed. Each time one moves from one party to another he must alter his criterion for measuring togetherness and must cast out his brothers on a different basis than he did before.

I am opposed to this mixed-up mess and messed-up mix. I recognize no other appointment to meet than at the cross of Jesus. Nothing will be allowed to negate the oneness created by the cross. I will walk with all of God’s children even while I disagree with all of them about many things. I am walking today with my brothers who disagree with me about instrumental music, the millennium, cups, classes, colleges, and a great host of other things. I shall continue to walk with all of them tomorrow, for no party proponent will ever inveigle me again into aligning myself with any faction whose orthodoxy is the criterion of faithfulness to my blessed Lord and Savior. I shall walk together with all of my brothers, realizing that we are not together in head but in heart.

The world needs a demonstration of the victorious power of love over all lesser things. It needs to know that the cross can still batter down walls of partition. I intend, God being my

helper, to prove it can be done. The best place to start is with a clear understanding of what God's word teaches. For that reason I suggest that all of my brothers look once more at Amos 3:3, and make an appointment for us to meet and walk together.

Playing It Safe

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Volume 27

[Abstract]

All sectarianism originates in fear and is perpetuated by it. It is fear which formulates creeds, erects walls, and dams the free flow of thought. Christianity is a great adventure. It thrives on daring deeds and epic achievements of men who burst their bonds and break their shackles. Christianity frees men; sectarianism enslaves them. The latter is the religion of the cross, the gibbet and the stake.

We have been observing recently how our brethren are victims of that timidity which comes from deliberately restricting their own horizon by simply refusing to lift up their eyes and look. It is obvious that what is being said about fellowship in MISSION MESSENGER is having a profound effect. It is evident in the renewed partisan attacks generally labeled "The New Ketcherside Unity Movement." The brethren are forced to take time and space from their favorite axe-grinding and use it to build their own factional walls higher and thicker. It can be seen in the clever insinuations in sermons and in the innuendoes in college classrooms, as the defenders of orthodoxy pump the bellows to keep the fires of prejudice glowing. For the first time in a century of shame, scandal and schism, a plea for unity and peace based upon spiritual depth and increasing insight is penetrating even the most extreme and reactionary segments of the non-instrument Churches of Christ.

Attitudes are changing at home and on the farflung mission fields of the world. The hearts of the humble yearn for a brighter day, when the acrid smoke of civil strife within the kingdom will no longer sear their nostrils or wring the tears from their eyes. There is a growing revulsion against the creation of artificial standards as the rallying point for clashing clans. Men are sick and tired of deserting the cross to dance and cavort around their own little rival maypoles while hurling challenges and insults at their brethren.

Why do we not see greater tangible results? There is no simple answer to such a question which is affected by the matted roots of traditional slogans. But we can give you an inkling with reference to one aspect of it. Repeatedly in these days we hear from brethren who write, "I have been reading your articles concerning fellowship and have come to the conclusion you may be right but I am going to keep on the safe side." Occasionally this is varied to read, "I am going to play it safe."

What does this mean? It means that frightened men, most of them preachers and elders, are going to continue to hide behind factional barricades and trust in their party affiliation for protection and security. The ground has been cut from beneath them as one scripture after another which they have wrested to justify division has been rescued for the cause of divine unity. They will cease to be as blatant in their condemnation of others and as bombastic in their challenges to dissenters. Their lessons will emphasize love as the hope for the future. In their hearts they will conclude that we are all "brothers in error" and that none of us know it all.

But when a brother drops in to visit them from a congregation which uses instrumental music, or from one that differs with the party on cups, classes, colleges, orphan homes or the millennium, they will give him the "deep freeze" treatment which consists of the cold shoulder and the frozen smile. This is playing it safe! It is the very opposite of the nature of the

Christian concept. No one can follow Jesus by such an attitude. He can merely sit on the fence and watch!

Jesus lived in a nice comfortable heaven. It was completely walled in. He associated with angels who never spoke a questionable word. It was a wonderful, marvelous place filled with a glory that was before the world was. But He did not play it safe! He deliberately left it and came to associate with those who were enemies of God. He ate with publicans and outcast tax collectors. He was wept over and anointed by street-walkers and prostitutes. He was ridiculed by the religious, criticized by the conventional and ostracized by the orthodox. Those who claimed to have a closed circuit on the heavenly wave length called him “a glutton and a winebibber.” They hustled him out of his boyhood congregation and were going to throw him over a cliff to prove their loyalty to God. He associated and shared with too many who were not “faithful” so they remained on the safe side and killed him!

No one can participate in “the great adventure” who wants to remain in his quiet and serene little heaven behind walls of artificial jasper and with gates of cultured pearls. He who restricts his sharing to those who see everything as he does and who refuses to associate with those who disagree is not following Jesus at all. Jesus took risks for the sake of unity. If Jesus had set up the criteria for association and fellowship which his professed followers now project, he could not have left heaven and come to earth until all of us saw things as he did. Christianity is not made for heaven but for earth. It is warfare and there will be no more war in heaven. The one who caused the only war heaven ever knew was cast out and is now down here. We need to be shaken out of our little air-conditioned factional heavens where we spend our time talking to ourselves and start following Jesus. It is difficult to walk while sitting in a pew. Too many brethren get their spiritual exercise by pedaling stationary bicycles. They always get off where they got on. But it is safer that way!

Saul of Tarsus could have played it safe. He was valedictorian in his rabbinical class at the Hillel School in Jerusalem. He might have succeeded Gamaliel as president some day. He could draw up a list of qualifications that topped any other candidate. "If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more." Then he saw Jesus and took the plunge. "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse." Later on when he attended religious services on the campus he was assaulted by some of the alumni, who dragged him out of the chapel and slammed the door shut. They were beating him up until he was rescued by the state troopers who got a call that there was a riot going on.

The "mother church" with which he met when he was in the city had a very restricted view of who should share in the Good News of Jesus. It was the idea of the elders and membership generally that every place on earth must be just like themselves to be recognized of God. They could not distinguish between Christianizing the world and Judaizing it. As they saw it, a missionary who was loyal must insist that every one embrace the forms and traditions which characterized their congregation. They packed enough weight that even their leaders when visiting congregations in other countries quickly snapped back in line when they learned that a "missions inspection team" from the home church had arrived in town.

If Paul had stayed on the safe side the community of saints for which Jesus gave his life would have been just another sect. But he refused to recognize any creed but Christ or any test of fellowship except Christian character based upon faith. He recognized those who placed emphasis on ceremonial ritual and those who did not; those who had scruples about dietary restrictions and those who had none; those who esteemed certain days as having significance and those who regarded all days alike. He was concerned only that no one make a test of brotherhood out of his personal views about such matters. It was his contention that, since the kingdom of heaven did not consist

of such matters, they should not be made the criteria of union or communion in the one body. He held that all that was necessary to join us as brothers was just what it took to join us to Jesus—no more and no less!

He was denounced as ultra-conservative by those who wanted to make a prey of the church by philosophy “according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.” They did not like it because he insisted, “For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily . . . and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you are also raised with him through faith in the working of God.” It was rather obnoxious to the intellectuals to hear any one naive enough to think that deity could be invested in a historical figure or that baptism had anything to do with coming into relationship with the divine.

Mostly, though, he was decried and disparaged as a liberal because he refused to bow his neck to any party yoke, and branded “selfishness, dissension, party spirit, and envy” as works of the flesh. When he was in a congregation that had four factions he refused to be confined to any of them but called them all “brethren” and treated them all as being “in Christ.” To Paul the Christian life was not staid, stagnant or stifling. It was a thrill-filled adventure, vibrant, throbbing and pulsating with joy. “We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing everything.” As Paul viewed it, Christianity was for eagles soaring in the wild blue yonder, and not for barnyard fowl clucking contentedly to each other while pecking in the tame brown dust of the corral.

God needs preachers who will not “play it safe” with reference to the status quo. We will never get over our sectarian state so long as we hide behind our sectarian fences. Brethren need to have the raw courage to go anywhere the Spirit opens up

a great door and effectual for communication and promote peace by personal contact. Jesus “came and preached peace” and he did it to those who were not at peace with each other or in agreement with him. We need to cross back and forth across our “crazy-quilt pattern” of lines. The shameful “Berlin walls” of the spiritual realm should be disregarded, rendered null and void. One does not fraternize with the “enemy” when he shares with God’s other children. The devil never pulled a more clever stratagem than when he caused us to regard our own brothers as aliens. If men cannot be free and supported financially they are enslaved by a chain of gold. They should free themselves to teach school, dig ditches, or do some other worthy work which will permit them to assist in the crusade for unity among all the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God needs elders who will not “play it safe” to appease a narrow, provincial, sectarian attitude. Elders are called to feed the sheep and lead them into the broad paths of Christian grace and love. There are too many who want to keep the flock confined to stalls of their own construction and throw down only the hay which they have cured. Let the elders be men of valor. Let them daringly rise above parochial, illiberal and intolerant views and practices. Let them scrape off the superficial and superfluous traditions which have accumulated like barnacles on the Ship of Zion and free that vessel to sail through the sea of life unhampered.

Elders must resist pressure from without, of editors who talk glibly of congregational autonomy and exercise diocesan dictatorship. Why should not a congregation of saints be free under God to listen to any consecrated person whom they wish to hear? Why should not brethren have the God-given liberty to invite any brother to share his thinking with them as long as he is not dogmatic, arbitrary or uncharitable? Let us cease to erect artificial barriers of our own devising. Let us make peace. Let us dare to be one in spite of differences. This is no time for cowardice. Shall we play it safe when the cause we love is in

danger?

They are slaves who fear to speak

For the fallen and the weak;

They are slaves who will not choose

Hatred, scoffing and abuse,

Rather than in silence shrink

From the truth they needs must think;

They are slaves who will not be

In the right with two or three.

Keep the Door Open

Mission Messenger (November 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

An editorial in Firm Foundation,
September 14, 1965

It is regrettably true that the heirs of the Restoration have seen fit to part on many issues. We feel uncomfortable when anyone points out that “there are twenty-five different segments” of the Restoration Movement. We do not believe that this accurately describes the church at all. It seems that some gloat over the number of such differences they can find. They would make every little difference of opinion a “split,” and it isn’t true. However, it is true that there are some cleavages in brotherhood thinking that should not be there.

We must point out that all shades of thinking among us have much in common. Each group will quote with the same vigor the pioneers of the Restoration. One group thinks as much of Campbell, Fanning, Smith, Stone and Scott as does the other. And behind these men there was a heritage of respect for the Bible gained from various Protestant sources.

Even among second generation restorationists like McGarvey, Lipscomb, Errett, Sommer, Pendleton, Pinkerton, Rowe, Johnson and Clark there was a bond of brotherhood. Even though they had begun to differ from each other over such questions as the missionary society,

the use of instrumental music, the millennium, located preachers and the Sunday School, they still worked together when they could conscientiously do so, and maintained communication with each other and in most instances friendship to the end of their lives. Party issues had not yet crystallized.

Even after major cleavages had occurred there were some giants who tried to keep lines of communication open. East of the Mississippi numerous men, even into the 20th century strove to maintain dialogue between elements of the Restoration which were gravitating further and further apart. We were fortunate enough to hear Daniel Sommer's now famous speech at Abilene Christian College in the early thirties in which in the closing years of his life he sought to close the gap his own teachings had created. We were also fortunate enough to have passing friendship with N. L. Clark during the last years of his life, and to hear him speak with regret of the cleavage the opposition to "Sunday Schools" had caused. We feel sure that some of this generation will weep bitter tears before they die over the cleavage of the past ten years.

That there are divisions in the body of Christ none will deny. They had that in the church at Corinth. We have it today. It is as sinful today as it was then. But to refer to every little difference of opinion among brethren as a "segment of the Restoration Movement" is a little ridiculous.

There are many times when brethren differ one from another— within a congregation and between congregations. As we look back upon history we feel that in all likelihood it was good for all of us that we have been forced to constantly re-examine all the postulates and all the consequences of our differences. True unity must be found in the Scriptures, and nowhere else. At the same time there is a basic need for a certain amount of friction within the society of saints, lest they become petrified through lack of challenge to study. Every challenge the

saints have received, whether it comes from denominational or heathen sources, or whether it comes from other saints, stimulates us to deeper study of the scriptures and increase (sic) activity in the interest of righteousness. Some diversity of opinion and method among churches is essential for incentive, and is a prod that goads along the way the odyssey of the human spirit. Brethren require of other brethren enough in common to understand each other, enough difference to provoke attention, and enough worth emulating to command admiration.

It would be to damn the Restoration to hopeless fracture if we should shut the door completely to dialogue between brethren whose opinions and whose interpretations of scripture differ. We must maintain contact with each other and prayerfully and hopefully work toward a better understanding of the scriptures upon the part of us all. We must never consider theological discussion closed between any two elements of brethren.

Unity is always to be sought within the framework of scripture; never outside it. We have no liberty or license to set aside what the Bible teaches in order to have fellowship. If fellowship is in a Person it is in the teachings of that Person. Salvation is in Christ which means on Christ's terms and within the framework of Christ's teachings. Likewise unity is in Christ— which means Christ's terms and within the framework of Christ's teachings. To attempt to set aside Christ's teaching either on the plan of salvation or the basis of Christian unity would be folly. There can be no fellowship— outside of Christ's teachings.

It would be unfortunate if in our discussions with each other we should meet only in the twilight zone of our mutual agreements. These are not the grounds upon which we took leave of each other. It is certainly good to explore mutual ground, but to do this at the expense of examining with honest hearts the grounds of difference would be

unprofitable. To close our minds to the fruitful possibility of discussing points of difference would be to kiss fellowship goodbye, and murder any hope of unity. With mutual respect for the conscientious belief of each other let us consider one another in love, and always keep the door of communication open.

Unity— not compromise— should always be the goal of our efforts. It is time we see how close we can get together rather than how far we can get apart. And in it let us pray, “Not my will but thine be done.”

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING

Although we have sought, in the interest of peace, to avoid direct reference to fellow-editors except when our name has been specifically mentioned, we are encouraged by the tone of this editorial by our esteemed brother in Christ, Reuel Lemmons, to make an exception to our policy. We trust that our readers will bear with us in a review of the article and in a suggestion we shall offer.

Our good brother admits that heirs of the Restoration “have seen fit to part ways on many issues.” He does not say how many factions there are but he thinks we set the figure too high when we mention “twenty-five different segments” of the Restoration movement. He infers that every little difference of opinion is made a “split.” By our use of the word “segment,” which is merely a polite term for sect, we mean an exclusivistic party which makes a definite test of fellowship out of something which God has not made a condition of salvation. We do not refer to “little differences of opinion,” but to opinion elevated (or degenerated) into partisan tests of fellowship.

There are at least twenty-five such parties within the restoration spectrum. We have personally visited and conversed with representatives of twenty-one of them, and trust, through

God's grace, to visit the rest, seeing they also contain our brothers. While others may gloat over "the number of such differences," we are seeking by association and sharing of thought to reduce tensions and eliminate further strife and division. Our divided state is a scandal and shame, an occasion of sorrow and sadness. Our esteemed brother does not know how many segments exist because he limits his efforts to the faction for which he is one of the chief spokesmen. He espouses the fallacy that it is "the Lord's church" to the exclusion of the others. We do not say this derogatorily, but merely as a point of fact, since we once held the same position as to the faction with which we were identified.

It is true that we have much in common, but it will come as a distinct surprise to most of the brethren who differ with us about the missionary society, instrumental music, and the pre-millennial interpretation, to know that our brother considers the door is still open for maintaining communication and dialogue. Most of them have thought that the orthodox party with which our brother is affiliated had slammed the door shut. Certainly the members of this party are conspicuous by their absence in every gathering of free men from various segments to engage in dialogue. In several places where our brother has labored, preachers and elders have issued decrees that their members must boycott such meetings. Brethren all over this country who use instrumental music and have sought to establish forums for open discussion have been rebuffed and repulsed. They can furnish our good brother photostatic copies of letters which are arrogant and insulting, received in reply to invitations issued in kindness. I know whereof I speak. I have read these rude epistles with sadness. The writers refuse to engage in dialogue and know only one course to pursue, that of unlovely insinuation and unbrotherly challenge to partisan debate.

I have published this editorial so our readers all over the world will see that there is still hope because of the changing attitudes of men like our esteemed brother. In April, 1962, he

said in an editorial personally attacking our position, "Brethren are united only when they see alike." It is refreshing to hear him now say that it is ridiculous to think that differences of opinion indicate division. While our brother once condemned me for saying that the only unity possible for thinking men is unity in diversity, he now goes so far as to assert, "There is a basic need for a certain amount of friction within the society of saints," and also, "Some diversity of opinion and method among churches is essential for incentive."

We concur heartily and sincerely with the paragraph in which our brother says, "It would be to damn the Restoration to hopeless fracture if we should shut the door completely to dialogue between brethren whose opinions and whose interpretations of scripture differ. We must maintain contact with each other and prayerfully and hopefully work toward a better understanding of the scriptures upon the part of us all. We must never consider theological discussion closed between any two elements of the brethren." This expresses our own viewpoint better than we could express it. I share in the sentiment without reservation.

On January 2, 1964, I wrote to Roy H. Lanier, Sr., Denver, Colorado, a brother who is a staff writer for Firm Foundation, in these words: "I suggest that we meet in Denver to engage in dialogue with reference to the question of fellowship and its relationship to the current status of the Restoration Movement. I suggest that we hold six sessions of two hours each, and that in the first session each of us take one hour to present his position on some agreed upon phase of the subject, and follow this by a two hour session in which we question each other in the presence of the public, and this, in turn, with another two hour session in which we sit down together and allow the audience to question us. I suggest that we repeat the same procedure with a second phase of the subjects so interesting in this day. In such a confrontation only truth can gain. If you concur with this fair and non-partisan approach, I further suggest that you agree to

announce it in three issues (at least) of Firm Foundation and I shall do the same in three issues of Mission Messenger, and I shall urge representatives of all segments of the Restoration Movement to attend and participate in the questioning.”

Our good brother Lanier rejected this approach to dialogue. He wrote, “I am not in the position you are; I am so related to brethren in the area that I cannot do such things without their fellowship and endorsement. The brethren in this area would have to realize the need of such discussion. Next, they would have to be allowed to choose their representative. I have talked with several preachers and they doubt if you have a sufficient following in the area to justify giving you an audience.”

Our brother did not want dialogue but partisan debate as a representative of a particular faction. He said, “I would insist on at least two nights of regular debate for one night of questions previously agreed on, at least as to the field of inquiry. Also general propositions would have to be drawn which would obligate you to affirm the outstanding doctrines you have taught since 1957. I am not interested in giving you an audience before which you would say a lot of pretty things about fellowship.”

I am heartened by the fact that the situation has so changed that the editor of the paper of which Brother Lanier is a staff writer now makes a plea for dialogue as the means of holding the door open. Brother Lemmons differs with my approach to making the spirit of the Restoration movement relevant to our day. He has accused me of surrendering *in toto* the entire restoration plea and of completely losing sight of any former truth which I held. He also wrote about me, “He has swung from the extreme of the narrowest of sectarian spirits to the broadest cover-everything-stand-for-nothing liberalism.” In one issue he charged me with gross error and rank liberalism, and declared that my current writing and speaking constitute “a glaring example of blindness.” None of this has affected my love or respect for our brother. I think I understand the pressures

upon him. I realize that when I was editing a factional journal I wrote the same way about some of my brothers with whom I differed. Brother Lemmons is a good man, and I do not think he really wants to write as he feels forced to do in his position.

But now I have a proposal to make to our gracious brother. On the basis of his own editorial I propose that the two of us “keep the door open” by meeting for open dialogue. Specifically, I propose that we meet in some Texas city of his own designation, for two full days of three sessions each, with each session lasting two hours. In the morning session let each of us speak one hour in setting forth his position on fellowship. In the afternoon session let the two of us question each other an equal amount of time for better understanding. At night let us sit down together and allow the audience to question us both for two hours. Let us then conclude the two day confrontation with joint prayer that God may use us as instruments of His grace in promoting unity among all of the saints. Let us do this as free men, representing no one but ourselves, even as we shall be judged in the last day.

I further propose that we invite all of the concerned ones among the Disciples of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, and various types of Churches of Christ, to attend and share in the occasion by directing questions to us in the evening forums. I pledge to Brother Lemmons, upon my sacred honor, that I will conduct myself toward him and all others who attend, as a Christian gentleman, and that when we part I shall love him as my brother as much as I do now. Because of the current atmosphere it is my earnest conviction that the two of us may go far toward relieving tensions and uniting our brothers across all lines and barriers within the restoration movement.

For reasons I shall not here disclose, I now feel that if effective witness of the original ideals of the restoration movement can ever be made to the leaders of the ecumenical movement, it will probably come from those in the non-

instrument segment who dare to rise above partisan considerations and establish rapport with world leaders of theological thought. But time is running out and our own shameful divisions hinder us in any attempt to approach such groups as “the Faith and Order Commission,” which are affecting the hearts of men in our day. I refuse to believe that the restoration ideal is invalid, but if there is not enough dynamic in it to hold us together, on what ground can we expect it to be accepted as it was originally defined by Alexander Campbell—a project for uniting the Christians in all of the sects.

I urge our readers in all segments of the restoration spectrum to write Brother Lemmons and encourage him in his announced purpose of actually using dialogue as a tool to forge the bonds of unity. I concur with him that we should not meet only in “the twilight zone of mutual agreements,” and I am ready and anxious to explore with him “the fruitful possibility of discussing points of difference.” His statement which follows is a noble one: “With mutual respect for the conscientious beliefs of each other let us consider one another in love, and always keep the door of communication open.” In the unabridged spirit of that declaration I invite my good friend and brother to share with me in public dialogue in consideration of our differences as to the grounds and nature of fellowship and unity among the saints of God.

Perhaps our brother would like to arrange a mutual dialogue on the campus of Abilene Christian College, where he serves on the board, and where members of the faculty could act as moderators. Failing this, perhaps some congregation with the courage to face twentieth century problems would consider inviting the two of us to engage in dialogue, with the elders serving as chairmen. I am not afraid of any of my brothers in the Lord. I shall not quibble about mere details. Time is failing us. We must get on with the task of unity among ourselves so we can present a case and a demonstration to the ecumenical world around us. I am so thoroughly convinced that the Spirit will

work with and through one who trusts in Jesus completely that I am ready to go anywhere at any time.

You may write our brother by addressing Reuel Lemmons, P.O. Box 610, Austin, Texas 78767. May God use us both as instruments to bring about an answer to the prayer of His Son for the oneness of all who believe upon Him through the apostolic testimony is my own prayer. Let the truth be known!

The Works of Darkness

Mission Messenger (December 1965)

Volume 27

[Abstract]

In a thrilling statement addressed to God's people at Ephesus, the apostle Paul declares that unity in Christ is the purpose, will and pleasure of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, that unity is to be universal. It is to include all in heaven and on earth. "He has made known to us his hidden purpose— such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ— to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ" (Eph. 1:9, 10). One who devotes his life to the promotion of unity among the saints acts in harmony with the divine purpose. He serves the will of God. He is responsive to the divine pleasure.

If the holy scriptures contain a revelation from God in which the mind of God is found expressed, it follows that they must be wholly in accord with the purpose of God. Any use of these writings to create, condone, or continue division within the family of God must be misuse and abuse. The sacred scriptures, like any other communication between rational beings, are subject to interpretation and application by those who read them, and one criterion of accuracy in both areas is whether our view formulated by study is conducive to the reduction or increase of tensions among the disciples of Christ.

No governing principle expressed in words, whether of

divine or human origin, is proof against distortion by prejudiced hearts. Not all prejudice is deliberate and all of us are prejudiced in one degree or another. It is a temptation to use the scriptures in such a manner as to give credence to our traditional positions and attitudes. Men may wrest what God has said and do it without recognizing an ulterior motive. We should be ready always to investigate anew our views and explanations, realizing that while God's word is sacred, our deductions are not necessarily so. There is a danger that we will see in the scriptures what we want to see. Our predispositions are stronger than most of us like to admit.

If it be true that God has designed that all who are in Christ be one, it follows that there must be a separation between those who are in Christ and those who are out of Christ. If the first are citizens of the kingdom, the others are aliens from it. To justify division in Christ one would have to destroy such distinction. That which applied to the wall between children of God and children of the devil would have to be wrested to make it appear applicable to the children of God in their relationships, so that walls could be erected between saints. Nothing can be more contributory to confusion and disorder than such a course, yet nothing is more common among those who profess loyalty to the Lord.

Passages pertaining to the relationship of believers with unbelievers are lifted from their context and made to apply to the relationship of believers with each other. A caution against an unequal yoke is magnified into prohibition of an equal one. Because the temple of God has no agreement with idols it is made to appear that the stones in the temple should have no cement between them. Because he that believes has no part with an infidel it is affirmed with equal force that he should have no part with other believers who differ with him about matters not directly concerned with the faith. The called out are called upon to come out from among the called out. Those whom God has called together are called to separate under the guise of pleasing

Him.

In this is seen the difference between the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirit of the party. The former uses the word to draw us together; the other uses the same word to drive us apart. One regards the scripture as a divine cement; the other as a solvent. Although we have dealt with the schismatic abuse of the sacred oracles in previous issues we propose to add some observations to what has been said by reference to another passage in Ephesians (5:11) which has been used as occasion to lend sanction to strife and disunion.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

In the desire to find sanction for factional and exclusivistic attitudes, men have seized upon the expression, “have no fellowship,” and employed it as the tool for fragmenting the saints. The “unfruitful works of darkness” are converted in the factional crucible into every point of difference arising among the brethren, and those who disagree with arbitrary opinions can be hounded out and treated with contempt and disdain as heathen and publicans. It is astounding that any one who poses as a Christian teacher could possibly make an application of this passage to brethren whose only “sin” is that they cannot see every point of doctrine alike. Yet we find this verse used over and over in those journals whose editors mistake community with conformity.

Is not the whole tenor of the Ephesian letter against such a forced interpretation? Did not the apostle tell the brethren, “Be humble always and gentle, and patient too. Be forbearing with one another and charitable. Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives” (4:2, 3). Did he not urge them to “throw off falsehood and speak the truth to each other, for all of us are parts of one body”? Did he not command them to “have done with spite and passion, all angry

shouting and cursing, and bad feeling of every kind”? (4:31). Did he not say, “Be generous to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you”? (4:32).

Surely one need not know the original Greek to determine that the apostle would not deliberately write an epistle to prove that we are one body, only to splinter and shiver it to bits with one sentence. The Ephesian letter is a magnificent document of unity and peace written to portray the fellowship of the mystery, and the mystery of the fellowship. Who can believe that after painting such a masterpiece that its author would hand us a knife and tell us to slash it into ribbons?

What are “the unfruitful works of darkness”? Are they opinions which differ from the party norm— opinions about the validity of instrumental music, missionary societies, the millennium, orphan homes, centralized support, institutionalism, organization, individual cups, Bible classes, qualification of elders, the work of evangelists, fermented wine, a method of breaking the bread in the Lord’s Supper, or owning a television set? Are these to become our criteria for cleaving the fabric of brotherhood and reducing the divine family to the status of warring tribes “hated and hating one another”? Are they the grounds upon which we shall callously rive, rend and rupture the one body, until it is lacerated and bleeding at every pore? What thoughtful man among us, knowing the spirit of Paul, can even imagine that he would approve our crazy-quilt pattern of division, much less that he would lay the foundation for it?

Would the apostle of grace set at nought a brother simply because he had a divergent view about instrumental music, the millennium, cups or classes? Would he refuse such a person the right to pray to the Father or coldly disdain to call upon him to do so? What spirit of evil has possessed us that we can set at nought a brother for whom Christ died, and seek for justification in the words of the very one who condemned such

arrogance and haughtiness of spirit?

Our trouble is that we are so muddled and confused we cannot distinguish between God's family and heathen. We mistake our brethren for barbarians. We cannot tell the difference between an honest difference of opinion and a barren work of darkness. In our factional derangement we cannot differentiate between error and sin. We think that every error is a sin simply because every sin is an error. This is the wilderness of perplexity into which we have been led by the party spirit and we have been left entangled in the thicket of our own meandering thoughts. We are trapped in a maze of legalism and dogmatism and we have forfeited our freedom through fright and fear.

I unhesitatingly affirm that no man can be true to Christ and make a test of fellowship out of either the pro or con of any of the motley multitude of those things which have disturbed the saints. He who sets at nought his brother simply on the basis of an opinion or idea of any of these, or all of them, judges another man's servant, does not walk charitably, and destroys with his own judgment one for whom Christ died. No honest opinion about cups, classes, colleges, methods, music or the millennium, regardless of how mistaken it may be, is a work of darkness in the context of Paul. We should not use the word of God deceitfully but by manifestation of the truth commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The works of darkness constituted the perverted practices of pagans and not the varied rationalizations of the called saints. This becomes obvious from any angle of approach to the Ephesian letter. Let us analyze a few of the ways which incontrovertibly prove it.

1. The use of the pronouns "ye" and "them." Certainly the first refers to the addressees and recipients of the letter as opposed to others. The letter was written to "the saints which

are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (1:1). They had believed the gospel and been sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13). Their faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all of the saints was an occasion of thankfulness upon the part of the apostle (1:15). They had been quickened together with Christ (2:5) and saved by grace (2:8). Thus, the admonition to “be not therefore partakers with them,” is not a warning to have no part or lot with others who are under the lordship of Jesus, but with those outside the pale.

2. The contrast between the regenerate and unregenerate state of the Ephesian saints. “For though you were once all darkness, now as Christians you are light” (5:8). They were “in time past Gentiles in the flesh” (2:11). “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (2:2). In times past they behaved “in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (2:3). Now the apostle testifies they must “henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of the mind” (4:17).

Works of darkness are the deeds of those who abide in darkness. Since there is no fellowship of light and darkness, those who have abandoned paganism with its vice have nothing in common with those who remain in its sordid and degenerate state. They are to have no fellowship with the barren works of darkness.

3. The terms of address employed. The saints are called children of light (5:8), and are told to be imitators of God, as dear children (5:1). Those who abide in darkness are called children of disobedience (5:6) and have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (5:5).

4. The remote context describes the former life of darkness from which they were called, and which must be laid aside completely. There can be no compromise of their present with

their past. Read Ephesians 4:17-24.

This then is my word to you, and I urge it upon you in the Lord's name. Give up living like pagans with their good-for-nothing notions. Their wits are beclouded, they are strangers to the life that is in God, because ignorance prevails among them and their minds have gone as hard as stone. Dead to all feeling, they have abandoned themselves to vice, and stop at nothing to satisfy their foul desires. But that is not how you learned Christ. For were you not told of him, were you not as Christians taught the truth as it is in Jesus— that leaving your former way of life, you must lay aside that old human nature which, deluded by its lusts, is sinking towards death. You must be made new in mind and in spirit, and put on the new nature of God's creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth.

5. The adjacent context describes the works of darkness indulged in by those who lived in the Stygian blackness of the heathen world where depravity drew a sable curtain across the moral planet and plunged it into total eclipse. Whatever else may be said of these works they consisted of such secret perversions practiced under nocturnal concealment that one who was in the light dared not contaminate his lips with the bare mention of them. "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

Although it is impossible for the apostle to give the lurid details of the conduct of those "who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," he does mention the generic categories of the works of darkness. These are fornication, uncleanness and covetousness (5:3, 5). Uncleanness refers to a state of heart which is dissolute, depraved and profligate; covetousness to a state of mind filled with insatiable desire. While all of these seem frightening to contemplate, they become even worse when we recall that this was an expression of religion, the very manner of

worshipping the gods.

For this reason, these things were “not to be once named among you, as becometh saints” (5:3). The saints were not to engage in filthy or suggestive conversation, foolish talking or low ribald jesting, about the sex deviates and their vices for this was not befitting or proper for those who had been delivered into the light. Instead, they were to substitute the giving of thanks for the fact that “God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (2:4, 5). They must never be deceived with vain words or shallow arguments “for because of these things (the works of darkness) cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

The opposite to the “unfruitful works of darkness” (5:11) is the “fruit of the Spirit” (5:9). Just as the former is portrayed in a threefold aspect of fornication, impurity and greed; so the latter demonstrates itself in the threefold virtues of “goodness and righteousness and truth.” One product is unfruitful; the other is fruitful for our growth and development.

6. The tenor of God’s revelation shows the nature of the darkness and its works. The universe of intelligent beings is divided into two great domains. One is the power of darkness (Col. 1:13); the other the kingdom of light. Over the first, Satan presides as the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air. Allied with him are his angels, the demonic forces, the principalities and powers who are “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (6:12). Opposed to these fiendish forces with their great army of depraved human beings, are the armies of righteousness. At their head is the Son of God, and with him are the holy angels. At his side and opposed to all wickedness are the men and women who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of light— those who acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus over their lives.

These have not yet reached perfection, but press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of them. They are reaching out for that which lies ahead. They are pressing toward the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus. They all make mistakes, they are all imperfect, and none of them have reached their goal. But the mistakes they make, they make in Christ. They are imperfect in Christ. They are not in the darkness nor of the darkness. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness" (1 Thess. 5:4).

It is a consideration of all of these factors which makes me realize how tragically many of the brethren err in our day in their application of such passages. Before me as I write are two journals edited by members of the "Churches of Christ." One of these champions the cause of those who make a test of fellowship out of the number of containers used in the distribution of the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. A writer urges the members of the faction, when traveling, not to "attend worship" with a "cups church" as he so quaintly and singularly refers to those who use individual containers. His advice is that it would be better to remain in the solitude of a hotel room on the Lord's Day and read the Bible alone, than to compromise "the truth" and meet with "a disloyal and sectarian group," who have departed from "the pattern." He closes with the stern admonition, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them." Thus the word of God is invoked to bless the partisan counsel.

The other paper is several years old. A subscriber raises a question to the editor. The reader is perturbed about a situation which occurred during his vacation. Due to difficulty with his automobile he found himself stranded in a certain city in the northern part of the United States on the Lord's Day. Intensive investigation revealed there was no "loyal church" meeting in the area, but there was "a group calling themselves Church of Christ which used the instrument." The brother and wife attended but with some misgivings. They ate of the Lord's

Supper when it was passed around. The group was so kind and friendly and exhibited such hospitality that the visitors from the south found it difficult to understand why they could not “see the truth as we do.” They expressed the hope that one of “our preachers” might go and “convert them and set them right.” But the brother wanted to know if they had sinned in worshipping with them as they did.

The editor advised that they had sinned in going but he did not think they ought to “go forward and acknowledge it” and ask forgiveness back home where the brother was a deacon, as this might upset some of the weaker members. He suggested that it would be satisfactory if they would repent in private and ask God to forgive them “for compromising and endorsing evil by their presence,” but he warned them that God might not overlook their error if they did it a second time. His closing remarks were very significant, “We cannot be too careful about our association, because we are distinctly told to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them.”

My memory is haunted by these two papers. I cannot eradicate them from mind. Both claim to represent the spirit of the restoration movement yet both are diametrically opposed to it. Both contend they are faithful to Jesus yet the unloving spirit exhibited toward brethren is the very opposite of the attitude of Jesus. Both boast that they are true to the word of God yet both are guilty of lifting the same passage and warping and wresting it to build a factional barrier higher and wider. I find myself pondering how Satan could so stealthily worm his way into a movement and cunningly deflect it from its original ideal so that it becomes a source of the very division it started out to remedy. By what diabolical alchemy in reverse has Belial converted all of our fine gold to dross, making us love what we should hate and hate what we should love?

I deny that this modern Babel with its confusion of

tongues, which we have built upon the shattered ruin of the restoration movement is pleasing unto God. The revelation from heaven is not responsible for the jumbled mess which has gone into a legalistic labyrinth to discourage the devout and stifle the spirit of the saints. How long will we continue to lift up discordant voices shouting “Lo, here!” or “Lo, there!” How long shall we squat behind our factional barricades and breast-works and bomb our brethren with accusations of “Liberal,” “Anti,” “Digressive,” and “Apostate.” Can we convert thinking men and women with such a farrago of chaotic claims? If not, are we willing to settle for only unthinking partisan proselytes who find refuge for their discontent and parochialism in our dogmatism and bitter denunciation of all but our arrogant selves?

Is it not time that we still the seething ferment of sectarianism in our own ranks before we are engulfed. Can we longer afford the luxury of division over a millennial position, or over cups, classes and colleges, when the whole world totters on the brink of destruction? Shall we continue to disown and denounce our brethren, rending ourselves into rival ranks, when it will take all that all of us can supply to survive the dread holocaust which licks out fiery tongues to devour all of us? How long can we indulge the insane tendency to confuse pandemonium with paradise and still survive? Do we not tempt God with our elevation of trifles and our denigration of timeless truths which alone can afford solid ground for eternity?

Let men of integrity in every party among us examine anew every scripture which has been used to foster and foment division. Why should we perpetuate the feuds of our fathers and slash each other with traditional interpretations forged in the heat of passion and hammered out on the anvil of debate? Have we learned nothing in a hundred years except how to gather new fuel to keep flames crackling under a witch’s cauldron of steaming hate? Are we to be the only people in the twentieth century who refuse to sit down at the council table to explore avenues leading to oneness?

Let men of courage move back and forth across our fanatical patchwork of party fences, ignoring the threats of their own factional custodians and the challenges of the self-appointed sentinels who guard the sacred portals of rival claims staked out on the kingdom commons. Why should a free man in Christ be told by anyone else where he may attend, to whom he may listen, and how he shall participate in services with his other brethren? Did Jesus die to free us from sin only to place us in durance vile and under slavery to men who will regulate our movements and chain us behind party doors which will swing only in one direction?

Let men of daring arrange conferences with dissenting brethren in every community where all may meet as equals in failure to keep the peace and none may come in the arrogance of self-righteousness to bluster and boast as if they held a special commission from the king to browbeat and deride His other subjects. The sands are fast trickling from the upper glass. We cannot afford to tarry much longer. Too long already we have held ourselves aloof from the other children of our Father. Now is the time to build bridges instead of barriers, to span chasms instead of to plan schisms.

I pledge myself to lend my meager influence to the cause of unity wherever I can serve any of my brethren. Regardless of the party or faction with which they may be affiliated, if I can do them good and not harm, I will go at their invitation. I will share with them what I have learned, and with them I shall share in what they have learned. With my allegiance given to the Lord of the whole church, the Shepherd of all the sheep, and the Head of the whole body, I will belong to all only because I belong to Him, even while because I belong to Him I shall belong to none of them exclusively. I would be afraid to belong to any but I am glad to belong to all! I have steadfastly decreed in my own heart that I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Here I stand!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1966)

Volume 28

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The Conflict of the Ages

Mission Messenger (January 1966)

Volume 28

[Abstract]

There are two great forces in conflict with each other in the moral universe. Because of their nature they are referred to as the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. And, also because of their nature, they will be locked in battle until the utter conquest and defeat of one or the other. Every intelligent being in the universe is directly connected with the strife, voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously, and there will be no cessation of hostilities to pick up the wounded or bury the dead.

This warfare did not begin on earth, but in heaven. It began before the creation of this world which we inhabit. It originated in insurrection and revolt motivated by pride— pride of such magnitude that it challenged the very prerogatives of God. It was precipitated by the one who came to be known as the Slanderer. Those who were seduced by him to regard God as their enemy fought and struggled bitterly for control, but the Messengers who remained loyal to God under the leadership of Michael vanquished them utterly and expelled them from the celestial realm.

When the earth was created to be the abode of man, made in the image of God, the Adversary, who pre-empted the sphere called Atmos, and became “the commander of the spiritual powers of the air” (Eph. 2:2), directed his attack upon man as a

means of wreaking vengeance upon God. That this was an exhibition of diabolical cunning is evident when one takes into account the nature, state and purpose of man at the time he was created.

Man was at the apex of God's ascending scale insofar as material creation is concerned. All that preceded was designed and executed with a view to his coming, and he was made so as to use it all for his advancement and enjoyment. He was the bridge between that which was wholly material and that which was wholly spiritual. His body was made out of the elements of the earth and was a product of the womb of *terra firma*, but his intellect and intelligence linked him with the divine. Thus he could hold communion with the visible forms of nature as well as with God. He was made to know happiness, and to experience joy in everything God made and in the God who made everything.

His condition made him ruler, by divine appointment, over everything which God created of a material nature. "Yet thou hast made him a little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the work of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:5-9).

It is true that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," but it is equally true that man was granted conditional title to it, and was the lord of all he surveyed. Inasmuch as the earth was made for man, and not man for the earth, when man found happiness, joy and satisfaction in the things made for his special enjoyment and gazed with thankfulness and admiration upon the Creator who provided them, God was glorified, and the divine purpose justified as pertained to material creation.

The purpose of man was to glorify God and he was to do this spontaneously, naturally and unaffectedly. His very association with the blessings provided was simply a part of his communion with the Creator. As he shared in their beauty, utility and grace, in their pristine purity, he was made a partaker with Him who had formed them and made them part of a great system, the unity of which required a divine intellect to grasp, and therefore, a divine power to create. No one has the power to produce what he has not the power to conceive of.

It is obvious that any spirit moved by malevolent or ulterior motives could best strike at God in the material universe by influencing man to commit such action as would prove him unworthy of the divine trust reposed in him and topple him from his exalted state. The possibility of such incitation was in man because of the nature of God as expressed in or impressed on the nature of man. It is not for us to question why man was not made a great deal lower than God, although we realize this would have limited his communion with God. If we spoke in purely human terms we would say that God “took a chance” in making man a little less than Himself. In doing this it was necessary to make him a free and responsible being, and to be either he had to be given the most awesome prerogative in the whole universe— the right of choice.

One does not possess the right of choice at all who is not free to make an adverse decision, so man was constitutionally susceptible of happiness and of misery. To be otherwise would have made him not only less than God, but also essentially less than man. As a human being with the right of choice, if he glorified God by willing subservience and obedience, the divine will had to be expressed and in such a manner that man would glorify God by choice. This required the enunciation of a principle or law which could serve as a test of willingness.

Nature of the Test

The precept proposed by God in the infancy of the human family was eminently designed to serve the purpose for which it was intended. It was simple, so that there could be no possible misunderstanding occasioning sin by imbecility; it was single rather than complex, since it was to be a test of the will and not of the function of the reasoning capacity. It was stated clearly and objectively, and the penalty was included therein, so that the penalty became an actual part of the choice and no ground was left for complaint that it was by caprice, an unthinkable thing with reference to God, and a thing which only the Slanderer is capable of asserting as an accusation against the Almighty.

That the precept was a positive, rather than a moral one, is obvious to all who are capable of distinguishing the difference, and that it could not have served its purpose if it had been the latter is equally self-evident to the thoughtful and discerning. In this lay the greatest opportunity for the Enemy and he moved with sagacity to the attack. He first denied the penalty. "You will not die." Then he proceeded to appeal to the inner urge of all mankind, to attain unto knowledge without limitation, to burst all intellectual bonds and restraints, to probe all of the mysteries of the universe until nothing is mystery, in short, to be like God, which in the final analysis is to be God.

This is not to say that the primeval pair understood all of this, nor that they could define the impulses and incentives which drove them almost relentlessly on, but to the woman the tempter quickly promised, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The result is known to all of our readers and requires no particular analysis here. Suffice it to say that for the first time in a human being, lust conceived and the period of gestation was short until sin was produced as a progeny. The animal man triumphed over the spiritual and the glory departed. The long and unbroken caravan of death began that has deposited many more in the earth than now walk upon its surface. All of us tread upon the dust of our sires back to Adam,

“the son of God.”

Man was thus thrust into the unceasing conflict of the ages, both as a participant and a pawn. Not a rational being in the universe is exempt from the effect of this war. As respects the regions inhabited by such beings, there are three— the celestial, the terrestrial and the infernal. The first is inhabited by the Father, Son and all of the holy angels or messengers. The last is invested with the Adversary and all of his angels, or messengers, the demons. The angels of Satan, having been thrown out of the celestial realm because of rebellion share the insensate fury of their leader against all that is heavenly.

The hierarchical distinctions of angelic hosts are retained by those who have fallen as well as by the holy messengers. Thus we have principalities, powers, mights and dominions, signifying the area of control in the cosmic forces. These are all supernatural distinctions and refer to those intelligent entities under direction of supernatural leadership. Since these constitute the unseen (by human vision) fighting force against the army of righteousness their subjection and conquest had to be included in the purpose of God to vindicate His right to govern the universe which He created.

Purpose of the Cross

He determined to accomplish his design by entry into the world of mankind in the person of a Son, reversing the process which obtained at creation as regards Adam, the son of God. Then, one who was first fleshly took upon him the inner nature of the divine; now one who was first divine took upon him the outer nature of man. This was essential in order that the struggle of the ages be fought upon that field which the Adversary had chosen, and that man be ransomed from the power of sin in the very state where he had been taken captive. Although, He had previously existed as the Logos, and joined in the inception of

the material universe as a creative personality, the Son entered the world by the process of natural birth after a supernatural begetting.

During his sojourn on earth he became thoroughly capable, by experience, of sympathizing with our weaknesses, being “one who because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way, only without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). But he never lost sight of his mission and of the cosmic forces which constituted the real threat to God’s sovereignty. And he recognized that the cross was the only means of ultimate conquest. This explains his statement to his disciples, “I shall not talk much longer with you, for the Prince of this world approaches. He has no rights over me; but the world must be shown that I love the Father, and do exactly as he commands; so up, let us go forward” (John 14:30, 31).

There is every possibility that we may seriously underestimate the real struggle of the cross. We are accustomed to think of it exclusively in relationship to ourselves. This may be natural since we have such a tremendous stake in it and our hope of life is vested in it. Yet it accomplished its purpose because it was the ultimate in a power struggle of such mammoth perspective as to challenge the highest peak of human thought and reason. It was the means by which creative intelligence asserted the absolute right of sovereignty over that which was created, and that which was eternal and unmade demonstrated that all which was made, whether tangible or intangible, must be forever subservient. The cross marked more than the crossroads of history, for history has to do with the past, with that which has happened. Instead it is the crux of destiny and it is just as meaningful today as it was when erected at “the place of the skull.” The cross is as imperishable as the victory it achieved. It is not a monument. It is a living symbol and men are still being crucified upon it daily.

The right of the Son by virtue of his creative power is

nowhere more clearly stated than in the Colossian letter (1:15-19). "He is the image of the invisible God: his is the primacy over all created things. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible, but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities and powers: the whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything, and all things are held together in him. He is, moreover, the head of the body, the church. He is its origin, the first to return from the dead, to be in all things alone supreme. For in him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell."

The key to this passage is found in the two phrases— "his is the primacy over all" and "in all things alone supreme." The ever present danger is that in the sanctuary of our hearts we shall attempt to enshrine something else as his equal. His unwitting enemies may do this with governments, powers or structures. His friends may unwittingly do it with angels, saints or the church. But all of these are creations and when they are used to divide our loyalty, they serve the cause of the Adversary. "All things alone supreme"— this forever precludes a diadem placed upon the head of any created organism or organization.

This is not simply a modern problem. "You are not to be disqualified by the decision of people who go in for self-mortification and angel-worship, and try to enter into some vision of their own. Such people, bursting with the futile conceit of worldly minds, lose hold upon the Head; yet it is from the Head that the whole body, with all its joints and ligaments, receives its supplies, and thus knit together grows according to God's design." God's purpose is not served either by exalting angels, which are invisible, to a place of adoration; nor by flagellation or mortification of the human body, which is visible, in an attempt to make devotion to Jesus appear greater. Neither can we serve him by a mistaken concept of the church in which we attribute our salvation to it. The church, like any other creation, cannot save, but must be saved!

The Cosmic Powers

But we must revert to our original theme and the conquest of the Son over the invisible forces of the universe. Here we have positive testimony as to the power of the cross. “On that cross he discarded the cosmic powers and authorities like a garment; he made a public spectacle of them and led them as captives in a triumphant procession” (Col. 2:15). This is a dramatic picture drawn from the ancient custom of the conquering general who returns home from the war victorious, to enter the gates of the city at the head of his army, trailed by slaves bearing the fruits of victory, and followed in turn by the dejected captives. So the Son when he returned to the city where the throne is located made a public spectacle of the cosmic powers. He demonstrated his ability to throw them off like one would slip out of a garment no longer needed.

This does not mean the annihilation of these principalities and powers by the cross, but rather their subjugation. They have been brought under the authority of Christ. We must still face them in the war of the ages but in Christ we are assured of victory. “Be on your guard; do not let your minds be captured by hollow and delusive speculations, based on traditions of man-made teaching and centered on the elemental spirits of the world and not on Christ. For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied, and in him you have been brought to completion. Every power and authority in the universe is subject to him as Head” (Col. 2:9, 10). The war for the minds of men continues and we are in danger of being captivated. There are still delusive speculations, there are still traditions of man-made teaching. These are the effective weapons to capture and enslave.

We have available unto us in Christ the same transcendent power which raised him from the dead, the power of the unconquerable life. Our problem is lack of inner illumination. We do not envision what is ours. We feel frustrated and often

defeated. We battle on as if we were committed simply to a holding action until death. We think in terms of a battle unto death instead of a victory over it. The enemy has deluded our hearts and befogged our vision until we expend our energies in futile skirmishes and waste our ammunition upon trivia.

“I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all government and authority, all power and dominion, and any title of sovereignty that can be named, not only in this age, but in the age to come” (Eph. 1:18-21).

The Adversary has deluded us with a clever strategem by confusing us as to the identity of our real foes. We congratulate ourselves when we think we have vanquished those who are not enemies at all. Through superior knowledge or extra intellectual effort we may put our less informed fellows to flight and think we have won a great victory but this may be wholly unrelated to the real warfare. The weapons and armor provided may not be adapted to such petty conflict at all. “Finally then, find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power. Put on all the armor which God provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil. For our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. Therefore, take up God’s armor, then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand” (Eph. 6:10-13). Devices of the devil— cosmic powers— forces of evil— these can never be overcome by natural power unaided. They require superhuman assistance, the armor which God provides.

Wiles and Devices

The apostle here mentions the devices of the devil. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 he refers to the wiles of the devil. "For Satan must not be allowed to get the better of us; we know his wiles all too well." There is a slight difference in the implication of the two terms, but both are associated with the master strategy by which he accomplishes his destructive ends. The word "wiles" has to do with the tricks or stratagems employed to deceive; the word "devices" has to do with the methods employed to accomplish the ulterior motive. The master design of the evil one is to thwart the will of God and to keep it from being regnant in our lives and on earth.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Satan is deeply interested in keeping this prayer from being answered. The reason is obvious. When he led the revolt in heaven he sought to impose his will as equal with the will of God. The will of God triumphed. "The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left them in heaven" (Revelation 12:8). If the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven there will be no foothold left for the devil on earth. Every aim of Satan is directed toward keeping the will of God from being translated into reality on earth.

It will be seen at once that the most direct means of offsetting the will of God would be to convince man that God does not exist, or to lead him to accept the theory that there is no personal being who may be called God. The will is associated with a being who is personal and intelligent. It must be said to the credit of man that he is not easily convinced that there is no God. Being a rational personality himself, and possessed of creative intelligence, he cannot readily account for the universe of which he is a part on any other basis. Even Voltaire, who decried supernaturalism and denied formal religious faith was forced to say, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to

invent him, but all nature cries out to us that he does exist.”

For this reason the devil does not make a direct frontal attack upon the existence of God. This would encourage too much reaction and defensiveness. Instead, he plants a doubt of his own existence. He seeks to become self-effacing, to obliterate himself. His purpose is achieved by making the world believe that man is somebody but there is nobody who is Satan. Evil is to be accounted for by assuming that it is merely a principle and not the machination of a principal. Man can dismiss his sins much more easily and with less twinging of the conscience if he can regard them as proceeding from an inner nature which he cannot help possessing and for which he does not therefore feel directly accountable.

The ultimate purpose in spreading the propaganda that he is non-existent is to lead man to a denial of the existence of God, or certainly to denial of the relevance of the word of God. If there is no enemy there can be no war, if there is no war weapons are unnecessary. A shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one is a ridiculous encumbrance with which to be burdened if there is no evil one and if the only fiery darts are social inequities and personal quirks of temperament. It would be silly for one to carry a sword around if there existed no enemy on earth, and since the sword of the Spirit is said to be the word of God, it follows that the word of God is meaningless to those who have learned that Satan is a purely mythological character, and a creation of superstitious minds.

The Success of Satan

It is the intellectual mind which Satan is especially anxious to mislead. There are two reasons for this. The policy of a people, if planned at all, will generally be planned by the intellectuals. These will determine what the popular philosophy of the moment will be and many others will follow in the wake of

a few respected leaders. Nothing is more conducive to the success of the tempter than the penchant of the masses for hero worship. Too, there is the ease with which the intellectual mind may be deceived in the realm of philosophy. This is proven by the numerous schools of thought which have succeeded each other in almost dreary monotony, and each of which was considered the ultimate in the days when it flourished. The natural pride associated with “the wisdom of this passing age” acts as a blind to shut out contradictory facts and betrays those who elevate past superstition into what is as bad, present fads and vagaries.

The greatest proof that the devil exists and that he has been uncommonly successful is seen in the fact that the great majority of intellectuals in our day do not believe that he is real. One who affirms that evil, like righteousness, originates with a personality outside of man himself is regarded as being ignorant and devoid of real mental and rational acumen. Certainly Satan has employed the art of camouflage and incognito with tremendous effect. Like a specter or wraith he has blended into the fog which he has created until men no longer suspect his presence or admit his reality. This will account for the foggy thinking about self, sin and Satan in our generation.

Of course the cause of Satan will be served as well if by direct approach men can be persuaded to deny the existence of God, for those who do so will also deny the existence of Satan. There can be no opposite to that which has no being. If there is no heaven, there will be no hell; if there is no such thing as morality, there can be no immorality. This course is not so easy, however, because man’s heart is so tuned as to yearn for God and to desire truth, and the creativity of God is everywhere manifested in the universe. “The invisible traits of him are clearly seen in the creation, being understood by the things that are.”

It is less trouble to sow the seeds of doubt and confusion

than to plant the seeds of absolute denial or rejection. Man finds it easier to be skeptical than to be atheistic. In an age which has been conditioned to think that all is relative, even in the moral and spiritual realm, there is a hesitancy to be positive about anything. We should not be surprised that instead of blatant atheism we are rather treated to theorizing which questions accepted means and methods of conveying the idea of God, and in the upheaval of the mind concerning the means, God himself is tossed out. If we are devoid of the terms for explaining our concept of a personal God we shall soon be without the concept altogether. Our contemporary predicament is not so much one of base denial as it is of denial of a base from which to reason.

The willingness of modern man to become entangled in the skeins of sophisticated mental meanderings is found in the readiness with which the theological world has hailed as deliverers those who, under the guise of rescuing us from outmoded and invalidated expressions, have left the world suspended in mid-air by a rope which is not attached to anything above. Recently, as an example, a volume by a Bishop in the Anglican party, became a runaway best seller, translated into nine different languages. The author, who admitted to having been powerfully influenced by the German theologians—Tillich, Bonhoeffer and Bultmann—attacked the idea of a God “up there” or “out there.” Actually, however, his thesis amounted to denial of a personal God anywhere. The God “down here” or “in here” as opposed to the God “up there” or “out there” was simply “the ground of being,” or some other impersonal principle.

We need to question whether such men have simply devised a way of explaining God to this generation, or have generated a method of explaining God away. It is one thing to make the language of the Bible *live* for our day but it is a wholly different thing to *kill* God off in the process. However, our objection is not to men expressing themselves as to the nature or existence of God even in denial of the truth of the divine person.

We deplore them doing so while parading as Christian, or intimating that their rationalizations constitute a justifiable alternative to revealed faith for Christians. It is not our intention to advocate the kind of blind censorship which denies a man the right to state his views regardless of how divergent they may be from our own. After all, as A. Leonard Griffith, Minister of City Temple, London, said about the bishop who wrote the book, “What really matters in this view is not what the Bishop thinks about God, but what God thinks of the Bishop.”

We can respect an honest atheist, agnostic or skeptic, in the sense in which we here use the word “honest,” nor do we deny there are such. But it is a wholly different thing for one who parades as a Christian, or as a Christian teacher, to deny the very foundation of the Christian concept. Obviously the word “Christian” is used so loosely in our day that like charity it covers a multitude of sins, but it cannot be divorced from Christ, for to eliminate “Christ” from “Christian” would be to destroy the very term. Regardless of what else may be involved, the very minimum expected of a Christian is that he possess the “Christ-attitude” and certainly this must begin with the proper attitude toward God.

Jesus and God

It is doubtful that any student of the new testament scriptures would deny that Jesus of Nazareth regarded God as a personal being, and as his Father. Even those who have popularized the term “myth” in a peculiar sense to describe the verbal cloak in which the Message is clothed, are forced to admit that this is so. It follows then that one who is a Christian in the real significance of the term, a designation for a disciple of Christ, must reflect the concepts and teaching of his Master. A disciple is a learner or student, but he is more than a mere student. He is also an adopter and follower of what he is taught. “If you continue in my words then are you my disciples indeed.”

To find what a Christian should believe about God or Satan, we need only to find out what Jesus taught about them. It is unthinkable that we should claim to be disciples while advocating the opposite of what Christ taught. Such a course would negate the very essence of discipleship, which is actually *followership*. Jesus taught that God was a personal being by description of His nature, attributes and functions. He also taught the same truth by identification and communication with the Father.

As to identification with God in purpose, he said, "If you knew me, you would know my Father too . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you: it is the Father who dwells in me, doing his own work . . . And the word you hear is not mine: it is the word of the Father who sent me." Again, "It is his will that all should pay the same honor to the Son as to the Father. To deny honor to the Son is to deny honor to the Father who sent him." As to communication with God, he declared, "I will ask the Father" (John 14:16), and "I have prayed to the Father." In a recorded prayer he said, "I came from thee," and, "Now I am coming to thee." This is the language used by one person in addressing another. On no other basis can it have any validity or make a semblance of sense.

It will be noted that when Jesus prayed "he looked up to heaven" (John 17:1) He said, "No one went up into heaven except the one who came down from heaven" (John 3:13). He declared, "You shall see heaven wide open, and God's angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). At his ascension he testified that he was "taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:11). The apostle says, "He who descended is no other than he who ascended far above all heavens, so that he might fill the universe" (Ephesians 4:10). This language is now made the butt of attack, and even of some ridicule. We are told that the idea of a "three-story universe" has been outgrown in the Space Age.

It is considered absurd to speak of God as “up there” or “out there,” and such language in the Bible is considered as myth. It is merely the feeble attempt of a primitive people to give form to their superstitions based upon ignorance of the universe, we are told. But the strange thing is that when modern sophisticates seek to “demythologize” the language, they can do no better in portraying the state of God in relation to earth and man. In their desperate attempt to correct the wording they terminate by eliminating God, or, what is worse, by reducing God to some innate principle or power which makes man end up in the insufferable egotism of worshiping himself.

But we are constantly told that we must “face up” to every assault made upon the Christian concept and take time out to fully investigate and reply to every philosophic thrust against it. To those who regard the Way as being simply another “religion” in a field of comparative religions, or another philosophic attempt to explain life, this is true. But to those who respect it as the revelation of a divine mind to direct our steps until the ultimate purpose is attained this does not appear at all necessary. One whose house is conceived of as being built upon a rock foundation hardly deems it essential to go about swatting every termite which mistakenly gnaws away at it. This is especially true when the yard is full of dead termites from the past which have killed themselves in prosecuting the same attempt.

It is argued that maintenance of personal integrity demands that we explore every critical attack to the fullest before we make any definite commitment. This we deny, because it makes no distinction between credulity and faith, and assumes that the latter is not a valid principle or premise upon which to postulate one’s hope. Yet those who demand that we hear their claims do so because they have faith in them, and thus demonstrate that man cannot choose whether he will believe or not, but only what or whom he will believe. In the final analysis, both scientists and theologians, and common folk like myself

who are neither, must end up walking by faith. Where their walk will take them depends upon the direction of their faith.

I have examined the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. I am willing to stake my life upon their verity and veracity. No one can prove at this late date that His claims are false without proving that he was a charlatan and an impostor. When I behold men who affirm the moral superiority of his personal life and teaching, and urge it as the standard by which to judge themselves and others, while asserting that he was a product of his times, hampered and hindered by a provincial outlook, my compassion is for the critics even as my faith is in the Christ. It is observable that our own day, with all of its tremendous potential, has not produced another Jesus, our critics themselves being judges. On what grounds can we conclude that the narrow and restricted age of the first century fashioned Jesus out of its fabric? It takes more faith than I am capable of generating to believe that one who was merely a son of man could so develop. It is much easier, within the limitations of my faith, to account for Jesus as the Son of God.

And because I acknowledge Jesus as Lord of my life, I accept what he taught about the personality of God and Satan. I have enlisted in the battle of the ages under the leadership of the captain of my salvation. I expect to battle the foe until the convulsion of death relaxes my grip upon the sword of the Spirit and I fall headlong upon the shield of faith. I am committed to the faith that Jesus is real. In the strength of that commitment I shall do my best to summon the whole world to kneel before him and acknowledge his sovereignty over all. I seek to go where he leads without fear. He said, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; where I am, my servant will be."

Is God Dead?

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[Abstract]

We live in a time which is designated by some as “the post-Christian age.” Certain philosophers have declared that God is dead, and certain clergymen have rushed in to conduct a funeral service for the deceased. Many who are highly educated hesitate to speak of faith in a living God for fear they will be thought to be traitors to the intellectual cause. They are victims of a fright psychosis brought on by reading such sophisticated works as *Religion Without Revelation*, by Julian Huxley, who wrote:

It will soon be as impossible for an intelligent, educated man or woman to believe in a god as it is now to believe that the earth is flat, that flies can be spontaneously generated, that disease is a divine punishment, or that death is always due to witchcraft. Gods will doubtless survive, sometimes under the protection of vested interests, or in the shelter of lazy minds, or as puppets used by politicians, or as refuges for unhappy and ignorant souls.

Perhaps it will be thought a little presumptuous for one who cannot qualify as either a philosopher, theologian, or intellectual, to enter the arena of contemporary thought and assert a firm conviction that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. On the other hand, the testimony of one of the common people like myself, may well be heard, if for no other reason than that we constitute a majority. Abraham

Lincoln declared, "God must have loved the common people because he made so many of them." Perhaps their recognition of this fact makes it easy for them to reciprocate his love.

I suspect that there is but one prime reason for believing in God and that all others are but facets of this one. However, we have been trained to require a multiplicity of proofs regardless of their connective relationship. Due to lack of space I will confine my own reasons to five which I shall refer to under the terms— purpose, power, plan, putative and personal. These are not in order of importance for in dealing with the infinite there is no such arrangement.

1. *Purpose.* We readily admit that no one can demonstrate that God is by use of syllogism or logic. God cannot be examined in the laboratory or under the microscope. He cannot be seen in the sky nor observed in space. Yet the evidence by which we judge ourselves and prove our own existence— a thing which has also been questioned by certain philosophers— is all about us. That which causes us to have faith in our own existence will lead to faith in the existence of God. Sir Isaac Newton declared, "The whole diversity of created things could have its origin only in the ideas and will of a necessarily Existing Being."

This is the equivalent of saying that a complex and inter-related universe could not be the product of chance but had to originate with will, and the will had to precede the creation and formulate it. If we can determine the ultimate in demonstration of mental power and show that the world of which we are a part could logically have no existence apart from it, we have by logic postulated the absolute necessity for a mind preceding creation and superior to it. This may be as far as we can go, but it is far enough, unless some wild theorist insists upon a logical demonstration of that which underlies all logic. In this event we need only to demand that he demonstrate by his accepted criteria his own existence, and refuse to reason with him until he does, on the ground that we may be seeking to convince one who

does not exist.

We agree with W. H. Fitchett that, "The highest expression of mind is to take a number of unconscious, unrelated physical things, and set them in relations which make them the channel of a meaning of which they are unconscious, the servants of an intelligent purpose of which they know nothing." There are twenty-six letters in our alphabet. Each of these is a symbol of a sound. They are powerless to combine themselves in such a manner as to create a simple sentence. These letters appear on children's blocks and if I walk into a room and see the blocks so arranged in a line that a sentence is constructed I know that someone has arranged them. I know that the type in a printing shop did not fall into such chance sequence as to spell out the words of "A Psalm of Life." It is easy for me to credit the creativity of the genius of Longfellow. The poem was produced out of the purpose governing an intellect. By the same token I must acknowledge that the intricate complex, but synchronized universe, grew out of an intelligent purpose.

2. *Power.* There are two manifestations of power or force connected with our universe. One is the power by which it originated, the other the power by which it is perpetuated. The power by which a thing comes into existence must exist prior to that which it originates. In view of the axiom, "Out of nothing, nothing comes," it is apparent that before the material originated there had to exist that which was immaterial and eternal. If it be affirmed that the power is natural to the material, we respond that power is not self-generating, and we ask from whence nature was invested with this power, and what power outside of nature threw the switch, or triggered the spark which caused blind, insensate matter to begin to function in co-ordination.

We accept by faith the atomic constituency of the material universe. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God in such a manner that the things which we

see are constructed from that which is in itself invisible.” The atomic universe is a vast reservoir of energy. Energy when unconfined dissipates itself and becomes powerless or ineffective. This is true of steam which drives a piston through a cylinder but has no potency when not confined. The power or substance which confines energy must be greater than the energy confined. If the atomic universe is a mass of energy the power which has confined this to the atom must have existed prior to atomic formation and was greater than the combined power of the material universe. To put it in another fashion, the material universe is subject to universal power which is superior to all that constitutes the material. That which we refer to as “the law of atomic energy” or “the first and second law of thermodynamics” is but an application of this power in a sustaining or regulative degree, for laws indicate intelligent application of that to which they are related and which they govern.

3. *Plan.* A universe so constructed as the one of which we are part could never have originated except by application of intelligent design coupled with the necessary power to produce the design and start it operating in pre-determined harmony and synchronization. It was William Paley, who in 1794 published a memorable work entitled, “Evidence of Christianity,” who first used a watch to illustrate creative design. It was his contention that anyone observing such a mechanism lying in the road would immediately conclude that it had an intelligent maker.

Modernistic thinkers who deny the personality of God refer to this as a remote “watchmaker relationship.” But A. Cressy Morrison, in his book, “Seven Reasons Why A Scientist Believes in God,” begins by relating the story of Paley, and offers “Our Unique World” as the first of his reasons for believing in God. Pointing out how the slightest variation in the planetary system would render life impossible, he cites case after case in point. He concludes the chapter by saying, “All these facts about the universe could not be the result of chance. The laws of

mathematics unerringly prove that they are the design of a Supreme Intelligence.” The expression “unerringly prove” is a strong one indeed.

There are other things to which Morrison does not refer that are as valid. One is the control of the affinity and unity of elementary material substances. For instance, water is essential to preservation of all life. It is composed of two elements combined in the ratio of two parts of hydrogen to one of oxygen. An invisible manifestation of controlling power has caused these two elements to separate from all others and merge in this exact mathematical proportion. Hydrogen has a greater affinity for chlorine than for oxygen, yet this power prohibits this natural affinity and causes oxygen to combine with hydrogen in the only proportion in which the two will combine naturally. If two parts of hydrogen compounded with two parts of oxygen the result would be hydrogen peroxide and all life would terminate at once.

It will serve but little purpose to multiply such illustrations. One can look at his own body and observe such synchronization as will convince the careful student that man is “fearfully and wonderfully made”— and he is made! The light would avail nothing without the eye and the eye would avail nothing without light. Yet the substance and the organ are both here and the organ functions harmoniously in that state for which it was designed. As Morrison has written, “Nature undistorted appears designed to call forth that which is highest within us, and inspire us with admiration for the Supreme Intelligence which seems to have given us the gift of beauty comprehended in its completeness only by man.”

4. *Putative*. Perhaps I should tell you what I mean by this word. It is a transliteration of the Latin *putatum*, which literally means “to reckon, to think.” It now refers to that which is commonly thought or deemed, that which is generally supposed or reputed to be so. There is nothing conclusive in the form of

“proof” to be deduced from this as to the existence of God but our readers must remember that we are not necessarily attempting to prove this. Instead, we are merely giving a few of the many reasons for our own personal faith in God. That which influences and carries weight with us may not so affect another.

Man knows a universal need of God. So acute is this that it is often actually referred to as hunger and thirst. A means has been provided for every other need of the human personality. Man knows physical craving and the prairies become veritable seas of waving yellow grain. He knows thirst and copious streams of crystal clear water burst forth from hillsides to cascade into the valleys below. He knows desire for intimacy of companionship and marriage provides for sexual satisfaction. Is the deep need for relationship with a power outside and above ourselves the only want for which no provision is made? If so, from whence came this overwhelming anxiety for communion with the Eternal?

The recognition of and reverence for divine power is as comprehensive in time and space as the history and sweep of mankind. It is unlimited by social and intellectual differences. The aborigine looks up with the same innate longing as the sophisticate. Man deems there is a God because the demands of nature and reason cry out there must be a God. A world without a God is as incomplete as a world would be in which no food has been provided. It is so because it has to be so. Like gravity, one may not be able to prove it by observation, sight or study, but this in no wise affects the reality of it. We dare not assume that a thing is not real until man can prove it is real, for much of what we now know as reality could have had no prior existence until men discovered means of proof. It is not lack of reality but ignorance of man which postponed the discovery of criteria by which to measure that which existed all of the time that man was seeking to discover it.

5. *Personal.* This must be in the nature of individual

testimony. I believe in God because of my personal experience with God. Centuries ago, when David was in a precarious position among his enemies, he wrote, "O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!" (Psalm 34:8). The Hebrew word for taste which is *toam* is equivalent to the Greek *geuomai*, which means "to try, test by experience." A good illustration is found in the account of the wedding feast which Jesus attended, and where he relieved the embarrassment of the host by replenishing the supply of wine. "When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine . . . he said, 'You have kept the good wine until now.'" The steward knew the wine was good because he tasted it; one knows God is good by the very same experience.

After a great many years of trusting in Christianity as a system and an organization, and placing my hope in my own good intentions and motivations, I found myself with a sense of emptiness and frustration. We were proclaiming love for our enemies while often showing contempt for our brothers; we were delivering sermons on unity at the very time we were dividing from another; we were giving learned encomiums on the Holy Spirit while often governed by the party spirit. It was like living in a world of unreality. We were caught up in a vortex of legalism and factionalism. Finally, thousands of miles from our own country, while reading the word of God one afternoon for my own strength and help, it dawned upon me that I had never really invited Jesus to come into my heart and life.

I was thoroughly familiar with the words, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open unto me, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him and he with me." These words had formed the basis of a little chorus I had taught boys and girls to sing. They had constituted the text of a sermon I had delivered scores of times with rather tremendous affect. I was accustomed to sitting down with my loved ones and eating in that precious intimacy of the table which seems to draw a family together, but I did not really experience that kind of closeness

with Jesus. Yet the promise was there that if he was invited in the experience would be as close and friendly as sitting down and eating together.

I was haunted by the fact that, search my memory as I did, I could not recall a single time when I had actually flung wide the door of my life to ask Jesus to step inside. Always I had been going into something. I had gone into the church. I had gone into the work. I had gone into the foreign field. I had been so involved with going into things, and making plans for going into more things, that I had overlooked inviting Jesus to come into my own heart and life. True I had always assumed that he was there because I thought that my going was an invitation for his coming.

I walked to the little meetinghouse with its stark furnishings and the wintry cold seeping through the aged walls. In the gray gloom, oblivious of the chill, I kneeled on the bare floor for an hour and very quietly talked to God and asked Jesus to come in and share with me. I was not emotionally upset at all. In fact, I never recall having been more calm. I knew what I wanted and I knew where to go and get it. I felt exactly as if I were talking to a good friend who been waiting for years to see me and visit with me.

Almost at once a tremendous change took place in my whole attitude. The first test, and tangible proof, took place that same evening when I talked with the brethren. Some of the things which they did as a part of their tradition had secretly irritated and disturbed me. I could not understand why they appeared so trivial to them when they seemed so important to me. Now, all of a sudden, it came to me that I was listening to them without one trace of annoyance that they differed with me. They were my brothers. They were children of my Father. They were eagerly and earnestly trying to please him. For the first time I could project myself into their place. As each one spoke I realized why he acted and reacted as he did.

I found myself wanting to share with them the truths I had discovered without worry as to whether they would accept them that night. There was a tugging in my heart to help these. It seemed unimportant that I should argue them into seeing every matter as I did. My task was to help, to minister, to serve in their needs. I experienced the love of God actually shed abroad, or poured out, by the indwelling Spirit, and that Spirit became vital, valid and vigorous in my life. Later as I tried to recall what had happened there came to me words of Jesus when James and John wanted to destroy with fire a city of the Samaritans. "You know not what spirit you are of." It is possible for men to be close to Jesus and to walk with him and not know the spirit of which they are.

I would not exchange this sense of personal closeness with the Father and the Son for all the wealth or prestige this world can bestow. The utter freedom from loneliness, even in the crowd; the all-pervading feeling of harmony and fellowship with the divine— this is the most tremendous thing that can happen to a mortal in the flesh. What a serenity of soul results from the majestic knowledge that "I am my Lord's and he is mine." Of course, I am not so foolish as to think that any other person in the world must come to know God, or will come to know God, under these same conditions or circumstances. We are all different in personality and temperament. I only say that *I know* that God is, because I know that God is within me through His Spirit. And I pray for all who do not know Him because I know what men miss when they trust to the rightness of their own concepts, the organizational structures which they project, or their own moral strength. In the midst of the turmoil and strife of this age, perhaps the one thing that most of us need is to hearken to the voice, "Be still, and know that I am God."

The One Foundation

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[Abstract]

It was a large tree and it was directly in the path of the new construction work. Obviously it had to be removed. We met with axes and mattocks to “grub it out by the roots” as the foreman phrased it. When we began digging about the base someone said that the roots reached out to form a circle in the earth of the same diameter as the branches in the air. Soon we had uncovered many of the roots and were chopping them in two, but the sturdy monarch stood unbowed, except for an occasional trembling of the giant frame. “We’ll have to cut the taproot,” said the foreman, “or it will never fall.” He was right. The supporting roots had been severed all around, but when the anchor root was cut, the tree tottered for a minute like a stricken animal and then plunged crashing to the earth.

I have long labored under the conviction that every system of religion and philosophy, true or false, has a taproot which is central to it and serves as its anchor in the soil of human hearts. As it lives and grows it develops a root system which sustains and supports it and which may be as great in scope under the surface as it appears visible above. One may lop off branches and sever secondary roots and thus weaken the system but not until the basic and fundamental principle is destroyed will the system topple. Thus the growth may be retarded and even halted temporarily, only to resume again when circumstances are favorable.

What we have said is appropriate to the Christian system. It is founded upon a fact peculiar to itself which anchors it against every stormy wind that blows. There is a network of spiritual and moral values reaching out in every direction. An attack upon these at the base may weaken the influence and temporarily halt the spread, but until that which is exclusively central to the Christian system is destroyed that system will survive. It is in our interest to ascertain what principle is basic to Christianity and determine the chances for its survival.

We can immediately eliminate certain aspects which some unthoughtedly would equate with Christianity. One of these is moral or ethical behavior. This offers support to the Christian concept, but is not centrally exclusive to it. Many philosophers have incorporated in their instructions to their disciples a high code of moral conduct and offered motives to encourage it. One is not a Christian simply because he lives a good moral life, but he lives a good moral life because he is a Christian.

Again, we may eliminate the rational element as central to Christianity. We believe that it is a definite part of it and that Christianity satisfies the emotional need, the demand of conscience for cleansing from guilt consciousness, and the cry of will for a cause greater than self to which willing surrender can be made. It is designed to appeal to thinking persons and God summons men who rebel against Him with the words, "Come, now, let us reason together," but there is a deeper anchor than man's power of rationalization, majestic as it is.

Nor may we regard miracles as the taproot of the system. We expect to show in a future issue, God willing, the relationship of the miraculous to revelation from God, and when we do we will demonstrate that the term "miracle" is used because of our human limitations. Nothing can be supernatural with God, for he is not subject to limitations of time or space and cannot be restricted by the restraints of nature. Nothing can be "super" or above the ultimate. That which is over all can have nothing over

it— or Him! Miracles may constitute a support to the claims of Christianity, and may confirm the mission of its proclaimers, but they are not basic to it. If they were there could be no Christianity without miracles, in which case miracles would cease to be supernatural at all and would become merely a natural demonstration in a Christian world.

The Initial Premise

Our task is to isolate the one great foundational anchor which separates the Christian system from every philosophy or religion in the world. I purposely omitted inserting the word “other” before either philosophy or religion, for the simple reason that when we apprehend the true nature of Christianity, we may learn that it is not simply a philosophy among other philosophies, or a religion among other religions. That which is peculiar to it may not merely set it apart from others in the same class, but may create a completely different and distinctive class to which nothing else can approach. It may not be “Exhibit A” on the top shelf of a museum case where it can be compared with other exhibits, but may be found to fit no case, and, for that matter, no museum.

As a launching pad for our orbital survey we may begin with the statement that Christianity proceeds upon the premise that at a certain juncture in the unfolding drama of human existence, God revealed himself to man. This alone serves to set the Christian system apart from many of the philosophies which preceded the Event and were still popular when it occurred. The magnificent mentality of the Greek world, in many spheres of thought had been influenced by, and in some cases obsessed with the notion that the chasm between the divine and the human was so wide and so deep that no bridge could span it. Zeno, and his disciples, the Stoics, had done their work thoroughly. Deity was considered to be so far above the realm occupied by mankind that there was no interest in or concern for men. God had no

feeling manward at all. If he could be affected by the needs or sufferings of men he then would be subject to men to the extent of concern, and to that extent, at least, could not be God. This provided a frightful fatalism which pervaded the whole area of life.

But this initial premise involves much more than revelation of the thoughts and ways of God for a specific people at a specific time in the stream of human history. It was not simply a declaration of the will of God in words adapted to man's need, and this makes it distinct from even pure Judaism. We use the word "pure" to distinguish what God declared through Moses and the prophets, with the mass of interpretations and deductions which were added to make up the body of Judaism which resulted from the forced wedding of revelation and tradition. Judaism was a revelation to men through men, and comprised a book or code of laws.

Christianity did not begin with a book but with a baby! It will be seen at once how this set it apart from many forms of Gnosticism, all of which were predicated on the thesis that all matter is inherently evil and corrupt. It could not, upon such a predication, be conceded that God could directly create the material universe, and gradually there evolved the idea that emanations from God, as Eons, proceeded farther and farther from the divine person and presence until one, as a demiurge, could be close enough to the material chaos to fashion the universe from it. There was no place in such a philosophy for a direct involvement with the universe of mankind upon the part of God.

Important Distinctions

It is important to remember that the revelation of God did not come as a system to synthesize all that was good in the philosophies of the day, or of any other day or age. It did not

salvage from Judaism that which was of abiding value, and mingle it with a distillate from Platonism, Aristotelianism and Persian Zoroastrianism, to form a way of life. Those who have been tempted to do this through the passing decades under the impression that they could best serve the true ends of Christianity have all, like the master of the synthetic, Thomas Aquinas, ended up with a distortion which as certainly perpetuates and protects the evil as it projects and propagates the good. All such attempts to harness Christianity to the human plow only succeed in curbing its freedom and breaking its true spirit. They stem from the false notion that Christianity is a way of life instead of life.

As we proceed further we must remember that Christianity differs from Judaism in that it is a revelation *of* God while the latter is a revelation *from* God. One would need to be skeptical indeed to doubt the divine wisdom which is exhibited in the order of these revelations. If it was to be a part of the divine purpose to recapture fellowship with men by a breakthrough of the flesh curtain, our innate sense of the appropriate would seem to decree the advisability of preparing the world of mankind for the event. Surely, if in our own day, when a dignitary pays a visit to an area which he has not previously graced with his presence, a great deal of exchange of thought is essential to pave the way, we can see the wisdom involved in preparing a world for the visit of its Creator. And just as we do not confuse the previous messages of protocol, nor what is said after the arrival, with the person of the dignitary himself, we must make the same sensible approach to the divine personage.

Having come thus far it becomes apparent that the central truth of Christianity involves a person and our relationship to that person. It is not a system of abstract truths arrived at by the power of logic, or by inductive or deductive reasoning. Instead, it centers around the birth, life and death of a person, for these are the facts which span the earthly existence of a personality, and since this is a divine personage there must be added one

more dimension, that of resurrection. Christianity relates to the proper identity of this person on the basis of these facts, and an acceptance freely of all the implications and responsibilities inherent in an acknowledgment of that identity, as one's own life and death are affected by them.

The Taproot Fact

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This is the taproot. This is the indispensable fact upon which the Christian system rests. In the region of Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus pointedly asked his disciples how they regarded or identified him, this was the response of Simon Peter. Jesus declared that upon this fact he would plant his community. Physical structures are built upon physical foundations, moral structures are built upon ethical codes or constitutions, and the spiritual structure of the ages is built upon the truth contained in a single proposition. It is impregnable and indestructible. The forces of death will never overpower it.

We must be careful at this point lest we mistake the nature of the foundation. In our glib reply that it was upon the confession made by Peter, we must be certain that we understand what is involved. The foundation is not the act of confession. It is not the words or formula of the confession. It was important for Peter to make the statement and impossible for him to do it without means of communication, but neither a human action, nor the means employed to implement it constitute the foundation. It was not the voicing of his faith but the faith which he voiced that is basic to our study. It was the truth, the reality, embodied in the proposition which constitutes the foundation. This was a revealed truth and not the result of human deduction or expression. "You did not learn that from mortal man, it was revealed to you by my heavenly Father" (Matt. 16:17). The truth, or reality, was a person. That person was of God, and because he was the Son of God, it was God who

laid the foundation. All that is built upon that foundation belongs to the foundation, and through that foundation, to God. This is made abundantly clear in the letter of Paul to the community of saints in Corinth. “There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself” (1 Cor. 3:11). “Surely you know that you are God’s temple, where the Spirit of God dwells” (verse 16). “So never make mere men a cause for pride. For though everything belongs to you— Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, all of them belong to you— yet you belong to Christ, and Christ to God” (verses 21-23).

Since Christianity is anchored in Christ the only way by which it can be uprooted is to first destroy Christ. That this is impossible will become evident to every person who solemnly contemplates that it was by an exercise of divine power that he was raised from the dead and given a name that is above every name, in all that is implied in that statement. Who can cut the taproot? The fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is a divine fact, divinely revealed and divinely sustained. All that is involved in Deity itself is invested in the fact of Christ. “For in him the complete being of God, by God’s own choice, came to dwell” (Col. 1:19). “For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied, and in him you have been brought to completion” (Col. 2:9, 10).

Facts and the Fact

There is a great deal of difference in the revealed fact of Christ who is the foundation and the facts revealed about Christ as a foundation. Men sometimes labor under the mistaken notion that by attacking the latter they are destroying the former. To all such the ancient human proverb is applicable— he who spits into the wind spits into his own face. This is as true of the winds of God which blow relentlessly across the universe. No cavilling about the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, the

literal resurrection, or any such thing, can ever deny the fact of Christ. Men dull their axes and blunt their weapons hacking away in vain attempts to even dent the cornerstone which was laid by God.

It is true, of course, that chopping away at these supporting roots may hinder the witness of the Christian community in a given era or period. The growth may be retarded for a time because of the confusion created but all of this is powerless to uproot what God has planted. A good example may be found in the criticism of what appears to moderns as a delinquency upon the part of the Christian ethic with regard to human slavery in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles. They appear not to have condemned it but simply to have regulated it. But the critical attitude stems from a lack of knowledge of both the nature of slaves and of Christianity.

Because Jesus is a historical figure and Christianity is a historical fact, it was essential that entry into the human spectrum be made at a specific time. This had to be because history is the record of persons and events within the boundaries of time. But regardless of the time of such entry, conditions politically, economically, socially and morally, will be far from ideal. Christianity is revolutionary but it does not effect its goals by direct attack upon organizations or structures as such. To simply overthrow such structures would mean their replacement by other structures subject to the same corruption. Christianity recognizes that conditions and environments not only shape men but are created by men. It reforms the men from within and reformed men alter conditions. "The kingdom of heaven does not come by observation (overt demonstration), the kingdom of God is within you."

If Jesus had organized abolition rallies during his earthly sojourn, cities would have been sacked and burnt, a course which he rejected when it was suggested by two of his more fiery followers. "You know not what spirit you are of, for the Son of

man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." This would have resulted in some men dying for him in contravention of his design to die for all men. Even if he had been successful in striking the shackles at once from the millions of abject and nameless slaves in the Roman Empire, they would have been wholly unconditioned by previous servitude to create a stable government. If society would have survived the resultant holocaust, the annals of history would have branded Jesus as a benevolent, compassionate, but misguided zealot, instead of the Savior of the world.

Yet human slavery was effectively doomed from the very day that the slaves of envy and passion nailed Jesus to the cross. The sharp nails driven into his body were to become the hypodermic needles of the world injecting a new life into the hearts of men, and transforming them from within. The blood flowing from the riven side made both slaves and masters free, for human bondage victimizes both, the buyer and the bought. The same price paid to redeem both proved that both were of equal value. The galling fetters of heart and conscience may be more cruel than chains on arms and feet. "Christ set us free to be free men" (Gal. 5:1).

The critics of the moral approach of Jesus are always betrayed by their own fears occasioned by recognition of the brevity of life and certainty of death. Most reformers, worthy as their motives may be, undo all that is noble in their approach by the fierce sense of urgency to see the fruits of their efforts during their own lifetime. They trust themselves but not their successors. They forget that "the mills of God grind slowly." Christianity is designed to be universal and timeless. Each area and each era is considered only as it relates to the whole.

Attacks made upon the miracles of Jesus can, in no sense, destroy the fact of Jesus. There is a difference between a fact and the credentials presented by one who testifies to that fact. Although the Son of God demonstrated his power by miraculous

works, he was the Son of God before them. Christianity is not based or founded upon miracles but upon the identity of the person who performed them. Miracles are signs and signs point to something— or Someone! We must never confuse the sign with the substance!

The Anointed of God

Jesus is the Christ! If this is one side of the foundation of the Christian system in all of its majesty and greatness, no field of investigation in the universe should be more challenging than the study of the implications of this foundational truth. What is involved in it which makes it so sublime and elevates it in rank above every other proposition in the universe? What does it mean to accept this proposition? To what does one give assent in so doing?

Let us first understand the meaning of the term “Christ.” John declares it is the equivalent of “Messiah.” “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (1:41). Messiah from the Hebrew, and Christ from the Greek, are one and the same, and they mean “anointed.” Unfortunately, the translators did not always faithfully render the original, and the average reader soon forgets that the definite article belongs before the word “Christ.” Indeed it appears that some actually think of “Christ” as a sort of second name for Jesus.

The word is not another name at all. It is the special office or function of Jesus. Dr. George Campbell, the noted scholar of Aberdeen, says in his *Dissertations on the Gospels*, “Our translators have contributed greatly to this mistake, by very seldom prefixing the article before Christ, though it is rarely wanting in the original. The word *Christ* was at first as much an appellation as the word *baptist* was, and the one was as regularly accompanied with the article as the other. Yet our translators, who always say *the baptist*, have, one would think, studiously

avoided saying *the christ*. This may appear to superficial readers an inconsiderable difference, but the addition of the article will be found, when attended to, of real consequence for conveying the meaning in English, with the same perspicuity and propriety with which it is conveyed in Greek.”

The expression, “Jesus the anointed,” is expressive of a particular person occupying a specific office. But in what sense is the word “anointed” used in this connection? Why is it reserved for Jesus exclusively? In order to understand we must make reference to God’s method of educating mankind to that point where a divine communication could be grasped and understood. Before a child can converse with mature persons he must develop an adequate vocabulary. For this reason children are first sent to primary and elementary schools. What is true of each individual is also true of society as a whole. So God sent his children to the primary school from Adam to Moses, and when they developed into adolescence, he sent them to the secondary school with greater discipline, from Moses to the coming of the Messiah. One purpose of revelation during these ages was to provide man with a vocabulary which could be used in conveying a message to those upon whom the end of the ages has come. Scarcely a word is used in the new covenant scriptures which is not found in the old, and the spiritual meaning can be deduced from the more primitive usage.

From the old covenant scriptures we learn that there were three offices or functions for which individuals were anointed by direction of God— those of prophet, priest and king. It was the responsibility of the prophet to make known the will of God. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). “Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me. Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9). “Hear, 0 heavens, and give ear, 0 earth: for the Lord hath spoken” (Isaiah 1:2).

The priest was to accomplish the service of God (Hebrews 9:6), to offer gifts and sacrifices (Hebrews 8:3), and to make atonement for the sins of the people. The prophet performed a work which was God to manward; the priest performed a work which was man to Godward. The first offered the gift of God to man; the second the gifts of men to God. These were distinct functions and while a priest might prophesy, he did not do so because he was a priest.

The duty of the king was to govern and command, to exercise leadership and control. It was his duty to stop the foe and with proper direction to conquer and bring forth judgment and victory. He was to command his subjects and gain their respect, acting in benevolence and not in despotism.

These three offices represent all that is essential to reclaim and save us from our lost condition. All that is necessary to reconcile man unto God is invested in them. As Alexander Campbell once said, "We are ignorant, guilty and enslaved. To remove ignorance is the office of a prophet; to remove guilt, the office of a priest; and to emancipate and lead to victory, to defend and protect, the office of king."

To believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed, is more than to say he is a prophet. At the very time when Peter confessed "Thou art the Christ," he did so in contrast to the popular view that Jesus was "Jeremias, Elias, or one of the prophets." The Jews, instructed by Moses to look for a prophet whom God would raise up like himself, and whose words must be heard under penalty of banishment by God, were awaiting the coming of such an eminent personage. Accordingly when John appeared proclaiming in the wilderness, they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, who asked him, "Art thou Elias?" When he answered in the negative, they quickly asked, "Art thou that prophet?" They distinguished between "the prophets" and *the* prophet.

As “the anointed” of God, in his role of prophet, Jesus is the superlative revelation of God. “When in the former times God spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets. But in this, the final age, he has spoken to us in the Son whom he has made the heir of the whole universe” (Hebrews 1:1, 2). To accept Jesus as the Christ cannot possibly mean to regard him as one of a long line of men given special insights into the outworking of God in the universe. He was not simply another of the prophets but the goal of all of them. “‘How dull you are!’ he answered. ‘How slow to believe all that the prophets said!’ . . . Then he began with Moses and all of the prophets, and explained to them the passages which referred to himself in every part of the scriptures.”

One does not accept Jesus *as the Christ* at all, by conceding that he was a majestic moralist, a profound philosopher, or a powerful prophet. His uniqueness consists not in his life, his wisdom, his insights— great as these may be— but in his person, that is, in his identity. He is the Christ. He is the Son of God.

By the same token, he is not simply one of a special order of men chosen as priests. In the relationship of priesthood, he is also *the Christ*, the anointed one. For this reason he is referred to as “the great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God” (Hebrews 4:14). He is unique in that he is both priest and sacrifice. “For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer” (8:3). “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (9:28).

Jesus is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. His authority, bestowed by the Father, is absolute with the exception of the Father himself who is the source of all authority. “Every other power and authority in the whole universe is subject to him as Head” (Col. 2:10). Jesus is more than a ruler among men. He is the divinely commissioned One of whom it is said, “He is the image of the invisible God; his is the primacy over all created

things.”

This much we have said about Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ, foretold by all of the prophets of God. But the taproot of the Christian system involves more than this. “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” No doubt it will appear difficult to see how one could accept one of these without acknowledging the other. The Messiah of the prophets is the Son of God, yet these are two divergent propositions pointing to the same purpose. One indicates the office, the other the divine relationship. One relates to that which brings us into citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, the other to that which brings us into kinship with God.

Belief of this proposition in its fulness and without reservation must work a profound change in the life of a man. So tremendous is the alteration produced that it is spoken of as a regeneration, the new birth, or the new creation. The entire attitude toward God and man, and death, is completely transformed. Love for one another in a transcendent sense is produced in the hearts of all believers. It can be envisioned why the community of the saved ones can be built upon no other foundation.

That foundation was laid by God to endure for all ages. He acknowledged Jesus as His Son when he arose from the waters of Jordan after having been immersed by John “to conform in this way with all that God requires” (Matthew 3:15). He confirmed it at the brow of the mount where Jesus was transfigured in the presence of his disciples who fell on their faces in terror when they heard the voice from heaven. When Peter made the confession of identity fundamental to the planting of the community, Jesus declared, “You did not learn that from mortal man; it was revealed to you by my heavenly Father.” It was God who laid Jesus as the cornerstone and other foundation can no man lay. A divine structure requires both a divine architect and a divine foundation.

For this reason there can be no system of religion, worship or ritual in the category of the Christian system. It is not this, or something else as a hope of salvation— it is this, or nothing else. That which undermines faith in the Messiahship or Sonship of Jesus sweeps away man’s only hope. Every doubt cast upon either, regardless of motivation, intent or purpose, is a betrayal of man’s best interest. It is destructive of his eternal welfare. It blights and eclipses his only hope. Whether such skepticism is fostered by the darkness of ignorance, or by the gleam of intellectualism, it should be resisted by every exercise of the will. “Keep safe that which has been handed to you as a sacred trust. Turn a deaf ear to empty and worldly chatter, and the contradictions of so-called ‘knowledge’ for many who claim to have it have shot far wide of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20, 21).

Modern Man and Belief

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[Abstract]

“Can modern man really believe in Jesus?” Increasingly we run into this question. It is not always asked by those who are in open revolt against God. More often it is the plaintive query of those whose broadening intellectual scope leaves wide chasms between childhood acceptance and mature skepticism. So many cherished notions of the past have been destroyed by advanced research that it would appear that everything once held as true must be surrendered to avoid the embarrassment of being labeled as provincial. Eventually man ends up without conviction and even doubting his own existence.

A little thought will show that the question is rather foolish. As it stands it implies that there is a difference in the way that a modern man believes and the way in which his ancestors believed. But this is not so. All rational men believe in the same way; that is they are led to belief by the same method. Belief is the response of the heart to testimony and the nature of the testimony will always govern the reaction to it, emotionally or otherwise. The question, then, is no different for man in the twentieth century than for man in any previous century. It is simply one related to testimony.

Is the testimony concerning Jesus adequate to establish the fact and nature of his existence? Is it credible? The approach must be made by examination of the witnesses. We say it must

be so made because there is no other way by which a thing of which one has no personal knowledge can be affirmed or denied. There are three ways open to one who would reject that which is testified to as a fact.

1. He may attack the character of the witnesses. In such case he must present testimony to establish that they possessed neither veracity nor integrity. Or, he may prove that they invented their testimony for an ulterior motive, producing a hoax for personal gain or other private consideration.

2. He may challenge the competency of the witnesses by demonstrating through counter testimony that they were not in the place or position at the time alleged and could not have ascertained the facts, or that their acquaintance and association with the principal was so superficial and sporadic as to render any conclusion invalid. Or, he may prove that the witnesses acted out of sheer prejudice in formulating and presenting the testimony.

3. He may examine the testimony as given and show that it is contradictory to such a degree that the witnesses actually offset each other.

Until “modern man” examines for himself carefully the testimony relating to Jesus and is able to give justifiable grounds for rejection of it, he proceeds wholly upon the basis of prejudice. The word “prejudice” simply means “to judge before,” that is without examination of the facts. In spite of his infatuation with intellectuality, modern man may be as biased and jaundiced as his predecessors. We have the testimony of witnesses concerning the fact of Jesus. The number of witnesses is sufficient to establish the fact. We must either prove that they were persons of perfidy, or that they were incompetent, or that their testimony is contradictory. If “modern man” fails to do this he can never believe anything which has happened outside of his own sphere of observance, and he effectively cancels all history

from his life.

If Jesus really existed, and if the testimony concerning him is accurate, to refuse to believe in him does no actual harm to Jesus. A fact is wholly unaffected by acceptance or rejection. It remains a fact regardless of the attitude taken toward it. But refusal to believe it may do untold injury to the one who rejects it, and to those under the scope of his influence who look to him for guidance. Of course there are a great many matters of fact which one may ignore with no serious or immediate consequence. There are two kinds of facts— vital and incidental. The fact of Jesus is cardinal and radical. To ignore it is to invite disaster and destruction.

We believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We regard him as the ruler of this universe. We do so upon what we accept as the testimony of credible witnesses. This may not affect what is called “modern man” for in the sophisticated language of our day this term is given a special and synthetic connotation. It does not refer to man in a certain era or epoch of history as contrasted with a previous age, but to a certain kind of man. “Modern man” is shrewd, canny and sagacious. He is the man of science who professes to live by knowledge and without faith. He does not realize that he may not be living at all in the fullest sense of the term. In spite of his suspicion and incredulity we still believe. Here are some of our reasons for doing so.

1. The witnesses who bore testimony to Jesus were simple and undesigning men. In spite of the fact that they were constantly confronted by their enemies they were not charged with perjury. On the day that they announced that Jesus had been made both Lord and Christ, three thousand of those who had been responsible for the murder of Jesus less than two months before recanted and acknowledged as Lord the one whom they had crucified. A short time later a great number of priests became obedient to the faith which the witnesses announced.

The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was so annoyed with their testimony that they put them into custody. In a private meeting they questioned, "What shall we do with these men?" It would have pleased them beyond measure to have attacked their character, but not once did they do so. If their contemporaries, who sought every means of off-setting their witness, did not once charge them with fabrication, forgery or mendacity, it is too late to do so now. The only legitimate ground for so doing would be the discovery of new evidence not available to the judges of their day. This is impossible. We are forced to regard the witnesses as men of honesty and candor.

It is evident that they did not invent the testimony about Jesus. In the first place they were incapable of producing a hoax by which to deceive millions of the wisest people on earth for nineteen centuries. Their antagonists were made to wonder about their boldness when they "perceived that they were uneducated, common men." They were from an obscure province of the Roman Empire, living in subjugation and in constant fear of the ruling authorities. It is incredible to suppose that they would conspire together to promote a delusion, and if they had done so they would never have included some of their number. One was a social outcast, one was a thief, and another a member of a party which was outside the pale of the law.

Instead of expecting financial gain they actually sacrificed their jobs, investments, and security in order to follow Jesus. Even the outcast tax collector left his lucrative position. One who had studied to be a lawyer, and who threw over everything he had amassed to follow Jesus declared, "As servants of God we commend ourselves to you in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger," etc. All of them, with the exception of one, actually suffered death for his faith. It is admitted that dying for one's testimony does not prove it is true, but it proves that he believes it is true. One of them wrote, "Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had

who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe, and so we speak." Even when threatened by the authorities they said, "For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

2. We accept the competency of the witnesses for theirs was not a mere passing acquaintance with the subject of their testimony. They had visual, audible and manual experience with Jesus. "We have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have carefully scrutinized and touched with our hands . . . we saw it and testify to you." They were constantly with Jesus for more than three and one-half years. Indeed, before he would accept them as witnesses they had to accompany him all the time that he went in and out among them from the day he began his public ministry until the day he left the earth. They were chosen and qualified so their credentials could never be successfully invalidated. "And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him upon a tree; but God raised him up on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

That the witnesses did not concoct the testimony as a result of sheer prejudice appears certain from their own doubt and hesitancy in accepting the facts at first. When they were informed of the resurrection of Jesus, we are told, "But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it." Again, "After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them." Again, "Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at tables; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he was risen." So far from being biased in favor of the fact they had to be convinced of it.

3. I have examined the testimony of the witnesses as it is

preserved in writing. I have discovered no contradiction of such consequence as to refuse a verdict in reference to the fact. In addition I have also considered carefully the alleged contradictions of those who urge rejection of the testimony on this ground. I am convinced that most of the opposers do not distinguish between a contradiction and a discrepancy or contrariety. Contradictories always exclude each other and do not admit of explanation; while discrepancies may oppose each other in appearance, or in some particular, and may be harmonized when all facets of testimony are taken into consideration in conjunction with the circumstances involved.

The philosopher William Paley wrote, "I know not a more rash or unphilosophical conduct of the understanding, than to reject the substance of a story by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related. The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety." It behooves us to remember that each of the witnesses who recorded testimony for us was writing to a different audience and with a different aspect in mind. Matthew wrote to the Jews to prove that Jesus was the Messiah of the prophets; Mark to the Romans to prove he was a world conqueror; Luke to the Greeks to prove that he was the ideal Man; John to the world to induce belief "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this, you might have life through his name." Yet all have the same Jesus in mind and all testify to those essential features which prove that his was a factual residence in history.

Much of what appears to be discrepancy, or even inconsistency, is due to omission, a fact being noted by one witness which is not mentioned by others, or, if mentioned, appearing out of a chronological order. This may be accounted for by the various purposes of the several writers, but if the fact at issue is rejected on this basis, then all courts of law must cease to function as clearinghouses for cases on the basis of evidence. Those who are skilled in the science of jurisprudence are fully

aware that when a number of witnesses testify to an incident with close and minute agreement, there may be a presumption of confederacy and fraud. The angle at which one views a person or thing may make a great difference in his actual testimony.

When “modern man” rejects that which has been accepted for centuries upon the basis of evidence, there is as much reason for questioning the motivation of “modern man” as for being suspicious of the evidence. Indeed we may well wonder why he wants to discard that which has been the accepted standard of a majority of his ancestors. Unless he can prove that the witnesses were incompetent and irresponsible, what personal reason governs him in disregarding that which they have testified? Will acceptance of it necessitate just demands upon his life which he is unwilling to meet? Will it increase his responsibility in such a manner as to interfere with his material desires and pursuits? Is denial merely a way of escapism?

One cannot simply say, “I do not believe in Jesus,” without facing the question, “Why?” And he must offer more than prejudice as an answer to that. If he says, “My intellectual status will not allow me to believe in Jesus,” he again must face the question, “Why?” Can one become so sophisticated that he is emancipated from the laws governing evidence? If so, let him be consistent and refuse to accept, believe or teach anything on that basis. So long as he acknowledges the validity of any conclusion based upon evidence, we will insist that he desist from forming a conclusion concerning Jesus until he has fairly attacked the evidence and proven that it is irrelevant or irrational in nature and content.

Meanwhile we want to state unequivocally that we accept the testimony related to Jesus of Nazareth. We unashamedly vow belief that he is the Son of God and both Lord and Christ. While we are convinced that someday every intelligent being in the universe will be forced to admit this, we prefer to do it voluntarily and cheerfully, for he has said, “So every one who

acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.” Please consider this article as my personal acknowledgment of Jesus in your presence. Glory to his name!

The Divine Revelation

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[Abstract]

It is our conviction that God has revealed himself in nature, in word, and in a Son. In these three he has demonstrated his power, his purpose, and his personality. Our conviction is not shared by all. We live in an age which challenges the authorship of the first two, and the paternity of the last. For that reason we propose to discuss the grounds of our belief and much as we would like to deal with all three, we will be forced to confine our attention primarily to the unfolding of the divine thought in word. It will be our thesis that the nature of God and man makes such a revelation imperative.

Man has limitations imposed upon his acquisition of knowledge by time and space. What is true of the individual is likewise true of mankind in the aggregate. The cumulative wisdom of the past has been achieved within these limitations so it can never become infinite. Death is always the terminus of personal research. It removes man from the arena of investigation and cuts off avenues of study. We can apprehend truth by the testimony of our senses, that is, by experience, or by rational deduction. But our perceptiveness is limited in its processes to known facts which form the bases for arrival at conclusions. The intellect can be projected by imagination into the sphere of the unreal but can only frame new combinations of thought from the elements already in possession. Reason and imagination differ in object and operation. Reason ascertains

what is true, imagination what is possible. The first enquires, the second creates. Reason is exercised within the limits of what is known and actual, the domain of imagination is that of the conjectural and conceivable. But in any communication of its concepts, imagination must employ word images of the real. The unknown can only be explained in the terms of the known. Man is constantly thrown back upon his intellectual resources consisting of a deposit of his previous observations of phenomena, or of the historical record of such observations by his ancestors.

Since man is by nature powerless to transcend his temporal and spatial limitations, any adequate concept of the infinite must come from without and be derived from a source other than mere rationalization. It must be dispensed, that is, passed out to man, rather than dug out by man. He cannot climb up to it and reach it by experience of his own faculties but it must be handed down to him. To believe in God— as God— one must accept that the ways and thoughts of God are not the ways and thoughts of man. Moreover, he must conclude that no man, by searching or researching, can find out God or fathom the mind of God. As the heavens are higher than the earth so must the thoughts of God be higher than the thoughts of men. To have it otherwise would be to elevate man to the status of God, or to reduce God to the status of man. The ultimate of this would be a denial of God altogether, by a postulation that the infinite can be contained in and confined by the finite.

If man cannot by his own resources and faculties apprehend the thoughts of God, it follows that, if those thoughts are to be made available unto him it must be the result of a gratuitous act of God, and by means of revelation. But revelation cannot take the place of research nor be a substitute for it. That which man is capable of learning for himself he must be allowed to discover, for any other procedure would destroy the incentive for study and stifle initiative. It must be assumed that revelation from God will be for the good of man, and the affording of

revelation which would be detrimental to man's development is unthinkable as an act of God. Revelation must be outside the perimeter which can be reached by experience and deduction, and there must be such a perimeter seeing that man is what he is.

Meaning of Revelation

This brings us to the place where we must have an adequate definition of our term. However, no term is plunged into a vocabulary without antecedent conditions or circumstances which give rise to it and make its employment either essential or useful. Frequently a definition is best which gathers up into brief compass these conditions. The term "revelation from God" presupposes the existence of God and man, and predicates that there were concepts known to God which were hidden from man, and which were indiscernible by man, and must remain so because of human limitations, and that these concepts were conveyed to man directly and not as the result of his own rationalization.

There is no indication that man could not grasp or understand these concepts once they were made available to his intellect, but simply that he could not ascertain or discover them by his own power. That which is incapable of apprehension by the mind when given, is not a revelation at all. It remains a mystery. Revelation has to do with ideas and thoughts. Words are merely the packages in which they are delivered. If we have no way of opening the package, the ideas will still be hidden, and we will have no revelation, but only neatly packaged mysteries. It is obvious then that revelation is uncovering by the divine mind of those things which man cannot discover for himself.

This definition is sustained by etymology. The Greek original for revelation is *apokalupsis*. This is a compound of *apo*, away from; and *kalupsis*, a veiling. It thus means literally, to take

a veil away, that is to uncover, lay bare, or make naked. It was used of the unveiling of a statue which had been swathed in a covering until the day of presentation to the public. It was also used of the explanation of any fact which had been hidden in obscurity. When we talk of the revelation of God we refer to the disclosure of truth which had previously been unknown and remained inaccessible unto man.

We are now ready to examine a much abused and misunderstood scriptural passage, I Corinthians 2:9, “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.’” Men who are ignorant of the context sometimes use this as the basis for a funeral discourse. They think it has reference to the eternal realm and the joys of heaven which none of us can fully anticipate in this life. But the very next statement demonstrates the fallacy of this. “God has revealed it to us through the Spirit.”

Isaiah was speaking of the coming Messianic age, the gospel dispensation, the era in which we now live. He points out the limitations of man and the need for revelation. There are some things we cannot discover by visual perception (eye has not seen); there are some things we cannot discern by audible testimony (ear has not heard); there are some things we cannot learn by human rationalization (the heart has not conceived). It is these things which we cannot discover by use of our senses and mental capacities which God has revealed unto us. We live in the age of the world to which all other previous ages were tributary, and in which the deep things of God have been revealed unto us.

Nature of Revelation

The divine agent of revelation must be divine. “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of

God except the Spirit of God.” It was necessary that the Spirit convey the thoughts of God to man, but it is not necessary for the Spirit to convey them directly to each man upon the earth, for once those thoughts have been bestowed upon capable and qualified men they can become the human agents of transmission to all other men. God is a divine economist. He exerts not one bit of power beyond what is necessary to fulfill the divine purpose. No supernatural demonstration will be given where natural power is all that is required. God does nothing for a man which he can do for himself or which another man can do for him.

Once a divine secret, mystery, or previously hidden truth, is disclosed and written down, all others may grasp it by reading and study. So we learn from Paul that, “the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” The purpose of the direct revelation to some men was “to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.” The task of the apostles and prophets was to transmit the divine thought to all men in language they could understand. Paul says, “For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand. I hope you will understand fully.”

What the apostles saw directly they simply recorded as eyewitnesses; what they heard firsthand they simply recorded as earwitnesses. But what they did not experience because of human limitations was made available to them by revelation. Thus Peter affirms, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). The words “cleverly devised” are from *sophizo*, and in this case mean “to play the sophist,” that is, to employ specious or fallacious reasoning. The apostle emphatically denies

that the testimony concerning Jesus Christ was a cunningly contrived piece of fiction intended as a hoax. That he positively believed what he said is evident from the fact that he died rather than renounce it.

Not only did he see Jesus but he affirmed that he heard the voice of God announce the identity of Jesus. "For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am pleased,' we heard this voice borne from heaven for we were with him on the holy mountain." "We were eyewitnesses . . . we heard this voice." No one at this late date can deny the fact of Jesus. He can only attack the credibility of the witnesses. He must prove that they were either deceived or deceivers. If he takes the latter course he confronts men who preferred death to denial, an utterly improbable thing in twelve men; if he takes the former he must first postulate a position based upon a presupposition which will make it impossible for him to believe anything which happened before his day or prove himself to be utterly inconsistent and prejudicial. We have never yet read an attack upon the chosen witnesses that did not result in a verdict of inconsistency upon the part of the attacker.

But the apostle does not stop with that which was visually and audibly experienced. "And we have the prophetic word made more sure . . . First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Here it is affirmed that men who received revelation were spokesmen for God. The message originated with God and it was delivered to the human spokesmen by the Holy Spirit. The word "moved" is from *phero*, to bear or carry. W. E. Vine comments of its use here, "They were 'borne along,' or impelled by the Holy Spirit's power, not acting according to their own wills, or simply expressing their own thoughts, but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by Him." Men moved by the Holy

Spirit spoke from God— this is revelation.

Note that this constitutes “the prophecy of scripture.” The word “scripture,” from *graphie*, refers to that which is written, but it is apparent that it has a specialized meaning. The prophecy of scripture makes up the scripture of prophecy, the accepted or canonical scripture, that is, the scripture which measures up (to the test of divine origin). Here is an affirmation that the scriptures regarded as holy did not originate by the impulse of man. They compose a revelation from God in writing.

Let us note the word “interpretation” because a false emphasis upon the expression, “No scripture is of private interpretation,” led to the evils resultant from the Romish authoritarianism over the sacred scriptures. On page 92 of his book, “The Faith of our Fathers,” James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, cites the statement as proof that “the Church is the divinely appointed Custodian and interpreter of the Bible.” But it will be observed that the apostle was not talking about those who read the scriptures but about those who wrote them. The question with which he deals is not that of understanding the scriptures or what they teach, but of their origin.

No scripture is of private interpretation “because no prophecy ever came by the will of man.” The prophets did not see events and write down their personal interpretation of them; they predicted events and the events happened in fulfillment of the prediction. The sacred scriptures are not made up of human interpretation based upon cause and effect, but holy men of God spoke as they were directed and motivated by the Holy Spirit. We accept the fact that the sacred writings contain God’s message to mankind.

This will be a good place for us to notice a modern tendency to undermine the authority of the sacred scriptures as being a revelation from God. Once this was done by agnostics

and skeptics who attacked the word of God from outside the church of God. Now it is being accomplished by those who are regarded as leaders of thought from within the fold. There is a difference in the nature of the attacks; one being an openly declared war of aggression, the other disguised revolt or rebellion. Both are part of the age-old conflict between the wisdom which is from above and “the wisdom of this age” (1 Cor. 2:6). One demonstrates itself in the words of the Spirit, the other in “plausible words of wisdom.”

Every such attack proceeds from a motivation which becomes the guiding genius behind all that is said or written. One needs to look behind the curtain and see what it is hoped to adopt or eliminate, which first makes necessary the undermining of the sacred scriptures. For instance, if one desires to promote a restructuring of the organization or polity of the church among those who have always looked to the scriptures for guidance in such matters he must first remove the scriptures from a position of validity in determination of such factors.

In a discussion on unity held in 1965, a brother speaking under the heading, “The Tradition of the Church Gave Rise to the New Testament,” made this statement: “When seeking for a Churchly structure it is an easy assumption to say that the New Testament— or even the Old Testament— gives a perfect record of what kind of structure we should have. Such an assumption seems to overlook the fact that the Scriptures as we know them in their canonized form did not make their appearance prior to 320 A.D. Of course, there were many letters, collections and writings available; but the Scriptures as we know them were not in anything like their present form for more than three hundred years after the birth of Christ. This means that the Church not alone preceded the Scriptures; but the Bible is the result of the work of the Church.”

It is not our intention here to enter into the controversy which gave rise to this statement but simply to examine the

merits of the argument adduced. It is typical of a form of reasoning being adopted by scores of Protestant scholars in our day as the means for preparing the way for various changes in form, liturgy and government— changes which are essential in order to make possible the merger or coalition of various divergent groups. We mention “Protestant scholars” because Rome has always used the same argument but with a different design. Rome employs this reasoning to establish the absolute authority of the church; Protestants use it to deny that there is any absolute authority for the church.

Our interest here is not whether the New Testament “gives a perfect record of what kind of structure we should have.” That is indeed a profitable field of investigation, but the origin and nature of revelation must never be confused with its design. Our purpose is to examine, without reference to the use made of it or intended by it, the argument of our brother, and if it is invalid, it cannot be used by any person justifiably to further any goal. We believe that his postulate is “an easy assumption” which overlooks two facts.

The Canonized Form

We presume that by the expression “the Scriptures in their canonized form” is meant the Scriptures collected and collated as we now have them in a single volume of twenty-seven letters and treatises, but if so, the expression “canonized form” may be somewhat confusing and misleading. We fail to see what relationship is sustained to the argument being made or to the deductions drawn from it, by the fact that the Scriptures were not collected into a composite volume “for more than three hundred years after the birth of Christ.”

If the question deals with the matter of structure, it rightly resolves itself into the problem of whether there is a structure provided in the letters to the congregations, and if so, whether it

was regarded by those who received the letters as the will of God and authoritative on that account.

The letters of a father detailing the responsibility of his several children in separate cities of the world do not depend upon the future act of others in collecting and validating their genuineness before they become authoritative to the members of the family. Nor can future generations logically conclude that the family had no special order, form or structure, prior to the publication of the letters in one volume. The authority stems from original authorship and not from subsequent arrangement of the material.

However, purely from a historical standpoint, we must recognize that the Scriptures existed before they were collected. Each letter became *scripture* the moment it was *written*, and if it was inspired of God it was holy, or sacred scripture. The collection of these into a volume called “the holy scriptures” added not one thing to their holiness or to their authority. It simply signified that all doubts concerning the rightful place of any of them had been abrogated by that time. Every student knows that long before the compilation of the books into a single volume, quotations were made from all of them by various Christian saints, both in their confirmation of the believers and the confrontation with schismatics. And these appeals were made to the writings as authoritative.

Did the tradition of the church give rise to the New Testament? That all depends upon what one means by tradition. Like most words which have been used for generations this one is now susceptible of several different definitions and even more implications. If used here as “an inherited culture or attitude,” to imply that the scriptures grew out of a human seeking or searching for an ideal, and represent the conclusions reached by a trial-and-error method, we emphatically deny that this is so. If the statement means that need grew for a collection into compact form of the writings regarded as sacred, and this need resulted

in the scriptures as we now have them, we accede to this as partially so. If “the tradition of the church” refers to conditions existing in the various congregations which required a revelation from God to exhibit what the response of the divine nature should be under such circumstances, we readily accede to it.

At this point we may well study the implication of the word “canon” as applied to the scriptures. It is a scriptural word, being translated by the terms “line” and “rule.” (Cp. Gal. 6:16; 2 Cor. 10:13, 15, 16). The Greek *kanon* is akin to the Hebrew word for reed, and originally signified a rod used for measuring. It is, then, a standard for measurement. But a thing used to measure must first be measured itself, and is then used to measure other things. There must be first established a rule for measuring the validity of those books accepted as sacred writings, and then those writings must become the rule by which all else is measured as to its holiness or sacredness.

On what ground was the rule established to determine the right of admissibility to the sacred canon of any writing? It could not have been on the basis of antiquity, or literary structure, or mere content of truth. The answer is found in the word “apostolicity.” The church recognized that the apostles had been chosen, called and commissioned by Jesus himself. They knew that he said unto them, “He that receiveth you, receiveth me.” They were aware that he promised that the Spirit of truth would guide the apostles into all truth. They were ambassadors, ministers plenipotentiary of the King. That which they wrote or sanctioned had the authority of Jesus to give it weight. They were the human agents selected to reveal and convey the divine will. It was made known “to the holy apostles and prophets.”

The general acceptance of the authority of the apostles motivated the acceptance of that which they wrote, or of that which was written by their associates and under their personal sanction or endorsement. It is here that the brother to whom we

have alluded may create a false impression by the statement, "the Bible is the result of the work of the Church." The Bible was not written by the church. It was written to the church. The books were not accepted as canonical because the church had produced them but because it had received them. The authority stemmed not from their acceptance but from their origin. Canonicity did not create authority nor increase it, but simply recognized it. It was in the giving and not the gathering of the books that the authority resided.

We have no desire to be tiresome or boresome. We do not wish to belabor a point. But it is our prediction that we will be treated to increasing disregard and irreverence for the sacred scriptures as men continue to confuse liberty with license. For this reason it becomes necessary to emphasize certain distinctive truths, and the truth about certain distinctions. Increasingly we are being treated to the idea that the new covenant scriptures simply grew out of the experience of the church, and that there was no adequate guide until the canon was completed in the fourth century. The conclusion of this is expected to be that the primitive saints had no certain structure, polity or norm. Certainly this would render any thought of restoration an impossibility and would make any reformation limit itself solely to ethical and moral behavior of those involved in it. You cannot restore that which never existed.

Now the apostles either wrote under the guidance and impulse of the Holy Spirit or they did not. If they did not, Christians have no distinctive *sacred* scriptures at all, and if they do not, any appeal to the new covenant scriptures for testimony about Jesus, or anything else, is useless and senseless. This is obvious when one realizes that Jesus promised that the Spirit would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all that he had said unto them, and the apostles testified that the things they spoke were received from the Spirit. "We impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit." If Jesus and the apostles misrepresented the origin of the

apostolic message, we cannot rely upon the content of it.

If they did speak and write by revelation, the authority existed before the revelation and the revelation became authoritative when given. *Canonicity conferred no authority!* It created a book not a revelation. It gathered up and compiled authoritative documents and created a volume out of them, but each of these was authoritative before the collection took place. Canonicity did not multiply the authority, it simply added the books together.

The authority does not reside in a volume but in a revelation. The Bible is not an authorized collection of books, but a collection of authorized books. The books were accepted because they measured up to the rule of the canon, they contained a revelation from God. They were sacred writings, holy scriptures. They were not holy scriptures because they were accepted in the canon, but they were adopted into the canon because they were holy scriptures.

Let it never be forgotten that there were many letters and treatises written by those within the body of believers at the same time as those which compose the new covenant scriptures. If the new testament scriptures were produced solely by the church out of her tradition, why were these others in that same tradition not included? On what basis was the selectivity governed? If, as is implied, the sacred canon was not closed until 320 A.D., why were the letters of some of the more recent “church fathers” not included as authoritative, seeing that they spoke directly to matters of controversy then current? Did the Holy Spirit guide the apostles into all truth and protect that truth from admixture with that which was deduced rather than revealed. We can never escape the question as to whether the sacred scriptures constitute letters written by the church or to the church!

Perhaps we will now be asked to what “theory of

inspiration” we subscribe. This question is always injected when one accepts the scriptures as a revelation from God. Of course the theory one holds does not in any sense affect the issue of whether or not the scriptures are given by inspiration or revelation. One could be quite mistaken about the nature or means of revelation without affecting the fact of it. An error as to the kind of tools employed in making an automobile does not affect its use or function. The truth is that I hold *no exclusive* theory about the how of revelation. To do so would be to limit God to a special method and a set form. But nothing seems to be clearer than that God has revealed his will in various ways to his chosen witnesses.

I do not doubt that the Spirit sometimes spoke in exact terms. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). The word “expressly” is from *rhotos*, which means “in stated terms.” But the “now” indicates that upon other occasions the Spirit did not thus communicate the divine message. By whatever means, and through whatever channels, it was conveyed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets I accept it as a revelation from God and propose to implement it as God’s will in my life. God does not need to follow my blueprint to get me to acknowledge his word. My motto is, “The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endures for ever” (Psalm 119:160).

Revelation and God

At this juncture I shall presume upon the graciousness of my readers by expressing myself about another problem which confronts us in our day. I refer to the skepticism which is concealed behind clerical garb and which has infiltrated many seminaries. It is this infiltration which bodes ill for our society. The word *seminary* is from *semen*, or *seminis*, seed, and it is the seed implanted in the hearts of those who will to a great extent influence and determine the pattern of religious thought in the

future which carries a portent of evil consequences. Many of these cultivated seedbeds will prove that “while men slept an enemy hath crept in and sowed tares.”

A concrete example may be found in *Time Magazine* for October 22, 1965, in which is reported the thinking of the “God is dead” ecclesiastics. Typical is the statement made by Gabriel Valhanian, Associate Professor of Syracuse University. The writer says, “He argues that God, if there is one, is known to man only in terms of man’s own culture, and thus is basically an idol. ‘Theologically speaking, any concept of God can only be an approximation,’ he says, ‘Only God can have a concept about God.’”

This whole skeptical position is based upon one presupposition, and while the learned professor talks with such dogmatic assurance it must not be forgotten that all he says is based upon assumption. If God has given man a revelation his entire “house of cards” comes tumbling down. It is true that if God has never revealed himself there can be no real assurance that he exists. Of course human reason, kindled by imagination, could project the idea of God, and man could react as if he had assurance, but this would not constitute proof. And it must be admitted that if God is known to man only in terms of man’s own culture, he would be basically an idol, a cultural creation of human beings.

But if God has revealed himself and man has accepted that revelation and developed a culture as the result of his acceptance, it is at once plain that God has influenced that culture rather than the culture creating God. Moreover, under such conditions, to know God in terms of the culture would not be to interpret God through the culture but to interpret and evaluate the culture through the terms of God. It is not true that “only God can have a concept about God” if God can reveal himself to rational beings. That concepts can be conveyed from one mind to another by communication must be admitted by

even Professor Valhanian, for if such were not the case he is obtaining money under false pretence by “professing” to teach at Syracuse University. When he reveals a concept to a student and the student receives it, does not that student then have that concept? If God reveals himself to rational beings capable of receiving concepts, on what ground is it argued that only God can have a concept about God?

Notice that the statement has to do with “a concept *about* God.” His contention is that any concept of God can be only an approximation. By this he apparently intends to convey the thought that the finite mind cannot fully grasp the infinite, a point which appears rather ridiculous. If one could enter fully into all that is implied in the concept of God he would be infinite and thus be God. But if God has revealed himself to man, certainly man may grasp the concept of God to the extent of that revelation, and this is not an approximation at all. An approximation is an approach to a correct estimate or conception, but one who believes all that God reveals has a correct estimate or concept, and when he acts upon the basis of that revelation he is not guided by an inferior or approximate rationalization.

The concept about God is in the world. It is as well-nigh universal as any concept can be, except perhaps, that of one’s own existence. If only God can have a concept about God, whence came this concept in the minds of men? How did man first receive it? Even Professor Valhanian talks about God and he either talks about something of which he has no concept, or he denies his own dictum. Seeing that “only God can have a concept about God” he must either admit that he is arguing about something of which he has no concept, or affirm that he is God! Actually he simply provides one more witness that there is a certain amount of proof that God exists in the fact that the mind of man is able to entertain the concept that there is one God.

All of the “God is dead” theorists begin by denying that God has revealed himself and then proceed upon that denial predicated upon assumption to spin their webs of sophistry. To do this they must conclude that God has not revealed himself because he is nonexistent, or because he is either powerless or indifferent. If the conclusion is based upon the first they sail under false colors when they claim to be “theologians,” because theology is a knowledge of God and the supernatural, and no one can claim to possess a knowledge of that to which he denies existence. If these men are not theologians then they should not be respected or quoted as experts in the field of theology. One would be a poor instructor in geology who began his course by asserting that the earth did not exist and was merely a phantom in superstitious minds, or a product of our culture. On what ground can one qualify as a theologian who intimates that there may be neither a *theos* nor a *logos*?

By the same token, to postulate that God exists but has not revealed himself unto man, is to turn about and reason God out of existence. If God could reveal his will but would not, he *would* not be God; if he would reveal his will but *could* not he could not be God. We concur with Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz, of Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, The New York School, that “A theologian stands in great jeopardy when he makes his fundamental methodological decisions.” Any survey will be affected by where the surveyor plants his Jacob’s staff. We have planted ours on the ground encompassed by the sentence with which this article begins. If you would know where we stand turn back and read that initial statement.

Unity in Christ

Mission Messenger (April 1966)

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[Abstract]

An address Delivered at the Forum on Fellowship, Hartford, Illinois

It is a privilege to greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and to present this opening message in the forum on fellowship which you sponsor every year at this time. I commend the congregation at Hartford for arranging these meetings in which men from the Disciples of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, and several segments of the non-instrument Churches of Christ can meet and share their views. In all the years that I have been participating I have never seen a single untoward incident occur. Every speech and the public dialogues between speakers and audience have demonstrated the genuine love and concern which temper our approach to controversial issues.

This year our themes are all drawn from the first two chapters of Ephesians and all of the speakers have been requested to use the New English Bible New Testament as the basic text. My theme is "Unity in Christ." My passage for exposition is Ephesians 1:3-11.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . In Christ he chose us before the world was founded, to be dedicated, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love; and he destined us— such was his will and pleasure— to be

accepted as his sons through Jesus Christ, that the glory of his gracious gift, so graciously bestowed on us in his Beloved, might redound to his praise. For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the richness of God's free grace lavished upon us, imparting full wisdom and insight. He has made known to us his hidden purpose— such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ— to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ.

This provides us the foundation for the whole epistle. It summarizes our relationship with the divine. All we have, all we are, and all we ever hope to be, is found in Christ. The term “in Christ” occurs seven times, the word “us” six times, the word “our” four times.

In Christ we have every spiritual blessing.

In Christ we are chosen.

In Christ we are dedicated.

In Christ we are cleansed from every blemish.

In Christ we are filled with love.

In Christ our release is secured.

In Christ our sins are forgiven.

In Christ our share of the heritage is given.

Christ is the center and circumference of the entire Christian economy. He is the center, and whatever does not propel us toward him has no validity. He is the circumference, and whatever does not proceed from him has no authority. He

draws us together by the magnetic power of his divine Sonship; he holds us together by the majestic power of his divine Lordship.

He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the pioneer and perfecter of our hope. All who ever went before him, all who ever came after him, if truly important, are important only because of their relationship unto him.

Adam, who was of the earth earthy, is important because of the second man Adam, who is the Lord from heaven. And our own worth is not because we have borne the image of the earthy, but because we shall bear the image of the heavenly.

Abraham is important to the world, because when summoned by divine call from his Chaldean home, it was revealed that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. And “it was not to ‘seeds’ in a plural form, but in the singular, ‘and to your seed,’ and the seed referred to is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

Moses is important because it was revealed to him that God would raise up a prophet like himself from among the people, and that prophet would speak with such authority that one who refused to hear him would be cut off from among the people.

David is important because of the promise that while he slumbered in his sepulcher, God would raise up one to sit on his throne and would establish that throne through the ages.

John the immerser is important because he could point to Jesus and say, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

Paul, who came from Tarsus, is important only because he was willing to cast his intellectual attainments, his social prestige

and his national privileges, into the garbage can, in order to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.

GROUNDS FOR HOPE

I am frequently asked for the ground of my undefeatable optimism and overwhelming confidence that unity will become a reality in the family of God. In spite of attacks upon my position, and in spite of opposition to it, I remain serene and unshaken. This is because of my reliance upon the veracity of God's revelation. And there are four words in the passage which I read which stimulate my trust. They are purpose, will, pleasure and design. Every one of these refers to God. What is God's purpose, will, pleasure and design? Here it is! "That the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ."

Unity in Christ! This is the purpose of God and one who works for such unity will help fulfill the purpose of God.

Unity in Christ! This is the will of God and one who works for such unity will labor in harmony with the divine will.

Unity in Christ! This is the pleasure of God and one who works for such unity will certainly please God.

Unity in Christ! This is the design of God and one who labors for such unity will be a factor in the divine program of the ages.

Unity will come because it must come. The divine purpose cannot be frustrated, the divine will cannot be a failure, the divine pleasure cannot be mere fancy, the divine design cannot be a fallacy. I think that the certainty of unity can be predicated upon either rationalization, philosophy, or faith, although I take my stand firmly on the latter as the basis of my sheer and rugged confidence. If it be argued that there is no difference in the first two, I affirm that there is. One may rationalize without a goal in

mind. All of us have heard of wandering thoughts and vagaries of mind. But the philosopher has a goal. Reasoning is simply the method of clearing the path leading to his destination. Let us examine how these three may lead us to conclude that unity will triumph over division and the party spirit in the universal program or design.

1. *Rationally.* To one who accepts the new covenant scriptures as authentic, it is given that the party spirit is a work of the flesh, while unity is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We may reason that the Spirit is as superior to the flesh as the divine nature is to the lower. The flesh is perishable. All that is produced by it, or is an outgrowth of it, is destined to perish. It will decay and pass away. But the Spirit is imperishable. That which is a fruit of the Spirit will outlast and survive. The unity which belongs to the Spirit will as certainly triumph over the flesh as Jesus became victor over death, being raised from the dead through that same Spirit. Division is doomed!

2. *Philosophically.* Life can be sustained only by unity. Death results from disunity. This is true in the vegetable, animal and spiritual worlds, those three areas in which we are acquainted with life. If a plant or tree is dismembered and the process of division continues long enough the plant will be killed. If an animal continues to be fragmented by removal of limbs and organs, death will result. If we bite and devour one another we will be consumed one of another.

Death is not a thing which displaces life. It is simply absence of life. The body without the spirit is dead. Life is positive. Death is negative. It is mere absence of animation. Darkness is simply absence of light. It is negative. It is not a *negative force* because it is not a force at all. When a light is turned on darkness simply recedes because light is a power or force which is positive. Division is simply absence of the unifying principle. It is negative. The unifying principle is love. Love will abide when all else departs. It is a positive force, the most

powerful in the universe. Some day it will overcome because it must do so!

3. *Faith*. This is the foundation for my unconquerable optimism. It stems from the very nature of God as revealed unto mankind. I have faith in what I call the divine imperative. Let me define or spell out for you what I mean.

THE DIVINE IMPERATIVE

Whatever God ordains as his will must be done as his will ordains.

That which the infinite mind can conceive, the infinite power can complete.

What God *projects* as a design of divine purpose, he will *perfect* as a sign of the divine pleasure.

This is but another way of saying that the Artist will not leave his picture with even one brush stroke lacking. The Architect will not desert his building with one stone missing. The divine purpose, will, pleasure and design, will be accomplished. It will become Reality.

Does God will the fulfillment of law? “Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to *complete*, I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened” (Matthew 5:17, 18). Ponder that last statement. “All that must happen has happened.” This is the divine imperative. What must be done will be done.

Does God will the birth of a nation? “Shall a nation be born in one day . . . Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth? says the Lord; shall I, who cause to bring forth,

shut the womb? says your God” (Isaiah 66:9). What does this mean? It simply means that God allows no abortion of his plans. There will be no miscarriage of his ultimate design.

Does God will eternal joy for the faithful? “Of one thing I am certain; the One who started the good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of the Lord Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). The One who started will bring it to completion. This is the divine imperative.

When someone, filled with doubt or dismay, asks me if we shall ever have unity in Christ, my reply is also in question form. Is unity in Christ the purpose of God? Is it God’s will? Is it God’s pleasure? Is it God’s design? Then we shall have it. The good work has already started and the One who started it will bring it to completion. The devil cannot stop it. The demons cannot do so. Even the brethren cannot do so, although some are frantically trying to do it, under the mistaken notion that the best way to work for God’s purpose is by thwarting it, and the way to please him is to work contrary to his pleasure.

Then how shall we be saved from our division and disunity? Of course, this is the Lord’s work through his Spirit and I am hesitant to suggest a “how” as if I would limit the Holy Spirit. History is rife with examples of those who drew up a well defined code of how God was going to act, or must act, and when he did not follow their code they rebelled against God. Most of them quoted Scripture to prove that God would act in a certain way, but he that sat in the heavens “laughed at them.” I do not want God laughing at me. I would prefer that he smiled upon me.

It is hardly so presumptuous for me to tell you how I think we will not be saved from our disunity. I do not think unity can be achieved by creeds, concordats or conventions. If a national convention were to be called to convene at Indianapolis, Cincinnati, or Nashville, for purpose of drawing up an

agreement to structure our unity I would be conspicuous by my absence. I will not attend a national debate to argue ourselves into oneness, or a national convention to try and agree ourselves into unity.

These are the horses and chariots of modern Egypt in which the modern Israel of God trusts. We will not be delivered from our bondage of corruption, expressed in disunity, by such means. “But I will have pity on the house of Judah and I will deliver them by the Lord their God; I will not deliver them by bow, nor by sword, nor by war, nor by horses, nor by horsemen” (Hosea 1:7). I do not anticipate victory from convention chariots nor from forensic horsemen. “Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of our God” (Psalm 20:7). “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).

The unity we seek is the unity of the Spirit. It is produced by the Spirit. There is every evidence that the Spirit is very active in the hearts of many who sigh and cry for Jerusalem in our day. Attitudes are changing all over the earth. This is true among our brethren. The heirs of the restoration movement stand upon the threshold of their greatest witness for Jesus since the first division descended as a curse upon us almost a century ago. In this forum we meet in love and in a sense of brotherhood which transcends all of our unfortunate differences. On this program are men from Churches of Christ with four different original factional backgrounds. Here is a man from the Disciples of Christ and one from the Independent Christian Churches. We meet in this building where no instrument is used by invitation of the saints who worship here regularly, and we listen to one another and question one another. We pray together and sometimes we weep together!

This is not an isolated phenomenon. On many mission fields brethren are now able to congregate and strengthen each

other in the one faith. Some of them can meet together in Africa and South America who could not do so at home. But in every section of our own great land there is a thawing and melting of men's hearts under the warmth of the genial rays of the Spirit. Of course there are still areas of bitter isolationism, sections where cold orthodoxy still prevails. The snow does not melt as quickly in the shadows. But the prophets of the party spirit are lifting up their cries at the altars of their gods with lessening influence. The Holy Spirit is working in hearts that have grown tired of conversion by cliché and devotion by dogma.

Unity is coming! Lift up your heads. Breathe the fresh winds of freedom that are blowing across the river of life. Unity in Christ—the purpose of God, the will of God, the pleasure of God, the design of God. “He has made known to us his hidden purpose . . . namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ.” Unity must come! Unity will come! Unity is coming!

And fierce though the fiends may fight,

And long though the angels hide,

I know that Truth and Right,

Have the universe on their side;

And that somewhere beyond the stars.

Is a Love that is better than fate;

When the night unlocks her bars

I shall see Him, and I will wait.

Divisive Party Loyalties

Mission Messenger (May 1966)

Volume 28

[Abstract]

An Address Delivered at the Seventh Consultation on the Internal Unity of Christian Churches, Enid, Oklahoma, March 1

The party spirit is a work of the flesh, an activity of the lower nature. It is so designated by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:20. In that context it is associated with moral impurity and indecency, with idolatry and sorcery, and with drunkenness, orgies and things of like nature. It is distinctly said that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God. The saint has a clear choice between the Holy Spirit and the party spirit, between intolerance and inheritance. He cannot have both. That which is grave enough to exclude from glory deserves our consideration lest through ignorance we forfeit our share of the heritage.

Why is the party spirit, or sectarian attitude, so heinous that it must stand before the judgment bar of God in the company of word felons of vice and depravity? Of what infamy is factionalism guilty that its presence will slam the door in the face of one under its influence? In this brief presentation I hope to suggest to you some of my very serious and sincere feelings as to why the Holy Spirit offers this stern indictment of a sin which is all too often condoned by us rather than being condemned among us.

Strangely enough, among the Greeks the original term had no evil connotation. Nor did it have an inherently bad reputation when used in a Judaistic framework in the gospel records. It is only when we come to the letters addressed to the communities of the ransomed ones that it becomes a word of obliquity and is never again used by a sacred writer except with demerit and disapprobation. We must look for the offense involved, not in the nature of the word, but in the nature of the community planted by Jesus on the bedrock fact of his own Messiahship and Sonship. Our question is not what there is about the term that is vicious, but what there is about the Way of life which makes the attitude expressed by the term so unseemly and improper.

Nothing else is more emphatically taught by Paul than the singularity and uniqueness of the body created by God with Jesus as head and those who are incorporate with him as members. On this point there is no room for doubt or disputation. "There is one body and one Spirit, as there is also one hope held out in God's call to you; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). "For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another" (Romans 12:4, 5).

There are two enabling ordinances provided by divine wisdom. Both are directly related to this oneness. The first of these is initiatory and introductory. It furnishes entrance to the one body, and thus is enacted but once. The second is repetitive and continual, serving to exhibit to the world that unity into which we were born. The first is baptism, and I read, "For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The second is the Lord's Supper and I read, "When we bless 'the cup of blessing,' is it not a

means of sharing in the blood of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake” (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

Now we are ready to enunciate a principle which must be corollary to the truths which we have read in the new covenant scriptures. Since it was the divine purpose and will to gather all of the called ones into one body, and through that one body to exhibit the unity of all things in heaven and on earth, any action taken or spirit manifested by the called out ones, which indicates or implies that the body is not a unit, is in direct contravention of the divine purpose and can be maintained only in opposition to the divine will. Factionalism is a rebellion against heaven, a revolt of the citizens against the will of their King. The division and splintering of the family of God into rival tribes and clashing clans is a sin of such deep dye as to forfeit the heritage of heaven for the factionalist.

It is here that the Arch-deceiver does his most deadly damage. With his cleverness and cunning he convinces us that we exhibit loyalty to the Father by separating from his other children. Every sect in the Christian spectrum was born of pure motivation. Every party was produced with the announced purpose of preserving truth. The fallacy lies in the fact that we have not been raised up to save the truth, but the truth has been sent down to save us. Truth existed before we were born; it will still be here after we are dead. It will not perish with us and may actually thrive more because of our funerals. Truth can no more be confined behind our little partisan walls than new wine can be contained in old skins which have lost their elasticity. You might as well try to can up the atmosphere as to bottle up universal truth.

But now I trust that you will allow me to present to you some of the reasons why I think that the party spirit is so heinous in the eyes of God.

1. It supplants the cross of Christ as the magnetic force which makes unity possible, and substitutes something else as the center around which men must rally to be considered worthy. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The sect is willing to exalt something else in order to draw some men unto it. Our union is created by the blood of Jesus. We are blood brothers— his blood, not ours. "But now in union with Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood" (Ephesians 4:13). The party separates and ties men off from the rest of the body and it must be sustained as an artificial growth, and kept alive by intravenous feeding of factional pap, and regular injection of the prescribed partisan plasma.

"This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity" (Ephesians 2:16). The cross was God's chosen reconciling medium. It accomplished its purpose by welding two into a single body. It produced fusion where fission had existed. Mark it down that whenever and wherever a single body is divided into two, the enmity has not been killed. Something has become more important than the cross. Retaliation supplants reconciliation. Every faction among us today bears testimony to the frightened, trembling world that we pay lipservice to the cross while giving our lifeservice to the sect. We have forgotten the "cross purpose" of God and we are now at cross-purposes with each other.

2. The party spirit reduces the majestic ordinances of God to mere factional rituals. Baptism is regarded as initiation into the party. It is a little like assuming that one who is born in the maternity ward of St. Joseph's Hospital, does not thereby become a member of the human family, but belongs to the hospital. Yet in all my experience I have never yet heard of one who applied for work in a hospital where he had not been delivered, being required by the personnel manager to enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born again in their

own loyal maternity division— and I do mean division! In its final analysis what this kind of thing means is that one is saved by the grace of the party and not by the grace of God at all.

No one was ever, by the Holy Spirit, baptized into the Methodist party, the Baptist party, or the Presbyterian party. Nor has any person, by that same Spirit, been baptized into the Disciples of Christ party, the Christian Church party, or any of the Church of Christ parties. If we are baptized at all under the influence of the Spirit we are all baptized into one body. The baptism authorized by the Holy Spirit is a key which fits no sectarian gate or creedal lock. The partisan administrator who baptizes a sincere believer in Jesus is like a blind obstetrician who can deliver the baby but cannot envision the great world into which he introduces the child. He is like a nearsighted shepherd who thinks that he is opening the gate into his own corral when he is letting down the bars into the Lord's abundant pasture.

The table of the Lord can never be made a factional weapon of discipline without destroying the one who wields the weapon. The congregation at Corinth was fractured into four sects composed of the Cephasites, the Paulites, the Apollosites, and the Christites. These gathered in their little cliques to eat the love feast with each selfish clan separated and segregated from the rest. In such a state of affairs they could not eat the Lord's Supper because it was a fellowship of the body and blood of the Lord, portraying the one body by their joint participation in it. The apostle wrote, "To begin with, I am told that when you meet as a congregation you fall into sharply divided groups . . . The result, is that when you meet as a congregation, it is impossible for you to eat the Lord's Supper."

I do not gather from this that the various factions did not physically eat bread and drink the fruit of the vine. The indication is exactly opposite to any such conclusion. I have little doubt that each sect, in its exclusiveness, blessed the cup and

broke the bread. But there is no spiritual significance attached to the mere physical act of eating and drinking aside from the divine purpose and motivation. So the record says, "It follows that anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord." What does "unworthily" mean? In this case, by the context, it means to regard the body of Jesus as having been killed for a faction, and the blood as having purchased only a part of the saints. To so reason is to desecrate the body and blood of the Lord. Jesus died for the whole company of the saints. He is the head of the entire body, the Shepherd of all the sheep, the Captain of all the enlisted men, the King of all his subjects.

In view of this, one should scrutinize his inner consciousness before participating in the Supper to determine if he is doing so as a branch of the vine or as a splinter of a sliver. There is a difference between being a stone in the temple and a rock in a lean-to. "A man must test himself before eating his share of the bread and drinking from the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment on himself if he does not discern the Body." Let me here commend C. H. Dodd and his fellowlaborers in production of the New English Bible New Testament, for capitalizing the word "Body." I once thought to "discern the Lord's body" meant to see mentally an image of the physical body of Jesus when the bread was passed, to have an inner vision of the scene at Golgotha while you ate. Now I know better.

The body we are to discern at the Supper is not the body writhing and dying in the agony of the crucifixion. It is the whole body composed of every believer who has been made a part of the new creation. It is the one body. If I separate and segregate myself in self-righteous partisan pride, and regard as my brothers only those who side with me in some point of controversy, I drink damnation to myself when I touch the cup to my lips for I desecrate the blood which freely cleanses us all.

If I slam a partisan gate to exclude God's other children I shut myself in. The others are still free. It is those who build walls around themselves who are in prison. Paul said of the meeting of those who were bigoted and intolerant partisans, "Your meetings do more harm than good" (1 Corinthians 11:17). The party spirit is frightening in its consequences because it transforms the sacred ordinances into spiritual pork-barrel projects to be administered in the behalf of their constituents at the whim of political theologians.

3. The party spirit is reprehensible because it captivates our hearts which should be the sacred citadels of the Holy Spirit, and causes us to drive out the best Friend we ever had, or shall ever have, in the mistaken notion that we thus prove our fidelity to the cause of righteousness. Our relationship to God is not conditioned upon our being right about a number of things. If it were so, we would be saved by knowledge rather than by faith, and our hope of heaven would depend upon our intelligence quotient rather than upon our love for the Father and his love for us.

When I build a party around the pro or con of any opinion, view or interpretation, and demand allegiance to it as a test of loyalty to Jesus, I have substituted human judgment for divine will as a criterion. There is nothing wrong in having an opinion. There is nothing wrong in holding or expressing an opinion. Sin lies not in discussion of opinions but in division over them. Unity in Christ does not depend upon conformity in views. It does not demand that we all meet in the same building or do everything in identical fashion. A family is not divided when some of the children become married and live in their own homes. We are not seeking geographical proximity but spiritual affinity. It is essential that we grant recognition to all of God's children as our brothers. Division occurs when we conclude that we are God's children by brain instead of by birth, by grasp instead of by grace.

The party spirit proposes and promotes tests of fellowship which demand that one be something else before he can be a Christian. This has been true since the very days of the primitive community of the sanctified ones. The Jewish element sought to bind circumcision upon the Gentiles who believed in Jesus. It was their contention that one must become a Jew before he could be in Christ. The sin of schism growing out of this unwarranted attitude was the first recorded error to threaten the body with disruption. Ananias and Sapphira operated only to their own destruction, but the schismatics who came down from Jerusalem threatened the very congregation at Antioch with their legalism. "Unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses you cannot be saved."

The kingdom of heaven has been riddled with these "unless you are." Unless you are willing to do this or that, or unless you are willing to give up or divest yourself of one thing or another, you cannot be saved. This removes salvation and justification from the realm of trust in Jesus as proclaimed by God and places them in the domain of the "unless you are" pronounced by men. But these have no avail in Christ. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." There was really nothing wrong with being circumcised provided that one did not regard it as meritorious or essential to salvation, or bind it upon others as essential to their proper standing with God.

When the dogmatic "Unless you are . . . you cannot be" was applied to salvation it virtually repealed the divine principle of justification, destroyed the bond of Christian union, and dethroned Jesus from his position of authority. It meant that faith in Jesus was not sufficient, but one must correctly pronounce the partisan shibboleth as bound by those who controlled the faction. It was not enough to be a Christian but one must also pledge himself to be a sectarian. He must be recognized by the official badge of the clan or the password of the exclusive fraternity rather than by the demonstration of love

for others which Jesus said would be the criterion by which all men should recognize discipleship.

After the garment has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and become “the fine linen white and clean which is the righteousness of the saints,” it must again be dipped in the party colors which constitute the distinctive uniform of the school or sect, so that all will know what kind of a Christian the wearer is. He must be a Christian-and something else! And that “something else” means more to a sectarian than being a Christian. It is for this reason that I have resolved never to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. If you are good enough for God to receive you are not too bad for me to accept. If he welcomes you with open arms it ill becomes me to approach you with a closed heart.

You have been courteous and amiable in inviting me to share with you in this consultation. My vocabulary is too meager and sparse to express my deep feeling of appreciation for your fraternal welcome. And you have every right to question what my future will be insofar as attitude and disposition are concerned. And inasmuch as I have availed myself of your hospitality you have a right to query me as to how I propose to implement the things I have suggested here and in my writings. You are aware that I have grown up within that segment of the disciple brotherhood where opposition is voiced to the employment of mechanical instruments in rendering our corporate praise unto God. Once I was member of an anti-instrument party. At that time I judged your relationship to God by my understanding of this matter. In those days if you had been big enough to invite me to such a meeting I would have been too little to come.

I thank the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who through the Spirit has purged my heart of such an unlovely, unspiritual and uncharitable disposition. I am ashamed of it! I am sorry for it! I have repented of it! I have prayed earnestly

that I might now devote my life to plucking up the thorns of factionalism which I once helped to plant and sow instead the seeds of peace and tranquility among the heirs of this once great movement which began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” I find my position as to instrumental music unaltered and unchanged. If you receive me at all in such meetings as this you will need to do so in spite of that conviction. Yet I think you may well do so, for I predict that in this age of decaying values our future problems will not lie with brethren who have diverse convictions but with those who have none. And we dare not forget that when the day comes that “anything goes” everything that is worthwhile has already gone.

I have resolved with the help of the Spirit, during my remaining days, to be simply a Christian and a Christian only. I do not intend to switch parties but I intend to renounce them all insofar as my own humble life is concerned. I can relieve the fears of those of you who may have been troubled as to what to do with me if I applied for membership with you. I am not leaving anyone; I am not going to anyone. I belong with all of you because I belong to Christ, but because I belong to Christ I belong to none of you. I shall move among all of my brothers as they allow. I shall share with them in love as they permit. I will thrust myself upon none, nor will I make myself purposely obnoxious to any. I will be cooperative among the Independents, and independent among the Cooperatives. I trust that I may be instrumental among those who are vocal in helping them see that the only instrument of our salvation is the cross of Jesus.

Of course this will not solve all of the problems. For that reason I make no demands that others order their lives as I expect to order mine. Nothing will solve all of our problems so long as we are in the flesh. I expect to be beset by the questions which occupy the minds and fill the hearts of every group which I visit. What will you do about individual cups? What will you do about Sunday Schools? What will you do about institutional orphan homes? What will you do about Herald of Truth? What

will you do about instrumental music? What will you do about restructure? What will you do about merger? What will you do about the ecumenical movement? Perhaps I shall be fortunate enough to die before these are resolved and new ones are introduced. If so, I trust that it will be my good fortune to enter that home where such questions will never trouble. I am not so sure but what in the other alternative available some of the brethren may continue to debate them, knowing the interest which the president of that realm must take in some of the current discussions about them.

But what will I do about them? I am not sure that I am required to do anything about them except to keep them in proper perspective. All of these are means and methods which my brethren have devised to get where they are going, although in some instances, the prayer of the elderly colored preacher at the funeral service of one of the more reckless members of his flock may be in order— “Lawd, we hope this brother has gone where we think he ain’t.” I shall never confuse the means of locomotion which men have invented with their inventors. When brethren drive up to the meetinghouse I am not obligated to love only those who drive Fords. I shall distinguish between the men for whom Christ died and their means of transportation for which he did not die. Thus I can love both those who travel by Jaguar and jalopy-something imported, or something distorted.

Jesus did not die for plans, programs or performances. He did not give his life for machinery, movements or monuments. He died for men, sinful men, hapless, hopeless, helpless men like me. And he did not tell me what my attitude must be to the things which mean so much to men, but he did tell me what my attitude must be to the men who mean so much to him. I am not obligated to love individual cups, Sunday schools, organs, societies, agencies, unified support or direct support. But I am obligated to love my brothers— all of them! And I do love them.

You see, I did not renounce my faction for another. I

renounced my factionalism. I am sick and tired of the whole sorry, sad and sordid mess. And I shall counter it with the only weapon with which I can wage effective war against it— love of my brethren. I love you all. I do not love you because of where you are any more than I love myself because of where I am. I love you because of Him in whom we are. You are all my brothers because you are his children. It is just that simple—and so am I!

The Church of God

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[Abstract]

The Church of God referred to in the sacred scriptures is not a human organization, but a divine organism. It is not a sect nor is it composed of a combination or coalition of sects. Sects were conceived in the opinions of men; the church was created by the power of God. The church does not consist of denominations or congregations, but of individuals who have been born again. Every saved person on this earth is in it, having been called out of sin and into Christ.

We should never use the word “church” in a universal sense except to include all of God’s children in the universe, nor in a local sense to exclude any who are members of his family in the locality. To talk about “the Lord’s church” as limited to a certain party, movement or segment, is to sectarianize the expression and to reveal our ignorance. The Lord’s church embraces every one of the Lord’s people and it is true that these are not all in the same partisan corral. The flock of God is still scattered over the sectarian hills.

Parties and sects are regrettable because they divide God’s family into rival camps, but they do no more harm than for one of them, born of historical exigency, to appropriate to itself the title, “The Lord’s Church” and to arrogantly imply that those who do not belong to it do not belong to the Lord. No person on earth knows the numerical strength of the Lord’s church and no

one can ascertain it. The figures of total membership that are published for the various parties only reveal which sects are increasing or decreasing. They say nothing about the growth of the Lord's church. There is no such thing as "the fastest growing church in America" for there is only one church, although sectarian parties may thrive or wane, and do.

We become members of the one body by acceptance of the great universals of the faith, we become adherents of sects by emphasizing unduly peculiarities or distinctions within the faith. That which makes one a child of God is relatively simple but to become a sectarian one must engage in mental ramifications and metaphysical speculations. One becomes a child by adoption, a partisan by deduction elevated to dogmatism. Christian stature is measured only by faith in Jesus, partisan attainment is measured by knowledge of the group requirements for fellowship.

Each new party that is spawned makes it that much more difficult to be a Christian only, and increases the probability that we will not be such. The real test of the non-partisan child of God lies in his ability to ignore all artificial walls and barriers erected by men, and to associate freely with all of his brethren. These walls are transparent when looked at through lens of love and one can walk through them if he wills to do it. Many are mere paper curtains hung by editorial usurpers who labor under the mistaken view that their journals are the official organs to publish supreme court decisions for the kingdom of the Lord.

There is no reality to these barriers since only God can give reality to anything in the divine-human relationship. They are simply mental blocks and figments of over-wrought imagination inflamed by partisan zeal. Let us cease to be confined and accept the liberty which we have in Christ. Then we can begin to answer the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers in Him. The time is ripe for freedom to serve one another.

The Life and the Joy

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[Abstract]

Do you know how a toothpaste tube looks when someone has flattened and pressed it in an attempt to extract from it the last quarter inch of flavored dentifrice? Or a football which has been punctured by a spike when it accidentally lands on top of the iron fence? Or a ripe tomato in the street which has just been run over by a passing garbage truck? Then you know what happens to some words when they are put through sectarian wringers and the idea-content is squeezed from them leaving them limp and flabby. This can happen to words that are rich and full, words that are plump and rounded out with meaning intended to cheer and comfort, to stimulate and encourage.

I'm thinking of such a word right now, a word which came straight from the throne of God, filled with promise and vibrant with hope. Men have taken it and pounded and pummeled it, and forced it into their little peculiarly shaped partisan moulds until it no longer shouts with the joy of heaven, but speaks with the raspy voice of theological politicians. All of the grace and glory have been mashed and ground out of it in sectarian vices and it whispers now of manipulation and maneuvering by usurpers who despise the conscience of others and play God with their fellows.

A few years ago the glorious thought exploded inside my heart with a burst of light that God really wanted me, and that

he was willing to go to any length to make it possible for the two of us to be together and share with one another. When the message finally got through to me (it wasn't easy because I had been preaching so long) I could not figure out why. I still do not know. I've wrestled with the problem until I have just about decided to accept it as a fact, like I do the Milky Way or the love of my grandchildren, and wait until I can talk with Him face to face about it. Probably when that happens I'll not have to even ask Him. I have an idea that the minute I see him I'll know perfectly all that has been hidden. The most astonishing thing will be that there is no more mystery, no darkness. I'm fully aware that the word "minute" has no place in the Great Event, for there will be no measurement of time or length. I use it here merely because it hasn't happened yet!

The word about which I am thinking is connected with joy, actually with fulness of joy. There's a difference between joy as I use the term (and as the Spirit also used it), and being glad or happy about things. It is much more than laughing at good fortune, or at a clever joke, or at seeing a pompous banker slip on a banana peel. The joy of which I speak may know acute suffering from cancer, or teeth-gritting pain. It may know hardship, privation, cold, hunger, or imprisonment. I'm not so sure but what it might actually thrive better under such circumstances if they did not result from one's own indifference, indolence or criminality. I recall that the one who wrote most about it was constantly in difficulty and danger. He talked about his perils almost as much as he did joy, but the joy was what counted. The perils didn't really matter.

This was the outstanding attribute of this joy! When you had it nothing else— absolutely nothing else— really mattered. I do not like that sentence because I rather think that one did not have this joy at all. It had him! It moved in and took over and when you were in its grip you were surprised to find that your life was completely changed and transformed. It was as if another person had moved in and nudged the old "you" out and

had taken possession. You couldn't really tell the difference when you looked in the mirror while shaving. There was the same scar in the eyebrow that resulted from the fall from the bicycle when you were a boy. There was the wart on the lower jaw and you still had to steer around it with the razor. Yet you had the impression that you were looking at a new person, a stranger, a calm and unperturbed stranger who probably wouldn't make a lot of mistakes such as you had made, or if he did make them would know Who to go to about them. And there was joy, unmistakable, unmitigated, genuine joy in knowing that Who.

The joy (sometimes I think it ought to be spelled with a capital "J," it is so personal) may come and identify itself, and move in and take possession, under all kinds of varied circumstances. No two of us are alike. No two of us have identical experiences in the same event. Even if we are sitting in the front seat of a car which starts to skid and goes out of control and rolls over down an embankment, our reactions are different. That is why, if we live, each of us must recount it for himself. And each of us gets bored with the other's account. We can be in the same place and go through the same experience, and still it is not the same at all. Joy— the joy— comes only to you *as it comes to you!*

You are sitting with head bowed and scalding tears running down your cheeks, almost oblivious of those around you as you think of the loved one lying cold and stiff in the sepulcher. You are bowed in grief at the thought that the eyes which once looked at you with love are sightless. Death has blown out the candle and pulled down the shades. The light that once gleamed through the soul's windows is extinguished. You are left lonely and in the dark. Then you feel a hand touching your shoulder and a voice whispers in your ear, "The Master has come and calleth for thee," and you arise and go to Him, and he speaks just to you, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die!" Joy!

You are on the sea in a small boat, and darkness has fallen swiftly and silently, as the moon and stars are blotted out by the ominous clouds. The wind ceases to moan and begins to shriek through the rigging. The waves increase in height and you are tossed from side to side, fighting to keep your balance and knowing that this time the fight is vain. Then you see Him coming, walking as calmly as if he were in a quiet country lane. The towering waves which seemed so frightening, rush toward him and become like frolicking puppies playing about His feet! Joy!

It isn't always that He comes. Sometimes you have to go. He has come often and you laughed at the thought that He could give you anything you needed or wanted. You had everything. And you thought you had joy. Then you awaken one morning with a bursting head and a thick dark brown taste in your mouth. The room is untidy. The empty bottle is turned over on the night table. Cigarette ashes bestrew the floor. You have a momentary thought between the throbbing splitting pains that the place looks like the pigpen down on the farm when you were a boy. You think of the old place again sheltered under the large maples. You think of the neat room you shared with your older brother. And then you think of yourself— of the parties, the flasks, the tantalizing women, the sordid apartments, the stale smoke, the taunting, haunting mockery of sex. You cannot believe that it is you— you who once bowed your innocent head while your father offered thanks at the breakfast table, you who took your little lunchbox from mother's hand and walked to the road to wait for the schoolbus, turning to wave to the figure in the door as you boarded it.

Of a sudden you feel dirty, loathsome, foul. You lie back down on the rumpled bed and start shaking, crying, sobbing, with uncontrollable grief. You remember what you said when you left three years ago, "Give me my share. I'm getting out of this dump!" What a fool! All of a sudden it bursts in upon you what you should do. Why didn't you think of it before? It is so

simple. “I’ll arise and go to my father and say, I’m no longer worthy. I’m not asking for anything. Really I’m not. I’ll be a servant. I just want to come home, that’s all, just come home!” And you get up and begin getting ready to go. As you walk toward the shower you find yourself humming a tune. What are the words? It’s been years since you heard them. Ah, there they are. “Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me!” Joy!

In every instance joy is associated with being with someone, or with the prospect of it. It is having someone share your grief, not merely cry with you. There’s a difference. It is having someone share your danger, someone who can do something about it. It is the prospect of being under the same roof with those you love, sharing at the table, sharing in the pleasantries and small talk, sharing in the intimacies of the family. It is association, but it is more than that. It is belonging!

And now we come to that word to which I alluded when I began this article, the word that has been crushed and cramped and strangled by sectarians and schismatics, until now it is more frequently associated with narrowness and littleness than with joy—the joy! The Christian Pharisees have squeezed the life out of it. Remember that expression. It is very vital. The word has had *the life* choked out of it. And when the life went the joy fled with it.

The Greeks spelled it *koinonia*. The English call it *fellowship*. It means “sharing,” but do not jump to conclusions. It does not refer to the mere sharing of *things*, tangible or intangible. It is not simply sharing your lunch, or your car, or your ideas, with someone else. *Koinonia* is the sharing of a common life. Whatever creates that common life creates fellowship, for fellowship is that life! When we come into that state of life with God, joy overtakes us, captures us, enters into us and radiates through us. That is what God’s word says and I believe it! And ever since I began to believe it I have been a

willing captive. Thank God for fellowship! Thank God for joy!

The apostle of radiant love, John, in his first epistle writes about the wonderful word of life and the life of the wonderful Word. He declares that “this life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony.” He identifies the life. “We here declare to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us.” You must distinguish between the word of life which was made visible and the words which John writes in description of that life. The word of life dwelt with the Father from the beginning.

There is a difference between a person and the testimony of another about that person. An individual is never the same as a declaration about him. We will become guilty of a tragic error if we equate the apostolic account with the word of life. It would be like mistaking a history book for George Washington, or a cookbook for a cake. John says, “What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we write this in order that the joy of us all may be complete” (1 John 1:3, 4).

It takes five words— “share in a common life”— to translate the one word *koinonia*. Fellowship is sharing in a common life. The common life is “that life which we share with the Father and with his Son.” The purpose of John’s writing was not to give life but to inform us that we had it so we could be wholly surrendered to joy. “This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life. It is addressed to those who give their allegiance to the Son of God” (5:13). *Koinonia* is a glorious sharing of life with the Father and Son, and with all others who have that life. It is a thrilling, overwhelming entering into all that is involved in being related to the Father, that is, in being one of His children. Whatever makes us a child of God brings us into the fellowship, into the life we share with the Father.

It at once becomes obvious that it is silly to talk about this fellowship as something we can extend or withdraw. It is quite as absurd and asinine to think of it as merely a mutual relationship to *things*. Fellowship is not, for example, allowing someone to share in the use of your lawnmower. “Yes, you may use my mower but if you do not treat it with proper concern I’ll withdraw your privilege.” Fellowship is related to life and it hardly seems quite as rational for a mother to say, “Yes, I bore you into this world and if you do not behave as you ought to do, I’ll withdraw you and put you back where you came from.” One cannot even put a living chicken back into an egg. How can he think of putting a child of God out of the divine family.

The expression “withdraw fellowship” is not in the Bible and for a very good reason. Fellowship is a state created by God. One enters it by the new birth exactly as he begins to share in the family life by his original birth. Anything which men can extend or withdraw is probably not too important spiritually, and could be merely the result of human whim or caprice. One does not enter life by vote of his fellows, and as long as he is living with joy) whether they recognize him or not, does not necessarily affect either his origin, destiny or wellbeing.

All history attests that generally those who have been put out of synagogues are the purest and best, far better than those who remained. Heretics are simply heroes ahead of their time. Saints are “cannoneered” in one generation and canonized in the next. The monuments we behold above the bodies are frequently made of the same stones hurled at them by our fathers.

To be excluded by the smug and self-righteous who consider themselves the favorites of God and the pets of heaven, may actually be the best thing that can happen to a genuinely spiritual person. If a plant starts growing until it fills the solarium it will always be stunted at that level unless it has the good fortune to be placed (or thrown out) in the yard where heaven becomes the limit of height.

Of course this is not intended to offer comfort to cranks and eccentrics who suffer from a martyr complex and exert every effort to make their presence a bore so they will be evicted and can complain of mistreatment and persecution of “pseudo-saints.” This is often a case of the pot and kettle calling attention to the darkened condition of each other. Most of us will be difficult enough to get along with at best and we will gain little by specializing in the art, or making a science out of it. We should heed the admonition to “aspire above all to excel in those gifts which build up the church” (1 Cor. 14:12).

To “share in a common life” does not mean that all participants will have the same degree of knowledge or understanding because then we could never be in the fellowship with the Father and Son. It does not demand that all be equally perfect. Those who predicate fellowship upon conformity or mutual attainment seal their own doom. The basis upon which they grant recognition to others will force God to withhold it from them. There are some fairly ignorant people in fellowship with the Christ, and some people in Christ who are fairly ignorant about fellowship. We should be generous in receiving others, knowing as we do what God has had to endure in order to let us “share in the common life.”

Those factions and parties which have pressed *the life* out of the sharing always suffer from the same delusion. They think that by an act of providence they have been allowed to find the key to the mystery of divine affection and because of their use of it have become the chosen people. They have the right combination, they have stumbled upon the secret code. Standing with God depends upon being correct about the one thing that really counts. That one thing differs with each party. That is why there are so many of them! It’s a little like a jigsaw puzzle. You can never see what it looks like because every one has his own part, and all stubbornly refuse to lay theirs down until every one else does first. In some cases there are those who think they have the whole puzzle. To them the kingdom of heaven for which

Jesus died and over which he resigns is a very small territory.

Sometimes the partisan test relates to what you are for. More frequently it has to do with what you are against. A man is not loyal because he loves Jesus with all his heart and seeks to surrender wholly and unreservedly to him. He must also have the right quirk to be recognized by other members of the family. He cannot be saved by grace through faith. He must have something else, something of his own, if he is admitted to the inner circle and allowed to participate in the party conclaves. It is not sufficient to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, to pray without ceasing and to bestow all of your goods to feed the poor in deep love and affection. You are still a “brother in error” unless you can parrot the party line and give the right answer when asked for the password. Then you are no longer in “error” for to be in error means to be in Christ with all of your heart, but without the identity card certified by the “powers that be” to whom every soul must also be subject. You must not only know the Savior of all men but the shibboleth of some men, for to be right is to be endorsed by the right people!

The sad thing about all of this is that it leaves the devotees of the party always hungry, emaciated and starving. And they are like all who are hungry with a gnawing at their vitals—snappish, quick-tempered, ready to take offence. They crave something but they cannot define it. Like a sick man who dreams of some tantalizing food which he cannot describe) they realize that despite all of their protestations of loyalty their lives are vapid, vacuous and vain.

They must be always alert that they do not walk into a trap. They must be fearful, frightened, suspicious of their brethren who make overtures of goodwill. They must never associate with one of another party enough that they get to liking him. When they demonstrate some growing sense of true bigness of spirit they must always go back and cover their tracks, like a

fleeing criminal or fugitive from justice who scatters pepper along his trail to elude the bloodhounds. For the hounds of the heretic detectors bay relentlessly at the heels of all who seek to escape from the shackles of the schismatics. And it is not pleasant to be torn and ripped to bits in bloody jaws before you reach the higher ground, when your longing eyes see the hills of freedom beckoning. It is especially ironic when the hounds are the ones you trained yourself to overtake others who once sought to escape.

I can tell you what is lacking in the lives of all of these. No partisan, no sectarian, no factionalist, no front man for any cult on earth, can have it in its fulness. It is joy— the joy! And it comes from sharing the common life with the Father, the Son, and *all of the saints*. To think you can experience this by being a member of a faction with its artificial, arbitrary, authoritarian tests of fellowship, loyalty and faithfulness, is like trying to dip the ocean dry with a thimble or drink the water of life from a sieve. To the extent that you make fellowship a relationship to *things* you squeeze the life out of it. *Then it is no longer the life but the things you hold in common.* And the party becomes a corpse with a necklace clutched in fingers stiffened by rigor mortis. You may have the form but the power is gone. It is like a woman who cannot find a husband and marries a wooden cigar store Indian! He will take up as much space in the living-room as a real man, but there's no life— and no joy!

To all who have been feeding upon the dried and shriveled husks of partisan antagonism, whose lives have been circumscribed and throttled by the party spirit instead of enriched and ennobled by the Holy Spirit, whose only associates are those who agree, whose only companions are those who conform, we issue an invitation to join the whole family of God and share in the reunion of all of the saints. Do not forget that those who band together because they share in the same knowledge actually stay together because they share in the same ignorance.

Break the lock on the party door which keeps you confined to your little room and move out into the Great Hall with the rest of the family. Free yourself from the uncommon life and start sharing in the common life. Fill your spiritual lungs with the tingling air of fellowship in Christ and see what happens as your heart beats faster and you fill up with joy! Not the false joy that things bring but the real joy the Savior shares. Joy! The Joy!

The Supreme Court

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[Abstract]

Any communication whether divine or human, must be interpreted to be understood. The constitution of the United States creates a series of courts, culminated by a Supreme Court as the court of final appeals, and empowers these to be the authoritative interpreters of the intent and meaning of the law. What court can sit in judgment to determine the meaning of the revealed will of God and enforce sanctions upon those who do not concur in the ruling and refuse on the basis of conscience to subject themselves to it? Perhaps no other question in the long, and sometimes sordid, history of Christendom has been fraught with graver consequences than this. We propose to approach it by setting forth a number of propositions in sequence to which we invite the attention of our readers.

1. It is impossible to transfer an idea directly from one mind to another without a medium of communication recognized and accepted by both.

2. The most common and effective means of communication utilized by man consists of language.

3. Language employs words as the symbols of ideas, and all words act as bridges upon which ideas cross from one mind to another.

4. Words may be either spoken or written. The first medium makes use of certain sounds and the second of certain characters to which definite values are attached.

5. The receiving mind must accept and evaluate the language of the conveying mind and honestly weigh it to deduce from it exactly that which the other seeks to convey. This is interpretation.

Revelation of God

6. Revelation is the uncovering of the thoughts in the divine mind and the making of them available to the thought processes of the human mind. Interpretation is the application of those processes to the communication in an attempt to determine what is meant. Revelation is what God said; interpretation is what we think he meant by what he said.

7. Since the word of God was to be of universal application and benefit, and not limited to scholastics or philosophers, it was revealed in the common language of universal currency in its day.

8. Our problem of interpretation is augmented by our remoteness in time, place and circumstance from its original presentation.

9. Since the message was conveyed in the language of the day and its connotation was the same as that involved in the common affairs of life, the word of God must be interpreted by the same rules as govern the interpretation and understanding of any other literature of that day and place.

10. The deductions from the sacred writings made under such conditions and circumstances may fairly be called the doctrine of divine revelation.

Interpretation of Scripture

11. For all *practical* purposes it is not the constitution but the interpretation placed upon it which becomes the functioning and governing law. Men will act in accordance with what they determine is implied in the law.

12. A careful study of the divine revelation will demonstrate that God has authorized no *official* interpreter or *official* interpretation of that revelation.

13. The nature of the church must be correctly understood or we will use the body to defeat the purpose of the head. We believe that there are at least three false concepts of the nature of the church which have helped to thwart the divine plan of the ages. These are as follows:

(A) The church is a monolithic structure with a universal authoritarian head who is recognized as the official interpreter of the will of God.

(B) The church is a guardian of orthodoxy with traditional views and interpretations expressed in a written or unwritten creed recognized as the norm or pattern and identified with the one faith. This sets up an official interpretation. In the episcopal form enforcement is upon a diocesan level through bishops. In the congregational form, elders or other local officials are invested with authority to interpret, define and decree what shall be recognized as the official doctrines or dogmas and no dissent or appeal from their decision can be made.

(C) The church is purely a social agency with interest primarily directed toward alleviation of physical or temporal distress, and the changing of climate and environment. Under such arrangement the revelation from God is interpreted pragmatically, that is, whatever works to achieve the desired end, or seems to do so, is considered to be the will of God for the age. Whereas the first two abrogate freedom, the third advocates

license in interpretation.

14. We hold that the church is an organism and not an organization, and that it is not composed of sects, denominations or parties, but of individuals who are joined by the Holy Spirit unto Christ as the head. These comprise a unit or unity because they are joined to the head. Their unity is found in him. But they are born into the relationship as individuals, they continue to be responsible and will eventually be judged as individuals. No one can impose his interpretation upon others. The supreme court is the individual conscience, enlightened by an honest and unprejudiced investigation of the truth. For this reason, and to ensure justice, we will be judged by the law with which we judge others. This provides a restraint against all undue stringency.

15. By the same token anarchy will be avoided because each person is restricted in exercise of liberty by the conscience of his brother (1 Corinthians 8:7-13; Romans 14:7-20). No one can be coerced into doing a thing as God's will further than he can see and understand it to be God's will. This holds forth no hope for those who deliberately rebel against God's will, but it provides for men to continue in the fellowship while they seek to grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.

Approach to Authority

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[Abstract]

Seldom indeed is a thinker in the theological realm able to divest himself of all concern for the immediate segment of that sphere with which he is more directly affiliated. We survey the world through a porthole rather than from the lofty summit of a mountain and while we may see afar we can never denude ourselves of the environment which limits the sweep of our vision. Perhaps it is best this way for it creates a sense of dependence upon each other if any of us is ever to gain a knowledge of the whole spectrum. We must rely upon the testimony of others who are also looking through their portholes.

Our situation or station is created by many factors. Not all are by voluntary choice directed toward a planned position. Many attitudes are the result of a fortuitous concourse of events which tend to shape our destinies in ways of which we do not dream. Thus we can never divorce ourselves from the history which reveals the origin and unfolding of the movements with which we are allied. This fact alone provides a sufficient ground for directing our attention to the current status of a restoration movement which received its greatest impetus in the early part of the preceding century under the brilliant leadership of such men as Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

This movement grew in response to the need for a solution of the problem of increasing schism and division within the

ranks of the army of believers in Jesus. It was described as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Today it is one of the most divided movements on the American religious scene. From the date of its first division it lost its potency as a unitive force. From that day forward a dubious world would ask how those who could not stay together could expect to bring all others together. It is obvious that the heirs of this movement must solve the problem of division among themselves or forfeit any significant role in the unfolding drama of unity discussion.

To reach a solution to the problem these heirs must go back to the initial division and heal this primary breach. Until this is done the movement will remain divided. The division cannot be healed by simply patching up later rents in each segment while ignoring the fact that these segments are themselves indications of a major disruption. Such a course would be symptomatic of the sectarian spirit. Yet it must be admitted that this latter has been the only approach to which the divergent groups have given their unstinted efforts and energy.

The several parties have employed only one type of confrontation in the past— partisan debate— in which the main objective was not to produce peace but to defend as wholly justifiable the positions of the respective factions. Every scripture related to these positions has been examined and a great many which have not the remotest bearing on the issues have been wrested and twisted from their context by forensic champions whose aim was victory rather than virtue. It is apparent that what is needed is a bold new approach to the problem which places relationship in Jesus above every thing which creates a tension or strain upon that relationship. Such an approach will permit a candid examination of all facets of the problem, divested of hereditary and traditional emotionalism. It will preserve a sense of brotherhood regardless of the circumstances which affect the brethren.

Such an approach will avoid the use of outgrown and worn

cliches and slogans. It will not expect to arrive at a solution by over-simplification. These methods have been tried for a century without effect except for encouraging partisan rivalry. Rather, it will seek by depth and penetration to analyze and understand the motivations of all, while constantly refusing to think of any one fragment or splinter as the one body to the exclusion of others. It is in this spirit we propose to make certain suggestions to all of our brothers in the restoration movement leading to a re-examination of certain traditional attitudes and assumptions in the hope that we can inaugurate steps leading toward our mutual goal of "peace on earth to men of goodwill."

There are now many facets to our problem but in the mind of the average member these are all an outgrowth of an original attitude toward instrumental music employed in public corporate expressions of praise to God. This is exhibited in the tendency to distinguish between our major groups as "instrument brethren" and "anti-instrument brethren." It is seen in the tracts and other documents of the latter who make a capella singing a mark of identity of the "true church." It is observable on sign boards along public highways which use parentheses under the title "Church of Christ" to enclose the modifying term "Vocal Music."

No one can deal with our divisiveness in the restoration movement without facing up to this issue sooner or later. Yet to do so hurls one into the thick of an emotional turmoil in which any genuine attempt at pacification generally results in the would-be peacemaker suffering attack from all sides. The reason for this is obvious. The instrument has become a symbol for a great many invisible feelings, including subconscious fears, frustrations and animosities on the one hand; and freedom, assertiveness and aggressiveness upon the other. It is the tangible token of certain intangible evils or values.

To one group it is a mark of apostasy adopted in rebellion against the will of Jesus and they would as soon see Satan

speaking from the platform as an organ on it; to the other group it is an insignia of liberty in Christ Jesus and they would as soon see “Old Glory” snatched rudely from the flag staff and trampled in the mire as to relinquish this emblem of victory over “reactionaries.” No doubt the careful student of human behavior can see reasons for regret that people would so closely identify a human invention with either Satan or Jesus, but we must face conditions as they are, and not as we would have them. This entails recognition of the fact that men do not always respond rationally to religious involvements.

The leaders of both sides affirm that instrumental music is not the real problem. All agree it is but an overt symptom. They disagree in their diagnosis of the underlying malady, of course, but all learnedly agree there is one. This raises the question as to why there should be so much attention given to the instrument. I suspect that it is simply because it can be seen and heard. It is visible and audible. A philosophy cannot be seen or heard in a man’s heart, and even when expressed the masses may not grasp it. But those who must have criteria for loyalty— whether seeking for signs of secularism to avoid, or symbols of security to accept— can readily see a piano, and they can flee from its presence, or bask in its nearness, and thus feel they are pleasing God by the action in which they engage, whether flight or fancy!

Sooner or later every reformer of the restoration movement must face this issue. When he does so he is generally finished insofar as effective impact is concerned. We propose to face it squarely. Do we thus invite murder or suicide for our simple effort of reform? We do not think so, and we will tell you why. It could be that we are mistaken in judgment and that our brethren in all segments will see fit to banish us to that religious Siberia where we can be marked off as a force to be reckoned with. Instead, we have high hope that our exploration of a thorny problem may encourage a sensible approach. Here are the reasons for “the hope that lieth in us,” on this issue.

1. We do not intend to engage in shallow partisan debate as a means of settling our difficulty. It is no exaggeration to say that we have read at home and abroad enough books on instrumental music to fill a twenty foot shelf. Many of these have been recorded debates. A great many were products of men within our restoration movement, but some of the best were written by Presbyterians and Primitive Baptists. We seriously doubt that any undiscovered scripture can be found to bolster a new argument either pro or con. Our hope of surviving where others have perished is by rising above the whole arena of controversy which has engaged the thought of all on both sides. If the instrument is but a symptom we shall penetrate behind the symptoms rather than fight over them.

2. We shall not allow our fellowship in Jesus to be affected by either the ongoing study or its outcome. I am a brother to all of God's children in a relationship so transcendently superior to all who compose it, or to any views, opinions or interpretations to which they cling, that I steadfastly refuse to allow it to be negated or denigrated by any interpretation of those who differ with me in Christ. I am not told how to treat instrumental music but I am told how to treat my brothers, and I shall not allow the silence of the scriptures to drown out the voice of God in my consciousness. A brother in Christ is much more important to me than any view he may hold as to vocal or instrumental music. Man was not made for music but music was made for man. I shall not destroy him for whom Christ died with my view about music.

3. The real hope lies in the spirit of our present generation. There is a revolt against the stereotyped, sterile and static attitude which characterizes all of our feuding factions. Earnest young men and women are tired of being regimented and forced into a lock-step on the partisan treadmills. There is a spirit of adventure in the air which distinguishes between loyalty to the Son of God and fidelity to the traditions of the fathers. Men are sick of the glib answers and shallow responses which they are

expected to swallow simply because they once proved effective in silencing ignorant protagonists. They are weary of hearing over and over the answers to questions which no one is asking. It is time for an examination in depth of things which we have accepted without question, not always because they were part of the apostolic tradition, but sometimes because they were part of our own traditions.

Such an examination will reveal that the restoration movement did not divide over the missionary society or instrumental music when these were introduced, nor for a long time thereafter. The former was first started in 1849, and the latter was brought into a congregation in 1859. It was not until 1889 that it was first proposed that those who endorsed these and other “innovations,” should “no longer be regarded as brethren.” Even then division did not occur because those who had abandoned sects with their creedal tests were reluctant to create new parties with factional standards. Finally, agitation from both sides aroused such bitterness that the fabric of brotherhood was strained until it gave way.

Those who sought to inject instrumental music acted from various motivations. Some were anxious for the movement to progress with the cultural changes taking place as the nation passed from a frontier society to an industrial complex. Others were frightened at the thought of losing the more “respectable” members to the glamorous sects about them. Increasing numbers and wealth made possible the erection of more ornate meetinghouses and these encouraged the formulation of a ritualistic approach to worship. Feelings ran high, families were divided, neighborhood tensions increased. Men vowed that instruments would be brought in only over their dead bodies. Locks were changed on doors, and these were battered off with sledge-hammers. Conspirators met and spirited an instrument in at night under cover of darkness, the opposers entered the following night and battered the offending organ into bits with their axes.

Worshippers were given an option of worshipping with the organ or leaving the meetinghouse they had helped to build. When they went forth under this ultimatum they frequently entered civil suits to recover the property. Courtrooms were filled to overflowing with witnesses and spectators, and whatever the decision, animosity reigned in the hearts of many, only to be passed on in unabated measure to their children. The camp of the saints was split into clashing clans and warring tribes whose followers spoke sneeringly of others as "Progressives" or "Antis." When an occasional gentle soul remonstrated, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be," he was accused of soft-peddalling, compromising, or being wishy-washy. Both sides denounced him because he would not parrot the party line. Only the debating champions were popular. These were trained professional warriors, skilled in strategy, apt at ambush, and talented with the tomahawk. They were generally imported and they taunted, threatened and challenged the opposition. Many were fluent on the platform and facile with the pen. They were out for victory while protesting their love for the truth and praying for the triumph of right. If division had not occurred before their arrival it followed soon thereafter. Brotherly love was stabbed to the heart in their partisan encounters and left gasping, writhing and twitching on the sanded floor of the arena.

Now, almost a century has passed and we can with a greater degree of calmness survey the scene of battle and assess the changes that have taken place. One thing is apparent at first glance. The seeds which were sown in the original division have continued to bear fruit, with both sides suffering further fragmentation and splintering. The arguments now used to defend the use of instrumental music are not the ones employed at its inauguration, and the basis of justification varies from one area to another. A new generation has grown up whose members have come into parties well organized. These find the instrument or the opposition to it already entrenched and a part of the party program to be accepted without question. They are surprised that there was ever any disagreement over such a matter, and

surprised too to learn that they are heirs of a restoration movement. The interest in such things as instrumental music must be kept alive by the preachers. It has become a battle of mercenaries, rather than of the enlisted men in the ranks.

But the whole ecclesiastical atmosphere has changed. Once there was open sectarian hostility as circuit riders went forth to do or die for their denominational establishments. Now the whole religious world regards division as the scandal of Christianity in our day. There is a continual exploration of the means by which schism can be eliminated. Mergers rather than divisions, make the newspaper headlines. The world is asking for the prescription of peace from those who claim to be following the Prince of peace. Any movement selfishly talking only to itself, or with nothing to offer except an example of strife, is strangely out of place, and is as irrelevant to the present as a Dodo or pterodactyl.

The heirs of the restoration movement must solve the problem of division among themselves or forfeit all right to sit as peacemakers at the council tables of our day. It will not do to freeze our schismatic state at its present status, or declare a moratorium on further division. It is imperative that we remove and repair the breaches among ourselves as proof that it can be done. At present this seems absolutely impossible to most of our brethren because they can see only one alternative. Either those who use instrumental music must give it up and confess that its use is a sin, or those who oppose it must cease their opposition and condone its use. In other words it appears that the only terms of reunion are absolute surrender of one party to the other.

So long as this type of rationalization prevails little will be achieved. There will be an occasional debate between the more rabid advocates of the various viewpoints. Some will desert one party for the other, but the reasons will generally be social, rather than conviction as to the instrument. When a defector is

received into the opposing ranks there will be a brief flurry of sectarian hope that soon the whole problem will be solved by wholesale capture but a little time will serve to dispel this forlorn partisan expectancy. If the current parochial attitudes prevail the various factions are doomed to a war of attrition until Jesus comes. But they need not prevail. They do so only because superficial thinkers have not sought for another alternative. There is one! It consists not of surrender of one party to another party but in the absolute surrender of both (or all) to the Spirit of God.

It was loss of this Spirit, and not instrumental music, which created the first division in our ranks. Certainly instrumental music placed a strain on our relationship, and will still do so, but it was failure to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace which produced the separation. Until we restore that unity and that peace we are not in any shape to discuss differences, and the increasing number of divisions in all of our segments is proof of this fact. We can never attain the unity of the Spirit by debating our differences on instrumental music, but we must regain the unity of the Spirit in order to logically discuss our problems as brethren. I propose to enter more deeply into our task than the superficial attention usually given to it. There is real hope in such a course!

That hope lies in what has previously been stated, that all admit that instrumental music is not the basic cause of division but a symptom of that cause. What is the real cause? It is an attitude toward the authority of Jesus as expressed in the revealed word of God. That attitude is the direct result of a philosophy, or principle of interpretation. When instrumental music was introduced and parties crystallized about the pro and con of its use, these took a position by rallying around one of two standards, each of which represented a particular postulate as to interpretation.

To put it in another fashion, when the conflict was joined,

each side withdrew to prepared fortifications upon hills facing each other across the valley. There they have remained to this day with each insisting that his hill is the promised land to be defended at all costs. Actually the valley between where men meet as brothers in spite of differences may be the true vantage point for God's people. Here is a brief statement of the two divergent views.

1. Whatever is not specifically authorized in scripture as an expression of worship is forbidden, and its introduction and employment constitutes a sin against the authority of Jesus.

2. Whatever is not specifically forbidden in scripture as an expression of worship may be allowable and permissible provided that it does not violate some other clearly stated principle of divine revelation.

Not all of those who use instrumental music in this day justify it upon this basis. Many deny that it is used in worship, as worship, or as an expression of worship. Some affirm it is merely an aid to keep the pitch as a tuning fork is an aid to securing the pitch. Occasionally these demonstrate the inconsistency of their argument by playing the instrument while taking up a collection or during a prayer. We are convinced this is primarily an accommodative position to which strategists have felt forced to retire in some areas and is more for public consumption than for private conviction. Generally speaking we believe that the two statements above are a fair exposition of the ground for its original introduction and the opposition thereto.

We must not forget that there is a difference between the authority of Jesus Christ and any philosophy of that authority in the light of which we examine it and seek to implement its requirements in our lives. The authority of Jesus is a fact created by the infinite source of all authority. It is divinely bestowed and is unalterable by any human power or by any combination of human powers. A philosophy of interpretation is adopted by

man, and is therefore adaptable in the light of increasing wisdom and deepening insight. But the authority of Jesus is as unvarying as the ordinances of sun and moon. There is as much difference between them as there is in the planetary system and the telescope through which that system is studied, or the human body and a fluoroscope through which fleshly organs are examined. Both telescope and fluoroscope are useful instruments provided one does not confuse the means with the object and conclude that because he cannot improve upon the planets or the human body he cannot improve upon the telescope or fluoroscope either.

At this juncture the casual reasoner will interject the question "Why do we need a principle of interpretation? Why can't we just accept the Bible for what it says and forget about modes of approach to authority and revelation?" Although the answer to this is apparent little will be gained by attempting to explain it to those who ask such questions and compassion can probably be better bestowed upon them indirectly since it does not require so much expenditure of time or tension. One might as well enquire, "If man wants to visit Mars why does he not just go, without messing around with space capsules and satellites?" Obviously the reason he cannot do so is because he is human. No doubt an angel would have no difficulty at all in making interplanetary visits without benefit of a capsule, but angels are not human beings. Or, should we state that in reverse?

Because we are human we even have to seek for a means to understand what other humans are trying to say to us. The Constitution of the United States is written in rather plain and unadorned fashion but the Supreme Court has been trying to interpret it almost since the day it was written. Even among the trained and scholarly men on the bench there is seldom a unanimous consensus. Undoubtedly this results from divergent philosophies of interpretation but without an approach to understanding there would be no understanding attainable at all. How much more must we utilize our rational powers to

understand the will and purpose of God.

We do not question but what God could have so constructed us that he could have imposed the divine will upon us and forced our automatic and involuntary response to it, but to do so he would have had to make us less than human. The granting of the right of choice meant the possibility of making the wrong choice. The creation of rational beings meant they could act irrationally. The divine will is not imposed but the thoughts of the divine mind are exposed, for that is precisely what revelation means. We are forced to deal with these thoughts for they are a part of the body of truth. Coming from God they cannot possibly be in any other category. But we must face them as human beings, and in all the mistakes and frailties to which such beings are subject. We must encounter a divine communication without divine insight. Revelation is divine, but interpretation is human.

We must recognize the sovereign right of God to speak to us, to direct us, to demand obedience of us. But we must also realize that while his lordship is exercised in perfection, our understanding and execution of his will are not perfect. We must be always seeking and searching for the ideal. We can never count unto ourselves that we have arrived. It is because of this that grace and mercy are so precious unto us and our hope lies in our love for Jesus, our commitment unto him, and our willingness to do his will. Being human, we will out of our abiding affection for him, formulate a course of procedure for our lives based upon our understanding of his revelation.

One is not necessarily a rebel against the authority of Jesus because he cannot in good conscience concur with my postulate relative to the understanding and interpretation of that authority. He may be honestly striving to know and do the will of God to the full extent of his present knowledge and ability. If so, we have a great deal in common, for that is precisely my status also. Neither of us will gain anything for the common

cause of him whom we both serve by assuming that the other is dishonest, stubborn or rebellious. In both cases such would be a false assumption. We will find it far more profitable to grant the integrity of one another and use this common ground as a basis for mutual aid and research.

We will also find it helpful to constantly remind ourselves of the difference between God and ourselves, a very necessary distinction which is frequently overlooked by those who engage in judging their brethren. Nothing else is more positively condemned by God's word than such judging, and yet no other sin is more frequently committed by those who claim to respect that authority. Unless we wish to be tried as "gods" and measured by a yardstick of perfect knowledge, infallibility of understanding, and unrepachable conduct, we had better quit playing at being God with our fellows, for with what judgment we judge we shall be judged. We are literally "writing our own ticket."

This brings us to an evaluation of the two divergent rules of interpreting the authority of Jesus Christ for our lives. Both of these rules are pre-suppositions. No one is so ridiculous as to say he can read either of them in the sacred scriptures. Both attempt to measure what God has said by something he did not say. Each is a pair of spectacles donned by men to aid them in reading the word of God. Each contains lens ground according to criteria which have been deemed to be correct. But spectacles are put on before one starts reading. In both cases men have searched the scriptures in an endeavor to understand the basis of authority and they have selected and tied together various scriptures which seem to substantiate and lend credence to the position they have adopted. But they are still spectacles and not the word of God. That they may help us even as do spectacles, goes without saying, but we need to be careful lest we fall into the error of thinking we can best exemplify the spirit of the Word by arguing about the respective merits of our spectacles.

Both rules are conclusions resulting from deductions and these deductions are themselves attempts to interpret the scriptures in order to determine a proper basis for interpreting the scriptures. Thus they actually stem from an attempt to peer behind the scriptures— to look through them by looking into them— and understand the intent and motivation of God, although using as tools in the process his various acts and words.

We will be asked, “Is not one of the rules safer than the other?” In plain language this is meant to enquire “Isn’t it better not to do a thing which may prove to be wrong than to do something which no one can prove is right?” This sounds good at first thought, but the moment you shift ground from dogmatism to safety you forfeit the whole argument based upon absolute authority. Safety is a relative term. Followed to its ultimate along a certain tangent it will result in doing nothing, because if one does anything he takes a chance. Men have been killed on almost every kind of job, or have been killed on the way to work. The safest thing, then, would be never to take a job, or, if given one, never go to it. Certainly one could never become an apostate who never accepted Jesus, and any person who does accept him might become an apostate. Shall we conclude it would be safer never to accept Jesus and eliminate the risk of apostasy?

Safety lies within the realm of human judgment but divine authority does not. One should accept and implement in his life what he conscientiously believes divine authority requires whether it appears safe to do it, or not. Careless and superficial thinkers will jump to the conclusion that we are here affirming that conscience is a safe guide, but the truly thoughtful will see that there is a great difference. Conscience is a monitor, or arbiter. It is no more the source of authority than a referee is in a football game, or an umpire is in a baseball game. If challenged, each must make appeal to a source of authority which all must recognize and accept or there can be no game.

Let us now come directly to our present state in the restoration movement. Let us face up realistically to the cleavage resulting from our initial division. We were once a united movement making a terrific impact upon the sectarian realm. We are now divided. We were brothers before we divided, we are brothers still, children of the same Father. What holds us apart? The answer lies in two divergent rules to govern our attitude and approach to the authority of Jesus. All of us recognize Jesus as the Son of God, all acknowledge his authority in heaven and upon earth. All of us seek to do his will, all want to please God, all crave to be with him forever. We are not divided over whether Jesus has absolute authority for all claim him as the Lord of life. We are not divided over whether the new covenant scriptures constitute a revelation from God, for we accept that as factual.

Our problem lies in the realm of human judgment as to how that revelation which we regard as an expression of authority must be applied in our lives. We have two well defined pre-suppositions for approach to the authority of Christ. These have not been given by his authority. The appeal to scripture for substantiating either of them is an appeal to the tenor or spirit of the word. They have been compiled through our deductions and formulated by our consciences, the rules appeal to us as being a valid approach for ourselves to the authority of Jesus.

Our past attempts to bind our deductions upon each other have been wholly unsuccessful. Our debates in which we have sought to define and defend our presuppositions as valid, and to convert all of our brethren to acceptance of them have proven to be futile. They have worsened rather than helped our condition. In this sad state of affairs many have despaired of our ever being able to recapture even a semblance of unity and have resigned themselves to the task of building up our various sects and parties with the hope that God will understand and take into consideration their ardent and unfulfilled longings for brotherhood. While I sympathize with such discouraged persons

I do not share either their resignation or pessimism. Our division is a scandal and a shame and I shall not fold my hands and conclude there is nothing to be done about the sin of our own sectarianism. I intend to do something about it in both word and deed.

But what can be done to restore a sense of brotherhood and oneness? Are we not staggered, stymied and stalemated? Have we not reached an impasse which provides no alternative except to cut and slash away at each other as rival factions until we force the surrender of one party or kill each other off? Suppose our real problem isn't the instrument, is it not true that as long as we have these divergent approaches to authority we must continue our fratricidal feuding? These are the questions asked by the sectarian in heart.

I have no doubt that the same questions in substance were asked by Jews and Gentiles at the time when Jesus was born. How could the circumcised be received in their insufferable arrogance by the uncircumcised? How could the uncircumcised be accepted in their foreignness to the covenants of God by the covenant people? There just simply was no answer. And then it happened! Here they were—raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places. The circumcised still had their circumcision, the uncircumcised were still uncircumcised, but they were made nigh by the blood of the cross, they were members of the same body and partakers of the same promises in Christ by the gospel! Study those last five words.

We are all of us already in Christ. We are there by the gospel! We are in Christ by his authority expressed in the dynamic of the good news! Whether we justify the use of instrumental music or oppose it we are in Christ and we are members of one body. We may not understand all God approves and God may not approve all we understand, but we are all members of God's family by the new birth. We have formed two parties (and more) but we were all baptized by one Spirit into

one body. Our unity lies not in what we accomplish but what God has accomplished for us.

But what about our divergent rules or principles for interpretation? Let us place them in proper perspective. Let us remember they are “ours” and not necessarily “His.” Let us not bind our deductions upon others farther than their own knowledge commends acceptance of them. But is not one of these correct and if so are not all bound to accept it and be governed by it? No one can be governed by something which he does not personally believe is correct. You cannot govern other free men by your own standards of correctness. But go back and study the two principles again and do so without bias. You may reach the conclusion that each is only partly correct. The authority of Jesus is absolute, but no human theory of it based upon deductions from the scripture need be so.

There is every evidence that both schools of thought realize that they cannot practically apply their rules in an absolute degree. Those who postulate the exclusiveness of silence are constantly called upon to explain and justify the things which they have adopted without specific mention or authorization. Those who accept the theory of the permissiveness of silence are ever seeking to lay down laws of restraint to control their membership. Both groups have engaged in mental gymnastics and semantic performances which entertain only their own members while amusing outside observers. Thus far both have been fairly successful because of the widespread indifference and ignorance of the masses. Both resent specific questions as to application of the rules, preferring their acceptance in generalities without examination. Both are in for stirring times in the future because of increasing intellectual status which will probe the fiat of the “infallible interpretation” of the party.

What can be done now to heal the gaping wound of a hundred years standing? There is much to be done. The first thing is to restore the right of every individual to go to the Word

of God for himself without benefit of clergy. The second is to make effective the function of congregational autonomy. This means that if a congregation of God's children decides to use instrumental music their right to make such a decision must be respected even by those who deplore the judgment exercised in reaching it. Those who choose to use the instrument do not give account to those who do not, but to the Lord. Men must be allowed to be answerable to him who is worshiped and not to other worshipers.

We dare not destroy men for whom Christ died over our views about instrumental music. Brethren who cannot see this issue alike and who worship in separate edifices because of their convictions should still regard each other as brothers. They should work together in such projects as do not require compromise or abdication of conscience. They should call upon each other in public meetings in spite of their differences, and should labor to narrow the chasm and reduce the tension between themselves. One need not sacrifice his personal attitude toward a thing to have brotherly love for one who does not share his views about it.

For reasons which appear to me to be good and sufficient I am opposed to the use of instrumental music in the public praise service of the saints. I shall not here detail the reasoning upon which I have reached that conclusion, but it will suffice to say that my position is more nearly that taken by J. W. McGarvey than any other person in the restoration movement. I realize that my position presents some problems to those who use the instrument when I go among them but I cannot compromise my personal conviction based upon my understanding merely to please men or to be popular, and I will not do so. Those who receive or welcome me must do so as I am, for I refuse to sail under false colors, or put on the mask. All of our factions have enough Pharisees and hypocrites without me contributing another to the number.

Occasionally, good brethren seek to soften the shock of my presence by introducing me with the words, "Brother Ketcherside prefers singing without the instrument." This actually does an injustice although I never allow myself to be bothered by it. My feeling on the matter goes deeper than mere personal preference. It has been reached after a great deal of prayer and research and is not a mere question of opinionated infatuation with an idea or attitude. My view is consonant with my goal and with the means by which I shall attempt to attain unto it.

But I shall steadfastly refuse to impose my views about this, or any other matter in the same category, as a test of fellowship or condition of brotherhood. No one is my brother because he does not use instrumental music, no one ceases to be my brother because he uses it. The only instrument through which I am related to my brothers is the cross of Jesus, and I shall allow no other instrument devised by man to break up the relationship created by the instrument designed by God to bring us together. When men forego the use of the instrument as a consideration for the feelings of those who cannot in good conscience condone it, I rejoice at the demonstration of their brotherly concern, but I would never impose this as a demand nor demonstrate an unbrotherly lack of concern for those of my brothers who do not think of it, or would not do it if they did.

I doubt that we will ever settle the problem by one side giving up the instrument, or the other side adopting it. Perhaps such a course would not settle our difficulty any way. It might actually intensify our troubles for a long time. But we can overcome the sin of schism right now. We can do it by declaring that we will not set up our philosophy as a measuring-reed for loyalty to Jesus. We can do it by refusing to permit instrumental music or anything else to keep us from loving our brothers, or from sharing and associating with them and helping them. We can do it by bringing both groups together for prayer and Bible study, perhaps on Wednesday nights. If the instrument is a

stumblingblock, forget about singing in these meetings. You do not need to sing every time you meet to pray or study. We will begin to grow together when we begin to associate together. Let's take steps now to end this senseless feud which our fathers began a hundred years ago. No one need give up a single conviction about the right or wrong of anything to share with others and treat them with a sense of decency and respect. No one thinks it is wrong to pray and study the Bible with others. Then here is something all of us can do together! If we do this we will demonstrate to the world that men who differ can be brethren. Why should a little handful of people meet for midweek study in one house while a few blocks away another little handful do the same thing— and all of them members of the same family? Rise above the littleness, intolerance and bigotry of the past. Act like mature men! We've been acting like children long enough! We have it within our power at this very moment to turn the tide of strife, sadness and sorrow which has dogged us as a people for a century. We can exhibit our oneness in Jesus and no one surrender a single truth he has ever held. Have you the courage and the vision to really face up to the prayer for unity of all believers as uttered by the Son of God— Jesus Christ our Lord?

Our problems of division in the restoration movement are not the only schismatic demonstrations among those who believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Historians have accorded one split the dubious honor of being titled "the great schism." It occurred in 1054 when Pope Leo IX of Rome and Patriarch Michael Caerularius of Constantinople excommunicated each other at the same time. The result of their reciprocal act was the East-West cleavage manifesting itself in the antagonistic Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. On December 7 of last year the successors to these usurpers of divine prerogatives took steps to heal the wound. Pope Paul VI in Rome and Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul each read a document voiding the excommunications.

I do not attach the same significance to this action as do many other observers. I am always glad when dissident factions make up after their quarrels, and I rejoice when my neighbors resume talking over the back fence after nine centuries of throwing their ecclesiastical garbage across it into the yards of each other. Unfortunately for those whose optimism is so unbounded, I cannot forget my history lessons, and I do not equate a mending of a big tear in the garment of the aging “mother of all sects” with the donning of a freshly laundered robe of righteousness by the chaste virgin espoused to Jesus. What interests me most is the changing climate which makes it almost essential that even rifts of long standing must be repaired by those who would speak with any hope of being heard by our modern world. Perhaps the impact of this will gradually seep into the consciousness of some of my brethren who are still talking to themselves and mistaking the echo of their own voices for a general “response.”

I thank God that I am a priest of God in my own right. No pope or patriarch can bind or loose anything for me. Only the chosen envoys of Jesus can do that and I can read their words for myself. I am not bound by the actions of my fathers nor the attitudes of my contemporaries. A hundred years ago our fathers denounced each other and excommunicated one another, making a test of fellowship out of something which God did not make a condition of salvation. Now I must personally face up to their action. I must decide for myself whether I shall be bound by their conclusions based upon a philosophy of interpretation by which they sought to implement the authority of Jesus. I must determine whether I shall continue to walk in the circumscribed sectarianism which resulted from their conflicting principles.

I know not what course others will take, but as for myself, let it be known that I have voided in my own heart the decree of excommunication made in the bitterness of partisan strife a century ago. I refuse to go to my grave and to the judgment, while “setting at nought my brothers” over their views related to

cups, classes, colleges, music, methods or movements. I am no longer brainwashed into believing that we can serve God in the restoration movement by each party putting factional salve on its own festering wounds or trivial abrasions. We will continue to be divided until we return to the place where we first defended schism as the way of righteousness and restore a genuine sense of brotherhood. I have spanned that chasm in my own soul and I invite the frightened cowering devotees of the cult of conformism to cross back and forth upon the same bridge. Then and only then, can you speak to an ecumenical world about unity based upon restoration.

In my heart I have banished the fears and phobias, the hates and hypocrisies; the despair and disillusionment, of ten long decades of mutual animosity. I do not deprecate the work of my sires. They did the best they knew how to do. But I will not perpetuate their mistakes in my own life nor hand on a heritage of habitual heartache to my children or my children's children. I shall love all of my brethren while realizing the imperfections of us all. I shall not confuse any approach to an interpretation of authority with the authority of my Lord. One thing I know and that is, he has placed me under obligation to nourish and cherish all of my brothers. On this point of authority there can be no question! It is not based upon silence but upon repeated assertions of the One who died for the sins of all of us.

Neither the use of instrumental music, nor opposition to it, has been made a condition of salvation by my Father in heaven. For that reason it will never be made a test of fellowship by me upon earth. I deplore its introduction and its present employment, both in purpose and in manner, but if it is to be made the ground of acceptance of one another, it will have to be by those who use it, for I refuse to reject them. They will have to constitute an instrument party, for I will never create an anti-instrument party. They are God's children. They are my brothers. I love them all. I will never allow any opinion or interpretation of mine to void my relationship with any of my

brothers in Christ. To do this would be to deny the plain authority of him to whom I am committed as the Lord of my life.

Introduction to Worship

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[Abstract]

Were these glittering vestments and soaring columns so absolutely essential to the cult of the manger-born God? —Israel Tangwill in “Italian Fantasies.”

Man is a “worshiping animal.” This is the verdict of the philosophers. The implication is that while there are many things man shares in common with other animate beings, in this respect he is in a class apart from the rest. Since animate creatures respond to needs and seek gratification for them, we must conclude, if this evaluation is correct, that man cannot be satisfied by indulging in food, drink and sexual relationships. There is a hunger which bread cannot assuage, a thirst which water cannot quench, and a longing which physical intimacy leaves unabated. Jesus put it very simply: “Man does not live by bread alone.”

Theodore Parker, in “A Lesson for the Day” said, “Yet, if he would, man cannot live all to this world. If not religious he will be superstitious. If he worship not the true God he will have his idols.”

There is a difference between worship and religion. The first belongs to man because he is man; the second belongs to him because he is fallen man. Religion literally means “to bind back,” and if man had never separated himself from God by sin,

he would have needed no religion. Like the clothes which cover our bodies, religion which covers our spirits, is a badge of our shame. Instead of being proud of either we should be humbled by the thought of how naked we would be without them. Worship belongs to man because of his nearness to God, religion because of his distance from God. Worship is the longing cry to God across the chasm which sin created, religion is the bridge which spans that gulf. For that reason, worship must always be essentially internal, while religion, like any other bridge, will be external.

The problem of dealing with “worship” in a Biblical context is intensified by the fact that so many different original terms have been rendered by the word, and the distinctions are thereby either blurred or lost. Perhaps it will enhance our understanding of, and simplify our approach to the meaning if we begin with the English word and determine its significance. The Anglo-Saxon ancestor of our term was *weorthscipe*, and even the casual reader can see enfolded in it the word “worth.” Literally it means to attach worth or value, and thus, to regard as worthy. By extension, it easily came to mean to pay homage, to revere.

Worship seeks to express itself openly, but the discriminating student will detect the difference between the form in which it is expressed and the worship itself, just as there is a distinction to be made between love and its expression. Worship is not necessarily restricted to a divine being, for man attaches great worth to many things. He may revere that which created him, or that which was created. But it is axiomatic that the more man worships the more he becomes like the object of his devotion. The character of that object, or the character which he attaches to it, whether genuine or unreal, will mould his own character and be reflected in his conduct and attitudes.

To avoid becoming unduly tedious we will come directly to some of the terms used in the new covenant scriptures which are

rendered “worship,” especially in the King James Version. We crave your patient consideration of these.

1. The first is *doxa*, which is translated “worship” only in Luke 14:10. Jesus observed how those invited to a feast hurried to secure seats near the head of the table to make it appear they were special dignitaries. Since a certain protocol was followed in assignment of places, he urged those who were invited to take the remotest places. The one who invited them would publicly insist that they “go up higher,” and the conclusion is, “Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.”

The word *doxa* is from *dokeo*, to seem, and literally means “an opinion or estimate.” It is found in our words orthodoxy, right opinions; and heterodoxy, other opinions. Eventually it came to refer to the honor or glory which resulted from a proper estimate or opinion. Thus it is rendered glory 133 times, honor 6, glorious 6, praise 4, dignity 2, worship 1. It is obvious that it means “honor” in Luke 14:10.

2. Another interesting word rendered “worship” only once (Acts 17:25) is *therapeuo*. Paul affirmed to the Athenian philosophers that God did not dwell in temples of human construction, “neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything.” We get our word “therapy” from the original which is translated heal 38 times, cure 5. The heathen believed that their gods were actually sustained by the offerings presented at the cult temples and they were regular in their provision of food and delicacies, for a hungry god was an angry god. By contrast, the God that made the world and all things therein does not dwell in earthly temples, requires nothing from man, but rather “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” We do not supply the needs of God because he has no needs. The word “served” is a better rendering in this case.

3. Another interesting term, although a little farfetched in

this article is *neokoros*, which occurs only once in the sacred scriptures although it is used by Josephus in a different sense. In Acts 19:35, the townclerk of Ephesus, seeking to quell a riot by the guild of silversmiths, said, "The city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter." The word for "worshiper" is *neokoros*, which means "temple-keeper." This was an honorary title awarded to certain cities which thereby became the official centers for the cults formed around certain pagan deities. Ephesus was the recognized guardian or protector of Artemis, or Diana. "Worshiper" does not convey the right idea.

4. There is the word *eusebeo* which Paul uses in Acts 17:23, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." This term occurs in only one other place, I Timothy 5:4, where children and grandchildren are told "to *show piety* at home and requite (repay or recompense) their parents." It means to show respect or reverence for any who are deserving, and especially in a practical fashion. The people of Athens, according to their custom and understanding, had demonstrated a pious regard for "the unknown god" in the only manner they could, by dedicating an altar on which to offer him gifts and sacrifices. Paul commends them for their piety but proceeds to show that their demonstration is based upon ignorance of the nature of the God who made the world, and all things therein. He supplies for them the information required to properly appreciate the nature of God.

5. Again, there is the word *latreuo*, which means "to serve." It is translated serve 16 times, worship 3, service 1, worshiper 1. In Philippians 3:3, Paul writes, "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit." The English Version has it, "we whose worship is spiritual." In Acts 7:42 it is used of the worship of the planets. "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven." In Acts 24:14 Paul employs it for the worship of God. "After the way which they call heresy (sect), so worship I the God of my fathers." In both of these last two the

Revised Version has “serve.”

That there is a distinction between this word and the one most frequently translated worship is evident from their usage in the same context. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou *serve*” (Matt. 4:10). “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and *served* the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). But the fact that the word *latreuo* is translated worship shows the close relationship to worship and service. However, a word of warning is needed. Nowhere does the word of God speak of a “worship service.” The saints did not “attend services.” The word serve was related to actual work performed, for *latreuo* is from *latris*, a hired servant, and one does not hire a servant to merely go as an occasional spectator to watch a performance. There is a difference between serving and observing.

6. Now we come to the word which is most important of all in this study. It is *proskuneo*, and it is translated worship 58 times. It is never rendered by any other word at all. It is at once obvious that here is the principal word for “worship” and a failure to understand its implications will mean that we have completely failed in grasping our subject. It is a combined form from *pros*, towards, and *kuneo*, to kiss; and literally means to kiss the hand towards, that is, as an indication of homage, adoration, or respect. Thus it can be used for making obeisance to one in honor of his person; to prostrate oneself in reverence. It is an indication or demonstration of the attitude which one feels toward another who is worthy of great respect. It is recognition of worth-ship, or worthiness.

Perhaps we can best understand it by recounting those who are said to have worshiped. The astrologers who came to Jerusalem said, “We have seen his star in the east, and we are come to worship him” (Matt. 2:2). It is not in vain that the classic painting of their visit is called “The Adoration of the Magi.” “And when they were come into the house, they saw the

young child . . . and fell down and worshiped him” (verse 11). “And behold, there came a leper and worshiped him” (Matt. 8:2). “Behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped him” (Matt. 9:18). “Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him” (Matt. 14:33). “Then came she and worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord help me’” (Matt. 15:25). There is no need for multiplying these citations. In every instance there is simply a recognition of the power and presence of Jesus with reverence.

CHALLENGING CONCLUSIONS

Our purpose is not to press the technical aspects of this study but to reduce it to practical consideration so that all may profit. For that reason we shall make certain statements to challenge thought on the subject. If some of these seem rather daring at first glance we can only say that they represent our sincere views and we trust will be given earnest consideration and not be lightly discarded.

1. Of all the words translated “worship” not one is ever applied to anything we do when we assemble on the Lord’s Day.

2. The expression “the worship” is not in the new covenant scriptures and the very idea represented in our use of it is foreign to those scriptures.

3. The term “acts of worship” is not in the Bible. The very thought of “five acts of worship” is absurd and ridiculous in the light of the teaching of the Word.

4. Christianity has no sacred places. It has no sacred days. It has no sacred rituals. There are no holy places, seasons or liturgies, in a special sense, for those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Indeed it was just these truths about Christianity which made it distinctive as “the way.” It was loss of these truths which

has bound it in fetters and made it grind in the prison-house of theology, as the blind Samson was shorn of his strength when “he wist not that the Spirit had departed from him.” Nothing is more frightening than the fact that we have fragmented and compartmented our lives into some areas that are “spiritual” and others that are “secular.” The very purpose of the teaching of Jesus was to show that every facet and feature of life was to be worship rendered to God.

James S. McEwen, M. A., B. D., in “A Theological Word Book of the Bible” says: “A further consequence of Jesus’ teaching is that the barrier between sacred and secular, worship and daily living crumbles away. Since worship means the service of God, and this in turn implies loving one’s neighbor, it follows that every kindly act performed in this spirit and intention is an act of worship (Matt. 25:34-40; James 1:27).”

The implications of this are startling when brought to bear upon our traditions. Few who have been reared in those traditions will dare to think seriously about these implications. Many will become incensed at the questioning of that which has been regarded as “scriptural” simply because it is commonplace and accepted. However, we cannot really be loyal to Jesus by sweeping these things under our ecclesiastical rugs or by returning our heads to the sand in our theological deserts in the hope that they will go away.

MOUNTAIN OR CITY?

In John 4 we have the familiar account of the encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well of Jacob, near Sychar. She was an outcast Samaritan who had married five times and was then living with a paramour, but to her were revealed profound truths about God’s desire as related to worship. When she became convinced that Jesus was a prophet she pointed to nearby Mount Gerizim, where lay the ruins of the temple

erected by the Samaritans to be a rival to the one at Jerusalem. She said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (verse 20). Note the expression "*the place* where men ought to worship." "Place" is from *topos*, and the question is whether God confronts man in a sacred mountain or in a holy city. The answer of Jesus is plain. "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem." The hour was coming when there would be no need for pilgrimages to a sacred spot. Every spot touched by a "true worshiper" would be holy. "But the hour is coming when the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Spirit and truth would supplant mountain and city!

This is the only time the word *proskunetes*, *worshiper*, occurs in the scriptures. It is preceded by *alethinos*, *true*. In his concordance, Cremer says of this word "*Alethinos* defines the relation of the conception to the thing to which it corresponds—genuine." The true worshiper, then, is the person who grasps the truth that since God is Spirit, the only genuine worship is spiritual, and cannot be confined to places and things, which are temporal. Places become holy not because they are places but simply because believers are there; things become holy not because they are things but because they are used by believers. All things and all places are holy when the true worshiper touches them, but the sanctity is not in the places or things.

William Barclay aptly states it thus: "The true, the genuine worship is when man, through his spirit, attains to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring certain gifts. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of man, speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible."

This encourages us to mention what is probably a perversion of a favorite funeral text— John 14:2, 3. "In my

Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." It is generally thought that Jesus was here speaking of the eternal abode after his second coming, but the entire context is against such an interpretation of his words.

It is obvious that if heaven is a state of being with God, Jesus did not have to go and get it ready, for he declared that he would say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The "place" is where Jesus receives us unto himself and where we abide with him. And the key is in the word "mansions." These are many, that is there is one for each individual. The word for "mansions" is *mone* and it occurs but twice. Both times are in this speech. It means "place of abode" and in God's house (estate or economy) there is a place for all, but that place had to be prepared, and it required that Jesus go away to prepare it.

Thus he said, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." He then declared that, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." Upon being asked how he would come and manifest himself, Jesus made a significant reply, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (verse 23). Note that he does not say in this instance, "We will abide with him," but rather "make our abode with him." The word "abode" is *mone*, the word for "mansions" in verse 2, and these are its only appearances in the scriptures. The *place* prepared where God dwells is the human heart and he dwells in us in and through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I

go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (16:7). "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (14:16-18). The many mansions are the many hearts which have his commandments, keep them and love him.

God's only sanctuary since the cross is the human heart. The only acceptable meeting place for worship with God is worship itself. There is no sacred law, no sacred furniture, no sacred garments, no sacred building, sprinkled with the blood of dedication. Ours is "a new and living way," in which we "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10:25). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The sanctuary of God is always where his covenant is kept. In the days before the true tabernacle was pitched, the tablets of stone were kept in a sacred chest or coffer, first in a tent, later in a magnificent temple. But the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. The new covenant is not inscribed on tablets of stone, nor written with pen and ink. It is a spiritual covenant and must be kept in an abode of the Spirit. "And as for you, it is plain that you are a letter that has come from Christ, given to us to deliver; a letter written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, written not on stone tablets but on the pages of the human heart . . . Such qualification as we have comes from God; it is he who has qualified us to dispense his new covenant— a covenant not expressed in a written document, but in a spiritual bond; for the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life."

A knowledge of these truths always makes me smile inwardly, in spite of my sadness when men show me through their piles of brick and stone, while they glow with pride. We enter through the nave arcade, we see the apse, and then I am conducted into “the sanctuary.” The voice is lowered because of the dim light filtered through art windows. I am shown the matching aisle carpets and pew cushions and am taken to the front where “the communion table” and pulpit furniture received a special dedication at a recent meeting which was like “a high holy day.” Frequently I receive programs of elaborate dedication ceremonies. The only thing that impresses me is how far from Christianity and how close to Judaism most of my brothers are even yet.

When will we learn, that only the sprinkling of blood can consecrate and that God no longer consecrates gold and silver and stones graven by art and man’s device? Franklin W. Young of Princeton University, in his article titled, “The Theological Content of New Testament Worship” writes: “It is an historical fact that the New Testament Church had no *holy place*, spatially located, which could be designated as *the place* where God, in some special sense, was present to his people.” A bit farther on the same author aptly declares, “The phrase ‘going to church,’ is an impossible linguistic construction in the New Testament.”

Dr. Young is correct. We do not “go to church.” It is the church which does the going. If those who go were not the church before they left home they will not be the church after they get where they are going, regardless of what is said or done when they arrive. Our speech betrays us. We hear a great deal today about “churchly” things and one can hardly pick up religious literature without reading about “churchly structure.” This is the language of ecclesiasticism, not of the Holy Spirit. Our tongues are still confounded by our modern Babels.

Just as absurd is “the call to worship” which consists of intoning in the sepulchral pulpit accent— the holy voice— “I

was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord.” What is a call to worship among those who worship in spirit and in truth? Can we turn worship on and off like the timer on an automatic oven? When does the true worshiper stop worshipping so that he has to be started again. If he is not a true worshiper, is he worshipping or merely going through certain mechanical motions after the call is given? I can understand why a muezzin in a minaret would call the Muslims to prayer, but does Christianity have its muezzins and minarets?

When David wrote Psalm 122, Jerusalem was the holy city of God. One had to go up to the house of God. But today we are the house of God in Christ. “You are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you” (1 Cor. 3:16). “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you) which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). God only has one house on earth and you cannot go up to it if you are already in it and an integral part of it. Our brothers who talk about going up to the house of God are still moping in Judaism. They are living B.C. lives in an A.D. world. They are sitting on the premises instead of standing on the promises.

This much will serve as an introduction to what we shall further say about the Christian concept of worship in our issue next month. Let us close our first installment by pointing out that true worship is the tuning of the heart to throb in harmony with the pulsation of the infinite. Certainly it is proper for God’s family to gather about the thanksgiving table to show that they do remember him, but the place where they gather is not holy because it is a place. The holy place is the heart of a Christian who is risen with Christ; the most holy place is the risen Christ. To be in him is to be in God’s holy of holies where the Father meets his priests before the mercy seat.

Failure to realize this makes us mistake rushing about for reverencing God, attending meetings for attaining maturity in faith, and confusing mobility of the body for nobility of spirit. Because we have been taught, at least by implication, that the first and greatest commandment is loyalty to the Establishment, many of us “go to church” so much we do not have time to serve God.

Holy Places and Days

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[Abstract]

It is significant that Hebrew has one word to denote work, service and worship; in Biblical thought there is no watertight division between daily work and the adoration of God— R. Martin-Achord in “A Companion to the Bible,” page 472.

I remember the house where I was born. It was a two room miner’s shack with a summer kitchen at the rear. The summer kitchen was a small building, not attached to the house, where food was prepared in the hot days of midsummer to keep the house from becoming unbearably warm. I can also remember how the family lived in those faraway days. There were but four children then, the other two came later. I was the oldest of the lot.

Our mother came from immigrant stock, and had never gone to English school. My grandfather was from Copenhagen, my grandmother from Schleswig-Holstein. They lived in a tightly-knit Lutheran colony where only German was spoken. My mother met my father when she visited her married sister. He was a tall, devil-may-care young blade who had gone underground as a miner before he was sixteen years old. What caused this reserved Lutheran girl to be attracted to this youthful skeptic who laughed at God no one could ever tell. I think he was relatively considerate of her feelings since he regarded religion as being more adapted to women, most of

whom did not care to drink and fight anyhow, and were entitled to some diversion. And their marriage did take her from the fields where she had been plowing, harvesting, and spreading manure from the cattle shed since she was twelve.

It was a long walk to the Lutheran church edifice but as we came along mother carried us in her arms and had us christened, and was very careful about the selection of a godfather and godmother for each of us. But she could not carry us all, and as a new baby came along, the others were forced to stay home with our father. This was much more fun because we would go for walks through the woods looking for paw-paws (the poor man's bananas) in season, or he would make a kite and help us loft it into the sky, or spin tops or play marbles. All of this came to a grinding halt, however when our father was converted.

I was almost six when it happened, and I recall seeing him immersed in the pond behind the shaft where he went down each day to mine out the ore. He gave away his shotgun with which he always won every shooting-match from which they did not debar him, and also disposed of the violin on which he used to fiddle for dances (shindigs, he called them), and threw his sack of Bull Durham and little book of cigarette papers in the heating stove. The living-room (which was also the bedroom) smelled like a tobacco factory for a little while, and this gave our mother, who was angry because he had "joined the crazy Campbellites," a chance to vent the Teutonic spleen which was deeply buried, and after it had burst out, always left her in a flood of tears.

Life was altered for all us. Now we got up earlier on Sunday and had to wash with special care, because our ears had to pass inspection. We had to don clean clothing and be otherwise uncomfortable. We had our meetings in the front room of an uncle's house, and to get there we walked up the road past houses where the more fortunate youngsters hung on the fences and stuck their tongues out at us as we passed by.

This required making mental notes of those to fight on the next day, for we had already learned that you did not fight on Sunday. On especially good days the list grew quite long by the time we reached our destination, and we knew we'd have a full day of activity on Monday.

I remember the meetings. All of those present were relatives except one or two. The Lord's table was simply the library table with the kerosene lamp pushed back for "the emblems." At first we just used a biscuit left from breakfast for the bread, but later someone came through and objected that it was leavened, so after quite a discussion as to what should go into it we began to use "unleavened" bread. I say "we" instead of "they" because it was just sort of a family and all of us seemed to belong. The little rug with the big shepherd dog woven into it, which lay in front of the table, was the same one on which we wrestled during the week if our aunt was gone.

Too, there wasn't any "preacher," and when an occasional one came and was "given the time" it wasn't nearly so much like a family gathering. Generally he talked louder and stood up. We ordinarily sat and read and talked about the Bible like we visited at Thanksgiving or birthdays. Only when the time came to "wait on the table" did one arise and remind us that this was the real reason we had gathered. When summer came the room was too hot and crowded and the meetings were transferred to a walnut grove and held under the open sky. This was a most interesting experience for a little lad. There were dung beetles to watch on the ground, or squirrels chasing each other through the trees. Occasionally a soaring vulture set his wings and caught a thermal current and was wafted heavenward with no apparent effort. It was years later before I came to know and to love poetry and to learn that, "The groves were God's first temples."

I've written all of this to tell you again that any place where God touches a human life is holy ground, and that no place is a sanctuary merely because it is a place. The outstanding

feature of early Christianity was its recognition that all one had was God's when the heart was given to God. Any house was the Lord's house when the Lord's people were there. The common expression was "the church which is in thy house." The table of the Lord was the family table, and it was the table of the Lord simply because he was Lord of the table. No building was sacred because none was secular.

There was no "worship service" because all service was worship. The husband who loved his wife as his own body was worshipping God and so was the wife who revered her own husband. One who worked quietly for his living was fulfilling an appeal made in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 3:12). Those who gave to charity with all their heart and those who cheerfully helped others in distress were using gifts allotted by God's grace as certainly as those who publicly prophesied, taught or exhorted (Rom. 12:6-8). C. F. D. Moule in "Worship in the New Testament" writes, "Christian worship is indeed service — hard work— but it is the responsive service of obedience and gratitude, not of flattery or of 'mutual benefit.'"

Service to humanity, the relief of human suffering, the supplying of human need— this was the greatest expression of worship. Even before Christ came the prophets caught the vision of the real liturgy of life. Isaiah, in his dissertation on the kind of service God chooses, pointedly reveals that it is not fasting to quarrel and fight, to bow the head like a reed in the wind, or to spread sackcloth and ashes under one. "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Jesus refused to allow even the law of the sabbath to take precedence over humanitarian principle. When his hungry

disciples plucked ears of grain and were censured by the Pharisees for such unlawful action, he cited them to the case of David “when he was in need and was hungry.” David “entered the house of God, ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him.” Then our Lord laid down a principle of such magnitude that most of those who profess to be his followers even now are still stunned by it. “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.” He then added, “So the Son of man is lord *even* of the sabbath.”

Note that word “even.” To the Pharisees the attitude toward the sabbath was the test of one’s loyalty to God. Jesus repeatedly and habitually broke the sabbath law as they interpreted it. He showed that the need of man took precedence over law since law was given for the good of man. Keeping the sabbath was a part of ritualistic religion but relief of human need was an expression of worship, that is reverence for God, the pure and undefiled religion. The point is that our compassion and mercy must be as full and free and as continuous as that of God. No day must ever be made an excuse for withholding aid that may be provided. Nothing must ever become more hallowed than the provision for suffering humanity.

Of course, in the Christian concept, there are no special days. There can be no holy days for the simple reason that there are no unholy ones. In the primitive community of saints Sunday was not a taboo day. L. Duchesne says in his *Origin of Christian Worship*:

The idea of imparting to the Sunday the solemnity of the Sabbath, with all its exigencies and in particular its prohibition of work, was an entirely foreign one to the early Christians.

Many of the primitive saints were slaves, owned as chattels by the masters. They had to work a full day in the fields. Pliny the Younger, who was governor of Bithynia, wrote that the

Christians met very early in the morning. Tertullian said of the Lord's Supper, "We take it in assemblies before daybreak." This prompted A. B. McDonald to write in *Christian Worship in the Primitive Church*:

The choice of the early morning hour would be dictated largely by the fact that most worshipers were busy people and had their day's work to do as usual.

Augustus Neander, in his *History of the Training and Planting of the Christian Church* places the attitude of the disciples in proper focus in these words:

On the standing-point of the gospel, the whole life became in an equal manner related to God, and served to glorify him, and thenceforth no opposition existed between what belonged to God and what belonged to the world. Thus all the days of the Christian life must be equally holy to the Lord; hence Paul says to the Galatian Christians . . . "After that ye have known God, or rather (by his pitying love) have been led to the knowledge of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" . . . The apostle does not here oppose the Christian feasts to the Jewish, but he considers the whole reference of religion to certain days as something foreign to the exalted standing-point of Christian freedom, and belonging to that of Judaism and Heathenism.

E. De Pressense, whose work *The Early Years of Christianity* became a sensation, both when issued in France, and when translated into English by Annie Harwood-Holmden, writes:

There is no apostolic decree or episcopal ordinance appointing the celebration of the first day of the week any more than the watch-days or the hours of devotion. Sunday is the offspring of Christian liberty, not the inheritance of Jewish bondage.

This makes some of our "sacred cows" look silly as sacred

cows always do. Think of the signboards reading: “9:45 a.m., Bible Study; 10:45 a.m., Worship; 11:45 a.m., Communion.” The more orthodox brethren, driven to extremes by those who oppose classes, have sought to avoid their charges by neatly arranged compartments, so they can argue that the Bible study ends before *the worship* begins. What is “the worship”? Where do those who speak where the Bible speaks find any such idea in the sacred scriptures? Do we not study the word together out of reverence for the Author? Then it is an expression of worship. Not only is Bible Study part of “our worship” but so is getting the children up, bathing them, dressing them, preparing breakfast and returning thanks, driving to the place where the saints assemble and waving a friendly hand to the neighbors along the way. We do not start worshipping “when the bell rings.”

Those good brethren who oppose Bible classes have a warped idea of the very nature of worship, but it is not one whit more twisted than is that of those who condone and defend classes. All of them are legalistic and Judaistic in their approach. All exhibit a lack of spiritual maturity. When we once grow up in the Lord, we will learn that Bible study, prayer, singing, contributing to needs, visiting the sick, plowing corn for a crippled neighbor or taking flowers to a shut-in, are all part of our “communion” and there is no such thing as the communion, although there is a communion of the body and blood of the Lord. We do not observe it; we participate in it. That is why it is a communion instead of a mere ritual.

Jesus only once gave a picture of the final judgment and in it he provided the basis for acceptance or rejection. It had nothing to do with liturgy, litany, rubric or ritual. Ceremonials and sacraments were not even mentioned. Those who received the Father’s blessing, who were invited to possess the kingdom that had been made ready for such as themselves since the world was made, were those who had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, received strangers, clothed the naked, helped the sick, and visited those in prison. This is the real test of true

worship, not the kind that is rendered at a certain mountain or in a certain city, but that which is in spirit and truth (reality).

This renders picayune and paltry a great many of the occasions of conflict now in vogue in which brethren constantly bombard each other with paper pellets from partisan blowguns. One segment of the non-instrument “Church of Christ” has engaged in an attempt to send clothing and other commodities to the stricken regions of the earth where famine stalks on silent feet. In one instance they sent purebred bulls and cows to Korea for breeding stock and paid men who were skilled in animal husbandry to go along and help the native peoples to improve their herds. This has brought them under constant attack by another segment who have accused them of forsaking the gospel of Christ for the “social gospel” philosophy.

Since I am simply a Christian and a Christian only, I am looked upon with suspicion as “a brother in error” by both the “cow party” and the “anti-cow party.” This is good because it makes me free in Christ to say what I honestly think. I have nothing to lose but my soul. This gives me a tremendous advantage. Since in Christ Jesus there can be no separation between secular and sacred, it remains that the only thing which is secular is sin! Peter learned that no created thing is unclean. God has removed the taboos and phylacteries by washing them all away in the blood of his Son.

Did you not die with Christ and pass beyond reach of the elemental spirits of the world? Then why behave as though you were still living the life of the world? Why let people dictate to you: “Do not handle this, do not taste that, do not touch the other”—all of them things that must perish as soon as they are used? This is to follow merely human injunctions and teaching. (Col. 2:20-22).

In our day the time of the sectarian professional missionary is growing short. It is just about over. If we had wanted to preserve it we should have kept the natives in abysmal

ignorance so that any cult representative would have looked good to them. But we established schools and shared educational advantages. In doing so we doomed our narrow sectarian hopes. Too many natives now speak with an Oxonian dialect. This means that the time is fast approaching when men who only go to the jungles to “grind an axe” will be supplanted by those who can swing one. This is no real loss and it may be a gain if the latter are committed Christians.

A schoolteacher in a native village, a doctor in a remote clinic, a visiting nurse in native huts, an expert in soil conservation, an operator of a bulldozer digging ponds for a water supply— all of these, if God’s dear children, are ministers of God for good. And if they let the light of the indwelling Spirit shine through them, and let the leaven of life touch the lives of those about them, they will serve God in the most effective manner in reaching men today. The poorest place on earth to reach those who need to be reached is from a pulpit, because those who need to be reached are not going to come and sit supinely before a wooden stand. If one really wants to witness for Christ in our day perhaps the worst thing he could do would be to quit teaching a biology class in college and “take up preaching.”

We are being forced to do what Jesus did— leave our nice comfortable heavens and go into the world where people are living, dying, fighting, fornicating, loving and lusting. And we might just barely be allowed, some of us, “of helping to complete, in our poor human flesh, the full tale of Christ’s afflictions still to be endured, for the sake of his body which is the church” (Col. 2:24). The Spirit is driving us into the wilderness and we will be tempted a thousand ways. A lot of us will not be coming back!

I really think that one may minister more effectively for Jesus at the time by showing starving natives how to raise more food than by passing out tracts to skeptical hands, entitled,

“Why I am not a Buddhist!” A man whose belly is writhing and cramping from hunger and whose clothing is soiled from diarrhea, is not too much concerned with what a sleek, well-dressed American is not! If brethren can increase the milk supply in a village where puling infants sob and moan as they tug at dry and withered paps, I say, “God bless them!” And I think He will. This does not mean that I want to substitute cow’s milk for the sincere milk of the word, any more than Jesus wanted to substitute the loaves and fishes for the bread of life. I do not derogate the value of the soul in ministering to the body. Those who reach such a conclusion will only prove how the sectarian mind can corrupt and defile anything that it touches with its venomous thought.

Of all the sects or movements on earth, the orthodox “Church of Christ” is the last to be accused seriously of espousing the social gospel because it sends bulls and cows to improve the herds of famine-stricken lands. I do not want to be critical of the motives of any of my brothers, but the writings of some of them about such humanitarian projects smack more of what I call “corn dangling” than the social gospel. When we had a recalcitrant mule who would not go where we wanted him, we learned that by dangling an ear of corn about two feet in front of his face we could take him right on into our stable. If sharing with the hungry and destitute becomes partisan bait and is used as a foundation for planting a “Texas style Church of Christ” and transplanting American culture to Tibet or Taiphong, the hungry will benefit, but the brethren over here may not. When there are any strings attached to sharing except the cords which bind our own hearts to Jesus we are part of a sectarian Establishment which prostitutes even deeds of mercy to its own growth and gain, and trades on human suffering for its own advancement. Competition makes compassion a farce; rivalry reduces religion to a racket!

We must never forget that while man does not live by bread alone, without bread he does not live at all upon this

earth. Jesus was “worshiping” the Father as much when he blessed the loaves and fishes as when “he took bread and blessed it, and broke it and gave it unto them saying, This bread is my body which is broken for you.” Come to think of it, did Jesus ever cease to worship God? Should we? Is not our problem that we are still choosing mountains and designating cities as “the place where men ought to worship.” Will we ever be able to cast off the shackles of Judaism and “worship in spirit and in truth”? If God wills, next month we will deal with “Acts of Worship.”

The Church Christ Founded

Mission Messenger (September 1966)

Volume 28

[Abstract]

My reading includes many journals outside of the restoration movement which forms our historical emphasis. Recently I have given attention to two periodicals published by Catholic organizations. I have found them interesting and provocative. One is *America*, the other is *Ave Maria*. The editor of the latter is John Reedy, C.S.C. He writes with a human touch as you'll learn if you read his lead editorial in the June 25 issue of his magazine. I wish all of you could read, "The Catholic School: Protector or Prophet?" in that same number.

One editorial recounts the work of a missionary, Joseph Spae, in Japan. He tells of an aged man who sidled up to him in a streetcar, took a New Testament out of his pocket, and said: "Tell me, whatever happened to that church Christ founded? Is there no way of starting it in Japan? We need a church like the one Christ speaks about."

Let it be said to the credit of our Catholic editorial friends that they did not use this as an opportunity to propagandize. Instead they showed how far short of the ideal of Christ is the Christian witness in Japan. I suspect most of our brethren would have told the elderly Japanese gentleman that the Lord's church was in his land and would have offered to debate the proposition that what they represented was identical in origin, name, doctrine, worship and practice with the New Testament church.

Once I would have done the same thing.

Somehow I like the Catholic editorial approach better. It does not sound nearly so arrogant or presumptuous.

1. The church Christ founded was a Spirit-filled church. The members did not confuse the person of the Spirit with the word which he revealed unto them. The indwelling Spirit was their divine Helper or Advocate during the absence of Jesus from the earth. He was the seal of their redemption, the source of their inward strength, and their intercessor in prayers with groanings which could not be made vocal. He furnished the power for crucifying the deeds of the flesh and poured out the love of God into their hearts. They lived in the Spirit; they walked in the Spirit; they rejoiced in the Spirit. They experienced personally “how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God.”

2. The church Christ founded was a community of daring adventurers. There was nothing staid or static about their faith. Through sheer audacity they probed and penetrated and formed cells of witnesses in every level of pagan life, including the very palace guard surrounding Caesar. Justin Martyr wrote: “It is certain that nothing can make us deny our faith, neither the sword of the slayer, nor the cross of agony, nor the teeth of fierce beasts, nor bonds, nor fire, nor tortures of any kind. The more men multiply our sufferings, the more does the number of the faithful grow, the more are the disciples found on the side of Christ.”

In the age of Valerian when a great plague swept the land and the pagans fled the cities abandoning their dead and dying, the Christians stayed and risked all to minister to their former accusers. Because they hazarded their very lives to save others they were called “The Gamblers” by those whom they helped.

3. The church Christ founded was vibrant with hope. The

return of Jesus was real. The members saluted one another with the words: "The Lord cometh!" They comforted one another with the thought: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven!" In this consciousness they labored together, loved one another with pure hearts fervently, and longed for the time when he would change their wretched bodies to resemble his own glorious body "by that power of his which makes him master of everything that is." They were overflowing with the joy of expectation. They were happy on their way to glory. This hope tinged the cold, cruel, cynical world about them as the rising sun bathes the earth in its soft glow. It dispelled the darkness of doubt and the dense fog of despair.

4. The church Christ founded was a fellowship of the Spirit. It was not composed of those who had perfect knowledge but of those who know the Perfect One. The members of the body accepted one another as they were, for this is the way He accepted them all. They had no artificial lines of separation, no arbitrary tests of fellowship. They did not exhibit the sad, sorry, shameful scandal of division as does the restoration movement in Japan. How tragic to divide the children of God who believe with all their hearts that the Messiah has come and who have accepted him as their Savior, into warring factions over how he will come again! Of the church which Christ founded it was said: "Among the large number who had become believers there was complete agreement of heart and soul. Not one of them claimed any of his possessions as his own but everything was common property. The apostles continued to give their witness to the Lord Jesus with great force, and a wonderful spirit of generosity pervaded the whole fellowship."

It is no wonder that an aged Japanese reading such an account as this would ask: "Whatever happened to that church Christ founded?" It is no wonder he would add: "We need a church like the one Christ speaks about." We know of no better way to close this than with the words of the Catholic editor. "Christians today will not be known in any other way than were

the first Christians about whom their neighbors were forced to exclaim: ‘See how they love one another.’”

Acts of Worship

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Volume 28

[Abstract]

There is a great difference between truth and custom. Truth is found when it is honestly sought, but custom, whether true or false, is received, not by judgment but by prejudice, at haphazard, on the opinion of those who have lived before; and it is not easy to cast aside the ancestral garment, although it be proven to be utterly absurd.— Clement of Alexandria in “Exhortations to the Heathen.”

Let us preface our remarks by reminding our readers that nothing which we do when we assemble on the Lord’s Day is ever referred to as “worship” in the new covenant scriptures. The expression “the worship” is not in the Christian scriptures. It is true that, in our day, a ritual has been devised which is designated “the five acts of worship,” but neither the language nor the idea signified by it, is found in God’s revelation. It has been created and fabricated by the dubious method of searching out isolated passages and from them weaving a pattern of action which is then deemed to be the revealed mode of acceptable worship of the Father.

In the language of Jesus and in the practice of the primitive saints every thought, word and deed, engaged in by those in Christ, out of a sense of reverence for God, was an expression of worship. There was no distinction between the spiritual and the secular. There was no specific ritual

unvaryingly observed for the simple reason that the whole body was offered as a living sacrifice and whatever was done in the body was worship. One did not go in and out of Christ, and everything performed was offered to him as a part of the life of the fellowship.

The first disciples were Jews and they did not cease to be Jews when they acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah. They continued to observe the sabbath as well as the passover and other feasts. Those in Jerusalem daily went to the temple at the hours of prayer. All circumcised their male children. In outlying provinces, the Nazarenes, as they were called, continued in the synagogues which they had been accustomed to attend. When Saul breathed out threats and murder against the disciples he went to the high priest “and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). Later he said of the saints, “I punished them often in all of the synagogues” (Acts 26:11). The thousands who believed in Jerusalem were all zealous for the law.

There was one feature of the gathering of the disciples which was distinctive— the breaking of the bread. At first this was done daily and in conjunction with the regular meal shared by those who gathered in private homes. It was not regarded as a sacred service as opposed to other meals, for every occasion of eating together was sacred to the Jews. Jesus had introduced the practice of eating and drinking in memory of his death at the passover, which was always a family feast and always observed in the homes. He had simply taken the bread and cup used in that feast and blessed them for his purpose, and the disciples at first continued the practice of observing it in conjunction with their daily meals.

As the predominant consciousness of the enjoyment of redemption brought under its influence and sanctified the whole of earthly life, nothing earthly could remain

untransformed by this relation to a higher state. The daily meal of which believers partook as members of one family was sanctified by it. They commemorated the last Supper of the disciples with Christ, and their brotherly union with one another. At the close of the meal the president distributed bread and wine to the persons present, as a memorial of Christ's similar distribution to the disciples. Thus every meal was consecrated to the Lord, and, at the same time, was a meal of brotherly love. —Augustus Neander in “The History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church.”

The Lord's Supper . . . was not kept distinct at this period from an ordinary meal; it was the conclusion of ordinary meals, as it had been the conclusion of the Passover feast. The commemoration of redemption took place every time that Christians gathered around the family table. St. Luke says positively that it was observed from house to house . . . From all these observations, it appears that the distinction between the ordinary and the religious life had no existence for the primitive Church, because its ordinary life was raised to a height truly sublime. —E. De Pressense in “The Early Years of Christianity.”

The love-feast, in which were combined the ordinary meal and the religious service of the primitive Christians, was originally celebrated in Jerusalem every day. At its conclusion the broken bread and the consecrated cup was passed around to every one at the table. In the Jewish congregations the Jewish sabbath and festivals were observed. Paul denied that any one was bound by positive law to show a preference of one sacred day above another. —Dr. Charles Hase in “A History of the Christian Church.”

As time went on, the agape, or love feast, came to be shared as an overt demonstration of classless fellowship. The wealthier members brought hampers of food and the table was spread so that all, including those who were slaves, might eat

together. The Lord's Supper was observed in connection with the meal, and it came to be reserved for the resurrection day, the first day of the week. From the simple act of eating together one change after another took place until a special ritual supplanted the simplicity.

Gradually the repast was parted from the religious act. The repast became more and more secular, the religious act more and more sacred. From century to century the breach widened. The two remained for a time together, but distinct, the meal immediately preceding or succeeding the Sacrament. —Dean Stanley in "Christian Institutes."

This last word (sacrament) calls for mention of the fact that the Lord's Supper is not so-called in the sacred writings. The word "sacrament," used to denote the soldier's oath of allegiance to the Emperor, was first applied to the breaking of the bread by Tertullian. Of equal importance is the observation that the Supper is not called "the communion" as so many, some of whom should know better, thoughtlessly refer to it in our day. "Communion" is a translation of *koinonia*, the word for fellowship or joint participation. All that we do as members of the one body or as joint partakers of the one Spirit, is part of our fellowship or communion. Singing, prayer, sharing of funds to relieve the needy, are all part of the communion. In fact the very word *koinonia* is used to designate the latter. The Lord's Supper is the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, but this is only one phase of our communion.

We believe the unbiased student must conclude that the early disciples had no procedural form for their meetings in which they broke bread from house to house. Their expressions of inner adoration by outward demonstration were no doubt spontaneous, and when they sang or prayed, it was not to conform to a ritual but in response to an inward motivation produced by the occasion. It is interesting to note that in a previous generation brethren actually regarded Acts 2:42 as "an

order of worship” and debates were held and congregations divided over whether God would accept “worship services” in which the various items did not occur in the sequence mentioned. We are grateful that an increasing maturity is making both such ideas and the debates over them belong to the past and our brethren are outgrowing them.

With no intention of shocking our readers we suggest that if a community of saints fully grasped the significance of the Supper they might gather in solemnity and bless the cup and break the bread, and having remembered the Lord, retire to their own homes, or remain to eat together at a common table in mutual love for one another, and be wholly pleasing unto God. This in no sense argues that it would be wrong to sing, pray, exhort or teach, but it does point out that to make of all of these combined a ritual is without scriptural foundation. The tracts which declare that the Church of Christ is scriptural in “worship” because it has “the five acts of worship”— singing, praying, giving, preaching and the Lord’s Supper, are ridiculous when one takes off his party glasses and looks at the Word of God objectively.

The stress laid upon congregational singing, for example, shows how easy it is to read a practice *into* the text which you cannot find in it. And the passages cited to sustain it are twisted to confirm a point to which they were not even remotely related. In Ephesians 5:19 the recommendation to “address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” is clearly set in a context of daily living. The apostle contrasts the conduct of the saints with that of the devotees of paganism who became drunken at their feasts and engaged in lewd and suggestive songs. The saints are urged not to get drunk with wine wherein is debauchery but to address one another in songs which will strengthen and elevate, “always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.” The apostle was telling brethren how to behave instead of getting drunk. He was not regulating their “public worship.”

The fact is that no one can take the new covenant scriptures and prove that the saints had congregational singing when they assembled in one place. It can be shown, I think, that they had solos when someone was moved to break forth in a chant which conveyed a message to the assembly. It is a commentary on our absurdity that in many places if a man has a good reading voice and stands up at the Lord's table and reads the twenty-third psalm he is commended; but if he has a good singing voice and sings the same psalm in moving fashion he is reprimanded. In the community of saints at Corinth Paul says, "When you come together each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation." The modern congregation which follows "the original pattern" would not tolerate any of these. It is apparent that the pattern we seek to impose upon the scriptures originated with our fathers, and not with our grandfathers, the apostles.

The very best that could be done with Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 would be to establish responsive singing or antiphonal chants if it could be shown (which it cannot) that these passages relate to public and corporate expression of praise. We do not teach and admonish one another while all singing the same thing at once. If we already know what we are singing we cannot be taught it. If we do not know we cannot be teaching others. Our four-part harmony would not make it possible to address one another, or to instruct and admonish one another, in any event. We like to sing if we can, and to try if we can't but we should admit candidly that the *way* we do so is pretty much our own traditional devising. There is nothing wrong about it and no doubt the Father is as glad to hear us sing as we are to hear our children do so. He is not happy when we fall out over means and seek to clout each other over the head with either our traditions or hymnbooks.

This brings us to the place where we can inject the thought that all of us may worship the same God and yet that worship may be expressed in different ways. It is doubtful that worship

can ever be divorced from our own personal temperament and it is probably not desirable that it should be. In the final analysis all worship is individual by its very nature, and all of us are not only products of our own genes and chromosomes, but of our environment, training and association. As members of the one body we engage in certain communal expressions, but one community differs from another, as “one star differeth from another star in glory.” The true worshiper worships in spirit and in truth, but this worship does not always take the same outward form in every place.

A congregation near a large college campus whose singing director is professor of music at the university may be so trained in music appreciation and technique that their reverence could only be expressed in selections such as “The Hallelujah Chorus” by Handel, or “O Sacred Head” from Bach’s “Passion According to Matthew.” At the same time a rural congregation down in the hills, such as the one from which I came, would be bored if forced to even listen to such stately strains and would use after-beat songs or such mundane numbers as “I’ve Got a Mansion” or “On the Jericho Road.” Let not the Hallelujah choristers despise the after-beaters, and let not the after-beaters judge the Hallelujah choristers, for God has welcomed them. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind.

By the same token, if Christ is taken to the people in Africa who express themselves by clapping their hands and swaying to a chant, they should not be compelled to conform to our culture as the only proper way to worship God. There is a difference between Lubbock and Lusambo, or Greenville and Gondokoro. An American restoration movement in Southern Rhodesia makes about as much sense as a Southern Baptist Church of Outer Mongolia. Congregations should never seek to plant others “according to their own image and after their own likeness.” There are enough imperfect ones already.

God’s house is made of living stones but it must be

composed of stones in the area. Not all stones are alike and a house built with hewn limestone in one territory will not look like one of field stone or cobblestones in another. So it is with God's house. It is not the conformity externally but the indwelling Spirit which is vital to the divine-human relationship. The building of God in Corinth did not look like the one at Jerusalem but both were a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is righteousness, not ritual, which joins us to the Lord.

Closely allied to the misunderstanding of worship and ritual is a controversy now creating tension and division among non-instrument Churches of Christ. It has to do with installation of kitchen and eating facilities in the meetinghouses. Strange as it will seem to the majority of our readers, congregations have actually been divided over such matters. I have been to places to speak where arrangements were made for the sisters to serve coffee and cookies after the lecture, and brethren have informed me that they would not attend and by their presence sanction "eating in the church house." I respect their scruples of course, but I regret they have not yet learned there is no such thing as "a church house" and there cannot be. There is a church and there are houses, but what is "a church house"? All of us use the term and I suspect that all of us thereby demonstrate our ignorance.

The problem is complicated because those who provide the facilities often refer to the room containing them as "the fellowship hall." Frequently the brethren in attendance are invited to remain for "the fellowship" following "the service." This is the language of Ashdod. The peculiar thing is that one group limits *worship* to a few ritualistic acts performed in "the service;" while the other limits *fellowship* to a few physical acts done afterwards. Is not singing a part of fellowship? Is not prayer? Is not mutual study of the word? Then why announce that after dismissal the brethren are invited to stay and enjoy a period of fellowship? Do we have to retire to a special room for fellowship? It is apparent that if the brethren are not in the fellowship before the coffee is poured they will not drink or

nibble their way into it.

Everything we do in relationship to Christ is done in the fellowship and is a part of it. We do not go in and out of the fellowship by going in or out of buildings and halls. By the same token, all that we do in word or deed, whether assembled or alone, when done to revere God, is worship. We belong to Christ as a whole and we must glorify him in both body and spirit which are his (1 Cor. 6:20). We worship the Father when we eat together in mutual love as certainly as we do when we eat the bread and drink the cup. Whether the early saints congregated in the temple to give a corporate expression of worship or ate dinner together in a private home, they were praising God. "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:40).

All of God's children are being turned into schizophrenics by an attempt to legislate differences between secular and sacred areas. No such distinctions exist in God's word. All we have comes from God. We have nothing that has not been given us. Every good gift is from above. Every exercise of life done with an eye singled to his glory is a manifestation of worship. In this day of urbanization with its lonely crowd, we need to share our time and our lives with each other more often than ever. The early Christians in a cruel pagan world banded together, visited together and ate together, strengthening each other to combat the forces of evil about them. What difference does it make where the food is prepared or served? God has no sacred buildings. He has no shrines or sacerdotal cloisters. There is a difference between eating because of the love of a feast, and partaking because it is a feast of love.

It is true that brethren can abuse the act of eating together. But this is no argument against doing so when the abuse is absent, and the abuse comes from motivation and not from the act. Perhaps the greatest abuse of all comes from separating and

segregating the various facets of life until worship is relegated to a certain day, a certain place and a certain ritual, to the utter exclusion of the daily life. We are the victims of traditions which have been equated with the will of God, and which force us once again into the throes of the Judaistic spirit.

Worship and Money

Mission Messenger (November 1966)

Volume 28

[Abstract]

Error is none the better for being common, nor truth, the worse for having lain neglected.— **John Locke.**

Worship is not the mere performance of acts. It is not engaging in a prescribed ritual. Worship is the prostration of the heart, filled with a sense of dependency, before the presence of God. It is tuning the soul to vibrate in harmony with the infinite, the reaching out of the hands of the inner self to draw God close and to draw close to God. We do not worship because we sing; we sing because we worship. We do not worship because we pray; we pray because we worship. Worship is the fountain of the great deep within us. Singing and prayer are two of the vessels which draw the water to the surface. There are many different vessels and the true worshiper reaches for the one which best suits his need of the hour.

Public praise and community sharing in the expression of worship may be regulated by calendar and clock, but the true worship is always that of the true worshiper. It is constant and consistent. It is the breathing of the spirit of one who is dead and whose life is hid with Christ in God; the palpitation of the inner heart of one in whom Christ dwells as a royal tenant in a frail tenement of clay. To such a person there is no distinction between what is God's and what is his. All artificial distinctions between secular and sacred are broken down and wafted away

upon the winds of the Spirit.

A lack of recognition of this causes men whose vision suffers from spiritual astigmatism to make it seem that differences exist where none appear. We are constantly treated to meticulous arguments, elaborately prepared, dealing with what the church may do and what the individual Christian may do. This is a little like arguing what the arm may do apart from the body, or what fruit may be borne by a branch apart from the vine. In the final analysis all of this comes down to what the congregation of saints may do to further the cause of Christ and the answer will be found in the thinking of those who compose the community, as that thinking has been formulated by study of the word of God, meditation upon it, and mutual exchange of ideas concerning it.

It is true that those in Christ Jesus may be mistaken about the divine requirements of service as to nature, extent and subject. They may also be mistaken as to the method or mode by which such service should be accomplished. But if they are governed by integrity they will be compelled by conscience and commitment to fulfill that which they believe to be His will for their lives, in that manner which commends itself unto them as being best adapted, under His grace, to achieve His ultimate purpose through themselves. Any mistake of such nature, regardless of how grave it may appear to me, does not negate the relationship or responsibilities of brotherhood. I must not destroy or dissolve the family ties simply because my own understanding leads me to question either the extent or the method of such service rendered in an attempt to give recognition to the Lordship of Jesus.

Those who are my brothers in Christ and who mistake what the Father wants them to do, or how they should do it, made no mistake in becoming children of God, but as children of God they may make mistakes. This is one thing they have in common with all of the other children. If I refuse to have

anything to do with them, it is not a perfect, or infallible child refusing recognition to those who are mistaken. Rather it is a case of one who makes mistakes shunting aside those who make *different* mistakes. None of us have any difficulty with those who make the same mistakes as ourselves. They are “loyal” for loyalty is actually being ignorant to the same degree, when used in a partisan sense. That is why it is so difficult to be a *good* partisan— one must be so selective about his mistakes, and be certain that he is always mistaken about the “right” things!

TO BE LIKE JESUS

Men have peculiar notions about how to become more like Jesus. It is generally believed that we should study and investigate the sacred scriptures and amend our thoughts and lives in conformity with God’s revelation, by eliminating our mistaken views and ideas. This is eminently correct. But it is also thought that by doing this we must cease to respect, revere and associate with those who still hold the same mistaken views. Thus, as our knowledge broadens, our circle of fellowship narrows. We not only put off our outgrown clothing but we also put out of the house all who do not immediately order the same size suit as our new one, in spite of the fact that they have not altered in mental girth.

It does not require a philosopher to figure out that, on this basis, the first one to arrive at perfect understanding of God’s will would not be in fellowship with any other person. I am certain that most of us will agree that Jesus perfectly understands the Father’s will. By such fallacious reasoning as has guided us in the past he should have nothing to do with any of us. Yet he loves us all, mistaken though we are. It seems certain, then, that the more we become like Jesus, the greater number of mistaken brethren we will love and cherish. Our problem is that we have forgotten we are to “*grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.*” Knowledge cannot tolerate ignorance

but grace can. When knowledge is extended ignorance is driven out to the degree of extension, but grace can be extended to some fairly ignorant individuals, a fact of which we are all living examples.

Increasing knowledge, unaccompanied by expanding grace, can transform men into intellectual snobs and insufferable bores. Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. It is a wonderful thing to see a man climb to a higher ledge of understanding but knowledge which only concerns itself with one's present status and forgets those who are still struggling below suffers from memory lapse. Certainly it is a hindrance when one must pause upon each ascending plane to worship himself awhile before going on. Our readers must pardon these preliminary and diversionary observations. I want to devote the remainder of our space to an actual problem which is divisive among the non-instrument Churches of Christ.

THE SCHISMATIC SPIRIT

The brethren, including myself, have generally divided what we term "the work of the church" into three separate departments— evangelistic, educational and charitable. I'm about ready to challenge in my own thinking the whole arbitrary arrangement. In the light of maturing concepts it seems a little childish. You cannot draw a line between work and worship. They are the same as God views them! And you cannot sort out the various facets of our intricate and interwoven relationships with each other and the world and toss them into three bins neatly labeled with compartmental tags. I think that a great deal of the writing appearing in partisan journals in which brethren have the one body going off on tangents leading in three different directions at the same time is really a great deal of political maneuvering calculated to make the average saint so dizzy he will settle for the easy way out and turn his money over to the Establishment and let those "that appear to be somewhat"

take the responsibility for dispensing it.

Currently the more orthodox segment of the non-instrument division of the disciple brotherhood of the restoration movement (it is becoming ever more difficult to keep things straight), is being harassed by pressures from a number of brethren about the support of institutional orphan homes, Herald of Truth, etc. In a good many localities brethren who once sat together at the table of the Lord are now separated into warring camps. They castigate each other with the old familiar designations of “Liberal” and “Anti” borrowed from other civil wars of the past.

I am not attached to either party. For that reason one of the few things left upon which they both agree is that I am “a brother in error.” This is good! It makes it possible for me to love them all. I am not the least bit interested in injecting myself into their factional conflict. Of course I am distressed that they have turned the sword of the Spirit against each other and have further shivered and splintered the family to pieces, however, I am practical enough to expect these things to occur until brethren come to be led by the indwelling Spirit. I am interested solely because the spectacle which they present to a startled world grows out of some interpretations which are probably baseless. A good deal of the argument centers around implications drawn from the scriptures which have been woven into a pattern of creedalism. I shall deal with one example. It is a part of modern Church of Christism that there are “five acts of worship” which the congregation must observe on the Lord’s Day, and that one of these is “laying by in store,” that is, contributing money to the congregational program. The rules, regulations, and legalistic traditions which have sprung out of this are about as ridiculous as they are deemed binding.

In many places men are taught that they must contribute every Lord’s Day if they truly worship God. This is the responsibility of every individual. If one is paid on the first of the

month, he divides what he intends to “give to the church” into four or five equal parts, depending on the number of Sundays in the month, so he can perform this little ritual each Sunday. If he is married he may allot his wife a dollar to drop in so she can also “worship.” Single women and widows are expected to “worship” in contributing but are forbidden to “worship” in deciding upon expenditures, being barred from “business meetings.”

In some places, regardless of circumstances, no collection is ever taken at any other meeting upon any other day, although brethren have become adept in evading this while making it appear they do not. It is not uncommon to hear men say, “We only take up one contribution, and we do it on the day the Lord commanded, and just as the pattern dictates.”

There are brethren who believe that every charitable act must be done “through the church,” which means “out of the treasury,” so that “the church will get the glory.” The giving of alms has been outlawed in favor of organizational dispensing of funds. A more modern dogma is the exact opposite. It affirms that only a member of the church can be helped out of “the treasury” and “the Lord’s money” must be used to feed no one but a saint. A saint is one who is a member of the party! Others must be fed by individuals. One can keep enough out of the plate (it does not become the Lord’s until you turn loose of it) to feed the children of a non-member who are starving, but once he has dropped it in the basket he cannot get it back and feed that same family. The intricacies involved in the applications and interpretations of these laws have developed some outstanding legal talent which would have been the envy of the scribes and Pharisees with whom Jesus contended. They did a fair job of it but were handicapped because they did not have the advantage of doing it “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

BASIS OF THIS LEGALISM

All of these fantastic rules have grown out of interpretations of 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, with certain other unrelated texts brought to bear. For obvious reasons, which we will not trouble to enumerate, the saints in Judea were in hard straits economically and required a sustained “poverty fighting program.” The brethren in Jerusalem requested Paul to remember the poor and he declared he was eager to do this very thing (Gal. 2:10). He conceived the idea of taking an offering from the Gentile congregations for this special need for several reasons. First, he considered that the Good News had been originally proclaimed in Jerusalem and sent from there to the Gentiles, and “if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings” (Romans 15:27). Second, he hoped to batter down prejudice through such sharing although he was concerned that the brethren in Jerusalem might resent taking anything from the uncircumcised and he urged others to pray “that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints” (Rom. 15:31). Paul probably came to Corinth about 52 A.D. and when he planted the community of saints he apparently said nothing about “taking up a collection as an act of worship” when they met. There is not a hint that they practiced such an arrangement and a good indication they did not. Five years later he wrote his first letter to them and in it directed them to take a contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem as he had already instructed the communities in Galatia to do. This was in no sense an apostolic command for a “public act of worship” as our more legalistic brethren so glibly refer to it.

1. Paul specifically states it was not a command. “I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love is also genuine” (2 Cor. 8:8).

2. Although he directed communities in Galatia and Achaia to make contributions he did not direct those in Macedonia who were in extreme poverty to do so. He did rejoice that some of them asked to be included, “of their own free will,

begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”

3. That it was not a regular practice of the congregations to take up a contribution is evident from the fact that the community at Corinth had been in existence four years before they began to do so. “It is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire” (2 Cor. 8:10).

4. It was simply a matter of congregational discretion and decision. “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem” (Romans 15:26). This is a far cry from “the law of God on worship” as taught in the average orthodox pulpit.

5. It was a voluntary gift and not an exaction of law. “So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.”

LAYING BY IN STORE

In a rather exhaustive study of 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, which was published in *Restoration Review* I showed that the weight of scholarship is in favor of the idea that the contribution on the first day of the week was laid up at home and not brought until Paul and his fellow-travelers arrived. At that time the members produced what they had saved and turned it over to them to be taken to Jerusalem. This seems to be the only way to satisfactorily view the original language employed.

On the first day of every week let each of you put on one side and store up at his home whatever gain has been granted him; so that whenever I come, there may be no collections going on. (*The Modern Speech New Testament*, Richard Francis Weymouth).

The day after the Sabbath let each of you put by savings as he has prospered, so that collections do not have to be made when I come. (*The Authentic Version*, Hugh J. Schonfield).

Every Sunday each of you is to put aside and keep by him a sum in proportion to his gains, so that there may be no collecting when I come. (*New English Bible New Testament*).

On the first day of the week let each of you put aside and save something from his earnings; so that the money has not all to be collected when I come. (The New Testament in Plain English, Charles Kingsley Williams).

Dr. Augustus Neander, in his *History of the Training and Planting of the Christian Church*, is one voice among many, saying virtually the same thing. He writes:

But Paul, if we examine his language closely, says no more than this: that every one should lay by in his own house on the first day of the week, whatever he was able to save. This certainly might mean, that every one should bring with him the sum he had saved to the meeting of the church, that thus the individual contributions might be collected together, and be ready for Paul as soon as he came. But this would be making a gratuitous supposition, not at all required by the connexion of the passage. We may fairly understand the whole passage to mean, that every one on the first day of the week should lay aside what he could spare, so that when Paul came, every one might be prepared with the total of the sum laid by, and then by pulling the sums together, the collection of the whole church would be at once made.

All of the talk about “our money” and “the Lord’s money” is without foundation, notwithstanding the interpretation commonly imposed upon the case of Ananias and Sapphira. All I have is the Lord’s, and I am Christ’s and Christ is God’s. The new covenant scriptures know nothing about a “church

treasury” or a “church budget.” There is not one iota of authority for taking up a collection to erect a meetinghouse, to own real estate, or to promote and advertise an evangelistic campaign. This does not argue that any of these are wrong.

Probably the best and most efficient way to deal with our financial obligations is to take up a collection when needed. We do not object to a congregation of saints having a bank account, a treasurer, a financial statement, or a weekly (or even daily contribution and distribution) collection. That is probably none of our business. We simply object to quoting scriptures for such arrangements when those scriptures are not remotely connected with our traditional “pattern.” We will probably be more honest if we quit trying to quote substantiating (?) scriptures for all we do and admit that we do a lot of things as we do because they work better, or because we have borrowed some ideas from our sectarian neighbors and friends who tried them out and proved their workability.

Certainly there are things we should do without involving the whole community. We have various relationships in Christ. These are not discarded in the act of becoming disciples, although they are sanctified. A good example is the care of widowed parents or grandparents. “Where a widow has children or grandchildren let those first learn to discharge their filial duty and to make suitable return to the authors of their being, for this is well-pleasing in God’s sight.” Filial duty is not cancelled or negated by our relationship to Jesus. God smiles upon our continual recognition of it.

“Should any believers have widows to look after, let them give them assistance and not burden the community, so that lone widows may be provided for.”

There is nothing said here about how widows should be cared for by either the believer or the community. Paul was not intending to lay down a comprehensive rule or law, nor to spell

out details. The point is that the community of saints is obligated to see that widows do not suffer from neglect. The community may, or may not, create a common fund or treasury from which to dispense aid. This is up to the community to determine. Different communities will probably approach the problem in various ways.

But to include “giving each Sunday” as “an act of worship” and as an identifying mark of “the Lord’s church,” and to make this a criterion of loyalty to Jesus and even a test of fellowship, only shows how creedalistic and legalistic we can become under guise of being scriptural. In doing so we demonstrate a woeful ignorance of worship and the nature of the community consisting of the called-out ones. To divide the brethren into warring factions over such opinions is to do despite to His Spirit of grace. Our brethren need to cease playing God and start loving Him, for this is the real essence of worship!

Twentieth Century Witness

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[Abstract]

This is the last article in our series called “Deep Roots.” It may not endear us to a great many of our brethren. We would probably be better off personally if we wrote upon an entirely different theme and there is no lack of other material crying for discussion. Yet there is a sense of editorial integrity and responsibility which makes it imperative that we take some risks for what we believe to be the common good. It may be that we are mistaken as to what is best for us all but our only recourse is to proceed prayerfully to do what seems proper to us and leave the eventuality with Him “whom having not seen we love.”

Read as far as you wish and if your interest wanes, do not go on. We will love and revere you as much as if you shared our concern and agreed with our method of approach. It is not at all necessary for you to concur in our personal convictions, or to acknowledge the timeliness of what we say. It is our hope that you will credit us with wanting to be helpfully critical even though you may resent the criticism and reject its value. Sometimes one gets to the place where he feels that he simply must speak. This in no sense implies that what he says will be justified or worthwhile.

I think I shall address what I have to say primarily to those identified with the non-instrument “Churches of Christ.” This is not because they are more partisan than other segments, because

they are not. But there are some features of this article which will apply more specifically to these brethren than to some other groups, because of the persons involved.

The use of that last word triggers what I really want to talk about *involvement*. We live in a world that is seething and bubbling with new and strange ideas. There has never been another age in which there has been such a ferment of thought. Almost every standard and criterion which we have accepted as valid is being rudely challenged. It is a different world, a defiant world, a frightening world— yet one which has the greatest potential if its thoughts can be captivated and its energies channeled in constructive fashion. It is made to order for a real test of the vitality of the Christian faith and that test must be made if we are to live with ourselves and our consciences. It is not being made because we are not in real contact with the enemy.

The church has retreated to entrenched positions. It has surrendered ground to the enemy. It has called its forces into medieval fortresses or summoned them behind monastic bastions. It has gone on the defensive and is satisfied if it can repulse attacks. It will do little good to point out our increased foreign mission activity as a denial of what we say. We glory in every effort to take the message of hope to other parts of the earth. We thank God for every man and woman who leaves home to follow the star and seek him in foreign lands. But we dare not overlook the fact that in these days of intellectual growth, of affluence, and of power structures, it may be easier for us to win converts, or to make proselytes, among the ignorant and untutored of the earth, than to face a clever, trained and taunting foe at home. We may glory in our conquests afar to cover up the shame of our failure close at hand. If victory is equated with the number of scalps dangling from a sectarian belt it little matters where we get them so long as we swell the tally. This has no reference to how the converts look at Jesus. It refers to how the faction may look at converts.

For some reason I have the idea that we are in a vacuum of our own creation. As I listen to the talks that are made it is obvious that we are not of the world. That is good! It is also just as obvious that we are not in the world. That is bad! We have created our own little worlds. We are answering questions no one is asking. We know all of the answers but we do not understand the questions. The things in which we glory are often badges of our shame. We point to baptisteries heated in the winter time, and to auditoriums air-conditioned in the summer time, but the warmth of our love for all of our brethren is missing, and our hearts are cold to those who do not line up with our faction.

We are not training spiritual commandos who seek out the enemy and grapple with him on his own terms. We have no infiltrators who penetrate the ranks and fight their way out. Instead we develop men for remote attack and long distance bombardment. We furnish them with sermon outlines which fizzle out when the fuse is lit. We substitute homiletics for hand-to-hand encounter, and well-turned phrases for battle-scarred faces. Yet the only aggressive weapon furnished us is a sword. And a sword must be used for close in-fighting. It cannot be thrown, hurled or flung at a distance. And one does not become skilled in its use by playing mumble-peg with those who agree with him.

Sooner or later we shall have to decide whether we have a message which can captivate the intellectual world for Christ, or whether we must abandon this as a lost province. If we decide to withdraw from meaningful combat with this area on its own ground (the only way you can ever fight with a sword), we are committed to a war of constant retreat and attrition for intellectuality will expand and the Christian concept will be driven into a corner and eventually crowded out altogether in our land. We cannot count, in the future, upon having enough non-intellectuals or anti-intellectuals, to keep our cause alive. God has not guaranteed to keep enough folk ignorant that we

can survive if we lose the whole intellectual world.

You will note my use of “meaningful combat.” This is the opposite of fighting merely for the sake of fighting, or of creating the impression that you are really fighting when you are making a noise, beating the air, or attacking a projection of your own imagination under the guise that it is the enemy. This can always be made to appear a victory when you may not have been near the real enemy at all.

GOD IS DEAD THEOLOGY

To illustrate what I mean, let us consider our approach to the “God is dead” movement in modern theology. Its importance cannot be laughed off or ridiculed out of existence. When a magazine like *Time*, for the first time in its history, appears without a picture on its cover, and has instead the three word question, “Is God Dead?” we are faced with a significant upheaval of thought. How do we react to it?

One good brother out west, whom I greatly admire, exhorts us to keep shouting “God is not dead!” So we take our positions on two hills across from each other and engage in a shouting match to see who can out-yell the other. If an issue can be settled in this fashion it may not appear as important to the people down in the valley as it does to those on either hill. And it will amaze you how many people are down in the valley.

I was at the Abilene Christian College lectureship when the program chairman announced to the packed auditorium that Dr. James D. Bales of Harding College had challenged Dr. Thomas J. J. Altizer, of Emory University, to debate whether God is dead. It was apparent that the great majority of those present were relieved that the Church of Christ had once more come to the rescue of God. They felt that God was in good hands. Moreover, it was another good chance for nationwide publicity. One good Texas brother said to me, “This’ll make the

big guns in the east know we are on the map!” To defend God and let the guns, and the sons of guns in the east, know we are on the map, is a double victory. Besides, since God had saved us from our enemies it was deemed only fair that we should reciprocate and save him from his enemies when we could help out!

Please do not think I am sarcastic, cynical or disparaging when I say it is probably one of the best things that ever happened when Altizer did not accept the challenge. That is merely my personal judgment. I may be wrong. But you will note that one of the first things he said was that he did not want our brother from Arkansas accusing him of being a Communist. We had a medical doctor down home once who was a specialist on gall bladders. He had built up a fair reputation in that field, and folks came to rely upon him a great deal. The worst feature about it was that he wasn’t too good at treating other things, so when a patient came in, regardless of what he had, the doctor always diagnosed it gall bladder trouble because he knew how to prescribe for that. Altizer did not want to be diagnosed according to Dr. Bales’s specialty. And you’ll have to admit that Brother Bales is a specialist in his field.

But I think that we have to face up to the fact that *the kind of God* whom Brother Bales represents could never die. You have to live before you can die, and I am not certain the kind of God Brother Bales projects (and I once did the same thing) ever lived, except in an overwrought partisan imagination. You see, our brother believes that the God of the universe has focussed his fatherly love exclusively on members of the non-instrument Churches of Christ. We are the loyal ones and his special favorites. Our brother thinks that “the Lord’s church” is identical with the branch of non-instrument “Church of Christ” with which he is affiliated and that the Father dispossesses his children and puts them in exile if they do not agree with us on the millennium or music.

I confess that I'm a little perturbed in heart because I wonder if the kind of God whom we have proclaimed may not have something to do with some of the so-called "Christian agnosticism" of today. We have made a pretty small God out of the Almighty. I know one brother who thinks the entire kingdom of heaven consists of six or seven congregations in three states. I know another who says he can count all of the faithful gospel preachers on his fingers, and he lost one of his thumbs in a sawmill accident.

THE MODERN PHILOSOPHY

I've been reading quite a bit that our brethren have written about the "God is dead" movement and the more I read the more convinced do I become that the writers know little, if anything, about what these philosophers are saying. To us it all seems relatively simple. Some philosophical crackpot has suggested that God has been shot down with nuclear weapons, strangled by space explorations, or poisoned by our technological discoveries, and is now a corpse. The thing to do is to quote, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God," and the Bible says to, "Answer a fool according to his folly," which, being interpreted, is to brand him a fool and not answer him at all. There are several things wrong with our approach. One is that it satisfies us but it does not satisfy those whom we seek to answer because it does not touch what they are really saying or questioning. Nothing falls flatter in a dialogue session on a university campus with students drawn from all walks of life, than the average article from *The Firm Foundation* or *The Gospel Advocate*. The same thing can be said about a dialogue meeting with representatives of the Roman Catholic and Protestant parties. I know because I am in direct confrontation regularly with all of these. I am driven to go among them and witness to my faith.

To pinpoint the problem we face, let us ask a few questions

and understand them, before we start to answer them. What does Thomas J. J. Altizer mean when he says that God is dead? What does he mean by “Christ?” What does he mean by “darkness?” Does he acknowledge that God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus? Who should answer these questions? Obviously, Thomas J. J. Altizer should do so. And when he does we see how much his conclusions are the fruit of the thinking of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, John A. T. Robinson, and others. Thus we are truly dealing with a “movement” and not with an isolated individual and unrelated ideas.

God is dead. Altizer declares he made this pronouncement only after vigorous mental wrestling with the terms “transcendent” and “immanent” as they are applied to the concept of God. A transcendent God is one who exists above and beyond the world of which we are a part. He looks down upon it and surveys it from afar, as a Being outside of it. He is not one with the world. He is a “wholly other.” A university student in one of our campus encounters told me publicly that the God about whom he was taught as a child was “just not with it.”

An immanent God exists in the world, and to some extent, as the world. He merges or blends with the world and to the extent that he does is indistinguishable from the world. When carried to its ultimate, I think that immanence becomes pantheism. God is identified not only with the universe but as the universe. Nature, including all of its animate forms and man, would be God. I have always conceived of God as both transcendent and immanent, because he is omnipotent and omnipresent, so there has been no dilemma for me. But I am not a theologian, and it seems that theologians thrive better when they have dilemmas.

Dr. Altizer declares that he accepted the incarnation as a historical fact but he reasoned that if God was in Christ, he emptied himself of his transcendence and became immanent.

God was in the world. He was in the flesh. He had become wholly immanent. According to this thinking God did not become all of the universe. He was immanent only in Christ at first, but he did not again assume transcendence, and is still in the universe becoming ever more immanent. He will continue to do so until his immanence swallows up all else, and God will become all in all. When Dr. Altizer talks of the death of God he refers only to the passing from a state of transcendence to one of immanence.

In this modern complex thought “Christ” is made to mean that point at which God divested himself of transcendence and entered the world. Altizer calls Jesus of Nazareth “the original Christ” because it was in him that God broke into the world and became a part of the created universe. He claims to accept the historical fact of the Logos (Word) becoming flesh, and that God was in Christ. But he does not believe in the resurrection of Christ and therefore rejects the idea of the ascension, coronation and glorification. It is his view that God is still in the world, moving ever toward greater immanence, and that there will be a final Christ, a Godhead in which there will be a wholly new creation— a new man, new world, and a new existence all embodied in a God who is all in all. It is his view that if God returned to heaven and again assumed transcendence this ultimate could not occur. God can become all only by being immanent and by conquest of the universe through being a part of it and extending himself to embrace it more fully and completely.

To Dr. Altizer it appears that man is groping in darkness, but this darkness is linked with what he would brand as a misconception of the resurrection. He believes that the body of Jesus decomposed in the tomb and that by pinning our hope on the resurrection of that body we are projecting a false hope. He says that “darkness is the body of the dead God” and it is his theory that if we will acknowledge the incarnation and crucifixion as real and recognize the latter as the end of

transcendence we can be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the freedom and liberty of the immanence of God.

I have taken the time and space to be thus specific for several reasons. First, I hold that we must clearly understand what we face and what we oppose before we develop our attack, lest we be found to fight against an image of our own creation. Secondly, I think it is a matter of personal integrity that I state the views of another, especially an opponent, in terms acceptable unto him. If I have misunderstood Dr. Altizer, or in any sense conveyed a wrong impression of what he believes, I sincerely apologize to him. I think he must also grant that the exponents of “the new theology” are not always clear and definitive in their Statements. They employ a considerable amount of professional clerical jargon.

Thirdly, I would have our readers recognize that we face a clever and subtle foe (I speak of the theology and not of its exponents) which takes terms we have always used and employs them in such fashion as to completely warp their original sense and make them delusive and deceitful. Having said this much I must confess I am not afraid of the ultimate influence of this theology on the Christian concept for the simple reason that it is an old theology warmed over and served up with new dressing, and Christianity faced it many centuries ago.

THE ROLE OF A RESTORATION MOVEMENT

What is the role of a movement such as is partially represented by the “Churches of Christ” if an impact is to be made upon the thinking minds on college and universities campuses in this day? Shall we retreat from the arena? Shall we continue to talk to ourselves and surrender the intellectual field to the devil? If we do so, are we fulfilling the task of the body of Christ in our generation? I am going to make a few suggestions.

I do this reluctantly and humbly and in full recognition of the prejudice with which some of my writings are read by the brethren whom I love.

1. The Church of Christ must come into the twentieth century. It is evident from most of the articles appearing in recognized journals that our brethren are not only heirs of a nineteenth century movement but they are still moving in the nineteenth century. Very little of what is being written in orthodox journals has any relevance to the life or conflicts of men and women in our present world.

2. We must close our ranks and recapture the vital unity of the Spirit. The bitter and frustrating wars of the past over cups, classes, the millennium, orphan homes, instrumental music, etc., no longer have any real significance. The tide of battle has swept on. If we continue our little pockets of civil war behind the lines, bushwhacking and sniping at our own brethren, not only will we not contribute anything worthwhile to the real conflict of the age, but we will not be in on the final victory. This in no sense means that one must surrender his personal convictions or that a congregation must change its practice as to cups, classes, or other things. These matters have absolutely nothing to do with fellowship in Christ or the unity created by the Spirit.

3. We must seek new ways of giving to the world demonstrations of the workability of our plea for unity in diversity, a unity centered in mutual recognition of the lordship of Jesus. Perhaps we need a "restoration Kirchentag." In Germany, each year, on a special day, multiplied thousands of Protestants from various parties meet in a common witness of their allegiance to the cross. This day is called "Kirchentag." What would happen in Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, or Nashville, if there was a great rally of the members of the restoration movement who still believe in the validity of this ideal and heritage in spite of our disappointing showing in the past? Suppose such a rally was announced in every Christian

Church and Church of Christ, and the members came overflowing a huge college stadium, with participants from every segment, even the smallest and most peripheral, reading, singing, praying and witnessing of their faith, without recourse to factional and sectarian attitudes. What a challenge for the Holy Spirit to work through them!

True, the next day all would return to their own factions and segments, just as do those who attend the Kirchentag, but they would never be quite the same again. Neither would the sectarian world around them. Nothing would make sectarianism tremble and quake as such a demonstration of unity. And what makes it impossible to do this but our own narrow, limited, illiberal and intolerant spirit?

4. As a move toward the recapture of a sense of involvement in the ecumenical age and a sane view of fellowship among the saints of God, brethren must start “levelling” with the world. They must quit using propaganda as bait with a hook concealed. Men are not “suckers” in this enlightened age. Let me be very frank with you. Radio and television programs are presented which make their pitch a tie-in with the restoration movement and plead for the unity of all believers. Smooth salesmanship is exhibited in using Hollywood stars who are members of the party. The word “ecumenical” is employed and it is made to appear that we are in the vanguard of the struggle for renewal of the church.

But when the chips are down, the brethren reveal that they are not pleading for vital unity at all, but for the same old sterile conformity. The only unity they recognize is that which would come from everyone becoming like the “mother church” which supervises the program. It is probably only fair to say that some of the featured speakers are dedicated men with high ideals. They are trying to make a relevant presentation. But those behind the scenes who “call the shots” are still making tests of fellowship which God did not make. Their dogmas are law. It

sounds nice in polite company to talk about “liberty of opinion” except for one thing. With them there are no opinions, and consequently no liberty. They decide what will be “faith” to themselves, and also decide what will not be “opinions” to others.

Our brethren are still confessing the sin of others in causing division. We need a program in which the speaker will put his head in his hands, and before this whole nation, tearfully confess our own sins. The message of God should be free! The day is past when you can fool men into believing that everyone else on earth “interprets” the word of God, but we do not interpret it. We just take it for what it says. This childish and immature attitude has no appeal to intelligent seekers after truth. They know that elders are just as fallible as the pope, and for the same reason— all are human. Dressing a television program up in color does not alter its sectarian nature. The hooks on a luminous fishing plug are just as barbed as those on a homemade trout fly.

I commend brethren such as those at Hartford, Illinois, for the fact that for several years they have arranged free discussion with members of the Disciples of Christ, Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. The elders are free men in Christ and therefore fearless.

5. The Churches of Christ should at once free their missionaries on foreign fields from sectarian restraint and permit them to share directly in the experiences, knowledge and association of all of our brethren and God’s saints laboring in the same area. If the missionaries do not possess enough stability that their judgment can be trusted they should be recalled. If sent forth to take the message of the cross of Jesus they should not be shackled, hampered and restrained by the sectarian attitudes “back home.”

The missionaries should be allowed, encouraged and urged

to set up workshops, conferences, training sessions, and sharing events to which men of every segment of the disciple brotherhood in the region are invited as direct participants. It is silly, senseless, absurd and asinine, in this day of world ferment for us to export to foreign soil all of the trivial partisan divisions of the United States. Let all of the non-instrument Church of Christ men in foreign fields be given the right and freedom immediately to work with all of their brethren in the Lord, and that without threat of censure, reprisal or cessation of funds from their homeland. Our brethren have a hard enough time fighting Communism, atheism, secularism, and indifferentism, without having to fight other members of God's family in order to pamper a bitter sectarian spirit in their homeland. Free our missionaries from fear! Free them from exclusivism, aloofness, shallowness, bitterness and hate for brethren. Turn God's children loose in the Holy Spirit. Let us close the ranks in other parts of the earth so we can face paganism with a united front!

6. We must infiltrate the neo-pagan intellectual world of our day but we must not confuse intellectuality with paganism. Men must feel a distinct urge to train as commandos for Christ. They must risk all to recapture for Christ the lost province of higher education. The most effective "ministry" of our day may not be behind the pulpit but in the college classroom. Men are eager to attend universities. They struggle with examinations. They pay high tuition fees for the privilege. They are not so eager to sit in ecclesiastical structures. The "sacred desk" is not an ornately carved rostrum. It is where God makes an impact on the souls of men. In our day it may be a laboratory table or a teacher's desk in a high school biology class! Let us not be derogatory about the teaching of the saints within their own edifices. This is necessary! But let us not confuse this with the only "ministry" available to us.

We do not follow the example of Christ by remaining in our air-conditioned "heavens" with good people and angelic characters. Christ did not do that. He abandoned heaven for the

world of men. He had no office room. He had no place to lay his head. His office was his function in the world. His office was his mission! We are doctoring people who claim to be well. If the sinsick ones want to be healed they must come to the office. We want to share in the glory without first sharing in the suffering of Jesus. Now is the time when we should be partaking of the suffering and shame of the cross. We should be moving among the lepers, the publicans, the prostitutes, the unwashed. It is possible we may exhaust our share of the glory, prestige and pomp on earth. If we do, God have mercy upon us. If we truly follow Jesus we will have to leave our heavens. We must enter the world. We are not acting like Jesus at all. Our pattern is the Pharisee!

7. We must recapture the word “witness” in our confrontation with the world. We must grasp its real significance. I grew up under the teaching that the apostles were the only witnesses for Christ and we must never apply the term to our work. It is true that the apostles were the chosen witnesses *of Christ* in his post-resurrection appearances. Thus they could testify of the reality of that resurrection. One can only testify to that which he has personally experienced or seen. Most of our brethren have had no real encounter with Jesus in their own lives, so they cannot be witnesses at all.

I am not in that predicament. I followed Jesus for years before I overtook him. We are walking together now. I knew a great deal about him then, I know him now! Regardless of what Dr. Altizer and others may say, I know that I serve a living Savior. I know what he can do because he has done it in my life. I believe that Jesus lived on earth in the flesh; I know he lives in my heart. This has happened to me. I am a witness of it and to it. I seek every opportunity to testify of what the grace of God has done. I will bear witness among philosophers, savants, theologians, publicans, prostitutes, Pharisees, Sadducees, members of the restoration movement or of any other movement.

There isn't anything mysterious or mystifying about it. It does not involve any emotional upset or agitation. I'm coldly practical, pragmatic and businesslike about it. I simply took Him at His word when he said that if I would open the door He would come in. I did, and he did! I know that he is not dead. Neither am I— now! I'm not excited as if company had come and we had to hurry up and do a lot of things before they left. He is here to stay. We've got a lifetime together and it is a life not regulated by time. I do not manifest any visible signs or demonstrations. I do not speak in tongues or have any special gifts. I have a lot of difficulty with English. But I have no difficulty with Jesus.

I know that I have passed from death unto life because I love the brethren. I have crossed the frontier into the life sector after years of patrolling in the dark along the border. I have received the Spirit of adoption and not the spirit of slavery again to fear. Perfect love has cast out all fear! I even find it possible to love my enemies. It is easy to love people whom I simply cannot like!

I have tested myself and I find that I love Thomas J. J. Altizer. If we ever meet I do not think I shall try to convince him that Jesus is at the right hand of God, by reading from the apostolic witnesses whom he does not accept. I shall rather testify that he is at my right hand so I shall not be moved. I shall simply look him in the face and say, "I love you, and I want to tell you about the One who made it possible for me to do so." That's what I mean by witnessing. Love is the power. I am simply the mouthpiece. Someday my mouth will be stopped by the hand of death clamped over it, but love will not be stopped by death. "There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance." I believe that! *I believe it with all my heart!* I am willing to "bet my life" on it!

The Dynamic of God

Mission Messenger (December 1966)

Volume 28

[Abstract]

The memories of yesterday do not completely disappear. There were the ardent meetings in little houses at rural crossroads, in brush arbors and in groves. We were quite partisan in those days, and as most partisans we were sure in our attitude of dogmatism, sure almost to the point of arrogance. We were the elect of God, the loyal group, the favorites of heaven. All others were outside the pale, sectarian, apostate, rejected, “without hope and without God in the world.”

It was easy then to determine who were the faithful. They were the ones who were sound on “the issues,” they opposed the items which were under the factional ban, they subscribed to and sent their reports to the loyal paper. They constituted the church that was established in 30 A.D. You could ascertain this by looking at the dates carved in cornerstones which were laid recently. They had the proper name as evidenced by embroidered velvet drapes hanging over the pulpit stands and citing Romans 16:16 as proof.

One can look back and see that we confused smugness with soundness, and sarcasm with steadfastness. But the Spirit of God can purge and purify, cleanse and consecrate, and save the souls of some who are steeped in their own self-righteousness. In every generation God needs living proof that His transforming power has not waned. If the life of an intolerant crusader for an

exclusivistic party can be altered under the shattering force of the dynamic of grace, there is hope for all of the unwitting or unwilling victims of the factional complex which is a curse to the Christian challenge in our day.

I shall never forget when the Spirit opened up to my soul the full significance of the four-dimensional power of love which makes possible the attainment to fulness of being, even the fulness of God himself. I had often read the prayer of Paul for the saints as recorded in Ephesians 3:14-19. I had even taught the words on numerous occasions. But when I became convinced that I had been looking at the scriptures through partisan spectacles and their real meaning had been obscured, I prayed that my inner eyes would be illumined so that I could behold wondrous things in the Word. And then it happened!

No longer was the word of the Spirit a mere written code of laws, a compilation of sermon texts, or a collection of ammunition to use in verbal warfare with dissenting brethren. It was not something which I looked at, perused, or investigated from afar or from outside of it. It was in me and I was also involved in it. I found myself not with a book in my hand but with my hand in the hand of Another. It was not so much that a book was leading me to someone as that Someone was leading me through the Book. And I was experiencing a new joy, a new life, a sense of glorious fulfillment.

The fulness did not come simply by study, for it was something to know which was beyond knowledge. It was a personal experience, the sharing of life, eternal life, the life of the Spirit. Now I often go back and read the words. And I never lose the thrill. It is not a thrill from what is in them but from what is in me. I borrowed the title of this book— Deep Roots— from these words.

With this in mind, then, I kneel in prayer to the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name,

that out of the treasures of his glory he may grant you strength and power through his Spirit in your inner being, that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations, may you be strong to grasp, with all God's people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you attain to fulness of being, the fulness of God himself.

The treasures of his glory! Curiosity prompts me to wish that I knew the extent of the deposit, but commonsense tells me that the moment I learned I would die in a burst of light. Even Moses who talked with God like a familiar friend had to be concealed in a crevice of rock so that the full glory would not shine upon him, and all he could behold was the receding glory.

Although I can never peer into the vault, I am free to step up to the window and draw from the treasure according to my need. And that which I receive does not diminish the supply one whit. The payment is made in the form of strength and power, actually *the dynamic* of God. This is made available through the Spirit in the inner being. This promise is precious to me. God not only supplies a knowledge of what is required through his word, but he supplies the strength and power to accomplish it through the Spirit.

Before I really knew about "the vast resources of his power open to us who trust in him" (Ephesians 1:19), I thought that I would just read the Bible frequently, memorize enough chapters, and have a proof-text for everything I did, and I would gradually develop into such a good character it would surprise God and he just would not have the heart to slam heaven's door in my face. But deep down inside I think I knew that I did not have the power in myself to overcome. I was frightened at my failures, frustrated by my fears, and worried about my weakness. Then I found out that the Spirit had not just "thrown the Book at me" to stand on the sidelines with divine arms folded while watching

me struggle to make the grade.

The power was not in my spirit at all, for I was unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin. The power was in His Spirit. And His Spirit was in me! The very minute I quit trusting in self and began trusting in him, the resources of his power became open to me.

It happened just as he said it would! I have never been the same. Regardless of what happens I can never be the same again. Those who are waiting for me to “come back” to the old factional life might just as well call the dogs, the hounds of heresy, and go home. I am not coming back. Thank God for the strength! Thank God for the power! Thank God for the Spirit’s dynamic in the inner man! This is what makes it possible for Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith! Glorious, joyous, victorious faith! This is the victory that overcometh the world!

The faith, love, strength and power— all of them fruits of the Spirit— drawn from the depository of grace, granted unto us out of the treasury of his glory, these make possible our deep roots and firm foundations. Our roots must penetrate until they can entwine themselves around the Rock of Ages. Our foundations must go down, down, down until they find rest in him. It is not a knowledge of a system, of a way of life, of a moral code, or a creedal confession, which will enable us to stand against battering storms and lashing winds. We must know him, for this is eternal life. He said, “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life . . . but you will not come to me that you might have life.”

Deep roots! These make it possible for us to be strong to grasp something with all of God’s people. Not those in a certain faction, or sect, or party, but all of them. And what is it that may be grasped? “The breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ.” No man can ever fully understand the love of Christ by merely reading about it, any more than one can

understand mother love by studying the dictionary definition of it. He must experience it, be caught up in it and grasped by it before he can grasp it.

Once we come to know how blind and senseless and hideous sin really is, and see ourselves broken and scarred and worthless, and then realize that it was precisely in this abject state that God's love sought us, and kept on seeking until it found us and led us out into the sunlight, we can begin to appreciate its scope. Its breadth is great enough to encompass the whole world. Its length outreaches all of the ages that men can measure or imagine. Love never ends. Its height is such that it towers into the heavens. Its depth enables it to probe to the very bottom of the fathomless depression of sinful nature and rescue the shattered spirit drowning in the sea of its own depravity.

But while all of this is wonderful to think about and the description of it is impressive it does not work. The Transformation until it reaches out and takes hold of one individually. It is like a slave reading a treatise on freedom, or a starving mendicant thumbing through the colorful displays of a cookbook. Such activity is interesting as a means of passing away the time or for personal entertainment. But it is not to be compared with one coming into the dungeon and arousing the prisoner sleeping on his pallet of straw, unlocking his shackles, and whispering for his ears alone, "You are free now. I paid the price!" And that is what happens when you grasp the nature, the quality, the dimensions of God's love, for the first glorious moment.

It is tragic, I think, that most of us never appropriate the fulness which is available to us because we are afraid to love. This is often true in a physical sense in marriage. We are beset by inhibitions, restrained by taboos, and conditioned by lingering adolescent attitudes, so that we never truly mature in love, either in bestowal or acceptance. Of course we live together

and share our intimacies, but always there are the anxieties deeply imbedded in the subconscious which prohibit our unrestricted yielding and we miss the fulness of untempered joy. One who cannot surrender all can never capture all.

No less is this true in the spiritual realm. It is probably an invariable characteristic of love. One draws upon the treasure of God, the riches of heaven, for love. And it must be used, not sparingly, but lavishly and liberally. One must never stop to count the cost. If he questions whether his love will be received or acknowledged or reciprocated, if he ponders what he will get out of it in return, he limits its height, or its breadth, or its depth. And when he does he must settle for less than the fulness of God. Love is to be sown in gay abandon, flung out to all, whether friends or enemies, worthy or unworthy. And perfect love casts out fear, all fear— fear of the cross, fear of what men may do to you, fear of the clan, the clique or the claue. Even fear of losing the love!

Love risks everything. It holds nothing in reserve. It never asks what the stakes are, it simply dumps all on the table. It drove a trembling, tearful prostitute to crash the gate at a feast to empty a flask of myrrh on the feet of Jesus, probably the only man she had ever met who loved her for her own sake and did not want her for his. It prompted a man of a despised racial minority to go out of his way to rescue an assault victim on the shoulder of the highway and to stand good for his financial needs without knowing what they would be. Love always “goes for broke.”

One who knows this kind of love knows something that is beyond knowledge. You cannot attain to it merely by the study of books, not even a sacred book. It cannot be caught up in a book, even one bound in leather and stamped with gold. You cannot reason it out and arrive at it for it is irrational by every standard of judgment on earth. But when you surrender to it you have fulness of being. Not just a full existence, but fulness of

being!

I am wholly committed to the dynamic of God's love as the only power in the universe which can ever make whole that which has been broken. It can mend broken hearts, broken spirits, broken lives, broken bodies, broken minds, and broken characters. Nothing else can do so. It is useless to play around or experiment with anything else. Love is the only power which can span the gaps of a broken fellowship. It alone can batter down walls, remove barriers and open gates of access. Argument will not do it. Debating will not do it. Neither will conferences, committees, creeds or concordats. Nothing will do it but love!

Love is greater than tongues, prophetic utterances and supernatural knowledge, all of which can be quite empty. It is greater than voluntary impoverishment, martyrdom or supernatural faith. "There is nothing love cannot face." It faced the cross. There is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance. That is why I have invested all of my feeble stock in Love, Unlimited. I have the key to the treasures of his glory. I have strength and power through the Spirit. I have God's dynamic in my inner being. With *deep roots* penetrating the soil of mercy and forgiveness, I want to be strong to grasp with all of God's people the four dimensional power of love.

With all of God's people! That is why I shall never again belong to a faction or fragment of the saints. That is why no man will ever again "line me up" with any sect or segment. I am not "coming back" to any party where I must hate some of my brothers to be loved by the others. I am sick and tired of the sham and hypocrisy of the whole sorry, sad and sordid sectarian mess. I intend to be a Christian and a Christian only! I do not intend, God being my helper, to settle for less than the fulness of God.

Whatever I grasp of eternal values from now on I will grasp with all of God's people. They are His and I am His, so

they are mine and I am theirs. God grant us all that through the indwelling Spirit we may be able to know that inner dynamic which makes possible the fulness of being, through the four-dimensional power of love!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1967)

Volume 29

Apples of Gold

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Apples of Gold

Mission Messenger (January 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Words are the ripe fruit dangling from the branches of idea trees. Some of these trees are cultivated, others have sprung up voluntarily. The fruit is sometimes flavorful and delightful, sometimes bitter and acrid, and sometimes tasteless. But we could not exist without words and he who would condemn them must make use of words to do so. Words are the bodies with which ideas clothe themselves and assume visible form, and every word, like every living person, is composed of both body and soul.

In his memorable work *On The Study of Words*, Archbishop Trench says, “Often in words contemplated singly, there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth, and no less of passion and imagination, laid up— that from these lessons of infinite worth may be derived, if only our attention is aroused to their existence.”

Trench quotes from another eminent writer who said, “In a language like ours, where so many words are derived from other languages, there are few modes of instruction more useful or amusing than that of accustoming young people to seek for the etymology or primary meaning of the words they use. There are cases in which more knowledge of more value may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign.” We have found this true.

Who is not intrigued by the fact that “bootlegger” is derived from the days when men hid a flask of liquor in their high boot legs? Or that union and onion came from the same original and the latter signifies “many skins bound into one”? Or that “nasturtium” literally means “nose twister” because its pungent odor has an effect upon the olfactory nerves? We still speak of a style of writing because men once used a stylus, and we call a writing instrument a pen, from the Latin *penna*, a feather, because they later used quills.

There is a temptation to wander into a thousand of these little linguistic byways, but our task is a more serious and deliberate one. We propose, if we live and our Lord tarries in His coming, to devote the entire year to a study of words used by the Holy Spirit. Our aim will be to edify the brethren by sharing with them the result of rather intensive research. We will be seeking to lay hold upon the thoughts of God by grasping the words of God. We hope to make a simple presentation but not a shallow one. All penetration implies an approach in increasing depth and we will try to go deeper into His purpose for mankind.

The entire series will be entitled *Apples of Gold*. The choice of title will at once commend itself to most of our readers who will remember the proverb of Solomon as copied down by the official court scribes of the good King Hezekiah. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). A more literal rendering might be, “A word spoken in season is golden fruit in silver carvings.” The setting, or frame of reference for a word, has a distinct influence upon the impression it conveys, and just as diamonds are displayed in proper settings, so words are made distinctive by their context.

Judge Learned Hand once wrote: “Words are chameleons, which reflect the color of their environment.”

We invite all members of the fellowship of the concerned

ones to stroll with us through the cool aisles of divine revelation as we pluck and examine the precious fruit of God's gracious Word. Great things lie ahead of us and we invoke His aid for our journey. May this year be profitable unto all of us in the Spirit!

Let us remember that "words once spoken can never be recalled!"

Example and Pioneer

Mission Messenger (January 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

When I was a little lad attending the village one-room school, we were issued a writing portfolio to encourage our study of penmanship. In addition to the paper with widely spaced lines required by novices, it also contained a heavy cardboard pad with strips of paper at the top, on each of which was printed a line of perfect writing to use as a sample. The student placed the sheet of practice paper with the top line immediately under the example and after copying it, thrust the paper up under it, and brought the next line into the same position. The process was continued until every line of the practice sheet was filled.

The secret of this system lay in the fact that one always had a perfect example in front of him. He did not copy from his own previous line and thus reproduce or exaggerate its imperfections. As a boy I did not realize this method of teaching was more than two thousand years old. I learned that when I came to know Jesus.

In 1 Peter 2:21 we are told, “For to this purpose you were called: because Christ also died for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.” The word “example” means “a copy-head for use in writing instruction.”

The Authentic Version translates: “To this end you were called, for Christ himself suffered on your behalf, leaving you a

copy, that you should follow in his traces.”

It is only when we pattern directly after Jesus that we are safe. When we use someone else as the example for our lives we tend to adopt his imperfections. Once, when we were erecting a meetinghouse, the carpenter working on the scaffold asked me to saw a dozen boards to fit the space between the window frame and the door. He marked one as a sample, but instead of using it for all, I used each one in turn to mark the next. By the time I handed up the fourth it would not fit at all, for each time I was gaining the width of the saw blade. God has provided an original pattern in Jesus and each of us should measure our lives by His, not by another for whom we have admiration. He is our Example!

I have always been thrilled with the stories of pioneers, men who dared to leave home and blaze a trail through the trackless wilderness so others might follow in their steps. This is the very description given of Jesus. In Hebrews 12:2 he is called “the author and finisher of our faith.” The word “author” is a translation of *archegos*.

This word can mean the point of origin from which a thing proceeds. Thus J. B. Phillips translates it as “Jesus the source and the goal of our faith.”

It can mean the starting-point of an endeavor, and since the context deals with the Christian race, the New English Version has it, “Jesus, on whom faith depends from start to finish.”

But it can also refer to one whom we describe as “breaking the ice” or “blazing the trail.” This is how I like to think of Jesus. The world was a jungle of sin and a wilderness of wickedness. He left a comfortable abode and plunged into this morass of evil and showed us the way through. He marked the path, put up signs to warn of danger spots, and left encouraging

notes along the way for those who falter and are ready to give in or give up. I can think of a dozen such little messages tacked on trees along the road, which have caused me to keep on going when I was tempted to sit down and rest or “throw in the sponge” during the fight.

That is why my own translation reads: “Run with fierce determination the crosscountry race for which you enrolled, keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus who marked out the trail and finished the course, showing what it means to have real trust in God.”

Aprons and Overalls

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

In the days of the apostles the Roman Empire was a teeming mass of slaves, most of them owned by nobles and patricians. The fighting machine developed with living cogs had overrun the world and reduced the bulk of mankind to a condition of abject physical servitude. The Roman politicians lived always in a state of tension and fear produced by the possibility of a universal uprising and revolt of their captives.

As a means of identification of status each slave was required to wear a distinctive garb, a wrap-around apron of white, when he went anywhere in public. Thus his inferior social standing was ascertainable unto all, and his deference in demeanor was understood. Peter uses the very word for this white apron in 1 Peter 5:5, where it appears in the word “clothed.” The passage reads: “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.”

Christians are slaves. The word rendered “servants” in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and Titus 1:1, is *doulos*, a bondslave. A slave belongs to another by right of capture or purchase. “The free man who received the call is a slave in the service of Christ” (1 Corinthians 7:22). The slave has no life or will of his own.

Our badge of subjection is humility. When we wear this

white apron the world recognizes that Jesus is our Master. Humility is not cowardice for it takes a brave man to follow Christ. It is not weakness for one must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It is not spineless servility but sincerity of service. It comes to the disciplined, not to the diffident.

Humility is the ready mind relinquishing rights to encourage others. It is the voluntary sacrifice of personal prerogatives to promote peace. It is sitting down on a lower step while another is elevated because of your effort. It is playing second fiddle while the soloist receives the applause for using the instrument you have tuned. It is calling the signal for another to carry the ball the last foot over the goal line after you have battered your way for fifty yards to place it in that position.

Humility is bending down to shake hands with a little child. It is saying, "Thank you!" to the Negro elevator man in your office without noticing that he is a Negro, and with no thought of being polite because of the civil rights agitation. It is stopping your car to enquire of the garbage man about his sick child because you are interested in the welfare of his family. If you do any of these to be seen of men, or because the neighbors are watching, it is not humility at all. It is pride of the worst kind. It is rank hypocrisy!

The New English Version reads: "Indeed, all of you should wrap yourselves in the garment of humility towards each other." J. B. Phillips translates it: "Indeed all of you should defer to one another and wear the 'overall' of humility in serving each other."

The Authentic Version puts it thus: "Always wear humility's apron with one another."

Strategy for Peace

Mission Messenger (January 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

The day we first divided we ceased to be a unity movement and became a contributor to the sectarian complex. Our plea was no longer a force, our program became a farce.

When we began to make pieces of one another, our work as peacemakers in a strife-torn world came to an inglorious halt.

The rents in the fabric of brotherhood give the lie to our vaunted boast of loyalty to Jesus. We have denied his prayer, defamed his plan and derogated his purpose. Our factions are monuments to our failures, our parties proclaim our futility.

We must heal our breaches, repair our cleavages, and bridge our chasms, or we shall forfeit all right to speak in the ecumenical councils of the world. If there is not a sufficient dynamic in our program to hold us together it is a foregone conclusion that it can never have the power to draw all others together. Our approach has been immature, impractical and ineffective. While parroting pious platitudes we have become further fragmented. We are strangled by senseless slogans, crucified by childish cliches, and massacred by meaningless mottoes.

In our dilemma of division and in the interest of inspiring a definite strategy for waging peace I suggest very humbly the

following guidelines.

1. Let all of us, in a deep sense of remorse and with unqualified repentance, acknowledge our guilt for perpetuating the partisan principles and positions inherited from our fathers. Let us desist from the puerile practice of pointing the finger of accusation at others as the sole cause of our disaster in the restoration experiment. The question is not who split the log, but who is going to put it back together. The need is not for pointing fingers but for helping hands.

2. Restore the cross of Jesus to the center of all Christian concern. Relegate all opinions, interpretations, and personal views to a secondary position. It is absurd, silly and ridiculous to make any view of instrumental music, the millennium, cups, classes or colleges, more important than the blood of God's dear Son, and to allow the relationship created by that blood to be negated by any blunder of those within it. Jesus did not give His life to purchase a non-instrument entity, a post-millennial party, or an anti-class clan.

3. Recapture the local autonomy of the congregation in truth as well as in theory. When a congregation of saints mutually and unanimously agrees to express its praise to God and to propagate His work in a certain manner, allow them to do so without reprisal and answerable to the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ as the only Lord. Let us renounce the rule of editors, preachers cliques and pressure groups. It is useless to oppose hierarchical domination in Rome and practice it among ourselves in America.

4. Recognize that fellowship is not endorsement but a family relationship produced by the indwelling Spirit in children of God. Our goal must be community and not conformity. The only unity possible for finite beings is unity in diversity. Harmony is not essential to fellowship but acknowledgment of fellowship is essential to achievement of harmony.

5. Let us begin at once the recognition both privately and publicly of all of God's children and our brothers. I am resolved never to be a partisan pawn nor to go any place which imposes upon me as a condition of my participation, the disregard of my brethren from another segment or faction. I will not insult the Father by cold disdain of His family. I shall not sell my birthright for the pottage of partisan praise or acclaim.

6. Substitute meaningful dialogue for debate, inviting all brethren to attend, and providing opportunity for all to question. To this end I am ready to meet any brother, or any group of brethren, one or a hundred, in public dialogue, at any time or any place which may be mutually agreeable. I think that the traditional crazy-quilt pattern of "fellowship" practiced by the "Church of Christ" is absolutely inconsistent, untenable and indefensible, when measured by the eternal purpose of God as revealed in the new covenant scriptures. I am ready to examine it and to have my own position examined freely and openly in brotherly fashion.

We can unite in Christ Jesus and point the world to a brighter and better day and none of us give up any truth he has ever held. But we must love Jesus more than we love our private opinions and public prejudices.

Paper Curtains

Mission Messenger (January 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Forgive me for this little article, but to me it is a tragic thing to see a people lose their freedom and not realize it. This has happened to a great degree to our brethren in many segments of “The Church of Christ.” They are victims of censorship, thought-control and pressure groups. Many hardly know what is going on among other heirs of the restoration movement, and what they learn must come through the “grapevine” or by chance discovery. The party organs filter to them only what “the powers that be” want them to hear. That isn’t a great deal. The paper curtains have been yanked down so no real light shines through the windows.

A short time ago I went to Nashville to visit the editor of one of the more influential journals in what might be designated the orthodox, mainstream, non-instrument segment of the restoration movement. I informed him of some of the tremendous things which are happening across various lines and asked if he would consider printing news items informing his readers of various meetings in which brethren of all factions, including his own, are invited to participate. I came away with two things: (1) A ball point pencil advertising the firm; (2) a very strong impression that the readers will be kept in ignorance, so far as possible, of what is transpiring in the whole church. Only news fitting the emasculated party pattern will be passed on to the subscribers.

This is characteristic also of the smaller factional journals. In each of these “news of the brotherhood” consists only of information of the doings of those circling about and kicking up dust in the party corral. Not a whisper of the activity of the great majority of those in the one body ever leaks through the sound-proofed walls of the clannish covert. In a religious atmosphere charged with electrifying possibilities these brethren dwell apart from the world He created, in little worlds of their own creation. The kingdom of heaven is circumscribed by their factional fences. Jesus is portrayed as a factional monarch whose only subjects are those who dance to the tune of fiddling editorials.

This type of tyranny is not limited to editors. In many areas the minister of the local “Church of Christ” is the self-appointed umpire for the *index expurgatorius*. A letter addressed to the congregation of saints inviting them to attend an open forum on fellowship and unity never reaches those saints at all. One must go over or around the preacher to reach the church of God, otherwise they will never know anything except what he wants them to know. He may know but they may not! The local preacher is frequently the greatest obstacle the Holy Spirit must overcome in the attempt to answer the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all who believe in Him.

We can present proof that many preachers not only refuse to convey to the congregations the letters of invitation addressed to them, but often do not even inform the elders of such invitations. It is bad enough to have someone pilfer your mail, but it is ridiculous to pay him a salary and provide him an office in which to do it. Hundreds of invitations to share in meaningful forums and dialogue sessions leading to re-study of our divisions are never mentioned to the people of God by the men in the front office, although bulletin boards are frequently cluttered with partisan trivia having not even a remote bearing upon our problems in this age.

What is the reason for this conspiracy to conceal facts

from the flock? Obviously the basic motivation is the sectarian spirit. It is the same whether found in Rome or in our congregations. All sectarianism is alike in attitude. It always uses the same old weapons— censorship, boycott and threat of excommunication. But we think that fear also plays a great part with the elders and preachers among us. They know that God's people are becoming fed up with the narrow, bitter, factional programs which have produced division, strife and hate. They do not want them to know that someone is doing something about this sad and sorry mess. The humble brethren are ready for our plea. They do not want to make tests of fellowship out of things which God has not made conditions of salvation. Many of them endorse what we are saying in their hearts although still cowed by fear of reprisal if they voice it openly.

But better days are coming! The Spirit is mightily at work! God's people will be delivered into a full and glorious freedom. Meanwhile we shall continue our effort knowing that we do not walk alone! Not even editors and preachers can always thwart the Spirit of God. The day of sectarianism is doomed. Even that which is peddled under our own brand name must pass away! Cheer up! Tomorrow will be brighter than today. The shadows are fleeing away!

Jealousy and Envy

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

“Envy is a certain grief of mind conceived upon the sight of another’s felicity, whether real or supposed, so that we see that it consists partly of hatred, and partly of grief.”— South.

The careless student usually thinks of envy and jealousy as virtually synonymous. It is our intention to make a proper distinction in them. Envy is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:21); a product of that wisdom which is earthly, sensual and devilish (James 3:14); and a companion of confusion and every evil work (James 3:16).

It was envy which prompted his brothers to sell Joseph (Acts 7:9); envy which caused the Jews to deliver up Jesus (Matt. 27:18); and envy which promoted riotous mob violence at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). Envy is always sinful. It proceeds from evil tendencies and produces evil consequences.

Jealousy, which comes from the same word as zealous, may be either good or evil, depending upon its object. God proclaimed himself to be a jealous God, and was actually referred to as the “Lord, whose name is Jealous” (Exo. 34:14). The apostle specifically declares that there is a “godly jealousy” (2 Cor. 11:2).

Jealousy is derived from *zelotypia*, a compound form

consisting of *zelos*, and *typia*, to strike or fill. It means to be struck full of passion, or to be inflamed with intense desire or longing. God desires his people with just such a yearning.

Envy is from the Latin *invideo*. The last part is now used with reference to tapes showing action on television screens, for video means to see. The combined word means looking at from the wrong angle or from a contrary direction.

One is jealous of that which is his own, he is envious of that which belongs to another. He is jealous of his wife, he is envious of his neighbor's wife. Jealousy is always related to fear, for it is ever frightened at the prospect of losing what it claims and cherishes; envy is accompanied by suffering for it is pained to see another enjoy and experience what it covets for itself.

A jealous man may be pacified, an envious man can never be appeased or placated. The first has a definite object to be attained or retained, and a threat to his possession of it. So if a wife expresses detestation of one who is deemed a rival, the jealous husband may be satisfied by enjoyment of her person.

On the other hand, an envious person cannot stand for the object to know happiness. He revolts at enjoyment. He is sickened by the very sight of satisfaction. He has a morbid desire to know of the misery of the other. For this reason we think that when Dryden made the familiar statement, "Jealousy, the jaundice of the soul," he was actually speaking about envy. Jealousy may lift to noble heights, envy is always base and debasing.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Romans 13:13).

J. B. Phillips speaks more to our age by translating: "Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the 'delights' of getting drunk or playing with sex, nor yet in quarrelling or jealousies."

The Authentic Version renders it: “Let us conduct ourselves with daytime decorum, not in revels or carousals, not in sexual intimacy and licentiousness, not in wrangling and rivalry.”

Carnal Weapons

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[Abstract]

Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defence that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ.

The above is the rendering by J. B. Phillips of 2 Corinthians 10:5. It occurs in a setting which has often been misunderstood, for the apostle says in the preceding verse, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” as the King James Version has it. This is taken as a condemnation of even defensive warfare upon the part of Christians. Without entering into the controversy of the right to bear arms under any circumstance, we simply state that this passage is not remotely connected with the problem. The point the apostle is making is not that war is sinful but that the nature of the warfare should determine the type of weapons to be used.

The false teachers who infiltrated the congregation which Paul planted at Corinth concocted every type of charge which they could level against him. They said he was very meek and humble when he was present with them but grew bold and brave at a distance and when absent. They implied that he had a vitriolic pen and wrote daringly from afar, but that “his bark was worse than his bite,” for he became docile when he arrived among them.

This amounted to charging him with a policy of double-dealing. The New English Version says they “charge us with moral weakness.” J. B. Phillips puts it as “reckoning that our activities are purely on the human level.” In reply the apostle asserts that although he is a weak man and leads a normal human life, he recognizes that the battle he fights is on a spiritual level.

His real conflict is not with men but with their deceptive fantasies, or sophistries. His was a war for men’s minds, a conflict of ideologies and thought processes. The weapons must be adapted to the kind of battle being waged. Carnal weapons will destroy men’s physical bodies but you cannot shoot down a fantasy any more than you can a phantom. An idea cannot be blasted with a shotgun loaded with nitro and buckshot. Yet Paul is here talking about a different kind of carnal weapon.

The opposite to deceptive fantasy is true knowledge of God and this last must be our weapon to storm the ramparts, batter down the bastions, and capture the fortress of human minds. The apostle was writing to a divided congregation of saints. His motives were under attack. His character was being assailed. His very integrity was being challenged. He was accused of refusing to take their money personally and sending Titus later on to collect all he could get. He was said to be a weighty and powerful writer but in appearance was weak and as a speaker was beneath contempt.

In all of this Paul refused to retaliate in kind. He did not engage in mud-slinging, personalities or recrimination. These were the carnal weapons he refused to use for he did not fight after the manner of men. We are still engaged in a struggle to capture every thought and bring it under the authority of Christ, but we dare not be led into the ambush of Satan where we will be tempted to use weapons adapted to those on the purely human level.

Partisan debate, factional rivalry and sectarian disorder are all carnal weapons. They do not fit the right hand of the Christian. The apostle wrote: “I fear that when I come . . . I may find quarrelling and jealousy, angry tempers and personal rivalries, backbiting and gossip, arrogance and general disorder” (2 Corinthians 12:20). These are carnal weapons. Those who use them fight after the manner of men. It is as dangerous for a Christian to carry a grudge as it is to carry a gun. It may be as sinful to shoot off your mouth as to shoot off a pistol.

Through the Dust

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[Abstract]

The most common word for “minister” in the new covenant scriptures is *diakonos*. It is also transliterated to become our English word “deacon.” The original is a combined form of *dia*, through, and *konos*, dust. It is sometimes said to mean “to kick up dust,” that is, of a runner speeding on an errand at the behest of another. A more logical meaning is one who walks through the dust while leading a camel on which another rides, thus serving the need of the rider.

The word has both a general and specific sense. In the latter it refers to the functionaries called deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8). Thus if any are to be designated the ministers of a congregation it should be the deacons. These were the almoners, or those who administered to the needs of the distressed and indigent.

However, the word was never employed in such a manner as to designate any specific or exclusive form of service. One cannot determine the function of another from the word minister, for it is used to designate every form or type of service. There must always be other terms by which one learns the nature of the ministry to which reference has been made. Every Christian is a minister if he serves God and his fellows.

One enters the ministry by baptism into Christ. He cannot

be made a minister by a diploma from a school nor by the imposition of human hands. One can decide to “take up the ministry” but to do so is a tacit admission that he has been neglecting the Christian life. He cannot go away to college to become a minister although one who has become a minister may go away to college. A minister of Christ may study engineering, psychology, science, business administration, or automobile mechanics, in order to better his ministry. This depends upon how he expects to support himself in his vocation, which must always be living for Jesus.

But should he not specialize in Bible? My reply is that every minister should do this regardless of how he expects to make a living. The weapon is not merely for the officers but for all the soldiers. And there is a difference in living of the gospel and making a living off the gospel. The gospel must be preached but it must never be peddled. (See 1 Corinthians 2:17 in the Revised Standard or New English New Testament translations).

We must either recapture the primitive concept of the universal ministry involving all of the saints or we will continue the inane practice of enrolling students who never intend to learn, enlisting soldiers who never intend to fight, and delivering infants who never intend to grow. And the stands which once were filled with heathen watching the Christian race will be thronged with Christians watching professional entertainers perform a pulpit adagio.

As a meager contribution of deep conviction I have resolved never to allow my name to appear on a signboard or letterhead as *the minister* of a congregation. I have no opposition to a congregation placing the names of its ministers on a sign but such a sign should contain the whole roster. An army consists of more than a first lieutenant. Our problem is that we have a lot of folk who want to minister but they are allergic to dust.

Crumbling Walls

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[Abstract]

The cracks are beginning to show in the artificial walls erected to separate brethren. The spite fences of the past are starting to sag. This is obvious to any observer who carefully scans the partisan journalistic organs of the “Church of Christ.” Not a single segment of this multi-factional complex is escaping the spirit of reform. For the first time in over a century, since disintegration of the restoration movement began, even small peripheral groups are feeling the impact of the witness for fellowship and unity.

A major journal of the largest faction, published in Texas, has been forced to devote more space to teaching on the Holy Spirit than ever before in history, and the Spirit has survived every attempt to explain Him away. One thing is plain, the writers do not agree with each other, but it is heartening to see them continue in “fellowship” with one another. This is proof that the Spirit is active even among some who are apparently uncomfortable in His presence.

A Tennessee journal has had to call up the big guns to bombard the “liberals” as all those are designated who refuse to bow to the edicts and dogmas of the “powers that be.” Some are becoming so “liberal” that they regard all of God’s children as their brethren and freely demonstrate it. It is correct to assume that every real sectarian must be illiberal for this is the very

essence of the sectarian establishment. Some of our brethren, not realizing that we now live in the twentieth century, are still breathing out threats and slaughter against those who are in the Way, but they have a hollow ring. The editors of these papers reveal that an enlightened membership is beginning to break the stranglehold of spiritual bureaucracy. The saints are starting to think for themselves.

What is true of the orthodox “Church of Christ” is also true of the lesser factions. Brethren who admit to making a test of fellowship out of cups and classes and who carve and slash the body to bits over such matters as how to break the bread, have had to call up reinforcements to hold the sectarian line. Some of the membership discovered that Romans 14 was in the Bible and that it was written specifically to tell brethren how to treat one another in spite of differences. In one issue of their chief journalistic organ, the editor apologizes for having to suspend publication of some serialized material to deal with “matters of pressing concern.” It is easy to see that some in the faction are starting to receive their brethren as God received them, and the elite corps has been rushed to the ramparts to gun down and purge those who start loving all of their brethren. This will only drive them into the wider fellowship of the family of God.

An editorial in one of the papers sponsoring the premillennial interpretation declares, “Yes, we would like to see the ‘premillennial movement’ die out. We long for the day when all of us will be ‘Christians only.’” The editor adds, “The premillennialists have always maintained that there should be no divisions in the body of Christ.” This is especially interesting because only a few months before the same editor was wanting to print a directory of the premillennial congregations, apparently so the brethren would have a “Who’s Who” of “the faithful churches.”

More and more men are beginning to say things like, “I agree with a lot that Brother Ketcherside is saying, and he

makes one think, but his program will not work.” That is sheer poppycock. It will work if we’ll work it. And if a lot of preachers were not afraid of their salaries they’d like to work it. Those of us who are not watching the congregational checkbook as closely as we do the Bible are making it work.

We meet with a little congregation of saints which contains some brethren who are premillennial, some who see no harm in instrumental music, some who claim to have spoken in tongues, some who smoke cigarettes as if they were dying to do so, and others who oppose smoking for fear they will. Some are quite orthodox and some are not. We are free to listen to any brother in the Lord and do listen to all kinds of them. We make no hypocritical pretence that we are all of the same opinion. We rejoice that we strive for community and not conformity. Our unity is in Christ Jesus. It is not in our degree of intellectual attainment or our membership in a faction. Men can surmount their fears. They can be free! It does work!

A great revolution is going on beneath the surface within the frightened ranks of all the factions. Nothing will stop it. There are already signs that the power of editors who once cracked the whip is on the wane. Their papers no longer speak for the members of the party. The sheep on the hills are hearing again the voice of the Shepherd. They are beginning to struggle and straggle homeward and some day there will be one flock and one shepherd. That day is coming. The Spirit is at work!

The Old Lady

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[Abstract]

This is the rather affectionate designation used by the British folk for The Church of England. This great communion is regarded as being a little dodderly and senile, living in the past and confused by the present. With many sources of income cut off and with inflation taking its toll, the ancient dowager finds herself hard put to maintain her standards of the past. She is laughed at behind her back, criticized to her face, and mocked on the side, even by those who are her best friends.

Most of those who know her feel that she has nothing worthwhile to contribute to an age dominated by Beatles and mods.

She dwells alone in stately aloofness from a swinging world except for an occasional visit to a coffeehouse where the litany consists of the kind of poetry which can only send those who are already gone.

It is the fate of every sect to grow old, and to wonder what the world is coming to since it is no longer going to it. This is just as true of sects which suffer from delusions of grandeur and think “we are the people and wisdom will die with us.” A sect can suffer from dementia the same as an individual. And to be mistaken about one’s own identity does not help him to clarify his relationship with others.

But the church of God is ageless and timeless. It was never wound up and will never run down. Its message is ever the same in content and never the same in its presentation. It speaks to men when and where they are, and as they are. It has no language of its own but employs the tongues of men in order to reach men. It never talks to itself except when it cannot interpret its message.

The church is not drab or discouraging. It never stifles or squelches. Like Moses, its “eye is not dimmed nor its natural force abated,” by the passage of years. It is vibrant, rejoicing, exuberant, filled with faith and filling others with hope.

Those who think that the church has served her time and is on the way out, reveal what is happening to them and not to the church. The one body can never die as long as its head lives, and he will live forever. Even the sepulcher had to release him from its clammy grasp at the touch of an angelic hand. Certainly the fortunes and figures of a sect will rise and wane, for sects are crystallized from movements which begin with men. And anything for which men can now give statistics of membership is nothing but a sect.

The church of God is composed of all the saved of all the earth. No partisan journal can print its statistics. The editors who try demonstrate their ignorance rather than prophetic vision. It is enough for the rest of us to remember that the Lord knoweth them that are His.

The Fiddlers

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[Abstract]

The classic example of majoring in trivia in time of crisis seems to be that of Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, more popularly known as Nero. While Rome was burning on at least five of the Seven Hills, he insisted on limbering up his fiddle and bow and sawing away at the Roman equivalent of “Turkey in the Straw.”

We believe that some of our brethren should be given consideration if there is a modern contest for Nero’s crown, not as emperor, but as king of the inconsequential. A good example is that of the Church of Christ in a Chicago suburb. Far away men were dying in the jungles of Vietnam. Close at hand other men were marching in the asphalt jungles of city streets. Automobiles were being overturned and burned. Rocks and curses filled the air. Obscenities were being shouted at Roman Catholic priests and nuns.

At the height of the tension the congregation imported a guest speaker who valiantly and courageously faced up to the great moral and spiritual issues of the day by proving beyond his own doubt that the Herald of Truth program sponsored by a congregation in Texas had not violated the autonomy of his own congregation, nor obtained their money with a switchblade knife.

If this seems a little absurd under the circumstances, let me assure you that it is the rule, not the exception. In a world of foment and ferment most of our brethren insist upon ignoring what is happening to give lengthy orations on things which it happens the world is ignoring. Nothing makes the dudgeon rise higher than to insist that we need to become relevant. That is a fighting word! One who uses it must be willing to bear the brand of every caustic term in the alphabet of invective from apostate to zealot.

One can now see the true perspective of the problem faced by the great apostle to mankind who was bounded and harassed by the Jewish legalistic party whose members wanted the message to the Greek world presented in the language and forms of the familiar synagogue sermons. To them Paul was a “liberal” who insisted on recognizing as brethren those who had not been circumcised. He would be called the same in our time if brethren ever awoke to the fact that in his epistle to the Romans he mentioned baptism three times, and grace twenty-three times!

Recently I saw a carping criticism of a preaching brother of whom it was alleged that he only quoted three scriptures in a thirty minute discourse. Paul would never have landed a job in the Church of Christ by using his message on Mars Hill as a trial sermon. Not only did he not quote a single scripture in it, but he referred to a heathen poet, Cleanthus, taking what he said in a hymn to Jupiter and applying it to God. Paul would have flunked any homiletics class in a Bible College. He might have flunked a class in Literary Interpretation at the University of Athens also.

But the point is that if you can quote enough scriptural passages you can often conceal both your ignorance and irrelevance. Frequently the audience can quote them right along with you (most brethren use the same ones in every talk) and you are not proclaiming at all, but leading the audience in a joint recitation. It will not harm the participants. It will not help the

rest of humanity either. Quoting scripture whether it applies or not does not mean that you are facing up to the world of which the scripture speaks.

Our world is washed over by great problems and is wallowing in the trough of grave concerns— hunger, nakedness, famine, war, fear, racial animosity and economic exploitation—to mention a few. The thundering hooves of the steeds ridden by the Four Grim Horsemen echo all over the universe.

While a million people are threatened with death from starvation and pestilence we fight about such things as whether it is right to eat in the meetinghouse. While teeming thousands in steaming jungles have no written language we debate about the validity of Sunday School literature.

Move over, Nero, and give the professionals a chance. No, thank you, that's all right, you may keep your fiddle, because we do not use instrumental music. But we can all join in and sing "with the spirit and with the understanding" while the devouring flames of hell burn unchecked and the licking tongues engulf our world. Who has a tuning fork so we can get the pitch?

The Baobab Tree

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[Abstract]

Africa is a land of peculiarities. The baobab tree is one of them. In his beautifully illustrated book *The River Nile*, Bruce Brander describes the trees as having “fat tubs for trunks and antlers for branches.” Indeed the trunks sometimes reach thirty feet in circumference and the natives hollow them out for huts in which to dwell. There is an interesting legend of the Arabs that the devil picked up the baobab tree and thrust its branches into the ground leaving the roots sticking up into the air.

This may be what has happened to the church in a lot of areas for it would appear that things are the reverse of what they were in the beginning. And we will never turn the world upside down until we get the church right side up. If the church is to be like Jesus it must begin coming to minister and not to be ministered unto. It must also be willing to give its life in order to gain it and to die in order to live.

The early church gathered around a table, the modern church sits before a pulpit. Then they loved the brethren and talked about Jesus, now they profess to love Jesus and talk about the brethren. Then they had no church buildings and sounded out the word, now they have their own architecture and sound the word in. The primitive saints went everywhere preaching the word, their modern counterparts go anywhere there is word of preaching.

Jesus used the cross as a hammer to batter down middle walls of partition; now men use the same cross as an excuse to build them up again. Once the believers would give their lives for the brethren; many now would rather die than give their brethren recognition.

The congregations are not generally lithe, lean, trim runners in the race of life. Many of them, like the baobab tree, are fat tubs, preoccupied with their own little rounds of trivia, living for self, loving their own concerns, leaving the world to flounder in a morass of problems, with no helping hand extended for fear of getting the robe of righteousness soiled and sticky. The world is in a pretty sticky mess and the idea seems to be to stay out of vital contact with it until it straightens itself out and decent folk can again afford to associate with it and take the credit for its improvement.

Actually the church is more affected by social mores and standards in our affluent culture than it affects them. It is like a client of a poverty relief program who learns the technique of profit and loss, and waxes wealthy only to look with disdain upon his former associates. Or like a teetotaler who starts out to rid the world of the curse of alcoholism and ends up taking a nip on the side with the bottle winning the battle.

I suspect the Arab legend about the baobab tree is sheer imagination. I do not think the devil is particularly interested in trees since men quit carving gods out of them. But I think it is quite possible he has turned the church upside down and I wish a lot of the members of it were as interested in it as he is.

The Headless Horseman

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

In *The Inner Hebrides and Their Legends*, Otta Swire tells the story of “Ewen of the Little Head,” a warrior of note on the island of Mull in the fifteenth century. Ewen was a swaggering ill-tempered brute who was married to “a MacDougall of Lorn, an equally unattractive character.” When he could no longer control his son, the father of Ewen sent to a relative, Maclean of Duart, asking for help. Duart was only too glad to invade the country.

When word came to Ewen about the attack he consulted a “Wise Woman” who told him that on the morning when he was arming for the fight if his wife served him butter with his breakfast *unasked* he would be victorious, but if not he and his two sons would be slain.

Breakfast came with no butter on the table so Ewen raved and ranted about the food. When his wife brought no butter he stormed from the house and malevolently turned his hunting dogs loose in her dairy.

Ewen tied himself in the saddle to keep from being accidentally knocked from his steed during the shock of the fray, but when the battle was joined in Glen Forsa a stroke from a broadsword swept off his head. The author describes what followed thus: “His horse, with his headless body still upright in

the saddle, bolted from the field and for many days thereafter it was seen careering in mad terror up and down glens and passes and along precipices and paths fit only for goats. At last, utterly exhausted, it allowed itself to be caught and the body taken from its back and sent to Iona for burial.”

This is an apt portrayal of the “institutional church” in our day. It rides high in the saddle and battles the political, economic and social forces which threaten our earthly pilgrimage. It has been so designed, drafted and departmentalized, that it can function automatically, spasmodically and by reflex action. Every reaction has been purposely planned, programmed and perfected by professional promoters, so that even our prayers must fit into a schedule, and one must hang up the receiver on God when the clock strikes.

The Holy Spirit no longer dares to shake the house where the saints are gathered. There is no place in the agenda into which we could possibly work a house-shaking experience. Besides, we would first have to secure permission from the City Architect or from the Municipal Building Code Inspector. So “the church” goes on swinging and swaying without realizing that something vital is missing. The “church” has lost her head!

The world does not realize it because she is roped up with rituals, laced up with liturgies, fastened with formularies and shackled by sacred solemnities. In her own consummate ignorance she thinks God is dead even while she is a corpse in a surplice. Like Samson, shorn of the locks of his strength, she arises as her custom has been, to shake herself, without knowing that the Spirit has departed from her.

But the thrilling thing is that “the institutional church” becomes a phantom when she is beheaded and the simple saints who cling more closely to the Savior constitute the real body. Only those joined to the One Lord by the One Spirit are members of that blessed company. Frequently these are

disowned by the headless corpse fastened to the frightened stallion of carnal ambition, but they are recognized by the Head and will be gathered unto Him in that day “when he cometh to make up his jewels.”

Combat Cooties

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

Once when I was a little lad down in the hills we moved into a house which was infected with bedbugs. We did not know it, of course, or we might not have moved into it. Having bedbugs was in the same category as having the seven-year itch, the only advantage of which was that when you'd had it three times you knew you were old enough to vote.

The first night in our new domicile found all of us restless and disturbed. When my mother finally found the matchbox and got the kerosene lamp lighted she gave a gasp. The sheets were covered with bugs scurrying for cover. They had marshalled their forces in the darkness and crawled out of the woodwork to attack in hungry frenzy. Our parents did not sleep the rest of the night although the children dozed fitfully while their elders waged futile warfare.

The next day all of the bed ticks had to be taken outside and the straw from them burned. The wooden bedsteads were taken down and every concealed part sprayed with a solution of carbolic acid poured from the bottle with the skull and crossbones on the label. All of the walls, which were of painted wood had to be washed with special attention given to the cracks between the boards. Bedbugs constituted the worst catastrophe we had ever suffered as a family up to that time.

Now times have changed. Bedbugs are our allies in the war in Vietnam. One of these insects is placed in a small box insulated on three sides, and carried with the fourth and open side directed toward the jungle. The task of the bug is to “sniff out” Communists concealed in ambush. When a bedbug senses human blood by its natural sonar system its “scream” is amplified until it becomes recognized by the carrier who thereupon directs withering fire into the undergrowth where the soldiers are concealed.

My mother is no longer with us but if she were I’m sure she would look askance at enlisting these insect pests to literally “bug the enemy.” But “new occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth,” as the poet writes, whether correctly or not. I know of a lot of bedbugs in the spiritual realm which are now being used to discomfit the enemy.

For instance, I grew up in a faction where “uninspired literature” in a Bible class was regarded as a device of Satan. To give little award cards for attendance which contained a religious picture and scriptural verse was almost in the same category as awarding a deck of playing cards in a memory verse contest.

When radio was first introduced it was bitterly attacked by those who several years before had prophesied that God would not let it happen. As I recall I even got into the fight over television, on the wrong side, going so far as to preach a discourse on “TV or Not TV— That is the Question.”

Now all of these “bedbugs” are being employed along with a lot of others to help stimulate interest and arouse concern for the Christian concept. If they belong to Satan he is being whipped over the head with his own weapons!

It will not be necessary for any of you to write and remind me that the insects used near Saigon have not changed their

nature and are still bedbugs. I know that. I trust to the good judgment of my intelligent readers not to carry this analogy of combat cooties too far. I can make it ridiculous enough for all of us!

Life's Final Star

Mission Messenger (February 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

The poet has sung that “life’s final star is brotherhood.” The word “brother” is from *adelphos*, which literally means “from the same womb.” It is common origin which makes us brothers. “He makes men pure from their sins, and both he and those whom he makes pure all have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebrews 2:11). Brotherhood derives from fatherhood. Fellowship is the result of mutual sonship.

God wants a family more than anything else and the most important thing to him is the maintenance of the family relationship. This takes precedence over all else, even over formal acts performed as ritual. Making peace with a brother is more important even than bringing a sacrifice to God. “So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go at once and make peace with your brother; then come back and offer your gift to God” (Matt. 5:23, 24). *Go at once— then come back!*

Men have broken up God’s children into warring clans and have “set at nought their brethren” over such matters as opinions related to music and the millennium, or pertaining to cups, classes and colleges. This is a sin of the deepest dye. It is not a sin to entertain or express any opinion about any of these

things, but it is a grave offence against heaven to make any opinion pro or con the basis of our recognition of one another and of our oneness in Christ.

God has received into His majestic family those who differ with me about the validity of instrumental music and the pre-millennial coming of my Lord. But these things have nothing to do with what makes us brothers and if I smite and strike my fellowservants, the Lord will banish me into outer darkness when he comes. If there are adjustments that need to be made because of inequities he will make them.

“For Christ died and rose to life in order to be the Lord of the living and of the dead. You then— why do you pass Judgment on your brother? And you— why do you despise your brother? All of us will stand before the judgment bar of God . . . Every one of us, then, will have to give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:9-12).

Because I believe that the recapture of the true meaning of brotherhood is the most important task of the fragmented church, I refuse to make any view or opinion of those in Christ Jesus of greater importance than the blessed Holy Spirit whose indwelling presence unites us to Him. Regardless of what my brothers think about the things that trouble us, they are all my brethren. I will do anything to help them, crossing back and forth over the lines as if they were not there. And for me they are not!

The crest and crowning of all good,

Life's final star is Brotherhood;

For it will bring again to earth

Her long lost Poesy and Mirth,

Will send new light on every face,

**A kingly power upon the race,
And till it comes, we men are slaves,
And travel onward to the dust of graves.**

Come, clear the way then, clear the way:

Blind creeds and kings have had their day.

Break the dead branches from the path:

Our hope is in the aftermath —

Our hope is in heroic men,

Star-led to build the world again.

To this Event the ages ran:

Make way for Brotherhood— make way for Man.

The Need for Reform

Mission Messenger (March 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Every institution which exists more than one generation has a tradition. The word comes from *paradosis*, to hand down, to deliver, to pass on. There is nothing wrong with a tradition. The apostolic message falls within that category (2 Thess. 2:15). The harm comes when men pass along the modes, means and methods which they adopted or devised to implement the requirements of apostolic doctrine as being of equal importance and authority with the words of the Spirit.

When this is done the discoveries of the passing generation become a strait-jacket for the next and the forms and customs which were effective in meeting the needs of yesteryear operate effectively against meeting the needs of the present. A standardized form of speech develops and becomes a familiar jargon, and regardless of the condition or circumstance the same grist must be ground by the creaking theological millwheel.

It becomes a test of loyalty to attack certain things to prove one's fidelity, and it is likewise considered a matter of expediency to ignore certain contemporary issues that are dangerous to the status quo of the Establishment. The Roman Catholic Church is a good example of an ecclesiastical mammoth bogged down in a swamp of its own creation. But it has some courageous souls who are trying to pry the behemoth out of the primordial ooze.

Among these is B. L. Wittenbrink, who is permanent secretary of the national Conference of Major Superiors of Men, representing every Catholic religious order. In a recent speech this reverend gentleman assailed the hierarchy for a preoccupation with such questions as shortening or not shortening the skirts of the sisters, while ignoring human needs and injustices. He cited such problems as mental illness, alcoholism and marital infidelity. He declared that the major problem was not lack of obedience to church authority. He said, "The crisis is in communications. Those on top— right to the very top— don't know all things. If they did they'd be God. Those at the bottom don't either. It is essential for the two element— top and bottom— to speak to each other."

Having grown up in the Churches of Christ we know how to sympathize with our friends who are caught up in the web of red tape identified as Catholicism. In a world groaning beneath heavy burdens, and like a trapped animal snapping and tearing at its own flesh in sheer desperation, we are able to pass by on the other side wholly oblivious of the frightful agonies which affect human personalities.

We are still reducing men to bulletin-board statistics, counting noses and making glowing reports of factional gains. While thousands are being enslaved by alcohol and dope, while hundreds are being driven relentlessly to suicide, while millions are pushed back into the teeming streets of the ghettos, we meet in air-conditioned comfort and listen to pleasant sermons on the tragic sin of eating in the basement of the meetinghouse, or of allowing a woman to teach Bible stories to a class of little children, or of breaking the loaf before passing it.

In a world where children are growing up in deprivation, dire poverty and the desperation born of hunger, and already slanted toward a career of criminality and vice, we feel satisfied to allow others to wipe away the filth and sweat and blood, while we fulfill the nobler calling of saving men from a mistaken

opinion concerning the millennium or instrumental music. We are fulminating about the fatuous, parroting party platitudes and bombarding a sick and sad world with sheer bombast.

Let us not sneer at the Catholic sect because of its traditions. Let us not laugh at its struggle to extricate itself from its medieval ties. Rather let us pray that God may raise up reformers among us with the bravery of some of those within the Roman pale. If we do not we may see Rome become free while Jerusalem remains bound and enslaved.

Quenching the Spirit

Mission Messenger (March 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Perhaps the greatest abuse and misuse of talent on earth today is found in the church. The practice of hiring one man to edify the saints exclusively, while others who are sometimes even better equipped, must sit in perpetual silence and are never given opportunity to address the congregation, is a little ridiculous. In some places brilliant attorneys who can plead a case where life and death is involved are not deemed qualified to plead the cause of the King of kings. Erudite professors and schoolmen must be fed on partisan pap week after week although in demand to speak before societies composed of their educational peers. If this type of brain drain was practiced in the business world, bankruptcy would be inevitable.

It was to all of the saints these words were addressed, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God’s word” (Hebrews 5:12). You ought to be teachers. This is God’s ideal. God never bestowed a useless gift. Every gift is intended to be exercised and developed. It is the duty of the congregation to provide and maintain an opportunity for the growth and development of every member to his highest potential. I unhesitatingly charge that our current method not only fails to do this but actually operates to prevent it!

The devil has tricked us into presenting a well-managed

performance under the guise that this is worship. We no longer gather as at a family reunion about the table. We come as the spectators of a drama and if it is not well staged we will attend another theater. And we'll take the price of admission with us. There is where the rub comes in!

Most of us are condemned always to be hearers, not doers, in the assembly. We are ever learning and never coming to the use of our knowledge. We are the taught ones, the interminably taught ones whose ears must enlarge while our brains wither and our tongues paralyze from disuse, for it is by teaching that one really grows in all of his mental faculties.

Plato said, "To teach is the way for a man to learn most and best."

Clement of Alexandria said, "In teaching the instructor often learns more than his pupils."

Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, wrote, "The one exclusive sign that a man is thoroughly cognizant of anything, is that he is able to teach it."

And the blind Homer, who may have been contemporary with Elijah, wrote thus:

Through mutual intercourse and mutual aid,

Great deeds are done and great decisions made;

The wise new wisdom on the wise bestow,

While the lone thinker's thoughts come slight and slow.

In 1663, Dr. Robert Anderson of London said in his book *Reason and Judgment*, "I learn much from my master, more from

my equals, and most of all from my disciples.”

If every congregation regularly placed on its public speaking program, every qualified man, or every man who could become qualified, the Cause would soon have a multitude of capable defenders in every business and profession. There is little incentive to qualify if you know you’ll never to be called upon to use your ability. And the congregation suffers from a lack of fresh and original approach which it could experience. It is useless to pretend that we are interested in restoration of primitive Christianity unless we include a realistic return to the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of all of the saints.

Dr. Robert Young was an eminent scholar who gave us a great Analytical Concordance, as well as a new translation of the entire Bible, along with numerous other works in Biblical and Oriental Literature. In his comment on 1 Corinthians 14:26, he wrote:

**From this and other passages it is clear that the upbuilding of the church was not confined, then, as now, to one, or at the most two, of the congregation; but was the privilege of all the members, and though such a practice is liable to abuse (James 3:1), it is possible that its entire disuse has led to still greater evils obvious to all—
‘quenching the Spirit.’**

Lapsing Into Latin

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

We were exposed to Latin in High School but apparently it did not “take.” It was almost as difficult as English and our deficiency in the linguistic field must be apparent to all. Once in a while, though, we come across a foreign phrase which strikes our fancy because of its appropriateness to our situation. One such is the legal term “*Res ipsa loquitur*,” which means “the thing speaks for itself.”

Our philosophy of fellowship as practiced in the past is in this category. Obviously the purpose of any philosophy of unity is to produce unity and that which results only in division should be carefully scrutinized. We are among the most divided of the religious movements in America, and what is worse, while the rest of them are thinking in terms of uniting, many of our brethren are preparing for further fragmentation.

We are exactly where our thinking has brought us and our condition emphasizes the need for a change in our thinking. What basic error has affected our reasoning? Actually there are several but we will mention only one.

We have been betrayed into adopting the fallacy that purity of doctrine can only be secured by separation from brethren. As a result, every time someone differs with us we are obligated by our warped conviction to divide the body and

create two new factions.

Each time we do this each faction assumes that it has the truth and is the defender of righteousness. The truth is that their very division is proof that they have denied the scriptural injunction to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Not one time are God's children told to form sects because of their differences. Every time division among Christians is mentioned it is condemned in the severest of terms.

In spite of this we are as divided as if it were God's will and he had repeatedly commanded it as the one means of fulfilling the divine purpose on earth.

Satan has not only divided us and sinfully splintered us, but he has also twisted our thinking and wrested our reasoning until we wilfully perpetuate our parties under the guise of fidelity to Christ Jesus. Our brethren have been betrayed into the silly and insane notion that if they even call upon a visiting brother to voice a prayer to God they thereby sanction and condone all of his interpretative peculiarities and religious idiosyncracies. They do not realize their inconsistencies for not one of their own party upon whom they call for prayer agrees with them fully unless he is ignorant of exactly the same things as themselves.

Our brethren who pose as theological experts and authorized exponents of God's will ought to be ashamed to live and afraid to die when they contemplate the mixed-up mess created by their mental meanderings. Our divisions are a stench in the nostrils of heaven. It is time we did something besides repeating little slogans with a partisan purpose and a sectarian slant. Anyone can see what the will to divide has done to us and how it has slashed us into ribbons. *Res ipsa loquitur!*

The Realm of Truth

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

The word “fellowship” is a rendering of *koinonia*, the sharing of a common life. Fellowship in Christ is the sharing of the life of the Holy Spirit. It originates with the Spirit by whom we are all immersed into one body, it is sustained by the Spirit of whom all imbibe or freely partake. All who are in Christ are in the fellowship and whatever things were required to bring them into Christ constitute the only conditions essential to entrance into fellowship.

Fellowship is not endorsement or Jesus could not be in the fellowship with any of us. It is not perfect conformity or none of us could be in the fellowship with Jesus. Fellowship is not harmony. It is not the fruit of harmony. Instead harmony is one of the goals of fellowship. We are not in the fellowship because we are in harmony but we strive to come into harmony because we are in the fellowship.

Every sincere immersed believer in Christ is in the fellowship in spite of the degree of his ignorance or mistaken views. To disregard or not recognize him as a brother in the Lord reveals our own blindness rather than his alienation. Even though he may be involved in a sectarian establishment he is God’s child, my brother beloved, and in the fellowship.

I have thousands of brethren who know nothing about the

restoration movement or its historicity. Some of them hide behind strange walls with diverse names. But they are my brothers and I love them, not with that detached love which some affect for the world but with the warmth of family affection which extends unstinted hospitality.

Fellowship in Christ is not conditioned upon a certain understanding or a correct position relative to societies, instrumental music, the millennium, the support of orphan homes, cups, classes or colleges. No opinion related to any of these must ever be allowed to sever our relationship. To allow our relationship in Christ to be affected by such matters is to demonstrate that a view or opinion about one or more of them is valued more highly than the blood of Jesus which makes us one. Our hope of heaven is not contingent upon our freedom from error but upon our attitude toward it.

I am not a living member of a fragmented body. I am a part of the one body and through its head I am joined to every saved person on the earth. The only way I can disown any of my brethren is to sever myself from Jesus. It is more difficult to work with some than with others, because of their attitude. Divergent opinions act as barriers, but love can conquer where argument fails. If the prime purpose of debate is to restore unity I will just start with unity and discuss our problems as a brother and not as an enemy.

Nothing that anyone can ever do short of forsaking my Lord will cause me to leave him. We are caught up together in God's mercy and all of us are monuments, not to our brilliance or spiritual attainment, but to His boundless grace. We must receive one another as He receives us all.

“My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine and show itself in action. This is how we may know that we belong to the realm of truth” (1 John 3:18, 19). The realm of truth— that is the domain to which I seek to

belong, and the way to do so is made plain.

Moral Agency

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

We are treated frequently in the writings of our brethren to the affirmation that man is “a free moral agent.” We regard the term “free” as both redundant and unnecessary. A moral agent must be free and one who is not free is not a moral agent. He is subject to the will of another by compulsion and for that reason may become a victim of whim or caprice over which he has no control.

As a moral agent man is granted the right to choose for such a right is inherent in moral agency. But choice is not an end in itself. It is the means to an end. One cannot just make his choice the right to choose, and stop there. He must exercise this right and this demands the utilization of the power of discrimination which weighs alternatives and guides to decisions. Such decisions must be governed by an ultimate, if they are to become a guideline for life. That which is transitory, conditional or circumstantial, can hardly form a satisfactory goal in life for the goal will be constantly shifting.

God can reveal the ultimate for the proper philosophy of life, but he cannot impel one to adopt it. This is not because He lacks the power to do it, but because true good must be measured by a criterion or principle, and God, who is ultimate good, cannot act in contravention of the principle of all goodness. It is for this reason that “it is impossible for God to

lie.”

To act in such a manner as to deprive man from exercise of his will would not be good, and in reality would reduce him to becoming less than man. Accordingly, the proper motivations for a right choice are provided, and the results of either choice predicted, and upon this disclosure man acts voluntarily. Thus his manhood is protected and preserved.

All law, so far as man is concerned, is summed up in love. The apostle writes, “He who loves his neighbor has satisfied every claim of the law” (Romans 13:8), and again, “the whole law is summed up in love” (verse 10). Such love as is here contemplated is not an emotion, but an act of will. It lifts man’s will to the highest possible plane and approximates the divine in the human, since God is love.

The ultimate is love directed toward two objects— God and man. On love expressed for these two hang all the law and the prophets. Whatever moral and ethical values are contained in legal codes or prophetic disclosures are suspended from, and dependent for their reality and validity upon love for God and man. These are over all and superior to all.

The word “love” as used here means benevolence. It is the faculty of benevolence to seek always the highest good of the beloved object. Obviously one’s love for God cannot operate to supply anything that He needs or requires. As the ultimate Good He lacks no goodness which we can bestow. The love for God, therefore, must provide that which ultimate Good deserves by its own nature, not that which it needs or requires. And this is expressed in glory, praise or adoration. Man reaches the highest relationship to moral law when he reverences God.

This does not imply that we must always be specifically thinking of God as the object of our love. To love God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength does not require that we

never concentrate our mind or energies upon any other subject. God must be the supreme preference of our hearts so that all life is enveloped in God, and whatever we do will spontaneously and naturally be done to His glory without having to pause in the activity to focus the mind's eye on the object. Indeed, when one must stop a project of scientific research or scholastic instruction in order to make certain in his own mind that he is glorifying God, he may be moved by doubt or fear, and demonstrate the imperfection of his love. "There is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear" (1 John 4:18).

There must be a central point of power for the moral system as there is a heart for the physical structure. Since the right of choice makes man a moral agent, the heart of the moral system must be the mind's supreme preference. Just as the heart charges the source of life to every member of the body without specific thought or concentration on the fact, so the entire moral being is diffused with life by the supreme choice or preference of the heart. God is served and glorified in every pursuit of life when the person is surrendered wholly to Him. We do not need to stop at the close of every action and credit it to Him, for all we have and are belongs to Him, and everything we do is directed to His glory and praise!

The Tether

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

The little village where I was born was surrounded by land which was called “free range.” This meant that you could turn your cows out of the lot and they could eat where they wished. You fenced your garden or yard if you wanted to guard against a stray cow looking in your window. Now we fence cattle in, then we fenced them out.

As a barefoot boy, my task was to search for our cow and those of the neighbors, and drive them home for milking in the evening. Occasionally there would be a cow which, like some humans, had a tendency to stray too far. Such a cow was said to have “wandering fever” when she went “over the hill.”

A very effective method of restraint was practiced in such cases. It was called “staking out.” We had an iron bar which was driven into the ground and a rope fastened about the cow’s neck was also looped around the stake and tied. The amount of territory which such an animal could cover was regulated by the length of the tether. The area where it might be done was determined by where the stake was driven. Life and activity revolved around the stake as a center.

This is a very homely example of what happens to one who allows himself to be “staked out” by the party spirit. Whatever one makes a test of fellowship becomes the center of his life and

thought. The rope of the party about his neck will allow him to crop the truth only so far. The cry of the factional system has been the same in all ages, "Conform or be crucified!"

But a great revolution is taking place in "The Church of Christ." For the first time in a century the winds of change are sweeping across and affecting every faction, even the most reactionary. This has never occurred before since we adopted the fallacy of seeking to unite the world to Christ by practicing division among ourselves. It is evident in the letters which cross our desk. It is manifest in the long distance calls from preachers who want to know if there is a congregation known to us which would allow them to be free men in Christ. It is seen in bulletins and papers edited by young brethren in every faction, noble young men who are sick of the hypocrisy involved in a disguised sectarianism.

One of these days a great transformation will come. Brethren will start pulling up their stakes and will begin to move closer to our blessed Lord as the only real center valid for a worthwhile plea to a sinful world. All of us who love Him and one another will be tethered to the stake which God drove down into the earth at Golgotha. The only rope about our necks will be the invisible cord of love. It is amazing how elastic that cord will be in a widening brotherhood. It will be astonishing how firmly that stake will hold us to a common center and restrain us from going too far.

In the meantime we should begin an apostolate of prayer for those are even now tugging and straining at the party ropes, who are weary of the treadmill and sick of the circle. Pray for those who have scaled divisive walls and from their tops have glimpsed the verdant fields of fellowship beyond, but who are still restrained even as they long for freedom. But freedom will come to the people of God, for the Spirit of God is mightily at work in our age!

Beware of Gribbles

Mission Messenger (April 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

It is very unlikely that the restoration movement, of which most of our readers are heirs, will ever sustain great loss through a direct frontal assault of those three philosophic rebels — atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism— although they may capture an occasional straggler who is lagging behind in the march and throwing rocks at his brethren.

Our greatest danger, as I see it, comes from what I call “spiritual gribbles.” Real gribbles are little marine crustaceans who are first cousins to the wood louse. The gribble has no shell and is only about a half inch long, but a family of gribbles can do untold damage. These insignificant creatures bore into and gnaw away at piers and other underwater wooden installations until the whole structure is undermined and weakened and eventually falls.

I always think of gribbles when I read some of the papers published by brethren who “major in minors.” There is no question in my mind that the Father wanted a family more than anything else, for only a family can make the term “father” relevant. He was willing to sacrifice the best that heaven had in order to make that family possible. Jesus shed his blood to make us blood-brothers!

The Father loves all of His children in spite of their foibles

and weaknesses. He created only one body so it must be big enough to include intellectuals and uninformed, strong and weak, wise and unwise. God's children would have come from both sides of the tracks, except for the fact that Jesus removed the tracks. There is no "other side" in Christ.

Many brethren have not caught the spirit of the Spirit! They bore away on such matters as fermented wine in the Lord's Supper, the method of breaking the bread, the nature of the second coming, the teaching of the Bible in classes, and a score of other controversial matters, and build parties and sects around their views and concepts. It is not the holding of opinions on these things, nor even the expressing of them which does despite to the body, but the crystallization of factions around the pro and con of them, which weakens the structure.

The restoration ideal has not been successfully attacked by its enemies. It has only been made to appear ridiculous by its friends. That a movement begun as "a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects" should fragment over the question of teaching the Bible in classes is just as absurd as it looks to a cynical world. The same thing holds true for the millennium or instrumental music.

The depth of love a man has for God may be measured by the nature of the thing which he allows to separate him from his brothers. If a man thinks more of his views on instrumental music (either for or against) than he does the blood shed on the cross, which makes us one, he will divide the brethren and relegate the cross to a secondary place. From that day forward the test will no longer be what one thinks of Christ, or whose Son he may be. The burning question will be where he stands on the music issue. Heaven and earth will be summoned to await with bated breath the expression of his views on this universe-shaking question. But if the cross is the supreme thing in life its arms will be allowed to reach out and embrace those whose views are utterly divergent on many things!

The tragedy of our present predicament is that in the midst of an age when throbbing drums betoken the rise of new nations of primitive peoples in the parliaments of the world, when millions are threatened by the torture of starvation in India, when the great questions of the population explosion and of birth control rock the congresses of the earth, when Communism stalks the free world like a hungry wolf-pack, our brethren are debating whether it is a sin against God to sit down and eat together in the meetinghouse. The gribbles are gnawing away at our piers in a day when we need all of the strength we can muster in a united front against evil!

Facing Death

Mission Messenger (April 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

“It is appointed unto man once to die.” This appointment has been made for us by God and we must keep it. There is no evading it. One outstanding feature of the Way is that it teaches us how to die by showing us how to live. The apostle Paul wrote from his Roman prison, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

One time we were driving in the mountains and came to the mouth of a narrow gorge. We enquired of the operator of a filling-station about the road. He replied, “You can get through without too much difficulty, but you can’t come back if you change your mind. There’s no place to turn around.” In our own section of Missouri there is an area covered by huge red granite boulders. It is called “Elephant Rocks” because it looks like a herd of large pachyderms on the hillside. Some of the rocks lie so close together it is hard to work your way between them. One narrow defile is even called “Fat Man’s Misery.”

The word for “strait” is *senechomai*. It is the very word for such a narrow passage between rocks as we have described. Paul was walking a narrow trail between two conflicting desires and he knew that he was not coming back. One cannot reverse time. The fountain of youth exists only in the imagination.

But it is the word for “depart” which gives me a genuine inner uplift of the spirit. It is *analuo*, and it was used in three different senses by the Greeks.

(1) It was employed for the act of loosing the moorings of a ship in preparation for sailing. As a lad Paul had probably played around the docks at Tarsus and watched the ships put out to sea. He knew that the cable which warped the ship into the wharf had to be untied and cast off before the ship was free. To him death was not the end of the voyage, but the beginning. Death was loosing the ropes.

(2) The word was applied to taking down a tent in a military campaign. William Barclay translates the passage: “I am caught between two desires for I have my desire to strike camp and be with Christ.” Charles Kingsley Williams renders it, “My desire is to fold my tent and be with Christ.” Soldiers take down their tents when the horrors of battle are over and they can return home. It is not true that Christians leave home when they die— they go home!

(3) Last of all the Greeks used *analuo* to describe the loosing of the yoke or saddle girths to remove the burden from the back of a pack animal. This is what death does for us at twilight. The loads of life are lifted and the burdens taken down so that the spirit is set free. We can readily see why Paul, writing from prison with such a philosophy, would want to *depart*.

The Nature of Reform

Mission Messenger (April 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

A good brother in Tennessee who has risen above the sectarian attitude which once held him in its frightful grip, writes as follows:

It is evident that your thinking and that of Brother Leroy Garrett has affected the orthodox Church of Christ far more than the leaders will admit. I must confess that I am amazed, for in spite of your constant optimism I did not think it could happen. There is a growing difference in emphasis which betokens the coming of even greater changes when it seeps into consciousness on the congregational level. What bothers me is why prominent leaders do not acknowledge your contribution to the ferment of thought, allow you to speak at Abilene Christian College lectureship, and recommend MISSION MESSENGER to at least the thinking members of the congregation, who are in inward revolt against their stereotypes.

As brilliant as the writer is, he forgets two things— the history and the nature of reforms. A knowledge of the first would serve to remind him that it is far too early for an existing structure to acknowledge indebtedness to its voices crying in the wilderness. Brother Garrett and myself are both yet alive, and one must be dead at least a hundred years before the brethren start gathering up the stones which their grandfathers flung to

create a monument from them. To be a real hero in the religious world one must start as a heretic in his own generation.

This bothers me none at all. I am sold out to Christ. I intend to serve Him the best I can regardless of consequences. I do not seek a following and I have renounced all factionalism. It would be ridiculous for one who deplors all schism to create a division by banding together a group of personal admirers. The cause is the thing! We are expendable. Let the good work go on and let the glory go to God. If we go to our graves “unwept, unhonored and unsung,” what difference does that make? The reward is on the other side of the tomb.

Human nature and the factional spirit being what they are, it makes a great deal of difference who says a thing. A courageous brother addressing a preacher’s luncheon not long ago, said: “If either Batsell Barrett Baxter or J. D. Thomas was saying what Carl Ketcherside is saying about fellowship he would be hailed as a second Alexander Campbell.” In the same state, so it was reported to me, a college president replied to a question about my writings, “Carl is right, and one of these days we will all have to admit it, but we’ll have to wait until some of our own men begin to say it.” There are two things which hinder my political progress. I grew up in the wrong party and I absolutely refuse to join another. So much for what history reveals about reformation!

The nature of reform indicates that it will come. As our brother points out, it is already on its way. But it will come gradually and almost imperceptibly. There will be no headlines in *Gospel Advocate* or *Firm Foundation*. There will be no testimonial dinners in Dallas or Fort Worth. The antagonistic bitterness will fade from the pulpit. There will be fewer talks on why we do not use instrumental music and more on why we should learn the meaning of grace. Debates between brethren will gradually disappear and be replaced by meaningful dialogue.

College lectureships will slowly become relevant to the twentieth century. Elders will refuse to have a preacher whose own inner lack of security drives him to lash out at everyone else. Everyone will deny they are changing but all will be doing so, just the same. The time is not far distant when brethren of good character will be recognized and called upon to participate in meetings regardless of personal opinion about divisive things.

Great things are happening now! In numerous places brethren who use instrumental music and those who do not are arranging seminars, workshops and other activities together. College-career groups are cutting across all of our artificial lines. Missionaries in some places are holding joint conferences with reference to their problems. As Jesus becomes more important to us, so do our brothers, while things lose significance unless they lead to Him.

Let's not get perturbed about recognition for a couple of earthen vessels. It is still true that neither he that planteth nor he that watereth is anything. It is God that giveth the increase. If any man glory, let him glory in the Lord!

It is very important, I think, that none of us be tempted to take any credit for what is obviously happening in the removal of walls and barriers among all of our brethren. It is simply another of those periods which can be called a "fulness of the times," and the Spirit of God is using some very humble instruments to effect God's purpose. If we were to hold our peace "the stones would cry out," for in such times the will of God must take on new meaning for all!

Out of This World

Mission Messenger (May 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

In each generation the saints on earth are faced with new challenges. The human mind is not static. The discoveries of the past are used as foundations for additional research in the present. The only certain thing about our world is change. The called out ones are never of the world, but they are to be always in the world, yet the world in which they are is a different one than that in which any of their fathers have been.

For this reason each generation must work out its own technique for effective encounter with “its world.” Methods of the past which have proven effective may be retained, but even these must be adapted to current situations or no real communication will be achieved. There are always two dangers. One is that we shall bind our arms by the approaches which worked in yesterday’s world; the other is that we may saddle our children with those which seemed effectual in our own world.

Man likes to categorize his successive eras of growth for historical purposes. He thus speaks of The Stone Age, The Bronze Age, The Machine Age, The Space Age, and so on. We suspect these arbitrary distinctions are not always too valid, as no one can tell where one age starts and another ends. It is a wee bit ridiculous to talk about “the Middle Ages” when you do not know how much time we have left. What seems like “the middle”

to one generation may appear to be away off on one side to another.

Every age is resistant to change because of the innate desire for security. Thus, the alterations that are made often come by revolution rather than by more peaceful evolution. So we talk about the scientific revolution, or the industrial revolution, exactly as we speak of the American Revolution, or the French Revolution. Revolution sometimes means rather violent attack upon the existing order, and this calls forth frantic attempts to defend and protect the *status quo*.

Because of its nature, the community of the ransomed ones is frequently involved in a struggle with the forces of change since it is the temporal representative of The Changeless One. Unfortunately, it does not always carefully distinguish between change that is neutral and natural (and therefore helpful), as opposed to that which is harmful and destructive. Upon such occasions it tends toward blind reaction rather than to effective action. A good example is in the encounter with the scientific revolution, in which religious champions were sometimes betrayed into assuming positions which have since proven embarrassing.

Today we have an intellectual revolution created by a breakthrough in numerous areas of research, coupled with a bringing into focus of all the discoveries of the past. The world in which our generation is cast is one of brilliance in many aspects of life. It seems to challenge the conventions and standards upon which we have always relied. It is especially antagonistic toward the structures of society. In every domain of existence including the governmental, economic, domestic and religious, "The Establishment" is under bombardment.

The reaction of the community of believers has frequently been to surrender the contested area and to retire within its own defences. A good example is the field of higher education. Since

this is the real battleground for the mind of modern man, and the one where “the enemy” has chosen to marshal his forces, let us consider the strategy which has been adopted by followers of the Christ.

The first thing noticeable is that they have often withdrawn from encounter with the world and have constructed little artificial worlds of their own. They have erected barricades around these, and within their own fortresses they bombard their own forces with propaganda as to the tactical weakness of the foe. They spend their time talking to each other, and their money and energy in making their walls thicker and more secure.

Within these protected compounds they sometimes build their own educational establishments, but these are frequently primarily devoted to indoctrination, and since their products are not intended to enter into direct meaningful combat with the real enemy, a great deal of the training is devoted to the advanced methods of disarming other companies stationed in other barracks.

To justify such restricted action the position has been adopted that in any encounter of truth with error, the former must always suffer humiliating defeat, and the real purpose of the believers is to protect and save the truth. To enforce this view, any invasion of the field of higher education is discouraged, and those who ignore the warning are brought under suspicion and harassment. Sometimes the atmosphere is rendered intolerable.

Most of the current strategy of the community is calculated to thwart any serious attempt to go into all of the world. It operates to keep its adherents from making any such thrust. Fighting must be done from entrenched positions. Often a piece of ground is bought and a pillbox constructed before a single soldier is planted in the area. There is no provision for

commandoes who fight behind the lines and must sometimes do so alone.

Many times we confuse going into all the world with going to a lot of points on the globe. There is a great difference between scattering our forces geographically and penetrating the world. It is even possible to go somewhere else on earth to keep from having to go into the world. The African jungle may be an easier place to work than the asphalt jungle in the inner city.

We may well be mistaken, but it is our personal conviction that the world will continue its intellectual drive, rather than lessening it. The more enlightened nations will continue the upward educational spiral and the lesser enlightened ones will be drawn into it inevitably. The community of saints must recapture this territory from which it has retreated, or be overcome by attrition. God has not promised to keep enough people ignorant so we can survive!

Soon there will be no other world than the intellectual world. If we go into the world at all it will have to be this one. We venture, with some degree of reluctance, to suggest to our readers and their friends, certain proposals which we believe to be valid. We will not be perturbed if you do not concur with us. We will love you just as much as if you did.

1. We must lose our anti-intellectual bias. The community of saints has been betrayed into the position that revealed truth will be washed down the drain when it seeks to penetrate the advanced scholastic realm. It cannot be denied that a species of intellectual snobbery has often been demonstrated by some whose faith in Christ has been shaken by the assault made upon it, and this has frightened the saints. But we can never eliminate the human factor, and we must remember that a man is what he wills to be. He makes a deliberate choice.

It is rather incongruous to argue that ignorance better qualifies one to choose or that we should set academic limitations in order to hold the saints firm in their commitment to Christ. This would be equivalent to arguing that the way to keep people faithful is to keep them ignorant!

The fact is that we owe a great deal to scholarly men among us whose research in linguistics (to mention but one field) has made the word of God more meaningful to us. We should never place a premium upon ignorance nor a checkrein upon advancing knowledge. To exhibit a fear of intellectual advancement does not prove the strength of our faith, but demonstrates the weakness of our trust in it.

2. We must conquer our awe of degrees and revere all men for their work of faith and labor of love. The fact that one is qualified to speak with some measure of certainty in one discipline does not mean that he is an expert in all. Thus we should not deprecate formal education upon the one hand, nor make a golden calf out of it upon the other. One may be a trained psychiatrist and not qualify as a Biblical exegete. A very humble saint who has devoted his life to a study of the revelation of God may speak with much greater clarity about the word of God than one who has specialized only in human motivations and behaviorism.

The ideal in the community of believers is attained when all, including both skilled and unskilled, are given an opportunity to contribute what they have to offer for the good of all. The man who is more familiar with the text of the Book may be better adapted to the conduct of home Bible studies, while wholly inadequate to deal with neurotic and psychotic conditions. The body of Christ is sufficiently great to make use of the talents of all its members, and can only function to its highest peak of efficiency when it does so.

3. It is our contention that the forces of righteousness must

reverse their strategy and recapture the field of higher education for the Christian dynamic. Jesus is directing a war of conquest. The kingdom of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord. He must rule until His enemies become His footstool.

But conquest is achieved by taking the initiative and waging aggressive warfare. A war cannot be won by holding the fort, or while in retreat. It cannot be won from an entrenched position. Too often we have been shelling enemy fortifications which have been abandoned for half a century. Those whom we honor as heroes are frequently men who parade their prowess only in front of their own troops and have never had a real confrontation with the foe.

What we call “fighting for Christ” is all too often shadow-boxing for the entertainment of the home forces. Many a valiant “soldier” has earned his reputation without ever getting outside of the barracks, or out of sight of company headquarters. Our weapon of conquest is a sword. It requires close in-fighting and face-to-face encounter. We have mistaken fencing with one another for fighting the foe, and while we have gained some release from boredom we have made no appreciable dent in enemy strongholds.

It is our intention, God willing, to make some practicable suggestions in coming issues of the paper for the development of an effective strategy for our day. But while we await the coming of those suggestions we would not wish to leave the impression that nothing is being done. The fact is that a great many disciples are aroused to the need of real encounter. They are personally witnessing to their faith on campuses, in conventions of scholarly men, and elsewhere. They testify boldly of the living Lord and of the abiding presence of His Spirit.

A couple of years ago it was my privilege to share the speaking honors at a banquet with a notable scientist who had given up his position in nuclear research to proclaim the Good

News of Jesus. He is still in demand as a speaker at scientific gatherings all over the world. As we talked about our witness to our contemporaries, he told of an address which he had delivered the previous week in Paris. Before reading his paper, he informed the erudite company that he wanted to pay honor to One who had done more than any person on earth to make possible his being there. Taking his New Testament from his pocket he then read to them about the grace of God and the hope of eternal life.

In my travels I have met others like this brother in the Lord who are members of “the fellowship of the unashamed.” I glory in the Lord for the courage He has given them, but sometimes one may be unashamed and still ineffective. We shall hope, by God’s grace, to help all who read our humble effort, to develop those attitudes and approaches which will enable us to present a more timely and cogent witness in our generation, which calls itself “the beat generation.” We shall hope to help those who are not a people to become the people of God, and to help those who have not found mercy to obtain it.

The Meaning of Grace

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[Abstract]

In Romans 11:6, the apostle Paul is speaking about a remnant of Israel who are “according to the election of grace.” He says, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

J. B. Phillips puts this rather complex statement in simple fashion, thus, “And if it is a matter of the grace of God, it cannot be a question of their actions especially deserving God’s favour, for that would make grace meaningless.”

It seems to me that many among us have done just that—made grace meaningless! Perhaps this is done most frequently by legalism. John writes, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Grace is undeserved kindness, truth is reality. The law which was given by Moses is placed in contrast with that kindness and reality which came by Christ. Nothing in scripture is clearer than the fact that “we are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:15).

The position of many would best be expressed by a statement, “For the law was given by Moses, and another one was given by Jesus Christ.” They believe that Jesus nailed one law to the cross and handed another one down. Indeed it is not

uncommon to hear brethren argue that the principal function of grace was to deliver us another law. They cannot distinguish between a written code and life in Christ Jesus. That life stems from the principle of the indwelling Spirit. We are plainly told, “For the new spiritual principle of life in Christ Jesus lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). That vicious circle is where law finds one. It is also where it leaves him! No law can give life!

If grace is not to be meaningless, how can we make it meaningful? There is but one answer to this, and that is to restore to it the meaning attached to it by the Spirit. We say “by the Spirit” for the simple reason that the Spirit adopted the Greek word *charis* and gave it a new and glorious significance.

Originally it referred to that property in a thing which caused those who viewed or experienced it to rejoice in it, or to be happy with it. By a natural evolution, characteristic of the Greeks, it eventually was used to describe that which gave them the greatest pleasure or satisfaction.

Since the Greek mind was stimulated by the arts, and rejoiced in grace and beauty above all else, *charis* was used to designate these things.

The next step was the application of the word, not to a state or quality of a thing, but to its bestowal upon or manifestation to others, for their blessing or benefit. It was here the Spirit found it and appropriated it, elevating it from earth to heaven, and using it to describe God’s giving of Himself in Christ.

Generations before Jesus was born, Aristotle had prepared the Greek mind for this tremendous content of *charis*, by defining it as a beneficence, a gift freely bestowed with no expectation of response, and with no other motive whatsoever than the love and generosity of the giver.

There are no conditions attached to grace itself. It is a gift! It is not an award for goodness nor a reward for performance. Being a gift, all that one must do is to reach out and take it, but the reaching is not a condition attached to the grace. It is simply a means of appropriating it by the individual. It is grace whether you accept it or not. Your refusal does not alter grace, although its acceptance will certainly alter you!

We make grace meaningless by first cheapening it, and then supplanting it. It is easier to do this than to accept it, for the acceptance of it requires utter negation of self. Pride keeps us from welcoming crucifixion. But grace is not a book, a message, a proclamation, a law, or a code of morals. Grace is God coming in Christ with truth, so that we can receive of His fulness and grace for grace (John 1:16).

Certainly the grace that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, but grace is the teacher, not the act of teaching, and not the thing taught. If we make our heart a home for the teacher, the instruction will come from within, not from without. Then we may say, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:10).

The Fulness of Godhood

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[Abstract]

The word “Godhead” occurs only twice in the King James Version. The first time is in Romans 1:20, where the apostle is showing that no sensible person can plead lack of proof of the existence of God as the ground of atheism. “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and *Godhead*; so that they are without excuse.”

The second is in Colossians 2:9, where it is affirmed of Christ, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the *Godhead* bodily.”

I am indebted to Richard Chenevix Trench, and his “Synonyms of the New Testament,” for first calling to my attention that these are from two different terms. Since then I have pursued the matter more deeply upon my own and have found confirmatory evidence elsewhere.

In the passage in Romans the subject is what one may learn about God from observation. The visible things in creation enable us to clearly see certain “invisible things” related to the creator. Obviously “the things that are made” are a result, and bespeak a cause preceding the result, and one adequate to produce it. By application of logical processes we can deduce certain traits or characteristics as belonging to the creator.

The apostle defines these traits as “eternal power and Godhead.” It is his contention that the natural realm furnishes to the mental faculties a sufficient amount of foundational material to allow us to reach the conclusion that the Prime Cause of creation possessed power, and that this power was eternal, that is, uncreated and personal (as we believe all power to be in its ultimate). This leads one step further and brings us to the point of admission that the source of eternal, or uncreated power, is divine. He uses the word “Godhead” to express that divinity. The Greek term here is *theiotes*.

Now there is a great deal of difference in knowing about the traits and attributes of God, as expressed through creative energy, and knowing God personally. One may see a beautiful building and from it learn a great deal about the skill and ability of the architect, and never know him as an individual at all. God not only wanted to make a world which would demonstrate that He was possessed of divine power, but He also wanted to create a family which would reveal Him as a Father. A universe could demonstrate that He was God, but only personal love could exhibit Him as a Father.

To fulfill His purpose it was necessary that He manifest himself as a person. This He did in His Son. The Word was made flesh. We beheld His glory. That glory was the glory of the only begotten Son of God. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” The Eternal Word became embodied. The fulness of *Godhead* dwelt in him bodily, that is, in a body.

The word for Godhead here is *theotes*. It is probably best translated “deity.” My regular readers know that I have long contended for the word “Godhood” as opposed to “Godhead.” The last does not mean much to most of us, but just as “priesthood” involves all that is related to the priestly domain, so Godhood implies all that is embraced in Deity. Only in Christ can we know God personally. The very next verse after the one which asserts that the “fulness of Godhood” dwelt in him, says,

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10).

For the benefit of modern theologians, Romans 1:20 exhibits the transcendence of God, while Colossians 2:9 exhibits His immanence. The God whom I revere is not limited by the terms which men invent to describe Him. I find no need to debate whether He is transcendent or immanent, because to me there is One God, not only transcendent and immanent, but vastly more than either of these, or both of them taken together. My God is not an either/or proposition. Nature may argue eloquently for a divine creator and does so, but the Son of God was Deity incarnate! I need not fully explain Him to know that I am His, and He is mine!

The Power of Christ

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[Abstract]

For reasons which we will not take time here to mention we have long held the opinion that the epistle called “Hebrews” was addressed to Palestinian Jews. It was written while the temple was still standing and its daily ritual still prevailed. Those to whom it was addressed had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but were in danger of defecting again to Judaism, thus denying the validity of the cross, and the efficacy of the blood shed by the Son of God.

One can imagine the lure of the pageantry and pomp of the temple service to those who had grown up in orthodox Judaism. The simplicity which characterized the Way, without buildings, a priestly caste, or sacerdotal trappings, must have made it appear drab to many. Little groups meeting in private homes must often have noted those missing from their number, only to learn that they had returned to the temple and its daily sacrifices upon the altar.

In order to counter this falling away the author wrote this treatise to show that in Christ we have something far superior to that which the Mosaic economy could offer. The keyword is “better” and it occurs thirteen times. Each chapter seems to prove that ours is a better arrangement. (1) Christ is better than angels. (2) The message of Christ is better than the one spoken by angels. (3) Christ is better than Moses. (4) Christ is better

than Joshua. (5) Christ has a better priesthood. (6) We have a better hope. (7) Christ is better than Levi. (8) We have a better covenant. (9) We have a better service. (10) We have a better sacrifice. (11) We have a better faith. (12) We have a better kingdom. (13) We have a better altar.

Jesus is the center and circumference of the Hebrew letter. Nothing had any authority which did not stem from Him; nothing had any validity which did not lead to Him. He was truly “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” He is revealed as the creator of the worlds (1:2); the captain of our salvation (2:10); the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (3:1); our forerunner (6:20); the minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched (8:2); the mediator of the new covenant (9:15; 12:24); and the author and finisher of our faith (12:2).

It seems apparent from this that God’s remedy against defection is to instil a proper understanding of our relationship to Jesus Christ our Lord. Every aspect of life must be adjusted in the framework of this relationship. Jesus is not the head of some department of life, or of some segment of daily existence. He is not the supervisor of the bureau of religion, but the Lord of the whole life. One is as much within His care and concern when sitting in a mathematics class, or when listening to the radio with his family, as when sitting in a pew of a “religious edifice.” Life in Christ is not regulated by the clock or calendar. It is not turned on and off like a faucet.

To be in Christ is to be plugged in to the very source of power, to be attached to the divine dynamo, or the generator of grace. There are seven things affirmed about the status of Jesus which indicate the nature of His power. These are concentrated in two verses— Hebrews 1:2, 3. Jesus is the heir of all things (universal power); the maker of the worlds (creative power); the brightness of God’s glory (majestic power); the express image of God’s person (divine power); the upholder of all things

(sustaining power); the purger of our sins (saving power); and he is seated at God's right hand (ruling power).

Here is the power to perform all that life demands of one. It is available unto us in the Savior. There is the power to properly handle whatever state comes to us, whether poverty or affluence; power to face pain and suffering, or the lack of them, which may be even harder; and the power to face either the cross or the tomb. How can anyone defect or desert who is conscious of what is ours in Christ?

Simple Solutions

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[Abstract]

Recently I have been paying some attention to that aspect of the party spirit which manifests itself in the glib answer to every human situation, regardless of how deep are its involvements and how intertwined are its roots. I think that the factional attitude always exhibits a spirit of dogmatism coupled with a feeling of infallibility, and this creates and perpetuates tensions. The opinions of the leaders in one generation become precedents for succeeding generations, and these harden into traditions which are actually equated with the will of God.

Much of this stems from insecurity in the hearts of those who regard their relationship with God as purely a matter of correct interpretation of legalistic statutes, rather than a personal one. This is more of a lawyer-client relationship than a father-son association. The salvation of those within it depends upon their being “right” on every issue, regardless of its degree of importance. It is unthinkable that one could be wrong about anything for that would make him “a brother in error,” a term used only as a description of those outside the party pale. No one in any of the parties is in error. All of them have the truth, and all of them disagree as to what it is!

Accordingly, each party looks to its controlling voices to hand down the official ruling and this becomes the blanket interpretation covering every situation in a general category.

There are no extenuating circumstances or mitigating conditions, so there is no room for mercy or compassion.

We constantly receive letters from brethren who oppose instrumental music, asking how they should regard “members of the Christian Church” in their communities. We get just as many letters from those in Independent Christian Churches enquiring how they should treat members of the “Disciples of Christ” party.

Such questions reveal a lot more about the questioners than about those of whom they ask. One wonders about the type of reasoning which concludes that someone in Missouri can prescribe a course of universal treatment to be applied to all within a certain religious coalition, thousands of whom he will never meet on earth. But the sectarian mentality must “pigeon-hole” everyone for its own security. And each box must be neatly labeled, with a list of instructions on how to treat the pigeons, tacked on the door.

Such a procedure avoids the responsibility of enlightened human contact and exchange. It enables one to evade weighing individual factors and evaluating causative conditions. It is simple, easy and quick. It is too simple to be Christ-like and just simple enough to be Pharisaical. We are the righteous. We are the children of Abraham and were never in bondage to any man. All of the others are publicans and sinners. But Jesus went to *the others*. He felt at home among those who knew they were sinners.

God never lumps people off. He never herds them into a corral to brand them. God regards no one as a Methodist, or a Baptist, or a Presbyterian— or a Christian Churcher, or a Church of Christ. These are labels men have invented. God deals with each person in the world as an individual. He takes him where He finds him, each one in his own uniqueness, and each must stand or fall on his own responsibility. Thus, there are no easy answers, no blanket decrees, no simple solutions. Not

everything is a very black black, or a very white white. There are some gray areas, and some of these alter in hue from day to day as you weigh additional facts which are revealed.

I once knew all of the answers. Every problem of life was simple. Nothing was too complex for me to handle. All one had to do was to apply the scripture. The Bible did not need to be interpreted, all it needed was to be obeyed. Those who did not agree with us were either ignorant or dishonest, and it did not bother me that there were so many of them. Those who loved truth were always in a minority. This kind of a spirit has fragmented the restoration movement into two dozen sects. The preachers in each one have a sermon outline on “The way that is right and cannot be wrong.” All of them think that all of the others are wrong and cannot be right.

Now I realize that security does not lie in having all of the right answers but in being in the right person. There are some fairly ignorant folk in Him, and some fairly bright ones who are not in Him. We need to be grateful that we will not be judged by others, nor by our degree of intellectual attainment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but it is almost as frightful to fall into the hands of a lot of living brethren.

Instead of drawing up a formula to fit every situation, or drafting decrees to cover every exigency, we will be better off if we relax in His arms and do unto others as we would have them do unto us. None of our parties have an infallible interpretation. All of us have much to learn. During the process it will not harm us to occasionally be forced to say, “I do not know.”

The only brethren I have are “brothers in error.” There aren’t any other kind! And because we are all in the same boat, there isn’t much use of painting signs for each little craft. I’ve quit looking at the boat and I intend to keep my eye on the Captain, who is the author and finisher of my faith!

To the extent that we exalt any man as a leader of a party, to that extent we disregard Jesus as the head of the body and the Lord of the whole church, and thus oppose the divine purpose.

The Spiritual Principle

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

The community of saints is a divine organism. It originated in the mind of God and is the result of divine purpose. Yet it is composed of human beings who are joined to one another only because they are joined to Jesus. The center of attraction is not within themselves at all. It does not lie within human nature.

Every institution among men must be built upon a principle, and that principle must be so related that the institution grows out of it, and gives expression to it. If the institution survives it must exist to maintain its foundational principle even while it is sustained by it. And the nature of the institution will be determined by the nature of the principle to which it traces its inception.

Political institutions, whether democratic, republican, monarchial, socialistic, or otherwise, must be built upon political principles. Economic institutions must be built upon economic principles. Moral institutions must be built upon moral principles. Spiritual institutions must be built upon spiritual principles. These principles nourish the institutions, even as the institutions which hope to survive must cherish the principles which called them into existence.

The community of believers is not built upon a political philosophy, or upon a socio-economic theory, but upon a historic

fact, attested to by credible witnesses. That fact is simply that God has manifested Himself to the rational beings whose chief purpose in existence is to glorify Him. To enable the achievement of this purpose divine disclosure was essential and it was afforded in three aspects— creation, incarnation and revelation.

In creation we are exposed to the *power* of God; in incarnation to the *person* of God; in revelation to the *purpose* of God. In these are found all of the elements required to make life in the flesh span meaningful, and to enable us to derive the blessings attendant upon the real divine-human encounter.

In creation every element essential to our relationship to life on the earth is provided.

In incarnation every element essential to our relationship to God is provided. “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.”

In revelation every element essential to our relationship to Christ is provided. “If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

God has spoken! The flock of God is composed of those who have seen His works, and heard His words, and have responded unto them by complete surrender to the Call. Christ broke through the flesh curtain to be with them, some day they will break through it to be with Him. In the meantime they are (sustained by the Word, even as they seek to share it with others in love.

To relinquish the principle of revelation is to renounce our purpose for continuation upon the earth, and our hope of glorification in the life beyond.

The Mission of Wholeness

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[Abstract]

Perhaps our brethren who have grown up in the restoration movement have had a mistaken view of mission which has operated to keep them from effective encounter with the world. In an attempt to avoid being of the world, they have sometimes actually not been in it. On at least two occasions in the past, colonies of the disciples have withdrawn to remote mountain areas to live a sort of communal life in simplicity, free from contact with worldly enticements. Both of these projects failed because of a gentle revolution of their children, or grandchildren, who deserted the colonies to return to society.

In the twentieth century the attempt to preserve a monastic type of existence has relied upon the more subtle restraints and pressures of factional loyalty. This has been rather successful in the past. In some communities there have been as many as ten different kinds of “Churches of Christ.” The members of one group have no acquaintance with those of any other. There is no sense of family relationship across the lines. Each one regards all of the others as either “sectarian” or “extremist.” A sectarian is one who endorses what the group opposes; an extremist is one who opposes what the group endorses.

Group activities are attended only by those affiliated with congregations allied with the sponsoring faction. For example, a

song rally will bring together only “the loyal brethren,” a term used to describe those, in each instance, who adhere to the partisan tests of fellowship. If there are ten divergent groups in a city there will be ten different kinds of “loyal brethren,” none of whom will have anything to do with any of the others. The young people of one segment are discouraged from dating those in another. When love triumphs over party pressures and two young people from different factions marry, one or both (depending upon where they attend) will be given up as “lost to the cause.”

In this kind of rigid sectarian framework, it is obvious that there will be no cultivation of acquaintanceship outside the “Church of Christ,” for there is no recognition of fellowship even within its own parties. It has completely abandoned its original historic purpose as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” There are now no Christians in the sects. There are only sectarians in the sects, and “brothers in error” in the other parties. The Christians are those who agree with us, for we have no error and our interpretations are infallible. It does not bother us that there are two dozens of our factions which are infallible and also inveterately different from each other.

Within our monastery walls we are insulated from the world— even the religious world, the theological world. We mill about talking to one another. We listen only to “faithful brethren.” We bask in the assurance that we belong to God and in the greater feeling of security that He belongs to us. We have captured God and have Him in a box. The world in which God moves is not the one He created, but the one which we have made. He dare not go outside of our structures, because this would cause us to lose faith in Him. We have fenced God in with the barbed wire of our own interpretations and we know exactly how He must work in any age to be consistent— that is, with our theological concepts.

There is only one thing that presents a problem. God has a

way of breaking through barriers and breaking down walls. He even broke through the flesh barrier in the incarnation, and battered down the fearsome racial wall between Jew and Greek. He does this when a “fulness of the times” arrives. There are a great many factors which contribute to the filling until a fulness is achieved. There are a lot of indications that “the Church of Christ” and the rest of the religious world, may be approaching such an era.

No simple explanation can be offered as to why we are going to be forced out of our shells and driven into the world where we ought to have been all of the time. God calls in multitudinous ways, and when He calls us out and we will not go, He sometimes pushes us out. He can even use evils to accomplish His purpose. War is an evil (although not necessarily a sin), but it has gathered young men from factional nests and flung them out into the world where their very homesickness for the manifested Christ has driven them into contact with those of other parties. Often they have discovered a depth of spiritual devotion which they never experienced in those with whom they have always associated. The term “loyal” takes on new meaning when one becomes aware that “the disloyal” are much closer to the cross than he has been. With such an awareness he can never again be satisfied with the old provincial alignments.

The major reason why we are bursting our factional bonds is because the factions are in a wholly different world than the one in which they were spawned. The members are breathing a different atmosphere. Our pressurized cabins are collapsing. The fresh winds are creeping through the crevices and seeping through the cracks. Our young people are becoming educated. They are being trained to think and to question. They are doing both, and the result is revolution, in the best sense of that term. The partisan answers no longer fit the pertinent questions. As always, the defenders of the *status quo* resent the questions. The partisan spirit thrives best when all of the dissenters swallow and none of them speak. The “faithful” should always gulp, but

they should never gasp or gag!

But it will do us good for the future if we listen to the voices of some who are being designated “the new breed” of saints, and learn what things in our unwritten creeds and unwholesome attitudes they can no longer condone. We have been with some of them on university campuses, in fraternity “bull sessions,” and in dialogues of depth. We cannot speak for them. No single person can do that. We can suggest a few things which we have learned and we do so with some reluctance, for we have no particular urge to join the critics.

1. There is a revolt against the tendency to make God a kind of partisan ruler who is always on “our side” in every theological engagement. This is, in essence, a reversion to the age of tribal deities, and makes God too small. When we whittle God down to our sectarian size we end up actually worshipping ourselves. The voice of the party becomes the voice of God. There is ever a tendency to think of God as a “Church of Christ God,” a “Christian Church God,” or a “Baptist Church God.” In such thinking God is made to like what we like, and also to hate those whom we hate. To “worship God” is to perform, our distinctive ritual and to search His revelation to find confirmation for it.

2. There is an uneasiness over the tendency to compartmentalize men and to fragment personality. Worship is reserved for certain times and performed in certain places and structures. Salvation pertains only to a part of man rather than to the whole being. It consists primarily of keeping men out of hell rather than keeping hell out of men. And many who are thoroughly convinced that they will escape hell because they meet behind the right signboard on Sunday morning, have hearts that are filled with unloveliness and animosity. Attendance at the ritual hour coupled with financial gifts are the “animal sacrifices” (surrendered by the “animal man”) to atone for guilt while leaving the heart unpurged. It is impossible for

men and money to take away sins!

The perceptive saints believe that every thought, intent, and act of the man in Christ, rendered in reverence for this divine-human relationship is worship. They know that the expression “the worship” is not found in the sacred scriptures. They are recapturing the meaning of salvation which is to make whole, and they know that it relates to the unshattered personality, and has to do with the physical, mental, moral and spiritual aspects of human nature. A group which regularly gathers to employ mass psychology in only one of these aspects, and which equates divine election with remaining in good graces with the group, can never truly represent the Christ to modern man. Jesus was worshipping as surely when He ate with publicans and sinners, relieved the embarrassment of a host by supplying wine, and fed a bedraggled mob, as when he read from Isaiah in the local synagogue. Jesus did not turn “worship” on and off like a faucet.

3. There is a growing resentment over the tendency to reduce men, who are made in the image of God, to partisan statistics, whose value to “The Establishment” lies principally in the “nose count” for the attendance figure in the weekly bulletin. In such situations men become pawns for clerical power plays and are digits in the climb to the “successful ministry.” The important thing is not that men count, but that they be counted. The growth of the “kingdom of heaven” is determined by the number of persons inside of religious structures at a specific hour on a given day, so that it is not so much a matter of what is within us, but of what we are within. Under these circumstances the kingdom *does* come with observation!

At the risk of being misunderstood, we must point out that there is a seething revolt against what is often referred to as “phony charity.” This is the kind of calculating concern which weighs human need and distress against partisan gain. The real consideration is not the desperate plight of the individual, but

whether, if we help him materially, in his dark hour, we can motivate him to become a member of the clan. The philosophy is that we can only go “all out” for a family if there is a real chance of getting them “all in.” Real compassion, which always relieves need for mercy’s sake, and never counts either the cost or gain, is dubbed “the social gospel” and dismissed as an invention of Satan operating through “liberals.”

Not too long ago we attended a great lectureship on the campus of a Christian college. A panel session on the theme, “Modern Day Liberalism,” drew a capacity crowd to a spacious auditorium. One of the speakers was assigned the theme, “The Social Gospel.” It was evident from the outset that he had no conception of it within the scope of current theology. He began by defining what it is not, and pointed out that it was not installing a kitchen in the basement, or putting a drinking fountain in the foyer, of the congregational meetinghouse. After this profound observation he proceeded to tell of what the social gospel consisted, and left the astute listener convinced that Jesus practiced what the speaker deplored.

In the question period he was asked about the infiltration of the inner city ghetto to clothe the naked, feed the starving, furnish medicine for the sick, and minister to the depressed. His answer demonstrated that the church could engage in such a work only as a direct means of lining the unfortunate up with “the Lord’s church.” Thus, feeding the hungry must not really be an act of impartial compassion, but a conversion gimmick, and the distribution of clothing must be what is often referred to by our cynical critics as “sucker bait.” The news media must be informed of our program and proper credit must be given. The pay-off must be the goal of what is paid out! The trumpet must be blown to signal the gift. The left hand must be clued in on what the right hand doeth. Charity becomes a part of the publicity or propaganda budget.

Such a crass approach to human demoralization and

disintegration under the guise of “giving the church the glory” is creating a reaction in the minds of many against the institutional church, which always covertly asks, “What do we get out of it?” The subtle art of talking out of both sides of the mouth about such questions as racial integration, birth control, and other problems (or, of not talking at all), tends to drive away the sensitive thinkers who conclude that once again the publicans and sinners may go into the real kingdom ahead of the scribes and Pharisees, who are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”

Our brethren, I think, conclude that when they oppose the “social gospel,” the world will automatically conclude that they have the gospel of Christ in its purity. Unfortunately, however, the world does not make this semantic switch or deduction. With them the alternative to the social gospel is an “anti-social gospel.” But the gospel of our blessed Lord is not anti-social. The Great Physician is no less a healer, a psychologist, and a moral counsellor, than a spiritual rescuer. When He ransomed man He delivered the whole man.

As His body upon earth, we must be concerned with every aspect of life. Certainly Jesus was concerned with those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, but He was also concerned about those with empty bellies and flagging energies who would “faint by the way.” We find ourselves always embroiled in the argument about “priority ratings.” “But which is more important,” we ask, “the body or the spirit?” We always assume there can be no dispute.

Jesus had a way of avoiding traps set by lawyers. When confronted with the alternative of keeping the sabbath inviolate (spiritual), or of healing an unfortunate cripple (physical). He did not say that either the spiritual or physical had the preferred rating, but *man* did! And whatever the man needed most at the time was what should be supplied.

A man who has been stabbed with a switchblade knife, and who lies bleeding on the street, does not need to be handed a tract on “Why I Left the Nazarene Church.” He needs to be rushed to a hospital. And if you go on passing out tracts, while a “lowly Nazarene” picks him up and takes him to the hospital, disregarding the gore that stains the upholstery of his new Ford, you might have been better off if you hadn’t left!

The point of all that we’re saying is simply that man cannot be drawn and quartered by those who are in the Way. A “social gospel” which deals only with environmental factors and ignores the fact that man is a sinner in need of amazing grace, is as inadequate as a gospel which seeks to relieve man’s total need by getting him into a religious meetinghouse three times per week. We are being challenged in our day to realize that laws and forms and structures, are secondary in importance to man. Man was not made for these, but vice versa. God still wants mercy and not sacrifice. Sacrifice in its totality can never become mercy, but mercy can give validity to sacrifice. Giving one’s body to be burned, when love is not involved, is merely adding fuel to the fire.

We can continue to close our ears to the voices of revolution and sit out the whirlwind in our ecclesiastical storm-cellars, but when we do emerge we may find a world so strange that we dare not go into it and cannot fulfill our mission. Or, we can with a courage born of faith in Him, penetrate our world now and seek assurance of His presence and promise, “Lo, I am with you always.” For me there is no real alternative to the latter!

Our Real Estate

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[Abstract]

The changing world will demand a changing approach if we are to make any impact upon it with the Christian witness. And we do not like to change our tactics! We would prefer to continue with “business as usual” and pad our reports to make it appear that we are gaining. We have been betrayed into a “tried and true” philosophy which has convinced us that anything we have tried is true, and anything we have not tried cannot be. But time is running out on us while the world is outrunning us!

It is difficult for us to contemplate taking the world for Christ without becoming involved with building programs, structures and edifices. Accordingly, because of this emphasis, our concern is often not to find where stark need exists, but where we can find a building site with space for a parking lot. We may deliberately move the leaven out of an area of real mission into one of unconcern, but which is compatible with our “image.”

But our transformation from a rural to an urban society, and the corresponding ascendancy of backward nations with their increasing population figures, may force us to completely re-think our strategy. We may find that some things which we regarded as essential are only incidental to the work of the Master in our generation.

We cannot always retreat from reality in spite of our success in doing so thus far. The myth that we can flee to affluent suburbia and maintain the kingdom of heaven as a commonwealth of white middle-class Americans will fade away under the cold blue light of fact. We must go back into the world which we left for it is a part of the “all the world” into which we have been sent. And it doesn’t make any difference how sticky, or dirty, or smelly it may be. We were not told to go into the clean, sanitary part of the world, but into *all* of it, and some of it is pretty messy, and often bloody!

Suppose we resolve to leave our air-conditioned salt shakers and penetrate the strange world at our urban doorsteps, to lose our lives in order to find them! No one can ever really influence those who are forced by a hundred factors, known and unknown, to dwell in the inner city ghetto, unless he moves into the area, and identifies with them as Jesus did with us. Gospel meetings and crusades will not reach them. Those who conduct such spectacles really hope they will not be packed with the unkempt and unwashed, the pimps and prostitutes, the addicts and alcoholics. Nothing would create more consternation than for a great multitude of these to “come early and get a good seat.” The people who “amount to something” would soon absent themselves from the place and regard the effort as a flop!

You can’t really do much good by bringing a little “Jesus talk” and dumping it in the inner city each evening, and then racing your car from the area as soon as the “ordeal” is over. You have to drop behind the lines as a volunteer commando for Christ, and learn to go native, and to live off the area. You have to get accustomed to flies and cockroaches in the bedroom, and to rats and mice in the kitchen. You may have to ride elevators to vertical high-rise slums, which stink from urine and fecal matter. And you may also have to endure with compassion the language of those who accost you while drunk on cheap whiskey or canned heat, or who are half-stupefied from “pot” or “grass.”

Our problem is that we must learn to love mankind and not just a certain kind of man. We must become human sculptors in the school of Christ, and envision the image of God, scarred and broken, underneath the hard exterior. We must learn how to bring it to the surface with the tools of love and faith. And this requires more than mere casual association. Often we are held back from the “inner city” because we have no church buildings, and yet these could prove a hindrance.

When a few people are led to Christ in a high-rise apartment building, let them meet in one of the apartments. Let those in other buildings do the same. Each place may arrange its time of meeting on Lord’s Day to suit the schedule of the attendants. A little “church in the house” whose adherents must work all day as chauffeurs, or maids, or cooks, might meet early in the morning, or late in the evening. The coffee table in the living-room, or the breakfast table in the kitchen, could become the Lord’s table. There might be as many communities of the saints as there are great buildings in a housing project! Jesus can be a good many places at the same time!

Such meetings could be more “sharing experiences” than anything else. Stately ritual, robes, choirs, and all of the other paraphernalia of the modern institutional church would seem out of place in a little apartment. There would be little need for someone to bring in a pulpit stand and deliver a formal address. But it would be relatively easy to capture the family feeling which provides warmth and understanding. And it is the sense of “belonging” which the Way must restore in our day of the lonely crowd. The larger the congregation the harder it becomes to implement the command to “bear one another’s burdens,” but a house church in the teeming inner city can develop a real sense of compassion for all.

It is not really a valid argument that we must own an elaborate meetinghouse in which to proclaim Jesus to the lost. Christianity had its greatest growth during the almost three

hundred years when it owned no buildings. A study of the book of Acts will reveal that the Good News was heralded forth in the Jewish temple, in synagogues, in a vehicle on the main highway, in private homes, on a river bank, in prison, in the inner city marketplace, in a Greek lecture-hall, in a Roman court, etc. The only place where the preaching was not done was the one place where most of it is done in our day—a house constructed by the saints for the purpose!

We do not argue that it is wrong for the saints to own communal real estate, or that it is wrong to speak in ecclesiastical edifices, or that we should disband suburban or rural communities of believers. Not at all! We simply say that when we use the lack of church-owned real estate as an excuse for not penetrating any area we are badly at fault in our reasoning. The church is people! And people who are saved can fulfill their mission only when they confront people who are lost with the claims of the risen Lord.

In the Bible we do not read of a Christian moving a sinner from where he was to go hear someone tell him what to do to be saved. Our task is to get men and women into Christ, not into buildings. It may yet be proven that we made a mistake in providing American funds for mission compounds and structures in foreign lands. We might have helped more by taking a knowledge of Christ and allowing the natives to erect their own meetingplaces or to gather where they would and could, even under the shade of trees. Often we have constructed a command headquarters before we had a soldier in the field. A changing world may force us in some places to abandon our comfortable barracks and go back to the foxholes and trenches on the edge of “No Man’s Land.” It would not always be a tragedy if we were forced to flee to Christ instead of to the suburbs! Our *real estate* in Him does not depend upon real estate.

The Restoration Principle

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[Abstract]

A little child was playing with a fragile china doll. Suddenly the toy fell to the concrete floor and shattered into a hundred pieces. Its owner was convulsed with grief. The mother, seeking for some means of consoling the child, placed her arms around the shaking little shoulders and said, "There, there, don't cry. We'll put the pieces back together again and it will be just like it was before." But the child cried out, "No, no, it will never be like it was before."

"Everything has changed!" These were the words of Albert Einstein upon hearing of the first atomic test. They were prophetic. The age of nuclear fission and fusion is also one of indecision and confusion. Men who live under the threat of the mushroom cloud are a different breed than their predecessors. This is as true in the field of religion as in any other area of existence.

Ours is an era when the values of the past are downgraded, discounted and discarded. God is declared to be dead by decree and that which belongs to the faith of the past is obsolete, outworn and passe. In such a time one who pleads for recapture of a previous position or for an ancient order of things is regarded with an amused smile of forced tolerance such as is generally adopted for the hopelessly senile.

I happen to be an heir of a restoration movement, an attempt to progress in the Christian walk by returning to the beginning. It was not the only such movement. There have been many of them and all of them admittedly came to the same inglorious end, bogged down in a welter of division, their later adherents fighting each other with no common foe to cause them to rally together around the same standard. Because of this unexceptional experience, many of philosophic bent have opposed the restoration principle as being inherently divisive and invariably destructive of every semblance of unity.

It is with full recognition of this that I offer this apology for that principle. I propose to define and outline it, to analyze and describe it, and to tell why I believe it is a valid approach leading to a solution of the very schism it has been alleged to help promote.

MEANING OF RESTORATION

Jesus *restored* Lazarus to life. One who had expired was thus able to resume existence. But when I talk about restoration as applied to the church I do not refer to the bringing back of something which had ceased to be. The church is the body of Christ and from the day that God breathed into it and invested it with the Holy Spirit it has never ceased to throb and pulsate with spiritual vitality.

Jesus has never been a head without a body, a king without a subject, a shepherd without a sheep, a vine without a branch, or a captain without a soldier, since his coronation and ascension. Restoration does not mean raising the dead.

Restoration does not mean the reproduction in our day of any congregation alluded to or addressed in the new covenant scriptures. It does not mean the revival of the Jerusalem congregation with its legalism and race prejudice; or the Corinthian church with its division and carnality, or the

Ephesian church with its first love abandoned.

Indeed there may never have been a model congregation at all save as it existed in the ideal of God.

Nor does restoration mean the renewal and duplication in our day of the customs and conventions, the fashions and vogues of a long-departed generation. It is not the re-establishment of the mores and cultures of another part of the world in an ancient day. It is not the reaching forth from a theological sepulcher of a skeletal hand with vise-like fingers in which to hold men in a stereotyped establishment. Then what is restoration in the sense in which we use it?

A short time ago the curator of a large museum of art decided to restore a work of one of the old masters. The painting was turned over to specialists who carefully and methodically removed the accretions and grime of generations until the picture appeared once more in its pristine and undimmed beauty. The message of heaven has become obscured by an accumulation of philosophic opinion, metaphysical speculation and theological interpretation. These are confusing, distorting and blurring. We propose to strip them away and let the simple communication of God speak to us “without benefit (or distraction) of clergy.”

In Saint Louis the drinking water is taken from the Mississippi River. At its inception this stream is clear and cool. Its waters are pure and invigorating. But on its rolling advance through the states it picks up filth and sediment until by the time it reaches our city it is a chocolate-colored body laden with foreign matter. Huge pumps take the water from the channel and direct it into filtration plants. Here it is restored to its original purity. Thus it is with the water of life as I conceive of restoration.

RESTORATION AND RENEWAL

Renewal is not necessarily the goal of restoration, but a consequence of it. When one removes the barnacles from a ship the purpose is to enable it to deliver its cargo without obstruction but renewed speed is a result. It is possible that an automobile radiator can become so clogged with insects as to render the cooling system ineffective, and a removal of them restores proper functioning and renews engine power and efficiency.

We are wholly sympathetic to “the call for renewal” as voiced by our religious neighbors in ecumenical circles. We congratulate and commend them for their recognition that our present state is abnormal and for their concern which prompts them to want to do something tangible to remedy it. What they have said and written has affected a great many of us who would not like to credit them for an impact upon our thinking, but they have dragged and pulled some of us into the twentieth century quite against our wills.

However, we would speak one word of caution. The very word “renew” implies a backward look, a peering into the past to see what the thing was like when it was new. Unless one knows what a thing was like originally he can never know whether he has renewed it or not. He might create something new, but this is not renewal at all. Renewal requires a return to a previous state but this is the very thing many who call for renewal condemn us for wanting to do.

It is our conviction that renewal can only come by recapture of that which gave existence to the structure originally. We like the word “recovery” and in the case of the church renewal comes through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. The first gives decision, the second direction and the third dynamic. Without the first there would be no start, without the second there would be no objective, without the last there would be no power to carry through to the goal. Confidence, continuation and

consummation— these are the three elements of any successful movement.

If we believe this is a “post-Christian era” we will be little concerned with renewal for we will not consider that there is anything vital which needs to be renewed or recaptured. But if we believe that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God and will continue to sit there until the last enemy is destroyed, we will recognize that the Christian economy must exist throughout the Christocracy, that is, until he turns the kingdom back to the Father. I believe this.

I also believe that before Jesus retired to the position he now occupies he called, qualified and commissioned certain men to act as his ambassadors. This leads me to the following elemental statements.

- 1. The apostles occupy a unique place in the program of Christ as ambassadors.**
- 2. The apostolic message occupies a unique place as the message of the ambassadors to the citizens of the kingdom.**
- 3. That message relayed to the one body from the head must be accepted as authoritative by that same body so long as it exists as that body.**

THE AMBASSADORS

The will of God foreordained that Jesus should operate through chosen envoys in the conversion and justification of the world. These were “chosen by God as witnesses” (Acts 10:41). They belonged to God and were given to Christ and were made recipients of the glory which Christ also received (John 17:6, 22). Accordingly Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you” (John 15:16).

The apostles were not ordinary ministers, but ministers plenipotentiary, empowered fully to dictate the terms of the King and enforce them as necessary. Since they were representatives of a supernatural regime their credentials were of a supernatural nature. These are called the signs, or marks, of apostleship. “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Corinthians 12:12).

The very ministry of reconciliation for an alien world was entrusted to them. God made his appeal through them. They spoke in behalf of Christ, or in his stead. “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . . and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:19, 20).

Although popular sermonizers apply this to every Christian we deny that the word implies it. The context carefully weighed demonstrates our contention that we are not ambassadors. We are not empowered by the Sovereign to dictate terms of a treaty with aliens nor to establish a constitution for the citizenry. We are not proclaimers, but re-proclaimers. In the very nature of the divine arrangement we are made to be dependent upon apostolic testimony. If we must revert to that testimony for knowledge of the source of life why should we balk at accepting it as the sustenance of that life?

THE MESSAGE

The mystery of the ages was revealed to apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3-5). They constitute the very foundation of the household of God, the holy temple (Ephesians 2:19, 20). The gospel which they proclaimed was addressed to every person who was lost; the doctrine which they propounded was

addressed to every person who was saved. The first was to produce faith in Jesus, the second to reproduce in the believer the life of Jesus.

The message was authoritative. It was commissioned upon all authority being granted to Jesus (Matthew 28:18). It was proclaimed with authority. "He who receives anyone whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him that sent me" (John 13:20). The apostles acted under direct authority from the Lord. "I write this while away from you in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down" (2 Cor. 13:10). Can any person doubt that the apostolic writing was intended to serve as authoritative instruction and discipline during the personal absence of the envoys? Will it not apply now under the same conditions?

We are asked why, if apostles are so necessary, we do not have them today? We reply that we do have them. We have the same apostles and prophets that the church has always had. The church still has the same foundation exactly as it still has the same cornerstone. The apostles did not abdicate their office. They had no successors for the simple reason that they needed none. They fulfilled their function. It was their role to receive and give to the church and the world the divine revelation intended for each. It is the revelation, not the men, that is important.

They gave the gospel, the good news, to the world, and it requires no addition to save any man in the twentieth century. It is God's dynamic to save all who believe it.

They gave the apostles' doctrine to believers, and those who continue steadfastly in it will grow in grace and knowledge of the truth.

That the apostolic authority was not to cease with the

death of the men is proven by the following considerations.

1. Jesus promised them, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:20). The age was the gospel dispensation which they were to inaugurate by their proclamation.

2. Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say unto you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

3. When Babylon the great was pronounced fallen, the apostles and prophets, as distinct from other saints, were given judgment or vindication against the city (Revelation 18:20).

4. The identity of the apostles will be maintained until the coming down out of heaven from God of the holy city Jerusalem, and their names will be inscribed in the twelve foundations.

THE IMPLICATIONS

The life of the apostles was transitory as is all human existence; the life of their message was permanent as becomes that which is divine. Apostolicity is the foundation of the system of justification bestowed by grace and based upon faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. Thus there can be no catholicity in Christianity without apostolicity, and there can be no effective sense of apostolicity without regard for the authority of the apostles. Since unity must always be founded upon catholicity of faith, it is useless to talk of securing it while ignoring its very foundation.

It is impossible to achieve renewal in the Christian frame of reference without recourse to the power and content of the gospel message. All spiritual energy must be sparked by plugging into the word which is God’s dynamo to save. There

never was a reformation of any consequence started on any other basis, nor will there ever be.

Renewal does not mean the restoration of any congregation of bygone days, not even the first one at Jerusalem. It means the recapture of the importance and relevance of the message from heaven and a seeking to know its meaning. There is every evidence that the community of saints at Jerusalem was produced by whom they knew, rather than by what, or how much, they knew. We are in the same position since we also are caught up in the human predicament.

Our hope of heaven is not at all dependent upon being free of error, but upon having a correct attitude toward truth. It is not contingent upon knowing truth perfectly, but rather upon knowing Him who is perfect Truth. We will not reach heaven, because of a way of life but because we have the life of the Way. Our task, then, is not to restore dead congregations to life, but to be restored to the Living Word so that we may have life. The congregations had their day and departed. The Word of God endureth forever. It outlasts heaven and earth. It also outlasts the congregations upon the earth.

SOME OBJECTIONS

In spite of our insistence that there has never been an effective renewal or reformation except upon the basis of restoration of apostolicity and scripture, we recognize that there is strong dissent to this in our day. One eminent scholar puts it this way:

Our concept of our mission, our plea as a people, is such that many will cry, 'If restoration goes, must not everything go?' . . . Yet I am convinced that the principle is no longer tenable in any meaningful form to those who take seriously the findings of modern biblical and theological scholarship; I believe the principle to be not

only untenable but pernicious, a stumblingblock to sincere Disciples on the pathway to the renewal of the church and the recovery of its unity in Christ.

What are the objections to renewal through recovery of the apostolicity set forth, as we believe, in the new covenant scriptures? It is argued first that this is going backward contrary to all laws of growth in any organism. This would come with greater force if those who offered it acted with some consistency. Some, for instance, in the field of polity, are preparing to adopt the episcopate, or diocesan bishopric, in order to secure union. They are willing to go back to where the church departed but not willing to go back to where it started. With them, the sin is not in going back. Rather it is in going back to the ambassadors of Christ.

What is wrong in going back to the source of power? If a line is short-circuited you cannot just go on from there and ignore it. You must retrace your steps until you locate the impediment between your present position and the dynamo. And when you find the stumblingblock you should not adopt it as the normal condition but act to remove it.

Again it is argued that the restoration approach quenches the Spirit in our day and keeps Him from being on-going in revelation. A brother has written:

We would want to point out that the church is more than 'passing on historical revelation'; indeed, it is that plus the continued revelation of God in the midst of our own time. For, we cannot but believe that the Holy Spirit is still working and that this is the manifestation of God in our modern times.

We also believe that the Holy Spirit is still working and active but we do not believe that he is revealing the will of God as he did to and through the apostles and prophets. Our brethren overlook the fact that the admonition to not quench the

Spirit was given to those to whom the revelation was addressed and not to those to whom it was directly given.

The Spirit produces unity which we must maintain, but those who profess to be recipients of modern revelations, have so many different and varied views that they add to the confusion rather than to the peace of the one body. Since God is not the author of confusion, we must conclude that these diverse views and ideas are not the fruit of the Spirit. It is easy for one to convince himself that what he desires is what the Spirit wants him to have, and he may confuse the spirit of his will for the will of the Spirit.

The apostolic message provides a consistent, uniform and regulated approach to the problem of unity, and we must never forget that he who prayed that we might be one was talking only of those “who believe in me through their (the apostles’) word.” We should at least allow him to define and describe those whose unity he desires.

THE PRINCIPLE AND UNITY

We contend that true unity is that of the Spirit. It is this unity which must be maintained in the bond of peace. It is expressed in the revelation given by the Spirit. Our task is not to discover a way to achieve unity but to recover and receive the unity which God bestows. To do this we must vault over all of the forms, structures and divergent theological interpretations, and recover the simple proclamation, the *kerygma*, the Good News, as the basis of our oneness.

Every person who responds in God’s own way to God’s own gospel is made a member of the one body, and is thus united to all others on earth who make the response. These will be varied in degree of knowledge, temperament, disposition, social status and race. Still they will be one— not in these things but in Christ.

That which is not a condition of unity at its creation can never be made a condition of unity in its continuation. This means simply that as there was diversity in arrival at unity there must always be unity in diversity. But that diversity must not be in relation to the person or identity of Jesus for it is in this fact that our unity becomes reality.

Then what is to be the relationship and responsibility of those in Christ toward the apostolic doctrine or teaching as revealed in the epistolary writings? Every person who submits his will wholly unto Christ thereby submits himself wholly to the will of Christ. This involves three things: an attitude of respect for the apostolic word; an intention to ascertain the meaning and implication of that word for one's own life, and the implementation of that word in one's own life and conduct.

All of this must be done in perfect liberty without any compulsion except that created by the lordship of Jesus. This liberty must be the prerogative of all of the saints which means that error must be allowed to remain self-correcting under the three rules of involvement. The members may share their divergent views of doctrine but may not sever themselves from one another over them, for this would violate the will of Christ as regards schisms and schismatics, or factionalists. They may correct but cannot coerce; they may discuss but not disrupt the relationships. Differences must always be grounds for discussion but never for division.

Brotherhood must be maintained in love. This is the prime consideration of the restoration principle, for if all else is restored and we lack this, we are still nothing. Regardless of what gifts we may hope to recover this remains the more excellent way. It follows then that we should concentrate our immediate effort upon the recapture of the spirit of mutual love which transcends honest differences in understanding. This tends to place all else in proper perspective. It is in this spirit I offer the following.

THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE

We believe that the following items are valid for recovery of the design of God for the community of believers in our day.

1. Each congregation is free under God to order its own affairs and conduct under the lordship of Jesus, and is not amenable to the direction or discipline of any other community, or combination or coalition of communities.

2. The offices of the community are functions and not honorary or titular positions. They simply fill needs growing out of the nature of the community, and those ordained for them are selected by the community in which they serve. This provides a bulwark against a developing ecclesiasticism, a constant threat!

3. The greatest function is to be one of several bishops in a local community and it is a flagrant corruption of this function to create one bishop over several communities.

4. The Lord's Supper is the public exhibition of fellowship in the one body and the table should be set for every baptized believer whose moral conduct does not render him unworthy of Christian association, in spite of divergencies of opinion or degrees of knowledge.

5. The several communities may refer to themselves by any term of designation used in the sacred scriptures, but may not bind this term upon any other congregation, nor exalt it to the position of a sectarian title.

6. Congregations of saints may cooperate together in such projects as they mutually agree upon, but may not require or demand that other congregations enter into such cooperative endeavors, and should not create such structures as will inhibit or destroy their own autonomy. Communities of saints which combine their resources to carry on a certain work cannot censure such communities as choose to abstain, nor can these

latter censure those who enter. Each congregation, as each member, must stand or fall to its own master.

7. Love, as the crown of all virtues, must govern in all areas of spiritual life, and love for the brotherhood must include every brother on earth. Love for those who constitute a party or sect, with discrimination shown against the great body of other believers, is a burlesque upon the Way, and constitutes hypocrisy and Pharisaism of the most damnable kind. It is specifically said of those who show partiality among those brethren who enter the assembly of saints that they “are inconsistent and judge by false standards” (James 2:4). “But if you show snobbery, you are committing a sin and stand convicted by that law (the sovereign law of love) as transgressors” (James 2:9).

In closing we simply say that we believe that renewal can only come through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. We are committed to laboring for renewal on that basis, and to this end we humbly beg an interest in your prayers.

Two Unity Movements

Mission Messenger (July 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The term “ecumenical movement” is about as common in current religious magazines as dandelions on the front lawn. In some circles it is about as welcome. What does “ecumenical” mean? It is from *oikoumene*, the inhabited world, which is from the root word *oikos*, house, dwelling, or habitation. “Ecumenical” simply means world-wide in extent or influence.

Its meaning as now used is closely akin to “catholic,” which is from *katholikos*, universal, and which refers to that which is universal or general, affecting mankind as a whole. However, when “The Great Schism” occurred in Christendom many centuries ago, the Eastern wing of the cleavage adopted “Orthodox” as a title and the Western wing fastened upon the term “Catholic.” It was to avoid confusion in the popular mind that “ecumenical” was chosen instead of “catholic.”

Yet, this usage of the word “ecumenical” is not new. The first person to so employ it was Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who was born about 1700. Karl Barth refers to him as “the first genuine ecumenicist.” The historian Heinz Renkewitz says he was the first person to use the word *oikoumene* to carry the meaning “the world-wide Christian

church.” Zinzendorf was identified with the “Unity of the Brethren” which is better known as the Moravian Church. In our times the term “ecumenical movement” is used to designate a general attempt to unite all sects and denominations by discovery of the least common denominator as a basis for confession. Some have suggested for such a basis the Lord’s Prayer, others the Lord’s Supper, and still others “The Apostles’ Creed.” At the present time it appears that a profession of the Lordship of Jesus in the simple statement, “Jesus is Lord,” is gaining prominence. It is believed from 1 Corinthians 12:3 that this was the test of the indwelling Spirit. “And no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”

Within the Roman Catholic fellowship John XXIII gave the first real impetus to the movement. His successor, Paul VI, is proceeding in the footsteps of his predecessor, but with some apparent reluctance. However, the “ecumenical movement” was sparked by Protestants with Nathan Soderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala (Sweden) in the forefront. This 1930 winner of the Nobel Prize for World Peace, has been aptly called “the father of the ecumenical program.” He was encouraged by Bishop Charles Henry Brent, Episcopalian; Dr. T. C. Chao, Dean of the School of Religion, Yenching University, Peking; Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, President-emeritus of Union Theological Seminary, and many others. The movement has attracted many other eminent theologians at home and abroad.

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

The movement of which the writer has the honor of being a rather unworthy heir, was launched in the early part of the nineteenth century by men who came principally from a Presbyterian background. If we accept 1910 as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, as is commonly done, the restoration movement preceded it almost exactly one hundred years. It was in the autumn of 1809 that Thomas Campbell read

his “Declaration and Address” in Washington, Pennsylvania, and years later his son acknowledged this as the beginning of “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

Even a casual investigation of the ecumenical movement and the restoration movement will show a great divergency in approach to the grave problem of disunity. The ecumenical movement seeks to unite the sects on the basis of the least common denominator. The restoration movement seeks to unite the Christians in the sects upon the basis of a return to the ideal of God as announced by the apostles of Jesus Christ. One is upon the basis of an irreducible minimum wrung from the revelation of God; the other on the highest possible plane, the authority of Jesus Christ as expressed in the whole of the new covenant scriptures.

This last is not Bibliolatry. It is not legalistic “patternism.” It does not make a savior of the Book. It recognizes that our hope of salvation lies in a personal relationship of the heart, and not in an intellectual attainment of the mind. It can best be summed up in two very simple propositions.

1. Only the Way of the Living Word can be absolute and authoritative for the life of the new humanity which He has created.

2. There is absolutely no way of determining that authority except through the written word which he has provided.

I propose herewith an investigation of the ecumenical movement and the restoration movement, to determine what they hold in common, as well as some areas of difference. I hope to be as objective as possible for one who is directly involved. Certainly, I shall not impugn the motives of the brilliant men who are in the ecumenical movement. I deplore such terms as “ecumaniacs” as being both uncharitable and un-Christian. Frequently they are the resort of the ignorant and uninformed.

The restoration movement has had its share of “characters” also.

I am not concerned with being on the extreme left. Neither am I concerned with being on the extreme right. I am opposed to extremists even in the “middle of the road.” But I am concerned with being right, and I want to be as “extremely right” as possible. It is not always possible for me. I am quite human and quite limited.

THINGS HELD IN COMMON

1. A conviction that schisms among Christians constitute a scandal to the church.

This has not always been a generally accepted view. When the pioneers of the restoration movement first set forth this principle, they were rather violently opposed. Many argued that the will of God could best be implemented through a variety of sects. Partisan debates were the order of the day. I feel that it is a refreshing change to find Catholics and Protestants alike deploring division and seeking for a way to overcome it. What has produced this altered climate?

The answer is found in a new awareness of the teaching of the new covenant scriptures. A renewed interest in Bible study, encouraged by research and modern translations has made us all realize that our divisions are symptoms of immaturity and carnality (1 Corinthians 3:1-4), and that they are works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). We realize that “those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God.” Regardless of our understanding of the kingdom of God, as to nature, extent, time or location, we know that schismatics cannot participate in it. Of course, we would never have known this without the written word, but it is enough that we have arrived at a mutual consensus drawn from this common source. Without the corrective word we could as easily have concluded that our

fragmentary state with its rival factions was ordained of God.

2. A belief that the prayer of Jesus for unity can be understood and answered, and must be.

The words recorded in John 17:20, 21 are repeated fervently by those in both movements, and this is good. To say that they can be understood is not to say that any of us fully understand the depths of their implications as yet. For instance, I find myself wholly out of tune with those who quote them as justification for dialogue with those of non-Christian religions. I am not at all opposed to such dialogue, but it has nothing to do with Christian unity when pursued with a view of finding common ground. Jesus limited his prayer for oneness to all who believed on him through the apostolic testimony. Christian unity involves only these.

Our unity is in Christ. “You are all one person in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). This unity is individual and personal, not organizational and structural. The prayer was “that all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee.” Proponents of legalistic creedal bases of unity mistake the whole tenor of this statement. They reason that since the Father and Son understand everything alike, in order for us to be one we too must all arrive at the same understanding of every matter at the same time. This is as silly as it is impracticable and impossible.

It is true that God and Christ have no differences of opinion and no misunderstandings, because they are infallible. But God does not demand of fallible men what it requires infallibility to achieve. Jesus did not pray for an impossibility. He did not say, “that they may all be one by understanding everything alike, as thou, Father, understand all that I say, and as I understand perfectly all that Thou sayest.”

He said, “as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.” He went on to explain that “they also may be one in us.” This is not

unity of intellectual insights, analytical attainments, or interpretative infallibility. It is a blending and merging of the personalities of those invested with the divine nature. It is the unity which results from the loss of selfhood in others.

This prayer shows that unity can never be an end in itself. It is the means to an end. The purpose of our unity is that the world may believe that God sent His Son. Unity which does not stem from Christ and lead to Christ is useless. There is no point in uniting everyone if, in the process, we separate them all from God. The world will only be won to believe in Christ, when those in the world who believe in Christ are one.

3. An acceptance of the proposition that Jesus is Lord.

The advocates of the ecumenical movement are correct in their insistence that this is basic. But it is not a proposition stated orally, or subscribed to in writing, which transforms. It is the truth of that proposition enshrined in the heart, and embodied in life and action which makes the difference. On this very subject, Jesus said, "Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father" (Matthew 7:21). The acceptance of the proposition, "Jesus is Lord," is essential, but it must not become a mere unitive declaration. It must be a principle of life, the whole life, in every phase and facet.

4. The goal of one church on earth.

In reality there is only one church now. There has never been but one. The church is a creation of God, not a concoction of man. It is a divine organism, not a human organization. The church consists of the called-out ones. All of these are in it. Not one is outside of it. We have been betrayed into calling sects "churches." But no sect is the church, and the church is no sect!

What we seek to do is not to create a church that is one, but to find a way of demonstrating or manifesting that the

church which God created is one. The ecumenical movement postulates that this can be achieved by merging the sects through a spirit of compromise. I believe that it can only be realized by uniting of individuals to a common Lord through the Spirit of promise.

The body of Christ is not composed of sects and no coalition of sects can ever constitute it. The body is composed of individuals joined to Jesus, as a common head, by the indwelling Spirit. "Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). Since there is no bond between Christ and any sect as an organization, sects are doomed to become sterile and die. They cannot be renewed by putting them together in a new structure. Throwing a corpse into a new casket beside another dead body will not resurrect either.

Before there can be a resurrection the spirit has to infuse the body. Renewal can only come as we are invested by the Spirit and sustain a vital relationship to Jesus. "You are on the spiritual level, if only God's Spirit dwells within you; and if a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ, he is no Christian" (Romans 8:9). Those who are on this level will manifest their oneness regardless of sectarian barriers and walls, for the Spirit which tugs at our spirit, also draws us to everyone else who has that one Spirit.

5. A relevance to our age, and its culture and society.

The Way represents God's approach to man in a historical moment. It came to man as he was and loved him as it found him. God staged the first great "love-in" demonstration on earth. And God did not love man because He changed him, but man changed because God loved him. The Way has not changed. It still comes to man as he is and loves him as it finds him.

The Way never washes, bathes and cleanses man so it can love him. If it finds him in a homosexual pad, or in a house of

prostitution, or in a room with heroin addicts, it doesn't get him out in order to love him, but it loves him, in order to get him out. For the Way knows that whether a man sleeps off a drunk in a flophouse or in a penthouse, he does so because he has lost his way. And one who is lost will remain lost until he has found the Way.

Some of my good friends in the ecumenical movement (and how I do thank God that there are many of them who are my close friends) argue with me that men are merely creatures of environment, and that our problem is not to reach men one by one, but to go at it on a wholesale basis by changing the physical conditions of habitat. I want to see men lifted out of intolerable conditions. I want to see their little children reared in an area way from filth and garbage and rats. But I know men who dwell in mansions whose hearts are like pigsties, and I know others who live in dirty tenements who are pure in heart and will see God.

Surely we must have a relevant approach and the Way must be presented in the language men can grasp, for "if I do not know the meaning of the sound the speaker makes, his words will be gibberish to me, and mine to him" (1 Cor. 14:11). We dare not seek relevance by conforming the word of God to men, but by transforming men through the word of God. The word of God must be translated into the words of men, in order that men be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

In summarization of this section and in spite of variant approach, let it be said that the ecumenical movement and the restoration movement hold these things in common: A conviction that schisms among Christians constitute a scandal to the church; a belief that the prayer of Jesus for unity can be understood and answered; an acceptance of the proposition that Jesus is Lord; a goal of one church, as the body of Christ, on earth; and a relevance to our age, its culture and society.

AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

We must not forget that those within the framework of the ecumenical movement, like those in the restoration movement, do not all share the same ideas in every particular. What we have to say about divergencies between the movements must be in the realm of rather broad generalization, and no specific should be charged against any individual who personally disavows it. Here are some of the things where we find ourselves at odds with many who espouse the cause of ecumenicity in our day.

1. The revelation of God is incomplete and open-ended.

By “revelation” we mean the uncovering by God of what man could not discover for himself. We believe that when God created the universe as we now have it that he rested or ceased from his labors. We believe that when God finished his revelation with regard to the new creation, as contained in the sacred scriptures, that he rested, or ceased from his labors. As shown in our preceding article in this issue, catholicity must be based upon apostolicity. To argue, as many do, that the Holy Spirit reveals the will of God by modern consensus is to argue that the will of the mass mind is the will of God and to determine the divine purpose for our age we should not study the Bible but take a poll of the theologians.

That the indwelling Spirit serves to illuminate the mind of a committed saint, we do not doubt, but this is achieved by use of the torch which God has placed in our hands. It is not by a force outside of the Word but by deeper insight into it that this is accomplished.

2. The apostles simply recorded the struggle of a primitive people to discover truth.

It is true that God never reveals to man what man can discover for himself. But there are things which man is

powerless to discover through use of his natural faculties. “Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him, these it is that God has revealed for us through the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). Revelation is the means by which God uncovers for man what man cannot discover for himself.

The Bible is not the result of man’s groping through space to find God, but it is the revelation of God who reached down to grasp man. That simple, unlearned and ignorant fishermen, contrary to all of their own prejudicial culture, could have produced the dynamic of the Good News would require more faith to believe than that God spoke through them.

Those who regard the Bible as the product of man’s own search for the meaning of life generally contend that all truth is relative and there is no absolute criteria for measuring it. To this we take exception. The Greeks regarded truth as reality; the Latins as verity. propositional truth is the agreement or conformity of that which is affirmed with that of which it is affirmed. If all truth is relative there is no reality, but if this be true there can be no assertion of unreality, for one cannot know unreality unless there is a reality by which to judge it.

To affirm that all truth is relative is either to state a truth or an untruth. If it is an untruth, then all truth is not relative. If it is a truth, then the statement itself is relative, and this leaves the possibility that some truth may not be relative. But to grant that some truth may not be relative is to cast doubt on the affirmation that all truth is relative. The man who begins with the assumption that all truth is relative can never make a really definitive statement about the relativity of truth.

Our own view is that there is ultimate truth, and that it is not propositional but personal. It is not the truth about someone or something. It is Someone who is the truth. It is the person of this Someone who is the treasure-house of reality which gives

validity and meaning to the universe, and who is the criterion of all goodness. “There is none good but one,” that is, in the absolute. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” These are not three different things. They are one person. The Way, the Truth, and the Life are one— one personality. By Him, then, all personality must be judged!

3. Man is free under God to experiment with religious structure upon the basis of present utility.

In our age of pragmatism we are betrayed into asking, “Will it work?” without questioning “Is it right?” But there are a great many things which work all right, that are not all right when they work. A burglar may perfect a “jimmy” which will open any window and may be the perfect tool for his profession, but his use of it may land him in prison.

If God has revealed His will as to congregational order our task is to implement it and not to tamper with it. In the early centuries of the *ekklesia* of God, the schisms and heresies seemed to call for a strong and authoritative voice to define the faith, so the office of diocesan bishop was created as separate from the local presbytery. It worked, but it worked itself into the papacy, a system from which the whole world has suffered. The question should not be “What do you think will work?” but “How can we best work what God has said?”

4. There is no definitive response to the Good News universally binding upon or demanded of mankind, but each man may surrender to God upon his own terms.

Man, who is made captive to Christ, cannot dictate the terms of his surrender. The necessary response to the Good News has been stipulated by the same authority which announced the News. So long as the Message is valid the response must also be. Matthew, who was present at the mountain in Galilee, where Jesus made a special appointment to

appear to the disciples, records how He came up and spoke to them and informed them, “Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed unto me.” He then commissioned them, “In view of this, go forth and enroll disciples from all nations, by immersing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Mark, who probably received his information from Peter, who was also at the Galilean mount, in a disputed passage, records the words thus, “Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation. Those who believe the Message and are immersed will obtain salvation, those who do not believe it will receive condemnation.” It is our very sincere conviction that one only enters the fellowship of the saved ones by belief of the Good News and immersion in water to implement that faith.

The apostle seems to be very positive about the matter. “All of you are sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus, for all who have been immersed into Christ, have put him on like a garment” (Gal. 3:26, 27). This appears to be both inclusive and exclusive.

5. The essential thing being to hold up the light, the instrument for doing so is purely incidental and expendable.

On this premise it is contended that the church is a dispensable item. We are treated to such statements as “post-Christian age,” and “churchless Christianity.” It is obvious that if God made no provision for a specific medium or means to hold up the truth, we may be free to discard the instruments we have used. But if the church is a divine creation and exists by divine authority, only that authority can discontinue it.

The community of the redeemed is the church of God, and it is referred to as “God’s household, that is, the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth” (1 Timothy

2:15). In the first chapter of Revelation, the communities of believers in Asia Minor were represented by golden lampstands, with Jesus standing in their midst. Gold was a symbol of preciousness or value, and we conclude that God regards the church as indispensable. It is “the church of the Lord, which he won for himself by his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it, to consecrate it, cleansing it by water and word, so that he might present the church to himself all glorious, with no stain or wrinkle or anything of the sort, but holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26, 27).

CONCLUSION

It is rather obvious from the foregoing that I find some of the views expressed by the promoters of the ecumenical movement incompatible with my own ideas. I am wholly committed to seek for renewal, but I am convinced that it must begin with a renewed interest in searching the sacred scriptures. To abandon the Word of God in order to be guided by flashes of inner light, would be like a mariner tossing his compass overboard to steer by the streaks of lightning cleaving the sky.

We must either receive the word of the Lord, or reject the Lord of the Word. We must either recognize that this is the age of the Spirit, or repose in the spirit of this age. We must either settle for a human fad, or struggle for an honest faith.

I shall continue to contend for a recapture of the spirit and power of the original proclaimers of the Good News. When I prepare to cross over the Jordan of death, I would like to be able to say, “The word I spoke, the gospel I proclaimed did not sway you with subtle arguments; it carried conviction by spiritual power, so that your faith might be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5).

The Bible and Reformation

Mission Messenger (July 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

One of my favorite Biblical characters is Josiah. Perhaps this is true because he triumphed over so many improbabilities. Let me mention just one to get us started. When Jereboam captured ten tribes from Solomon's son, during a revolt over high taxes, he immediately introduced calf-worship at Dan and Bethel. A prophet from Judah was sent to denounce the false ritual at the latter place. In doing so, he predicted that some day a reformer would arise by the name of Josiah, and he would break down the altar which Jereboam had erected and would burn the bones of the idolatrous priests upon it.

It was 326 years later that Josiah was born. His father and grandfather were worse idolaters than Jeroboam. Moreover, Josiah was a king in Judah, and Bethel was in another kingdom, Israel. Yet as a mere boy the king developed such a hatred of idolatry that he not only swept every vestige of it from his own land but was driven by his intense zeal to cross the line of the neighboring monarchy, where he broke down the altar at Bethel and actually crushed the stones of it into dust. He even invaded Samaria, the capital of Israel, and cleaned it out.

The grandfather of Josiah was Manasseh, whose name became proverbial for wickedness. He was a worshiper of the planets, and placed altars dedicated to all "the host of heaven" in the sacred precincts of God's temple. Finally he stooped to

human sacrifice and burned his own son as an offering. In his superstitious blindness he “practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums, and with wizards.” Jewish tradition credits him with murdering the prophet Isaiah by sawing him asunder.

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon who carried on all of the vile practices of his father, but was assassinated at the end of two years by his palace guards. The coup was ineffective because the people of the land killed the conspirators and installed Josiah as king. When Josiah was coronated he was eight years old, the same age at which I accepted the awesome responsibilities of the second grade in school.

At the age of sixteen “while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father,” and when he reached his twentieth birthday, he started a purge such as the land had never seen before. This was hazardous because it cut across the social, economic and political structures, all of which were geared to idolatry. Foreign trade and commerce were enhanced by recognition of other gods, and the import and export bureaus thrived because of the shrines which other nationals could visit in Jerusalem. Idolatry was favored by many men of rank and influence in the court and kingdom.

The young ruler soon learned that he could not entrust the work to members of his cabinet, some of whom would simply place the images in places of concealment until the furor died down. He resolved to personally supervise the work of the wrecking crews, and traveled from one place to another to see that the job was thoroughly done. I always marvel at the revelation of how corrupt Jerusalem had become, by reading what Josiah abolished.

He instructed the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers of the temple to bring out every vessel that had ever been used in reverence for Baal or any planet, and these he

burned in the fields of Kidron. He fired every priest who had ever burned incense to Baal, or to the sun, moon, or any constellation. He smashed the houses and stalls of the cult prostitutes who solicited in the temple precincts. He tore down the high places in every city, village and hamlet, and forbade their priests to ever set foot in the temple at Jerusalem. He ran all of the motley horde of fortune-tellers, witches, soothsayers, wizards and necromancers, out of town.

He defiled Topheth, the grisly location of human sacrifice, in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, so no one could burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech. He removed the sacred horses that had been dedicated to the sun, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. He pulled down the altars on the palace roof, broke them to pieces, ground the pieces into dust, and threw the dust into a nearby creek. Before he had finished, he completely eradicated the high places which Solomon had created to placate the foreign princesses whom he had married. This was no small undertaking because Solomon went on a marrying spree and ended up with a thousand women in his harem.

I suspect that I am a sufficient iconoclast at heart, that I get “a bang” out of this young king running around in overalls, swinging an axe or a sledge-hammer, and not being too careful what or who he hit. And I can imagine the dispossessed priests, prostitutes, witches and members of the teamster’s union who drove the chariots of the sun, whispering to one another, “That crazy young fool will ruin this place if someone doesn’t stop him!” And yet I confess, with some reluctance I admit, that all of this is not what actually endears Josiah to my heart.

DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK

When he was twenty-six years old Josiah devoted himself to the repair of the holy temple. He sent Shaphan, the royal

secretary, to Hilkiah the high priest, instructing the latter to count the money which had accumulated from gifts of the worshipers, and to convey it to carpenters, builders and masons, to use in restoring the temple and its precincts. In the prosecution of the task the high priest found the book of the law of the Lord which had been written by Moses. He turned it over to the secretary who took it with him when he made his progress report to the king, and read from it in the hearing of Josiah.

When the king heard the words of the law he rent his clothes and instructed his advisers to go immediately and enquire of the Lord about the words of the book. He said, "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book."

The counsellors went to Huldah the prophetess who informed them that God had indeed decreed the destruction of Jerusalem and all of its inhabitants because of idolatry, but the penitent attitude of Josiah had averted the calamity during his lifetime. The king then summoned all of the people both great and small to meet him at the temple where he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant. "And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book" (2 Chronicles 34:31).

I do not think there has ever been a religious reformation worth mentioning that did not result from rediscovery of the Word of God and its importance to life. John Wycliffe has been called "The Morning Star of the Reformation." He translated the Word into English and this sparked a great revival of interest which eventually led to many of the freedoms which we now enjoy. The historian, J. J. Blunt, describes what transpired as follows:

An eager appetite for scriptural knowledge was excited among the people, which they would make any sacrifice and risk any danger to gratify. Entire copies of the Bible, when they could only be multiplied by means of amanuenses, were too costly to be within reach of very many readers; but those who could not procure ‘the volume of the book’ would give a load of hay for a few favorite chapters, and many such scraps were consumed upon the persons of the martyrs at the stake. They would hide the forbidden treasure under the floors of their houses, and put their lives in peril rather than forego the book they desired; they would sit up at night, sometimes all night long, their doors being shut for fear of surprise, reading or hearing others read the word of God; they would bury themselves in the woods, and there converse with it in solitude; they would tend their herds in the fields, and still steal an hour for drinking in the tidings of great joy.

When Martin Luther stood before the German emperor and the Imperial Diet at Worms, on April 17, 18, 1521, his final words to the assemblage were these:

Unless I am refuted and convinced by proofs from the Holy Scriptures, or by plain, lucid, and evident argument, I yield my faith neither to the pope nor to the councils alone, for it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Until so convinced, I can and will retract nothing, for it is neither safe nor expedient to act against conscience. Here I stand, I can do nothing else; God help me! Amen.

The restoration movement of which I am fortunate enough to be an heir, although an unworthy one, began with the reading of “The Declaration and Address” by Thomas Campbell. Mr. Campbell said:

We have no nostrum, no peculiar discovery of our own, to propose to fellow-Christians, for the fancied importance of which they should become followers of us.

We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express Word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore we have nothing new.

Whether concerned with the reformatory attempts of previous generations, or caught up in the ecumenical fervor of our own complex age, our appeal must be to the Bible as the word of God. I unhesitatingly take my stand with “the fellowship of the unashamed,” the great company of believers which numbered among its ranks those martyrs who perished at the stake rather than recant their faith in the testimony of the sacred scriptures. If this means ridicule in an age of enlightenment I shall be content that “The reproaches of them which reproached thee have fallen upon me.” The disciple is not above his master; the servant is not greater than his lord.

Renewal will only come through recovery of the dynamic of God. This will be my constant watchword, whether I speak in halls of learning or in homes of the humble. With faith that is childlike, but with the resolution of manhood, I commit my course to the revelation of God. It will be my inspiration in life, my invigoration in approaching age, and my illumination on the journey through the valley of shadows!

I have trimmed my sails to catch the winds of the Spirit, and if these will not drive my frail bark safely into the harbor of eternal rest and peace, I have nothing else upon which I can rely to bring me at last to that blest anchorage. *He has spoken!* My eyes have looked upon His words, and my heart throbs in exultation that He cares for me. The words of Israel’s bard express my feelings:

I shall keep thy law continually, for ever and ever, and I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts. I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame, for I find my delight in thy commandments which I love (Psalm 119:44-47).

The Reconciling Community

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

In our generation, so filled with complexities, the commission of our Lord might best be translated, “Go into all of the worlds.” We are surrounded by many worlds which need to be penetrated with the message. There is the world of science, of art, and of higher education; the world of affluent suburbia and of the poverty stricken ghetto. There is also the world of religion, for here too the Call has not always come through, and the milling flocks have never heard the voice of the Shepherd. There have been other voices, many of them, and the welter of discordant sounds has confused the sheep and stifled the voice of the One who could lead them out.

Our approach has always been meager and nebulous because we have proposed to fulfill a mission without realizing who we are, and, what is even worse, without knowing *what* we are! In this dilemma, we tend to add to the confusion rather than to give direction. And while our present task in this article lies along a different route than the establishment of our own identity, we must point out, in passing, that we are a community of the reconciled, and a reconciling community. That expresses both who we are and what we are. We move into the world as Christ moved into the world (for we are the body of Christ), saying, “Be ye reconciled to God.”

If this seems an over-simplification, it must be remembered

that it strikes at the very heart of the whole inflamed and festering human conflict, both within and without. Because the finite was meant to vibrate in harmony with the infinite, until proper adjustment has been made and we are again attuned, only discord can result. Sin has short-circuited our lives, and we see the effect in the three areas of personal and inter-personal relationships— with God, others, and self. Our own inner serenity, as well as our peaceful existence with our fellows, is dependent upon a restoration of peace with God. This can be achieved only in and through Jesus Christ.

Ours is a ministry of healing through reconciliation. We move into our contemporary worlds to share what we have received, or to allow Him to share through us what only He can bestow. The problems of our troubled society can never be settled except as they melt under the influence of His reconciling grace. They may be curbed by law and restrained by threat of punishment, but laws are external and can never change hearts. The purpose in this little article is to discuss with you some of the adjustments and changes which we must make if we are to speak meaningfully to the intellectual world in which our lot has been cast.

1. We must cease to identify with, or allow ourselves to be regarded as representative of any sect, splinter or fragment, in a divided Christendom. The body of Christ must never be presented as schizophrenic. In our present state of things we will probably be forced to work within the confines of a party, which will provide for us a base of operation, but we must always “discern the Body,” and our confrontation must be to lead men to Christ, and never to build up a sect. One can be in a party without being partisan; he can be in a sect without being sectarian. It is enough that we be a part of the company of the unashamed, unhesitatingly affirming our confidence in the Good News of Jesus Christ, as God’s dynamic to restore and recover all who believe it, regardless of nationality. The sectarian seeks to make men over in his image. He is concerned with conformity

to the party pattern and projection. The members of the fellowship of the unashamed are content to allow men to “be transformed into his likeness, from splendor to splendor; such is the influence of the Lord who is Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The sectarian spirit has little appeal for modern man. He is tired of useless fighting over dogma, imposed by authoritarian methods, whether proceeding from the pope or local elders. The hoary weight of traditional interpretations and metaphysical speculation will be discounted and discarded at once by a world in revolt against this very thing. Only the claim of a personal Jesus who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God, can appeal to those who are caught up in the power struggle and the scholastic relationship founded upon faith. It leads one to a person rather than to a position.

2. The community of the saints must be projected as large enough and flexible enough to embrace all who have been received by Christ, Just as the world of creation must find a place for all humanity to dwell without need of conflict, so the sphere of the new creation must find a place for every individual in the new humanity. The right to dwell in the United States is not conditioned upon one’s political opinion but upon citizenship, and one’s right to the blessings of the kingdom of heaven must not be made contingent upon a theological opinion, but upon adoption as a son of God.

To devise humanly-conceived structural rigidity based upon the acceptance of some philosophy or exclusive doctrinal emphasis is to attempt to confine grace, and results in the mistaken notion that the community is the dispenser of grace rather than the recipient of it. The community results from grace freely bestowed, and not the reverse. Thus, the umbrella of fellowship must be of sufficient spread to cover all who by grace are saved through faith.

Practical commonsense dictates that men will have

temperamental, scholastic, sociological, and other preferences as to where (and even *how*) they express their praise to God within the framework of revelation, but we must never confuse the intimate group association which results from such preference with fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ. To do so is to become victims of religious snobbery and sectarian pride. There is only one body and it must be majestic enough to include all of God's children, whether of liberal or conservative tendency, for these are terms of human definition, and not conditions of divine acceptance. All who are caught up by grace are caught up together when they properly respond to its demands upon them.

No theory or view about the nature of Deity, the work of the Holy Spirit, the second coming of Christ, or the manner of the resurrection to come (to cite only a few examples), can ever be made a test of union or communion among those who have set to their seal that God is true, and have committed themselves to an unreserved trust in Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith. To exalt such things to tests of loyalty is to become guilty of sectarianism in its narrowest (and, therefore, its worst) form. In the sight of God there is no premillennial body, and no amillennial body. There is one body, although there are members of it whose finite minds searching for an understanding of the infinite disclosure, have allied themselves with one interpretative approach or another.

The partisan approach with its arbitrary and artificial criteria of loyalty is wholly outmoded in an ecumenical climate and will have absolutely no impact upon it. In the modern revolt against fragmentation those who indulge the luxury of separation and segregation will be left to talk to themselves, a symptom of senility caused by hardening of the spiritual arteries. The world is not concerned with what we think about this or that question of theological speculation, but it must be made once again to face up to the question, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?"

The message of reconciliation which has been committed to us, and must be transmitted to men by the reconciling community is that “for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Those who are in him are the righteousness of God regardless of their divergent views about such things as the millennium, because these things are not determinant factors in our relationship. To divide men into antagonistic parties over such matters is to walk after the flesh, and to do despite unto the Spirit. It is also to remove ourselves from effective impact upon those who need to be drawn unto Christ.

3. We must make it clear that the ordinances of God are not partisan administrations. The blessings of God are designed to be enjoyed in conjunction with these ordinances. It is not necessary that we know why this is so; it is enough that we recognize the principle as established by revelation, and to realize that the ordinances are not interchangeable. One cannot be substituted for the other.

Baptism is not a factional or sectarian rite when a penitent believer submits to it. Even though the administrator may be quite sectarian, and may regard baptism as introducing the believer into his exclusive party, the Holy Spirit defeats such bigotry, and initiates the obedient believer into the one body which encompasses every saved person in the universe. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” A sectarian is powerless to baptize a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ into anything except the one body.

When a man hears the Good News of the death of Jesus for our sins, of his burial and his resurrection the third day according to the scriptures, and believes this message with all of his heart, reforms his life in accordance with it, and is baptized upon the basis of that faith, regardless of his ignorance about other things, or the ignorance and mistaken views of the one who

does the baptizing, that man is inducted into the family of God. Once this is realized, many brilliant men who have refused to be baptized will cease their opposition. Their rejection of it has not been a predilection against the divine ordinance but against the implication that it was a door into a specific and narrow sect. Baptism into a state of glorious liberty as the sons of God has a wide appeal, but thinking men rebel against entering a door to the narrow confines of a dogmatic faction. It is one thing to surrender to Jesus and be set free, a wholly different thing to be captured by a religious clique or clan.

We have a real appeal to the thoughtful men of our generation if we uphold the Way as a personal relationship with the Divine Absolute when we “have come to the fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.” Then the Good News becomes the divine dynamic to all who believe, regardless of racial origin; and baptism is the response to His claim of lordship over our individual lives, “in which you are also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead,” However, when baptism is presented as an exclusive and copyrighted ritual to introduce one only into a historical religious party of separatist tendencies, it tends to repel those who are mature reasoners, while attracting only those who seek inner security through dogmatism and thought-control.

Baptism is an ordinance which introduces one into the fellowship of all of the saints of all ages, and like birth, it is not repetitive. Birth never produces life. One is not born in order to have life, but because he already has it. Birth is a change of state, and introduces one into a realm where he can enjoy all of the blessings accruing from life and fulfill all of the responsibilities attendant upon it. Regardless of the expanding benefits derived from the family relationship, one has to be born only once to share in them.

But the demonstration of the family relationship is a

constant and regular thing, and the ordinance by which it is proclaimed is of such a nature as to demand repetition. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Lord's death, until He comes, as the basis of oneness in Him. The cup is the fellowship, or communion, of the blood of Christ. The bread is the fellowship, or communion, of the body of Christ. We are one body, and one bread, because we are all partakers of that one bread.

In spite of unfortunate schisms which have occurred, and lines of separation which have been drawn, at the table ordained by Christ, we may manifest the real unity which is a creation of the Spirit. If we seek to make the Lord's Supper a mere demonstration of factional alliance, we turn the table into a snare and stumblingblock for ourselves, for we eat and drink judgment upon ourselves, by not discerning the body—the whole Body! We believe that men can see the beauty of an ordinance designed to express openly the majestic fellowship of the whole body of saints on earth, but that many will refuse their alliance to what they consider an egotistic party, which equates itself with the universal body, and arrogates to itself those ordinances which are bestowed upon the whole.

4. We must communicate to the world of our day the Message in a manner that is understandable and relevant. We must be certain that the Message is God's, for there is no power to heal or make whole, in any other. But we must also be sure that the Way is made clear by placing it in the vernacular of those whom we would reach. If the Word of God was intended for all nations, languages and tongues, we should translate it into all languages, and we should not ourselves become fixated to language forms in our own tongue which have become obsolete and are no longer employed for daily communication.

Again, we face the task of rescuing the Way from the specialized theological jargon which has been developed and adopted by the institutional church, and which reduces it simply

to a modern mystery cult, as seen by the average person. Of course we must ever retain the sense of dignity and appropriateness which befits a sacred declaration but we must never thrust back into the clouds that which was sent down to earth. In our own land we should not be badgered into denying the validity of translations into modern English simply because they do not sustain some of our traditional verbiage. Indeed, we should look askance at any doctrinal deduction which is solely dependent upon one version for its strength and defence.

The world is still open for a non-sectarian plea, but it is not receptive to such a plea made by sectarians. It is wary of any party which talks of non-denominational Christianity with its own denominational bias or slant. A party or movement which equates itself with the one body and projects the idea that to be in Christ Jesus, one must unquestioningly support the party program and organizations, has nothing to offer the thinking men in an ecumenical world.

This does not mean that such a party may not grow numerically and financially. The population explosion will take care of the first and the inflationary economy of the second, but it will grow at the expense of the truly thoughtful and perceptive minds which can never be content with the head-shrinking process which must always and inevitably be practiced by every religious party and exclusivistic sect. Men will no longer bow before infallible interpreters such as the pope, nor kneel to the infallible interpretations of a party! We must either lead men to Christ or leave them in despair.

A Non-Partisan Faith

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[Abstract]

All of you have seen the wall motto with the question, “What on earth are you doing for heaven’s sake?” That pretty well sums up a lot of letters we receive. A sister in the east, whom I greatly appreciate, writes an epistle that is so typical I cannot refrain from sharing a bit of it with you.

“Just what are you trying to do, and how do you hope to accomplish it? I think I know, but I’d like to be able to explain it to others. One man here says you do not think baptism is necessary. Another says that you are preaching for the Christian Church. Are you trying to get the Church of Christ and Christian Church together? I do not see how you will ever be able to do it.”

I regret that I have become a controversial figure, but I do not see how it can be avoided in a world of partisan alignments, if I remain true to my conscience. And although I have answered the above questions many times, I know that I will have to repeat the answers many times more, because my position is so different. I do not become impatient with my brothers and sisters for questioning me.

A part of the problem lies in the fact that I once was a champion of a very narrow party in the restoration movement. When the grace of God opened my eyes to the true scope of

fellowship and brotherhood which heaven revealed to earth, I did not leave the brethren with whom I had always labored and align myself with another faction. I simply renounced all factionalism as a work of the flesh and a symptom of immaturity and carnality.

I learned that no faction among us constituted the one body in its majestic fulness, and that all of them together did not exhaust the possibilities of the community of saved ones. The kingdom of heaven is not confined to the restoration movement. God's family may include many who never heard of Alexander Campbell. The flock of God is still a scattered flock!

MY MISSION AND MESSAGE

I am deeply concerned with the welfare of all who call upon Christ out of pure hearts, but we must begin where we are in any approach to unity. For this reason I have exerted most of my efforts with those who are a part of the splintered restoration movement. There are more than two dozen parties among us, although we began as "a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects."

My thesis is that brotherhood stems from fatherhood, and fellowship is the result of sonship. Our relationship in Christ, created by his precious blood, is more important than any of the things over which we have fractured into our little sects. For that reason we must restore a real vital sense of brotherhood and unity before we can even discuss our differences as members of a family instead of as adherents of warring tribes or clashing clans.

We made a tragic error when we allowed Satan to manipulate us into a position where we divided over our variant views about instrumental music. Our philosophy, developed in facing that issue has been applied to every subsequent problem and has left a train of schisms with their attendant sorrows and

shame.

Regardless of the right or wrong of using instrumental music, the whole subject is not as important as the cross of Christ. The fact that Jesus died “that he might reconcile us both to God in one body by the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end” is transcendently more significant than anything which has become a source of debate among us. Jesus was not raised from the dead to become the head of “an instrumental party” or of an “anti-instrumental party” but of the one body which includes every saved person on the face of this whole wide earth.

It would be pleasant if we could simply blot out all of our troubles and go back to 1825 and start over, but we cannot do that. We have to face up to the fact that all of us, without exception, are in a faction, or fraction, of the restoration movement. It will not do to call out all those who are opposed to the factional spirit and band them together. That would only add another sect. An anti-party party is as sinful as any other.

I have recommended that all of us stay where we are and share the truths we learn with those whom we know the best. It is ridiculous, when you learn a truth, to abandon those who do not have it, in order to join those who do. This would remove the leaven from the mass in order to associate it with other leaven. But there is nothing more useless than a pile of yeast-cakes.

One need not be factional merely because he is in a faction any more than he must be a Communist because he is in Russia. We need to stay where we are and start loving all of our brethren where they are. We need to pray for all of them eagerly and earnestly. When we do this we will realize that our artificial barriers are not walls of stone but of ice, and they will melt away under the warm rays of brotherly affection. These walls are not opaque to one who loves. They become transparent and he can see through them and recognize brethren on the other side.

But we must not hide behind our walls and peer through the cracks. We must come out from behind them and associate with our brethren. We must come to know them. We must listen to them regardless of their attitude toward us. We must attend their meetings even though fear and narrowness keeps them from reciprocating. And we must never quit loving them even though they manifest unlovely attitudes and treat us with coldness and reserve. “Love knows no limit to its endurance . . . it can outlast anything.” I base my hope for the unity of God’s people wholly and unreservedly upon love. There is no other power by which God’s purpose can be achieved. There is no other potential for answering the prayer of Christ. It is love or nothing!

MY VIEW OF BAPTISM

All over this country I run into the accusation that I do not believe baptism is essential to fellowship. Of course, that is exactly opposite to my position, as I have clearly stated many times. I think that we must be practical enough to recognize that many of our brethren are not noted for a high degree of scrupulosity or integrity when reporting the views of one with whom they differ. This is especially true if they would like to destroy him. But no one has ever quoted a single statement from me in which I disavowed the essentiality of baptism. They have relied upon rumor and hearsay.

The fact is that what I have written about fellowship has affected the thinking of some in every segment and sect among us. Some of the party leaders are growing desperate. If they can discredit me and distort what I say the membership will be more easily kept under their partisan yoke. This is the crux of the matter.

I believe that faith in the great proposition that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and immersion in water upon the basis

of that faith, are essential to unity with Christ. I recognize no unbaptized person as in the fellowship of the body. The problem arises, I think, from the fact that I do not feel called upon to usurp the prerogatives of God, and decide the eternal destiny of all, who for one reason or another, are not baptized.

I am under the authority of a King. His authority is absolute. As his willing slave I have no right, desire or inclination to offer salvation upon any other basis than his promise. But if his grace prompts him to go beyond his promise, I will not rebel but rejoice that others were allowed to share in the amazing grace which saved a wretch like me. I shall not bind God with the laws which he gave to bind me!

MY PREACHING

I am not “preaching for the Christian Church.” Neither am I “preaching for the Church of Christ.” I am not preaching for any of the two dozen kinds of “Churches of Christ.” I now belong to the blessed Lord who ransomed and redeemed me. I have “decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Wherever the Spirit opens up a door to witness of my faith, I go. I do not clear my appointments with any hierarchy. I do not seek permission from those “who appear to be somewhat” in any party or sect. I take very seriously the words of the apostle, “You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.”

I study the word as diligently as I can with my limited resources, in the hope that I may be able to edify the brethren. My watchword is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.” I go wherever brethren invite me and whenever I can help his cause. I never ask them how they conduct their

public devotions. I make no demand that they alter them because of my presence!

Nothing disturbs our brethren more than to be confronted with one who is free in Christ and really means to be a Christian only. They frantically try to categorize him and put him in the proper pigeon-hole. The sectarian mentality must sectarianize every one it knows and everything it touches. Not long ago in Dallas, at a conclave of Independent Christian Church brethren, a good brother who could not even remember my name, solemnly declared that I had “gone with the Disciples of Christ.” After I held a series of meeting at Gallatin, Tennessee, last year, a preacher in Kentucky openly announced that I had “gone with the pre-millennialists.” A brother who edits a widely read journal in Texas, announced to a congregation in New Mexico that I had “gone liberal.” The very same week another brother who writes for his paper, told an audience in Oklahoma that “Brother Ketcherside is really an ultraconservative and has the liberals fooled.”

The fact is, of course, that I am simply heeding the admonition of Paul to “Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery.” I am simply trying to preach Christ and preach for Christ! The approval of the sect means nothing to me. Neither does their disapproval. I do not intend to be caught again!

On this basis I could speak at the World Convention of Churches of Christ in Puerto Rico, and affirm my conviction in the Bible as God’s revelation. On the same basis I spoke twice at the North American Christian Convention in Long Beach and Saint Louis. But I have also attended the Abilene Christian College Lectureship the last two years. I have twice spoken at Bethany College as well as at Emmanuel School of Religion, Milligan College and numerous Bible Colleges. In addition, I have shared my thinking with a number of Christian witness

groups in state universities, but I have also met with many groups of hippies and beatniks and affirmed my belief in the Christian dynamic, and allowed them to question me by the hour!

I have held public dialogue sessions with the president and cantor of an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, and three times testified to my faith in Jesus at the sabbath services of a large Reformed Synagogue. I was the only non-Jew present at a five day seminar on Judaism and shared with two rabbis in daily dialogue sessions on the relationship of the law to grace.

I am even now a member of a dialogue group in which there are more than thirty Roman Catholic priests and doctors of philosophy, and as many Anglican canons and rectors. I am the only member from the restoration movement background and my task is to present the restoration ideal and allow it to be explored. Each session that I attend I find myself more convinced that we have something rare and wonderful to offer in this age of ecumenical thought. Each time I strive to present it a little more clearly and definitively. It is not easy to do that!

I love all of God's children. They are all my brothers and sisters. I also love all who are seeking to know Him. I shall never again be the front-man for any party or segment. I will not allow myself to be maneuvered into a place where I must hate some of my brothers to be loved by others. They may attack one another, debate with one another, and refuse to associate with one another, but I will still go among them all for good, and not for evil. I will join no party! I am His!

MY PRESENT AIM

I'm not really trying to get the "Christian Church" and "Church of Christ" together. Uniting two parties or sects will not make the one body. I will not fight the big ecumenical movement and start a little one. The body of my Lord is bigger

than either the “Christian Church” or “Church of Christ,” and it is bigger than both of them put together. His body is made up of parts, not of parties, and every precious individual upon this earth who is joined to Jesus is one of those parts. What I am trying to do is to get those in all our factions to recognize that all of us are brethren. We are children in the same family. We should start treating each other as brethren where we are. We do not all need to meet under the same roof to be one in Christ; we only need to be partakers of the same grace! Oneness in Christ Jesus is a creation of the Holy Spirit. It is not a relationship to music, cups, classes, colleges, or the millennium, but to our Lord Jesus Christ. Congregations of my brethren will have to decide whether they will use instrumental music or not; whether they will support Herald of Truth or not. But whatever they decide about any or all of these they do not decide themselves out of the family. They are still my brothers, and I’ll still love them— all of them. They can answer to God for their decision and not to me. I’m not trying to get groups together for that would do no real good, if their hearts were not changed. I’m simply trying to get all of us to share in the glorious togetherness into which Christ Jesus has called us by the gospel.

In closing, let me say that I regard the grace in which He allowed me to share as such a thrilling experience that I refuse to allow myself to be shut off from other “grace-sharers.” I will not rob myself of the kindling flame of association with any of the saints lest my own gift flicker and be extinguished by the snuffer of schism.

The attitude of others toward me is between themselves and God. They may live without me, but I cannot live without them for my soul is bound up in the bundle of life with all who have the Son. Just as “the life is more than food, and the body more than clothing” (Matthew 6:25), so to me the mutual life in Him is more than a means or a method, and the one body is more than a schism or system. Let men argue and debate about the transitory things which cleave them asunder. To me these

are like the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven. The things about which we strive today will have their little place in the sun and fade away, but His love abides forever. There are eternal values which demand my heart and soul. Brotherhood in Christ is one of them!

God and Surveyor 3

Mission Messenger (August 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Apparently there are a lot of people who think God is in difficulty during the Space Age. They regard him as a benevolent father who allowed his boys to go to college, only to find that they not only did not need him any longer but he couldn't even talk to them. Just about every time a scientific gadget makes a breakthrough, the question is bandied about, "What does this do to the concept of God?"

The latest is Surveyor 3. This complicated piece of equipment, obeying commands from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Pasadena, squatted down gently on the surface of the moon and went to work like a beaver behind on his chewing. It took hundreds of pictures, checked the temperature, extended an aluminum arm and dug trenches, and picked up soil and dumped it down on its flat footpads so the scientists could take a good look at it in closeup pictures. Ronald Scott, the engineer in charge said, "The operation was accurate to within half an inch, working at a range of a quarter of a million miles."

All of this is pretty impressive, of course, but it doesn't affect my thinking about God one bit. I'm accustomed to the belief that creative intelligence can produce a machine which can function on a distant planet. After all, man is a complex machine which makes Surveyor 3 look like a little fire engine in the toy department. I'll not begin to worry until Surveyor 3

makes a man of the dust of the moon and breathes into his nostrils the breath of spheres.

I don't hold with a lot of good religious folk that God does not want us to explore space, or that he will slap us down as if we were "off limits." I think we will plop a man down on the moon, but we will still be a long way from the stars. It will be like a man who decides to walk from New York to San Francisco, and stops in Philadelphia to congratulate himself on his progress. It just could be that he would decide to stay in Philadelphia.

I'm not so sure that God approves of the means by which we are trying to go to the moon, and I'm almost certain he will not like what we do to it after we arrive. The space race is a little silly when you stop to think about it, and those of us who are caught up in it, taxwise and otherwise are liable to be deadly serious about something which could have some humorous aspects if we were watching it all at once. I've fallen to wondering if God might think of the earth as a small merry-go-round swarming with a whole bunch of kids, and a couple of them who are richer than the others, throwing an occasional expensive balloon into the wild blue yonder, while the rest of them can't even afford a balloon. I don't think he approves of it when we get out of hand and start blustering around and playing with giant fire-crackers which could blow the whole shebang to "kingdom come."

I'd hate to see the moon covered with beer cans, whiskey bottles and used car lots. We've pretty well made a garbage dump out of one planet and we've gotten ourselves into a mess. A few years ago everyone was in a dither about whether a man could breathe the atmosphere on another planet and survive. The big question now is whether he can breathe the air on this one and live. We may see the day when people will line up to go to the moon like they do now at the Eagle Stamp counter. You always have to crowd up now in order to get away from the

crowd!

Of course God is interested in the Russians too. They may be godless but God is not Russianless. The fact that they are trying so hard to make themselves believe that he doesn't exist, does not alter the fact that he does. Denying a fact does not destroy the fact. It is altogether possible, though, that we get angry with the Russians for different reasons than God does. For instance, we charge that they have defamed God by turning their cathedrals into museums. We've done the same thing but we still pretend to "worship" in them. I'm not so sure God was in a lot of the cathedrals to start with. He might have been out in the stable, and it wouldn't have been the first time.

This brings me to the place where I can mention the cosmonaut who came back and reported that he had not seen God up there. This struck the funnybone of a lot of Russians and they repeated it with glee. It did not shake me. The God whom I love is not going to be confined to some point in space. The atheistic Communist had apparently fallen into the same trap as a lot of Christians who think that God dwells at a certain dedicated street address, and when you get there you can smoke in the dining-hall, but "no smoking in the sanctuary." So it didn't worry me that a Russian didn't run into God a few miles up. It would have worried me if he had. It would have worried me more if God had sent back word that he hadn't seen the cosmonaut up there!

I'm a one-hundred-percent, dyed-in-the-wool believer "in him who gives life to the dead, and calls into existence the things that do not exist." He will be when the moon and stars no longer are. I do not say he will be *here*, for by that time here may be *there*. I only say that he lives, and I'm willing to risk my life on it. In fact, I am doing so!

The Devil and Factions

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

I guess I'm a little old-fashioned for the modern theological world. You see, I still believe there is a personal devil, a real, genuine, dishonest-to-God devil. I do not hold with the little kid in Sunday school, whose teacher asked, "Children, is there really a devil?" "No," he answered, "it's like Santa Claus, it's your dad!"

I do not hold with some of the Anglican clerics in England either. They proposed to get rid of Satan by knocking the "d" out of devil, and accrediting everything bad to our own inner tendency toward evil. I have some acquaintance with both England and the Bible, and I suspect that it would be easier for them to get the devil out of the Bible than it would to get him out of England.

There are some pretty brilliant folks I know who have marked the devil off of their list. He has some of them thinking that he never was here in the first place, and others that he retired when they got too sophisticated for him to handle. Actually, I think that with these the real problem is not how they regard Satan, but how they look at Jesus. They admire Jesus but they are not disciples of his. One can admire a schoolteacher from across the street without enrolling in her class.

I've enrolled under Jesus, and I'm majoring in life. It

happens that Jesus knew the devil personally and they had some head-on encounters. It is unthinkable for me to claim to be a disciple and deny what my master teaches. So long as I am in school I'll take my instruction from the Teacher and not from the drop-outs who hang around on the corner to make fun of those who are still learning.

Did you ever try to put yourself in the devil's hooves, and attempt to work out the strategy you'd employ to accomplish his purpose? Suppose you had the forces of Light all ripped to shreds, clawing and fighting one another, while you sat on the porch, picking your teeth and watching them. Then about 1809 years after He had invaded your territory in the Great Breakthrough, a little group of the dispossessed inaugurate "a project to unite the Christians (that dirty word!) in all of your sects." What would you do to that movement?

You'll agree, I think, that you'd abort the purpose of the project by fragmenting its adherents into warring factions and deluding them into augmenting the very condition they proposed to alleviate. So far, so bad, for that's exactly what Satan has done to our "noble experiment." He pulled the wool over our eyes and hoodwinked us into thinking that the way to be faithful to the Leader was to slash his body to ribbons.

He took about fifty years to decoy our fathers into looking away from the *stauros* which was their only hope, and to beguile them into debating and berating one another over the proper way to show homage unto Him whom they all professed to love with the same intensity with which they began to despise one another.

When the original ruse had succeeded, the time was ripe to make the family feast, which was eaten in His memory as a public proclamation of unity, the source of bitter strife and wrangling. Taking advantage of that curious temperament which blends unquenchable zeal with incessant nit-picking,

Satan planted the thought that the important thing was not eating and drinking together “until He comes,” but rather how long the fruit of the vine has been kept on hand, how it was passed to the children of God, and how the bread was broken. There was thus precipitated a series of violent quarrels which filled the hearts of the communicants with such a spirit of rivalry and hatred as to make their participation a farce and mockery. “Their table was made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them.” Now, at long last, after almost a century of civil war, a generation has arisen which is beginning to question the validity of the assumptions and inferences upon which the party spirit has fed. The sun is once more starting to peek from behind the dark clouds of sectarian animosity.

It is true that the partisan leaders are working overtime to plaster the chinks in their crumbling walls. Soldiers of the old guard are being frantically called up to man the bastions. But the party cries sound hollow and empty in an age of increasing knowledge and concern. And the clever ruses and feints of yesterday no longer appeal to the thoughtful.

Recently, in a journal whose editor mistakenly equates advancing the factional plea for advocating “the old paths,” there appeared a statement which shows that the sectarian attitude still lives. After quoting at length from another brother whose article showed a strange inconsistency on what could be “tolerated and fellowshiped,” the editor in question declared that what had been said about some other things “can just as aptly and logically and scripturally be said against individual communion cups on the Lord’s table, fermented wine in the cup, more than one loaf on the table at one time, unscriptural ways of breaking the bread, the assembly divided into classes to edify the church, and women teachers.”

A great many brethren confuse seeking for old paths and searching out the old ruts. And this causes a lot of folk to want to

rend their garments, throw up their hands in despair and shake the dust of their feet off against the restoration movement. I'm not inclined that way at all because I'm sure that wherever you go Satan will be there injecting the party spirit by exalting the trivial. I freely admit that our brethren have probably shown a greater inclination than most other folk to piddle around with the paltry, and fiddle-faddle with the frivolous, but they are victims of a philosophy which they inherited. But Church of Christism, like other isms, will have its day. Some fine morning our brethren will be able to distinguish between the coat handed down by their fathers and the robe of righteousness handed over by the Son. And they'll shed the first and don the second.

I plan to stay and fight the devil on the territory that I know best. I feel a great deal better about my chances since I've learned that I don't have to outsmart him by myself. My strategy consists of staying close to the One whom Satan couldn't even keep down after he had killed Him, and loving all of my brethren from that vantage point. A long time ago, one who had actually associated with Him during the period of the Supreme Sharing put it this way, "His orders are that we should put our trust in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another— as we used to hear him say in person."

A Letter from Texas

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[Abstract]

Our readers have had to be very patient with me. I am engaged in a direct frontal assault on our factional attitudes, and this requires a good deal of repetition. Many of the brethren find it very difficult indeed to acknowledge that fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ is not contingent upon being right about such matters as cups, classes, colleges, the millennium, or instrumental music. I'd like to get on with the exploration of truly major issues confronting us in the modern theological complex, but we will gain little by running off from those whom we love. You cannot lead others when you're out of sight.

I regularly receive letters from those who simply cannot see how we can all be one until every person on earth reaches absolute agreement (with them) on "the issues" as they refer to the motley horde of ideas over which we have been splintered into hostile parties. The futility of such an approach as they recommend is apparent when we realize that if we suddenly reached a state of concord on every troublesome issue today, we would divide over other issues tomorrow. The current issues are not all the same as those over which our fathers split asunder. New conflicts over interpretation arise in every generation. They are spawned by our philosophy.

I have steeled myself never to become discouraged or to be impatient with brethren who are "slow of heart to learn."

Regardless of how often I am asked the same questions I want to be kind and considerate in my reply. I endured a great deal of mental agony and engaged in prolonged soul-searching before I was able to throw off the factional yoke and reach the position I now hold. I want to be as forbearing with others as God has been gracious unto me. For that reason I am never upset by such communications as the following which was signed by two brethren in Texas.

We are of the opinion that you'll only create more division because you insist on lumping together such things as individual cups and Bible classes with instrumental music. The first two are merely matters of opinion, while the last is in the realm of faith. How can you fellowship the Christian Church in its error? Why don't you face up to things as they are and answer these questions in your paper?

Does not the Bible teach that instrumental music is a sin? "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Is not the big difference between us and the Christian Church their lack of respect for the authority of Christ? Will God ever accept the worship of those who claim to be sincere but do not follow the pattern He has laid down? If not, how can you accept it?

You talk about loving everyone, but what about those who reject the word of God and insist upon having their own way? Has God ever tolerated such people while they persisted in keeping that which was a sign of their rebellion? These are things we want you to meet squarely, and until you do, we'll conclude that your teaching on fellowship will not stand up when tested by the Bible.

I have never met the brethren who wrote this letter, but I have corresponded with them individually. They are good men. They want to obey the Lord. I have no problem in projecting myself to the place where I can walk in their shoes for I once wrote to others just such letters as they have written unto me. I

can have sympathy for them because I know exactly the process which brought them to their present state. But my compassion does not blind me to the fact that their interpretations and attitudes are destructive of the unity for which my Lord prayed, and will continue to divide the saints as long as they hold them.

Our readers who have matured in their thinking to the place where they no longer confuse community with conformity must bear with me in this issue while I again deal with a matter that has become an emotional fixation because of its involvement in debates and arguments of the past. The two brethren who have been kind enough to write have expressed the sentiments of a good many thousands who are caught up in the throes of the factional spirit without even realizing it. I simply will not desert them without seeking to aid them to attain to a clearer knowledge of the will of my Father for His whole family, as I understand that will. I do not say this boastfully, for none of us have anything of which to boast.

1. INCONSISTENCIES

The restoration movement has divided into more than two dozen factions. This statement embarrasses some of our fellow-editors who try to deny it. They affirm that not every difference is a division, which is true. None of our differences ought to be allowed to divide us but we now have as many as twenty-five distinct parties which make a test of fellowship out of their peculiarities. We are divided over everything from how to pass the Lord's Supper to the saints to how to take the gospel to the lost. Our own condition gives the lie to every radio appeal for unity upon the basis we propose. That very proposal has been the ground of our own sad and shameful division.

All of our factions, without exception, find it easy to be charitable toward those who oppose what they have. And all of them refuse to recognize those who have what they oppose.

Brethren who use individual cups can be very gracious and condescending toward those who insist upon one container. They readily agree to accept them as brethren if they will not be contentious and make a test of fellowship out of their views. But those who contend for one container cannot be of this mind toward the others because, as they view it, they have added something “to the pattern.”

Those who have classes are very amiable toward those who do not have and steadfastly insist they will not make a test of fellowship out of the matter, but the reverse is not generally the case. Those who use instrumental music do not proscribe those who do not, but the latter excommunicate them.

In every case those who oppose what we have are “antis” and those who have what we oppose are “liberals.” With one exception every party in the restoration movement is regarded as “anti” by others; and with a single exception every party is regarded as “liberal” by others.

Let me illustrate. Suppose you list in order every faction among us starting with the most ecumenical “Disciples of Christ” at the top, and placing the most reactionary “Church of Christ” on the bottom. The one on the bottom would regard no one else as an “anti” but all as “liberals;” the one on the top would regard no one else as a “liberal” for all would be “antis.” All of us are both “antis” and “liberals” to some others, unless we are the tip of the beak on one end or the last tail feather on the other. I use this metaphor because our mixed-up mess is “for the birds.”

Our good Texas brethren think I will create more division by “lumping together such things as individual cups and Bible classes with instrumental music.” They propose to unite us by sorting out our bones of contention into two piles, one labeled “Opinion” and the other “Faith.” Just how naive can we become? Do they not realize that no two factions would have the

same “bones” in their piles? That’s our real problem!

Note carefully that these brethren label as in the area of “opinion” those things which they employ, and in the area of “faith” those things which they oppose. So does every other faction! What is one man’s opinion is another man’s faith. The brethren who have instrumental music class it with opinion. They do not say every one has to use it, they only affirm *their right* to do so. They do not bind it upon others. Those who contend for one cup make multiple cups a matter of faith and deny that anyone has the right to use multiple containers. They seek to bind their usage upon all.

If you would list a hundred things which have troubled us through the years, and submit these to a hundred preachers, with the request that they catalog them under three headings—Matters of Faith, Matters of Opinion, Matters of Indifference—no two papers would be alike. It is downright silly for thinking men to perpetuate the farcical myth that we can unite the believers on any such a basis. Our practice of it has made us the most tragically divided religious movement on the contemporary American scene.

On what grounds do my Texas brethren assert the prerogative of defining for any other person or party what *must* be regarded as a matter of faith and a basis of separation from other saints, and what *may* be regarded as a matter of opinion and a basis of tolerance. Since they propose to speak where the Bible speaks, what scriptural authority can they cite which will appoint them as lords over my conscience? Is not my faith personal? Are not my opinions, by their very nature, personal? Shall I not stand or fall to my own Master?

Our brethren in the non-instrument “Churches of Christ” would salute me as a hero if I came up with a formula for ironing out all of the divisions in the non-instrument ranks. But they want to stop there! All of us in the family of God are

opposed to division, but we are not opposed to all division in the family of God. We want everyone to become one only up to our party!

The non-instrument brethren would like to freeze the status of the kingdom of heaven at the 1906 level. But unless we go back to our first fracture and heal it, we will always be divided, regardless of how much patchwork we do on the feathers of our separate wings. We developed a false philosophy under the tension of our original cleavage and it has continued to split and sunder us. It will plague us until we divest ourselves of it and cast it “to the moles and the bats.”

I plead guilty to the charge of the Texas brethren of placing all of our family squabbles, from first to last, in the same category. With me they are neither matters of faith or matters of opinion. They are simply questions for discussion in the spirit of love and continuing brotherhood. We ought not to have separated over any of them. I’m sorry they had to arise and I’m grieved at the trouble they have caused, but I shall not sever myself from a single one of my brethren over any of them. We are saved by faith, and only that which pertains to our salvation is related to “the faith once delivered.” These things are no part of *the faith*.

The faith which I am to have to myself— my personal conviction— as to the propriety of this thing or that, is a wholly different matter. A man can be judged on the basis of his acceptance or rejection of the faith, but I dare not judge a brother on his acceptance or rejection of that faith which I am told to have to myself. God does not make one’s attitude toward the use of instrumental music, or cups, or classes, or the millennium, a condition of acceptance with Him, so I shall not make them a test of fellowship with me. It is just that simple!

When my Texas brethren encounter those who oppose their classes and cups *they decide* that these are in the realm of

opinion; when they confront those who have instrumental music *they decide* it is in the realm of faith. Has God endowed them with infallibility? The problem is that other brethren think they also have a right to decide what is a matter of faith or opinion to themselves, and so our childish fighting continues from generation to generation while the world around us is going to hell.

All of this points up the undeniable fact that no man is a “liberal” or an “anti” because of where he stands, but because of where we stand as we look at him. The most extreme “anti” to one is the most flagrant “liberal” to another!

2. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

I am asked, “How can you fellowship the Christian Church in its error?”

My answer will not please my questioners. I do not believe there is any such thing as “the Christian Church.” Neither do I believe there is any such thing as “the Church of Christ.” These organizations are not churches at all. They are parties or factions which grew out of the tensions of a nineteenth century movement which was “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

There is only one church. There never was but one. There never will be but one. The church is not a human organization but a divine organism. It is a divine creation and God only created one church. Man can no more create another church than he can create another God.

The church includes every saved person on the face of this earth. All of these are Christians but they are not all in “the Christian Church.” All of them are in the one body but they are not all in “the Church of Christ.” The church of our Lord existed before our restoration movement. It is still greater than

that movement or any other movement. The Texas brethren confuse the body of Christ with the “Church of Christ” which advertises its meeting-places in the Saturday edition of the Fort Worth newspaper, or in the yellow pages of the telephone directory. I’m just not that sectarian. My hope is not in a signboard but in a Savior!

Wherever my father has a child I have a brother. God only has one family and all of his children are in it. I am in it with them. Some of them are still in spiritual diapers, and some are trying to wear clothes too large for them. A lot of them are running around in “intellectual rompers” who ought to start acting their age. God even has some retarded children, but they are a part of the family and we have to bestow more time and abundant honor upon them. So long as they are His and I am His we’re in this thing together.

I can no more “fellowship the Christian Church in its error,” than I could fellowship the Church of Christ in its error. I am in the fellowship with every child of God on this earth, and I have found that I’ve got a lot more brothers than I once thought I had. Fellowship is not something you extend but something you experience. It is not seeing everything alike, but sharing in a common life, the life of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship is a state into which we are called and not a grace which we dispense (1 Corinthians 1:9). Certainly I am in the fellowship with “brothers in error.” There just aren’t any other kind of brothers, not even in Texas.

3. NOT OF FAITH

“Does not the Bible teach that instrumental music in worship is a sin? ‘Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.’”

Of course the Bible does not teach that instrumental music is a sin. If it did there would be no controversy over the matter among honest and humble slaves of Christ. Few of us indeed

deliberately trample underfoot the plain teaching of our dear Lord. Although I know thousands of brethren who attend where instrumental music is employed in conjunction with the public expression of praise, I cannot at this time think of a one of them who would insist upon it if the Bible taught that it was a sin.

The truth of it is that, instead of the new covenant scriptures teaching that it is a sin, they say nothing about it. Those brethren who oppose it do so upon the basis of their deduction. From scriptures in various settings and places they formulate a basis of interpretation and using this as a working postulate they conclude that the introduction or injection of instrumental music would violate the intent of God. Since they believe that their postulate is valid and their logical construction derived therefrom is correct they cannot condone the use of the instrument. I share their view and, therefore, it would be a sin *for me* to introduce instrumental music into the praise service of the saints in violation of my conscience.

However, other brethren read the same scriptures and draw from them a divergent conclusion. They are as honest and sincere as I am. They love Jesus as much as I do. How shall I act toward them? I cannot demand that they violate their conscience and confess something to be a sin when they do not believe that it is. But brotherhood and fellowship are not conditioned upon their seeing it like I do. We were not begotten by “my postulate” but by “our Father.” I am not told that I must love instrumental music, but I am obligated to love my brethren— all of them— and this I do. Now if I think more of my reasoning and deduction than I do of my brethren, I’ll sacrifice brotherhood to my deduction. The reverse is not true. Through brotherly love I can retain both my brethren and my personal conviction. This I am resolved to do. It is merely a matter of priorities.

Of course, it isn’t always easy to take “the high road” because there are some pretty sectarian brethren who use instrumental music and they want to measure your love for them

by your attitude toward that with which they play. It is a case of “Love me, love my dog!” All of us have pets and none of us can understand why others don’t fondle them like we do. I’ve a suspicion that heaven will be like some motels— no pets allowed! After the first heartbreak we’ll all be happy!

While I do not commend the employment of instrumental music as a corporate expression of praise, I do deplore some of the hackneyed and shopworn arguments which twist the scriptures to oppose it. Our Texas brethren have fallen prey to a traditional approach which is an unjustifiable debaters’ quibble. All of us have cut our theological eyeteeth on that running sequence which goes like this:

Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). The word of God is silent on the subject of instrumental music, therefore, instrumental music is not of faith. But, whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23), therefore, instrumental music is sin.

It is by such mental meandering and circumlocution that it is said, “the Bible teaches that instrumental music is a sin.” The Holy Spirit does not generally encircle “Robin Hood’s barn” a couple of times, or “beat the devil about the bush,” as does this argument, in order to reveal that a thing is sin. The worst feature about it is that it demonstrates a palpable ignorance of Paul’s use of “faith.”

In Romans 10, the context plainly shows that the apostle is contrasting justification by faith with attempted justification by law (verses 5, 6). The faith is that which accrues from the proclamation of the glad tidings about Jesus. It results in confessing with the lips that Jesus is Lord and believing in the heart that God has raised him from the dead (verse 9). It is, in short, the faith that saves (verses 10, 13). It is the faith which results from believing the gospel and has not one thing to do with understanding the fine points of apostolic doctrine. “But they have not all heeded the gospel; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who

has believed what he has heard from us?’ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (verses 16, 17).

In Romans 14, the subject is altogether different. Here the apostle is advocating tolerance of brethren in Christ who differ in opinions. “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions” (verse 1). The faith under consideration is not belief in Christ, but the personal conviction reached about the propriety of things by one who is in Christ. “One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables” (verse 2). Such belief neither saves or damns because the kingdom of heaven is not contingent upon it (verse 17).

Since this is personal faith it cannot be imposed upon others but must be private, known but to self and God. “The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God” (verse 22). The Authentic Version reads: “As to the conviction you hold, hold it privately in the sight of God.” J. B. Phillips: “Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God.” The New English Version: “If you have a clear conviction, apply it to yourself in the sight of God.”

The faith which saves (Romans 10) must be proclaimed to all; the faith which prompts one to partake or to abstain from certain things must be privately cherished. The first is produced by hearing the word of God; the second by listening to the voice of conscience.

One must never act contrary to his conscience. To do so is a sin. If one doubts that a thing is right he must not act until he is convinced. “But he who doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin.” The Authentic Version: “But he who does discriminate stands condemned if he should eat, because it is not from conviction. For whatsoever is not done from

conviction is sin.” The New English Version: “But a man who has doubts is guilty if he eats, because his action does not arise from his conviction, and anything which does not arise from conviction is sin.” J. B. Phillips: “Yet if a man eats meat with an uneasy conscience about it, you may be sure he is wrong to do so. For his action does not spring from his faith, and when we act apart from our faith we sin.”

Brethren who confuse the faith of Romans 10 with the personal scruples of Romans 14 ought never to accuse those who use instrumental music of “wresting the scriptures.” It would seem that the time is at hand for a lot of men to grow up and rise above the party spirit which has prompted both sides in the past to dream up fantastic and frivolous arguments which serve only to confound the unlearned and crystallize bitterness.

4. RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

“Is not the big difference between us and the Christian Church their lack of respect for the authority of Christ?”

Of course not! Such generalizations are silly, selfish and without warrant. There are thousands in both the Christian Church and the Churches of Christ who have a deep respect for the lordship of Jesus. There are many outside of both of these parties who also do. It is not a question of respect for authority but of understanding. That is why we have so many different kinds of “Churches of Christ.” Too many of us equate God’s revelation with our interpretation, and conclude that because one is infallible, the other must also be infallible. This does not follow!

The cleavage over instrumental music does not result from lack of respect for the authority of Jesus by either segment. It stems from a difference in the philosophy of approach to authority. Each side begins with a pre-supposition, and what the scriptures say is judged in the light of this pre-supposition. Our

brothers who use instrumental music do not love Jesus any less than I do, but they do not love our philosophy of approach to authority as much as I do. But one does not reject the revelation of God because he cannot concur with my explanation of it.

There is no need for me to labor this point any further. It is fully covered in pages 113-124 of my book *Deep Roots*. In the chapter titled “Approach to Authority” I have dealt with the problem as directly related to instrumental music. A great many on both sides of the fence have been kind enough to say it is the most outstanding treatise on the theme they have ever read, but they probably have not read many others. We do hope you will read and study it carefully, for it could settle many of our difficulties at once.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF WORSHIP

“Will God ever accept the worship of those who are sincere but do not follow the pattern as it is laid down? If not, how can you accept it?”

I do not accept worship since it is not addressed to me, but I do try to answer the questions of brethren which are addressed to me. It appears that our Texas brethren entertain the opinion that God has never at any time accepted the worship of those who did not conform exactly to what was written, but they have overlooked one example. When God ordained the passover He was quite specific about the requirements, but the prayer of a righteous man once prevailed over the specifications.

“For a multitude of the people . . . had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people” (2 Chronicles 38:18-20). The

Revised Standard Version says, “They ate the passover otherwise than as prescribed.”

If our brethren in Texas think that our brothers in the Christian Church are worshiping “otherwise than it was written” they ought to be imitating Hezekiah and praying to the good Lord to pardon every one that prepares his heart to seek God, in spite of his dereliction. How long has it been since any of the non-instrument preachers in Texas have publicly prayed for the Lord to pardon those who have prepared their heart to seek God even while doing “otherwise than as prescribed”? I imagine that they would withdraw from Hezekiah if he did it!

But it is because of the mercy shown by God, even under a legalistic arrangement, that I rejoice that the final judgment will be held in heaven rather than in Texas. I think I’d prefer to risk my chances in glory than in Austin!

6. TOLERANCE OF GOD

“You talk about loving everyone, but what about those who reject the word of God and insist upon having what they want? Has God ever tolerated such people when they persisted in keeping that which was a sign of their rebellion?”

Yes, He has! Israel came to Samuel and demanded, “Give us a king to govern us.” When Samuel prayed to the Lord, the Lord said to him, “Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” God pointed out that this was only one more in a long line of departures since He had delivered them from bondage.

Samuel plainly labeled it a sin! “You shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.” When an unseasonal phenomenon occurred the frightened people said to

Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins this evil to ask for ourselves a king.” But God tolerated them and allowed them to keep their king. The reason is given. “For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself” (1 Samuel 12:22).

It is for this reason I shall not cast away His people, nor separate myself from them because of the troublesome things which are espoused and adopted by those who are in Him. I simply refuse to recognize the walls and barriers which men have erected to partition off God’s children into factional compartments.

7. A CHALLENGE

Now that I have squarely met and answered the questions of our good brethren from Texas, I want to issue a challenge to them and to all of my brethren in the non-instrument segment of the restoration movement all over the earth. I do this in all humility and sincerity.

1. I challenge them to remove *all of our controversial issues* (instrumental music, institutionalism, cups, classes, colleges, the millennium, etc.) from the sphere of tests of union or communion among the children of God, and return them to their only proper province, that of grounds for continuing discussion among brethren in the bonds of sacred fellowship.

This will require no change of congregational procedure, and no adoption by any person of anything contrary to conscience. It will mean no endorsement of what anyone else practices, but will simply leave every saint to stand or fall to his own Master.

2. I challenge them to genuinely practice what they have

always professed and to make *congregational autonomy* an active principle instead of a political pawn. This means that every congregation of saints on earth will be free under the Lordship of Jesus to study the revelation of heaven for themselves without fear of attack or reprisal from any other, regardless of divergent views.

3. I challenge them to renounce public partisan debate with factional gladiators as a means of trying to achieve oneness and to substitute *meaningful dialogue* in an atmosphere of courtesy and humility as equals in their need of the grace of God.

4. I challenge them to inaugurate a *sharing program* with all men of good will in all of our parties, inviting such brethren to address them, and receiving the benefit of insights above and beyond the factional level.

5. I challenge them to cross over partisan barriers in *combining as children of God* to effect greater impact upon the grave problems of their several communities. Let brethren from all branches of our restoration heritage meet in mutual respect for one another to discuss how best to grapple with the forces of decay which threaten us all. Hunger, famine, nakedness, dope addiction, alcoholism, prostitution— these are not related to divergent views on instrumental music or the millennium. Things which threaten us all can better be fought together.

6. I challenge the brethren to really “let brotherly love continue,” and to “love the brotherhood” as God sees it, and not as we have viewed it through the jaundiced eyes of partisan prejudice. We can be *one in Christ* and no one give up any truth he has ever held. Regardless of what it costs us to have the unity of the Spirit the cost of not having it is much greater. Let us resolve in this generation to recapture the vitality, the validity, and the unity of the restoration ideal.

We do not reject Jesus when we renounce the wars and feuds which our fathers kindled; we do not deny the Spirit when we denounce the factions and parties which we have inherited. If peace must come, let it come through our efforts. Let it begin now!

“Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Romans 14:19).

Liberty and Expediency

Mission Messenger (September 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12).

This controversial passage does not imply that one is free to do anything he wishes, regardless of its nature. The context shows that the “all things” relate to those things which God has made. The point is that God did nothing useless. There is a lawful purpose for all that he created.

The next verse illustrates the point. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.” The digestive organs serve a useful design, and so does food. Both are neutral in so far as moral significance is concerned, and belong to our transitory physical existence. God has ordained that they cease with our death. But they may be employed in such fashion by an act of will that their use may be detrimental to our eternal welfare. One may become a slave of appetite until he no longer rules his belly but it governs him. Or, he may destroy one for whom Christ died by insisting upon his “rights” with regard to eating meat (Romans 14:15).

Thus even that which was created with a lawful purpose may be inexpedient. What is meant by expedient? Our word is from the Latin, which means, “to free one caught by the foot,”

that is, to get the foot out of a trap, or out of quicksand or mire. The Greek is *sumphero*, to bring together. It is used in Acts 19:19 where those who practiced the black arts, brought their books together, and made a bonfire of these volumes on magic. The word always relates to that which is profitable.

In Matthew 5:29, 30, it is translated, “it is profitable.” In Hebrews 12:10 it refers to the chastisement administered by the Father as “for our profit.” In 1 Corinthians 12:7, where the subject is spiritual gifts, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for profitable use. The best definition we can furnish for the term is “apt and suitable for the end in view, advantageous.”

The divine purpose is not the selfish gratification of one, but the salvation of all. Even that which is harmless or negative in itself, cannot be indulged if such indulgence operates against the greater and universal design of the edification of all. This lays upon each of us the grave responsibility of examining his freedom and rights, to assure that in the enjoyment of the first, and the exercise of the second, he does not violate the moral restraints imposed by God. Man is a social being, and as such must share with others his inalienable rights. As a guideline for consideration of our interpersonal relationships we submit the following propositions.

1. *There are values which are superior to individual rights.*

This being true, in order to secure the benefits and blessings of such superior values, one may need to forfeit or forego his rights. That which builds up, or edifies all, at the expense of one, is to be preferred over that which builds up one at the expense of all. “I try to please all men in everything that I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33). There are some blessings which accrue only from union with others and a disruption of such union by the selfish action of one destroys all hope of sharing in

such beneficence.

2. No individual can insist upon his own rights to the destruction of the rights of others.

There can be no such thing as absolute personal freedom in a universe founded upon moral obligation. Our liberty must always be limited by the nature of the relationship which we sustain to others. The means which we devise to disregard and overthrow the rights of others when we are in position to enforce them will some day be used to overthrow our rights by those who gain the ascendancy. The insistence upon our own freedom regardless of consequences is subversive of all freedom, and will result in the enslavement of all.

3. The strong individual in Christ is the one who is willing to forego his personal rights for the common good.

He is the one who has learned that the greater right is the “right not to.” This is brought out in the wonderful dissertation on strong and weak brethren in Romans 14. “It is *right not to* eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble” (verse 21). One had a right to eat meat or drink wine. “Everything is indeed clean (that is *kosher*, verse 20) but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats.”

EROSION OF LIBERTY

The body of Christ is a community of free men. “Christ set us free, to be free men” (Gal. 5:1). But it is in the nature of the sectarian establishment to confiscate and destroy liberty. In order to do so it must always exalt men whose opinions and interpretations are given an aura of infallibility and to whose will all others must bow. In the Roman structure such power is invested in the pope, and when he speaks *ex cathedra* (from the chair), his pronouncements become dogma and must be accepted, or excommunication will result.

In establishments which argue for congregational autonomy, the body of elders or presbyters often decide upon the official interpretation on any controverted issue, and upon their statement such interpretation becomes dogma. Any dissenter is henceforth regarded as a heretic, and those who cannot violate conscience and void their own intelligence are hounded out. Yet, but a little thought will prove that there is nothing about appointment to office which provides either inerrancy of judgment or infallibility of understanding.

There are certain freedoms which belong to one as a child of God and these should not be infringed upon by either pope or prelate, for neither of these is God. They have no right to thrust themselves between God and his children. The revelation has been given to all. It is not a prerogative of an exalted few to be dispensed at their will. For that reason, and in order that our faith may rest in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men, I shall define the liberty which inheres in being a child of God and which is not subject to the authoritarian structures. These freedoms belong to all. They should be cherished and defended for all.

1. The liberty to examine and search the scriptures personally.

This includes the right to make use of any aids which help to clarify, explain and enlighten, and to employ any translation or version which may serve to better uncover the will of God. There can be no “authorized version” in our language, for the simple reason that no one is authorized to authorize one.

2. The liberty to form conclusions and render judgments upon the basis of personal understanding.

It is a burlesque upon honesty to urge every person to study the word of God for himself, if he must reach a foregone conclusion. Because the human mind is fallible and subject to limitation, all knowledge must be relative. The imposition of

bounds and restraints by “the powers that be” in any sectarian establishment represents an attempt to play at being God.

3. The liberty to implement one’s understanding in his own life.

One must be true to himself. He dare not violate his own conscience. His understanding may be faulty but he must work in harmony with it until he learns better. If he reaches a conclusion which becomes a personal conviction about the method of caring for orphans or the aged, or of training and preparing himself for more effective service, or of dispensing his money upon mission fields, or of expressing his praise to God, I dare not pass legislation to make him conform to my divergent views. To do so would make his liberty subject to my will. I must be tolerant of him while I implement my own understanding in a divergent manner. Tolerance is not the endorsement of anything that is wrong but the endurance of one who thinks that it is right.

4. The liberty to be judged by conscience and Christ, to stand or fall to one’s own master.

The faculty of the heart which condemns is called the conscience. It is not infallible for it can act only upon the facts apprehended by the intellect. The ultimate judge is God and he is able to consider all weaknesses, motivations and mitigating factors. “By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:19, 20).

“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls” (Romans 14:4). “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (verse 10).

5. The liberty to serve in a congregational capacity with those whose joint service appears most compatible to one's understanding.

No one should be compelled or forced, under threat of expulsion or duress, to serve in a congregation where the policies run counter to his conscience and understanding. One cannot choose his brothers in the Lord, but he should be free to select the particular community of the saints where he can best grow in grace and knowledge, and he should be lovingly commended unto them.

If a brother believes, from his own study of the Word, that praise to God can be acceptably rendered where instrumental music is employed, he should be free to directly associate with others who share the view, without being accused of departing from the faith. If one believes in mutual ministry, or a certain method of caring for orphans and widows, or if he is opposed to classes or individual cups, he should be permitted the liberty of assembling with other saints with whom he feels at home. But he must not be regarded as any less a brother by those who do not share his ideas, nor should he regard them as disloyal or unfaithful for standing or falling to their own master.

Meeting in different places is not “division.” Meeting in the same place is not necessarily unity. To gather with brethren who share your views about certain things, as a preference based upon personal understanding, is not factional. It becomes so only when those who do it make such preference and understanding a test of fellowship, or of union and communion with God. If those who gather for such preferences or understanding can never meet with the whole body of saints in the community to share in praise and witness of the common faith, they are factional and sectarian, regardless of their claims to be otherwise.

RESPONSIBILITY OF LIBERTY

Most of us crave liberty for ourselves, but are hesitant about accepting the consequences which accompany it. It is therefore necessary to point out that there are certain realms in which one must be restrained from acting. We do not intend to be exhaustive in our treatment, but we shall merely mention six areas in which one has no right to intrude. He does not have a right to:

1. *Bind his deductions upon others as terms of communion further than they are able to understand and concur in them.*

For example, whatever conclusion one may reach with reference to the millennium, he cannot formally bind upon another, for the other has the same right to study God's word and to form conclusions based upon his deductions. This is not to say both will be right, for both may be wrong. But if one is right in his deductions he is wrong in making a creed out of them which must be accepted as a term of fellowship contrary to one's personal belief, or in ignorance of the whole subject. No one should be made to subscribe to something of which he is ignorant, for then the faith is not his, but that of the one who imposes it.

2. *Make personal interpretation a test of fellowship.*

The word of God must be studied by all of God's children, as brothers one of another. But those who are brothers dare not destroy the family relationship over the increasing knowledge of one or the relative slowness of perception of others. If one arrives at an interpretation of a passage after thirty years he cannot demand that others see it in thirty minutes or be ejected from the family and the father's house for his slowness.

3. *Form a party around his deductions on either the pro or con of some point of teaching among those in Christ.*

The party spirit is sectarian. It is a work of the flesh. It is a symptom of immaturity and carnality. There is no room on

earth for a pro-instrument party or an anti-instrument party, but there is room in God's family for brethren who differ about the validity of the instrument. There is no room on earth for a pre-millennial party, or an amillennial party, but there is room enough in the Father's house for children who have divergent views about the millennium. There is no room on earth for a one-cup party or a multiple-cups party, but God's wonderful saving grace is wide enough to shelter all of his children who differ on such matters. A pro-instrument party is a sect. An anti-instrument party is a sect. A one-cup party is a sect. A multiple-cups party is a sect. All sects result from those who walk not after the Spirit, but after the flesh. The first fruit of the Spirit is love.

4. Place a stumblingblock in the way of any brother.

"Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumblingblock or hindrance in the way of a brother" (Romans 14:13). "It is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble" (verse 21).

Because the word for "stumblingblock" is also translated "offence," it is sometimes thought that a Christian must never do anything which will cause others to get their feelings hurt, or to murmur or complain. But the word "offend" is not so used. It is from *skandalon*, which originally referred to the trigger of a trap or snare, literally, the part to which the bait was fastened. It then came to refer to the trap itself. Now one does not walk into a snare deliberately. He does not stumble over that which he clearly sees. In the exercise of our liberty we are not to do those things which may cause a brother who observes us to practice them to the detriment of his personal conduct or conscience.

If an unbeliever invited a Christian to attend a feast, he was free to go and eat without asking any questions about the food. But if someone volunteered the information that the food

had been consecrated to a pagan deity, the Christian had to desist from eating it, not because his own conscience condemned him, but out of consideration for the conscience of the informer. Too, there were often those in the congregation of saints who had not learned that idols were nothing. They had left their immorality but retained their superstitions. “There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration” (1 Cor. 8:9).

When such brethren were liable to be present, although it was perfectly legitimate for the man of spiritual maturity to eat such food, he was to voluntarily abstain rather than to set an example for one whose motivation in eating might be different. “If a weak character sees you sitting down to a meal in a heathen temple— you, who have knowledge— will not his conscience be emboldened to eat food consecrated to the heathen deity?” There is a great deal of difference in eating food in spite of the fact it may have been consecrated to a heathen deity, and eating it because it has been so consecrated. While we are on the subject we should note that the scriptures do not teach that “it is not right to eat meat or to drink wine.” The teaching is that “it is right not to eat meat or drink wine” under certain circumstances. There is a difference!

5. Impose his thinking upon a congregation of saints as a condition of recognition as brethren in the Lord.

The congregation of redeemed ones is subject to the Lord, and not to men outside of its number. No man can dismember the body of those whom the Lord has accepted. No man can establish fellowship for another in the Spirit, no man can sever another from that fellowship. He only cuts himself off with the knife with which he seeks to cut others off. Whether or not one recognizes a congregation has not one thing to do with their relationship to God.

If a congregation has Bible classes by unanimous consent,

and one moves into the community whose conscience does not allow him to condone such a practice he has no right to make a proposition that if the congregation will bow to his will and thinking in the matter, he will regard them as brethren and “worship” with them. Our relationship to God is covenantal and propositional, but the only proposition which must be believed for entrance into the fellowship is that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink” (Romans 14:17). Neither is it cups, classes, colleges, orphan homes, music, or the millennium. It is now, as it ever has been, “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

A congregation of saints may alter a practice out of deference to the views of one because he is a brother, but they should never do so to meet the arbitrary demands of such a one as a condition of brotherhood. The first would be done out of recognition for the Lordship of Christ which makes us all brothers, but the second would be bowing to the lordship of another over God’s heritage. Even the apostle who planted the congregation at Corinth wrote, “Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith” (2 Cor. 1:24).

6. Assist any congregation in excluding any other congregation from fellowship, or violate the autonomy of another congregation.

It is absurd and ridiculous to talk about “congregational autonomy” in one breath, and about “excluding a congregation” in the next. No group of men on earth has any jurisdiction outside of the congregation which elected and appointed them. Every congregation of brethren in the world must be left to the Lordship of Jesus and is not subject to a self-appointed tribunal of preachers and editors. There is no place in God’s system for a brotherhood jury composed of peripatetic proclaimers and paper popes.

CONCLUSION

Paul Scherer wrote, “Freedom is not so much an inalienable right as it is an interminable quest.” In a very real sense, freedom cannot be bequeathed. It is not so much an inheritance as an achievement. Each generation must struggle to attain freedom. Each must learn anew that freedom in Christ is not freedom from Christ. We cannot rest upon the laurels of our fathers, for those who rest will lose that which others gained through their labors. We covet freedom for all of God’s children — freedom to think, to speak and to act! If we conspire to take away the freedom of those in Christ who do not think, speak and act exactly as we do, we only prepare a Haman’s gallows upon which we will some day be gibbeted.

He who grinds a party axe will some day feel its keen blade and cold steel upon the flesh of his own neck. When the factional chickens come home to roost they always turn out to be chicken-hawks! Only by granting freedom in Christ can we be free in Christ ourselves.

The Clergy of God

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[Abstract]

Christianity was not designed for a Christian world. It is the divine strategy intended to probe and penetrate a pagan culture and to bring it into voluntary subjection to the Prince of peace. When it was originally introduced it motivated a group of nameless slaves and frightened fishermen with such a dynamic that they were transformed, and this message proclaimed in the inner city areas of great metropolitan centers brought thousands to the foot of the cross as believing penitents. And this was accomplished without gimmicks or gadgets, and with none of the devices and appliances which are available to us through science and technology.

Even the most optimistic proponent of the Way must admit that we can more honestly boast of the glories of the past than of the conquests of the present. After twenty centuries of possession of “the faith once delivered” Christians form a minority group which grows proportionately less with each passing year. Even those places which report marked gains confess that many of their “converts” are apathetic, indifferent and generally unconcerned. They do not add real hard muscle to the body, but are flabby tissue which must be pampered and endured. Frequently a congregation gets numerically larger and actually becomes weaker. We must never confuse blubber with muscle!

Is there any hope of reversing the trend? The disciple of

Christ can have but one answer, for hope is one of the three abiding values in his life. It is his helmet, which therefore protects the seat of his intellectual powers and rational processes. If he once admits that what he has is powerless to change men when brought to bear in all of its force, he has already fled the field of battle, for he has nothing left with which to fight. The only question with which he can possibly deal is how to meet the forces of crisis effectively and responsibly.

It will probably not be disputed that, in our day the body of believers must be transformed before the world can be. This means that we must discover a principle of such tremendous vitality as to completely re-make our approach to life. But is there such a principle? I think there is, and I also think it was the secret of the electrifying results of the primitive saints. It is altogether possible that we have mistaken ideas about what made the ignorant and unlearned fishermen so effective, and we may seek eagerly to recapture some aspect of their witness which was purely secondary.

We may become obsessed with the sound of rushing winds, with flaming tongues of fire and supernatural phenomena, and forget that it was a Message which was the dynamic to save, and it was faith in that Message, even when unaccompanied with any overt demonstration except the conviction of the speaker, which caused kings and governors to tremble. Testifying about the horsepower under the hood will achieve little if one allows the family to starve because he does not know how to drive the car to market and “bring home the bacon.” The Christian Way must be the most practical approach to life on the human level, or it will be nothing. Men do not live in the clouds except in dreams.

The primitive saints were living reproductions of Christ. They were not merely members of a society or organization, but each one of them was the living, vital word made flesh. As Jesus was the word made flesh to dwell among men, during His

earthly sojourn, so every disciple became like his Lord. Before there was a compilation of epistles into the New Testament scriptures, the apostle wrote to the saints, “You are all the letter we need, a letter written on our heart; any man can see it for what it is and read it for himself. And as for you, it is plain that you are a letter that has come from Christ, given to us to deliver.”

The living letters were the saints themselves, and men read their lives like the pages of a book. Those lives reflected the very essence of the teaching of Jesus who said, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give himself a ransom for many.” So the disciples did not come to be ministered unto. Rather they also served and gave. We can never make an impact on the world so long as we must minister unto the church. An army which must spend the major part of its money and time entertaining its own soldiers will never make an effective fighting force. Those who must be petted and pampered are too soft to fight the world, the flesh and the devil.

The early disciples heard the call of the Captain and they followed him wherever He led. They had no concept of the boredom and spiritless routine attendant upon “going to church.” Instead, they were a part of a great adventure. Theirs was a struggle for survival “against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens.” When they met in a bivouac in a cavern or an upper room it was not to listen to a carefully prepared address or an after-dinner speech delivered by one of their number for a fee or offering, but it was to swap stories of actual engagements on the hottest front.

They reported assaults on the centers of pagan opposition, recounted what had happened when they encountered enemy ambush units and snipers, and told of victories achieved when gates were flung open for their triumphal entry. “When they arrived and had called the congregation together, they reported

all that God had helped them to do, and how he had thrown open the gates of faith to the Gentiles.” And always they went back to the battlefield, back to the thick of the fight.

Today we number in the millions those who profess to be following Christ, but they are fooling themselves, and we are helping to dupe them. The devil has deceived us into making and projecting an image of the body of Christ in the form of the institutional church, a great organization, with programs, charts and graphs, with executive assistants to manipulate it, with financial devices and schemes to perpetuate it, and offering security for a price. We have confused enlistment in the army with enrollment in a mutual insurance company, and we no longer enter the fray with its blood and sweat and tears. We gather only as stockholders in an air-conditioned central office building, and after learning about our current status, we do not go back into the conflict, but to our living-room with its television set. And Satan cautions his demons not to interfere, or allow us to become disturbed. The church has come between us and Christ, and nothing else so obscures and hides him as what we call “religious organizations.”

What can be done to transform the modern “church” into a hard core fighting force? Probably very little with the current membership. These did not enlist to fight. Suppose we illustrate with a huge football stadium on a rainy afternoon. On the muddy field the small knot of players is engaged in a struggle which has left their uniforms sweaty, grimy and dirty. The sheltered stands are packed with a crowd dressed fashionably, many of them fat and paunchy. They are enjoying the spectacle below. If the announcer would invite them, over the amplifying system, to come down and get into the game, how many would respond? Perhaps an occasional show-off would work his way down to the field, but the multitude would remain unmoved, except to joke with one another about the absurdity of the announcement. They did not come to participate but to watch. They are paying observers. If you tried to force them to become

a part of the action they would take their blankets and thermos bottles and head for the gates.

Our hope does not lie with the unconverted mass who call themselves “Christians.” But in every group there is a small pocket of the concerned ones. These may not always be identical with those who are designated “the faithful few.” We tend to equate faithfulness merely with showing up at meetings, giving money or volunteering for organizational projects, such as chaperoning youth meetings. All of these are important but the motivations for doing them may frequently keep them from being demonstrations of real faith.

One may be deeply concerned while pressed down with the burden of making a living and supporting his family until he cannot attend many of the regular meetings. It is a commentary on our distorted sense of values that we count as “faithful” those who grumblingly attend all of the meetings out of a sense of compulsion, while we discount those who are saddened by the fact that they cannot come.

The concerned ones are those who are distressed by the differences between profession and practice, and who have come to see that the Way does not consist of the recitation of ritual, or of presenting religious performances. Instead, it is a vital relationship with God through Christ which touches every avenue of earthly existence and changes one’s entire approach to life. There is a great temptation to one who comes to such a realization. He immediately wants to associate with those who share his vision, and often he widens the gap between himself and those who tend to place their trust in merely “belonging to the church,” or supporting an institution.

But this becomes in itself a symptom of unconcern. When the “fellowship of the concerned” becomes concerned only for its own, it simply reproduces in another party what it has previously condemned. It becomes Pharisaical, thanking God it

is not like other men, and especially like publicans. The concerned ones must become leaven. They are God's yeast cakes. But there is nothing more useless or ineffective than a gathering of yeast cakes. All of them have the potential to create an uprising or a rising up, but all of this is lost when the yeast cakes form their own heap. A faction of concerned ones is no better than any other faction.

Leaven achieves life by losing it. It penetrates the mass at the expense of its own existence. Jesus entered the world knowing that to provide life for others, he must give his own. And he said to his disciples, "Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self." What is true of leaven is also true of salt. It must lose itself in that which it is to season or preserve. Salt achieves nothing while in the shaker. And we are to be the salt of the world, not the salt of the saved!

Wherever the unleavened, or untouched substance is, there must the leaven be found. Jesus did not commission us to call the unleavened mass unto ourselves, or to our structures, but commissioned the leaven to go. "And he called to him his twelve disciples . . . These twelve Jesus sent out" (Matt. 10:1, 5). The purpose of Jesus in calling anyone to him is to send him out. Those who come in but never go out, miss the whole point of the Christian life.

Unfortunately we have been victimized by the Enemy into dividing our forces into priests and people, or clergy and laity. The former are considered to have a vocation for soul-winning. This has been developed into a fine art, to be carried out by trained professionals. In the Roman Catholic party those who have taken special vows are actually called "the religious." The clergyman is supposed to act, talk and behave in a manner different from the rest of the saints. He has a "divine calling" or a "high calling."

Such an idea is absolutely foreign to God's program. The very thought of it automatically de-salinizes the salt, and unleavens the yeast. If the leaven is useless unless it comes in a special package, then every yeast cake which is unable to secure the required wrapping will remain on the refrigerator shelf and make no attempt to contact the mass. The clergy system operates to convince the soldiers that they cannot fight, and the athletes that they cannot run. The motto is, "Find a seat and leave the driving to us!" There is nothing left for the "average Christian" to do except to sit in the grandstand and watch the performance and pay the performers. Baptism is not a door to Christ but a turnstile!

We are not being anti-clerical when we insist that every grain of God's salt has a responsibility to bring its strength to bear on the mass. We would defeat God's purpose if we reduced all of our "clergy" to the status of "laity." What we must do is exactly the opposite. We must elevate all of the "laity" to "clergy" status. This does not imply that we should do away with public proclaimers, but rather that we should recognize that this is only one form of ministry. And like any other, it may or may not be effective, depending upon how it is carried out. It is not the only form of ministry because every child of God is a minister.

The doctor who is a Christian has an enviable place as God's minister, for he contacts people at a time of need, when they are sick, frightened and often losing hope. If we could get Christian physicians to pray with their patients before surgery, it would be much more effective than sending for "a preacher" to come in and "say a prayer."

The Christian nurse has a tremendous opportunity to serve as a minister of God. If hospital rules forbid her offering a prayer with the patients on the ward, she can say to each one as she tucks him in, "God bless you and give you a good night's sleep, and I will be praying for you." Of course, when she

returns to the nurses station she must pray for guidance and understanding in ministering to each need, for it would be hypocritical to tell the patients you'd pray if you did not do so.

I know a firm of Christian realtors, the members of which believe that God wants them to minister to their clients for good. Each morning they gather for prayer before they open for the day. Frequently they pray with a client in their inner offices. It is no wonder that all of them bear a real witness outside of the office. They are active in the Christian Businessmen's Fellowship, in evangelical outreach to the Jews, in Bible distribution work, etc. They are God's ministers to the realty profession.

The universal ministry of the saints is the dynamic which can change our modern world. This is not, however, "the ministry of the laity," about which we read so much in this day. The term "lay ministry" still implies that this is a separate ministry, another kind of ministry. But "laity" is from *laos*, which means "the people." The preacher is also one of the people of God and when he serves he does so because of this.

There is no other ministry than "lay ministry" for it is "people ministry" and preachers are people. So long as we talk about "the ministry of the laity" we are still thinking in terms of a clergy, and unconsciously we equate their service with a professional, skilled and craftsmanlike job as opposed to the work done by good-natured, willing, but unskilled and bumbling laborers. The man who talks about "my laymen" missed his calling. He should be a Roman Catholic priest.

Why should any child of God send for a preacher to pray in a time of crisis or emergency? This would be like children in a family sending for an attorney to draw up a petition every time they wanted to ask their father for a favor. If all of the saints become ministers as God intended, there will be no "minister shortage." The early church knew nothing of such a problem.

There was a shortage of saints in the world, but there was never a shortage of ministers among the saints, for there were no non-ministering saints. To talk about a non-ministering follower of Jesus would be the equivalent of talking about a “non-serving slave.” Imagine the apostle Paul writing about “a church without a minister.” To him this would have been exactly like saying “a congregation without a member” or “a flock without a sheep.”

A recapture of the divine dynamic universal witness will not offset the need for men of ability to train the soldiers and to help plan the strategy. But it will free them from the onerous duty of spoon-feeding perpetual infants and liberate them to go into the world and share the message with every creature.

Belief and Unbelief

Mission Messenger (October 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

A good brother whom I love is a little perturbed with me and disturbed about me because I am unwilling to concede that all of the heathen who never even heard about Jesus will be eternally lost. He is extremely anxious to herd all such unfortunates into hell in order to rescue God from any manifestation of inconsistency and to prove his own loyalty to Jesus. He thinks I may be guilty of holding out hope for unbelievers and of projecting “another way” of salvation.

I confess that I do not share his excitement for wanting to consign all of the ignorant to the flames while the righteous continue to stand afar off and shout, “Burn baby, burn!” In the first place I do not think that God will judge the world by my interpretation of revelation and I do not expect him to send an angel to ask me to advise Him as to how I think He should proceed in order to maintain His integrity. Moreover, I’m having quite a time of it lately in trying to live up to what I know is His will and I’m being forced to rely so heavily upon grace to have any hope at all that I have been driven to the conclusion that divine grace may be a lot greater than my puny powers of comprehension.

The brother to whom I refer points out that Jesus plainly said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” He argues that there are

only two classes, the saved and the damned, and he seems almost as anxious to damn a lot as to save a few. I accept what Jesus said but I hold that it has no bearing upon our discussion at all because Jesus was speaking only of those who heard the gospel and accepted or rejected it. “And he said unto them, Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not (the gospel) shall be damned.”

I’m not interested in arguing about the ultimate fate of the heathen. God will handle their case according to His sovereign purpose and what I think will have no bearing on it one way or another. But I am going to note our brother’s position, for the simple reason that I do not think he understands the “unbelief” that damns, and it may be that the reason he does not, is because he does not understand the “belief” that saves. I trust that my readers will pardon me for the time and space I must consume in this study.

Faith is the belief of testimony, and where there is no testimony there can be no faith. No one can believe something of which he has never heard. “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). When the mind receives testimony and judges the witnesses to be credible and reliable, the intellect acknowledges a firm conviction or persuasion as to the subject of the testimony. This is not the faith that saves, however, but the foundation of it.

One can never be saved by a mere intellectual state, because all intellectual states are involuntary and passive. An intellectual state cannot be commanded but we are commanded to believe as a condition of salvation. An intellectual state which registers either assent to or doubt of a proposition can never be made a condition of salvation. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble” (James 2:19). It is well and good to believe any truth which commends itself to our intellectual powers of discrimination, but

intellectual assent will not save.

One can consent to the truth of a proposition intellectually and make no reformation of life or conduct. Such a person may be said to believe exactly as the demons are said to believe in the existence of God and monotheism. All of the demons are monotheists. But the faith which saves manifests itself in the outward life because it is an act of the will. Thus it is the yielding up or surrender of the whole being or personality to the claims of Jesus as apprehended by the intellect acting upon the testimony as to his Lordship. Such surrender is voluntary. It is deliberate. It is wilful, that is, self-determined and intentional.

FAITH AND COMMITMENT

Faith is the act of commitment to Christ of one's whole life and being. Some of the brethren are bothered about the increasing use of the word "commitment" in our day. It has not been a part of our vocabulary. Articles criticizing its use have appeared in some orthodox journals. But the writers have forgotten that the word for faith has also been translated by "commit" and "committed" in the King James Version.

Take Luke 16:11 for an example, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" The word for "commit" is the very same word translated "believeth" in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Or consider John 2:24. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." The word for "commit" is the same as that for "believeth" in 1 John 5:5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

The nature of the faith that saves is such that not only must a fact or truth be presented by testimony but the presentation must be in such form as to be grasped or understood by the mind. Just as the physical eye cannot have an image of that which is enveloped in darkness so the mental vision cannot embrace that upon which it has no enlightenment. To expect faith to function in that which it cannot understand is the equivalent of expecting one to see what is veiled or cloaked. The object may be there but one cannot envision it.

If a proposition is stated in a language which is foreign to me I cannot believe it because I do not understand it. It may be a fact or a truth but I do not know whether it is or not and until I understand it I cannot say that I believe it, for one can believe only to the extent that he understands. It is true that I may understand some things about Jesus Christ, and understand enough that I am willing to commit my being unto Him, without understanding all about His nature and accomplishments, but my faith *in Him* upon the basis of what I apprehend is one thing, while my belief about certain aspects related to Him is a wholly different thing.

It is impossible for the mind to receive a truth it does not understand and it is impossible for it to reject a truth it does not understand. By the same token one cannot believe a thing, nor disbelieve it until he understands it. One neither believes or disbelieves what is stated in a tongue unknown to him.

THE HONEST HEART

At this juncture I would like to inject a thought which will immediately commend itself to every rational person. It is that every honest heart will at once embrace and adopt all known truth. By the term “honest heart” I refer to a mind that is free from prejudice and bias and which is not motivated by personal advantage or profit. Such a mind is influenced by a love for truth

as truth and, therefore, accepts truth because it is truth.

It is impossible for one who loves truth because it is truth, to reject any truth when it becomes known unto him. All truth is harmonious and consistent. One truth cannot contradict another truth. Truth is not affected by time or place. One may not have learned many truths but if he believes and adopts the truths he has learned because they are truth, he will embrace other truths as they are disclosed and he discovers them to be truth.

The faith that saves does not require that one understand all truths but it does demand that one understand and accept the great underlying truth of the Christian calling, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Lord of life, and is, by His own testimony, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Surrender unto Him is the hope of salvation but the commitment unto One who is the truth implies that he who surrenders will accept all truths as he comes to know them. The faith which brings life begins with acceptance of a truth, and the life of faith must continue to be nurtured by acceptance of truth so long as the mind is rational and responsible.

With this much before us we are prepared to examine the disbelief that will damn one. I hold that the nature of the disbelief that damns can only be understood in the light of the faith that saves. This will account for my lengthy preliminary.

Unbelief is not ignorance of truth. Ignorance is simply lack of knowledge. It may be either voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary ignorance is never a sin and cannot be. It is not a deliberate act for one in the darkness of the night to say that he cannot see an object. The eye can only respond to light. Where there is no light available one is not responsible for lack of vision. Voluntary ignorance is a sin and it may be occasioned by unbelief, but the unbelief which acts as a cause and the ignorance which results, although related, are not the same.

The unbelief which damns is not simply absence of faith. One may hear a proposition and because of imbecility of reasoning powers or slowness of perception be unable to develop a firm conviction related to it, and still not be guilty of unbelief. One may be thick-skulled without being hard-headed. Absence of faith is a mere vacuum, an unreality, and no one will be eternally doomed because of that which is insubstantial.

INTELLECTUAL DOUBT

I now approach an aspect of this discussion in which I must risk my reputation as a believer in order to elucidate what I conceive of as the truth about unbelief. I am fully aware that in doing so, I may lay myself open to attack and calumny, but I am firmly committed to truth as I apprehend it, and any statement of truth requires personal risk. Just as faith is not an intellectual state, because all intellectual states are involuntary and passive, so unbelief is not intellectual skepticism. No honest intellectual doubt or distrust is the unbelief that damns.

Just as one may have an intellectual faith that will not save because it is involuntary and inactive, so he may have an intellectual doubt or skepticism which will not damn because it is involuntary and inactive. Such an intellectual state has no moral character, for moral character cannot be predicated of anything that is involuntary and passive. It will not of itself sever one from God because it is not the result of choice or election. One might be more true to himself with an honest doubt than with a dishonest profession of faith. It was Tennyson who wrote

There lives more faith in honest doubt,

Believe me, than in half the creeds.

For several years I have been trying in forums to help my

brethren differentiate between theoretic or intellectual doubt of a proposition and disbelief of it. Thus far I have had no success and I am not too optimistic about my present attempt. But I keep on in the hope that the light will eventually break through and we will allow the arms of fellowship to embrace those who dearly love Jesus even while they struggle with inner qualms. Wrestling with one's self is not necessarily fighting against God. I have learned that those who are so cocksure, are generally more cocky than they are sure!

I have no doubt that disbelief will damn but I have no inclination to augment the ranks by damning in advance those who are straining to see through blurred vision. I am convinced that we have driven some to hell whom we should have led to the Divine Optometrist, and if we don't repent we may meet in hell. We'll have no trouble in recognizing them with our perfect vision.

To make a long story a little shorter, the unbelief which the Bible calls a sin is an act of the will. It is voluntary and deliberate. It is the rejection of truth. It is closing the eyes against the light. It is refusal to see. Just as there must be a revelation of the will of God before there can be faith, so there must be a revelation before there can be unbelief. Belief and unbelief are the actions of the will in reaction to the same testimony. As there can be no belief further than there is light, there can be no unbelief further than there is light.

Where the gospel has never been heard there is no unbelief of the gospel as there is no belief of it. There is ignorance of the gospel for there could be nothing else where the gospel has never penetrated. But there is no indication that God will damn those who have not heard and do not know. Not everyone is rebellious. Some simply have not heard.

I am told that Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." I believe that! The Father has committed all things

into the hands of the Son. Any person who is saved will be saved by the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. This is true of those who lived and died before the cross. It is true of infants and imbeciles. It will be true of those who never hear the Good News if they are saved at all. Jesus is the only access to the Father. The blood of Jesus is the atonement for the whole world and those who are accepted because they are not responsible come in under the blood as does every responsible person who is saved!

I am then asked why we should take the gospel to the heathen if they may be saved without it. I always feel sorry for those who ask this question. They only reveal how narrow and limited and circumscribed is their view of God's purpose through the gospel. They regard Christianity as a fire department rescue squad whose members can sit around the engine house playing checkers until an apartment house catches on fire, whereupon they must rush in and save the occupants from the flames.

There is a great deal more to Christianity than keeping people out of hell. It also involves keeping hell out of people. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Christianity is not like a life insurance policy from which one only benefits by dying. There are tremendous dividends and values in this life also. We share in "all this and heaven too."

I am in favor of taking the blessed Joy Message to the whole world! I pray that all who hear it will heed it and gain the Joy! But I do not feel that God has to damn all whom we do not reach in order to save some of those whom we do. I rejoice that His grace has touched me in my weakness and ignorance and I'll praise His holy name for a glorious salvation wrought in behalf of that mighty host "which no man can number." I've quit trying to count them!

Restoring a Movement

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

Thoughtful men and women who are members of the community of saints planted by Jesus Christ as a result of his personal visit to our planet are deeply concerned with the fact that the proportion of those who acknowledge Him as Lord is a constantly receding one. Not only are they a minority group, but they are a shrinking minority. The birth boom, or population explosion, adds to the teeming millions who walk the surface of our troubled earth, and increases the gap between the few who know Jesus as Lord and the many who do not.

The Christian witness is hampered by the divisions among those who seek to lift it up, and the community which should be an example of unity and peace to a frightened world, presents a picture of discord and strife. Indeed, those who shared a relative degree of harmonious cooperation as pagans are often converted into warring clans when rival “Christian” parties move into their territory.

Recognition of the futility of seeking to unite men in Christ by a community militant against itself has challenged sincere men in all generations to search for a means of healing the breaches so that all disciples of Christ could engage in a united testimony to the power of the Prince of peace. One ever-recurring proposal has been to leapfrog over the existing sects and schisms, and by a mighty act of will, return to the primitive

order of things, as announced by the apostles, as special ambassadors of Christ. Other suggestions have also been put forward, but every century has produced its restoration movements.

In our own nation, since its inception, numerous such movements have flourished. Most of them have been imported, and a number of them have borne the stamp of their land of origin. The majority of the readers of this paper are heirs of a movement indigenous to this New World, although directly sparked by Presbyterians of Scotch and Irish descent. Since such movements originate in reaction and revolution, they generally gravitate into other sects with their own institutions, organizations and vested interests. The search for truth gives way to the defense of traditional positions, and adherents fragment into parties, thus helping to intensify the very situation which the movement was created to alleviate.

It is the history of such movements that they generally are regarded as outcasts by the sectarian Establishment, and this helps to contribute both to rigidity of position and to frenzied effort, much of which is directed toward proselytization.

The result is that numerically they become a force with which to reckon, and eventually gain social recognition as a result of decades of improvement of their distinctive educational institutions, and the growing magnitude and location of their architectural structures.

For awhile, probably as a result of an institutional adolescence, every restoration movement seeks to attain the dignity and age denied it by the cold facts of history through direct identification with the primitive company of witnesses. On the cornerstones of edifices will be chiseled such inscriptions as "Established in 33 A.D." or "Primitive Baptist Church." The movement thereupon ceases to be a movement and becomes a monument. It has *arrived* and all others have *departed*!

Each ascending rung of the social ladder brings a new stratum to influence. The little frame building on the other side of the tracks with its appeal to the economically and culturally deprived gives way to the attractive brick edifice in affluent suburbia. Those things which were once condemned as evidence of pride—rugs, kitchens, air-conditioning, educational buildings—become a part of the modern structure. The ritual undergoes a transformation to conform to the needs of young executives and their families.

Although our brethren bitterly deny it, they have developed into another sect, and being one of the newer sects they are resentful of those which have grown older and whose sectarian peculiarities have come to mean less to them. One of the very first symptoms of sectism is exclusivism. A sect creates its own little world and equates it with God's big one. God moves and works only within and through the sect, as they view it. He is limited, hampered and restrained by the indifference of the sect. Members must be cajoled, driven and implored to become active so that God will not fail. It never occurs to members of a sect that "God is able of these stones to raise up children." God is powerless without the party!

Of course, no sect ever likes to think of itself as such, for there is a sort of subtle relationship of the term with Pharisees and Sadducees with whom our Lord had some rather stirring encounters. Various subterfuges are proposed to distinguish between "the Lord's church" (consisting of the chosen ones, ourselves) and "other churches" (made up of the rejected). One rather childish little trick is to spell their titles with a capital "C" (Church of God, Church of the Nazarene, etc.) while spelling ours with a lower case "c" (churches of Christ). The inference is that we are apostolic while others are apostate. We are called in; they are cast out!

The fact is that regardless of how we spell it, we have adopted "Church of Christ" as a distinctive title, and since

“denominate” simply means to name, we have accepted an exclusive designation and we are a denomination. To say this in print makes one very unpopular. Each of our two dozen parties thinks all of the others are sectarian, and this is quite frequently implied in their respective journals, but each always excludes its own party from the accusation. The thing that strikes home to all is when one like myself, without intended rancor and simply as a statement of fact, points out that we have sectarianized the whole restoration movement. We have even made the tragic error of equating a movement with the kingdom of heaven. All of us are caught up in the same human predicament. Our real hope lies in the fact that one need not be a sectarian to be in a sect, and we will be saved as individuals, and not as a mass.

I think that history will prove that no sect ever returns to a movement status. Its vested interests will not allow it to do so. We would like to believe that the Spirit of God could prove that this doctrine of sectarian continuity and uniformity is not unalterable and that “the law of sectarian progression” can have one exception. I hold that nothing else could make the impact on a twentieth century world, sick and tired of its own sectarianism, as to see a sect reverse its trend and recapture its pre-sectarian spirit and once again become a movement. In our own case this would mean a renewal through recovery of the concepts and ideals which launched the movement.

Of course, at this juncture, some will at once interpose that they are not interested in going back to the beginning of a movement, and their concern is to go back to Jerusalem and restore the church. But there is one fly in this ointment. Those who say this actually think they have already restored the church. They are it! Thus, they have ceased to be a movement among Christians, for there are no Christians outside of the party. The only moving that can be done is toward them. To be called out of the world is to become a member of “The Church of Christ.” If every sincere person could start with their presuppositions, accept the infallibility of their interpretations,

and unquestionably surrender his right to examine the scriptures for himself, some degree of uniformity could be achieved, and “The Church of Christ” could unite all believers under its authoritarian canopy. But since such conditions will be resisted by thinking men who will not surrender their freedom, we tend only to confuse and clutter up the theological landscape with our parties. What would we need to accept and advocate to return to our original aim? Permit us to suggest a few items of importance.

1. We must once more become a unity-oriented people, dedicated to an active and aggressive attempt to answer the prayer of Jesus for all who believe in Him through the apostolic proclamation. This means a calculated renunciation of the philosophy of division among God’s children as a means of proving fidelity to God.

Alexander Campbell described the movement which was launched in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1809, as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” To revive this project we must again recognize that there are Christians in the sects, a thing which was never questioned by the restoration pioneers. We must move among the sects as did Alexander Campbell who spoke in all kinds of sectarian edifices, and in a manner devoid of arrogance or unnecessary offense we must make our plea known and felt by all who “sigh over Jerusalem.”

2. We must again affirm that “the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one,” as did Thomas Campbell in the first proposition of the “Declaration and Address,” and we must understand the meaning and implication of each of these terms. We must distinguish between the “Church of Christ” as here mentioned and the modern party which has appropriated the words as an exclusive title. When Mr. Campbell penned these words he was still a Presbyterian and there was no group known to him which was meeting behind a signboard with this designation. Indeed,

when the reformers were driven to become a separated group there was long and anxious discussion of how they should be designated.

The church of Christ is the universal community consisting of all of the saints. Every saved person upon earth is in it. Many of these have allowed themselves to become allied with parties and sects. They do not grasp the glory attached to guarding the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We must move among them in the irenic attitude manifested by Thomas Campbell, who wrote, “We would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the churches— as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God.” At the time this was written, the phrase “all the churches,” did not include separatist parties called “Church of Christ” or “Christian Church,” nor did the author dream that in the future such organizations would summon his words to defend a partisan existence or to justify rival religious clans.

3. We must make a clear distinction between the divine revelation and human interpretation of it. Revelation is what God said, interpretation is what we think he meant by what he said. We cannot make what we *think* the basis of another’s loyalty for he also has the same right as ourselves to read and to think. Every child of God in surrendering to the lordship of Jesus over his life, thereby pledges himself to be bound by the doctrine of God’s word as he comes to understand it, but no one can *formally* bind that doctrine upon him beyond his personal knowledge and apprehension. And our deductions cannot be made tests of fellowship since they are not conditions of entrance into Christ, but are rather related to growth which is always gradual and by stages. In one of the most perceptive statements I have ever read Thomas Campbell put it thus:

That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet are they not formally

binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church.

We can never be a genuine movement for unity across the whole Christian spectrum so long as we postulate that oneness depends upon attainment to the same level or degree of knowledge. Each party or sect will attempt to establish its own plateau as the intellectual height to which all must climb to be acceptable as a brother without error. Each will accuse those upon plateaus above as making laws where God has not made them, and those below as being liberal and loose in their thinking. The irreducible minimum of knowledge in every case will be the deductions of the faction woven into their unwritten creed. The restoration trailbreakers saw this and Mr. Campbell wrote as follows:

That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths and defensive testimonies, in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes the better; yet, as these must be, in a great measure, the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion, unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the Church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

It is my conviction that the “Church of Christ” projecting the image of simply another sect, as it now does in most places, will have no unifying effect upon a divided Christendom. Its

preachers dare not even participate in ecumenical dialogue forums and are often restricted from association with other parties growing out of the restoration movement. They are helplessly entangled in an authoritarian web woven by editors and scholastic administrators, doomed to talk only to themselves through fear of financial loss or other reprisal.

But free men who have grown up in this background, and have caught the real vision of the restoration ideal, while extricating themselves from the party machinery, can again assert their right and intention to be Christians and Christians only. As such they can spark a *movement* which will help the whole Christian framework to reconsider the values accruing from renewal through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. As a sect we will do nothing but divide Christians into factions; as a movement we may once again become “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Then it can be said again, as it was aptly stated in 1809:

We are also of opinion that as the Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it and it alone, and not by any human interpretation of it; and that, therefore, no man has a right to judge his brother except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law— that every such judgment is an express violation of the law of Christ, a daring usurpation of his throne, and a gross intrusion upon rights and liberties of his subjects.

Church of the Firstborn

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

The writer of the Hebrews informs those with whom God deals as with sons (12:7) that they have come “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven” (12:23). In my simpler days when I had only the King James Version I misunderstood and misapplied that statement. That was at the time when we indulged in the mistaken notion that the saints of God had to have a corporate title by which the Lord would be able to recognize those who were His, and we were anxious, above all else, to justify our signboards.

It was easy to prove that Jesus was “the firstborn.” All one had to do was to flip the Bible open to Colossians 1:18, and read, “And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” Since Christ was the firstborn, the church of the firstborn was “the Church of Christ.” I suppose I ought to have been a little suspicious because of the word *are*— “the firstborn which are written in heaven.” But we were more concerned about being right than about being grammatical, and nothing was said about this in the sermon outline book we had. I probably did not get beyond the word “firstborn” since the rest of it was not essential to my argument. Back in those days we were always “presenting an argument.”

I admit to being a little ashamed of my former ignorance,

but I am thankful that I have lived long enough to correct some of my errors. It helped a lot when I learned that “Christ” was not the name of the incarnate Son, but his “office.” He is Jesus *the* Christ! So to “name the church after Him” you’d at least have to call it the “Church of Jesus.” You wouldn’t call the bride of Mr. Jones the butcher, “Mrs. Butcher.”

It also helped when I learned that “the firstborn which are written in heaven” are the saints whose names are enrolled, registered and inscribed in the throne city of the Great King. The Authentic Version reads, “the gathering of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” The New English Version reads, “the assembly of the firstborn citizens of heaven.” The Concordant Literal Version says, “the ecclesia of the firstborn, registered *in* the heavens.”

The firstborn are God’s children. They are so designated because God claimed the firstborn of Israel as His own. They were His by right of adoption. He sanctified them unto Himself (Numbers 8:17). The Hebrews understood this so the writer had to make no explanation. The firstborn consisted of the sanctified ones, the heirs of God. The names of all of these are found in the Lamb’s book of life. They are written down in glory!

All of that is interesting but it is not what I want to discuss here. The church consists of all those whom God has called and who have responded unto that call. Only God can call men out of sin and self, and every man upon the face of the earth who has heard that call and denied himself to take up his cross and follow Jesus is in the church of God.

When the word “church” is used in a universal sense, if used properly and scripturally, it must embrace every saved person in the universe. Every man on earth who has been born again, who has been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, is a part of the church. To use such terms as “the Lord’s church,” with a view

to excluding many (or any) of the Lord's people, is to speak unadvisedly with the lips and those who do it "understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

When the word "church" is employed to designate the saints in a given city area it must include every saint of God in that geographical division. The church of God in Saint Louis includes every individual in that metropolitan complex who has been called into his kingdom and glory and who has the seal of God in his forehead. This is true in spite of division, schism, ignorance, race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Regardless of what men may call them, or of what (in their ignorance) they may designate themselves, if they have thrown themselves upon the mercy of God, fled to Jesus for rest, washed their garments in the crimson flood that flowed from Immanuel's veins and received the adoption of sons, they are in the church which God purchased with the blood of His own (Son).

This is very difficult for most of us to realize and even more difficult for many to openly affirm. In our sectarian attitudes with their creedal barriers and legalistic lines, carefully drawn and meticulously defined, it is easy to equate the limits of God's grace with the boundaries of our acceptance. But God is not obligated to welcome only those we receive; instead, we are obligated to welcome all whom He receives. That He is willing to receive some rather pitiable and unworthy characters most of us are living testimony. The quality of grace in rescuing unwholesome personalities should never be doubted by those of us who have mirrors and can glance into them.

We are always in danger of assuming that the party, faction or sect, with which we are affiliated is "the church." I am not sure just how the angels regard the antics of the heirs of salvation to whom they minister. It could be that they get quite a "kick" out of some of the things we say with such seriousness, and they must smile frequently at how little we think the church

is, as compared to how big and majestic they know it really is. It's a good thing our brethren do not travel around with the angels and visit some of the saints with whom the angels visit. If they did there would be a lot of angels haled up before the elders and "withdrawn from" for fraternizing with folks who are not members of the loyal church.

Every party, with few exceptions, has its membership rosters, and the sum total of these rosters of "faithful congregations" in each instance, constitutes "the brotherhood." A good many factions also have directories of "loyal congregations" where "the Lord's church" meets, so that those on vacation will not be misled by a signboard and get into a meeting of "apostates." The peculiar thing is that no two directories have "the Lord's church" meeting at the same places, and if you happen to get the wrong directory you are liable to spend your entire vacation "worshiping with false brethren" and never know it until you get back home and invite the preacher who is holding your fall meeting out to dinner. The safest thing to do is to write to the party headquarters before you start and the editor there can check your itinerary and cross off all of the doubtful points. One such headquarters has recently announced, "When a request is made for free information or assistance, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope." Remember that!

About the only time all of the congregations are counted worthy and lumped off together is when we want to leave the impression on our religious neighbors that we are growing like weeds in the cornfield. The particular segment of the religious spectrum with which I am identified recently received newspaper publicity as "the fastest growing religious group in the United States." If the reporter who wrote that really knew us he would have used the plural for "group."

It was affirmed that our membership now stands at 2,350,000. Brethren of reputation hang their heads when this

figure is given. They are afraid it is padded like a company expense account. Of course, no one knows how many people there are enrolled with congregations which make a test of fellowship out of the use of instrumental music. That is about the only common denominator of the two dozen kinds of baptized believers in “the fastest growing religious group.” It is astonishing that those who cannot sit together at the Lord’s table can meet together in an estimated census table.

One Texas Christian University professor thinks the number was arrived at by an editor in the southland who multiplied his subscription list by the size of his hat, and multiplied the total received by the number of divisions within our ranks. I think he was being a little facetious, because some of the professors at Texas Christian should not be taken too seriously!

I just do not think that any person on earth can number the Lord’s people. He knows who they are and that is enough for me. “God has laid a foundation, and it stands firm with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows his own.’” I do not doubt that a sect or faction can number its adherents and tell who is “on the books.” But no party contains all of God’s beloved— *no party!* That includes the one I am in! Jesus did not suffer to become the chief of a clan nor die to become the prince of a party. He is the head of the whole body and Lord of the whole church!

When the venerable envoy, John, was in exile upon Patmos he looked over and saw a vast throng, *which no one could count*, from every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages. They were identified by a member of the heavenly presbytery as “the men who have passed through the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” All of these were from the earth and if no man could count them in heaven after they arrived, there is no use of any one trying it here before they leave. I don’t think one’s mathematical powers are any greater in Tennessee than they

will be in heaven. The truth of it is that the wonderful family of God is greater than any faction on earth, and mightier than all of them put together.

The brotherhood of which I am a part is as vast as God's redemptive love reaching down and receiving helpless humanity unto himself. The church of my allegiance is as great as the citizenry of the kingdom of God. I am a kindred soul with every consecrated believer whose name is enrolled in heaven. There is only one body and it embraces every precious soul linked to the head by the Holy Spirit, and by that same Spirit I am joined to all who are in him— and I do mean *all*! You can no more confine the church of the firstborn ones to party-structures, programs, houses and signboards than you can capture the Holy Spirit in a box and slam the lid shut.

Thoughts on Repentance

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

In the letter of Paul to the Romans we are treated to an incidental revelation of the nature of repentance and its antecedents, and impenitence and its consequences, which is very enlightening. We shall quote from the New English Bible. “Or do you think lightly of his wealth of kindness, of tolerance, and of patience, without recognizing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to a change of heart. In the rigid obstinacy of your heart you are laying up for yourself a store of retribution for the day of retribution when God’s just judgment will be revealed, and he will pay every man for what he has done” (2:4, 5).

The word translated “change of heart,” rendered “repentance” in other versions, means literally to “take an after view,” and then to change the mind as the result of taking a second view of the subject. The subject is sin and its effect upon one’s character and destiny. One must be motivated to take a *rational* view of sin since his passions, emotions and inclinations are keyed to the enjoyment of its pleasure. All sin is an offence against the majesty of God, and only his kindness, tolerance and patience, operate to permit a guilty sinner to live.

The individual who is blinded intellectually by lust will not recognize the purpose of divine kindness to the transgressor, but those who do recognize it will readily see that it is intended to

direct or guide them to a change of heart. This change is everywhere represented as one of moral character. This means it is not a mere state of intellect. It is not a conviction of sin, a consciousness of guilt, or a recognition and fear of retribution. All of these are passive states of the mind and can never have moral character attributed to them. All involuntary states of mind are passive and moral character cannot be postulated of a passive state.

For the same reason repentance is not a mere reaction of the sensibility. It is not a feeling or an emotion. It is not sorrow for wrongdoing, nor regret for a sinful act, nor remorse for hurtful conduct. It is not grief for the consequences of sin either to oneself or to another victim. These feelings and emotions may operate to impel one to take a second view of life and thus may be secondary causes leading to repentance but they are not of themselves repentance. You cannot command a feeling or an emotion.

Repentance is an act of volition, a positive phenomenon of the will. It represents a deliberate choice involving a complete change of purpose and intention, a choice made in the full light of intelligence. Since choice has to do with the expression of a preference, and all life can be summed up in two terms—selfishness and selflessness—repentance is an act of turning from the former to the latter. But “selflessness” must not be regarded as a mere negation of self. It is rather a surrender of the self to Jesus Christ as Lord. Repentance involves the abasement of self as unworthy, the indictment of self at the bar of conscience, and the consequent embracing by the heart of God and His ruling majesty.

While this is true, it must be remembered that in the rational being, every faculty is related. It is this relationship which is broken up when one becomes irrational, so that the irrational person may demonstrate emotions incongruent with circumstances and may be wholly incapable of exercising the

will. Thus, with the rational person the intellect weighs the nature and result of the life of sin, and the sensibility registers a deep remorse and consciousness of guilt, and these impel the will to action so that the heart is changed as to the aim, purpose and duration of life.

Because of the involvement of the sensibility the penitent loathes sin. It is abhorrent because of what it does to his own personality and to the world of mankind. He hates sin because it is sin, and because it creates a battlefield within upon which he is at war with himself and God. When he realizes his helplessness and the utter futility of trying to win the conflict by himself, and gives himself in complete surrender to Christ through full confidence that God is able to deliver him, he does not make a truce with sin, but he makes peace with God.

Conscious of the fact that God can declare or pronounce him justified, not because he is no sinner, but precisely because he is one, he transfers his allegiance. And this last term is probably the best that we can do in expressing what is meant by the phrase "believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." The remorseful sinner places himself, through full and unreserved commitment of self, in Him, where sin is not imputed or counted unto self, for he has no self. Self has been crucified. Such a person is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God. His condition is described in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, now, that we have been justified through faith, let us continue at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have been allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace."

Now let me say a few words about impenitence which is also generally misunderstood and confused with other states and conditions as is repentance. Our original text uses the expression, "rigid obstinacy of your heart," and this is a good rendering. Throughout God's entire word impenitence is looked upon as a frightful sin and fraught with terrible consequences. But a great many people are charged with impenitence who are

ignorant or apathetic, or who seek to justify themselves in their present state. Such self-justification may be a fruit of impenitence, but it is not impenitence of itself.

Impenitence is not the love of sin. It is not a desire for sin, nor a craving after it. It is not an involuntary passion which cries and clamors for gratification. Rather, it is an act of the will, a voluntary and deliberate choice to pursue one's course, taken in full light of the consequences. This last is very important, for just as one must have light in which to view his true condition and be motivated to repentance, so he must have light against which he deliberately closes his inner eyes to be impenitent. Repentance and impenitence are the reactions of the heart taken in the light which illuminates and reveals the true state of the sinner.

Impenitence is rooted in the worship of self. It deposes God and drives Him from the throne-room of the heart. It installs self as the usurper of the divine prerogatives and privileges and insists that every wish of this tyrant be regarded as sovereign. Impenitence is not passive. It is not simply inattention to sin or indifference to its consequences. But it is an active, obstinate, belligerent state of the will. It is a grim, unyielding and resolute determination to be served at all costs, not from a love of sin, but because of the gratification which is derived from it. Sin is simply the lackey who does the bidding of Self, and it is no more loved than any other menial servant would be.

A knowledge of these facts will at once enable us to see why impenitence is denounced with such stringent woes in the sacred oracles. When the claims of God are presented to the mind and are weighed by the mental powers, the heart must take action in the light of these claims. It must either throw open the door to the Lord of life or begin immediately to strengthen the bars and locks to prevent his entrance.

It is this deliberate attempt to barricade the door from

within which is called impenitence. The excuses which are voiced and the cavils at truth which are indulged, are not impenitence. They are the articles of furniture which impenitence piles against the door. And we need to remember that we may demolish the furniture without touching the occupant.

There is much more we would like to say and a great deal more which needs to be said upon this subject, but time and space will not permit of our saying it at this time. We shall close with the scriptural statement as to the fate which the impenitent must expect.

“In the rigid obstinacy of your heart you are laying up for yourself a store of retribution, when God’s just judgment will be revealed, and he will pay every man for what he has done . . . For those who are governed by selfish ambition, who refuse obedience to the truth and take wrong for their guide, there will be fury of retribution. There will be grinding misery for every human being who is an evil-doer, for the Jew first and for the Greek also.” Let us renounce all selfish ambition.

Speaking Unto Edification

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

Few readers of this journal would argue against the assertion in some of the more venerable creeds that the chief aim of man is to glorify God, yet all of us recognize that in our corporate expression of praise we have an equally obvious responsibility to edify the saints. Indeed, in the only real description of the activities of the primitive saints when assembled, it is distinctly said, “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

This admonition occurs in a setting which deals primarily with the exercise of spiritual gifts, and because of the abuse of such gifts. On the one hand the disciples were in danger of creating the impression upon outsiders who dropped in that they had mistaken the address and ended up in the insane asylum. At the same time the brethren were not being properly nurtured and strengthened, although admittedly there was a lot of excitement going on. It was like forgetting to feed the baby during a tornado and for three or four days afterwards. If there was a problem in those days when the Holy Spirit imparted special gifts through imposition of apostolic hands, we have no less a problem now that we are dependent upon natural gifts and abilities. There is every reason to believe that great congregations assemble regularly and go through a ritual or liturgy and return home with no idea of entering combat duty. It is a little like training army inductees by taking them regularly

to symphony concerts. They may be pacified but they will not be edified.

There was a sense of urgency about the congregating of those first century followers of the Messiah. All of them knew that on the morrow they might be arrested and thrown into a dungeon, or immediately deported to suffer banishment on some far-off island. It was essential that in the corporate fellowship they should find that inner fortitude which would sustain them through long periods of suffering and privation until the final slumber brought peace. Every tissue of their spiritual being longed for the water of life, and for the bread of life.

In such circumstances, it is well to note what constituted the recommendation of the Spirit as to the aim and purpose of addressing the saints. First, let us remember that the gift of prophecy was to be preferred above the other spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1). The reason for this is stated. The man who spoke in another tongue contributed nothing of value to the auditors, “for no man understandeth him” (verse 2). “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort.”

Edification, exhortation, comfort— what is involved in these? Our word “edify” comes from the Latin. In the dim past it was a combined form of *aedes*, a fireplace; and *ficare*, to make. Men tended to make their abodes where they constructed their fire rings, and so eventually the word came to mean “a building or house.”

Of course Paul used the word *oikodome* which means “to build a house.” To edify means to build up, and in its spiritual usage has to do with the promotion of spiritual growth. The apostle shows his concern for the development of the saints by pointing out that any message conveyed must be translated into the language of the people “that the church may receive edifying.”

In these days of theological gobbledy-gook and ecclesiastical jargon some preachers can talk English and still speak in an unknown tongue. Jesus did not say, “Feed my giraffes,” but “Feed my sheep.” To do this one needs to throw the fodder *down* and not put it into orbit.

Just as one cannot grow physically upon what he cannot digest, so he cannot develop spiritual strength from that which he does not assimilate. The word of God must be translated into life, for this is one version no one can oppose. The man who does the most good for the disciples is the one who trains them to stand upon their own feet. “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12).

The word “exhortation” is from a term which originally meant to call to a person, and then came to mean to call on, or entreat one to exert an effort. We instruct those who do not know, and exhort those who do. Thus exhortation has to do with incitation or motivation to the fulfillment of a task.

Edification is the diet table for God’s athletes, exhortation is the cheering section while they are in the race. Edification is the drill in the manual of arms for the Christian soldiers, exhortation is the call of the officers to attack the foe. The first is involved in getting what is needed, the second is getting involved where one is needed.

The term “comfort” is from *para-muthia*, which occurs only this once in the scriptures. *Para* means near, and *muthos* means speech. To comfort literally means to speak closely to one, to directly console or encourage him. We make a mistake when we confuse comfort with a kind of sticky or sickly sentimentality. We’ve abused the word “comfortable” until it is devoid of its original meaning. The word is from *fortis*, which is found in such words as fortress, or fortify. It has to do with strength and defence.

Edify means to build up, exhort means to stir up, and comfort means to cheer up. W. E. Vine says, “Edification develops the character; encouragement stimulates the will; consolation strengthens the spirit.” And the Holy Spirit indicates that this should be the aim of the assembled saints.

The Denouement

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[Abstract]

Christianity brought a living hope to a tired and jaded world. This may be one of the chief factors in its eager acceptance by slaves and social outcasts. The message of the resurrection thrilled the hearts of those whose lives and earthly lots were drab and dreary.

The threefold basis of our hope seems to be summed up in Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Christ is our life. He will appear. We will appear with him. A realization of these facts transformed the lives of the primitive disciples.

It is most interesting to note the translation of this passage by J. B. Phillips, who has it, "One day, Christ, the secret center of our lives, will show himself openly, and you will share in that magnificent denouement." This final word, borrowed from the French, has puzzled many readers, yet it is probable that it is the very best term available for portraying the real meaning involved.

I like the translation of Phillips at this point. The Christian life is the Christ-centered life. He is the hub around which all else revolves. Every relationship is governed by Him. The world cannot see him in our heart but every thought, word and deed reflects his secret presence. The man in whom Christ dwells is a

member of the new humanity. As far as the world is concerned he is already dead. His true life is hidden in God.

But it will not always be so, for Christ is destined to show himself openly. "To those who look for him, he will appear a second time, not this time to deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation those who eagerly await him" (Hebrews 9:28).

The faithful will share in "that magnificent denouement." This is from *de*, to undo or untie; and *nodus*, a knot. It referred to the final act of untying a knot, and thus came to mean, "the final revelation or occurrence which clarifies the nature and outcome of a plot." The coming of Jesus will make all else in God's great program for the universe fit into place. It is the key to all of the mysteries of life through the ages.

Those who do not eagerly await Jesus have no explanation for what is transpiring. Andre Maurois wrote, "The universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud-heap spinning in infinite space? I have not the slightest idea, and I am quite convinced that no one has the slightest idea."

G. N. Clark, during his inauguration ceremonies at Cambridge, said "There is no secret and no plan in history to be discovered. I do not believe that any future consummation could make sense of all the irrationalities of preceding ages. If it could not explain them, still less could it justify them."

The beauty of the Way is that it is not a way of extinction but of resurrection. It is the way of the blessed hope, the glorious hope. I am convinced of the reality of the promises of God. I freely admit that I am on this earth as an exile and a foreigner. I long for a better country, a heavenly one. I want to share in the magnificent denouement. I am glad that I have caught the meaning of grace, or that it has caught me, for therein lies the only ground of my hope!

The Progress of Reform

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Volume 29

[Abstract]

“The good cause of the restoration of a pure speech and of the ancient institutions, I am happy to inform you, from our recent accounts up to the close of the last year, is plead with increasing success and prosperity in very many portions of this highly favored land.”

These were the words of Alexander Campbell written from Bethany, Virginia in February, 1838, and addressed to James Wallis in Great Britain. Mr. Campbell was writing about the impact of the restoration movement upon the divided forces of Christendom. Now, almost 130 years later, I can employ the same words to describe the influence of a growing movement for renewal upon the splintered and fragmented body of restoration heirs.

Almost ten years have gone by since I published the initial series of articles entitled, “Thoughts on Fellowship.” When these first appeared I was very unpopular. As was to be expected the original opposition came from members of the faction with which I had been identified and whose cause I had so often championed in public debate. I gave my attackers full space in the paper and published an uncensored version of all they wrote. The only objection I ever received was because I replied. The replies revealed that the factional spirit is unscriptural, vulnerable and wholly indefensible. For several years other

groups kept silent, hoping that our pleas would die like every previous one had succumbed, while battering against the iron gates and stone walls of the partisan monasteries. But when chinks were made in the barricades an occasional knight sallied forth. A prominent theologian from Abilene Christian College chose as his field of combat the *Gospel Advocate*, and when I was forbidden the right to reply to him in its columns I published his article in full, and replied point by point in our little paper.

Then an editor in Texas was pressured into assailing me, but again I published all of his articles and my replies and even printed the whole correspondence exchange between us. These have now entered into the literature of the disciple brotherhood in bound volumes. Those of us who have grown up in the non-instrument wing of the shattered restoration movement know what happened in past years to those who dared to challenge men who “appeared to be somewhat.” The silence which now reigns in the papers with reference to the plea for renewal through recovery is more significant and portentous than many of the articles contained in them.

I would not want my readers to forget that I have repeatedly published an offer, and once a challenge, to appear on the platform of George Pepperdine College, Abilene Christian College, Harding College, David Lipscomb College, or Florida College, to present my views on fellowship, and submit to questioning by a blue ribbon panel selected by the authorities, or to grilling by the whole audience. To this very day a profound silence reigns. Not one word has been received from the administration of any of these institutions. The offer still remains in effect.

Perhaps the reason for the silence is found in the words of a Texas preacher who said, “If Carl Ketcherside ever speaks at the Abilene Christian College lectureship we’ll have a revolution on our hands, because three-fourths of our people in Texas already believe what he advocates. The difference is that he is

not afraid to say it out loud.” Our brother is wholly correct in his last assertion and I trust that he is right on his estimate of sentiment.

In spite of attempted occasional boycott, insinuation and innuendo, the cause of reform is growing. This is seen in a score of happenings. For instance, brethren involved in building the most expensive edifice they have ever undertaken in the United States, no longer make a test of fellowship out of personal conviction concerning the use of instrumental music. They now share in “the fellowship of giving and receiving” with prominent leaders in the Christian Church. Meanwhile, editors of orthodox “Church of Christ” journals still urge their readers and congregations to contribute to the same project.

Some men from all of the parties can now engage freely in dialogue sessions across all lines, although those from centers such as Nashville still have to hedge themselves in with protective statements which can clear them with brethren back home in case of emergency. There are congregations in a number of areas now where brethren from various segments can exchange pulpits, and in which free men in the Christ are planning joint projects to exhibit openly that unity which transcends diversity of opinions and methods.

I find myself ever more frequently appearing in company with brethren of note on the platform. A good example was the last Southern Christian Convention which was arranged by our brethren in the Independent Christian Churches. A brother from Harding Graduate School (who has since transferred to Abilene Christian College) and myself, were speakers at the same meeting.

Even more revealing are the letters from students and faculty members in some of the colleges, and from preachers, who assure me of their prayers and best wishes. Many of these are not yet in a position to declare themselves publicly. This is

not an exhibition of cowardice at all but a simple recognition that the tides of prejudice have not yet all ebbed out. I do not think it is necessary that they work as I do, and I think they are wise in being expedient.

The fact is that literally hundreds of brethren now realize that it was sinful to divide the precious family of our God over divergent views regarding instrumental music, the millennium, Herald of Truth, orphan homes, colleges, Bible classes, individual cups, etc. They will be happy when this motley horde of “issues” is returned to proper perspective. These men have no thought of changing their views on these matters, or of relinquishing their personal convictions, but they want to cease “playing God” with the brethren. They are sick and tired of having to perpetuate division which they did not perpetrate merely to stand in good with those whose unlovely dispositions have often been the real cause of division. Our thinking brethren everywhere are beginning to see that differences are simply concerns for discussion and not causes of division. They are problems in the fellowship and not problems of fellowship!

THOUGHTS ON FELLOWSHIP

It would seem appropriate for me to once more suggest some of the ideas I have advanced concerning fellowship. In order to facilitate replies by those who are so inclined, I will number the various points.

1. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, and there is no single English word which is its exact equivalent. It connotes mutual sharing or joint participation, since it stems from the word *koine*, which means “common.” *Koinonia* refers to that which is held in common, and in the new covenant scriptures it is the sharing of the common life created by the indwelling Spirit of God. Every person on earth in whom the Spirit abides is in the fellowship with every other such person in the universe.

Thus it is called “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14). Fellowship is not something we extend or withdraw, but it is a state into which we are called. “God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). The New English Version gives the best translation, “What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

2. Harmony is not essential to fellowship but is a goal of those who are in the fellowship. We do not achieve harmony in order to be in the fellowship, but because we are in the fellowship, we seek to achieve harmony. There is not a passage in the apostolic doctrine commanding harmony which was written to bring the saints into fellowship. Every such passage was written to those who were in the fellowship and because they were in it. We suggest that you study Philippians 2:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 1:9-13; and 2 Corinthians 13:11. We are not in the fellowship because we walk in peace, but we walk in peace because we are in the fellowship.

3. Fellowship is not the endorsement of another’s position or views. Fellowship is a state into which we are called by God through the Good News of Jesus Christ. We enter it by the proper response to that News. Every sincere believer who is immersed upon the basis of his trust that Jesus is God’s Son and the Messiah, is in the fellowship in spite of his ignorance or warped opinions about many other things. Endorsement is an act of individual will in which one approves or supports the opinions or acts of another when he agrees with or concurs in such opinions or acts.

We endorse a lot of things done by people with whom we are not in fellowship; we are in the fellowship with people who do a lot of things we cannot endorse. God certainly did not endorse a lot of things done by the saints in Corinth, but they

were in his fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9).

In Galatians 2:9 Peter is said to have given the right hand of fellowship to Paul, but in verse 11, Paul withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. I do not think that anyone would be so rash as to say that they were no longer in fellowship. No congregation of believers on this earth is composed of those who completely endorse one another's views, interpretations, or ideas. It is for this reason that each faction has to arbitrarily agree upon some item on which there must be agreement as a criterion of fellowship and acceptance. And whatever that thing is it becomes the creed of the party.

4. Fellowship is not contingent upon unanimity of opinion and has no real relation to it, although the twisted factional mentality seeks to establish such a relationship. The unity of the Spirit is based upon community, not conformity. The only unity attainable by thinking men is that of diversity. The unity of conformity must first reduce men to robots. It belongs to the wax museum and not to the temple of God. Jesus did not die for puppets nor allow himself to be murdered for manikins.

In Romans 14 we learn that there were varied opinions in the early church. These were not allowed to become the basis of rejection. "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions" (verse 1). "One man believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables." Paul effectively spiked the creeping creedal conformity which has so often blossomed forth in all of its inglorious tendencies in modern Church of Christism. The entire chapter is a stirring apologetic for unity in diversity. It stands squarely athwart the path of every partisan journalist in our day.

In our time one who ate anything or everything would be called a sectarian or a liberal. The one who restricted himself solely to vegetables would be an anti, an extremist, or an ultra-conservative. To Paul, who rejected such asinine labels, they

were children of the same Father or slaves of the same Master. "To his own master he stands or falls." It is ridiculous for one slave to try and throw out another whom he does not own because he will not eat meat— or because he insists on singing "Jesus is all the world to me," while someone else is pounding out the beat on a piano.

A considerable number of our brethren have been suffering from a Messiah complex, and they are anxious to save God from any undue worry, by taking care of as much of the final judgment as possible in advance. Every factional leader on earth begins by giving Jesus a shove and squeezing down in the throne as his authorized mouthpiece and representative. It is no problem to push the brethren around after you have shoved Jesus to one side. It will be a great day when all of us learn that Jesus has no prime ministers!

5. Equality in the attainment of spiritual knowledge is not the foundation of fellowship. This is obvious when one realizes that in spite of his ignorance he has been accepted into the fellowship of the Father and Son. Jesus would be very lonely if he eliminated all of his "brothers in error." If we must wait until our knowledge equals that of the Father before he can receive us into his fellowship we have a long period of detention on the outside. Fortunately God accepts some fairly superficial characters, as almost any good mirror will reveal, and the apostle says, "In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

The family of God consists of babes and children as well as young men and fathers. These who are born of the water and of the Spirit are not born in a state of maturity. Some of them develop rather slowly and some are dwarfed from malnutrition and from being beaten over the head by their guardians. God has some children who are deformed because of being hastened to delivery before the period of gestation was completed normally. Not all of the saints enjoy perfect vision.

We must not forget that the Christian life is a walk and we are not going to heaven in a clump or cluster. We are strung out along the highway, but it is not necessary that we keep up with one another. It is only necessary that we keep in the Way. If the trumpet sounds while we are crippling along because of our blisters, God will find us. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save!

Life in Christ is a growth and all growth demands change and alteration. Not all children reach the same height. Some of our brethren are following Procrustes instead of Jesus. That mythical highwayman set up a bed on the main road and forced every traveler to lie upon it. Those who were too long had their legs cut off; those who were too short were stretched to the required length by pulleys. The perceptive reader will not need to be told whose height was used as a criterion of measurement.

There was a considerable latitude in the primitive community of saints. Take Corinth for example. There were some of the brethren who did not know there was one God. "But not everyone knows this. There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that they even now eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration." Others did not accept the idea of the resurrection. "How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" But Paul did not divide them into a "Resurrection Church of Christ" and an "Anti-Resurrection Church of Christ."

Instead, he said, "Of course we all 'have knowledge' as you say. This knowledge breeds conceit, it is love that builds. If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of knowing. But if a man loves, he is acknowledged by God." I sometimes wonder if Paul was rubbing it in on the "know-it-all" in the congregation, by pointing out that they claimed to know a lot, but they didn't even know how to treat brethren who differed with them, and that is about one of the first things God wants us to learn.

He did not tell the knowing brethren to separate from the ignorant Christians or to come out from among them as if they were pagans or unbelievers. His admonition was, “Mend your ways; take our appeal to heart; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

FOILING THE CRITICS

Some of my earlier critics freely predicted that I would merely create another faction and complicate matters by starting an anti-party party. I have been able to prove that they were not possessed of the gift of prophecy. There are several things which have contributed to this.

1. When I learned that the factional attitude which prevailed among the restoration heirs was a work of the flesh, a sin against God, and a sign of immaturity and carnality, I did not leave the brethren with whom I had been associated and go join another group. I simply repudiated all factionalism but I did it from where I was by accepting and welcoming all of my brethren. I stayed where I was and loved them where they were. I no longer recognize as valid any of the artificial walls which they had thrown up. I paid no further attention to the tests of union and communion devised by any group.

2. When I went among brethren I did so simply to share my thinking with them, and to share in their concepts. I did not seek to proselyte followers nor to persuade anyone to my way of thinking. I had already learned that I could love those who differed with me as much as I could those who concurred in my views and I did not worry about “lining them up.” To me, a Ketcherside party would be as disgraceful as any other. I never asked any person to alter his methods to pamper my personal feelings. I considered every invitation from sincere saints as a door opened unto me of the Spirit.

3. I urged every person who advanced in learning not to

leave the brethren with whom he had always labored to go join the faction which had taught him a new truth. This would only serve to remove the leaven from where it was needed and transfer it to where it was not, and it would breed hatred and envy. There have been some instances where brethren felt they were driven out but I have steadfastly refused to urge them to form another faction.

If every person stays where he is the spread of factionalism will be stopped cold at its present level and that level will gradually decline under the benign influence of the Holy Spirit. One of the most gratifying things that has happened is to see men who have grown in knowledge beyond their factional constituency, remaining with the brethren who have supported them in the past.

4. Now there is a vast army of the concerned ones and these are distributed among all of our factions. They will act as leaven for peace and we shall within our generation see a tremendous change of attitude. Brethren will repudiate the false propaganda that purity of doctrine can only be maintained by separation from other brethren. Many will help to build bridges across the chasms which Satan has created. There are still pockets of partisan venom. There are some men who are purveyors of hate against brethren. There are journals whose editors confuse the partisan status quo with first century Christianity. Other editors ride the factional merry-go-round and try to wave first to one side and then to the other. But these will gradually forfeit any real influence and those papers which drum up issues so they can project themselves as the defenders of orthodoxy will soon be seen in their true light.

As for myself, I would have it plainly understood that I intend to make no test of fellowship out of either the pro or con of a position on instrumental music, centralized control, colleges, orphan homes, national radio and television programs, the right to own television sets, leavened bread, unleavened bread, the

manner of breaking the bread, fermented wine, individual cups, prayer coverings for women, Bible classes, uninspired literature, foot-washing, speaking with tongues, or any other of the “issues” which periodically raise their disturbing heads and breathe their fetid breath in our faces. Our real problem is not with those who claim to speak in other tongues, but with preachers who claim to speak English and are still talking in unknown tongues.

I have a firm personal conviction on all of these things but I will not impose it by force or coercion upon others. I’ll express my view and listen to brethren who differ with me and go on my way rejoicing. If a man is good enough for God to receive he is not too bad for me to accept. I am sick and tired of our whole sad, sorry and gruesome sectarian mess. I never intend to be a party to its promotion again, so help me God. I shall never be used as a cat’s paw to pull partisan chestnuts out of the factional fire. And as Patrick Henry said, “If that be treason, make the most of it!”

On the Rocks

Mission Messenger (December 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

In the simpler days of earth, rude shepherds counted their flocks and herds upon their fingers and toes. Each toe was touched by the staff and each finger with the thumbs and when a complete round was made a line was drawn in the sand and this line was called a score. A score was thus twenty; forty was two-score, or two lines; and sixty was threescore, or three lines. We still refer to the toes and fingers as digits, even as we do figures or numbers.

Sometimes a notch or line was cut into a stick for each group of twenty, and we still use the word “scoring” for the making of such lines. We say a piston is scored when reduced oil pressure causes friction to make lines in its surface. And we still talk about keeping the score in a game or contest, although it now means to keep the tally, rather than to count by twenties.

As man developed commercial interests through barter or trade, lines drawn in the sand were no longer adequate, and a new medium of computation providing for subtraction and division, as well as addition, was required. Small white pebbles were found to be best suited for the purpose. Such a pebble was called a calculus.

In ancient Rome chariots for hire were kept at the outer gates of the wall to transport passengers to the inner city. The

driver counted twenty and dropped a calculus into an urn, and repeated the process until arrival at the destination, where the calculi were poured out and the passenger paid accordingly. Our word “calculate” means “to count by stones.”

These chariots were the first taxicabs, although this word is from the French. The word “cab” is an abbreviation for cabriolet, a young goat, because the first such vehicles driven over the cobblestones of Paris, jostled and jounced and cavorted about like a young goat on the rocks. Of course the word “taxi” has to do with tax, and in our day we hardly need to explain that this refers to an assessment, or fee. A taxicab is a vehicle which assesses a fee for its use.

We hope this is all interesting but it actually doesn’t have a thing to do with our real theme. We want to talk about the word *scrupulus*, which also meant a rock, but literally “a small sharp stone in the shoe.” All of us have experienced the acute discomfort which comes from trying to walk with such an object in our footwear. It is from this that our word “scruple” is derived and this is the word used by J. B. Phillips to translate the Greek *dialogismos* in Romans 14:1.

The Greek term denotes inward reasoning resulting in an opinion or personal conviction, especially as related to the formation or development of a doubt. Phillips has it, “Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples.” The New English Version reads, “If a man is weak in his faith you must accept him without attempting to settle doubtful points.” The Revised Standard Version says, “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.”

Because of the context we are inclined to like the word “scruples” in the passage. A scruple is the fruit of conscience which has been impregnated by doubt. It is the result of one’s own inner reasoning although it may have begun with a

suggestion from another. When there is a question about the propriety of a thing the one who questions it must abstain from doing it, or stifle the conscience which acts as a monitor in all such affairs.

When the apostles were alive there were two matters which created real problems among the saints. One related to the eating of meats; the other to the keeping of special days. In our culture these are no longer concerns, but nothing that troubles us now is of more importance than these were then. They were questions fraught with intense emotional strain, creating suspicion and distrust. They had in them the potential for the fragmentation and disruption of the communities of the saints. Men had genuine scruples against eating meat which might have been consecrated to idols and in celebrating certain days.

The apostolic approach to the problem was unique. It is fully set forth in Romans, chapter fourteen. It took into consideration the natural reactions of two who try to walk together, while one has a sharp pebble in his shoe. The one who does not is inclined to despise the one who has the impediment; the one who possesses the scruple is inclined to judge and censure the other. Here are the considerations which should eliminate the contempt of one and the condemnation of the other.

1. God has received them both, not because of their attitudes, but in spite of them.

2. Neither one belongs to the other, but both belong to a common master. It is ridiculous for a slave to try and dispossess another slave whom he does not possess.

3. Each man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind and act in accord with his personal conviction.

4. The judgment seat of Christ has been appointed as the tribunal for all, and premature judgment of others is playing at

being God.

5. A thing which is right in itself becomes wrong to one who has the conviction it is wrong, although it is not wrong to others.

6. A brother is superior in value to anything which we may desire and must never be sacrificed in order to gratify self.

7. All are to pursue these things which promote peace and which are mutually upbuilding.

It is obvious that a small gravel which appears insignificant to one who does not have to walk upon it may be a real problem to one who must do so. The one who can walk without flinching may have to slow down voluntarily to walk with his brother. He must never boast about his freedom and must not hold his brother in contempt for limping along.

Heretics and Reform

Mission Messenger (December 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Papal Rome has been guilty of many grievous errors. Among them, none is of greater consequence than the equating with heresy, of unorthodox opinions persistently held. Men have been burned at the stake or forced to endure indescribable torture for no other crime than a refusal to submit their minds and thoughts to the herd mentality dominated by a hierarchy laboring to enforce the false concept of human infallibility.

As we have repeatedly shown in the past, this is utterly foreign to the scriptural concept, which regards a heresy as a sect, and a heretic as a schismatic. To seek to regulate men's opinions by threat, or to alter them by force or coercion is to make hypocrites of the weak and martyrs of the strong. It is also to provide effectively against any correction from within the institution by purging out the reformers, for all reformation must be promoted from within and will only be undertaken by those who think for themselves.

Any group which has imbibed the spirit of Rome and has suckled at the breast of the "Old Mother on the Tiber," will inevitably rid itself of the thoughtful and perceptive while cherishing the ignorant and the conformists. The smaller the brain and the longer the tongue, the better partisan does one make. The man who can repeat monotonously the old cliches and parrot the traditional position unthinkingly will be elevated

as an example of “the faithful,” while the one who breaks the chains and fetters is branded as “dangerous.”

Every faction skims off the brains from the top and retains the mass of the unthinking below. The most hazardous thing that can happen to one is to rise above the narrow and intolerant spirit, and to outgrow the sectarian nest in which he was hatched. All sectarianism seeks constantly to push the fledgling back into the egg and prevent him from using his wings, and ends up by throwing him overboard and thus forcing him into the very state which it sought valiantly to prevent him from entering.

It is amazing to the student of history to see that every protest movement began as a rebellion against intolerance and ends by becoming more intolerant than that which it abandoned. The persecuted one of yesterday becomes the persecutor of today. Those who react against the power structure act differently when they create a power structure of their own. When Christianity was oppressed Tertullian wrote, “It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions.” He nobly asserted, “One man’s religion neither helps nor harms another person.” But later, when Christians began to gain the ascendancy, he affirmed, “Heretics may properly be compelled, not enticed to duty. Obstinacy must be corrected, not coaxed.”

Martin Luther, the reformer, was vocal in his plea for the right to think and was branded a heretic and hounded into seclusion to protect his life. But Luther, as the leader of a sect, wrote, “Heretics are not to be disputed with, but to be condemned unheard, and whilst they perish by fire, the faithful ought to pursue the evil to its source and bathe their hands in blood.”

No reformation has ever been wrought without exacting its payment of tears and sweat and blood. The jeering mob, the

false accusers, the character assassins, these are the accompanists of every revolution of thought as certainly as the one who bears the cross. The compensation comes in the thought that all the heroes of today were the heretics of yesterday. No generation ever recognizes its own prophets. It is the grandchildren who pile up the stones which their ancestors flung, and make a monument to the memory of one whom their fathers murdered.

There are two persons humanity can never tolerate— a man who lives too far below their standard, and one who lives too far above it. The first they cast into prison, the second they nail to a cross. The one brings reproach upon them by his sins, the life of the other reproaches them for their own sins. Neither a sinful world nor a “sinless sect” wants to face up to its sins. The first has created its own hell, the other its own heaven, and neither one wants to face the judgment that will come! And all the nails that ever fastened men to a cross came from a box labeled “Heresy.”

Hippies and Missions

Mission Messenger (December 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

Please don't let that title fool you! There isn't any real relation between the two terms, although there well could be. But in this case it happens to represent two ends of a conversation. Not long ago I had a chance to visit with Matthew Ikeda. It was a pleasure which had been too long deferred. Matthew is a brilliant and perceptive young Japanese. He was an orphan in Tokyo when immersed by a missionary of the restoration movement persuasion. Now he is laboring with a group of saints in northern Indiana, while teaching a course on "The Psychology of Abnormality" at a nearby university and working on his doctorate at the University of Chicago.

I had been wanting to talk to him about several things. One was the development of the hippie sub-culture in our affluent society. We discussed the motivation behind the flaking off of these young intellectuals, and what they hoped to attain through the use of psychedelic drugs and mind expansion experiments. We explored briefly the results which might accrue from smoking "pot" or "grass" but my primary interest was related to why so many are rejecting Christianity in favor of Zen or Ch'an Buddhism, or some other form of Oriental religion or philosophy. I think we concurred at almost every step of our analysis of the "Flower Children."

Then we moved into another area of mutual concern— the

missionary program in various parts of our world. I have been perturbed about a great many of our attitudes and practices. One is the transportation of our American factionalism and grounds for debate to other parts of the earth which are not historically conditioned to receive them. One has to be reared in our parochial areas of partisan ferment in order for it to make any sense to him. All of the furore about our loyalty to Jesus as the Son of God, being tested by an attitude toward cups, classes, colleges, instrumental music or the millennium, can only serve to confuse Buddhists or Brahmans.

It is a little silly when you think of our having five or six different kinds of "Churches of Christ" in Africa based upon what segment in America furnishes the financial pipeline to the missionaries. A lot of people, basing their judgment on what tourists and movies they have seen, think Americans are a bunch of screw-balls anyway and it is regrettable that we work overtime in the name of Jesus, trying to prove how correct they are. Most areas of the earth have enough confusion of their own without allowing us to come in and stir up an international religious hullabaloo by moving in some of the molehills which we have inflated into artificial mountains.

Matthew pointed out another thing that leaves a bad taste in the mouth of others, and that is the practice of some of the missionaries and of a goodly number of their stateside visitors who "talk down" to the groups which they address. For instance, a preacher from the United States who is called upon to speak to a group of young Japanese who are college students gives them a lecture on "first principles" on the Sunday School literature level. One can understand how this would appear to those who are students of philosophy and eager to share in those concepts which probe the meaning of life and the universe.

I suspect the day is fast approaching in the increasingly improving intellectual climate, when one will not be respected merely because he is an American, and comes from a land where

you can purchase “education” in an affluent social structure. And I’ll not be too greatly surprised if a lot of countries decide they can get along without “ambassadors for Christ” who tend to confuse western culture and mores with citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. When we present Jesus to people of another nation we are not generously and gratuitously offering something that is *ours* to them, but we are merely calling attention to Someone who is also theirs. We do not “take Christ” to Japan, for He has already been there!

Because of the shrinking world in which we live I hope to increase my personal association with a great many of those who represent other peoples, nations and tongues. I want to do this, not alone because of what I can convey to them, for that is little indeed. I want to share in their insights for my growth and development. If God needed all of us to make up His family I certainly need all whom He has adopted into it whatever their race or color! Surely we must strive to understand one another.

Family Culture

Mission Messenger (December 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

When Nell and I were in Ulverston, Lancashire, England, we stayed in the home of the venerable brother, Walter Crosthwaite, while I spoke nightly to the little band of saints and a few friends who convened to hear me. It was an unforgettable experience. One evening we were invited to dine with a widowed sister whose husband had been a book lover. I was urged to inspect the remaining volumes and to select any one as a souvenir of our visit.

Tucked away in one corner I found a little pocket-size book by Alexander Campbell, titled, “Family Culture; or Conversations in the Domestic Circle at the Carlton House.” These articles were never printed in a single volume in America, but they had been gathered by Henry Hudston and brought out under the patronage of the Mayor of Nottingham in 1850. In spite of the fine print I read the 343 pages in the book on board our ship sailing back to America.

And now I have read the book again in a wonderful large print edition of the Restoration Reprint Library. Interesting indeed is the preface by George Greenwell, penned 117 years ago. The plate of the pen-and-ink drawing of the profile of Campbell made in Glasgow is impressive.

In the book, Campbell creates a family of Mr. Olympas

and his wife Harriet, their nine children, natural and adopted, and six servants of various ages. Each morning from six to seven o'clock, this household is summoned to family devotions and Bible study. The children and domestics are divided into three groups. The little children give the facts of the lesson, the second group explains them, and the oldest draw the inferences and make the practical deductions and applications. A second session is held each evening at dusk.

The reader is taken through a thorough study of the first twenty-two chapters of Genesis, and a subsequent exploration of part of the book of Luke, as Olympas questions his family and supplies answers to the deeper questions when others ask him. There is an appendix by Thomas Campbell on how to teach nursery children in which he affirms that by following his instructions parents can be sure that, "by the time the child has completed its third year, it will have become a practical deist or theist." If that seems a pretty stiff assignment for the tricycle clan, remember that his success in training his son, Alexander, lends some weight to his words. Of course, Thomas Campbell was not bothered with television!

It is interesting beyond description to read Campbell's views on creation, the flood, the tower of Babel, the call of Abraham, etc. The profundity of his knowledge and the simplicity of his trust in the Bible are clearly exhibited through the discussion of this hypothetical family. Any person who thinks he has exhausted the possibilities of the first half of Genesis is in for a surprise. No less interesting are the discussions on Luke's account of Christ.

One intriguing thing is the glimpse provided into problems of the early restoration movement. A good example is found in the application by Olympas of certain Old Testament principles to the discussion on "the order of worship" based on Acts 2:42. The book is a nostalgic trip into the simpler days of yesteryear when there was a daily meeting of the family at the domestic

altar and when all were bound together in an almost patriarchal trust. It was a day of hard physical labor and of strong faith. The reader is seized with a pang of regret at how far our land has drifted from that which provided its pioneer courage and stability.

After two readings of the “conversations in the domestic circle at the Carlton House,” I find myself with an increased respect for Alexander Campbell, who is unquestionably the “Olympas” of the book. I also find myself drawn closer to the God of creation and providence. I am glad that this book is at last available in our United States after more than a century. I treasure it as a valuable addition to my collection of restoration literature.

A Good Question

Mission Messenger (December 1967)

Volume 29

[Abstract]

A very perceptive brother in one of the western states writes as follows:

I have just read your article “Belief and Unbelief” in the October MISSION MESSENGER. I admit that you have given me some good things to think about. But I would like to have you explain 2 Thessalonians 1:8, where Jesus is pictured as rendering vengeance on them that “know not God” along with those who “obey not the gospel.” These are two different groups, one knowing, the other ignorant.

A careful reading of the passage cited will show that our Lord will be revealed from heaven with his angels, “taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is apparent that two classes are represented since the article is repeated in the original.

Vengeance is from *ekdikesis*, that which is enacted out of justice. It does not imply a spirit of revenge. In the sense here mentioned, one may know God and never even have heard of the gospel. “His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made” (Romans 1:20).

Man can be under no governing principle of which he has

never heard, and to which he has no personal access. He cannot make a choice if he does not know there is an alternative. He cannot decide to be under the Lordship of Jesus if he has never heard of Jesus. But the entire world of rational beings has testimony related to God in nature. To the heathen it was said, “He has not left you without some clue to his nature, in the kindness he shows: he sends you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons, and gives you food and good cheer in plenty” (Acts 14:17).

When man, by reason, follows this clue to its logical end, he will either acknowledge God or reject him, for his reasoning will become the law by which he will be judged and to which he will be held accountable until he is informed of a higher or superior principle. To act out of reverence for God in the light available unto one is to “know God” as the term is here employed.

“When Gentiles who do not possess the law carry out its precepts by the light of nature, then, although they have no law, they are their own law, for they display the effect of the law inscribed on their own hearts. Their conscience is called as witness, and their own thoughts argue the case on either side, against them or even for them, on the day when God judges the secrets of human hearts through Christ Jesus. So my gospel declares” (Romans 2:14-16).

If the light of nature is all one has, that is all the light in which he can walk. That light is sufficient to reveal the existence of God, determined by reason. If one does not have the reasoning capacity to ascertain this, he is not accountable in his imbecility. But it is argued that the gospel was given as a light for the whole world. That is true. But the sun was also given as a light for the whole world, and yet if it is on the other side of the earth I'll be in darkness. There is nothing wrong with the sun, and I'm doing the best I can, but I'm in darkness through no fault of mine. It is just as logical to argue that people should see

as clearly in darkness as those in the sunlight, since it is shining somewhere, as it is to contend that those who have never heard the gospel should be judged on the same basis as those who have constant access to it.

Those who will receive punishment for not knowing God, are those who have willfully and deliberately rejected the testimony of nature, and that of their own reason and conscience. W. E. Vine says of the passage, “The wicked persecution of inoffensive persons was an outcome of the sin of willful ignorance against God.” The New English Version translates the passage more in harmony with the original, “Then he will do justice upon those who refuse to acknowledge God and upon those who will not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is a vast difference between a refusal to acknowledge that of which you have heard, or to which you have access with proof, and involuntary ignorance which you cannot help. I am in favor of taking the Good News to all men, but I do not think God has to damn all those who die before I reach them in order to save some of those who are alive when I get there.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1968)

Volume 30

God's Community

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The Community of God

Mission Messenger (January 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

It was Simon Peter who answered the greatest question ever proposed to sinful man, and set the stage for a theological controversy which has echoed through the centuries. And the circumstances surrounding the occasion are filled with consuming interest for all who are caught up in love for Him who asked the question then, and who still requires a personal reply from each of us.

The physical environment in which Jesus chose to propound the question was extraordinarily appropriate. It was in the district of Caesarea Philippi. This was about twenty-five miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee, and about four miles from the site of Dan, the northernmost city of the ancient tribal inheritance. The area was populated heavily with non-Jews and rival cultures and religions strove for recognition.

The hills were sites of ancient altars and ruined temples devoted to the Baals of Syria and Phoenicia. These were fertility gods, sometimes grim and implacable, and sometimes smiling and beneficent. They were worshiped by the release of sexual passions in orgies at harvest festivals. It is a matter of history that whatever men employ in their liturgies will be furnished by others for a price, so the green hills and forest glades became the haunt of cult prostitutes, both male and female.

Near Caesarea Philippi there was a towering hill, a steep wall of rock, and opening into its bowels was a famous cavern, regarded by many as the birthplace of Pan. This god of flocks and fields and forests was described as the son of Zeus, and the nymph Callisto. His playing upon the reeds, or the shepherd's pipe, was supposed to strike a frenzy of sudden fear into the hearts of all who heard it. We still call such groundless fright *panic*.

Pan was pictured as an animal-like figure with horns, a crooked nose, a tail and goat's feet. In medieval times he became the prototype of the devil in superstitious minds. It is interesting to remember that the city of which we speak was first called Paneas. The Greek influence thus blended with the more primitive paganism of the area.

But this is not all. The cave which we mentioned was the entry to a great subterranean lake. Just as every prominent cave in the Ozarks region where I was born was said to have a bottomless pit, so Josephus declared of this lake that its depth was unfathomable. "When anyone lets down anything to measure the depth of the earth beneath the water, no length of cord is sufficient to reach it." Out of the cave's mouth flowed a great spring which was the principal headwater of the Jordan River, hallowed by the Jews because of its historical influence on their national life. Thus the Jewish influence was felt, as well as that of the Greek and pagan. Of even greater significance was the political status of the city. When Herod the Great, half-Jew and half-Idumean, was given control of the country by Caesar, he included Paneas as one of the cities where his Works Project Administration engaged in an urban beautification program. Here he built a great temple of gleaming white marble which was dedicated to emperor worship. Later on, his son, Philip the tetrarch, remodeled the temple and carried out a slum clearance project. He changed its name to Caesarea which means "Caesar's City." Because there was already a city of the same name which was the seat of the occupation government in

Palestine, he added his name Philippi, which means “of Philip.” The Roman interests were joined with the pagan, Greek and Jewish concerns at this spot.

The great question of Jesus was not asked in Jerusalem, the religious center of Judaism in the world. It was not asked along the shores of Galilee, the teeming commercial center of Palestine. Instead, he waited until he stood near the foot of Isbel Shrik, the Prince’s Mount, a lofty branch of the Lebanon range which formed the boundary between Palestine and Syria. Here at the one spot in Palestine where all of the cultures of the world met, on the very threshold of “the nations” and at the back door of “the land of the people,” he asked his disciples about his identity.

We do not imply that there was preconsidered significance in the location. We only point out how remarkable it was that a question, whose answer would affect the destiny of all the world should be propounded at such a place, remote from the area where the greater part of the personal ministry was carried out.

THE QUESTION

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that I the Son of man am?”

They said, “Some say that you are John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”

He said unto them, “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

The time of Jesus on earth was growing short. It was imperative that there be those who understood his mission and identity, or his work and advent would be a total loss. He begins

by asking about the public reaction, and the answers were varied. This furnishes us a good example of the difference between the opinions of men and the revelation of God. All of the opinions proved to be in error. Only the one to whom God revealed the truth had the correct answer.

It is sometimes easier for men to adopt error than to accept the truth. To believe that Jesus was any of the characters designated, except Elijah, would have necessitated believing in the resurrection of those who had died long before, yet many of these very people refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead when they were confronted with the claim.

The names with which the people identified Jesus stand as an indirect proof of the powerful impact of his preaching and work. John the Baptist had exercised such a tremendous influence that all Jerusalem and Judea and the region round about Jordan “were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” During his life all men mused in their hearts, whether John was the Messiah, or not (Luke 3:15); now that he was dead, many questioned if the Messiah was John the Baptist. Such are the vagaries of human thought.

When Herod Antipas, who had John beheaded in the prison at Machaerus, heard about the wonders performed by Jesus, his stricken conscience immediately jumped to the conclusion that John had risen from the dead. It is obvious that others also felt that the slain reformer had returned to prosecute the work of turning the hearts of fathers and children back toward each other.

Some said that Jesus was Elijah. In doing so they paid him a great tribute because the scribes placed Elijah at the very top of the prophetic roster. He was the great restorationist who was to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Even Jesus declared, “Elijah shall truly come first and restore all things.” Elijah was the prophet of zeal and of miracles, and the

fact that people thought of Jesus and Elijah in the same connection demonstrates how the signs had affected them.

Still others argued that Jesus was Jeremiah. The tradition was widely held that Jeremiah would also come before the Messiah did. This prophet was living at the time when the Chaldeans sacked Jerusalem and carried the people into exile. It was believed that before the city fell in the siege that Jeremiah had spirited the ark of the covenant away and carried it across Jordan to hide it in a cave in Mount Nebo, the burial site of Moses. It was also confidently expected that before the Messiah came, the prophet would precede him and restore the tables of stone containing the Torah. So the people confused Jesus with those whom they regarded as forerunners, but they did so because they could not otherwise account for his mighty miracles, and yet they believed that the Messiah had to be preceded by these other great personages.

The world is always attempting to fit Jesus into traditional patterns. They seek to pour him into traditional moulds or fit him into human categories. In spite of the passing of twenty centuries there are those who still say that Jesus was one of the prophets, but that is all. But the greatest prophets of all ages pale into insignificance beside him who is the Lord of all. The answer still rings true, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

THE PROMISE

Jesus answered, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

In an attempt to understand this we must remember that the word for "blessed" is *makarios*, which literally means "happy." The source of happiness in this case was that Peter had access to divine revelation, and was thus enabled to ascertain the truth. Without it he would have been reliant upon speculation and could have been as mistaken as others. That man is fortunate indeed who is permitted to know the will of God.

Our readers may be aware that one eminent modern Jewish scholar suggests that "Bar-jona" may be the Aramaic "Baryona" which means "unrestrained or lacking self-control, that is, impetuous." He translates the statement, "How fortunate you are, impulsive Simon!" Examination proves there is such a word, and we grant that the disposition of Peter seems to exhibit this characteristic, but it is our personal opinion that Jesus identified him by naming his father, since Simon was a common name in that day, and distinctions were ordinarily made by using the father's name.

Simon had just said, "You are the Messiah (that is, the Anointed)." Jesus replies, "And I tell you that you are Peter (a Rock)." Then he makes the statement, "And on this rock I will build my church." Our readers will be familiar with the various positions taken as to the identity of the rock, and especially as relates to the Greek *petros* and *petra*. It is generally supposed that the Romish commentators are the only group which seriously contends that Jesus alluded to Peter, but this is far from being the case. Many Protestant commentators lean to the same view, without giving credence to the claim of papal or apostolic succession.

It is our personal opinion that the rock referred to here is neither Christ nor Peter. Nor do we believe that it is necessarily *the confession* made by Peter. We incline rather to the idea that it

is *the fact* of the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus. The foundation is that which was revealed to Peter by the Father, and it would have been a fact if Peter had never confessed it.

In this article we are going to be more particularly concerned with what our Lord meant by the word which has been translated “church.” And that there may be no doubt of the turn our study will take, let us at the very outset say that we hold that this translation is correct, and the ecclesiastical connotations connected with it in our day are misleading and deceptive.

We are not unaware of the attitude of many who do not want their prejudices disturbed. It is much easier not to have to study again these things we have always accepted. But we think that nothing else is quite as important to us just now as recapture of the real meaning of “*ekklesia*,” the very word our Lord used for what he would build. We make no apology for this investigation of it!

THE DEFINITION

Ekklesia is a combined form of *ek*, meaning out, and *kaleo*, to call. The term signifies those who are called out and by the same act are gathered or called together. When Jesus employed the word it was already colored by Greek and Jewish usage. Because of our association of it with matters exclusively religious or ecclesiastical it is difficult for us to realize that it did not have such a connotation originally.

When we use the word “church” we automatically connect it with a religious institution. This is because we have adopted this word which really has no relation at all to what Jesus said, and have given it a meaning of our own. When Jesus declared that he would plant or construct his *ekklesia* upon the fact of his Christhood and Sonship, he certainly was not talking about “building a church” in the sense in which we use the expression

today. And not one of the apostles would ever have thought about it in such a light.

The Greeks used *ekklesia* to designate a certain gathering of citizens summoned to deal with problems related to a Greek city-state. It was not applied to a casual crowd such as often convened to argue in the marketplace, nor to the informal throng surrounding a philosopher. It was a proper assembly of qualified and accredited citizens possessed of credentials and the right of franchise, called out of the mass to discuss matters of state.

There are certain things which invite our attention at once when we consider the original connotation of the term. First, the *ekklesia* is composed of persons. It is not a place or a structure. Second, those who compose it do so as the result of a summons which has been issued and to which they respond. One could not be a part of the *ekklesia* who had not heard the call. Third, the act of calling out is also an act of calling in, or calling together into a fellowship.

We must not overlook the fact that the disciples of Jesus were Jews, and any term he used in addressing them would impress them in the light of their Jewish experience with it. And the old covenant scriptures employ two words to signify the gathering together of the people, Israel.

One was *edhah* which was sometimes used for gathering the sheaves of grain at the threshingfloor, or the grapes at the winepress. It was also used for the assembling of the people preparatory to a battle. Thus it came to be used for the congregation of Israel.

More than two hundred years before the birth of Jesus eminent Jewish scholars had translated the Hebrew old covenant scriptures into Greek. Because there were seventy men employed in the task, their version is called The Septuagint. This

was the version in common use in the days when Jesus was upon earth. And generally, although not invariably, this version translated the Hebrew word *edhah*, by the Greek *sunagoge*.

This word is a combined form of *syn*, together; and *ago*, to bring. The bringing together, as we have found of the Hebrew equivalent, might relate to things, or persons. Eventually it came to refer primarily to an assembling of persons. In an attempt to find a consistent English term for translating *edhah*, the Revised Standard Version adopted the word “congregation.” This is from the Latin *grex*, flock; combined with *con*, together. A congregation is composed of those who are drawn together as sheep in a flock.

The other Hebrew word is *tahal*, to call or summon. Where this term occurs the Septuagint generally uses *ekklesia*, and the Revised Standard Version uses “assembly.” Note then that “congregation” and “assembly” are employed by our English versions to translate the equivalent of *sunagoge* and *ekklesia* in the old covenant scriptures. Not once does the King James Version or the Revised Standard Version use “church” in the old covenant scriptures. If the proper translation of *ekklesia* in the version used in our Lord’s time on earth was “assembly,” why do the translators carefully avoid it and substitute another word?

ORDERS FROM THE KING

There is an interesting story behind this. The word “church” is not a translation of *ekklesia* at all. There is not one element in it which is even remotely related to the idea of calling out any person or thing. It has no connection whatsoever with the concept of congregating or assembling. It is absolutely foreign to the very implications of *ekklesia*.

The word “church” comes to us as an abbreviation of *kuriou oikos*, which literally means “house of a lord.” It referred

to the manor house of a feudal lord, as contrasted with the huts of his serfs, thus, an elevated house occupied by a dignitary. It is true that the *ekklesia* of God is “the house of the living God,” a temple composed of living stones, but neither the word “house” or “temple” can translate *ekklesia*.

Why do we have “church” instead of a word which signifies a body of people who have been called out of a former state to share in a new communal relationship in the Lord Jesus Christ?

We may blame the developing hierarchy which carried the saints into what Martin Luther described as “the Babylonian Captivity.” More particularly the fault lies at the door of James I, who commissioned the translation of a version “authorized to be read in the churches.” Earlier free English versions employed the word “congregation” for *ekklesia*. But James was an ardent exponent of the divine right of kings and a firm advocate of the rule of the state over the church. He did not want to be merely the titular head of the congregation.

Accordingly, he dictated a set of fourteen orders to be observed by the translators, the third of which provided: “The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word church not to be translated congregation, etc.” The translators followed this directive, as they pointed out in their preface, where they declared they had “avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who left the old ecclesiastical words and betook them to others, as when they put washing for baptism, and congregation for church.” Do not forget that scrupulosity means “carefulness, exactness, or conscientiousness.”

Alexander Campbell was aware of this, and printed the list of “King James’ Instructions to the Translators of the Bible—with extracts and remarks” in the November, 1824, issue of “The Christian Baptist.” When he published his new version of the new covenant scriptures, familiarly known as “The Living

Oracles,” he did not include the word “church” even once. Instead he used the word “congregation” as a translation of *ekklesia*. In this he followed the lead of Drs. George Campbell and Philip Doddridge.

Campbell wrote about *ekklesia*, “It is an assembly of the called, or those brought together by one leader, or profession. The whole community of professing Christians make the one body or congregation of the Lord; and those meeting in one place constitute the Christian congregation in that place.” George Smith, editor of the *Episcopal Recorder* in 1834, attacked Mr. Campbell’s usage and deemed it incongruous that Christ should be referred to as “head of the congregation.” To this Campbell replied, “But what incongruity in the word *congregation* here more than in calling Christ *the head of the church*. The head of the community, or the congregation, or the assembly is to my optics as clear and intelligible as the head of the church” (Millennial Harbinger, 1834, page 299).

MY OWN SUGGESTION

I am convinced that our use of the word “church” is responsible for many of our problems in the religious world. We were saddled with a term which was in no sense a translation of the word it was intended to represent. It has now taken on certain ecclesiastical accretions which only serve to complicate it further.

In addition to this we have compounded the offence by applying it to sects, factions and parties in such a manner as to defeat the very purpose of God.

I am inclined strongly toward the use of “community” as our best modern English equivalent for *ekklesia*. The Authentic Version uses this word in every instance where *ekklesia* is found in the original. This is the only translation of the new covenant scriptures by a Jew. In his preface the author states that he

rejects the word “church” because it is an ecclesiastical term.

While I am not at all averse to the employment of “congregation” or “assembly” it seems to me that both of these words now represent a concept that is somewhat too limited or restricted. I find myself rejecting the view of some very admirable and respected brethren that the *ekklesia* is manifested only when assembled in a local sense. I am wondering if their reaction to the “institutional church” with its forms and structures may have driven them to a position which will eventually prove untenable.

The word “community” signifies a company of persons joined together by common ties, and in the case of the saints the ties that bind are faith in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and love for one another kindled by an awareness of the love of God for all. The community is formed by God. The formation is an act of divine creation. It is established on the foundation that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son. It is a community of the reconciled and a reconciling community.

But if the idea of “community” is inherent in *ekklesia*, why did Jesus use the word “build”? I think it stems from the circumstances surrounding the area where his question elicited the answer from Peter. The city of Caesarea Philippi was built upon a ledge and it honored the name of him who claimed universal dominion. At this very time Caesar-worship was rife in the land.

The statement of Jesus assured that he would not found a community upon a crumbling ledge but upon a principle of such enduring significance that the gates of hades would not swallow it up as they have long since engulfed the Palestinian centers of Caesar-adoration.

I think Jesus was saying something like this: “Simon, you have just acknowledged that I am God’s Son, and I recognize

that you are only Jonah's son, but you are fortunate because my heavenly Father has revealed unto you a truth which you could not have learned from men. Truly you are a stone but upon the bedrock fact which my Father disclosed unto you I am going to found my community, and the gates of hades will not engulf it."

QUESTIONS FROM BRETHREN

Because of the nature of my essays this year I am going to submit some of them in advance to brethren who are concerned. I want them to raise questions for clarification so that I may print them in conjunction with the articles. Here are some of the questions about my foregoing thesis with my replies. I trust that you will find them interesting. You need not concur with my answers to be loved and revered as my brethren in Him who died for us all.

1. Although the word "church" is not a translation of *ekklesia*, is it not possible that through common usage it may become expressive of the idea and be rendered indispensable?

Yes, this could happen, for the word could be invested with a meaning regardless of origin, or it could acquire a meaning through usage. All written words are simply combinations of characters representing certain sounds employed for communication, and they convey only the meaning infused into them by the writer or reader. However, the word "church" is now a professional term of the ecclesiastical establishment and it is unlikely they will ever relinquish it from their grasp.

Moreover, it is very confusing because it is now used to designate a multiplicity of sects. This is an unthinkable thing in the light of God's revelation. One might as well speak of a Methodist God, a Baptist God, or a Presbyterian God, as to speak of these sects as separate "churches." There is only one *ekklesia*. It is composed of all the redeemed and reconciled ones.

No man can call people out of sin, therefore no man can form an *ekklesia* of the saints. There is one body!

2. Do you seriously think that what you have said will influence many of what you call “the heirs of the restoration movement”?

No, I do not. But I never ask what results will accrue from my writings, nor do I concern myself with how many people will concur. I am committed to stating the truth as I understand it if I must stand alone. I am willing to stand in the judgment and answer for what I say. Our brethren have delivered too many inane lessons on such subjects as “The Name of the Church” to really study what I am saying. I know how they feel; for one of my favorite topics used to be, “Whose Name Shall the Bride Wear?” The arguments which I borrowed and made in my sincere ignorance appear downright silly in the light of maturing study and meditation. It would have been much more harmonious to have spoken on “What Common Nouns Designate an Uncommon People?” The community of heaven has no distinctive title. It needs none for there is nothing else in its class from which to distinguish it.

Our brethren have been conditioned and influenced by men with the kind of sectarian spirit which I once possessed, to find their safety in a signboard rather than a Savior. They will hardly accept a translation which reads: “The Christian communities send greetings to you,” instead of: “The Churches of Christ Salute You— Romans 16:16.” To do so would wreak havoc with signboards, cornerstones and “altar cloths.”

If we give up such distinctive titles as “Church of Christ” we will lose our identity among other parties and sects, so I doubt that many whom I know will want to read about “the communities of the saints,” or “the community of God which is at Corinth.” To some it is much more important to defend our traditions than to acknowledge the truth.

3. How can the local “community” be identified and even distinguished from other such communities?

Exactly as it was done in apostolic times. The *ekklesia* was never identified by a special title. To give such an organizational name is to denominate and this creates a denomination. The primitive saints were identified only by the location of their assembly-point or gathering-place. For example: “This is to commend to you Sister Phoebe, who is an administrator of the Cenchræ community.” “Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, with Brother Timotheus, to our dear friend and co-worker Philemon. . . . and to the community in your house.” “Give my regards to the brothers at Laodicea, also to Nympha and the community in her house.”

Our brethren have not only sectarianized themselves with a title, but have doubly sectarianized themselves in parentheses. They not only want to be distinguished as to sect, but also to be separated from their brethren in the same historical party. Thus one reads such absurd signs as “Church of Christ (Christian)” and “Church of Christ (Vocal Music).” Those who erect such signs ought never to have the audacity to go on the radio and condemn only single-minded sectarians. They should at least limit their attacks to those like the “Brethren Church (Progressive Bunkers);” or “Baptist Churches (Duck River);” or to the “Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (Old School).”

Try and imagine an apostle writing, “All the Christian communities (Christian) send their regards” (Romans 16:16). Or, “Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus, to the community of Thessalonians (Vocal Music) in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Of course I know in advance the arguments which will be made to justify these twentieth century signboards. Please pardon me for mentioning that it still looks a little childish and silly to me!

4. In the divided state of the religious world today,

whom do you regard as constituting the *ekklesia*?

We must recognize that the state to which allusion is made is of post-apostolic origin. This complicates matters when we attempt a scriptural approach, and this is the only approach in which I am interested. However, I regard all naturalized citizens of the kingdom of heaven on earth as being in the *ekklesia*, and the citizens are those who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

To state it in another fashion, every person who has been born from above and has been inducted into the family of God is a citizen of the community of the holy ones. In our fragmented world God's sheep are scattered over the sectarian hills. They are not all in one partisan corral. Those who think they are generally count some goats and overlook a lot of sheep about whom they know nothing because of lack of association.

5. Just what do you regard as essential to becoming a part of the *ekklesia*?

Since the word means "called out" one must hear the call of God (1 Corinthians 1:9) and make a proper response to it. Those who never hear the call are not among the called; those who hear it and refuse to respond, or who do not respond in God's way are not called out. The call is made through the gospel, that is, by proclamation of the *kerygma* (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The proper response to the message is belief of the proclamation and immersion in water upon the basis of that faith (Mark 16:15, 16). It seems to me that there can be no question but what those who believe and are immersed thereby become citizens of the community of God on earth. Certainly one who has complied with these things from the heart, may safely assure himself that he is in the *ekklesia*. Such an assumption by others would be without scriptural warrant, and hazardous to say the least.

6. Do you think that those who do not recognize the

distinctions that you have made are guilty of sin?

Of course not. Our brethren need to grow up and stop equating every error of judgment and vocabulary with sin. A little child does not sin against its parents when it becomes confused and does not call everything by its right name. We should not always remain in the baby class, but it requires time to grow and develop greater communication skills. The problem is augmented when we have tutors whose vocabulary is faulty and who threaten those who want to improve.

One can be honestly mistaken about a lot of things without being a sinner, and no one is more seriously mistaken than he who does not know this. It is probable that, in our current climate of investigation, all of us will learn a great many things. This will require alterations and amendments in life and speech conformable to our newly acquired knowledge. There is little to be gained by those who are too stubborn to learn, or those who under the impact of new insights become fervent iconoclasts and start chopping down signboards and other symbols. After all, the real issue is not so much what appears on a signboard as what occupies the hearts of those who gather behind it. Violent revolution of ardent spirits will not serve the divine interest half so well as the gentle reformation of the Holy Spirit.

Next month, if God wills, we will present another phase of our investigation of the primitive community of believers under the heading “The Crisis of Change.” We will show how difficult it was for the Jewish saints to countenance acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles, and how a council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem fixed upon a compromise, with the help of the Spirit, which provided for unity in diversity. This provided for recognition of cultural and national differences while preserving the unity in Christ which made for one body. We earnestly solicit your attention to this coming article which may have tremendous implications for those who seek renewal through recovery of the apostolic order of things.

The Reason Why

Mission Messenger (January 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

“The gentleman complains that our foundation is too broad—too liberal. It is indeed broad, liberal and strong. If it were not so, it would not be a Christian foundation. Christianity is a liberal institution.” (Alexander Campbell in “The Campbell-Rice Debate,” page 808).

I have as my goal to be a Christian, and a Christian only. It is not at all easy for me. My fleshly desires are opposed to it. So are most of my fellow-believers. The love of security entices me to covet the close-hearted association of the sect with its easy answer philosophy to all of the major problems of life. But I am committed to the life of hard struggle essential to free myself from the quicksand of the partisan quagmire, and I am resolved to pursue this dream for my life until death.

Obviously I am not alone in my ambition. A great many thoughtful people make the same claim and quite a few of them are serious about it. But I think a lot of them want to be “Christians only” because they do not want to be something else in our patchwork crazy-quilt religious world. Theirs is a negative approach. They are what they are because they do not care to be what others are. They do not want to be Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, or Catholics, so they create a “Christians only” party. This satisfies their consciences, gives them identity, and may even inflate their corporate ego.

My approach is exactly opposite to this. I want to be a Christian only, because only by so being, can I share in the values of all others who believe in Jesus, but who have become fragmented by the purely human level of their lower nature. I know that they have a great many things which are not values, and in these I do not care to share. I have more than enough of such things of my own. But I do not want to miss any spiritual value for I need all of them.

My readers know that I personally feel that one of the great abuses of spiritual language is to apply the word “churches” to our various modern sects, yet we sometimes have to “speak after the manner of men because of the infirmities of the fleshly mind.” Perhaps you can forgive us for doing so in this article that we might be better able to explain. I want you to see that I am not a “Christian only” simply because I am prejudiced against something else, but that it is only by being a “Christian only” that I can really be everything else.

1. I am *catholic* in my religion. The word *katholikon* originally was applied by physicians and metaphysicians to a universal remedy which, if it could be discovered, would cure all ills and allow men to live forever. I have discovered it. It is the blood of Christ. It cleanses from all sin. It provides eternal life.

My faith is catholic. My love is catholic. I believe all truth and I love all men. I love the world. I have not seen all truth nor all men, but my faith and love are not limited by my personal experience since they are rooted in God.

2. I am a *baptist*. A baptist, in the true sense of the term, is one who baptizes. He is a baptizer. I have baptized a good many thousands of believers in the Messiah. I am not a baptist because I believe in baptism, but because I believe in Jesus who ordained baptism as the response to the message of God’s grace.

3. I am a *methodist*. It is my conviction that our God is a

God of order. The very universe which he created is a majestic display of order and method. I think that my approach to his service should not be slipshod or haphazard. I would want the apostle Paul to be able to write to me, "For though absent in body, I am with you in spirit, and rejoice to see your orderly array and the firm front which your faith in Christ presents."

4. I am *presbyterian*. I hold that each community of believers should select from its constituency a number of qualified presbyters who are properly qualified, men of unimpeachable character, who adhere to the true doctrine, and who may be well able to motivate their hearers with wholesome teaching and to confute objectors, and that these should be ordained to tend the flock of God. They constitute a presbytery in that community.

5. I am *episcopal*. It is my position that elders who are ordained to tend a flock are bishops; that is, overseers of the community, superintending it through power of example. The word for bishop is *episkopos*, so that the presbytery is the episcopate of the community of saints. The divine order is a plurality of bishops over one community; it is never a plurality of communities under one bishop.

6. I am one of the *brethren*. The greatest relationship we can sustain to each other is that of brethren. This simple collective noun indicates a state which transcends all others which create artificial titles to flatter the dominant and further denigrate the subservient and weaker. Few of us have ever caught the glory of the statement, "But you must not be called 'rabbi'; for you have one Rabbi, and you are all brothers."

Rabbis are made by men but brothers are made by God. Men can choose a rabbi but one cannot choose his brothers, either in the physical or spiritual realm. There is a difference between what men are called by other men and what they really are. "You must not be called 'rabbi' . . . you are all brothers."

7. I am one of the *united brethren in Christ*. Unity is not really something we attain or achieve. It is not gained but given. It is a gift of the Spirit. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, and through faith we are all the sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. The only real unity we can enjoy is in Christ. Outside of him we are caught up in national, cultural, status, social and sexual differences. But in him “there is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; you are all one person in Christ Jesus.”

Do not misunderstand this. There are Jews in Christ and there are Greeks in Christ. There are slaves in Christ and there are freemen in Christ. There are males in Christ and there are females in Christ. But *in Christ*, that is, in union with him, there is no such thing as Jew or Greek. National, social and sexual characteristics have nothing to do with this relationship.

Jesus did not die for only one or the other. He died for all persons that they might all become one in him. Anyone who attempts in his human blindness and prejudice to create or perpetuate a community of saints based on color, culture or caste, wars against the purpose of the Christ. You may be sure Christ does not dwell in such a community and it does not dwell in Christ.

8. I am a *friend*. The Master said to his disciples, “I call you servants no longer; a slave does not know what his master is about. I have called you friends, because I have disclosed to you everything that I heard from my Father.” This does not indicate that I am not a servant, but rather that I am a servant who has been taken into his confidence. I know what his plans are. As a mere slave I would be on the “outside” but as a friend I am on the “inside.”

Sharing in a knowledge of my Lord’s intentions does not exempt me from doing what he commands. My obligation becomes even greater because it is enforced by warm regard and

intimacy. “You are my friends, if you do what I command you.” This was not said to the envoys of Jesus because they were apostles, but because they were disciples and I share in that discipleship.

9. I am in the *church of God*. As a part of God’s household, I am in the church of the living God. This makes me a vital part of “the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” It defines my task as responsibility to support and sustain the truth in my personal witness. A bulwark is a defense or rampart and I am obligated to stand in defense of the truth.

10. I am in the *church of God in Christ*. The Gentiles in Thessalonica became followers of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which were in Judea. They did so because when handed God’s message, they received it not as the word of men, but as what it truly is, the very word of God at work in those who hold the faith. When I was handed this message that is how I received it. I have not changed one bit in my attitude toward it. It is still at work in me and on me and it is making some pretty radical changes in my attitude.

11. I am a *protestant*. While I recognize that this word has come to mean the registering of an objection, and there are a great many things to which I object, I want to remind you that originally it did not relate to something one was against, but to that which he was for. “Pro” literally means “for, or forth.” It means an argument or vote in favor of something. *Testari* means to “testify” and is from *testis*, a witness.

For one to say he is not a protestant is to affirm that he does not stand for anything, to intimate that he is not willing to testify in behalf of anything. Like the apostle Paul, I am a two-edged protestant. I protest both for and against. I commend what I can and condemn what I cannot commend. I declare my faith and object strenuously to that which would weaken or destroy it.

12. I am a *conservative*. A conservative is one who seeks to conserve that which he admires and respects and which he believes to be for the general welfare. I believe in the preservation of natural resources such as forests, fisheries and wilderness areas. I am a lover of wildlife and am dedicated to the ideal of preserving its habitat. I believe in the preservation of economic resources. I am opposed to throwing money down ratholes, whether the rats who made them are domestic or foreign.

I believe in preservation of spiritual resources and I am committed to protecting them from erosion and attack to the extent of my ability. I am not interested in maintaining the *status quo*, because that is just Latin for the mess we are in. Too many are concerned merely about holding the fort when they should be involved in fighting the devil.

13. I am a *liberal*. This word is from *liberalis* and means “pertaining to a freeman.” “The man who as a slave received the call to be a Christian is the Lord’s freedman . . . You are bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” I am resolved to remain free as a slave of Jesus. And I am not so much concerned with what I have been freed from doing as what I have been freed to do.

I am liberal in the sense that the term implies one who is characterized by or inclined toward opinions favoring progress or reform. I want to see the cause to which I have devoted my all make gain and growth in the hearts of men. I want to see the unfinished reformation continue, and I want to be an activist in promoting God’s design for his people.

MY POSITION

Thus I am a Christian only, not because I want to be narrow, limited and inhibited, but precisely because I do not want to be. If I were a Baptist I could not be a Methodist. I

would be frowned upon as a compromiser by both. No sect is big enough to include all of the truth or all of the saved. Truth cannot be caught and confined in sectarian containers any more than the atmosphere can be canned and dispensed by the Democrats or the Republicans. Neither the truth to be believed nor the air to be breathed can be captured by any party, although both can be polluted by all of the parties.

I must either settle for less than the whole truth, which means trying to content myself with less than the undivided Christ, or I must be just a Christian. The love of God was not designed to run on a narrow-gauge track. I say this in full cognizance of the statement of our blessed Lord that, "The gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow." Many of my brethren misunderstand that like they do a lot of other sayings of Jesus, and their misconceptions have dwarfed a lot of them. Some of them are pretty small and narrow, fearful of growing either up or out! Jesus was not trying to stunt us by scaring us! He was not trying to produce pygmies or manufacture midgets!

If I am any *kind* of Christian, I become a hyphenated one, and what is before the hyphen restricts what is after it. But I do not want to be restricted. "Christ set us free to be free men. Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again." I shall not be some kind of Christian nor all kinds of Christian. I do not want to be grouped, typed, classed or categorized, except as a follower of Christ Jesus. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." If it is enough for him to have me so it is enough for me to be thus.

No man belongs to Jesus because he is a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Conservative, a Liberal or a Protestant. Disciples of Jesus may create parties, but no party can create disciples of Jesus. If men will be disciples of Jesus it will be in spite of their parties and not because of them. The body of Christ consists of many parts, not parties. I can share in

all that is holy, just and good in all of the parties as a Christian only, and I simply do not want to share in less than all that is good.

All parties have a combination of truth and error. Of course this is also my condition, but as a Christian only I am free to adopt new truth at once when I apprehend it. I am also free to immediately reject error when I am made aware of it. This is not true of a partisan. He must subscribe to the error as well as the truth in the party creed, whether written or unwritten, else he will be ejected from the party. Generally he will be retained longer while questioning the truth than while questioning the error of the party. Parties are often quite sensitive about their errors, because it is their errors rather than their truths, which serve to give them identity. Others may have discovered the truths they hold without having been betrayed into their errors. The distinctive errors of the party are always their own brainchildren and we tend to lavish more care upon our own offspring.

It is true that most parties tend to outgrow their errors, or their errors outgrow them, but this takes centuries and I do not have time to wait. I cannot be saved by the truth held by others and I refuse to be damned by the errors held by others, so for that reason I insist that I shall belong only to Jesus.

This does not free me from a relationship to others. It enlarges it. There is no place for a lone wolf among God's sheep. A single member does not constitute a body and a head requires a body! Just as Jesus belongs to all of his disciples and all of his disciples belong to Jesus, I also belong to every person on this whole wide earth who belongs to Jesus. "We being many, are one!"

Let me say once more that I am a Christian only, not because I desire to be narrow and exclusive, but rather because I want to be expansive and inclusive. No sect on earth is broad

enough or comprehensive enough to provide all of the love or truth which I crave. I am not an ecumenical Christian, but as a Christian, I am ecumenical in the inherent meaning of that term, although not in its imposed and infused partisan connotation. I do not care too much about a One World Church, but I am deeply concerned about a “one church” world, and some day I shall see it when “the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!” Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

A College Student

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

We get a number of letters these days from college men and women. It is a privilege to hear from them. Here is part of a recent letter we received.

I am a graduate student in biology at the university here. I grew up in the Church of Christ but have been very depressed recently because I simply cannot condone the arrogance and dogmatism which characterizes the large congregation where my family belongs. In fact, I was getting ready to throw it all overboard when someone sent me your publication. It offered me a glimmer of hope and I have decided to stay with it a little while longer.

The great number of letters of this general tone indicate that a lot of very fine young people in our day are having difficulty with the sectarian spirit which has captured a large part of our segment of the restoration movement. It is only natural that they should chafe under the rigidity of a party system which projects its every pronouncement and interpretation as infallible, and regards as second-class citizens of the heavenly kingdom those who do not conform. The rebellion against “our establishment” is understandable in the light of the current revolt against the sham and pretence of all such citadels of orthodoxy.

However, we need to realize that there are thousands who are crusading for reform from within. We should not underestimate what is taking place. Changes in the thought patterns of ponderous structures always come slowly and those made in religious structures are the slowest of all. This may be good for religion involves our deepest feelings and innermost emotions. We should not sacrifice the discoveries, gains and values of the past in a mad rush to reach a higher plane. Mountain steeps are best climbed slowly and with due regard for the supply base.

Our brethren are under a great deal of tension. They do not want to throw the chart and compass away, but they have been misusing them as weapons against the brethren, rather than using them as steering guides. The primary purpose of a compass is not as a knuckle-duster to clout brethren over the head. Now there is a genuine appeal to get on with the task at hand rather than running in crazy circles around some of the issues which have engrossed our attention. I think we will eventually get back on course and when we do we will find others there who are also piloting their lives by the bright and morning Star.

Probably the easiest thing to do in this age of restlessness and uneasiness would be to desert and “go over the hill,” but I am not about to quit. The fact is, I am just getting started. If there are those who are waiting for me to shut up shop and retire to a cave of Adullam they are due for a sad disappointment. I intend to stay with the brethren I have always known and to work for the Master from this base, revealing the sheer folly of our divisions and encouraging all who will listen to labor for fellowship and unity.

I shall not be scared off, shoved out, or shaken loose. I have been around enough to know that there are problems wherever you go and I don’t want to swap the problems that I am familiar with for new ones that I might not understand. I do not know

how a dog would better himself by trading the fleas he has scratched and fought so long, for strange ones that might not understand his disposition!

I can sympathize with those in scholastic disciplines who are taught to think for themselves, and who find that the one place they are not allowed to do so is in the congregation. It must be a little difficult for some of them to listen repeatedly to our pious platitudes which are calculated to augment our apathy and commend our complacency. Surely it is a letdown to come from the campus where the air is rife with discussion about such matters as the population explosion, hunger, famine, war, and the rights of mankind, to hear a dissertation on why we do not contribute to Herald of Truth or use individual cups in the Lord's Supper.

But there is an oasis of concerned ones in almost every splinter among us, dry and desert though it may seem. And these need the encouragement of all the rest of us. As for myself, the word "depression" is not in my spiritual vocabulary. I am confident that God can take our few little sardines and wiener buns and feed a multitude. I do not think the Holy Spirit has retired on social security. It is my task to plant and water; it is God's work to give the increase. If I fulfill my responsibility He will not fail in His part. I have no qualm or doubt about the outcome. I am glad our brother is staying. I urge all of our younger brethren not to defect. We shall win the battle for returning sanity in a movement which has been tearing at its own flesh. One of these days we shall see fellowship in its true light and will be able to join hands with all of God's children to bring a powerful witness in our neo-pagan world. In the meantime we count it a pleasure to hear from any of our brothers and sisters on the college or university campus. You are an inspiration to me, and I hope I can be an encouragement to you.

The Crisis of Change

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

Slavery is that which cramps powers. The worst slavery is that which cramps the noblest powers. Worse, therefore, than he who manacles the hands and feet is he who puts fetters on the mind, and pretends to demand that men shall think, and believe, and feel thus and thus, because others so believed, and thought, and felt before. (Sermons by Frederick W. Robertson, page 213).

The Good News which Jesus authorized to all the world consisted of seven facts. These related to his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification. The first five were attested by the personal experience of the apostles who were required to company with him during his entire public ministry from his baptism until he was taken up from them. The last two were certified by a manifestation both visible and audible of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

These seven facts were first presented only to Jews and proselytes, and when they embraced them by faith, and were immersed by the authority of Jesus, they constituted the first community of the saved ones by the blood of atonement. Their recognition of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of the prophets did not convert them from their exclusive “Jewishness” and they had no thought of forming any association outside of the pale of Judaism.

Having grown up in an atmosphere of tolerance for sundry viewpoints which enabled Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and others to gather at the same temple and participate together in the same liturgy, they expected to compose a Messianic sect in which the circumcised ones who regarded Jesus as the Messiah could share in a communal relationship while remaining within the framework of the law.

There was no intention of forming a “Christian church” and many saints suffered persecution and death without knowing they were expected to be “Christians.” Certainly the term would have been meaningless to Stephen who died for the faith. The first disciples continued to share in the temple worship at the hours of prayer, to circumcise their children and observe the law. The apostles, who were orthodox in practice, kept the dietary laws meticulously, and Peter assured God that he was kosher, long after Pentecost.

There was no discord among them as to their relationship to Judaism and “they continued daily with one accord in the temple.” In their homes they ate together in small groups, maintaining that hospitality which Jerusalem Jews had always shown to their foreign brethren, and at the principal meal each day they partook of the bread and fruit of the vine, in memory of Jesus who had enjoined them to do this until he returned.

They created no special days or hours of worship with the exception of gatherings for united prayer when persecution drove them together to call upon God to grant them boldness. Otherwise they remained in the synagogues where they had been wont to study and read the law, the psalms and the prophets.

When a persecutor, breathing out threats of death against the Messianists, wanted to arrest them in the capital city of Syria, he requested letters from the high priest addressed to the rulers of the synagogues, demanding that any believers in Jesus among their number be delivered up to be bound and

transferred to Jerusalem for trial. There was no separate or segregated group in Damascus.

These primitive saints observed the customs and traditions, and kept the law, being zealous for it. They celebrated the passover and other days of national significance. In their new relationship created in the belief that they had found the Prince of life, and had recognized the Holy One and the Just, they experienced a sense of closeness which enabled them to exhibit joy, so that in praising God they found favor with all the populace, and daily their number was augmented by those who were being made whole through trust in the Messiah.

They were Jews and their natural inclinations and prejudices remained deeply ingrained in them. This was especially true of those members of the sect of the Pharisees who became believers, for these were the uncompromising proponents of the law. Too, the human failing of cupidity raised its ugly head above the serene and placid surface and the first two of their number who died, perished by divinely administered retribution for greed, conspiracy and falsehood.

At the original proclamation there were Jews present from every nation then in existence and those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah were drawn from both the Hebrews, or Palestinian Jews, and the Hellenists, or Greek-speaking Jews. The latter often tended to be more liberal in association with non-Jews than the former and were sometimes suspect because of this. The first discontent in the new community arose between these two groups.

It was traditional with every synagogue that it was responsible for the sustenance of the widows who found a haven within it. Deacons, or almoners, regularly made collections which were employed to purchase the necessities of life for the poor. The new synagogue of Messianists followed this procedure of caring for dependents. However, the Greek-speaking Jews

alleged that favoritism was being shown and their widows were being neglected.

The apostles, who had been receiving funds, and distributing food each day, asked to be relieved of the time-consuming task and requested the company to choose from their number seven honest men of reputation whom they could appoint over the business of supplying needs. All were highly pleased with the suggestion and averted future criticism by selecting only Hellenists, including a proselyte of Antioch with the others.

THE GATHERING STORM

The subsequent calm was disturbed when various foreign Jews engaged in a debate with Stephen, one of the seven, who was charged with treason and haled before the Sanhedrin. In his defense he argued that any place where God confronted man was a holy place, and that the fathers had met God in Chaldea, Egypt and Midian, and that the very law was given on a mount outside of Palestine. Thus, Jerusalem was not unique, and God could not be confined to a temple constructed by men.

This speech with its implications of God's universal concern so inflamed the hearers that they stopped their ears and ran to assault Stephen, while gritting their teeth in uncontrollable rage. They hustled him out of the city which they regarded as holy, and murdered him by beating his body into a pulp with rocks.

The action of the court, in open defiance of the Roman law, kindled the fire of persecution in the heart of a young rabbinical student from Tarsus, who was in the city as a student of the Hillel School. In an action, bordering upon the berserk, he broke into private dwellings and dragged men and women from their homes, throwing them in prison. The helpless disciples fled the city with the exception of the apostles, all of whom were

Palestinian Jews, and regarded as orthodox.

Those who were forced to flee went everywhere telling the Good News that the Messiah had come. One of the seven went to Samaria and found a ready reception for the Message. When the apostles heard that the Samaritans had received the word of God they sent Peter and John to investigate, because the Jews had in the past had no dealings with the Samaritans, although the latter were circumcised. When they ascertained the correctness of the report they prayed that the Holy Spirit might be received by those who had been immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Meanwhile, the chief persecutor had undergone a shaking experience while en route to a foreign capital to arrest believers. He encountered the Messiah just outside the city walls, and was blinded by the heavenly vision. When he was led by the hand into the city and taken to the house of Judas on Straight Street, he was so stricken that he could not eat or drink for three days. At the end of this period one of the very persons whom he had come to arrest visited him with the result that his sight was restored and he was baptized.

Immediately he entered into the very synagogues to which the high priest had given him letters of authority and introduction, and proclaimed that the Messiah was God's Son. All of the Jews were astonished at this turn of events, but when they attempted to contradict the former rabbinical student, he refuted their arguments with ease, and proved that the Nazarene was unquestionably the Messiah.

Unable to meet him on the forensic level, the Jews conspired to murder him from ambush, and placed a guard at the city gates on an around-the-clock basis. However, their quarry escaped over the wall and returned to Jerusalem, where the Messianists were afraid of him and refused to believe that he had changed. A Cypriot Jew vouched for his story, and when he

was accepted, he inaugurated a discussion with the very Hellenists whose act of murder had started his own career of pillage and slaughter.

When they plotted to do away with him the brethren learned about it and spirited him away to Caesarea from which he returned to his boyhood home of Tarsus. The historian records, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." The community of believers was still safely Jewish. Not an uncircumcised person had found his way into it. Perhaps none would ever find acceptance with many of the original Jerusalem company.

THE OPENING DOOR

Then occurred an astonishing event which was fraught with explosive potential. Peter had visited the saints at Lydda and while there learned of the death of a member of the widow ministry at Joppa. He went to the seaport town and raised her and presented her to the saints and widows who had been "enrolled in the number." He remained in the city dwelling with a man who operated a tanner's vat, who also was named Simon.

About this time an angel appeared to a Roman military captain stationed at Caesarea, while he was praying about three o'clock in the afternoon. The angel informed him that his prayers had been heard and instructed him to send to Joppa and call for Peter to come and tell him what to do. He immediately dispatched two slaves and a soldier who was his personal bodyguard, on the mission.

The next day as the envoys were nearing the city about noon. Peter became very hungry, but because of the delay in luncheon preparations went to the house-top to pray. He fell into a trance in which he envisioned a great vessel descending from

heaven and containing all kinds of unclean animals. A voice instructed him to arise and slay the animals and eat. Peter resisted and declared he had never violated the kosher laws. The voice addressed him again with the words, "Do not refer to that as common which the Lord has cleansed." This occurred three times, after which the container was drawn back into heaven.

Peter was in a quandary as to the significance of the vision but even while he was revolving it in his mind the emissaries from Caesarea were approaching the house. Peter was informed by the Holy Spirit that he should accompany the men, and the next day, accompanied by six Jewish disciples he went with them. When he arrived at the home of the military captain, Peter at once informed him that his presence should not be considered as endorsement, and it was not lawful for him as a Jew to associate with, or even enter the house of a non-Jew. He made it clear that, except for the vision, he would not have come at all.

Although Peter was a herald of the Good News about Jesus and had learned three days previously that an angel had instructed the army captain to send for him to hear words from him, his reluctance to share the message with the uncircumcised household was evidenced in his opening question, "Let me ask what you had in mind in sending for me."

When Peter became convinced that God really wanted the Gentile gathering to hear about Jesus, he recounted what had transpired, but pointed out that the word was sent unto the children of Israel and the witnesses were commanded to preach to the people (Jews). While he was saying that "whosoever believes in him shall receive forgiveness of sin," the Holy Spirit descended on the whole Gentile company. The six Jews who had come with Peter were astounded at this phenomenon, and could hardly believe that the Gentiles were given such a token of God's grace. While they questioned what had happened Peter demanded if any one of them would dare deny the right of these

Gentiles to be immersed.

However, when Peter arrived in Jerusalem, the circumcision party in the congregation attacked him for associating and eating with Gentiles who were uncircumcised. Peter rehearsed all that had transpired and summoned the six Jews as witnesses. He made it clear that he would not have gone except for the vision and that he would not have encouraged the Gentile household if it had not been for the Spirit. “Who was I to oppose God in this situation?”

Although this silenced the immediate opposition, it soon became obvious that many of the Palestinian Jewish disciples had no intention of opening the door to the uncircumcised on a wholesale basis. It seems evident that they regarded the incident at Caesarea as unique and only in case of a direct demonstration by the Spirit would they reluctantly immerse Gentiles in the Name.

It was different with some of the Hellenists who had been driven out of Jerusalem at the time of Stephen’s murder. At first those who fled to Cyprus, Syria and Phoenicia limited their proclamation only to Jews. Then, some of the more daring and liberal ones, who came to Antioch, the cultural capital, proclaimed Jesus as Lord to the Greeks. A great number believed and turned from their idols.

When word of this seeped back to Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to investigate what was happening. The choice of a delegate was fortunate. A Cypriot, Barnabas was a good man who was full of faith and the Spirit. He rejoiced upon beholding the manifestation of God’s grace, and encouraged the new converts to cling to the faith. He went to Tarsus and located Saul and brought him to Antioch, where these two Hellenists labored without prejudice or racial bias.

Meanwhile, the circumcision party in Jerusalem, bent on confining the Way to a Jewish sect, and without consent of the whole company, dispatched certain of their number to Antioch to inform the brethren that their salvation was contingent upon their submitting to circumcision after the manner of Moses. Paul and Barnabas, recognizing that the universal purpose of God was in jeopardy, boldly challenged these teachers from Jerusalem. When the dispute became heated it was decided that Paul and Barnabas, with some others, should go to Jerusalem and lay the question before the apostles and elders. The circumcision party would not have consented to this if they had not thought that their position would be upheld.

Paul took Titus, a young Greek, as a test case. If Titus was forced to be circumcised in Jerusalem the case for freedom would be lost; if he returned uncircumcised the attempt to make the called out ones a mere Messianic sect would be thwarted. The community of the saints never faced a more crucial test. Only the Holy Spirit could keep it from fragmenting into a splintered movement, with one headquarters at Jerusalem and another at Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas received a cordial welcome from the apostles and elders, as well as from the Jerusalem community. They reported on their achievements in the pagan environment and the basis upon which they had received believers from the Gentile world. It was at this juncture the circumcision party threatened to disrupt the proceedings.

Members of the Pharisaical sect who had become Messianists demanded that all Gentiles be circumcised as essential to being in the fellowship. The battle centered around Titus. Men who pretended to be brethren, but were not a part of the community, were secretly brought in and put forward to contend against Paul and upset the meeting. But Paul was adamant. He refused to allow them to touch Titus or to bring him into bondage to their legalism. The issue was clearly drawn.

Will men be saved by works of the flesh, or by grace through faith?

In a public meeting, after lengthy and stormy debate. Peter arose and took his stand. “We believe that it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, and so are they.” This marked a decisive turn in the proceedings. Paul and Barnabas recited the list of miracles by which God had attested and confirmed their labors among the Gentiles. But the one man whose decision would most count was James. Already he was venerated as the most respected leader in the Jewish community. His orthodoxy was unquestioned.

Hegesipus relates how James went daily to the temple to pray for the forgiveness of the people, and how through long periods of kneeling, his knees became hard and worn like those of a camel. His integrity and equitable dealing earned for him the name of “The Just,” or “the Oblias,” which means “the bulwark of the people.” Just as every synagogue had three “pillars” or supports, so the Messianic community looked to Peter, James and John. Clement of Alexandria says that James served in the same capacity as the ruler of a synagogue, that is, the first among equals.

The judgment of James was that no irksome restrictions should be imposed upon the Gentiles turning to God, but that they should simply be instructed to keep the four Noachan precepts. The Jews believed that when Noah, as the father of all mankind, came forth from the ark, that God lifted the ban on the eating of animal flesh which had existed to make ante-diluvian man a vegetarian. It was also a matter of tradition that in conjunction with the permission to eat flesh, God demanded of Noah and his descendants that they abstain from things polluted by contamination with idols, from fornication, from that which had been killed by strangulation, and from blood.

Since these principles were given long before the law of

Moses, and were universal in application, the whole community saw the wisdom of not binding anything which was distinctly Jewish upon the Gentiles. They decided to write a letter incorporating the suggestion of James. The conference ended in a compromise. Peter, James and John would go to the Jews and would continue to tell them to circumcise their children; Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles and instruct them that it was not necessary for them to be circumcised. The terms of the compromise were clearly stated by James himself a long time afterward (Acts 21:21, 25).

This meant that the community of believers on earth would find their unity in Jesus and not in uniformity of thought or practice. Jew and Gentile would hear the same good news and in accepting it would acknowledge the same Lord, so there would be but one body in Him, but cultural and environmental differences would regulate their approach to Him. There would continue to be differences between attitudes in Jerusalem and Antioch, but they would not affect the fellowship in Christ.

It is always easier to agree to a thing theoretically than to apply it practically. Although the Jerusalem community amicably agreed not to bind circumcision on the Gentiles they continued as a segregated congregation, refusing to eat with the uncircumcised. The community at Antioch was the first integrated congregation. This created a problem for Peter who was one of the chief spokesmen in the Jerusalem fellowship forum, and who helped draft the letter to the Gentile communities.

When Peter paid a visit to Antioch he entered into the spirit of the community and indulged in the love feasts at the communal table with all of the brethren. But when he learned that certain brethren had come from James, and that the report would be conveyed to Jerusalem that he was eating with the uncircumcised, he quickly divided the brethren and refused to be seen eating with those not of the circumcision. The factional

spirit was kindled until even Barnabas and other Jewish brethren joined in the exclusivistic attitude.

Paul wrote thus about the occasion, “Later, however, when Cephas came to Antioch I had to oppose him publicly, for he was then plainly in the wrong. It happened like this. Until the arrival of some of James’ companions, he, Peter, was in the habit of eating his meals with the Gentiles. After they came, however, he withdrew and ate separately from the Gentiles— out of sheer fear of what the Jews might think. The other Jewish Christians carried out a similar piece of deception and the force of their bad example was so great that even Barnabas was affected by it.”

It is evident from this that those in the Jerusalem community did not eat with the Gentiles, and while they were willing to accept their admission at distant points they did not receive them at home. Paul called Peter’s hand for trying to bind this discriminatory attitude on a community where both races were integrated as equals.

History confirms the fact that the idea of making the community of believers another Jewish sect died hard and slowly. Even after the apostles were long since departed there remained many who were zealous of the law. Justin Martyr in his “Dialogue with Trypho the Jew” writes, “As for the Jews who, professing to believe in Christ, would yet compel the converts from paganism to adhere to the whole law of Moses, under pain of perdition, I cannot recognize them as belonging to the church.”

It was not easy for men to forget their early teaching and background. Thus there were Jews in the community who thought that every person must be circumcised after the manner of Moses in order to be saved. There were Gentiles who believed there might be something to idols. “For some, who until now have been used to idols, eat the meat as meat really sacrificed to

a god, and their delicate conscience is thereby injured.” Yet these were in Christ and were instructed to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

One thing is apparent. The primitive saints were not conformists. One congregation differed from another. Jerusalem and Antioch were not alike. There were grave cultural differences which were bridged only by mutual love for the Lord Jesus. He who makes it appear that the lifetime of the apostles was a period when all was rosy and pleasant does not recognize the facts. Their very letters were written because of turmoil and friction. The many exhortations to mend their ways and to live in peace are indicative of the problems which arose.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR DAY

Let us repeat that the smug assumption that the community of the saints during the lifetime of the apostles was a smooth-running organization of conformists is shown to be fallacious in the light of history and the new covenant scriptures. Thus, the real goal of restoration-minded believers in our day should be the recapture of the noble spirit of tolerance which preserved the one body from disintegrating under serious tensions and stresses.

Men have sought for the recovery of forms and rituals and “acts of worship,” and in their feverish search for that which may never have existed in fact, have fragmented into hostile splinter movements. The unfortunate state which we have allowed to happen is the very thing the apostles and elders at Jerusalem sought to prevent. They were successful because of a firm resolution not to bind upon the brethren anything which was not essential to a personal relationship with God. It is a pertinent question whether we have any right to bind upon immersed believers anything beyond the four things which were bound upon Gentile converts. What else would the apostles bind

if they were living today?

It is absurd and asinine to divide the saints of God over such questions as the millennium, for example. By no stretch of the imagination can this issue be made as important as was circumcision. The same attitude which prevailed at Jerusalem would have prevented our shameful and disgraceful schism over such matters. Why did the brethren not give each other the right hand of fellowship to go to their respective areas without seeking to bind their dogmatic decrees upon one another and frustrate the grace of God?

It is useless for men to plead that they are “patterning after the early church,” so long as they allow such matters to divide them. Their action is as contrary to the attitude of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem as anything can be. Only the densest ignorance can equate our position with the spirit of the primitive saints. The scholarly world will see through the hypocrisy which pays lip-service to restoration while denying the very essence of that original spirit.

It seems almost incredible that men with doctoral degrees in such liberal arts colleges as Abilene Christian College or George Pepperdine College could be so provincial and naive as to condone and even try to defend the factional barriers created over matters such as a view of the millennium. Surely our brethren are sadly lacking in their theology. Surely they have a warped view of the ancient order of things.

This becomes even more apparent if you substitute one of our “issues” for the word “circumcision” and if you insert the name of one of our chief centers for Jerusalem or Antioch in the apostolic writings. “But some men came down from Nashville and were teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you espouse the millennium according to the custom of the Gospel Advocate you cannot be saved.’” Or again, “But some believers who belonged to the amillennial party rose up, and said. It is necessary for

them to embrace the amillennial position and observe the creed of the loyal church.”

Why can we not realize that in Christ Jesus neither premillennialism or amillennialism is of any avail, but faith working through love?

More than anything else in our day we need to restore to the saints that spirit of Christ which will enable us to “lead a life worthy of the calling to which we are called.” It is manifested “with all lowliness and meekness, with patience forbearing one another in love.” It makes us eager “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Of what value are forms and structures, doctrines and dogmas without this?

The apostle Paul, more than many others of his day, caught the vision that the herald of Christ did not force others to adapt to himself in order to hear the message. Instead the proclaimer subjected himself as a slave to others that the influence of a slave might capture them for Christ. “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.” A slave does not assert himself, he does not debate or argue with one whose slave he is.

Paul became as a Jew, as one under the law, as one outside the law, as one who was weak. He said, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” There were things which Paul regarded as important to himself and his faith personally which he was willing to forego for the sake of others; there were things important to others that he was willing to adopt while among them. He did not ask anyone to adapt to him but he adapted himself to everyone. “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

All things, all men, all means— what a terrific approach to the saving of men! What maturity, what stature, what freedom! “I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its

blessings.” Paul was clear as to the content of the gospel. He did not confuse it with anything else, not even with the apostolic doctrine. The gospel was superior to all else. It was the message about a person. There is a difference between that which produces life and that which sustains it.

This concept is vital to our need of today. If we elevate every trivial discussion to the realm of gospel, we can make no overtures, for to do so would compromise the gospel, in our warped view. But if we restore the gospel to proper perspective and realize that our controversial issues are no part of the *kerygma*, the proclamation, we can make adjustments without forsaking the gospel. We must restore the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit or wallow in a welter of semantic involvements, while men go to hell and the world burns down around our persons.

The tragedy of our day is that men confuse the very spirit of tolerance and longsuffering enjoined upon us by Christ Jesus with unworthy softness and spiritual effeminacy. They regard as deadly poisonous plants the very flowers which God has planted to beautify and grace his heritage. They put light for darkness and darkness for light even as they profess to be guides for the blind. They seek to extinguish the one spark which alone can make our lives wholesome and enlightening.

It is absurd to assume that the way of love which makes allowances for one another is the easy way. It is the most difficult of all ways. It is only when one grows into such maturity that he realizes the bigness of the universe that he does not try to circumscribe it with his own narrow and feeble thought-processes. To love and revere those who differ because they are the offspring of a common Father, and to view the relationship thus established as more vital than the peculiarities of those within it is no task for little souls. The cult of conformity is the habitat of the contracted heart!

Satan never enforced a more subtle or damnable strategy than when he seduced the children of God into thinking that the way to prove their loyalty to the Father was by separating from His children over matters of opinion and intellectual perception. And hell rejoices and the demons clap hands in glad abandon because the heirs of heaven have been brainwashed into thinking that love unlimited is dangerous. The wicked one can take a holiday as long as he can employ us in throwing his fiery darts at one another. Love that will not function in spite of differences is not brotherly love at all!

A NEW LOOK

We need to take a new look at ourselves in the light of God's record of the primitive saints. Are the things over which we have divided really as important as we have made them to appear? It is evident that many of them cannot compare in gravity with some of the problems which affected the early communities of believers. If those communities could remain unbroken in spite of serious divergencies, how can we justify our fragmentation over inferior matters?

Are our factional emphases as important to God as they are to us? Does the Father think so little of his children that he would rather have the fabric of the family torn to shreds than to have them study the Bible in classes, or use individual cups to distribute the fruit of the vine?

Have our fathers in a previous age of debate and controversy projected their views and interpretations as the will of God, and saddled us with a system which makes our plea for unity the butt of ridicule among thinking and perceptive people? Are we committed to the perpetuation of strife and division out of a false sense of loyalty to the framers of our partisan tests and creeds. Shall we continue to lay upon the shoulders of our children a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to

bear?

We revere those who broke with the false systems of the past to bring us thus far on the path to a brighter day. But if our ancestors are to be honored because they sought to undo the mistakes of their fathers, can we honor their memory by breathing life into the body of their own errors? Can we be worthy sons of our sires if we plod blindly along in their footprints without the courage to launch out upon our own and blaze a new trail of compassion and understanding through the jungle of sectarian complexity into which our factional attitudes have lured us?

If the restoration plea was valid when applied to the sects of the first half of the nineteenth century why will it not be equally valid to apply to our own parties in the last half of the twentieth century? Is the schism which we damn in others to be applauded in us? If we can plead with others to go back beyond their divisions to the apostolic proclamation as the hope of unity why can we not go back beyond ours to the same great rallying point, the cross of Jesus?

I know not what course others may take, but as for me, I shall seek to return to the abiding values of the apostolic era. I shall seek to revive in my heart and life the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and to recapture the generosity and tenderhearted concern for all of my brethren which will make it possible to be forgiving as God in Christ forgave me. I want to be made new in mind and spirit, to put on the new nature of God's creating which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth. I want to let love for the brotherhood breed warmth of genuine affection.

Without these things whatever is restored will be an empty shell, a vacant hull, a decaying corpse. Of what value is it to clean the outside of the cup or dish while the inside is greasy with self-indulgence? To what avail shall we meticulously pay

tithes of our modern mint, dill and cummin, while we overlook the weightier demands of justice, mercy and faith? I am wearied with the spirit of Pharisaism which contrives new modes of travel over land and sea to win one convert, only to make him twice as factional and partisan as those who boast of his accession.

Let us restore the ideal of God, not by first recapturing every jot and tittle, but by recovery of the lost nail from which everything in the law and prophets were meant to be suspended. What good will be done by codes of conduct, rules of ritual and precepts of priesthood, if we have nothing upon which to hang them? “And indeed this command comes to us from Christ himself: that he who loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:21).

Absolute Proof

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

A young friend whom we have never met, but who is attending a prominent state university, writes to ask if we can produce in simple and useable fashion absolute proof of the existence of God. It seems that if we cannot do so he is ready to become a skeptic and abandon what he has been taught from childhood in order to maintain what he defines as his “intellectual integrity.”

I take all such letters seriously but I must confess that they do not perturb me as they do a lot of those in my generation. I rather expect such communications from those who are freshmen and sophomores in college because I realize that they are passing through a period when they must question and re-evaluate all they have been taught in order to arrive at a personal and disciplined faith. We cannot always go through life trusting for support upon what our fathers and grandfathers believed. We must fight our way through the jungle of terrifying doubts until we emerge into the sunlight on our own.

At a certain time in our lives we are betrayed by our very inexperience, coupled with our search for assurance and meaning, into demanding dogmatic data upon which to rest our case. Increasing growth toward maturity eventually leads us to the place where we recognize that happiness in the intellectual and moral sphere is not contingent upon a collection of

correlated propositions in a well arranged catalogue. God cannot be reduced to a mathematical equation nor relegated to a table of contents.

An absolute is one thing and absolute proof of the absolute is a wholly different thing. There may be no absolute proof for the simple reason that the prover is fallible and all of his proof must be relative. The finite cannot embrace the infinite with reason nor encompass the ultimate with logic. God is greater, if he is God, than any criteria we have by which to measure. But the fact that a package is greater than the range of a scale to weigh, does not prove the parcel does not exist. It but proves the inadequacy of the device upon which we depend for ascertaining weight.

Now one is not dependent for well-being solely upon what he can test or prove by the limited criteria available unto him. He may project himself upon wings of faith beyond the reach of rational proof. One may see with a powerful telescope that which is outside the range of his gun, and he may envision with the eyes of the inner being that which cannot be bagged by the weapon of logic. Faith is as much an attribute of the spirit as reason, and the man who refuses to employ it is as handicapped as one who blinds an eye until it is atrophied from disuse.

It is a fallacy to assume that everything can be proven or must be proven to be believed. Such an assumption itself would have to be proven in order to be accepted. There is ample evidence available that men have fervently believed things which they could not finally prove and have been as profoundly changed by that faith as if they could test the reality in a laboratory or an experimental research. If the ultimate proof of God's existence available to man is the effect of his transforming penetration into our personality, such a change achieved by faith is as meaningful as if we could establish it by a logical process.

To merely prove the existence of God as another fact of

intellectual perception, or to have a prize book on the library shelf dealing with the logical sequence essential to arriving at the conclusion is useless. If God is personal the real proof must be person-to-person, and it must lie in the rising above the purely human and the triumph over the natural.

The inability of man to present absolute proof constitutes no ground for affirming the non-existence of God. To so affirm would mean that the one making the declaration possessed unlimited knowledge and infinite vision. Everyone who promulgates the proposition that there is no God ends up by making himself a God. If man is powerless to present absolute proof of God's existence, his powerlessness does not constitute absolute proof of God's non-existence. No fact is affected by the ability or inability of one to prove it. The fact is one thing, the ability to prove it is something else, and outside of the fact itself.

Our friend who rejects God for want of absolute proof can turn to nothing else for security. If he predicates his "intellectual integrity" upon such proof as he requires he will eventually be unable to build upon science or any other scholastic discipline for none of these can furnish absolute proof. Thus, his reaction is not intellectual at all, but anti-intellectual. Integrity is not conditioned upon demand for absolute proof in advance of faith, but upon unprejudiced examination of data as it is disclosed or discovered, and the interpretation and acceptance of all such data as appears to be relevant, with a mind held open for reception of additional testimony which may subsequently appear.

It possibly gives one who is forced to re-examine the grounds of his faith by exposure to new ideas on the college campus, a real feeling of sophistication to announce that he is rejecting his childhood faith to maintain "intellectual integrity." Being a lot older and having long since passed through the same stage of development, I trust that I may be excused for smiling rather than exhibiting the profound shock which such

announcements are intended to provoke in old fuddy-duddies and traditionalists like myself. You see I do not equate intellectuality with arrival at such doubts any more than letting your hair grow down to your collar as a freshman or taking up smoking a pipe as a sophomore.

Most of us in our intellectual development are like a wasp, which is bigger when first hatched out than at any other time. Fortunately some of us live long enough to be able to look back with a patronizing smile upon our former selves, and to learn that the truly sophisticated do not measure the universe finally and irrevocably by their own feeble and limited resources and thought processes. Once we quit playing God it is much easier to resume praying to him. And we need to pray!

As for myself, I have examined the available data related to God and revelation, and I humbly accept for my own life in simple trusting faith the existence of God and the authenticity and genuineness of his word. When I see rabbit tracks in the newly fallen snow I cannot prove absolutely that the rabbit exists but I believe that if I patiently follow the tracks I will eventually see the rabbit. There are too many God-tracks on the face of the universe for me to ignore. I'm following them with confident anticipation that some day I shall see him as he is. Does that strike you as sort of childlike? It is!

A Personal Decision

Mission Messenger (February 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

I am not sure you will be the least bit interested in what I am going to tell you, but I felt an urge to share with you some personal attitudes about MISSION MESSENGER. It could be that I am unconsciously seeking justification for something and am not aware of my real motives. In any event, here is what happened.

Not long ago a group of fine brethren, possessed of a great deal of business acumen, set up a conference with me. They had been talking with one another about my work and they wanted to talk with me personally. They said a lot of very complimentary things about my writing and the paper and they implied that its impact had helped to spark a revolution in the restoration movement in our day.

They felt that I deserved a larger audience and they proposed to make the paper into a much larger monthly. They suggested a use of color, art work on the inside, a new format with varied type faces for chapter headings and a lot of other things. Space would be sold for legitimate advertising. The subscription price would be increased to \$3.00 per year. They offered to raise \$25,000 to finance the changes and underwrite the costs of production as a start. It was suggested that I be the editor and receive a salary, and that we have a managing editor as well as a contributiorial staff of writers selected purely on the

basis of ability rather than on identification with any party or school of thought in the restoration movement.

I listened very carefully to the whole proposal and then I turned it down. I am sure these brethren think I am either stubborn or nearsighted. As it is, the paper is small and stereotyped in appearance. We have no office in which to edit it or from which to mail it except the room downstairs in our home. I have no secretary. There is no one to type the manuscripts except myself. And that's the way I want it.

Nell and I live a simple life. We believe it is the way He would want us to do. Our personal wants are few. We seek to serve God and all of His children without trying to impress anyone with a sense of importance which we know we do not have. I write the articles for the paper on planes, in air terminals, in hotel rooms, and at our own kitchen table. I read all of the proofs and I go get the papers when the printer notifies us that they are ready.

Nell takes care of all of the subscriptions, address changes and files. With the help of Emily (our daughter-in-law, Jerry's wife) she wraps the papers, addresses them and sorts them for mailing. When the eight mail sacks are ready I label them and take them to the post office. Every paper touches our hands. Each one is sent on its long journey by our own labor and with our prayers accompanying it.

We put many hours of our own lives into each issue. We see the names of our family of subscribers every month. We wonder how those in school are doing, we are interested in those who are parents. We are especially interested in those who are grandparents. We wonder if they know "The Joy" as we know Him. And because we never take one cent from the subscription price or contributions sent for the work it is a work of faith and a labor of love.

MISSION MESSENGER is not an organization. It is just us! And we know who we are, just down-home folks from the Missouri hills. We're interested in being ourselves and not someone else. I have no illusions of greatness about our feeble effort. I am not carrying on a crusade and I am not leading a movement. I am not much of an editor, and I do not aspire to be one.

All I want to do is to share what I think with all of our brethren who are in the fellowship of the concerned ones. I have a sort of old-fashioned notion that if you love people (really and truly) and write from the bottom of your heart, it will shine through and they'll read what you have to say if it is printed on brown wrapping paper salvaged from the meat market.

I do not want to write because I am a member of an organization or an incorporation. I'm sick and tired of having to organize something in order to be friendly and neighborly. I am weary of institutionalized religion. I am tired of vested interests and party machinery. So MISSION MESSENGER will continue to be plain in appearance as long as I have anything to do with it. It is for plain folks!

We have no trust funds, no endowments, no nothing! I've given orders that when I die, MISSION MESSENGER will die with me! We will bury it the day I'm buried! I want to share with others while I live but I do not want anything I've started to be used to pressure them after I am gone. We will not send any money back if a subscription has not expired at the same time I do. If you send a five year subscription you'd better pray that I live that long.

It costs us more than a dollar per year for each subscription, but we do not intend to raise the price, I like to know that a college boy can stick a dollar in a letter and tell us to send the paper for a year. The difference is always made up by friends and brethren who believe in what we are doing. The

Holy Spirit did not whisper to us to start the paper and we have no information from the Spirit as to what we ought to write, beyond a firm trust in God and His blessed word! We also trust our brethren.

I would not want you to think that I do not appreciate the interest of the good brethren who would like to help us dress the paper up and make it a little more appealing. We thank them for their evidence of concern but we'll continue as we have been for as long as God allows us to serve.

There are a lot of journals which are very attractive. Many are doing a good work. We are not rivals or competitors with any of them. I like to mention them and urge others to read them, and especially if they make a direct attack upon us. We have nothing to lose but our souls, therefore, nothing to fear! Nothing! Best of all we're free in Christ. We can publish articles from anyone. We do not have to worry about what "the faithful brethren" will think.

This is not very businesslike, but we will keep on like we have been, and those who feel that we do not deserve reading can drop out. We'll love them just the same. We do hope to have the honor of retaining most of you for a long time and we trust you'll not be too disappointed that we have chosen to continue as plain individuals to put out a plain paper.

The Fellowship of the Unashamed

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

The final address delivered at the Hartford (Ill.) Forum, December 29, 1967.

“For I am not ashamed of the good news concerning Jesus Christ, it is God’s dynamic to save every person who believes it, the Jew first, but the Greek also.”

I am not ashamed! This is the motto embroidered on the spiritual tunics of the mightiest fighting force ever mustered. It is engraved upon their shields. It is burnished upon their hearts. It has provided the motivation for successive generations to wage a war in which there can never be a negotiated settlement, and never a cessation of hostilities to pick up the wounded and bury the dead.

It is a relentless conflict, universal in its scope, involving men of every nation, kindred and tongue. And behind the curtains of the drama are the shadowy forms of the angels, divine emissaries to the flagging spirits of the hosts of light. Within the realm of the unseen are also the malicious and malevolent myriads, flying forth from the realm of darkness to incite to hate and to lash into fury.

Some there are who say it began at Pentecost— *the* Pentecost. And in some respects this is true. But if one could

have stood like a giant colossus astride the turbulent stream of history upon that memorable day, and from his superior vantage point surveyed the whole panorama of human involvement he would have seen the line stretching out to become enfolded in the gray mists of both horizons.

Turning his face to the west, where the last rays of the dying sun transform every feathery cloud into a golden fleece, he would have seen what Vachel Lindsay referred to as “an endless line of splendor, these troops with heaven for home.” And he would have recognized the receding forms of some of them despite the intervening time and distance.

John the Baptizer, austere and uncompromising as the unsparing wilderness in which he grew to manhood. In his rude garment of camel’s hair caught up with a leather belt about the waist, a fiery denouncer of wrong, damning the lust of a demagogue, and because of his denunciation, shedding his blood upon the cold stone chopping-block of a gory dungeon.

Judas Maccabeus, stern iconoclast from the hill country of Galilee, brazenly challenging the might of a Syrian invasion force which had deliberately desecrated the sacred altar with the burning of the flesh of swine, and then smeared the rendered unclean fat upon the stones of the open court.

Daniel, of royal lineage, taken captive and deported to the sensual and profligate court of the proud monarch of Chaldea, stubbornly defying the order to eat at the king’s table, risking death rather than partake of the food which had been dedicated to Bel and Nebo, the national deities of Babylon.

Jeremiah, of the priestly family of Anathoth, called of God in the days when his nation reeled and staggered like a drunken man, called to write the epitaph of Jerusalem, called to write with tears gushing forth like a fountain, “How lonely sits the city that was full of people . . . She that was a princess among the

cities has become a vassal.”

Elijah, implacable enemy of the treacherous and murderous Jezebel, calmly standing by the altar of God on the brow of Carmel as the frenzied priests of Baal danced and contorted themselves on the stones made slimy with their own gore, while they vainly entreated a deaf god to hear their frantic cries.

David, summoned from the sheep-cote to rule the flock of God, a curious combination of love and lust, of sweet songs and sordid standards, whose gentle plucking of a harp could bring tranquillity to a neurotic king, and who could steal the wife of his best friend, only to repent in a veritable torrent of grief.

Samuel, called of God to be the first national prophet, dispensing justice throughout his circuit, refusing to be tempted by political bribes, and resisting every evil conspiracy of the ancient Mafia.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, tuning his ear to hear the voice of God amidst the discordant clamor of the wild devotees of idolatry, and in obedience to that voice leaving his homeland and journeying to a destination known but to God.

These were men who freely admitted that they lived on earth as exiles and foreigners. They saw God’s promises at a distance and hailed them as true. They were convinced of their reality. They longed for a better country altogether, nothing less than a heavenly one. While they lived in tents like nomads they dared to dream of a city with solid foundations of which God himself is both architect and builder. And when the dreamless sleep closed their eyelids, they went as joyfully as travelers who set their sails for home. “These all died in faith.” The fellowship of the unashamed who lived and died before the creative Infinite allowed himself to be clothed in the flesh and sinews of a creeping infant, was a mighty army of those who “preferred

sharing the burden of God's people to enjoying the temporary advantages of alliance with sinful nations." They "considered the reproach of Christ more precious than all the wealth of Egypt." Here is a paean of victory composed about them by one whose quill was dipped in the ink of the Spirit.

There is simply not time to continue by telling the stories of Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephtha; of David, Samuel and the prophets. Through their faith these men conquered kingdoms, ruled in justice and proved the truth of God's promises. They shut the mouths of lions, they quenched the furious blaze of fire, they escaped from death itself. From being weaklings they became strong men and mighty warriors; they routed whole armies of foreigners. Women received their dead raised to life again, while others were tortured and refused to be ransomed, because they wanted to deserve a more honorable resurrection in the world to come. Others were exposed to the test of public mockery and flogging, and to the torture of being left bound in prison. They were killed by stoning, by being sawn in two; they were tempted by specious promises of release and then were killed with the sword. Many became refugees with nothing but sheepskins or goatskins to cover them. They lost everything and yet were spurned and ill-treated by a world that was too evil to see their worth. They lived as vagrants in the desert, or on the mountains, or in caves or holes in the ground.

All these won a glowing testimony to their faith, but they did not then and there receive the fulfillment of the promise. God had something better planned for our day, and it was not his plan that they should reach perfection without us.

The cross symbolized the change from promise to realization, from prophecy to fulfillment. It was God's hypodermic needle thrust beneath the skin of the lorn earth, the elemental mother of us all, and the reaction even of nature was violent. The earth convulsed and shivered and shook. The sun at

its meridian was veiled with a sable curtain. For a little while it was as if time itself stood still until the sand resumed its flow from the upper hourglass. And when man raised his startled head and looked there was a new calendar on the wall.

The hand of God had reached down and the raking fingers had gathered all of the sin and degradation to which the human race had fallen heir, and the staggering burden was laid upon the sagging shoulders of the One on the tree. Like the scapegoat of antiquity he bore our transgressions to the far country through the portals of suffering and the gate of death. And then He came back and the glad sound of rejoicing was heard. "The Lord has risen and appeared"

Now the new army of faith, the fellowship of the unashamed, began to form and to march. And the casualties began to be registered on the battlefield. Stephen, eloquent and fervent was beaten and battered into a bruised pulp while he prayed for those who dashed the rocks against his quivering flesh. Homes were invaded, possessions confiscated and destroyed, and the saints thrown into prison. This was heralded as the signal for an onward movement under the banner of the King.

From the porticoes of the temple in Jerusalem into the environs of Judea, down to Samaria and on to Cyprus and Antioch. Here the torch was taken by a former enemy and carried to the islands of the sea, on to the great university center of Cilicia, through the rocky defile called "The Tarsian Gate," and down into the miasmatic plain and the malaria infested swampland of Asia, and up to the temple of Diana, lustful goddess of a thousand breasts suckling a venal priestcraft.

Then to fabled Troy, home of Priam and Hector, and of fair Helen whose face was so beautiful it launched a thousand ships. And at the summons of a midnight visionary visitor, across the Aegean Sea to Samothracia and on to Philippi on the

River Strymon, “the deathbed of the Roman Republic.” Then along the great military highway. *Via Egnatia*, to Thessalonica with its mob, and then to sensual Corinth and intellectual Athens. And finally, borne in hands on which shackles clanked, into the dark recesses of the Mamertine Prison in Rome.

No earthly power could halt their triumphant processional. They invaded every part of the earth and penetrated every stratum of society. Eventually they toppled the tyrannical Caesars from their thrones and the cross which had been a badge of shame became the symbol of their conquest.

The heart pulsates more rapidly as one contemplates their fearless exploits on the frontiers of life, the eye grows moist and the vision becomes misty when one reads of the way in which they faced death. And admiration deepens and wonderment increases when it is realized that their magnificent accomplishments were achieved without any of the machinery deemed essential to promote and procure our own feeble successes.

The primitive liberation army had no buildings of its own. There were no cathedrals, no edifices, no suburban chapels with well-manicured lawns, stained-glass windows, or cushioned pews. They operated from the small homes of the members, from third-story walk-up halls, from caves and catacombs, and from dens in the earth.

They had no lighted signboards flashing forth their address, no printing presses, and no newspapers. They could not distribute scripture portions, or pass out copies of the new testament. They could not give chapter and verse. There were no journals, no bulletins or tracts; no inspirational volumes, no religious libraries, no duplicated lesson sheets.

There were no television sets, no radio stations and no telephones with which to correlate arrangements. There were no

cars, no buses, no trains, and no planes to link together the far-flung outposts of the empire.

They had no bank accounts, no budgets, no endowments, no investments, no interest-bearing bonds or annuities. They established no institutions, chartered no organizations, and created no fraternal orders. They had no schools or colleges to train and polish their vanguard, no courses in hermeneutics or homiletics, no missionary societies to send them forth and sustain them, no conventions to draft resolutions to the Caesars or their procurators, no board of church extension, no council of agencies.

There were no promotional secretaries, no crusade directors, no headquarters on earth. They sought no prestige by parading before the world the politicians, professionals or actors within their number. There was no appeal to a pagan public through sensationalism, sophistication or fabrication.

Then what did they have?

The answer is found in their lives, their documents and the indictments of their enemies. First, they were aware of the astonishing change which had been wrought in their hearts by the Spirit who moved in when they unreservedly surrendered themselves to the Father and pledged allegiance to His Son. They remembered what they were before the hand of God had touched their lives. One of them wrote:

For at one time we ourselves in our folly and obstinacy were all astray. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of every kind. Our days were passed in malice and envy; we were odious to ourselves and we hated one another.

And they knew what had happened!

But when the kindness of God our savior and his

love toward man appeared, he saved us in his mercy— not by virtue of any moral achievements of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace, and can look forward to inheriting life for evermore. This is solid truth; I want you to speak about these matters with absolute certainty, so that those who have believed God may concentrate upon a life of goodness.

This sense of constant communion with God at the altar of incense in the new sanctuary, the consecrated heart, bred in them an unquenchable ardor, and an unflagging zeal which bordered on quiet fanaticism. Their bodies were holy temples, the dwelling-place of Deity, and they not only lived for God, but with Him.

Gone was the emptiness and futility, gone the depression and sadness which had been theirs before the illumination burst upon them and exploded within them, and they had been welcomed into His precious presence. No longer was life meaningless and fruitless, a despondent plodding toward the grave of weary refugees from a wretched and doleful existence.

They had an overwhelming sense of mission which transcended every earthly value and every purely mundane consideration. They had been called out of the world to be sent back into it. Because the Master came into the world to seek and save the lost, they went into the world to seek and save. Like Him they came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give their lives.

There was no distance too great, no night too dark, no sea too wide, and no mountain too high, to keep them from attempting to reach the wandering and straying and to lead them gently home. The three “I am’s” of Paul in as many verses in Romans, chapter one, were the marching orders for every

soldier in the army of the King. “I am not ashamed of the gospel;” “I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians;” “I am ready to preach the gospel to you also.”

And it was this man who could say,

In my travels I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen and from pagans. I have faced danger in city streets, danger in the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals) cold and lack of clothing.

Listen again!

Yet every advantage that I had gained I considered lost for Christ’s sake. Yes, and I look upon everything as loss compared with the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I did in actual fact suffer the loss of everything, but I considered it useless rubbish compared with being able to win Christ. For now my place is in Him . . . How changed are my ambitions.

They lived in a constant state of jeopardy. They teetered daily on the brink of danger and physical disaster. They hazarded life itself and were so indifferent to the consequences that the pagans referred to them as “The Gamblers.” They played the game with utter abandon and their own lives were the stakes. They flung them down on the table of time, ready to lose them without a whine or whimper. They hungered and thirsted for the souls of men with a passion that could never be quenched or satisfied.

So they did not send missionaries, they went! And they made no such distinctions as home and foreign missions, for this earth was not their home. They readily acknowledged, “We have no permanent city here on earth, we are looking for one in the world to come.” When they stepped out of their houses into the

street they were among pagans. Every saved person was a missionary, every lost person on earth an object of concern.

They had no pulpits to mount, no speaker's stands from which to orate. The counter of the merchant, the desk of the banker, the bench of the shoe cobbler, the plow handles of the farmer— these were their pulpits, and across them they faced their clients and visitors with hearts filled with concern, eyes filled with love, and lips filled with fervent testimony and eager pleading. And their number increased and their ranks multiplied until “their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”

They had the vessel concept of life. Their very bodies were earthen vessels, made of clay by the master potter on the whirling wheel of destiny. And no vessel was useless. Every one was functional. The glorious gospel was a treasure beyond value. And they were the receptacles into which it had been poured, not to be hoarded but to be shared. “This priceless treasure we hold — so to speak, in a common earthenware jar— to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us.”

They were chosen vessels to bear his name throughout the earth, over land and sea, across mountains and through deep valleys, fulfilling the purpose of the Master. “If a man keeps himself clean from the contaminations of evil he will be a vessel used for honorable purposes, clean and serviceable for the use of the master of the household, all ready, in fact, for any good purpose.”

Thus the saints of the first centuries had three things: a divine relationship through the Spirit, a divine mission with the Spirit, and a divine service in the Spirit. They were consecrated, animated, motivated and activated by the Spirit. He was the Spirit of life, so theirs was the life of the Spirit in which there was no condemnation. In the power of the Spirit they went forth conquering and to conquer.

It is here that we have been betrayed into resting our hopes in that which cannot give life. We have sought to entice the world by piling up brick and stone in fantastic and bizarre shapes, and all too often we have gotten into our structures that to which we have appealed— the world) We have allured and attracted by sanitized nurseries, tiled kitchens, air-conditioned auditoriums and cushioned pews. But the world does not come. We must even push and pressure our own constituency to keep up our attendance figures.

We cajole those who come to get them to empty their purses into congregational coffers and threaten with hell those who are reluctant to heed, and we spend the bulk of what we get on our own comfort. We equate the expanding of our facilities with the growth of the kingdom, and measure the degree of our success in the number of rooms in our educational annex.

But we do not endure hardship as soldiers of Jesus Christ. And those who see through the tinsel and glitter, the sham and pretence of our frantic programs, are deserting. We pay a frightful toll in lost youth every year, and they do not leave because we have made Christianity too difficult, but because we have made it too easy! It requires little spirit of adventure to park your automobile in the parking lot and sit for an hour in an air-conditioned building listening to a well-dressed preacher harangue a pampered audience on the frightful sin involved in sending a part of the contribution to help support an old folk's home.

Thoughtful men see no real relationship between the reason for which they enlisted and the serious and involved arguments in business meetings over what color of shingles to put on the roof, or what color of tile to put on the restroom floors. In a world wrenched apart over such problems as life in the sordid and stinking rat-infested ghettos, the war in Vietnam, the population explosion, the famine in India, the increase of crime in the streets, dope addiction, the increase of

illegitimacy and juvenile delinquency, we can no longer afford the thumb-twiddling luxury of casual preoccupation with trivialities and inconsequential.

It is for this reason I challenge you to become a vital part of the fellowship of the unashamed. Let us get the army out of the rocking-chairs and out where the rocks are flying. Let us quit acting like a peacetime patrol and begin fighting on the front lines and in the trenches. Instead of taking the danger out of life, let us restore it; instead of removing the risk, let us renew it. Let's move the battle from the mess hall back on the battlefield. Let's stop confusing the vineyard with the storage shed, and the wheatfield with the granary or air-conditioned elevator.

I challenge you to help turn our meeting-houses into arsenals, supply centers, ammunition dumps and training grounds. To quit talking about holding services and to start rendering them. A service is not sitting in a comfortable pew singing, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone?" Crosses were not made to sing about, but to carry and to die upon.

Service is entering into a life situation to supply a need—food for the starving, clothing for the naked, visitation for the imprisoned, medicine for the sick— and anything you can hold is not a service, for service must be given and not held. I challenge you to stop thinking that the service begins on Sunday morning at ten o'clock when you enter a religious structure, and start thinking of it as beginning on Monday morning when you enter the factory or office, or along the road or street as you go. Today there are many roads which lead down to Jericho, along which a man may fall among thieves!

I challenge you to cease the silly and inane practice of compartmentalizing life into some areas marked "sacred" and others marked "secular." Jesus came to remove for ever such categories and those who maintain them are living B.C. lives in

an A.D. world. A man is as much a son of God while sitting at his breakfast table as he is while sitting at the Lord's table. He is worshiping God as much while singing to himself for the sheer joy of living as he drives his automobile along the freeway, as he is when a song director announces a hymn.

Every word of cheer one speaks to the disconsolate, every little act of kindness he performs out of reverence for the Father of mercies is an act of worship. Either every act we perform as a Christian is an act of worship, or none of them are. Love must be a fountain flowing freely all of the time. It is not turned on and off with a faucet or spigot on certain days or at certain hours.

I challenge us all to get up from lying in the cool shade by the wayside, to buckle on our packs and join the serried ranks of courageous souls marching with their feet in the mud but with heaven in their hearts. Let's go where the action is. Let's be in on the happening. We are expendable! If we die, let us die with our boots on, with our faces on the green turf and not on white pillows filled with down. Let those who search the battleground of life find us there, crumpled and still, but with our armor buckled on and our weapon still clutched in nerveless fingers, with a half smile frozen on our lips and our sightless eyes turned toward Jerusalem's walls.

I am a member of the fellowship of the unashamed!

I am not ashamed of Him who left the world of glory to be cradled in the virgin womb for nine months, and then to fight his way through pangs and paroxysms into this world of suffering and sadness. I am grateful that not one experience through which I have passed from the night of my conception did he escape, except my sin, and he atoned for that! I am thankful that Christianity did not begin with a book but with a baby, that it is personal and not merely a perusal. I am not ashamed of the way he entered the world of mankind!

I am not ashamed of the wonders which he performed to prove His divine mission. I make no apology for any of his miracles. I do not seek a way to explain them, nor do I seek to explain them away. I accept them. I glory in them. I rejoice in the blind eyes that were opened, the ears of the deaf that were unsealed, the very dead that were brought back to life and restored to the arms of their loved ones.

I am not ashamed of the cross which towers over the wrecks of time. It is a frightful memento of man's hate but an even greater monument to God's love. In it I find my hope. To its firm base I cling in moments when despair would threaten my sanity and temptation would wash me out into the unknown. I kneel before it in wonderment that it was for me he died, but I arise refreshed to return to the busy thoroughfares of life content to believe that he cares for me! If any man glory, let him glory in the cross!

I am not ashamed of the gospel, the good news, the joyous tidings! It is still God's dynamic to save every one who believes it. I know because that salvation has been mine to experience. It is mine now! It is mine in all of its fulness and assurance. It is not by works of righteousness that I have done. It is not reckoned according to works. It is the gift of grace. "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt."

This is the message that the world needs. It is the message that satisfies the God-craving in the human spirit. I have resolved that it will be my testimony while I am able to proclaim it, and when I feel the mist in my face, and the fog in my throat, I will not forget it.

The soul of Jesus is restless today;

Christ is tramping through the spirit-world,

Compassion in his heart for the fainting millions;

**He trudges through China, through Poland,
Through Russia, Austria, Germany, Armenia;
Patiently he pleads with the Church,
Tenderly he woos her.**

**The wounds of his body are bleeding afresh for
the sorrows of his shepherdless people.**

**We besiege him with selfish petitions,
We weary him with our petty ambitions,
From the needy we bury him in piles of carven stone,
We obscure him in the smoke of stuffy incense,
We drown his voice with the snarls and shrieks of
our disgruntled bickerings,
We build temples to him with hands that are bloody,
We deny him in the needs and sorrows of the exploited
“least of his brethren.”**

**The soul of Jesus is restless today,
But eternally undismayed.**

A Marked Copy

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

It is not an unusual thing for me to receive marked copies of papers and bulletins from brethren who feel they would like to have me read something of special interest. Thus I was not much surprised to receive a mimeographed copy of a letter sent out by a preacher to his congregation to warn the saints of the grave danger involved in reading after certain men. The marked portion read as follows:

Perhaps the most controversial figure on our list is Carl Ketcherside, of St. Louis, Missouri. He is a prodigious writer and even some of the faithful brethren have been captivated by his style and have grown soft toward such errors as instrumental music and premillennialism. While Ketcherside does not personally endorse these things, or institutionalism, he persistently works with those who favor them and steadfastly refuses to disfellowship them. If this man is not somehow stopped he has the ability to completely undermine the church as we have known it. In his talk about fresh insights he writes as if he had a new revelation or commandment which the rest of us have not received.

At one time in my life this kind of thing would have disturbed me. I would have thought about the people who would read it and form prejudiced opinions without ever having met me or even read a single word I had written. But that was before

I really came to know Jesus as a genuine personal friend. Ever since I invited him in and he came, not just as a passing acquaintance but as an abiding Presence to sup with me, and me with him, all that has changed.

It is easy now to look back and see that I once reacted just as our brother who wrote me up. I was fearful and frightened and factional, and I attacked those who did not conform to our party program to prove that I was sound and solid on “the issues.” I remember how proud I was when I was introduced at our factional conclaves as “an outstanding defender of the truth,”— the truth being our party line and factional creed, of course.

I still have a long way to go in measuring up to the Father’s expectation for one of his children, and I’ve got a lot of weak spots that trouble me, but I think that the biggest relief I have ever experienced comes from a realization that I no longer have to prove everything. It’s a tremendous thing to realize that it is *a fact* that Jesus lives in you, and you can just accept it and go on your way rejoicing. No conscious effort is demanded to prove it to anyone else. If it is true it doesn’t make any difference if anyone else knows it or not. If it isn’t true it wouldn’t make any difference if everyone thought it was.

As a result of his moving in when I opened the door, I can now read what brethren write about me a lot more objectively than before. So I study what they say to see what good I can derive from it. Obviously we cannot learn a great deal from those who agree with us, and the more they agree with us the less we can learn from them. Since we are all finite and fallible, we need the criticism of others to help us eliminate our errors. In one sense our enemies are the best friends we have.

In analyzing the warning of our brother, I think he over-estimated my ability and influence. It is true that I write a great deal, although not nearly as much as I would like to write. I have

to practice a great deal of restraint in that area. I doubt that my style is captivating. I never studied journalism and I do not have the educational background for proficiency in this discipline. I just get full up on the inside, and when I do I simply have to share my views with others, but I'm never satisfied with what I've written after I see it in print.

Perhaps I am getting credit I do not deserve for articulating ideas whose time has come. Anyone else who said the same things would be in my position, although he could probably do a much better job of stating them clearly. Our brethren were all moving toward a change in attitude. I just came along at the right time. I had to alter my views for I could no longer live with my own inconsistencies in the sphere of fellowship and brotherhood. I tried hard to remain a narrow, bigoted party champion but I lost the battle to the Spirit and now I am trying to be his willing captive.

I must plead guilty to the charge of refusing to create tests of union and communion out of our variant views about the things that trouble us. It isn't because I've grown soft or spiritually flabby about error. I've just had my sense of values straightened out by reversal. I've learned that Jesus died for people, not for systems, methods, or legal codes. As he put it, "Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath was made for man." If I use my interpretation of the millennium or music to destroy my brother for whom Christ died, or to justify my treating him like an outcast and an alien, I think more of my views than I do of God's children.

Since I share in the abiding Presence it isn't necessary for me to play God and exercise censorious judgmental attitudes toward others who are caught up in the same human predicament as myself. I will go anywhere and share with any of my brethren just like Jesus came and shared with me. He didn't wait until I was good, and right about everything, or we would still be living apart. I find it much more satisfying now that I do

not have to be infallible. It was always a hard task for me as I'm sure it is for the pope.

Really I don't think that anyone will stop me. I anticipate that senility or death will do so, and I hope the last one beats the first one to it. And I am not at all disturbed that what we write about factionalism and fellowship will upset "the church as we have known it." It needs to be undermined, although as openly as I try to work, I doubt that is the proper term. Perhaps instead of being undermined it will be overwhelmed by the Spirit. That would make a difference!

"The church as we have known it" is quite sectarian and inadequate. It is not really the body of Christ but an institutional image which we have created and animated. It moves when the right strings are pulled, and in the midst of a lot of dead wooden images it fools a lot of us into thinking that it is alive. Satan has hoodwinked us into thinking that those who attack this ponderous structure are battling against the *soma* (body) of Christ which is enlivened by the *pneuma* (Spirit). This does not follow. The two are not identical.

I think we need a radical change in our whole approach to the problems of a sorry, sick and sinful world. And the first change that must be made is in "the church as we have known it." We must return to the community of saints as God wants it. It will be a costly process. Most of us will not pay the price and will die defending our sects under the delusion that we are preserving the one body. Our lives, our money, and our hopes are all invested in our monastic structures. To surrender these would be like having to hate our own lives to take up the cross and follow him. That's the last thing most of us will ever do.

I have a deep sense of compassion for my attacking brother. He spends much of his time fighting what he brands as "institutionalism." He thinks that because his faction does not congregationally support some of the projects, promotions and

programs which have been dreamed up and drummed up to coax the world into the “Church of Christ” camp, it thereby constitutes the “faithful church.”

But what he calls “the loyal church” with its unlovely attitude and unbrotherly posture is a human institution much worse than what he opposes. This will sound like blasphemy in his ears because he equates his faction with “the Lord’s church.” But these things need to be said much as we regret the situation which gives rise to the need. I only pray that all of our good brethren will take an unbiased look at the multitude of rabid sects we have spawned under the guise that each is “the Lord’s church.”

I simply could not resist smiling at my brother’s words to the effect that I write as if I had a new commandment. His idea is correct but he has it backwards. A new commandment has me! Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Of course that was there all of the time, but I was just not all there at the time!

I recall how we used to protest and bluster that we loved everybody, even our brothers in error. But we were hypocritical and dishonest. We were uneasy when those from another faction came around our meetings. We’d get a little clump of the loyal ones together and hold a caucus, and take a quick poll on whether we would call on one of them to lead in prayer. We had goose pimples for fear someone would take word back to our “spiritual Jerusalem” that we were eating with the uncircumcised.

When Jesus came in at my invitation, he swept such sham and pretence out of my poor shriveled and sinful heart. He made me realize that what I had regarded as fidelity to him was nothing but partisan pride. So I gave in and let him begin to love through me. Great new vistas were opened up. The scales fell

from my eyes. My horizons were pushed back and for the first time I found myself able to love my enemies and pray for them. I mean really love them instead of feigning and fabricating. When I quit lying about loving all of my brethren and my enemies and got rid of the gangrenous guilt that was eating at my heart because of such pious fraud as the party designates faithfulness, life took on new dimensions.

Don't think that I'm free from all of my littleness and bigotry and intolerance. I am not purged from all prejudice and I know it better than anyone else. It's pretty hard for one who was raised in slavery all of his life to act like a free man all of the time. The temptation to hate and to let the flesh take over is still there.

I often have to hold a conversation with Jesus about it and apologize to him for barging in ahead of him and generally messing up my life by trying to handle things on my own like I used to do. I must be very trying to him. But at least I have gotten to the point where I can be thankful that brethren who think I am dangerous can write it up and get it out in the open so I can pray for them. And if that is being dangerous, brace yourself, for I have just started!

One Day of Life

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[Abstract]

I don't think one ought to keep count of the things God does, that is to run a tally sheet on heaven's blessings. God cannot be confined to a calendar or regulated by a clock. Both of these are devices for measuring time and God is timeless. But life is very rich and full for me right now, and I would like to share with you some of the things that are occurring. What I am going to describe can happen to anyone, but it would never happen to any two of us in exactly the same fashion.

When I became aware that all true happiness lies in being God's slave, after I'd been living off of his bounty for years, I was talking with him one day, and I confessed that I was ashamed of the fact that a lot of times in the past I had made excuses to justify my neglect of going into areas which I felt ought to be contacted and penetrated. I acknowledged that I was sometimes motivated by fear of failure and of making an even bigger fool of myself, or of falling flat on my face.

I mentioned to him my lack of formal education and the deprivation of my early home life, and how these were factors which probably gnawed at my inner being and acted to keep me from going into a lot of "the worlds" from which I had shied away. But I also told him I was tired of running and that I knew now that my real trouble had been lack of faith. I went on to promise that from that time forward I'd go wherever a door

opened up and I would share what I knew about our relationship with all who would listen.

I have lived in Saint Louis for a good many years but I might as well have lived in Patagonia or Timbuctoo, so far as some areas were concerned. I couldn't have been much farther from them. But almost from the time that I surrendered to God's purpose in my life opportunities began to come. I explain it by saying I had followed Jesus for years and then finally caught up with him.

The first thing I noticed was a sense of inner peace and freedom from fear. A consciousness of the abiding Presence actually made me want to enter into new and untried situations. I wanted to see how I could be his tool to mend and repair. The second thing that became apparent was that new meaningful relationships were being created. Bridges were being built where no means of communication had existed.

Let me take just one twenty-four hour period, for example. At noon one day, by invitation I attended a dialogue session. The Metropolitan Church Federation arranged a discussion on "The Meaning of Infallibility." The chief speaker was Dr. Constantine J. Andrews, pastor of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, with the reactors being Msgr. Joseph W. Baker of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and Dr. Gerald Slusser of the theological studies department of Eden Theological Seminary.

In order to prepare myself for the occasion I talked with God and asked him to help me see everyone as he saw them and also to keep me from building cultural or other walls which might prove to be barriers. I wanted to be open and receptive but I also wanted to be discriminative in the realm of ideas.

As soon as I arrived I saw two young men standing somewhat apart so I went to them and ascertained that one was an assistant pastor of a Lutheran congregation while the other

was a senior seminarian. We immediately became involved in a discussion of our varying concepts. When we came to the subject of baptism they informed me that many of the young men were coming to see it as the immersion of a penitent. I made arrangements for them to visit our home and to bring other young men with them to continue our mutual exchange of thought.

The three presentations by the principals were excellent. Each speaker was perceptive and kind, but also firm. The reactors stated the areas of difference as clearly as they did the points of agreement. Since I have long been a member of a kindred type of dialogue group, I made a note of the things which originally acted as mental barriers for me, and made it difficult for me to openly witness to my convictions. Fortunately I no longer allow these to interfere. Here are the things that came to mind.

(1) The vocabulary which makes use of a great many expressions cast in the modern theological mould and which are seldom heard among us. I have learned that if I am to communicate meaningfully with these men that I must understand their terminology. Ordinarily we do not talk about Christological anthropology, naturalistic objectivism, idealistic subjectivism, or eschatological development. But if we are to reach men we must go where they are, linguistically as well as geographically. It has helped me to realize that Paul became all things to all men with the highest motivation and with Spirit approval.

(2) The clerical dress is abhorrent to me because it symbolizes a caste system among believers. I have learned that a lot of young men are rebelling against a special costume of rank which separates them from man in general, but I also know that if I had been born into the same theological situation as these men, I also would be thus attired. I always whisper to God to help me not to look on the outward appearance but to try and

understand the hearts of men as they are unburdened and disclosed in word and declaration.

(3) The personal habit of smoking bothers me. Fully one-third of the clerics in the audience had their pipes going and a haze of blue smoke filled the upper reaches of the room where three hundred men were listening very intently. I think that a number of them smoked even more because of the tension of the occasion just as I tend to eat compulsively at night when working under stress on some research task. I hope they are all as ashamed of their weakness as I am of mine.

(4) The physical surroundings once acted as a deterrent. For instance, the sacred pictures used as icons in the Greek Orthodox structure disturbed me but when I silently prayed about it, the thought intruded into my mind that Jesus had to come into a world where there were many worse things to be seen and it seemed to me that he wanted me to get the point that I should quit looking at things and start looking at men. I'm not sure that all the wall hangings in the house of Simon the leper were in good taste, but Jesus visited it and ate with the guests.

When the three speeches were finished we divided into four smaller groups for an hour of discussion. As the King James Version puts it "my hap was to light" in a group led by Peter Kastaris, an amiable Greek Orthodox priest. Present also was the Catholic monsignor. I have never attended another session which was conducted on a fairer basis. Almost at once we were plunged into a study in depth of authority and absolutes. Everything was on an eminently elevated plane and no one felt obligated to "pull any punches." I am convinced that everyone in the room was honestly trying to understand the position of every other person present. I was invited four times to testify to my own convictions and the basis for them.

The next morning I accompanied Walter and Ruth Short, who are doing a tremendous job in the heart of the Negro ghetto,

to a monthly breakfast and Bible study conducted by men and women of various religious affiliations. I was impressed by the lack of sectarian emphasis and the apparent eagerness to probe the real meaning of the Word. Here where human need is so appalling, Negro and Caucasian servants of their fellowmen can sit down together with open Bibles for two hours and share their insights without rancor or restraint.

While in the area I also visited the site of the Head Start program and saw what volunteers are doing to make it possible for little boys and girls from bleak tenements to know some of the life values of which they are deprived by situations beyond their control. I will be visiting this work again.

At noon I was with the Messianic Forum which meets weekly in a downtown hotel and brings Jewish business and professional men together for an examination of the claims of Jesus as the Messiah of the prophets. It has been my good fortune to address them six times recently and to answer their penetrating questions. My theme was "The Credibility of the Messianic Witnesses," and the questions were asked of me by attorneys and judges of the courts. I think I have never at any other time felt the nearness to Christ as when speaking to the descendants of those unto whom the Good News was first taken.

These are but a few of "the happenings" and "share-ins" and each day is different. Since he provides not only the possibilities but also the power to perform them, we pray for many more. Life is not drab when he leads and every day becomes a thriller-diller to those who have tuned their hearts into heaven's frequency. One cannot afford to sit around under juniper trees when there is work to do on Mount Carmel. And yet, no two Carmels are ever alike!

The Solvent of Doubt

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

My casual invitation to college and university students to write to me has produced a real contribution to my life and thought. I have sought to listen and learn as well as to reply and I find my life enriched by the exchange. I am never shocked by disclosure of doubt or dismay, and I am not at all concerned with selling someone a bill of goods consisting of my own views and opinions. This makes for a great deal of freedom and understanding. One can grow mighty tired if he feels obligated to bend everyone in his direction and especially when a lot of folks don't want to be bent.

No one else can raise as many questions as a college student, and no one else is as eager to find answers. One thing I notice is that the questions are not new. They are the same ones that were asked in childhood but they take on a greater significance in college. I wonder if this is an indication of an innate sense of quest for the meaning of life and of personal relationship to the universe which comes as naturally to the rational being as eating when hungry.

Does one start searching for God like a newborn babe starts nuzzling its mother's breast until it fastens upon the nipple with the mouth already drawing and pulling? If so, is there no universal breast, no source of supply for the soul hunger? Must we wail in vain, like an infant in the night whose

mother has died and is growing cold beside it?

I got to thinking about this when I received a letter from an art major in a western college a few weeks ago. He grew up in a strict “Church of Christ” environment, but he is about to slip his cable and go adrift with the tide. He has reached the conclusion that God is not real and that each person creates his own image of God. He points out that his own mental picture of God has been changing, and that the God-image is conditioned solely by environment. The “God” of the Hottentot or the pin-headed pigmy is not the “God” of the Wall Street broker, for example.

I must confess that my own concept of God has undergone some changes also, but these alterations have produced exactly the opposite effect upon me as upon my young friend, whom I have yet to meet. I find my trust in God grows stronger each day of my life. Instead of taking “French leave” from the camp of the believers, I am driving my tent stakes down ever more firmly. I’m here for life. Read that again. I mean I’m here “for life.”

A vagrant thought flitted through my mind that perhaps his flirting with modern art which thrives upon distortion and seeks to reduce the real to an unreal imagery, might have upset my young brother. I think one might shut himself up with pictures which there is ever a danger of hanging downside up, until he might get out of focus and have his thinking upside down. I know that I trust I will never meet a woman or a cow like they are pictured by some of our more garish “pop art” entrepreneurs.

Seriously, though, changing concepts about the *nature* of God have nothing to do with the *existence* of God. We need to alter our concepts about a great many personalities and things as we mature, but to postulate that we invent that about which our concepts alter, and that such alteration is a proof of invention, seems a little immature to me. Some fairly great

intellectuals have even argued that the ability to conceive of God, and the universal exercise of that ability, constitutes a very strong presumption that God exists. It is their contention that the concept of God as the Eternal One could not originate with man as he is, and that the Creator had to plant this seed in the human consciousness.

I'm not much of a philosopher, being more of the old-fashioned cracker barrel type, so it is necessary for me to stay pretty close to earth in my rather feeble attempt at reasoning. There are a number of theological experts and geniuses, and I owe them a tremendous debt for the insights they have given me. I read what they say with profound admiration and appreciation, but my faith is not based upon their reasoning. Middleton Murry said, "Man cannot accept certainties, he must discover them. An accepted certainty is not a certainty, a discovered certainty is."

That is why I know the only way I can be sure of God in my life is by surrender to him in obedience. Faith can never be separated from doing his will. I know God, I experience God, I share with God, by obedience. Jesus said, "Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him" (John 7:17). And this works! I have the will to do the will of God, although I bumble around a lot in practice. And I know where the teaching originates!

It couldn't originate with me because it is too pure. If I originated it I would eventually drag it down to my level. As it is, it keeps hauling and tugging me uphill, even when I dig in my heels and try to grab at passing tree limbs to slow the progress. There is nothing more persistent or relentless than the God-pull on a human heart which has once tuned its directional finder so as to "home-in" on the divine runway.

One reason why I do not think man is a direct descendant of a long line of animal ancestors stretching back into the scum

of a primordial swamp is because of the phenomenal faculty of faith. It is true that an ape can make a long leap from one tree to another, but it has to see the other tree before it lets go or cuts loose from its perch. Only man can “obey the summons to go out . . . and set out in complete ignorance of his destination” as did Abraham. I’ve launched out on the promises. I have “seen” them in the distance and I am quite convinced of their reality. It is the very essence of faith to see the unseen!

I am no more of a prophet than I am a philosopher, but I predict that our young friend will not drop astern and veer completely from the course. As he probes deeper into art forms he will come to appreciate that this great universe is itself a work of the Artist whose landscapes and seascapes no canvas can capture. Instead of that special breed of arrogance which has tempted him thoughtlessly to imagine he invented God, he will arrive at that state of humility where he will be grateful to God for creating him.

W. H. Fitchett has said, “And truth, no matter how beclouded by doubt, becomes at the touch of the loyal and assenting will translucent. The effort to obey scatters the shadows. It brings an instant verification. Obedience is the true and final solvent of doubt.”

Priests and Pontiffs

Mission Messenger (April 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

Every Christian should be a minister!

Every Christian should be a priest!

Every Christian should be a pontiff!

The fact that some Christians sneer and others snicker at such statements does not disprove them in the least. It only demonstrates ignorance of the real nature of Christianity by a lot of those who profess it.

Most Christians do not want to be thought of as ministers or priests. Ministers are stuffy individuals who look with jaundiced eye upon what average folk like to do and who make the company ill at ease when they walk in. Priests are “holy Joes” who wear clerical dog-collars and pace up and down in front of the “sanctuary” dressed in long robes.

What has happened, of course, is that those who ought to be ministers and priests have abdicated their function and have created an office and developed men to fill it and now they do not want to be personally identified with the function. They prefer to pay others to do the work and lend just enough support to them to salve their own consciences and keep the functionaries off their necks. And they secretly resent the caricatures of their own

creation.

Any relation between such a custom and the genuine militant sword-wielding army of the Captain of salvation is purely incidental. The two should not be spoken of in the same breath. Perhaps they ought not to be mentioned in the same article. Forgive me then, and I'll get on with the task of explaining the bit about the universal pontificate of the believers. And don't be frightened off from reading further by that big word.

The word "pontiff" simply means "a bridge-builder." It might be argued with some degree of consistency that it just means a bridge. No other term more fittingly portrays the relation of Jesus to God and ourselves. There was a big chasm between us. It had been created by a universal tremor of disobedience and then widened and deepened by erosion of the stream of iniquity.

There was no way to cross it from our side. But it never became wider or deeper than God's love, and to prove it he launched grace into orbit and spanned the grand canyon of sin. But grace was not something to be shot across like a breeches buoy from shore to sinking ship. He was in grace, so that it was not a system, a sequence of events, or a series of things.

Grace was God coming! It was God coming in the form of a Son. Over and over again he said, "I have come!"

He came from the other side. We had been without God but now He became "God with us." In order to do this the living Word which was with God and was God had to become flesh and dwell among us. He had to come into the world and the only way he could come was as Word become flesh. This is the only way God can penetrate the world. The bridge upon which men cross from the world of flesh to God is one which results when the word of God becomes flesh.

And this is where we come in. The Word had to enter the world at a point in history. There was a “before he came” and an “after he came,” and “before” and “after” are historical terms. Thus it was with us also and since he had to return we are here with his commission and demand to go into all of the world.

Our trouble is that we think of “all the world” from a geographical sense. We conceive of it as a matter of time and space. It is a question of distance covered and miles traveled. But he came to the whole world and yet he never got beyond a hundred miles from the stable in which he was born. Of course, all the world must sometimes be thought of as the surface of our spinning sphere, but it must not be limited to that.

To go into all the world for him meant to empty himself of any thought of equality with God. It meant to take on the form of a slave, to be made like a man. It meant willing acceptance of humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. It was not covering every mile of every road to contact every man, but it was accepting the burden and the concern and the human sensitivity of every sinful being on earth, wherever that being was.

If we are to fulfill our mission we must start as he did. The word of God must become flesh— our flesh. He did not merely quote passages or read scriptures, although sometimes he did both, but he translated the word into life. The word became virile, vital and vigorous. It lived and moved and had being.

And we must leave our heavens and our structures and go into the world. In our day the world is fragmented. It is split asunder and hostile against itself. Thus, there are now many worlds and between each one of them and God is a great gulf fixed. When the word becomes our flesh we move into these worlds and we become bridge-builders (pontiffs) so those who inhabit these worlds can cross over to God.

We are miniature Christs. He was “the Anointed One” but we are “the anointed ones.” That is what Christ means. It is also what “Christian” means. When he was baptized he was anointed and acknowledged as God’s Son, when we are baptized we are anointed and acknowledged as God’s sons. And our mission is identified with his from that time on.

As “little Christs” we can never become the bridge from earth to heaven. We can only be the approaches to that bridge. There is no supreme pontiff upon earth. This is not the language of the anointed but of the antichrist. Supreme pontiffs become the heads of organizations which stand athwart the way to the goal. They do not build bridges to the glory of God, they erect buildings to the honor of saints.

We must not dramatize our role, for we are not acting a part, but being a partner with him. We must be in the world as he was in the world. There is nothing glamorous or sensational about a bridge although it may lead to all sorts of dazzling possibilities. Its function is to be there to provide men with a way out of where they are and a way in to where they long to go.

Some of us will go into the educational world as teachers, others into the world of physical suffering as doctors and nurses. Still others will go into the distorted mental world as psychologists and psychiatrists, or into the ghetto world as sharers and counsellors. But wherever we go we must be “little Christs” and while we feed the poor, heal the sick, console the distressed and comfort the mourners, we must lead men to God. We must never forget the purposes of our anointing.

To be born again is simply to become incarnate, to allow the word of God to become flesh— our flesh— suffering, shrinking, sensitive, tempted flesh. When this happens we will know what he meant when he said, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” And as he became the pontiff of God even so shall we be pontiffs of God,

bridges across the frightening chasms whose awesome depths separate men from the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

This is the work of all of us. We cannot relegate it. We cannot delegate it. If you fail, some world— your world— will be left stranded, hopeless and helpless. It will be a world of untouched lives and lonely hearts. Wherever your lot is cast by temperament, choice, qualification, or natural bent, there is your destiny, there is your world. And you are sent into that world as minister, priest and pontiff.

A good Roman Catholic friend with whom I shared this concept objected strenuously. “You would have every man his own pontiff,” he said. I replied to him as I now say to you, “I am not interested in every man becoming his own pontiff, but I am desperately concerned that every believer become a pontiff of God.” One greater than any of us has said, “It is enough that the servant become as his lord.”

The Ministry of the Cross and the Growth of the Church

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[Abstract]

An address delivered at Milligan College, February 13, 1968

The cross! On that day it was a scandal, a badge of shame! The time would come when crowds would assemble to see crosses pinned on men, but that was in the dim and distant future. Today a mob had gathered to see men pinioned on crosses. And they did not know as they followed their divergent roads to the cross, that they would stand that day at the cross roads of history and of the world.

The religious leaders were present, a sleek pack moving in for the kill. There were chief priests, the temple butchers who had grown callous from thrusting the knife into the jugular veins in the quivering bodies of helpless sheep. They were drawn together by the smell of warm blood, which spurted from jagged holes torn in the flesh by cruel spikes. It was a holiday atmosphere which they sought to create with their wisecracks and backslapping of the scribes and one another.

Their taunts developed into a chant, a unified yell from a hysterical cheering section watching the grim and grisly game of death being played before their eyes. "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may believe." And little did they realize that they were that day writing the words

and setting the tune for the composition which would be the theme song of the chief priests in the temples made with hands twenty centuries after Golgotha.

Let Christ come down from the cross! But he did not because it is written that one took courage and went to the Roman procurator, and asked for the body of Jesus, and took him down. *Then* he was taken down from the cross by a friend, but *now* he is taken down by his betrayers. For every generation crucifies the Son of God afresh at its own Place of the Skull. And every generation takes him down under the pretence of making possible belief in Him.

Theories of incarnation which deny his quickening in a virgin womb, theories of naturalism which efface his signs and wonders; theories of pragmatism which explain away his doctrine; theories of atonement which belie the efficacy of his blood; theories about his own search for identity which make his death explainable by human standards; theories of his resurrection which result in making every apostle a Judas Iscariot— these are the intellectual crowbars, the rationalistic clawhammers which men use to pry and draw out the nails and take him down from the cross. It is easier for the sons of men to believe in a man on the earth, than it is for men on the earth to believe in the Son of God on a cross.

There was a Joseph present when he was born, and a Joseph present when he died. Joseph of Nazareth helped to wrap him in swaddling cloths; Joseph of Arimathea in a linen death shroud. But there have been many others since who have also tried to wrap him up. Some have sought to keep him a perpetual infant, reproducing annually in their homes and temples the manger scene with the helpless child. They have hung on the walls of their hospitals and art galleries paintings of “The Madonna” and have created a cult which has elevated an earthly handmaiden to the throne of the Son of God in the heavens. The world is not saved by baby hands stretching forth from a rude

crib, but by a man's hands stretching out on a rude cross. Jesus cannot be forever swaddled by our own infantile thinking.

Others have sought to keep him enveloped in the shroud and have spoken long and learnedly about what might have happened to cause the frightened and forlorn disciples to think they had seen him after his sad death. But Jesus will not remain in the wrappings of men. Eventually all must be brought to confront him as he is, devoid of all the trappings with which they have bedecked and invested him. He will discard our theological habiliments and fold them up as he did the graveclothes in the sepulcher.

Our present personal task is to explore the relationship of the cross ministry to the spread of the reconciling community over the face of the earth. What was there about the cross which would supply the motivation, the drive, the power, to penetrate every segment of society with the Message of grace in its redemptive fulness? How could unlearned and ignorant men, unschooled in philosophy, make an undying impact upon the very centers of Greek sophistication? How could those from a remote province move into the lordly core of the political arena and topple the pagan Caesars from their imperial thrones?

What was the secret of the cross which captivated men of diverse tongues and divergent ways and welded them into an invincible army whose soldiers would conquer while shedding no blood but their own? In the second century, Justin Martyr declared, "There exists not a single race of men, barbarians, Greeks, or by whatever name they may be called, warlike or nomadic, whether they live in tents or wander in wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of Jesus the crucified, to the Father and Creator of all things."

In a passage, which has become famous, Tertullian wrote to the Roman emperor, "We Christians are but of yesterday and we have filled your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your

towns, your market places, the very camp, palace, senate, forum, and have left you nothing but the temples of your gods. . . . If we were to make a general secession, and betake ourselves to some remote corner of the world, you would be horror-struck at the solitude.”

It was the divine plan that the Good News should spread by radiation. The order of witnessing was to be first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria, and on to the uttermost parts of the earth. Radiation requires a center, a fixed point. And God fixed the center of the earth at Jerusalem. Hear the words of Ezekiel, “Thus says the Lord God: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries round about her” (5:5).

Of this passage. Dr. Faussett writes, “Here Jerusalem is regarded as the center of the whole earth, designed to radiate the true light over the nations in all directions. No center in the ancient heathen world could have been selected more fitted than Canaan to be a vantage ground, whence the people of God could act with success upon the heathenism of the world. It lay midway between the oldest and most civilized states, Egypt and Ethiopia on the one side, and Babylon, Nineveh and India on the other, and afterwards, between Greece, Rome and Persia. The Phoenician mariners were close by through whom they might have transmitted the true religion to the remotest lands; around them were the Ishmaelites, the great inland traders in south Asia and north Africa. Israel was thus placed not for its own selfish good, but to be the spiritual benefactor of the whole world. Compare Psalm 67 throughout.”

Professor Kurtz said, “Its own near approach to the most important channels along which the commerce of the world flowed, combined to establish it in the center of the activity of the world. The country was in this manner, specially adapted to become, at first, the silent and retired nursery of the kingdom of God; and afterwards to spread abroad, in all directions and

among all nations, the great salvation, when the latter had reached the period of its maturity.”

When men wish to draw a circle they drive a stake into the ground and fasten a string to it. Using that stake as a center they can reach out in ever-widening areas by the simple expedient of lengthening the cord. The cross was God’s stake driven into the earth with the invisible cord of faith attached to it. Philip reached down to the superstition-ridden city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ unto them. Peter stretched the cord to include Caesarea, provincial capital of the Roman power, and took the message to the home of an army captain whose prayers had been interrupted by an angelic visitor.

Paul took that faith from Antioch across to Cilicia, down through the rocky defile known as “The Tarsian Gate,” across the miasmatic plains of Asia Minor and into the ancient city of fame and fable, Troy. Then, at the call of a night vision, he crossed over the sea to Philippi, “deathbed of the Roman Republic,” along the Egnatian Way to sensual Corinth and intellectual Athens. At last with chains clanking on his wrists he brought it into the dark dungeon of the Mamertine Prison in Rome, and it broke free even while he was chained and captivated the hearts of some of Caesar’s very household.

If we are to walk in the footsteps of these soldiers we too must start at the cross, and wherever we go over land and sea we must feel the tension created by the fact that our faith reaches back and is fastened to the torture-stake of Calvary. The Christian can never be at loose ends. When he fails to feel the pull of the past, or the haul of history, he can be certain that he has no future.

The earth was the scene of violence and the wretchedness of sin. Those who lived upon its surface were walking in the shadow of their own iniquity, those who slumbered in its bosom were mute witnesses in their narrow cells to the fatal effects of

the venom. "The sting of sin is death!" But the cross was God's hypodermic needle driven into the quivering heart of the universe, conveying the antitoxin to evil and the serum, of life. And although the earth shook and writhed in convulsion until the sun hid its face, hope was restored and the flush of life replaced the pallor of approaching death. We live because he died!

The cause of Christ grows by planting and cultivation. It is not mere chance which prompted the apostle, in the very context of the cross, to talk about planting and irrigation. To the community at Corinth he said, "You are God's husbandry." We would have said, "You are the field of God," or "You are God's ranch."

The Greek term signifies land that is tilled or soil that is worked, in contrast with unbroken prairie or untrammelled forest. It suggests fruitfulness and productivity. The original proclaimers of the Word are pioneers who clear the fields, others come to scatter the grain, and still others to irrigate and cultivate. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are fellow workmen for God; you are God's field, you are God's building."

The cross is the implement of divine invention capable of doing all that is required to cultivate God's heritage. It is the power take-off which makes possible every operation. It is the plow which drives deep into the untouched soil of human hearts and cuts a furrow which turns them over toward God. It is the harrow which breaks up and pulverizes the clods of doubt and fear and works the soil into a mellow loam so the seed can fall on good ground.

It is the reaper before whose blade the grain ripened by the

grace of God bows and falls, and is made ready for the gathering in. And the cross is God's threshing instrument, winnowing and sifting the wheat from the chaff. The tribulation of the cross is more than mere semantics. The Latin "tribulum" means a threshing instrument and it is when men are confronted by the cross that they are separated from one another for the granary or the consuming fire.

The community of believers advances when the army marches abreast. There must be straight paths for the feet. The valleys must be exalted. The hills must be brought low. There can be none looking down from heights of arrogance upon the many, nor the many looking up in adoration at the few. And the cross is God's great leveler.

It is the "headache ball" that smashes incessantly at the high walls of pride, reinforced by the iron rods of selfishness, until we are brought down in a cloud of inglorious dust from our self-exaltation to the place of our beginning. In the beautiful twenty-third psalm the phrase "He restoreth my soul" in the Hebrew is literally, "He takes me back to the place of my beginnings."

But there is the other side of the picture. So the cross is also God's elevated crane which dips down into the miry slough of despond and tugs and pulls me free of the sucking clay, and draws me up and out of my own despair and frustration. It is not in vain that we sing:

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled,
For faith has caught the joyful sound;
The song of saints on higher ground.

The cross came into a world of human inequity, injustice and bigotry. Mankind was separated and segregated by racial, national, social and ritual barriers. Nameless slaves were given hope where despair and degradation had reigned, cruel taskmasters found their hearts melting under the influence of an irresistible heaven-sent influence. Those who had been filled with hostility were suddenly transformed until they thrilled with humility. The clinched fist gave way to the open hand. Unity prevailed where hatred had once dwelt.

The cross made the world a neighborhood where all men belonged in a single category— those who need salvation. The earth became heaven's backyard where ethnic differences and cultural variations fade into nothingness when compared with the overwhelming concern for life eternal. And when those who had discovered the Secret touched the lives of those who had not, hope was restored and terror was banished. And the Way spread throughout the world.

We dare not evade the implications of this for our own generation! How does it happen that, after twenty centuries, the cross-bearers are a shrinking minority? Why can we not repeat the glorious conquests of the long ago? All of us are aware of the replies of the skeptics who would relegate the power to the past, and confine the dynamic to the dead tomes of history. To them it is merely something to read about, but not to repeat.

I deny their thesis! I deny it vehemently! This is not a post-Christian era. There is no such thing. I admit that what has been termed Christianity is now being rejected as helpless and senile. But this is merely the golden calf which was constructed of their jewels by the people of God and before which they have prostrated themselves. It is true that it may be ground into powder by the millstones of destiny and flung into the stream of time. But there is no real relationship between that with which God has endowed us and the image which we have created and projected.

Actually, our task is not so much to defend the Way against its enemies as to rescue it from those who profess to be its friends. Let me suggest a few areas in which I think we need to revise our thinking if we would recover the power of God for our age.

1. We must quit talking about the symbols of our faith and the images of the church, and begin to exemplify the reality of our divine-human relationship. It is not a crucifix on the wall, or a cross on the steeple, which will save the world. The cross is not something to be worn, but something to be borne. It was not meant to rely upon but to die upon.

The things to which we point with such pride and exhibit with such pomp may be mute witnesses of the shallowness of our own hearts and the emptiness of our own souls. There is ever the danger that we shall become so wrapped up in our own concerns and the preservation of our own image that we may feast sumptuously while the world of suffering mankind lies at our gates begging for the crumbs which fall from our table. I have never known a people to be concerned about creating an image who did not end up worshipping it.

2. We must relinquish the vain hope that we can conquer this world for our captain by a well-trained group of professionals who fight in the valley while the great majority languidly watch from the safety of the hills. There is not one command to fight the good fight of faith which applies only to a top echelon of elite troops. Every part of the Christian armor was designed to be worn by every soldier of the Lamb. One man cannot wear the helmet, carry the shield, or wield the sword for the whole company.

We have employed enlistment gimmicks to increase our numbers and swell our ranks until they are now filled with soldiers who have no intention of fighting. We are spending our time pacifying and placating disgruntled troops, devising new

means of pampering those who threaten to go “over the hill” when their sensitivities are offended or when they feel neglected. Our preachers are not so much leaders who take men into battle as they are “Bob Hopes” who quip and joke to keep the soldiers happy. It is questionable whether the Devil worries about how many we enroll provided they act like many of those who are already in. And it is obvious that a lot of our brethren are willing to live in a state of peaceful co-existence with Satan.

We promote such unworthy and unhealthful conditions when we talk of certain ones going into “full time Christian service,” thus making it appear that others are obligated to serve as Christians only on a part time basis. Every child of God is a soldier all of the time, at home or abroad, awake or asleep, in daylight or dark. We are not mustered in on Sunday morning and mustered out on Sunday afternoon. And the task of evangelists and bishops is to train and develop every member to become a seasoned veteran in his own right and his own field. Our places of meeting must become arsenals and training grounds. We must convert our structures into ammunition dumps. We are not a peacetime army. We are at war!

3. We must develop a definite strategy for the recapture of those territories from which we have withdrawn and which we have forfeited to the enemy. Time will not permit mention of more than a few of them, but foremost among these is the field of advanced education. This is an intellectual age and young men and women of ambition and acumen are going to be exposed to every form of scholastic research. Whether they are guided by instructors who believe in God, or by humanists and secularists who become their own gods, depends upon our vision and foresight.

We cannot indulge the luxury of withdrawal into our own partisan pillboxes, and sit in sectarian security while the world goes up in flames about our structures. We must recognize that the man who teaches biology, sociology, psychology, history or

literature, in the state university, is God's minister, if he is a disciple of Jesus, the same as the man who stands in the pulpit and often speaks to a complacent congregation on Sunday morning.

It is a sign of our weakness that we fear for truth in any encounter and look askance at those who feel called to bring an effective witness for Jesus in the legal profession, or as physicians, athletic coaches, or state university professors. Surely God needs men who can minister in all of these areas and we should be producing commandoes who can drop behind the lines and infiltrate every sector of our culture for Christ. We must either meet the intellectual world on its own level or "fold our tents like the Arabs and as silently steal away." God has not promised to keep enough people ignorant so the restoration movement can survive.

Another surrendered area is that of science. Our own survival may depend upon our recovery of this region by men of Christian commitment. Science itself is neutral, but scientists are not, and if the power to destroy the universe is in the control of those who do not recognize the God of the universe, catastrophe beyond our power to imagine may occur. Science belongs to God and we need more Christian scientists— not the sectarian brand whose mother church is in Boston, but the committed kind whose headquarters are in heaven.

In the field of race relations we need to move into hard core areas to make the voice of the Prince of peace heard amidst the strident clamorings of fanatics and extremists of all kinds. The world will be changed only as men are changed. Power has no color, and the Christian must never allow his judgment to be colored by prejudice, bias or hate. We must meet these problems not with hot heads and cold hearts, but with cool heads and warm hearts. But we must meet them and not ignore them. Jesus died for men of concern who hold their heads up, not for ostriches who bury theirs in the sand.

4. We must recover our faith in the attested truth of God so that it may be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God. The man who quotes the Word with tongue-in-cheek or with fingers crossed, is a betrayer of the Christ as certainly as the covetous pretender who sold him for thirty pieces of silver. The one who masquerades as a proclaimer of the Good News while his own heart has been eroded of faith in Jesus by the wisdom of this passing age, is a greater deceiver and more dangerous than the avowed atheist.

When the tattered forces of the American Revolution were surrounded by the enemy, Thomas Paine took a charred stick from the campfire one night and wrote upon the head of his drum, "Put none but Americans on guard tonight." And now, when the sheep of God are challenged by grievous wolves who enter in, not sparing the flock, it is time once more to be careful of those who shepherd them. The character of a mere hireling never changes with the passing centuries. Such a one "when he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and runs away, because he is no shepherd and the sheep are not his. Then the wolf harries the flock and scatters the sheep."

Men who are frightened of their own theological shadow, who are wire-walking, fence-sitting compromisers of the faith, will sell the cause of Christ down the river to maintain their personal popularity. And any man who carries water on both shoulders should have one bucket knocked off or be made to spill them both. The preaching of the cross is a task for one whose eye is single and whose heart is undivided.

Encompassed within the scriptural setting assigned to me is that lustrous gem of imperishable truth which declares, "There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself." Upon this foundation I cheerfully build the house of my hopes and construct the citadel of my cherished dreams.

He is the foundation of my faith and trust for this world and the world to come. I am in Christ Jesus by God's act, for God has made him my wisdom; he is my righteousness, in him I am consecrated and set free. I had to be made a fool to gain true wisdom, but now I know that the wisdom of this world is folly in God's sight. I am content to have it become so in my own sight.

He is the foundation of my fellowship. No longer is that fellowship conditioned upon conformity with a cold legalistic code, manipulated by clever factional leaders who can make partisan puppets perform while keeping themselves concealed behind the curtain of contrived interpretations. I am one with Him and with every other person who has set to his seal that God is true, and who has bowed the knee to His sovereignty.

He is the foundation of authority for my life. I am convinced beyond all doubt that He is enthroned at the right hand of my Father in the heavenly realms, that every thing has been put in subjection beneath His feet, and that He has been appointed supreme head of the body. Wherein I fail to follow His will it will be a sin of the head and not of the heart, it will be due to imbecility and not to intention. He is the center and circumference of my life. That which does not proceed from him has no validity; that which does not lead to him has no value.

He is the foundation of my feeble service. I am no longer concerned with glorifying an institution or projecting pride in an organization. No institution could forgive my grievous sin, purify my iniquitous heart, and transform my wasted life. All that I am or ever hope to be I owe to him and I shall go where my heart prompts me to believe that he would have me go if every institution on this earth seeks to thwart me with threats or discourage me by detraction. I belong to Him!

He is the foundation of my hope for the hour of my departure. When the cool breeze from the shadowy river is wafted through the cypress trees to fan my feverish brow; when

the voices of loved ones fade and I stumble on toward the dim unknown, I want to know that he is there to take me by the hand. I want the voice which spoke to the tempestuous waves of Galilee to say to the turbulent Jordan, "Peace, be still!" And I will fear no evil if he is with me!

The power of the cross is not lessened for him who still stands at its base and says in the words of the centurion of old "Truly this man is the Son of God." Let us willingly proclaim that which is foolishness to those who perish, but wisdom to us who are saved. If any man glory, let him glory in the cross of Christ, where heaven stooped low to touch the earth with the magic wand of grace, and the gentle voice of mercy whispered forgiveness to frightened and forlorn man as he stood trembling upon the step of the gallows erected by his own guilt.

Heralds of Hope

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[Abstract]

Truth fairly presented, and enforced by the good example of its advocates, has ever triumphed, and will continue to triumph until the victory is complete.— Alexander Campbell in *Christian Baptist*, page 225.

At first the flame was very small as if someone had suddenly struck a single match in the velvet darkness of the whole universe. Then it was applied to the ripened field of humanity and it flickered and flared and burst into light. The wind began to blow with increasing velocity and the flame licked out its fiery tongues in all directions. The flame was the Message. The wind was persecution. And the darkness was the terrifying ignorance of a world which knew Him not!

The torch was lighted from above. The flame came down as it did when it consumed the sacrifices of Abraham and Elijah. No man could light the torch, for the fire is the fire of God. Men could hold the torch and run with it for it was their duty to work the work of God on earth, but they could not kindle the flame. They could not extinguish it either. And that is why it has never gone out.

The first person who really held it up for his people to see was a fisherman. He was not alone upon the occasion. There were eleven others with him and they had just undergone a

tremendous experience. A tornadic wind had rushed earthward and enveloped the room where they were sitting. Glowing tongues like flame appeared above the head of each one. Suddenly they found themselves able to converse in languages utterly foreign to them. An excited multitude formed. Eyes were focused on the fisherman.

He was ill-equipped for the role which fell to his lot. By nature impetuous, by occupation inured to hard work, he was ignorant by worldly standards. But he spoke with fluency and with no lack of words, for he was but the mouthpiece of divine power. And the multitude listened and were moved. The flame kindled their hearts.

Then a tentmaker who was also a rabbinical student, became filled with hatred for the fire. Frantically he sought to beat it out with hands whose fingers were blackened and pricked from the needles of his craft. But the light smote him and the intensity of it blinded him. When he was made to see again he picked up the torch which he had sought to destroy and carried it at the peril of his very life.

So it came to pass that the flame leaped over the straits to islands of the sea as a forest fire jumps from one pine-clad crag to another. It swept over mountains and down through the rocky defile called "The Tarsian Gate" and flowed over the miasmatic plains of Asia Minor. From ancient Troy of fabled fame it crossed to Philippi "the deathbed of the Roman Republic," and rippled along the Egnatian Way to sensual Corinth and intellectual Athens. And at last it came to the heart of the Empire, to Rome itself, borne by a captive into the dank Mamertine Prison, and it penetrated the walls of the palace and burned in the hearts of some of Caesar's very household.

The bearing of the flame is a saga of the courage of simple men and women, elevated to heights of daring by an unquenchable trust which caused them to "love not their lives

unto death.” Many of them were nameless slaves, their bodies the chattels of earthly masters. They were human ciphers until the Message came and established identity for them in a voluntary surrender which made them free. And this freedom took away the fear of death with its ultimate casting of their bodies on the dunghills and garbage-dumps where tireless worms worked ceaselessly in the aroma of decay. The Message was a message of Beyond!

In this presentation we hope to tell you of the growth and spread of the community of grace-sharers, the grace that came with truth by Jesus of Nazareth. We want to establish that it was not the work of brilliant intellectuals, or trained professionals, or smooth operators. It was not the triumph of organizational planning and direction. It made no use of great combines or crusades. It was unregimented, inept and amateurish— and it succeeded! It was the only war in history won by men who took no lives but freely gave their own.

Consider their calling, their summons to vocation. There were not many earthly philosophers among them. There were not many men of political prominence to wield power. There were not many of noble birth. It was the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the despised things, which were chosen. Even the things which were not were selected. And they reduced to nothing the things that were. It was as if a stone which had no reality, no weight and no solidity, fell upon the proud structure of the world’s glory and pulverized it. No one could explain it. It defied all scientific data, all human experience. It was the Lord’s doing and it is still marvelous in our eyes until this day!

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

Let us stroll through the aisles of recorded history and examine the evidence that has been preserved for our edification. We must gather it from both friend and foe. Often an enemy by

his fury of attack, by the very intensity of his effort, will reveal more about the onward sweep of a movement than a proponent. The latter is behind it, the former is in its path and must battle for his life, or for the life of his system.

Such a man, for example, was Celsus, the first of the intellectuals and philosophers to bitterly assail the Way. In the second century he composed a book of ridicule and invective against Christianity, under the title *Alethes Logos*. He did not realize that his volume would some day become a direct proof of that which he sought to destroy, and be all the more valuable because it was penned by a foe rather than a friend. One of his accusations was that “woolworkers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind are zealous preachers of the gospel.”

Canon Farrar in his volume titled *The Early Days of Christianity* writes, “The Christians had filled no large space in the eye of the world. Until the days of Domitian we do not hear of a single noble or distinguished person who had joined their ranks.” Celsus declared that the Christians consisted only of “the uninstructed, the servile and the ignorant.”

In spite of their handicap the humble saints kindled the fire of God all over the known world. They were not trained professionals. A. H. Newman in *A Manual of Church History* writes, “After the time of the apostle Paul most of the spread of the gospel was effected, not by direct missionary efforts, but by the moving hither and thither throughout the empire of artisans and tradesmen, who planted Christianity wherever they went. So also Christianity was frequently spread by persecution, each fugitive forming a new center of Christian influence.” (Page 142).

Professor Fisher in *The Beginnings of Christianity* says, “It is an interesting, but not a surprising fact, that the circumstances of the first planting of Christianity in places

which were later its most powerful seats, including Rome and Carthage, are not known. Visitors to Jerusalem at the great festivals, mechanics who changed their abode from place to place, and commercial travelers, might carry to their homes the faith which they had elsewhere received, and form the nucleus of new Christian communities. The gospel was transported from place to place, as seeds are blown from the trees and wafted abroad.”

L. de Pressense in *The Early Years of Christianity* writes, “We observe, first that the work was not done through any fixed organization. We shall not find in the church of the second and third centuries, any of those great missionary associations which form so important a part of modern Christian agency, for the simple reason that the whole church was then essentially a missionary society. A stranger and a sojourner rather than a settler in the world, hard pressed on all sides by surrounding paganism, its very life was one long conflict. It must fight in self-defence, and conquer or die. There was no distinction then between home and foreign missions; the Christian had but to cross his own threshold, and walk the public streets of his own city, and he found a pagan people at his own door to be converted.”

Again he says, “Every church was a mission-center, radiating gospel light far and near . . . A new mission generally arose out of some incidental circumstance, and wherever a Christian set his foot, however barren the soil, there he planted the cross, and gathered around him the nucleus of a church.”

Celsus complained, “Many of the Christians without any special calling, watch for all opportunities, and both within and without the temples, boldly proclaim their faith; they find their way into the cities, and the armies, and there having called the people together, harangue them with fanatical gestures.”

That such fervency of spirit was successful is evidenced

from the writings which have been preserved for us. In the second century Justin Martyr declared, “There exists not a single race of man, barbarians, Greeks, or by whatever name they may be called, warlike or nomadic, whether they live in tents or wander in wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of Jesus the crucified, to the Father and Creator of all things.”

Ireneus wrote, “Many tribes of the barbarians, without paper and ink, have the words of salvation written in their hearts through the Holy Spirit.” This referred to the fact that the Good News was taken to men before the sacred scriptures were translated into their languages, and they accepted the message.

In a passage which has become famous, Tertullian wrote to the Roman emperor, “We Christians are but of yesterday and we have filled your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your towns, your market places, the very camp, palace, senate, forum, and have left you nothing but the temples of your gods . . . If we were to make a general secession, and betake ourselves to some remote corner of the world, you would be horror-struck at the solitude.”

BEARERS OF THE TORCH

We shall now prosecute a search to determine the factors contributing to what one historian refers to as “that steady forward march of the church which no obstacle could impede, no danger daunt. Under the leadership of its invisible Head, it went forth without trembling to meet adversaries at once skilful and strong and as numerous as formidable— to encounter, in fact, all the recognized lords of the world, its princes and priests, its philosophers and artists. Every conflict became a victory, and the only effect of persecution was to extend the missionary field of the church, to give greater weight to its testimony, and to

command for it a wider hearing.” (De Pressense in *The Early Years of Christianity*).

1. *The transformed life.* The Christians were saints, and the word “saint” to them simply meant “one who is different.” They no longer conformed to the world.

They regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and as such they avoided those lusts which war against the soul. Filled with the same desires as others in the flesh they still lived a disciplined and ordered life.

In a world of luxury, affluence and profligacy, they moved with quiet dignity, their eyes fixed on a far-off goal. In all of my reading I have never come across more poignant language than that used by Canon Farrar in his description of the world into which Christianity was introduced. Although space will not permit of lengthy excerpts, please bear with me as I draw the following from *The Early Days of Christianity*.

“The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and degradation have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind . . . Even if St. Paul had never paused amid his sacred reasonings to affix his terrible brand upon the pride of Heathenism, there would still have been abundant proofs of the abnormal wickedness which accompanied the decadence of ancient civilization. They are stamped upon its coinage, cut on its gems, painted upon its chamber-walls, sown broadcast over the pages of its poets, satirists, and historians.”

“I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of insecurity and terror; its apathy, debauchery and cruelty; its hopeless fatalism; its unspeakable sadness and weariness; its strange extravagance alike of infidelity and superstition.”

“At the summit of the whole decaying system— necessary, yet detested— elevated indefinitely above the very highest, yet living in dread of the very lowest, oppressing a population which he terrified, and terrified by the population which he oppressed — was an Emperor, raised to the divinest pinnacle of autocracy, yet conscious that his life hung upon a thread; an Emperor, who, in the terrible phrase of Gibbon, was at once a priest, an atheist, and a god.”

In such a world, and in such a time, the Christians refused to tarnish their lives by participation in the sports and amusements, the crimes and indecencies of those about them. Athenagoras was an outstanding Athenian Philosopher who began reading the scriptures in order to refute them. He was converted by his own study and in 177 A.D., addressed his *Plea for the Christians* to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus. Here are some of his statements.

“Amongst us you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women, who if they are unable by words to prove our doctrine, yet exhibit by their deeds the good arising from their conviction of the truth. They do not make speeches, but they practice good works; when smitten they do not strike again; when robbed they do not go to law; they give to those who ask of them, and love their neighbors as themselves.”

Origen also wrote, “Those who are despised as ignorant fools and no better than slaves, no sooner commit themselves to God’s direction, by accepting the teaching of Jesus, than, forsaking their sins, many of them, like perfect priests for whom such pleasures have no charm, keep themselves pure in act and thought.”

2. *Lack of prejudice.* The fact that God loved the world and that Jesus died for all men, gave every reconciled being equal status among the believers. No longer did artificial criteria such as wealth, intellectual attainment, national prominence, or social

position have any significance. The cross served to produce a world of a single category. All were in equal need of a savior and beside this fact all else paled into insignificance.

The love feast became a visible demonstration of that inner power which transcended every other consideration. Men loved one another because God loved them all. Thus Minucius Felix has Octavius say, "The reason we love one another is because we do not know how to hate. We call one another brethren, as being born of the same God and parent, and as companions in faith and fellow-heirs of the same hope. As for crosses, we neither worship nor wish for them."

B. H. Cooper in his book *The Free Church* says of the end of the apostolic age, "The bright prospect which opened upon the day of Pentecost, the rallying of redeemed mankind around the Son of man, and of their awakening to a common consciousness of their brotherly relationship to each other in Him, was realized in the bosom of the two or three hundred apostolic churches (which had then been gathered), in some cases four thousand miles apart, and built up of men of every variety of rank, culture, color, clime, language, and previous religious training, as it has never been since." We pause to remark that those who seek to recapture the apostolic power and purpose should ponder carefully this statement.

3. *The raw courage of faith.* In his *Church History*, Milner says of the lack of documents in the sub-apostolic age, that the principal work of the Christians was "to believe, to suffer, to love, and not to write." If this is correct there is ample evidence they walked worthy of their vocation.

A good example is Justin Martyr who, after examination of all the philosophic schools of the day, became a follower of Jesus. Together with six of his companions, one of them a sister in Christ, he was arrested and brought before Rusticus, the city prefect, who had been appointed to office because he had

formerly been the instructor of the emperor in the Stoic philosophy.

The account of the trial is interesting. When Rusticus asked, "What kind of doctrines do you profess?" the reply was given, "I have endeavored to learn all doctrines; but I have settled at last in the true doctrine, that of the Christians."

The prefect asked, "Are those the doctrines that please thee, miserable man? Where do you Christians assemble?" Justin said, "Where everyone chooses and is able. Dost thou suppose we all meet in the same place? Not so. The God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place; being invisible He fills heaven and earth, and is everywhere worshiped and glorified by the faithful."

The entire party acknowledged boldly that they were Christians. The prefect threatened them all with death, and turning to Justin asked him if he supposed that if he was beheaded he would go to heaven and receive a reward. The reply was, "I do not suppose it, I know and am fully persuaded of it."

When the Christians refused to burn incense to the gods, Rusticus pronounced the sentence of death. "Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the command of the Emperor, be scourged and led away to suffer the punishment of decapitation, pursuant to the laws." At the place of execution the faithful little band died with a hymn of praise upon their lips.

When the community of saints at Carthage was threatened with persecution of the worst kind, Cyprian addressed to the believers his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, to persuade them to don joyfully the purple robe, dyed in the blood of the Lamb. Here is his conclusion.

"In such meditations the spirit grows strong, and becomes proof against the terrors of the evil one and the menaces of the world. Earth is shut up against us in times of persecution, but

heaven is opened; Antichrist threatens, but Christ sustains; death overtakes us, but immortality follows: the world recedes, but paradise receives us; this life of a day is quenched, eternal life begins. What honor, what peace, what joy, to depart thus gloriously from the midst of persecution and anguish, to shut the eyes on the world of men, to open them on the face of God and of His Christ: O short and blessed voyage.”

4. *The message of hope.* Canon Farrar says of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ, “Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.”

The historian continues, “And what was the religion of a period which needed the sanctions and consolations of religion more deeply than any age since the world began? It is certain that the old Paganism was— except in country places—practically dead. The very fact that it was necessary to prop it up by the buttress of political interference shows how hollow and ruinous the structure of classic Polytheism had become . . . The upper classes were destitute of faith, yet terrified at skepticism. They had long learnt to treat the current mythology as a mass of worthless fables, scarcely amusing enough even for a schoolboy’s laughter, but they were the ready dupes of every wandering quack who chose to assume the character of a *mathematicus* or a *mage*.”

In such an atmosphere Stoicism became the religion of the literary ranks. The historian says, “It made a vice of compassion, which Christianity inculcated as a virtue; it cherished a haughtiness which Christianity discouraged as a sin. It was unfit for the task of ameliorating mankind because it looked on human nature in its normal aspects with contemptuous disgust. Its marked characteristic was a despairing sadness, which became specially prominent in its most sincere adherents. Its favorite theme was the glorification

of suicide, which wise moralists severely reprobated, but which many Stoics belauded as the one sure refuge against oppression and outrage.”

The writer concludes his chapter with these words, “St. Paul and St. Peter, on the other hand, were at the very same epoch teaching in the same city, to a few Jewish hucksters and a few Gentile slaves, a doctrine so full of brightness, that letters, written in a prison with torture and death in view, read like idylls of serene happiness and paeans of triumphant joy. The graves of these poor sufferers, hid from the public eye in the catacombs, were decorated with an art, rude indeed, yet so triumphant as to make their subterranean squalor radiant with emblems of all that is brightest and most poetic in the happiness of man. While the glimmering taper of the Stoics was burning pale, as though amid the vapors of a charnel-house, the torch of life upheld by the hands of the Tarsian tentmaker and the Galilean fisherman had flashed from Damascus to Antioch, from Antioch to Athens, from Athens to Corinth, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Rome.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR DAY

We live in a neo-pagan age. It can be proven that the same attitudes which prevailed among men when the Good News was first heralded forth are the very ones which characterize our world today. Unfortunately, many who profess faith in Christ are listless and apathetic, or worldly and sinful. The gospel is still God’s dynamite but there is no one to light the fuse in many areas.

The Message is needed today. Men are hungering and thirsting for righteousness and that is what it has to offer. It is not outgrown or outmoded. It is adapted to meet the needs of men like they are and where they are. But it is obvious that there must be renewal in our time if we are to become effective. We

propose to discuss with you what we believe are vital factors which can lead to that renewal.

1. We must recapture the concept that every Christian is a minister of God, and we must provide training for every-member ministry. We must cease to designate one man as “the minister” or “our minister” for this very language places the remainder of the saints in a non-ministering category. Elton Trueblood deserves the commendation of all of us for pointing out in his book *The Incendiary Fellowship* that “If Dr. Jones is the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Centerville, it follows logically that the ordinary members are not ministers.”

The strength of the primitive community of believers lay in the fact that they had not been betrayed into thinking of themselves as spectators of a performance. They did not even think of themselves as performers on a world stage. They were not play-acting. The world was a battlefield and they were combat troops. In the rather slang but expressive language of the city streets “this was for real, man!”

We must also recognize that whatever is done by a child of God in an attitude of humility and reverence, constitutes ministry, for ministry simply means service. The “service” is not something held in an ecclesiastical structure, but something that is done outside. The Christian does not attend a service, he renders it! The service does not begin at ten o’clock on Sunday morning. It does not cease and for that reason cannot start. It is as important on Monday morning as on Sunday morning. Actually, what we do on Monday may be more important than what we do on Sunday, and this does not at all argue that what is done on Sunday is not important!

All of the saints must become so involved that they do not have time to gather every night for two weeks to listen to someone tell them over and over what they have already heard and done. Why repeat interminably the terms of enlistment to

men in battle fatigues? They have already enlisted and should be out fighting! We have a world to conquer and we will not get the job done by sitting around in the mess-hall listening to an imported sergeant describe the terms of enlistment. It is silly to talk about “holding a revival” for a company of troops unless they are dead. It is interesting to note that the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not hold revivals!

We must turn our meetinghouses into arsenals and training centers. We must make our preachers into coaches and trainers. Their task should be to discover and develop the aptitudes of all who volunteer under the banner of Christ. Not all are adapted to the same task but all should be given some task. There are no non-functioning members in the body of Christ, but the divine instruction is, “having gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them” (Romans 12:6).

This entails several things. One must determine the nature of the gift he has, and must be willing and eager to use it. The community of saints must seek for meaningful ways in which to encourage use of all the gifts. The present system discourages use of gifts. It relegates the mass of the membership to a place where they can only “pay and pray.” Sometimes the last is done for them, although the first never is.

The apostle urged those with the gift of prophecy to exercise it in proportion to faith. He continues, “If service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

We will need to revise our strategy. The world will simply not be won by an elite group of trained professionals, call them priests, ministers, theologians, or whatever. The idea of creating a congregation for a minister, and then creating a minister for the congregation, or vice versa, is just not a part of God’s program and plan for world conquest. This idea did not

originate with the Bible.

An army that spends its time being served or ministered to is helpless and hopeless as a fighting force. We talk nonsense when we equate strength with numbers. We have been deceived by the fallacy of strength in statistics! Innate strength is the ability to accomplish the work or purpose for which a thing is created without additional force or help from the outside or from another source. A group of twenty Christians who are capable of edifying themselves is strong, while four hundred who have to be edified to survive are weak. A man who weighs four hundred pounds but has to be helped to his feet and supported while he walks is not nearly as strong as one who weighs a hundred and fifty pounds and can go out and chop wood all day!

If the primitive saints had adopted our ideas and constituted themselves into “a church” Christianity would have expired in its cradle. And we will never recapture our potential until we cease to be “a church” with its structures, forms, programs, organizations and vested interests, and become a living organism— the body of Christ. Emil Brunner is right when he says, “The community which waits in hope for the return of the Lord and which lives by faith and love in the possession of His Spirit, cannot be an institution, a church.”

Brunner is also correct when he says, “The New Testament *Ecclesia*, the fellowship of Jesus Christ, is a pure communion of persons and has nothing of the character of an institution about it: it is therefore misleading to identify any single one of the historically developed churches, which are all marked by an institutional character, with the true Christian communion.”

The body of Christ, through its members, brought the pagan world to its knees in humble suppliance to the Lord. But when, in order to secure and hold their gains, they constituted themselves into a “church,” a historical institution, paganism moved in and rendered the institution helpless for effective

combat. The difference between a church and the body of Christ is simply stated. A church arranges and uses its adherents, manipulating them as it chooses. Men are made for the “church.” “But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose” (1 Corinthians 12:18).

2. We must recapture the concept of the transformed life. We no longer feel at ease when we are called saints. We do not like to think of ourselves as sanctified. We shrink from being regarded as holy. But the early Christians were “different” and they knew they were. This was the very thing which lent them power.

Now if we are absolutely honest (and this is difficult to be) we will admit that we have “watered down” our lives a great deal. Keith Miller in *The Taste of New Wine* points out that the modern institutional church is filled with people who look pure and sound pure but are sick of themselves and that of which they are a part.

One reason that we do not get more people out of the world and into the “church” is that so many who are already in it would like to get out. Remove the fear of hell which the institutional church uses as a weapon trained on the gate, and there would be a general exodus in a lot of places. All one needs to do to find out how unhappy most people are with their associates in the *church* is to listen to them talk about them for a half hour. We need to change one of our old hymn titles to: “What? A fellowship?” Small wonder that most of the heathen decide to stay out of something which turns so many of its adherents into frustrated grumblers and spiritual schizophrenics.

Yet the reason why the condition exists is very apparent. We have been converting men to an institution rather than to a savior. And sinful man needs a savior! Putting men into an institution who really need a physician will not cure them. It

may make them worse! I realize that this will be resented and vociferously denied, but I still affirm that it is so.

To be quite plain we use Christ as another gimmick, an attention-getter, a sales pitch. But in the final analysis, the thing that really counts with us is how many names are listed on our institutional tally sheet, the membership roster. The fact is that when we hold a “crusade” against the modern Turks, if someone really comes to Christ but does not come with us, we think of him as being lost, not saved. And we bemoan the fact that after we got him to land he slipped out of our net.

We contrast the number in our “church” with that in other *churches*, and we revel in the news reports that we are the “fastest growing church” in America. We clip out such items and carry them in our billfold to show to our unfortunate associates who belong to slower “churches;” we reproduce our favorable figures in bulletins and tack the reports on our bulletin boards!

But there is nothing about affiliating with an institution that automatically revolutionizes one’s life. There is a difference between being transferred to a new status by a creed, and transformed into a new state by the Christ. It could be a serious question how much Satan worries about those we capture. He probably does not care how many we get into the “church” provided they act like many of those who are already there. He doesn’t really lose them, he just puts them into a clump at our expense, where he can readily find them.

It will be argued that what we say is true of sects, or denominations, or cults, but is not true of “the Lord’s church.” But the term “the Lord’s church” is a clever semantic switch in our day which is employed to designate a special historic movement which is institutionalized with all of its supporting and contributing agencies, organizations, business enterprises and vested interests.

“The Lord’s church” is a synonym in the minds of those who use the term for “The Church of Christ,” and this is the outgrowth of a historical restoration movement. All of our pious platitudes will not alter this fact. And as Brunner says it is “marked by an institutional character.” What I have said is true of any institution calling itself “a church” or “the church.” No institutional relationship can mechanically change one’s life. It can serve as a cover or shield, and often does!

The primitive saints enrolled and entered into a vital, absorbing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The language employed to describe this state is revelatory of its nature. Those who entered were born again, they constituted a new creation, a new humanity. Their life was hid with Christ in God. To live was Christ. It was a thrilling vocabulary, pulsating and throbbing with the dynamic of a new existence. They had come to know The Joy, and they were blessed in the knowing! They had been touched by the hand of God, their hearts had been sprinkled with blood, their bodies washed with pure water. And they were not the same as before. They would never be the same again. Old things (including the old sameness, the old drabness) had passed away. All things had become new. It was this which gave them such a sense of destiny, of urgency, of inexhaustible power.

Although every indication is that the temptation to conform seems almost overwhelming, we must not overlook the power of the Spirit and the word of God. We have relied upon our own plans and projects, our schemes and systems, but these can never produce a new creation. They can rearrange and readjust, but they have no power to redeem or regenerate. An incubator cannot produce chickens, although ours has been entrusted with that task. Life comes from life! We must throw ourselves upon the Lord and cease to trust in “the horses and chariots of Egypt.” We must preach Christ, and live Christ. We must be content to lead men to Him and let God place them in the body as it pleases Him.

3. We must crucify our prejudice. The entertainment of racial prejudice is a denial of God's revelation and purpose. Regardless of how we seek to rationalize or justify it we will never gloss over the fact that it is unjust, uncharitable and unchristian. It is not enough that we merely tolerate our brethren of other ethnic backgrounds, but we must receive them and welcome them as God has welcomed us for the sake of Jesus Christ.

God has no stepchildren and we can have no half-brothers in the Lord. There are no second-class citizens in the kingdom made possible and created by "the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior." We must face up to the issue of our own prejudice very honestly for no other question in our day is quite so likely to make hypocrites of us.

This is evident in religiously oriented institutions such as some schools which resisted integration and held the white line until public and political pressure from without forced them to integrate, and which then began to publicize themselves as champions of racial freedom. It is manifest in those organizations which allowed token integration and pointed to the few blacks among them as a sign of charitable fellowship. Such a flagrant attempt to use men to project a false image is quackery and pretension of the worst kind.

Our prejudice against those of another color or race must be washed away by the blood of the Lamb, for that one blood is the same blood from which God made all nations of men. It is not enough to conceal our true feelings, or to go along because it "is the thing to do." We must mortify or put to death our littleness, intolerance and bigotry.

We will never be able to really further the kingdom in our day until we see our partiality as sin and recognize that so long as we make such distinctions among ourselves we become "judges with evil thoughts." So long as we merely hide our

human nature, and cloak it with empty profession and outward appearance we are deceivers. We must overcome this grave sin on our knees and in true penitent confession.

The world is shrinking. The man on the other side of the globe is now closer than the next village was a century ago. We simply cannot afford the luxury of racial hatred or animosity. Hungarians are no longer “Bohunks,” Italians are no longer “Wops,” Jews are no longer “Kikes,” French are no longer “Frogs,” Negroes are no longer “Niggers.” The one who still indulges in this kind of national and racial appellation only reveals his ignorance and provincialism. He dates himself by his uncultured and untutored language. If he thinks in these terms but does not utter them he shows that he only has a thin veneer of silence to cover up a heart seething with bias.

That the Christian world is outgrowing its parochial attitude of the past in the matter of racial differences is apparent from many angles. One that deserves special mention relates to a resolution adopted by the *World Congress on Evangelism* which met in Berlin in the autumn of 1966. The proclamation was entitled, “One Race, One Gospel, One Task.” Of special significance is the following excerpt.

“All who are ‘in Christ’ henceforth can recognize no distinctions based on race or color and no limitations arising out of human pride or prejudice, whether in the fellowship of those who have come to faith in Christ or in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to men everywhere. We reject the notion that men are unequal because of distinction of race or color. In the name of Scripture and of Jesus Christ we condemn racialism wherever it appears. We ask forgiveness for our past sins in refusing to recognize the clear command of God to love our fellowmen with a love that transcends every human barrier or prejudice.”

A genuine implementation of this resolution by the

concerned ones who drew it up will make a tremendous impact upon our world. These evangelicals came from 100 nations and represented 70 religious groups. They assembled in “a spectacular display of evangelical unity on the basis of biblical theology and evangelism,” as Carl F. H. Henry phrased it. No one of us ought to hesitate to subscribe to this clear statement on the subject of race. All of us ought to engrave it upon the shield of our hearts.

4. We must recapture the raw courage of faith. In our day, at least in the United States of America, men are no longer put to death by torture for faith in God. Our problem is not one of being faithful unto death, but of remaining faithful until death. However, persecution has not ceased in our neo-pagan world, although it has changed its form. It is now generally psychical rather than physical. Sarcasm has been substituted for the stake, and ridicule has replaced the rack. Men are pilloried now by satirists rather than by soldiers.

Because the means employed are not so bloody or blatant there is a danger that we may be deceived into thinking that a less intense faith will suffice. This is not so. It may be much easier to steel oneself to endure physical agony for a season until welcome death brings respite than to face the daily shafts which wound but do not kill. It is probably easier to die for the faith than to live for it.

Let us mention a few situations where bulldog tenacity is needed to hold on to integrity. Take the case of a soldier who is thrown into company with those whose moral standards, or lack of them, allow them to drink, gamble and frequent houses of prostitution. An atmosphere of profanity and rank obscenity prevails and one who does not indulge in vice is made the subject of constant taunt and the butt of ridicule. To maintain one's faith in God, to read the Bible and to pray regularly, is not easy. One whose spiritual valor does not weaken deserves to be decorated with the badge of superior courage. That many do

come through such an ordeal unscathed and unscarred is a testimony to the power of God in the committed life.

Or, consider the student on a large university campus where many of those with whom he is thrown into daily contact are experimenting with hallucinogenic or “mind-expanding” drugs, and who brand as “straights” or “squares” all who resist “the madding crowd’s ignoble strife” and “keep the even tenor of their way.” Such a student can hardly escape being thrown into circumstances where sex is exploited and where resistance to its enticement and blandishment causes one to be regarded as a “kook” or “religious nut.” In our own on-campus dialogues and encounters we have met a lot of young men and women who refuse to “sell their faith down the river.”

I must confess that I have often found in college students that quality of courageous faith demonstrated by another brilliant scholastic, Moses, who absorbed all of the wisdom available in the most profligate culture of his day, and through the sheer genius of his leadership became a national hero (Acts 7:22). But when “the chips were down” by an act of irrevocable faith he turned his back on wealth and political honor, “choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.” I know young people in high school and college who have actually spent sleepless nights praying and wrestling with their inner selves, buffeting their bodies to bring them into subjection. And I know a lot of them who have won the battle!

I have come to admire a great deal the company of committed ones who have penetrated the secular campus to bring a Christian influence to bear upon the teaching of varied disciplines. I am not especially concerned with the agitation to place the Bible as a textbook in such a college, or with teaching Christianity as one of the “world religions.” Nor have I become especially exercised over the Supreme Court decision to proscribe prepared and prescribed prayers in the classroom.

What I am concerned about is that we have Christian teachers in every department, and praying men and women instructing in all areas.

Aesop had a moral which read, "It is easy to be brave from a safe distance." La Rouchefoucauld wrote, "No man can answer for his courage who has never been in danger." Most of us will never know the pressures brought upon the man or woman who pursues the study of philosophy, psychology, or the healing arts, to the highest degree. That many of these maintain a humble faith in God is a tribute to the same spirit which prompted Sir Walter Raleigh to say on the scaffold, "If the heart be right, it matters not which way the head lies." My own faith has been immeasurably strengthened by physicians, engineers and university instructors who keep theirs.

In our world of regimentation and conformity we are liable to be betrayed into glorifying one who abandons the prosaic and humdrum to go to a remote area as a missionary. Certainly such a person deserves credit and respect, but this may actually require less courage than to be God's missionary where one works in a large department store, a huge factory, or an automobile assembly plant. The man who instructs simple savages in the letters of the alphabet may not face nearly as many problems as one who must meet a civilized "savage" public in the asphalt jungle of a great metropolitan center.

One of the best "missionaries" I know runs a Shell service station. Another has a bread delivery route in a suburban area. Still another works for our state in a home economics program. Another is an engineer in a large aerodynamics plant. They have affected my life in a very substantial manner, but they have done no more for me than a cotton farmer whom I know in the southland who never finished the fourth grade in school. Probably he has helped me as much as any person I have ever met.

J. T. Clarke wrote, "This is the way to cultivate courage: first, by standing firm on some conscientious principle, some law of duty. Next, by being faithful to truth and right on small occasions and common events. Third, by trusting God for help and power." Cicero summed it up for us when he wrote, "A man of courage is also full of faith."

5. We must recapture the impact of the message of hope. We live in an age that is filled to satiety with things. Men are drunken and nauseated by the power of money. The world is growing cold, callous and cruel. Sub-cultures of rebellion have formed in protest against the well-groomed look, the scented bath, and the cosmetic complexion. The "man in the grey flannel suit," the Wall Street promoter, the slick operator, has given way to the Beatles as the projected idols of the younger set.

And the disillusionment with the sham and hypocrisy which has developed from pretending to worship God openly, while keeping a shrine to Mammon in the inner heart, has created a revulsion to the emptiness and vacuity which characterizes life today. It is not a mere circumstance that suicide will claim more lives on the university campus this year than any other means of physical extinction.

This presents to the Way the greatest opportunity it has had since the days of the Caesars. We are fast approaching the very kind of world into which Christianity was launched. We stand at the portals of another "fulness of the times." The tired, jaded, saddened men and women all about us are no different than those who made up the Roman Empire. And we now have every facility to enable us to encircle the globe with the Message.

We have no time left, however, to experiment with incidental or peripheral topics or themes. Humanity in crisis is not interested in our little arguments indulged among ourselves in our little partisan playhouses. The man on the operating table suffering from a gangrenous infection will become impatient

with those surgeons who debate the various opinions as to techniques.

We must discover again the very core of the Message, that which is vital, innate and intrinsic. And somehow we must find the way for all who trust in that essence to unite in its proclamation. If the time ever arrives that our world ceases to seethe in ferment and again settles down upon its lees we may find time for Christians to argue and dispute over accessory matters, circumstantials and extraneous situations. But we dare not take time out now to argue the merits of our approaches in the face of impending disaster.

To me our course is plain. We must inject hope, transcendent hope, into the quaking, trembling body of a universe frightened by its own shadow. That means a recovery of the message of the resurrection. Nothing else will do. I have personally tried this out with campus groups in Student Union buildings, in fraternity houses, and in sorority lounges. I have a firm and positive faith in the resurrection. When I speak of it I do so without equivocation. The motto of the apostle is my own guideline, "We also believe and therefore speak!" And I have been astounded at what has happened.

It is upon the fact of the resurrection that all else hinges. "Now if the rising of Christ from the dead is the very heart of our message, how can some of you deny that there is any resurrection?" (1 Corinthians 15:12). No person can honestly and intelligently confront the fact of the resurrection and not be changed. "And if Christ was not raised then neither our preaching nor your faith has any meaning at all." Again, "If Christ did not rise your faith is futile and your sins have never been forgiven."

The resurrection must not be proclaimed as "a doctrine of the church." There is nothing more void or empty to modern man than "a doctrine of the church." He is fed up with the

controversies, quarrels and wranglings occasioned by such matters. The resurrection of Jesus is a fact of history, not a theological deduction. It is not a timeless something, but it is like any other historical fact, it was timed!

As a historical fact it relates to man caught up in the historical predicament. There is no such thing as an unrelated historical fact. And man can no more escape or evade the implications of the resurrection for his life than he can escape the implications of the industrial revolution, the discovery of the Salk vaccine, or the launching of space capsules.

We must let men in on God's greatest secret. We must show them the transcendent mystery. Being "in the know" on this is the only thing which can transform earthly beings composed outwardly of clay. Man was not made to continue elemental. "This perishable nature of ours must be wrapped in imperishability; these bodies which are mortal must be wrapped in immortality." The sequel to this is the most startling revelation to a dying race. "So when this perishable is lost in the imperishable, the mortal lost in the immortal, this saying will come true, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

This is the very heart of our Message. We have neglected it at our own peril. We close with the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Surely God would not have created such a being as man, with an ability to grasp the infinite, to exist only for a day. No, no, man was made for immortality."

God and Time

Mission Messenger (June 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

A gang of us were sitting in the library lounge killing time the other day and we got to kicking around our ideas about God. Do you think it is necessary to believe that God is a person, or can we settle for Tillich's idea that God is "the ground of our being"? Also, what is time? Do you think it is a force?

I am certain the conversation alluded to by my young friend in this excerpt from his letter was much more elevating than some other of the "bull sessions" held in college lounges these days. And I find myself a little intrigued by the question about God. The phrasing seems to indicate that the fellows thought one has to believe in God, and the only real question has to do with the nature of God. It is a fact that trying to live by bread alone is a pretty difficult and agonizing experience. You're always hungry deep down, and death by starvation of the personality can be harrowing.

What is meant by the expression, "Is it *necessary* to believe that God is a person?" Necessary for what? Does this mean, is it necessary for happiness? Or security? Or safety? If so, these are unworthy motivations for believing anything. Actually there is only one honest motive for belief and that is to be intellectually consistent with fact or truth. Anything else is secondary and is more likely to be a consequence or result of belief than a motivation toward it.

This being the case, one should believe about God what commends itself to his heart to be true. He is obligated to examine all of the evidence available and formulate his conclusion upon the basis of that evidence. In this instance the field of research spans the entire range of thought from the need of the human heart to the origin of the universe.

I unhesitatingly accept for myself the belief in God as a personal being. I go farther than that. I believe that my own personality as a rational being stems from him. I am made in his image. So I do not find it necessary for me to believe and trust in the living God, for God's sake only, but also for my sake.

I am sure that a dog can get some animal pleasure out of chewing on a rubber bone made in the image of a real one, but I cannot cut my spiritual eyeteeth or attain to any degree of satisfaction by mentally gnawing at an imitation. I am so constructed that my highest and noblest love must be projected to a responsive being rather than to an invention.

One can make an idol out of a concept as well as out of a tree trunk, and anything which comes between one and God is an idol, whether it is a mental block or a wooden block. And I am not cut out to be an idolater. If the late Paul Tillich derived his ground of being theory from Paul's speech in Athens— "in him we live and move and have our being"— he certainly wrested the passage if he posited a non-personal God. I am not sure he meant to do so!

To be quite honest about it, since the matter has been mentioned, I do not know what Tillich really thought about a good many things. When his writings were the current fad I read a lot of them and tried to look wise when his name was mentioned in company, but I was like a boy learning to swim on an inflated inner tube which someone carelessly punctures with a fish spear. I was glad to quit floundering around and get back to my own depth.

One who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Any real approach to God must be predicated upon belief in his existence, and it must include the idea that he is not impersonal, incapable, unreachable or aloof. He is concerned about man, and he manifests that concern by rewarding those who seek with diligence. He can be sought, he can be found, and he will reward those who make a meaningful divine-human encounter. I know he can be found because I've found him!

As to the question about time, I realize that there are some philosophers who regard it as a dynamic. I disagree with them. As I view it, time, like space, is a dimension. Space is the realm in which things exist, time is the realm in which things change. And this prompts me to say a few words about those of my good brethren who differentiate between "time" and "eternity." There is no such logical distinction that is valid.

Eternity did not end in order for time to begin. Time will not end in order for eternity to begin or resume. What we call time is simply our way of measuring that segment of eternity in which our existence is cast. Eternity has no past, present or future, although man has, so time marks only the scope of existence of humanity in the broader realm of eternity. Time is for man. Neither God nor lower animals would require it!

Conflict with Caesar

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

Christians pass their life on earth, but they are citizens in heaven. They obey the established laws, but they out-do the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are not understood, and are condemned. They are put to death, and yet made alive.— The Epistle to Diognetus (2nd century).

It still seems almost impossible. And the more I think about it, the more convinced do I become that its very success is proof that behind it all there was a divine power shaping its destiny. Of course I have never really doubted that, but I am merely saying that the proof of it lies within the fact itself.

In Jerusalem, for example, the community was formed of Jews with their traditional prejudices and animosities. There were Hebrews and Hellenists, Pharisees and proselytes, and they brought with them their disputes and speculations, as well as their virtues and vices.

In Corinth there were some in the number who were formerly adulterers, homosexual perverts, thieves, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers. Some of them still stood in awe of idols and some resorted to heathen courts in legal action against their own brethren.

In Thessalonica they were drawn from the ranks of the

lazy, shiftless loungers who hung out on the market square. They were adept at the art of subsisting on food scrounged from others.

In Ephesus they had been pagans with beclouded wits and hardened hearts, living in ignorance so dense that they wandered in a world of intellectual darkness.

And yet, in spite of all this, they were brought into a state of fellowship so powerful that it was described as one body. They composed an army that became unconquerable, a kingdom that was invincible, a stream that overflowed its banks and drove its waters all over the world. And they did this in the face of opposition so fierce that we can only imagine its intensity. They were bounded by political pawns, harassed by priests and hated by philosophers. They were misunderstood, lied about and falsely accused. Wherever they went they were forced to answer ridiculous charges stemming from falsehoods of such wild nature as to be revolting and disgusting.

Perhaps the first charge ever hurled at them was that they were atheists, and enemies of the human race. The Christians denounced idolatry, refused to attend the festivals and celebrations in the pagan temples, and would not even purchase meat in the markets which had been devoted to the gods. To deny the pantheon of idols was to bring down upon one's head the charge of being an atheist. Justin Martyr, who was killed for the faith about A.D. 165, wrote:

Thus we are called atheists. And we admit that in respect of such supposed gods we are atheists: but not in regard to the most true God, the Father of righteousness and moderation and the other virtues, the God who is without a trace of evil. Him we worship and adore, and His Son, who came from him and taught us of these things, and the host of the other good angels who attend on God and are of god-like nature, and the Spirit of prophecy. These we worship with reason and truth.

It was also alleged that the Christians constituted a cult devoted to clandestine practice of unspeakable immoralities. Several factors gave rise to this accusation. In the community of saints the women enjoyed greater freedom than in many other areas. They sat down together with the men at the same table for the “love feasts,” an expression which was given a suggestive meaning by the pagans.

Too, many of the meetings were held before daybreak or after sunset. This was made necessary by virtue of the fact that many Christians were slaves and were forced to spend all of the daylight hours toiling in the fields. However, their detractors circulated the report that the darkness was used as a cover for indulgence in riotous orgies.

One of the widely circulated calumnies was to the effect that the Christians were cannibals, and that in their feast they ate human flesh and drank a libation of human blood. This is an indication of how statements with reference to the Lord’s Supper were twisted and wrested by the enemies of righteousness. In order to show the problems faced by the community of believers in confrontation with the world of its day, let us consider the following from *A History of the Christian Church*, by the eminent Dr. Charles Hase.

“Against Christianity was urged; its foreign and barbarous origin, to which all that was national must give way, all that was true or good in Christianity belonged still more anciently to philosophy, so that the only novelty which it possessed was a most repulsive outward form, its sacred scriptures were of doubtful origin, and had frequently been altered; Jesus was said to have been the offspring of adultery, instructed by magicians in Egypt, and surrounded only by wretched fishermen and abandoned publicans, to have died in the expression of unmanly sorrows, and finally to have given no proof of his resurrection except what was derived from his own followers. Against Christians it was urged: that they had deified a public

malefactor; that they demanded a blind faith; that they invited to their society those who were sinners and criminals, while in the heathen mysteries, none were initiated but those who were pure in heart; that the various Christian sects were intolerant towards each other; that they were remarkably unfortunate; and finally, that if they were not secret criminals, they shunned publicity, and were enemies to the eternal city of Rome.”

How did the community of saints become a force which could not be ignored? They had no structures or edifices to which they could invite the populace. They had no scriptures of their own, no “new testaments” to distribute. They were without newspapers, tracts or other literature. They possessed no printing presses or duplicating devices. There were no loudspeaking systems, no radio or television sets.

They could not communicate with one another at a distance except by courier. Their overland journeys were made slow and laborious by foot travel. Their journeys to other lands depended upon the vagaries of maritime breezes. And they were always in peril, on land and sea. How can we account for the spread of the Way? What can we learn from these primitive believers which might enable us once again to recapture the vitality and virility of their lives. We cannot possibly go behind the curtain which time has drawn and reveal all of the factors, but we would like to suggest a few items of interest for the fellowship of the concerned ones. We do this very humbly in the hope that we may be helpful to those who read.

THE SECRET OF STRENGTH

(1) Their relationship to Jesus was not an organizational one, but personal. They did not join something, but they were joined to the Lord in a union so intimate it was illustrated by the act of consummation in marriage. They became one spirit with him and thus they were transformed by their very closeness to

the divine.

It was their complete and unreserved surrender to Jesus, their uninhibited pledge of allegiance unto him, which made them holy. The word “holy” simply means “different.” Their difference was manifest and noticeable in speech, behavior and action.

They never thought of Jesus as coming to start a new religion, but to give life. And they seldom engaged in the comparison of “their religion” with “other religions.” They did not propagate a better religion as opposed to an inferior one; they simply proclaimed life as opposed to death.

Since Jesus was the life, all life grew out of and was related to Jesus. One loved his wife as Jesus loved the church (Ephesians 5:25); slaves loved their earthly masters as slaves of Christ (Ephesians 6:6); all forgave each other as God in Christ forgave them. Life was measured by Christ. He was both the center and the circumference of existence. The saints reacted in every situation as he would have reacted. Thus they were never lonely, for they had no sense of aloneness. They walked in the light of his promise never to leave them or forsake them.

(2) Every saint was a soldier, a runner, a fighter in the arena. There was no need to form a “Christian Athlete’s Association.” The entire community created by Jesus was just that. Every member was salt, every one was light, every one was a living stone.

No one thought of paying another to fight for him, or of hiring someone else to be a light for him. No one sat in the bleachers or grandstand to watch a performance. The Way was not a dramatization to be presented for critical spectators by an actor, for the Way was not a play at all. It was for real! And those who were in it grew tired and sweaty and bloody. And some of them died for it!

There was no missionary society because no one could have attended its meetings. They were all too busy fulfilling their mission to take time out to talk about it. There was no discussion about means or methods, plans or programs. Wherever one who was “in” met one who was “without” he encountered him with faith and love. “As for those who had been scattered, they went through the country telling the Good News.” Here is the way Edwyn Bevan puts it in his book *Hellenism and Christianity*:

“The track of Paul shines curiously in the mists of primitive Christianity, but it was for the most part by persons whose names were soon forgotten in this world—undistinguished evangelists, or itinerant traders, or slaves—that the Good News was carried from city to city, ‘till the whole world was leavened.’”

This host of the nameless ones, styled by the poet Vachel Lindsay, “an endless line of splendor,” outlived, outloved and outdied the enemies of the cross. They penetrated every avenue of a rotten, corrupt and decaying society, and it was purged and purified by their passing. They were made courageous by the hope of his coming. And they loved not their lives unto death.

(3) Their message was not a recital of decrees or a repetition of dogma. It was not the imposition of a systematic theology, for their theology was not documentary but personal. Jesus was the Word of God, the *theos logos*, the theology of God.

One cannot confine life and love to a book, not even a divinely authorized one. He can write about life or love, but he cannot capture either in an ink bottle or within a leather cover. The saints of old never thought of a Bible saving the world. A lost world needs a Savior. Those who are sick need a physician.

They did not confuse the physician with his prescription, the captain with his commands, the Father with his chastening rod, or the friend with his letters. To them, Christianity was not

Jesus pointing them to a book, but a book pointing them to Jesus. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Grace was God stooping down, bending low, to become like man; truth is the lifting up of man to be like God. Neither is something to merely read about; both are what life itself is all about. Grace and truth can never be kept in wineskins that are either old or new. They elude every attempt to capture them; they overflow every container created to confine them.

So the early disciples did not seek to become great lawyers like the scribes, but great lovers like the Christ. The Word was not a repository of texts to be searched, scrapped and scrutinized to build a case with which to belabor an opponent. There was no attempt to formulate doctrines of the faith. Not once did they ever use the word in the plural to signify that which was revealed from heaven.

They knew nothing about developing “a theology of the Spirit,” or “a theology of the nature of God,” so they refused to wrangle or dispute about the bones of contention which have been dug up to be strung together to form the skeletons in our sectarian closets.

(4) They knew the value and power of the fellowship created by the Spirit and found comfort and strength in an association composed of those who rejoiced at the great salvation wrought in their behalf. There was no question but what something had happened to them, all of them, something so breathtaking that it is still a thrill to read about it.

They described what they had been when allied with God’s rebel subjects in these words, “We too were of their number: we all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition we, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgment of God.”

The very next sentence throbs with hope. “But God, rich in

mercy, for the great love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our sins; it is by his grace you are saved.” Mercy, love, life, grace, salvation— they shared in them all, and their union was one of life-given and life-giving experience.

They were participants of a supernatural condition. Creation is always a miracle, and the new creation is no exception. In the natural condition they were under dreadful judgment, but there is no condemnation to those who are united with Christ Jesus, because in Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death!

They were a fellowship of the free, a company of the committed, and a community of the consecrated. They belonged together simply because together they belonged to him. They were one body and thus were of one heart and of one soul. As members of a common body they functioned in unison, prayed in unison, and performed in unison. And the cold, cruel, callous pagan world said in tones filled with awe, “Behold how these love one another.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR DAY

We live in a neo-pagan world. Rival power structures jostle each other for supremacy. Moral integrity is at a low ebb. Thus we have in our generation the greatest opportunity in centuries to test the power of the Christian dynamic to survive and triumph. That dynamic was designed to enter a pagan world and transform it. It is a dynamic of conquest and directed by one who is destined to reign until God has put all enemies under his feet.

The soldiers of the Lamb are a minority group as they were intended to be. It must be made apparent that the power to overcome is of God and not of men. But if we are enlisted under him we are the forces of ultimate victory. True, these forces are

misunderstood, falsely accused and even maligned. This is but a part of their discipline. "It gives you a share in Christ's sufferings, and that is cause for joy; and when his glory is revealed, your joy will be triumphant." We should regard insult and innuendo like the soldier does an obstacle course. It is part of the training.

There are some changes we must make if we are to recapture the power to triumph. "It is time for judgment to begin and it must begin with God's own household." I should like to suggest a few steps necessary to recapture the dynamic. These are musts; not might or maybes.

(1) We must cease to equate our sectarian structures and their supporting organizational machinery with the one body filled with and impelled by the Holy Spirit. The one body is composed of individuals joined to Jesus as their head, and every person on earth who has pledged allegiance unto him and been born into the realm of the new humanity is in the one body. They are joined together in him precisely because they are in him and for no other reason. They constitute a divine organism because of the ties of the Spirit and not because of organizational ties devised as party bonds.

(2) We must cease to judge the loyalty of men to the King by their attitude toward secondary matters in the kingdom. Just as citizens of the United States of America may honestly differ over the tariff, public aid to private educational institutions, and the draft law, and still be loyal citizens, so those in the kingdom of heaven may hold varied views about many things without being traitors to Christ. No honest opinion about instrumental music, the millennium, cups, classes or colleges, makes one an apostate. One may be right or wrong about any such matters without forfeiting his family relationship. Those who make tests of fellowship out of such issues do far more harm to God's purpose than these things themselves do.

(3) We must stop trying to deceive and hoodwink men by false claims or weasel words. For example, such signs as “The Church of Christ— God’s Ecumenical Movement,” when taken in the sense meant by those who erect them, project an image that is patently false. They represent a brazen attempt to capitalize on current ecumenical concerns, but in reality they mean simply that a specific group of a particular branch of the noninstrumental segment of a nineteenth century restoration movement contains all of the people of God, and that these are ecumenically minded. That is just not true as those on the inside know all too well.

(4) We must start “leveling” with our generation. Men frequently engage in a great deal of double-talk, leaving the impression that they are more open and receptive to all of God’s children, but when the chips are down they are just as narrow and intolerant as they always were. Journals which are edited as partisan mouthpieces often conceal in clever phraseology their factional bias, but it is there just the same. When they talk of unity they have only one idea in mind and that is complete surrender to their opinions and unwritten creeds. We need to “tell it as it is.”

(5) We must begin practicing congregational autonomy in honest fashion. To profess to believe in such autonomy and then exclude those congregations which do not line up with the party program is rank hypocrisy. If congregational autonomy extends only to those who conform to us in every particular under penalty of exclusion, it is neither congregational nor autonomous. The right to self-government entails the right of choice, and unless one has the possibility of being mistaken, he has no choice. Any congregation that does not recognize another congregation of saints simply because they believe in instrumental music or the premillennial coming of our Lord, does not believe in congregational autonomy, and it is sailing under false colors when it pretends that it does.

(6) We must find a way to implement in meaningful fashion “the priesthood of all believers.” Our vocabulary related to ministry must become scriptural. As it is, we pay lipservice to a divine ideal while we practice a human substitute. The world is no longer ignorant. It can tell when we support a clerical caste even while we condemn the division between clergy and laity. Every man and woman in Christ must be a minister, every one must become a priest of God. And we must create opportunities for them to function effectively.

(7) We must cease to think of what is done in our religious edifices as a service. Our service is not held on Sunday morning, but may be rendered on Monday morning. Service is not carrying out a ritual, but meeting a genuine need. It is entering into the life situation with others in a sharing experience, because God shared with us by entering into our life situation. It is the Word being made our flesh to dwell among men to participate in their sufferings, and thus in his agony.

(8) We must stop dividing life into sacred and secular compartments. In the Christian life nothing which God has made is secular. Unless everything is sacred and spiritual, nothing is. Jesus abolished the artificial lines which men had drawn to separate life into neat little properly-labeled pigeon-holes. What I do in my own home, or in an office or shop, is as important to God as what I do in a temple or synagogue. God is not worshiped in temples made with hands. For instance, it is not partaking of the Lord’s Supper which makes my life acceptable unto God, but it is my life which makes partaking of the Lord’s Supper acceptable unto God.

(9) We must cease talking about holy days, holy places and holy liturgy. Life itself, when consecrated to God, is the only sacred liturgy. Christianity has no special sacred places or sacred days. The human heart is God’s only sanctuary. Those who talk about dedicating a building to God have fallen victims to what Elton Trueblood calls “the heresy of brick and mortar.”

God cannot be captured in the traps we build. He cannot be confined in the boxes we construct. It is silly to see a community with thirty edifices all “dedicated to the one God,” whose members have nothing to do with one another, and who have piled up brick and stone in an endeavor to commandeer God so they may be the sole dispensers of divine grace.

10) We must revive the message of vibrant hope and proclaim anew to a tired, jaded, weary and forlorn world, the resurrection. This is the way out of all that is distressing and the way into every eternal blessing. Men cannot be kept from suicide by well-arranged arguments on doctrinal distinctions. That which has no power to produce life should not be used to promote death.

Our gospel is not null and void whether the coming of Jesus is premillennial or postmillennial; our faith is not in vain whether Bible classes prove to be right or wrong. No one who is mistaken about one cup or individual cups will turn out to be a lying witness for God. But, “if there be no resurrection, then Christ was not raised, then our gospel is null and void, and so is your faith; and we turn out to be lying witnesses for God, because we bore witness that he raised Christ to life.”

Jesus was not raised from the dead to preside over either a class faction or an anti-class faction; nor was he raised to form a one-cup party or a multiple-cups party. Christ was raised to life and for life. He was raised to give life, and “it is only for this life that Christ has given us hope, we of all men are most to be pitied.” How long shall we continue to major in minors, persist in pettifoggery, and fool with the frivolous, while the world goes to hell all around us? Has our course of action saved mankind? Have we populated heaven by propagating division?

CONCLUSION

Today, as in every age, the forces of Christ confront the

phalanxes of Caesar. On one side, men are motivated by the idea that “might makes right;” on the other by the principle that “right makes might.” One wields the naked sword of steel, the other the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. One climbs to greatness over the bodies of men, the other elevates men to greatness in the body of Christ.

Which is greater— the power of selfish lust or the power of unselfish love? We are met on a great battlefield testing for our generation which of them is supreme. The course we take will affect generations yet unborn, as our own conflict is influenced by those long since dead. One thing is certain, the issue is so tremendous that we cannot afford to maintain those systems, methods and structures which will place the outcome in doubt.

Let us free ourselves from every hindering encumbrance, and rid ourselves of every weight that restrains us. Let us fight the good fight of faith regardless of consequences. Abraham Lincoln said, “The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of the cause we believe to be just.” And Lincoln also said, “The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise high with the occasion.”

The Uncommon Faith

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

For a long time I have been pondering how limited is our concept of what the Word really accomplished when he took off the robe of divine equality and hung it up in the heavenly vestry, and donned the slave garb which made it possible for him to share with the earthborn ones. The first infant cry in the stable was the signal that God was with us. The great gulf between the divine and the human had been spanned. This whirling sphere became the visited planet, and like any other visited planet it would never be the same.

The power of heaven to reach man where he was, and as he was, became a fact rather than a prophetic dream. And this manifestation transcended and culminated all previous exhibitions for these were but signs pointing to the Great Sharing. So majestic and sublime was the divine breakthrough that it challenges our puny intellects, and some must still seek for reassurance in lesser demonstrations. These are hailed as proof of faith. They are really symptoms of doubt. They betoken the longing of troubled and distraught minds to know that God is *still* with them.

To the man of unadulterated trust there is no need to ascend into heaven and bring Christ down from above, for faith says that the word is near, even in the mouth and in the heart. From the moment the Son touched the earth with his feet, the

earth itself became the sphere of God's influence and everything that God had made bore eloquent testimony to the divine purpose. It was not in vain that the Lord summoned the common things of nature to testify.

Once upon a time God spoke to Moses from a burning bush on the slopes of Horeb, but it is not necessary for me to journey to such a special spot. Every bush and flowering shrub now speaks eloquently of the difference between created and inherent glory and the artificial adornment which is external. "Behold the lilies of the field . . . even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The rose blooming in my backyard is God's "burning bush" for me.

Elijah was fed by the ravens which brought him flesh to eat, but my soul is daily nourished by the birds which flutter about my feeder. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet one of them shall not fall to the ground without your heavenly Father knowing it." The mockingbird, the bluejays and the cardinals are God's ravens sent to feed my spirit with providential manna.

Our real problem is that we are still dull of hearing. We are yet "fools, and slow of heart to believe." We find it easier to walk by sight than by faith. Caught up in the human predicament, sinful and unable to forgive ourselves, haunted by the specters of our past evil deeds, we are afraid to trust the testimony of the ages. The divine outburst of love was so powerful it staggers our guilt-soaked imagination. We want to believe it but we are forlorn, frightened and suspicious.

In this state of mind we eagerly seek for some new proof that He has not withdrawn. The Visit was too long ago. It was then and there. We must have something here and now. Faith, which was intended to span aeons is running out in our

generation. We want a discernible tug on the chain reaching into the gloom, to know that the anchor is still there.

Then let this be my personal testimony that I have no desire or inclination to seek additional proof of his love and mercy. My faith would be no stronger if I saw someone raised from the dead. I need not see a withered arm straightened to know that His own arm is not shortened that it cannot save. It is not necessary for me to spend long hours in agonizing prayer for another tongue. I have not yet finished praising him in the language wherein I was born. It is not a divine eloquence I seek, but the ability to share more fully the depth of my human gratitude for his forgiveness. With me, it is not that I speak, and therefore believe; but rather that I believe and therefore speak.

The voice of heaven is all around me, for “to him who, in the love of Nature, holds communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language.” Once, when He was here as a Servant he came to his frightened followers and said unto them, “Why are you troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” I shall not forget those words now that He is Lord!

As Shaw Said It

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[Abstract]

I confess that I am not especially intrigued by the literary, economical, political, or religious views of George Bernard Shaw. However, I do acknowledge that the “Shavian” wit unleashed some remarks in the last field which are as poignant as they are pungent. Take this one: “The best reformers the world has ever seen are those who commence on themselves.” Or, “The churches must learn humility, as well as teach it.”

But the one I really wanted to mention was this: “Any religion that is going to unite man . . . must have room for mystics, prophets, and for priests, and it must be a religion of such a character as will prevent the priests from stoning the prophets.”

The outstanding thing about the primitive community of grace-sharers was its roominess. It differed from the narrow Jewish sects and Greek cults with their national, racial and cultural distinctions. “Gone is the distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free man, male and female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The Way could unite the world because it ignored the distinctions which kept it divided. And when distinctions are ignored they are *gone*. Nothing is more useless than a distinction which does not distinguish.

But Satan took advantage of our inner feeling of insecurity

and substituted other distinctions— intellectual, psychological and notional. Mystics and pragmatists vied with one another to capture the kingdom for their enthusiasts. The priestly group, always dedicated to the preservation of form even at the cost of human dignity, engaged in the great religious activity of all ages, the stoning of the prophets.

We need to restore the roominess of the ransomed community. We have allowed the space intended for people to become cluttered up with theological tools and unnecessary utensils. Instead of throwing out people to have room for things, we need to throw out things to have room for people— all the people of God. God's house is big enough for all of his family. The Father has begotten no surplus or unwanted children. He loves them all and He wants them with him.

I am resolved that where I am, all of my brethren will be welcome, regardless of how far they may be from me in their ideas about how the children should implement the Father's will. I shall not split, sunder or sever the brethren from one another. I refuse to shiver the family into fragments over my deductions and views. There is room in the kingdom for a multitude of folk who disagree with me and I propose to receive and love them all. I would rather walk in to meet the Father with my brothers at my side, than to march in before Him in the splendor of isolation.

The Stumblingblock

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[Abstract]

“It is demonstrable that many of the obstacles to change which have been attributed to human nature are in fact due to the inertia of institutions and to the voluntary desire of powerful classes to maintain the existing status.”— John Dewey.

A goodly number of our readers will consider that this issue of our paper represents a sheer waste of time. They are interested in the history of God’s community as we have been tracing it, but they are not greatly concerned with the contemporary struggles of the heirs of our early nineteenth century restoration movement. I happen to be one of those heirs by adoption, having been first rocked in another reformation cradle. I am interested in what is happening to us.

It is our good fortune to be cast into an age of religious ferment and upheaval. Ponderous ancient structures such as the Roman and Anglican Establishments are seething, writhing and struggling within. The Protestant parties are re-aligning themselves all over the world. It would be difficult for any people like ourselves to insulate themselves completely from this stirring of minds, in spite of a century of monasticism brought about through fear and a mistaken sense of how to show loyalty to our Lord.

We began, you know, as “a project to unite the Christians

in all of the sects.” We have ended up more divided than those whom we sought to unite, and generally believing that there are no Christians in the sects. Thus we lost our purpose and forgot our goal, and frenziedly attacked one another over our varied deductions, conclusions and interpretations. The very revelation which we heralded to others as a means of unity became the battleground upon which we shivered into factional splinters.

Moved by a false philosophy which we developed in our initial fracture we have continued to fragment ourselves into belligerent parties of “loyal brethren” until many have concluded our state is hopeless and have resigned themselves to slogging along the schismatic path until death brings relief. But this is a mistake. Conditions are going to improve. There are signs apparent that the trend is rapidly developing.

For example, in South America, our brethren of various segments have held amicable meetings. In Texas, representatives of both sides of the unfortunate cleavage over what is dubbed “institutionalism” have held meaningful dialogue sessions. The response to these from brethren everywhere demonstrates that there is a great reservoir of good will among the saints. Thoughtful and perceptive brethren in all of our parties are beginning to evaluate anew the reasons assigned for our factional divisions. They are finding many of them inadequate and unscriptural.

There is one obstacle to even wider recognition of that fellowship which is found only in the person of Jesus. That is the use of instrumental music. In letters which I now receive from all over the United States this issue is raised over and over.

It is very easy for me to see why this particular problem seems so important to many of the brethren. In the first place, this was the issue credited with responsibility for our first division. It is very doubtful that the factors leading to the breakdown of our relationship can be so simplified. Every

indication is that personal, cultural and psychological reactions also played their part. However, our traditional and historical position has led to the assignment of instrumental music as the basic cause of our original separation. It has been exalted by both sides to a prominence which it really does not deserve.

Secondly, the means taken to resolve the issue in its inception, have contributed much to its current status. Deep antagonism and bitterness were aroused, ridicule and invective were indulged. Partisan debates filled with acrimony, insinuation, and false accusation, became the order of the day. Suits followed in the civil courts and were carried to higher tribunals on repeated appeals. (You can read this history in my book “The Path of Peace”). No people can engage in such actions without being scarred and left to suffer from deep trauma.

OUR CIVIL WAR

Because of these circumstances, each side in the civil war between brethren, chose their hilltops on either side of “the valley of decision.” Here they dug their trenches, erected their fortresses and established their strongholds. To abandon either position now to move toward the valley to discuss terms of peace or to arrange for a cessation of hostilities is regarded as a traitorous action. By such deception the enemy of souls who has infiltrated both camps with his propaganda, guarantees that we shall continue to war against one another rather than combine our efforts against his evil forces.

Complicating the picture even more is the fact that the problem has shifted from a rational to an emotional plane. The instrument is tangible. It can be seen. But it has become the visible symbol of an intangible set of values. The values are worthy and valid but the instrument is not and never can become an adequate representative of them. To exalt it is but to demonstrate the littleness of our own thoughts and lives.

To those who oppose it, the instrument is viewed as an indication of rebellion against the sovereign authority of Christ. They would as soon see Satan declaiming from the pulpit as to see an organ on it. To them, the instrument is accepted as undeniable proof that the pledge of allegiance to the King has been renounced and the fort surrendered lock, stock and barrel, to the legions of torment.

To those who defend its use, the instrument is regarded as a visible proof of their liberty. They would as soon see Old Glory hauled down from its mast and trampled underfoot in the mud, as to silence the instrument. They have congratulated themselves so long that they are more free from the sectarian spirit than “the antis,” whom some of them fear, and others secretly despise, that they would regard any concession not as an expression of love for brethren, but a wholesale surrender to the enemy.

A little thought will show how easily we have permitted ourselves to be betrayed into allowing a material thing to become our criterion for spiritual qualities. We have all been a little childish. I know some brethren who use instrumental music who are not free men in Christ. They are legalistic, egotistic, and shackled by their own littleness. On the other hand, I know some brethren who are opposed to the use of the instrument who are conscious of the true meaning of grace and are magnanimous in spirit. This proves nothing except that a material instrument can never become a yardstick of liberty or freedom in Christ.

By the same token, I know of God-fearing, Christ-revering, Bible-loving brethren in congregations where the instrument is used, even as I know of some brethren who are worldly, carnal and sensual, in congregations where its use is deplored. The absence of an instrument in the meetinghouse is no guarantee of Christ in the heart.

It is tragic that we have allowed an attitude toward a thing

to blindfold and lead us into the party spirit which is condemned as a work of the flesh and a symptom of spiritual immaturity. That we have done so is amply evidenced in the letters that I receive and the forums that I conduct.

Preachers from the non-instrument segment continuously write to ask why I do not attack the shortcomings of “the Christian Church” as I do those in “the Church of Christ.” Almost invariably they will admit that what I say about “us” is justified but they want me to get after “them” also. It is difficult for them to realize that with me there is no longer an *us* and *them*, but only a *we*. I no longer belong to the “us party” as opposed to the “they party.”

The sad thing about the letters is that “they” reveal what is wrong with “us.” Instead of going to work to purge ourselves from evil attitudes which we admittedly have, we want to be sure that others are placed in the same guilt spectrum as our selves. Some of the brethren querulously ask, “Isn’t there anything wrong with them? Why don’t you write about their faults like you do ours?” We forget the priority rating of Jesus, “Take the log out of your own eye *first!*”

One of the questions, frequently and almost plaintively asked by preachers who defend the use of the instrument, is this: “Brother Ketcherside, which group do you consider more charitable and interested in fellowship, your brethren or ours?” This is very revealing. It shows that even though I do not make the use of the instrument a test of fellowship, these are inclined to make its non-use a test. Indeed, I predict that when the time comes that non-instrument brethren no longer make use of the instrument a test of union or communion, those who use it will sometimes make its non-use a test.

In answer to this question, I always ask, “What do you mean by ‘your brethren or ours,’ since I thought that those who are charitable in fellowship regarded all of us as brethren

together, and members of the same family?” These brethren are like the apostle Peter, “After all, the way you speak gives you away” (Matthew 26:73). The fact is that some non-instrument brethren are quite open and charitable, while some instrument brethren are quite Pharisaical and exclusive. The reverse is also true. Both groups have some they would like to swap off. All of us need to be on guard that we do not fall under the same condemnation as the critics of Paul. “They make up their own standards to measure themselves by, and judge themselves by their own standards” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

We must be realistic. We have a problem. We cannot solve it by an idealistic, dream-world approach. We did not create the division, we inherited it. This heritage brought with it all of the overtones of suspicion and distrust engendered in a feud in which our fathers hacked each other to bits before the eyes of a skeptical and amused generation. Nothing pleased the sectarian world more than to see those who set out to save them from their strife and to unite them, end up in a bitter brawl which splintered them into rival clans filled with hatred and envy.

It is apparent to thinking men that we must go back and heal this original fracture, or we will remain a divided movement. It is not enough for each side to bind up its own wounds and sew up its own rents, while we continue to present the spectacle of two factions, each claiming to be the one body. In such a predicament we will not be able to present a valid plea for unity to a world seeking for such a plea. We will always be subjected to the pragmatic question, “If your proposal will work, why don’t you first demonstrate it by uniting the forces in your own movement? Then we will examine it.”

ASSESSING RESPONSIBILITY

We will get nowhere by merely trying to assess the guilt for the original rupture. The fact is that all of us know that civil

wars are always created by complex involvements, many of which are not even apparent at the time. We must free ourselves from the childish tendency to point a finger at one another and scream, "You did it!"

The time is past for partisan front-men to swagger back and forth on the forensic platform and yell, "Who split the log?" The real question before the house now is, "Who has the courage to put it back together?" The age of demagoguery is over. The time for constructive action is at hand.

In my own examination of our history I repudiate the attitudes and conclusions of both sides. This does not mean that I censure our fathers for acting as they did. They were sincere men. They did the best they knew. If I had lived in their day and time I would have reacted exactly as they did. Indeed, in a different generation than theirs, for a long time, I followed as meticulously as possible in the factional footsteps of my ancestors. I memorized their arguments, defended their historic attitudes, and valiantly maintained their traditional partisan walls and barbed wire fences. I no longer do so!

I have resolved that no skeletal hand reaching forth from the tomb will shackle my thinking or stifle my speech. I refuse to perpetuate the old fratricidal wars or try to prove my faithfulness to the Father by ruthlessly attacking his other children. My loyalty is not to my dead progenitors but to the living Christ. And just as I cannot be saved by the deeds of my fathers, so I refuse to be damned for adopting and perpetuating their mistakes, when I know better.

I am convinced that those brethren who introduced the instrument over the solemn protests of many brethren did a grave wrong. I am convinced that those who contribute to our contemporary division by maintaining it over continued protest in many areas, do a grave injury to the cause of fellowship in Christ Jesus.

But I am equally convinced that those who made of it a test of fellowship and separated from their brethren over the issue, also made a tragic mistake, a crucial error, from which the cause suffers until this very day.

Let me state again that in the atmosphere then extant the course was almost inevitable. But in the greater light now available and with full knowledge of the fruits of their decision, it can be seen that the creation of two parties, pro and con, was sinful and wrong. If it became necessary to meet in different places the fabric of brotherhood should have been kept inviolate and the fraternal spirit unquenched. No one should have “set at nought his brother” over an instrument.

But it was done, and now we have two parties, both of whom love the Lord and revere his word, but who are cast in the role of enemies rather than as children of the same Father. What shall we do? What can we do? There are several alternatives.

We can continue to attack each other in the pulpit and press, and by means of radio and other communications media. And we can still challenge each other to partisan debate and repeat over and over the same antiquated arguments and threadbare propositions.

There are several things wrong with such a procedure. It has not produced unity in the past but has only widened the chasm between us. It has served to crystallize the party spirit and consolidate the factional attitude. It has been tried a hundred years and has proven to be a failure. Moreover, it has lost any relevance in an age when the very foundations of Christianity and the social structure based upon it are threatened. It has no real appeal to enlightened and perceptive students who recognize it as a destructive and divisive tool.

Or, we can simply ignore each other and build up our partisan establishments in cool disdain for one another. This

approach is suspect because it is the easy way, the shallow and superficial way. But it is not the way of brotherly love to which we are undeniably committed by our Lord. It is not the way of Christ! And it offers no real solution for it is the way of evasion. It is dishonest!

Our problem has been intensified because it has been thought that the only mode of settlement was by surrender of one party to the other, a cold-blooded either/or proposition. Either those who use the instrument must give it up and confess that they have sinned, or else those who oppose it must be convinced it is right and adopt it. Until one side or the other gives in or gives up, they are doomed to batter and bruise each other in an attempt to reduce someone to submission.

However, the real hope does not lie in the surrender of one party to the other, but in the surrender of both parties to Christ. Then the Holy Spirit can actively work in both to bring them to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is useless for one side to talk about lack of respect for the authority of Jesus as long as we are in schism. While we are separated from one another none of us is in full subjection to Jesus. We are walking contrary to the divine purpose, plan and peace. We are living in contradiction to the very prayer of Jesus for our oneness.

Nothing can be clearer than that the Holy Spirit condemns all division among the children of God. It is carnal and a work of the flesh. It is sinful and scandalous. It is a projection of Satan. No man who is not a peacemaker can be called a child of God. No man respects the authority of Jesus while he passes judgment upon, or despises his brother (Romans 14:10).

Surrender to Christ does not eliminate the problem of the instrument. It will be there as intensely as before. But such surrender places the instrument in proper perspective. It makes the family relationship more vital and valuable than any peculiarity of those within it. When Paul wrote about eating

meat and esteeming days, he did not remove the meat or the days. He simply showed that a brother was worth more than either. “Do not let the food that you eat ruin the man for whom Christ died.” That for which Jesus did not die can never become as important as one for whom he did die. And Jesus did not die for a piano.

THINKING ABOUT ROMANS 14

While we are talking about Romans 14 a few suggestions are in order. Most of the non-instrument brethren refuse to place the instrument in the category of eating meats and observing days. They are perceptive enough to realize that if they do so, this will end their judging of the servants of someone else. They also know that each person must be fully allowed to make up his own mind, and that whatever one does about such things he does to the Lord. However, these same brethren will concoct an argument and resort to Romans 14:23 to sustain it. When Paul says, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,” he is talking about the things in this chapter. It seems inconsistent and even unscrupulous to deny that a thing is covered by a chapter and then appeal to that very text to condemn it.

Not too long ago, a fellow-editor who is sincerely questing for union, made a suggestion to those who use the instrument in his area, that if they would forego its employment in the Lord’s Day morning service at least, it would make it possible for non-instrument brethren to meet and break bread with them. He made his appeal on the basis of Romans 14 and even agreed to accept the role of the weak brother. While this sounds very gracious it falls far short of the scriptural approach.

First of all, it reveals that the instrument is not the real problem at all, but a woeful misunderstanding of worship and fellowship. Some of us have long known that this is the root of most of our trouble. The word of God says nothing about “five

acts of worship.” That is a term coined in Church of Christ traditionalism. Although a good many Greek words are translated worship, the term is never once applied to anything we do when we gather on the Lord’s Day. And the expression “the worship” of such notoriety on our signboards is not even in the scriptures.

To assume that we must all sing in order to worship corporately is without scriptural warrant. No one can show that the early saints ever engaged in congregational singing. It is simply not in the scriptures. One can show that when the whole community of saints came together in one place, one man had a hymn, another a teaching, another a revelation, another a tongue, another an interpretation. A case can be made for singing a solo but there is no precedent for congregational singing.

To postulate that because brethren do something while they are singing which makes it impossible for me to join in the singing, and therefore, I cannot even participate with them in what they do that is right and commendable, is ridiculous. The brethren could “worship acceptably” if they did not have singing on Lord’s Day, and I could “worship acceptably” without joining in the congregational singing if they did have it.

It borders a little on the absurd for men who profess to be learned in the scriptures to talk about the instrument “corrupting the worship,” and this to such an extent that they cannot even break bread with their brethren. Perhaps no greater demonstration of the sectarian attitude could be imagined.

I do not believe that Romans 14 was intended to provide a spiritual “bargaining issue” or “horse-swapping” position. It is commendable if a brother exercises *his right not to do* certain things out of deference for my personal conviction. But I have no right to demand that he do so as a condition of union,

communion, or brotherly recognition. He is my brother whether he defers in love to my conscience, or does not. And I shall walk in love toward him regardless of how he considers me.

It is high time that we undo the factional error of our fathers by removing instrumental music from the category of a test of fellowship. It never should have been elevated to such a position in the first place. We only prolong error by allowing it to remain there. This says nothing about the right or wrong of the thing. It requires no alteration of one's views about its merits. It simply declares that brotherhood in Christ Jesus is more important than one's view about this matter.

This will free us to combine our efforts and work together in those areas where instrumental music is not a factor. There are many such areas. They require the best of all of us. The instrument will still be a matter for discussion but not for division. We ought to be able to unite at least up to the point where the problem begins. Because of the traumatic effect of my proposal, especially upon those who oppose instrumental music, I suggest the following considerations which may make the task of reconciliation easier for them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The use of the instrument is not a test of one's respect for the authority of Christ. Many of those who use it have a profound regard for the Lordship of Jesus over their lives. If they believed that instrumental music contravened that authority they would abandon it in a minute. They love the Lord. They seek to be guided by his word. Many of them have willingly relinquished sectarian relationships because of their conversion to the restoration ideal. It is not that they trample underfoot the authority of Jesus, but simply that they do not concur in our interpretation of it in one aspect. They do not despise the Constitution, they simply reject our claim to be the

Supreme Court to rule upon its meaning for them.

2. Both those who defend and those who oppose instrumental music do so upon the basis of deduction. The new covenant scriptures say nothing about the validity or invalidity of such music. One group deduces that it is justifiable, based upon a philosophy of interpretation; the other deduces that it is wrong, based upon a divergent philosophy of interpretation.

Each philosophy grows out of a presupposition. These presuppositions are formulated by collating and interpreting isolated passages. We are divided, not over what God has said on the subject, for it is admitted by all that he has not specifically spoken upon the issue, but over what we believe is his will based upon our understanding of the nature of God and the general tenor of revelation.

3. Each side, therefore, approaches the scriptures with an interpretative bias, and it is this bias for which there is no specific authority in either case, which holds us apart. It will not do to say we do not interpret the scriptures for this demonstrates ignorance rather than loyalty. Any communication of ideas from one rational mind to another must be interpreted by the recipient. This is as true of the thoughts of God conveyed by divine revelation as of our own thoughts.

Those who indulge in the absurd notion that they do not interpret the scriptures, reveal the fallacy of their words by their own actions. They preach sermons, deliver expository addresses, print journals and write books to explain their position on the scriptures. No one appears more silly than the man who engages in long harangues on the scriptures to prove that he does not interpret the scriptures.

4. We must reject as childish and immature the notion that we cannot be in the fellowship with what we quaintly call "brethren in error." This would make it impossible for God to

be in fellowship with any of us. It would destroy all fellowship on earth. We are all brethren in error, although not all in the same error. God does not endorse our error in receiving us, nor do we endorse error when we receive one another. No one ever endorses that which he personally disavows.

It is true that someone is in error regarding instrumental music. Since not one of us is infallible, we may all be in error regarding some aspects of it. But such error does not mean that either of us will be damned merely because we are mistaken about some of God's requirements of His children. If it were otherwise there would be no use for heaven. There is a difference between deliberate rebellion against the Father's will and an honest error about meanings or deductions. And such deductions can never be made conditions of union or communion among saints, for such tests are themselves opposed to his divine authority.

5. The use of instrumental music does not negate our relationship as brothers. If a congregation does not use instrumental music, and some who are members leave to associate with those who do use it, they do not cease to be children of God. They are still my brethren—brethren who do not agree with my personal convictions about the status of instrumental music.

The problem of the instrument will be settled, so far as fellowship is concerned, when we truly implement and duly regard the concept of congregational autonomy. Note that I said, "as far as fellowship is concerned." The right or wrong of using instrumental music will not be settled, but the question as relates to fellowship will have been answered. If a congregation of my brethren reaches a decision to use the instrument, they must be allowed to stand or fall to their own master.

They are not subject to me. I am not a pope, a diocesan bishop, or a brotherhood regulator. I cannot impose my views

upon them. I cannot crack the whip of dogmatism over them. I can tell them why I do not condone their decisions or share in their interpretation, but having said this, I have done all that I am obligated to do. I must regard them as brethren and revere them as such even though I cannot respect their decision for myself. It would be wonderful if we could find some simple solution. Someone will say that all that is required is for brethren to give up the instrument and we will be at peace. Only the very naive and provincial believe this. The fact is that the real tension would just begin. The question would still remain as to which of the many non-instrument groups they would join. You see we have more than a score of different “Churches of Christ” all of which are composed of “the loyal brethren” and which have nothing to do with one another. There are more than a dozen diverse kinds in some cities.

Moreover, if both sides maintained their past attitudes they would only divest themselves of the instrument to divide over something else. Men are divided in their hearts before they are divided openly. They must get their hearts right in order to have peace. It may be argued that those who cannot treat each other as brethren in spite of the instrument probably will not do so without it.

A PERSONAL DECLARATION

As an editor, presumptuous enough to point to the alternative of fellowship regardless of differences, I feel I am obligated to make my own position clear beyond any shadow of doubt. I have nothing to hide. I take my stand boldly and unflinchingly.

1. I repudiate all factionalism and partisan division among brethren as being contrary to the will and purpose of my Lord. I think it was a critical error to divide the family of God into warring camps over instrumental music. I reject the validity of

that schism. I am no longer a member of an “anti-instrument party.” I will never become a member of a “pro-instrument party.” I am through with all partisan political alliances, once and for all, now and forever.

2. I shall retain and defend my personal convictions about instrumental music and all other controversial issues. I shall not be frightened, cajoled, bullied or bought into surrender of my principles. I am a free man in Christ and I intend to remain free. I shall respect the right of all my brethren to make up their own minds, and have their own faith, on any of our controversial issues. I will commend what I can and refuse to commend what I cannot, but I will not violate their freedom nor allow them to violate mine.

3. I will go among all of my brethren when invited, regardless of our differences, and share insights with them. I will not be directed by some earthly headquarters as to where I can and cannot go, nor will I be subject to the orders of any hierarchy in those areas where I am answerable only unto my Lord. Wherever I go I shall endeavor to be a peacemaker, not a sower of discord. I shall try to strengthen and improve all of my brethren. But I will not go anywhere as the front man for any party, nor will I go upon condition that I reject any of God’s other children. I am not for sale to any faction, sect or splinter group. I belong to Christ.

4. I will not arrogantly demand that my brethren give up what they have, or alter and amend their procedures as a condition of my coming among them. I will allow them to be answerable unto God for what they do and I shall be answerable to God for what I teach while among them.

The way to unite is to unite! The time to unite is now! We never should have become a divided movement. We dare not remain one. Unless someone ignores our artificial walls and barriers they will grow higher and thicker with each passing

year. All that is necessary to prove that they are fragile and useless is for someone to go through them all as if they were not there. And to the one who does so they will not be there. They are not there for me! I regard none of them as valid. My brethren are on both sides of all of them.

I offer no propositions, make no bargains, enter into no conditional treaties. If you are in Christ Jesus we are in this together. The only side I am interested in is the spear-wounded, blood-flowing side. That blood made us one. I am resolved that, for my part, it will keep us one.

I do not have time to wait for factional leaders to beat each other into submission and to give the rest of us the all-clear signal to resume fraternization with all of our brothers and sisters. I cannot sit in the bleachers of life and wait for his Holy Spirit to overtake those who are frantically fleeing from Him under the mistaken notion that the exhibition of His fruits will be displeasing unto God and disloyal to Christ.

I am in the brotherhood, the whole brotherhood, the universal brotherhood. I am a part of the new humanity, not merely of a narrow clique within it. I have renounced the code of the clan for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which alone can make me free from the law of sin and death. While brethren argue and debate about how they can ever be one while some use an instrument and others do not, while they strive and clamor for advantage, I shall ignore their assaults and love them all. The pitiable and paltry problems which seem so much greater to them than the brotherhood of the cross, have been for me washed down the drain of the ages by the crimson stream that flowed from his crucified body. I am free from their blight.

It little matters to one who loves all of his brethren how any of them regard him. It is only the factionalist whose petty thinking pleads for toleration from those whom he regards as stronger, or seeks a means of persecuting those who are weaker.

It was Thomas Babington Macaulay who wrote in *Sir John Macintosh's History of the Revolution* (1835), "The doctrine which from the very first origin of religious dissensions has been held by bigots of all sects, when condensed into a few words and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is simply this: I am in the right and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger you ought to tolerate me; for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger I shall persecute you, for it is my duty to persecute error."

Transplanted Hearts

Mission Messenger (July 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

For quite some time I have been exchanging occasional letters with a fine young man in one of our northern states. He is not satisfied with trite answers and he keeps probing for that which will adequately explain God and life. For example, here is a brief paragraph from a recent communication which I received.

I think we shall eventually have to come face-to-face with the prime question of whether God really exists, and if so, whether he is personal and individual, that is, whether he has being. If God does exist why, for instance, would he allow George Washkansky to die after the apparently successful heart transplant? Would a benevolent being who had the power to prevent such tragedy, deliberately mock the humble and dedicated surgeons who had worked so long in their laboratories eagerly seeking this one moment of success? How could a merciful being act with such indifference while so many were praying to him?

The problem of pain and human misery will continue to challenge our deepest intellectual powers. No sensitive person can ever fully evade it. And there will be varied reactions as men confront it. Some will be led to a deeper trust, others to denial and rejection.

In his book, *The Plague*, Albert Camus paints a graphic picture of a little boy dying in agony from the bubonic plague. By his bedside stand a priest, a doctor and a kindly agnostic. The doctor works frantically while the priest, who has difficulty even watching the struggle, places his hands before his face and prays earnestly, "God, please spare this child." But the boy dies. Later, while the three men are sitting in the shade of a tree on the hospital lawn, the priest admits that to him what happened is revolting because unexplainable, but he suggests that perhaps we should learn to love that which is not understandable. At that, the doctor turns on him in a rush of heated anger, and says, "No, Father! I have a very different idea of love and until my dying day I refuse to believe in a God who lets a child die like that!"

I make no claim of special insight which would enable me to eradicate all doubt from the earth and provide an easy solution for every question. Indeed I am also caught up in the human predicament and must struggle with many baffling problems which beset my rational powers. For that reason, I can only witness to that which has been meaningful to me, but I would be derelict in my responsibility if I refused to do this.

I do not deplore the asking of questions by men for it seems to me that the very fact we are men forces us to ask questions. Man is a questioning animal simply because he is a thinking animal. But not all questions which men ask are valid. They are not always the questions which should be asked. And I could be quite mistaken, of course, but it seems to me that my young friend may have asked a wrong question, even though it was right to ask it.

The point is that the query, "Why did God allow Mr. Washkansky to die?" may not prove a great deal regardless of how it is answered. It may not be very elemental after all. I presume that the death of Mr. Washkansky, except for the publicity attending it, was no different than the death of any

other person on earth.

Insofar as its effect upon others was concerned it certainly came with much less of a shock than that from one who dies in an automobile crash. Mr. Washkansky had suffered from an aggravated heart condition for many months and this deterioration had affected other organs, including the brain. It was precisely because there was no possibility of the success of any other known therapy that the heart transplant was attempted. So it is not really a question of whether God allowed *this* patient to die more than any other. This reduces the problem to one which is elemental, "Why do men die?"

By the same token the diligent work done by the surgeons in the laboratories in this particular area, is a secondary issue and has no real relationship to the question posed. This does not undervalue the experimental efforts in which the hearts of many dogs had been transplanted, but we must realize that hundreds of dedicated men have devoted themselves to ardent research in other areas to find a remedy for plagues which have proven to be a scourge to mankind. In the final analysis, their findings may be of far greater importance to mankind, although not all are as spectacular.

The point is that we have no more right to expect God to interfere in the case of a heart transplant than in the case of administration of smallpox vaccine which also required a tremendous amount of dedicated research. God should not be expected to show preference for cases that make headlines in international newspapers. The fact that my friend singles out this one case as a test of God's existence may reveal how little he understands the nature of God, for God would be equally concerned with all of his creatures. In other words "not a sparrow would fall to the ground without *a heavenly Father* knowing it."

When we reduce the problem to the question, "Why do

men die?" we have not answered it, but we have placed it upon a wholly different plane. It may then be no longer a question of God's allowing, permitting or letting individuals die. And since there is no longer the question, then the death (or the circumstances surrounding the death), of any specific individual, cannot be used as the proof of the existence or non-existence of God.

At this juncture I find myself, as usual, tempted to set forth my personal convictions as to why men must die. Yet that is actually an altogether different theme than the problem proposed in the letter, and I shall resist the urge to explore it now, and say a little bit more about heart transplantation. If my friend tends to doubt God's existence because of the failure of a heart transplant it is because of the success of one that I believe in Him.

God declared, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I shall take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

When I became conscious that I was suffering from calcification of the spiritual heart and went to the Great Physician and Surgeon, he did exactly what he promised to do. And as soon as the new heart began to function a new life really began.

This does not mean that I do not have occasional symptoms of my former life or that I do not need blood transfusions regularly, but the new heart is there. My vision has been materially helped, my mental processes cleared up, and my speech purified. I have a new interest in living such as I never knew before. It is surprising what deterioration of all the faculties can be caused by an old heart.

There is now no fright, not even fear of death. But the important thing is that one can see others in proper perspective.

He does not seek to use them but to love them. The inner thrill of joy floods the being. It is for this reason my prayer for all who read this is, “May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that *he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness* before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all of his saints.”

I think the best way to determine whether God exists or not, is not that he make a certain physical operation successful (for there might be other factors involved of which you know nothing) but by taking him at his word in unreserved obedience. He has promised to give you a new heart if you'll submit your will to him unqualifiedly. So “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). Be your own laboratory. Make your own taste test! This is a case where the proof is in the eating!

Dr. William Barclay tells the story of an alcoholic who was transformed by hearing the gospel in simple faith. When he began to talk about Jesus to his fellow workmen some of them ridiculed his belief. “Oh, come now,” they said, “you don't mean to tell us that you believe that Jesus actually turned water to wine, do you?” He replied, “I don't know anything about that, but I do know that he can turn whiskey into clothing and furniture, because he did it in my home.”

The Unsearchable Riches

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[Abstract]

I find myself more amused than aggravated with those pseudo-intellectuals who think the scriptures are outmoded and should be discarded. Because their rope is so short it will not allow their bucket to hit the water they think they have drawn the well dry. They are like a convention of termites passing a resolution condemning the Empire State Building because they cannot chew its foundations to pieces.

God is the author of two books, creation and revelation. There has not been a single atom added to the material universe since the Creator rested, but man is still laboring to discover new truths which have been there all of the time. It required divine skill to ordain a world of inexhaustible riches so that each succeeding generation would meet challenges which would motivate it to continued research. It would be a dull world if there were nothing left to explore.

As it is in the natural realm, so is it in the spiritual. Not an atom of direct revelation has been added since the sage of Patmos dropped the pen from his weary fingers. But there will be unexplored depths to beckon men on until Jesus comes. The new creation, like the old, releases its secrets gradually and as men can grasp and appreciate them.

Once in awhile someone who flatters himself that he is a

chosen vessel sinks his mental shaft and concludes that he has exhausted a vein of ore, but after his puny body mingles with the mould, another comes along with a more penetrating drill and opens up a completely new lead.

For this reason it hardly behoooves us to put up a sign titled “The End” and build a fence to keep others from proceeding to additional discoveries.

It is a primary condition of a book such as the Bible that it be an inexhaustible storehouse, that no man come to the end of it and thus contain it, rather than being contained by it. Those sects which seek to bottle truth and peddle it under their private label generally end up selling thin air.

The Bible was written for all men and for every age. To appeal to all it must offer each generation new fruits which have never before been gathered. There must be a promise for all who search the scriptures, but there would be no use of searching if every truth had long since been discovered. Nothing would discourage study more than a realization that there was nothing to be achieved by it, and that the golden summit of truth had already been attained.

To discard the scriptures as God’s revelation because they have been around so long would be like deciding to abandon the earth because of its antiquity. I do not intend to abandon either the earth or the Bible while I am in the flesh. There really isn’t anywhere else to go, so I’m staying with both!

The fact is that I have not learned nearly as much about God’s Word as I want to know, and I expect to continue drinking at this wonderful spring of pure water flowing from the Throne as long as I live. And I want to share what I find in its depths.

The Question Box

Mission Messenger (August 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

“Only one thing can give unity in the church on the human level: the love which allows another to be different even when it does not understand him.”— Karl Rahner.

I might have known it would happen! In the July issue of this journal I made the proposal that we remove the use of instrumental music from the category of tests of union and communion, and restore a degree of sanity to a schizophrenic restoration movement whose members have been tomahawking one another in a senseless feud for more than a hundred years.

It is now apparent that many of the brethren are more adept at making pieces of the body, than of making peace within it. They want the war to continue. They like to judge brethren and engage in the great American pastime of confessing other men’s sins. And now I am the target!

This is not an entirely new experience for me, nor is it the first time that I have been regarded as a Benedict Arnold, or a traitor. In fact, I never recall having given up any narrow factional attitude without being so accused, and since I have given up quite a few of them, it is beginning to sound like a cracked record.

I am going to share with you some of the questions and my

reactions to them, although I do so a little reluctantly. This necessitates a change of plan with reference to the series of articles for this year, but in this fast-moving age an editor ought not to be harnessed to one field when another, which is more fertile, deserves cultivation.

My chief concern is for our many readers who are not even a part of our restoration movement and heritage. Perhaps they will regard us with a more charitable eye than we have sometimes turned upon one another.

It is important, I think, that you know exactly what I am suggesting, and just as important that you understand what I am not suggesting. Let me deal with the latter first on the principle that “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

I am not proposing that any person change his mind or alter his views about the right or wrong of instrumental music in the congregational praise service dedicated to God.

I am not suggesting that anyone must amend his interpretation of any scriptural passage which he thinks is related to this issue. I am not recommending a cessation of discussion about the status of instrumental music. I believe that continued discussion will be wholesome and helpful.

I am not proposing that any congregation adopt instrumental music. I am not suggesting that any congregation change sides, or swap horses. Instead, I recommend that, at least for the present, where conditions are not wholly intolerable, that we stay where we are and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Any wholesale milling around will only confuse the scene and upset a lot of unstable souls, of which all our factions have more than a fair share.

Then what do I propose? It is very simple. I suggest a recapture of that spirit of brotherly love which transcends divergent views about the instrument, and which will impel us to

associate with each other as children of the same Father.

I urge only that we change our categorization of the problem. Every faction, without exception, has two boxes filled with traditional issues. One bears the label, "Differences Which Do Not Divide;" the other, "Differences Which Divide." These boxes are our own. God did not create them. He filled neither of them. I propose that we transfer instrumental music from the last-named to the first. That's where it was originally. We did not divide for many years after the instrument was introduced. It was only after we irritated, agitated, aggravated, and rubbed each other raw, that we took the issue from the hope chest and threw it in the war chest.

The transfer will make it no less a difference. It will be as big one place as another. But it will create a tremendous difference in our attitudes. It will free us from a species of intolerance which has plagued us for many decades. It will create a sharing situation which will release the pent-up energy of the Spirit and actually sweep some mission fields for Christ. It will eradicate the inner trauma which some brethren feel in the presence of others and make for free and genuine recognition of that fellowship which we have in Christ.

Why do I make this proposal just now? I do so for a lot of reasons which I do not have either the time or inclination to discuss. I am sick and tired of our wrangling around over issues which are glorified and magnified out of all proportion to their value by our fanatical and inordinate attention. With a world threatened by holocaust of such magnitude as to cause strong men to tremble at the thought, we can no longer indulge in the folly of partisan squabbles such as entertained our fathers in the halcyon days of sectarian bitterness.

I want to get to the gut-issues of our generation and see if Christianity has the potential to face them down and bring them to heel. I want to be where the action is! I want to be in on the

happening! The most important thing in this frightened universe does not seem to me to be whether some of my brethren want to blow, beat, saw or pound upon something while the others are singing.

Obviously the suggestion had to come from someone who is conscientiously opposed to the use of the instrument in the public praise service. And since no one else seemed anxious to push toward the front and offer the suggestion I decided to stand up in our little journal and make the proposition.

There was nothing brave about it because bravery is courage in the face of fear. I just do not have any fear. Perfect love cast it all out. When I faced up to Jesus and surrendered to him unreservedly, he came in, flooded my soul with light, poured out love in my heart, and gave me a peace that even I do not understand.

Perhaps we had better get on with the reactions to my little proposal. I've sorted some of them out so you'll be able to get the gist of the questions and my replies. In a case or two, I've combined them from several sources. It really is not important that you know who asked what, nor is it particularly important that I do the answering. What is important is that we all strive for truth. I am still optimistic that truth will separate itself from error and rise to the top like cream on the milk, in spite of the observation of Mark Twain that: "The man who is a pessimist before forty-eight knows too much; the man who is an optimist after forty-eight knows too little."

DEBATING THE QUESTION

1. You were quite a debater on this subject, affirming the use of instrumental music was a sin. Do you still regard it as a sin? Would you still debate it?

True, I was once a rather forward partisan champion,

defending the tenets and tests of the faction with which I was allied. It would be a sin for me to introduce or engage in the playing of an instrument in the public praise of the saints. Whether God will regard it as such upon the part of those of his children who have no scruples against it, I shall not presume to judge, in the absence of any specific directive from him on the matter.

I have renounced all public partisan debate with any of my brethren as having any real hope of promoting understanding or eliminating strife. I think, as generally carried out in our day, debate is a divisive tool which serves only to intensify the party spirit. I have debated the questions of instrumental music, support of orphan homes, theological schools, the clergy system, classes, cups, the status of elders, and a host of other things, but I will not again publicly debate any of my brethren.

This was not an easy decision for me. I rather liked debating. I grew up to regard my brethren in other factions as rivals and enemies and I was glad to lead the tribe in war against them, under the guise that we were opposing Satan. It was a thrill to jump on my theological steed, ride hard and “head them off at the pass.” Since I’ve been able to distinguish between the devil and my brethren, I would prefer to concentrate my efforts against him and love them.

Can I say a word about G. C. Brewer, in tribute to his memory? After our first skirmish he suggested that we make a sort of “Lincoln-Douglas” tour of all of the college campuses, and we held our second debate at Freed-Hardeman College. It was a good one. He was very gentlemanly. But we had no further debates. I suspect both of us thought we were “Lincoln.”

One reason I will not debate with my brethren is that I no longer represent any party, group or school of thought. I’m not a front man for any faction nor the champion of any clique. I represent only Jesus and he is not debatable among brethren. I

do not want anyone else to represent my views. I do not want to represent the views of anyone else. I shall allow no other man to do my thinking. I will not impose my own thinking on any other man.

2. Would you make the same arguments against the instrument now as you did in the past?

I would certainly not make some of them, because they would sound as silly now as they must have then. In looking back over my more ancient debate notes in my file marked “Digressives,” I find, for example, that once I belabored those “that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David” (Amos 6:5). At the time I did not know enough to realize that the context when so applied, would equally condemn eating Grade-A veal chops, stretching out on a couch, or using pine-scented after shave lotion.

The truth is that both sides in the controversy ought to examine anew their debate notes and sermon outlines and set fire to most of them and start over. The years have produced a lot of chaff and little real wheat in either partisan granary. And this has made for a lot of sawdust and cornflake sermons. No wonder Spurgeon said, “Some ministers would make good martyrs: they are so dry they would burn well.”

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

3. You assert positively that no one can establish congregational singing in the public worship, by the scriptures, but does not Ephesians 5:19 do so, when it says, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”?

No. It lacks the very element you need to make it say what you want it to say. The sentence begins with, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

etc.” This is not an apostolic command regulating public praise. It simply tells Christians how to behave when they are not drunk.

Ephesus was the site of the temple of Diana which was the scene of Bacchanalian revelry. This included drinking, lewd songs and filthy talk. It also included such sexual excesses it was a shame to speak of them (See verses 11, 12). In contrast with such daily conduct, the grace-sharers were to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of unholy fermented spirits, and they were to exhibit it in the kind of songs which they sang to each other.

Careful examination will show that the whole context is set in a framework of daily living, consisting of the circumspect walk, and the proper use of time, because the days were evil. It is a context of the submission of wives, love of husbands, obedience of children, respect for slaves and masters. Our problem is that we postulated congregational singing as God’s pattern and looked for scriptures to justify our presupposition. The ones we discovered had to be twisted to fit the shape we wanted. It is likely that we are more indebted to Moody and Sankey than we are to Paul and Peter for our pattern.

Please understand that I do not condemn congregational singing. On the contrary, I think it is a good thing. I suspect that God likes for his children to get together and sing, just as Nell and I like for our family to do so. I am not sure that the Father gets too much of a thrill out of it when we think we are forced to do it to keep him from being mad at us. The “sing or be damned” attitude may affect him as it would me if the parents of our grandchildren would say, “You straighten up and sing now or we’ll whip the daylights out of you.” My Book says, “Is any one merry? Let him sing psalms.” It’s a little hard to be bubbling over with joy when the threat of hell is hanging over your head if you are not!

4. If Colossians 3:16 does not prove congregational singing,

please tell me what it does prove?

I am not sure it was written to prove anything in the sense in which you use the word “prove.” We do not want to fall into the trap which has grabbed some scientists, described by Samuel Butler thus, “The tendency of modern science is to reduce proof to absurdity by continually reducing absurdity to proof.” Generally when we turn a text into a prooftext we have already decided what we want it to prove. By a little effort with our mental hammer and intellectual crowbar we can make it fit almost as well as if it had been made for the place.

Of course, some texts require a little more battering than others, but almost any text can be made to do in a pinch. It helps some if you have gone to school and taken courses in how to warp the scriptures and force them into place. This is one of the advantages of a theological education. The average unskilled bumbler may be inclined to leave a passage in the setting where God placed it, never even realizing that he can lift it out and beat the stuffing out of it and fit it in somewhere else.

The passage reads, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

We could not possibly fulfill this requirement the way we sing, because we are all singing at once. If you are going to teach another, he ought to listen to you. Moreover, teaching is conveying information or instruction. You cannot teach another if he already knows as much about the subject as you do. In our singing, if you don’t know the song you cannot teach another, but if you do know it another cannot teach you. Either way you take it, someone is violating the command.

What would you say if all of the members in an assembly sought to teach one another a lesson by all standing up and

shouting the same thing at the same time? Do you think that putting a tune to the words would make a difference? Where we attend, sometimes the bass singers are saying one thing, and the soprano singers another at the same time. I can understand how you might teach if “whenever you meet let everyone be ready to contribute a psalm, a piece of teaching, a spiritual truth, or a ‘tongue’ with an interpreter,” as Paul instructed Corinth.

But I think we ought to quit trying to fool the public into thinking that we teach and admonish one another, when we put a man up front to wave his arms while we all stand and belt out the words. We all enjoy it I suppose, and I don’t want to see it stopped, but we need to quit trying to find scriptural justification for it. There isn’t any. If Paul walked in and heard us in high gear and in four-part harmony it would probably shake him. It wouldn’t shake him nearly as much as it would if we told him we were doing it because it was what he commanded. He might not get over that shock!

If you really want to teach in song, I suggest that next Lord’s Day, just before you have the Supper, you have some brother with a good voice “contribute a psalm” while you sit reverently and allow the words to seep into the very fiber of your inner being. But to answer your question. Colossians 3:16 is set in a framework of everyday living. It does not prove congregational singing the way we do it. Nothing does. I do not think anything really has to do so! I believe that we may be hung up on the idea that God intended to provide us with a meticulous blueprint, a sort of “pray by pray account” of everything we are to do when we gather, thus leaving no room for spontaneous expression and spiritual freshness. But I am not so sure that the new covenant scriptures were meant to be a printed program handed out by the apostles. I respect these scriptures but I do not think it is an act of reverence to press them into a role which God may not have intended for them to occupy.

I do not think congregational singing is to be condemned

or abandoned just because there is no clear precedent for it. On the contrary, it is a very unifying group exercise and no doubt it is pleasing to the Father. If we were to get rid of all for which we did not have a clear precedent we'd not have a lot left.

5. Will not your proposition encourage congregations to adopt instrumental music?

Why should it? The status of instrumental music will not be altered. All I propose is that we regard and treat our brethren who use it as brethren. Is there anything about showing brotherly love that would make brethren adopt instrumental music? Must we keep God's family divided and rent, and treat some of his children with cold disdain, in order to keep some congregations from using instrumental music?

It is obvious that no congregation will adopt it whose members oppose it, and those congregations whose members see no violation of scripture in its use, and who want it, will probably have it regardless of what I say. My contention is simply that instrumental music has no relationship to our fellowship in Christ Jesus, and it should not keep us from recognition of that fellowship. I am not trying to regulate and control the procedure of any congregation.

6. If this compromising crackpot idea you have dreamed up is right, why are there not more brethren who are pushing it? Are you the only one who is right?

I really think that a goodly number of informed brethren have been uneasy about our factional position for a long time. Many of them realize that it was a mistake to make an honest opinion about instrumental music a test of fellowship. Some are not as free as I am, and not as vocal about it, but I think they will be glad that someone has brought the suggestion into the open at last.

However, I never test sentiment in advance, or determine

the way the wind blows, before I state my convictions. I am not concerned with lining up with a majority. I am only concerned with being right. I think it is sinful to perpetuate a division which ought never to have happened in the first place. I am resigned to standing alone if need be. I am not worried about the ultimate.

My study of history convinces me that every constructive idea was branded as a crackpot idea when first enunciated, but after it has been duly considered it is adopted and all are better for it. No traditionalist ever improved upon the status quo. That must be done by nonconformists. Sometimes they are rather lonely at first. However, many more brethren share my present convictions than some of you have even dreamed. We will be able to work together some day!

7. Where will this thing stop if your views are accepted?

Hopefully, it will continue to leaven every faction until all of us may exhibit our oneness in Christ Jesus. Perhaps some brother who has led in the fight to make the support of Herald of Truth and orphan homes a test of fellowship will recommend that the issue be completely removed from this category and that local congregations which have divided over this issue start working together across the barrier.

I should like to see Baxter Loe, for example, make an editorial recommendation in *Gospel Tidings* that we close the breach in fellowship on the "Sunday School issue" with a genuine implementation of local autonomy on the congregational level. I should like to see Ervin Waters do the same in *Outreach* with reference to the question of individual cups. Both of these men are good writers and good thinkers. They might be able to help brethren see how foolish and immature we act when we maintain our senseless partisan bitterness.

I suspect that many brethren in every faction are deterred

by fear of being branded as “liberals,” but if Jesus could endure being called “gluttonous and a winebibber” by those whom he sought to help, we ought not to worry too much. “The servant is not greater than his Lord.” I have to confess that it does not bother me one bit what men may do unto me. So I pray that we shall not stop until we build bridges across all of our divisions and can cross freely back and forth without fear of reprisal.

THE POSSIBLE EFFECT

8. Here in Texas it seems to me that many brethren in Abilene and Austin have been influenced by your writings, although they would probably deny it. Will your suggestion about music widen the gap between them and you again, after it seemed to be closing?

I do not really think so. There are some very perceptive and outstanding brethren in Texas, and I love them a great deal for their work’s sake, although some of them have been quite bitter about my emphasis on fellowship. I have been made the object of attack upon several occasions where I could not hope to gain permission to reply, but I understand the motivation for this and it does not disturb me a great deal.

Letters coming to me indicate that many of the brethren are seeing the question of fellowship in a wholly new light, and it is true that my writings have recently been looked upon with much more charity in some areas. Some of the brethren in the places mentioned are in agreement with my position that we should not make a test of fellowship out of an honest opinion about instrumental music, although they are quite opposed to its use in the corporate worship.

I pray that what I have written will not “widen the gap” for all of us need to find common ground upon which to stand regardless of the state in which we live. But whatever happens to me personally I must be honest with God and myself for I would

not want to create a chasm between myself and God in order to lessen one between my self and brethren in Texas. Heaven must take precedence over Texas!

9. Why don't you go on and join the Christian Church and let us alone?

I know the brother who asked this question. He has been involved in three divisions and is now meeting with a small group of unhappy souls whose outlook is very negative and pessimistic. The strange thing is that these good brethren do not count me as one of them, but I "bug" them simply because I love them and continue to write to them and offer to help them serve our Lord.

I am sure that most of us are made uncomfortable by those who force us to examine anew our traditional thinking. And it isn't very pleasant, when we have all of our positions, arguments, and deductions, packed down nicely in our box of playthings, to have someone come along and kick the box over. We would like to rid ourselves of such a person.

But I am not going to "go on and join" anything. I belong to my Lord and that is enough for me. I hold that there is only one church on earth and that it contains all of the saved. I am one of them. I am not the least bit interested in the old religious "shell game" of switching parties. I am afraid our good brother is stuck with me. I refuse to leave and I will not be frightened or driven off. If my brethren cannot stand to remain with one who loves them all, they will have to pack their debate books and "go over the hill." I like it here and I am staying for the duration.

10. Suppose we agreed to remove instrumental music from being a test of fellowship, where do you think the greatest impact would first be felt?

On the foreign mission field. We have confused many simple native peoples by transporting our American feuds to

their lands, for which they are not temperamentally, historically or traditionally prepared. You have to grow up in the very midst of our mixed-up mess for it to make any sense to you at all.

In some distant lands, two “Churches of Christ” have been planted, neither of which uses instrumental music. But, because one group is supported by those in the United States who use it, the other group would have nothing to do with them in a Jungle on the other side of the globe. This kind of childish procedure on the part of grown men would be as laughable as it is ridiculous, if it were not for the fact that it helps to fragment a world already bursting at its ideological seams.

I suggest that we free our missionaries in all factions from party domination and let them work freely with every Christian brother in their section of the world. Let them exchange speaking appointments, hold conferences and lectureships together, share in youth camps, and produce jointly-published reading material and literature in native tongues. In short, let them manifest the unity we have in Christ Jesus in spite of differences.

Let’s have an end to our stupid and infantile attitude, which will eventually make us the laughingstock of the intelligent people all over the earth. We have instrumental, non-instrumental, pre-millennial, post-millennial, one-cup, multiple cups, institutional, anti-institutional, Sunday School, and anti-Sunday School parties (to name a few) in such places as Africa, Japan and South America. In some locations we have taken those who always lived in unity as pagans and separated them into warring tribes as Christians. But our inconsistencies will catch up with us. Our partisan chickens will come home to roost!

If a man does not have good judgment he should not be sent to the mission field, and if he does have he should be allowed the freedom to use it. Let’s stop making puppets out of these self-sacrificing brethren, and cut the sectarian apron

strings. It is time to quit regulating their endeavors by our mechanical remote control devices. Instead of calling men home because they work and fraternize with other Christians, we should call them home if they will not do so. The mission field is no place to practice sectarian littleness and exclusiveness. We have shivered God's family to bits in the United States and that should suffice without peddling our factional wares abroad.

CONCLUSION

It was difficult for me to gain consent of my mind to devote this issue of the paper to the above material. I am chafing at the bits to get on with the real task at hand in a world aflame. Still, I am conscious of the fact that we are coming out of a divisive state which has troubled us for more than a century, so we will extricate ourselves slowly and with some hardship. I am not so mystical as to think that God will send the Spirit in the form of a dove to snatch us out of our state in one swoop. I am not so pessimistic as to believe that we will never overcome our factional barriers. We will overcome but it will be by disciplined thinking. Brethren who pioneer for real unity must be content to suffer under unjust accusation and to have their motives impugned. But someone has to break ground if we are to build more solidly for the future.

With a deep conviction that our divisions are all displeasing to God, and that a brother is worth much more to me than my own opinions and views, I am committed unreservedly to the task of pleading for unity among all segments of the brotherhood until my pen drops from my hand in death. I shall seek to remember always the adage of Louis Brandeis, the eminent jurist, "Behind every argument is someone's ignorance."

Moral Philosophy

Mission Messenger (August 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

One of the most articulate graduate students among those whom I know is a regular reader of MISSION MESSENGER. I think he sometimes feels that I belong to a bygone age, and yet he envies my simple faith. Recently he wrote me thus about his own.

I came to the university with my faith intact, clothed in it as an armor. But it was shot full of holes and now hangs in shreds. Christianity no longer appears unique to me. My study of philosophy has convinced me that every moral or ethical precept enunciated by Jesus was borrowed from a prior source, and was not a divine declaration as I have always been taught to believe. You will probably say I should not have studied philosophy, yet it seems to me that an honest man should not subject himself to a mental straitjacket in order to find security at the cost of truth.

There is a grave possibility that our young brother, brilliant as he undoubtedly is, may have begun his university work on a borrowed faith. It is very easy for us to grow up in a religious atmosphere in which we simply accept what is being taught or said without engaging in the agonizing struggle to reach a personal meaningful conviction. Thus we may confuse our father's overcoat with armor. And, like an overcoat, what we call faith may be merely an external form or pattern of

thought into which we slipped quite easily.

The shooting full of holes of such a cloak represents no real attack upon the faith once delivered. It need not cripple the wearer for life if he sees it in proper perspective. One can recover from a hole in his cloak, but he will need to change garments.

Certainly I do not argue that one should not study philosophy, even though Frederick the Great did say, "If I wished to punish a province, I would have it governed by philosophers." Philosophy is actually the history of the thought processes of men through the ages. When I read after Plato, Aristotle, or Marcus Aurelius, I am able to understand the forces which helped to shape human destiny in every avenue of life. The problem with our brother is not that he understands too much about philosophy, but he understands too little about the nature of Christianity.

First of all, the Way was never intended to be a compendium of epigrams, a collation of ethical proverbs, or a code of laws and rules. Obviously our Lord did not intend to load us up with a collection of new or original moral precepts. One does not become a moral being merely by observing statutes, but he observes the rules because he is a moral being.

A moral law is not right simply because God commands it, but God commands it because it was right. That is why no moral law can ever become a test of one's faith in God. Moral obligations are inherent in the nature of man as a social and rational being, and while laws may define and clarify them they can never create them.

Actually, it is a little silly to talk about "a new morality." There is no such thing and there cannot be. Morality is not a creation of lawmakers nor a product of creed-makers. External laws may be modified, amended, or even abrogated in the

interest of morality, but the moral obligation existed before such regulations and will still inhere regardless of what may happen to the rules.

Men existed as moral beings a long time before Jesus entered the earth through the flesh curtain, and since there were brilliant thinkers who knew how to define human relationships and to record their observations, we should not be surprised to find a wealth of wisdom literature in the philosophic works of many ancient peoples. There were ethics before there were Christian ethics. And whatever was true would certainly be acknowledged by One who was the very embodiment of Truth.

As a philosophic student our brother should recognize that he has joined a rather inglorious company of skeptics, some of whom have become discredited long since. Celsus, who lived in the second century, wrote about the admonition of Jesus to forgive our enemies, and declared that he had found the same injunction in the writings of Plato, and more eloquently stated by the Greek philosopher. But Celsus hated Christianity with a prejudice so deep it became a passion.

Many philosophers have not been too accurate in their citations either. A good example is Edward Gibbon who referred to what is called “the golden rule” and then remarked, “A rule which I read in a moral treatise of Isocrates, four hundred years before the publication of the Gospel.” The historian was presuming upon the ignorance of his readers, because Isocrates gave a negative precept which was a far cry from the positive action required by our Lord.

Our brother was carried away in his desire to justify himself and impress me. His statement that “every moral or ethical precept enunciated by Jesus was borrowed from a prior source,” is not according to fact. A good example is the teaching related to love— *agape*— that active and benevolent good will which stops at nothing to accomplish the good of its object. So

superior was this teaching that the word can hardly be found in the Greek classics.

The reason is quite clear. It required the cross to demonstrate its depth and give it meaning. Jesus could truthfully say, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you." The natural concept until this time was that love responded to that which was lovable in the object, that is, that the lovable quality created the love. But *agape* is exactly the opposite. It is the ability to love the unlovable. It is the love that creates the worth in the object, and not the worth in the object that creates the love.

This is a height of moral value to which human philosophy had never attained, nor could it do so, for it grew out of divine philanthropy and not out of the social relationship as rational beings. And it is the love ethic which gives the lie to Voltaire's thesis that Christianity drew its light from the Far East, and to some of our more recent theorists who speculate that Jesus was educated and initiated in the lore of the Essenes.

I have no hesitancy in acknowledging the truth of any statement that is true, regardless of who discovered the truth or issued the statement. If a pagan discovered the truth about a matter of moral consequence before our Lord came to earth I would expect the latter to affirm it rather than to deny it. I happen to hold that since all nations had a common ancestry, and since our primeval fathers walked and talked with God originally we should not be at all surprised that many who were shut off from later direct oracles should rise above the corruption of their times.

The uniqueness of Christianity does not lie in the code of morals which it predicates, superior though they may be in their statement. If we regard God's supreme revelation of Himself in Jesus as merely a declaration of ethical truths there may not be anything to challenge our lives. But when we see it as the

manifestation of eternal life, that life which was with the Father from the beginning, we can at once recognize that Christianity is not merely a way of life, but the life of the Way! “He that hath the Son hath life.”

Heathen philosophers could discover moral truths and frame them into precepts, but they could not find power to implement them in their own lives. Christianity is not an ethical code trying to make us good from without, but an inner transformation, a transfiguration, which purifies from within. It is the residence of Deity, through the Holy Spirit in our fleshly frames by which we crucify the deeds of the body.

I do not recommend that our brother stop his study of philosophy, but I do suggest most humbly that He begin a genuine acquaintance with Jesus through the indwelling Spirit. He will never really be happy until he does. When the Spirit comes in He can straighten out a philosopher. My God can do anything but fail!

More Questions

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

For the third straight month I must apologize to our readers for dealing with a subject which probably proves boring to many of them. In the midst of world ferment they wish that I would get on with the real task. I wish I could too, but I am committed to the program of promoting peace among those of us who are a part of the noble experiment launched in 1809 as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

In July I made the proposal that we remove the question of the use of instrumental music from the category of a test of fellowship, and receive as brethren those children of God on either side of this long-standing issue which has been so controversial. I came under attack immediately in some circles as a liberal and traitor, a thing not wholly unexpected. In the August issue I answered some of the questions raised in letters. I cannot drop the matter at this juncture, so I plead for your patience and understanding.

By far the greater number of letters received contain words of commendation and encouragement, but I am not asking for popular acclaim. I simply want truth and I shall remain free to express what I believe is true, unmoved by criticism on the one hand, or by flattery on the other. I trust I shall not be forced to continue dealing with this matter interminably but I do want to face it without fear or flinching.

Herewith we present additional questions, in the meantime urging that you read the July and August issues which are preliminary.

1. How can we overcome the problem of division on a local level? The non-instrument preacher and I are on very friendly terms as individuals, but when I attend a meeting at his place, he seems like a different person, very cool and almost abrupt.

Of course, he is a different person. Most of us are far better than our narrow unwritten creeds. When you meet privately you are just brethren, both human and frail, both needing each other. But in a public meeting the preacher is the defender of orthodoxy, the partisan front-man, and involved in this are many things—the factional image, salary, sectarian prestige and pride. The legalistic attitude always makes for dishonesty on the part of any of us. We become Pharisaical, haughty and supercilious.

I suggest that you pray very eagerly for the Holy Spirit to open up real doors of contact. Invite the preacher and his wife to visit in your home, and you and your wife call upon his family. Make your love for them real! Attend the meetings conducted by these brethren, and always be loving and lovable. Do not be disturbed if you are not given recognition, or if you are not called “brother.” This is not the important thing. We must establish and maintain association regardless of difficulty. We must hold the door open. If we do the Holy Spirit will lessen the chasm.

2. In our little town there is a Christian Church and a Church of Christ. Most of the members know one another and several are relatives. However, because of the division and bitterness created during special meetings conducted by outside evangelists brought in by both sides, we have had little contact with one another. How would you approach this problem?

In a small town people often have very deep feelings about local issues. I think you should not try to exchange speaking engagements on Lord's Day, but I suggest that you begin with joint Bible studies on Wednesday nights. Choose a book such as the epistle of James, and alternate in the use of your meetinghouses. Forget about singing since this creates a problem. God has no law that we must sing a half hour before we start studying the Bible. When you meet, get down upon your knees and let one brother from each place lead in prayer to God, and then begin your mutual sharing of thought in the lesson.

When you meet at the Christian Church building let one of the elders of the non-instrument congregation lead the study; when you meet at the Church of Christ building let one of the elders of the instrument congregation do the teaching. It will be better for the preachers to stay in the background as much as possible, contributing to the discussion from their seats. Surely no one can object to people gathering to study the word of God. And it follows that both sides need to be careful about importing preachers "who sow discord among brethren." The work of promoting peace is not accomplished by rabble-rousers.

3. What can a group of concerned students in a non-instrument oriented Christian college do to further unity as you see it?

They can do a great deal. We have some of the most brilliant, perceptive young men and women in our day that have ever graced the restoration movement. They are tired of our sectarian bigotry, sham and pretence. They are sick of the stereotyping, pigeon-holing, categorizing tactics which have been our disgrace.

I suggest to the concerned ones that they first meet as a cell group to wrestle with God in prayer about their role in our day. In the seclusion of a living-room or dormitory wing they can implore God upon their knees to help them make their lives

meaningful and rich with service. They must revolt against our dishonesty and camouflage, and do so in at least two ways.

They must challenge the deductions and conclusions which are unwarranted by the scriptures, and which have grown out of the text-scraping tactics we have employed as the glib “easy-answer people” of the religious world. In class, they must do this respectfully, but firmly, as becometh brethren who are free in the Lord. And they must be prepared to suffer the consequences accruing to anyone of staunch conviction who challenges or bucks the Establishment.

They must not switch parties or change factions, but work from the base in which they have grown up. All reformation must be achieved from within, never from without. And they must stay within the restoration frame of reference for if they flake off or flack out they will cease to be of any real help. But they must work out from this base or else it will be a prison.

I suggest to every concerned student in a Christian college that he continue to attend services on the Lord’s Day morning where he has been accustomed to break bread with the saints, and to love all of these brethren dearly. But on Sunday night, and at other times, I urge brethren who are rising above their previous factional littleness to break out of the shell. Let them visit every congregation in the area— instrumental, premillennial, anti-institutional, one-cup, anticlass— all of them! Especially visit the little ones, not neglecting store-front types, or any other.

Make contact with the young people in all of these, and when possible set up informal discussion groups with them. This will not be easy, but nothing that is worthwhile ever is. You will be branded as radicals, which may not be too bad, seeing that the word means to get to the root of things. No faction wants to be jarred. Many brethren think that “the whole law is summed up in one word, even in this, thou shalt not rock the boat!”

But we need a revolution of thought, attitude and approach. Most of us think of daring and courage as exhibited only by missionaries who go to snake-infested jungles, but we need to live just as daringly in the adventure for unity. It is as important that one be ready to risk his standing for the cause for which Jesus prayed, as for the cause which he commissioned.

I am quite thoroughly convinced that tomorrow will be better than today for the very reason that energetic, eager, Spirit-filled young men and women are not satisfied with our divisive status quo. They have the desire, the ability, and the know-how to change it. And they will do so. Those in every party who educated their children to think for themselves sounded the death knell of our factionalism. Those who “see visions and dream dreams” of unity and fellowship are our greatest hope and our best asset.

The plea for oneness of all who believe in Christ through the apostolic testimony is *our thing*. Where men cut across factional lines and artificial barriers is where the action is. The happening in our age is where there is proclamation of renewal through recovery of the apostolic purpose and power. This is it, man! And, it is for real! Tune in, crank up, and get going on the most challenging cause that heaven has ever flung into our laps.

4. It seems to me that you have sold out, and that you’ve adopted the policy that if you can’t lick ‘em you’ll join ‘em. What do you say?

I say you are dead wrong, my brother, and wrong on all counts. I am not for sale to any party, faction, fragment, or segment. I have not joined anyone but our precious Lord. And he joined me to all of God’s other children as my brothers. We should never have been fighting brethren in the first place. What business is it of any person to “lick” some of God’s other children? The devil never did a more clever selling job than when he convinced us we should take the sword of the Spirit and

hack the body of God's Son into bloody chunks over instrumental music or any other of our "issues." God's house is not a butcher shop. His children are not cannibals.

What would you think of a father who commissioned some of his children to take a switchblade knife and cut and stab his other children? I do not believe that God is guilty of that kind of insanity. The problem with you is that you have Christianity confused with tribal warfare. You and I grew up in different factions and you never did recognize me as your brother. It is not only since I am pleading for unity of all believers in Christ that you think I am in error. You thought that when our factions were clawing each other to pieces "in the name of Jesus Christ."

If I had left my faction and joined yours, and urged all others to do the same, you would have hailed me as the greatest hero of the restoration movement in our generation. But since the Holy Spirit really came into my heart I can see how miserably both of us were missing the mark. Now, with a deep concern for your wellbeing, I can love you sincerely and pray for you fervently.

I am no longer a factional leader and I shall never again allow any clique to dictate to me whom I shall love and whom I shall not love. I know now that I am joined to all of God's children by the blood tie. If you will open up your heart and let the Spirit in you will be happy also.

5. Suppose half of the members of a congregation want to put in an instrument, and the other half oppose it. What should they do?

Quite obviously none of us should ever push what we want in the realm of deduction, upon brethren who deplore it. I do not think many places will be faced with this problem in our generation, although an occasional ambitious preacher possessed of more lust for power than common sense, may create such a

situation. Practically all divisions are caused by preachers and always have been. Brethren who have always sung praises without an instrument are not likely to get so filled with rancor and hate that they will thrust something in which will fragment the body, unless they are fired up by an emotional or intemperate zealot. All of our brethren, with few exceptions, want peace in our time.

However, if a group of brethren are so deeply concerned that they divide, they should not do so in hate, for regardless of the status of the instrument, he that hateth his brother is a murderer. In spite of my views on the instrument, I would rather meet with a group which had a piano and dearly loved all of the brethren, than to meet with a group that did not have an instrument and sincerely hated most of the brethren. One doesn't know whether he really loves his brethren or not until he is tested.

We do not all need to meet under the same roof but we do need to be members of the same family. If we simply cannot do things alike, let us not undo the work of the Spirit in our lives. I think that we have come to the time when the instrument does not mean more to the brethren than the family relationship, and I doubt that any sober or serious thinker will sever the body over his preference for it. To form an "organ party" in a congregation opposed to it would be a sin, and so would the reverse position.

6. If those of us who have the instrument silence it out of deference when brethren come to share a service with us, shouldn't they put in a piano out of respect for our views when we worship with them?

No. This is what I call an elephant fallacy, big enough that anyone ought to see it. I think I am the proper person to answer this because I never ask my brethren to change their procedures out of deference to my position. I do not agree to come and teach

on a contingent basis. I just go and let them all stand or fall to their own master. I do not play God or try to dictate to them.

Brethren who have the attitude expressed in this question ought not to silence the instrument because their motivation in doing so is not right. They want to use their action as a kind of partisan horse-swapping technique, and it is not done as a real expression of brotherly love.

If eating meat is offensive to my brother I will forego serving it when he comes to my house, but I will not expect or require him to serve that which is offensive to him when I go to his house. If a brother is grieved with my meat I do not walk charitably when I force it upon him. I shall not destroy with my meat one for whom Christ died, and I refuse to let my good be evil spoken of when I can avoid it. "If eating meat offends my brother, I will eat no more meat while the world stands."

I am probably wrong, as I often am, but it seems to me when we see-saw back and forth to gain some kind of partisan advantage we are acting childish and immature. Please forgive me if I say that I want to be free from this whole sectarian attitude on both sides. I am tired of playing tag while the world burns down around our ears. Those who prefer such games will please leave me out when they choose up sides.

7. I have been ministering in this congregation where the instrument is not used for three years, and I am convinced that your position is the only sane one I have heard expressed. I have a good relationship with the minister of the Christian Church and we talk over our problems privately. I would like to call upon him to pray or speak when he comes to our services, but if I did I would divide the congregation. I feel like I am leading a double life since my inner thinking is so far removed from the congregational practice. What shall I do?

It will help you to realize that you are not alone. Literally

scores of noninstrument brethren caught up in the web of legalistic exclusiveness, write me every year about “the practice gap” into which they are forced. I am sure that you feel much closer to the Spirit-filled brother who does not see any harm in using the instrument than you do to many of those who help pay your salary. The indwelling Spirit always brings us closer to others in whom he dwells. This divine tension on the heart is a tremendous magnetic force.

Never having met you, I cannot advise you what to do. I can suggest some of my personal feelings about an approach to the situation. You should explain fairly and honestly your predicament to our Christian Church brother. If he truly loves the Lord, he will understand the need of proceeding so as not to augment strife and division. All of us are inhibited by circumstances. Jesus had many things he wanted to say to the apostles but they were not able to bear them.

Do not leave the congregation, but begin a careful and painstaking process of education to enable them to properly adjust their sense of values. Use your messages to point out that all division in God’s family is a sin, and that we are called upon to be peacemakers. Urge the brethren to pray about the matter of strife and to have open minds on all issues, and to remember that with God no issue is ever settled as long as we are divided.

I am thoroughly convinced that if we can influence our brethren to “think unity” instead of thinking division, the Churches of Christ are in a strategic position right now to help lead a genuine attempt to unite the Christians in all of the sects. In an intellectual age they possess the scholastic ability, world vision, dynamism, and financial means to move into the whole evangelical realm, and with faith, hope and love, lead all of God’s reconciled ones to a deeper sense of commitment to the unity of the Spirit.

There are many obstacles to this and they may prove

insuperable, although they need not do so. We have created an image of sectarian bigotry unrivalled by any other group except the Roman Catholic communion. We have maintained an attitude that is arrogant, stand-offish and Pharisaical. This has produced a trauma of fear and insecurity which causes us to lash out at other children of the Father. Often times, as little tin-gods we have assumed a stance of infallibility in interpretation and this has caused us to become dogmatic and authoritarian. This may appear to have produced a hopeless situation. I do not think so!

Our greatest hope lies in that fact that we are everywhere awakening to the indwelling power of the eternal Spirit. If we try to use Him to further our traditional factional concerns we will be smitten down of God in our boastful partisan pride. But if we allow him to use us as a peacemaking force we can become effective witnesses in our generation. So I urge you not to become discouraged. Do not wash out or go down the drain. I think God may be preparing us for a mighty work and a wonder. Stay in! He knows and understands!

8. For the life of me I cannot see how we can demonstrate any unity to the world while we meet in separate places, with some using the instrument and others refusing to do so.

Your problem is an old one. "Thou savorest not the things which be of God, but those that be of men." You are "hooked" on organizational unity which is as far from God's plan as is the Roman papal system. The very thing the world needs is a demonstration of the unity in diversity. Everybody expects people to work and fraternize together who see every little thing alike. This exhibits no real dynamic of the Spirit. It can be done by exercise of human nature. But when people differ and yet work together out of sheer love for God, this is the potent exhibition of a transcendent and transforming power.

Let us demonstrate our unity by joining our efforts in

areas where we agree. There are desperate needs which can better be served by cooperation than by isolated efforts. We can join together in proclaiming Christ in great metropolitan areas. We all agree that Jesus is Lord and Savior and the only hope of the world. We do not have a Christian Church Christ and a Church of Christ Christ. Then let us join in telling the world that “there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.”

It is downright silly and sectarian for brethren to plan a “city-wide crusade” and limit participation and consultation only to the congregations in their one faction. All such “crusades” are sectarian, partisan and factional, in spite of the noble and high-sounding statements handed out to the press by their front-men and promoters. Thinking people can see through this facade and detect the sham. They know that such “crusades” are not advancing the cause of Christ and are only ripples on the ocean of humanity intended to build up another sect.

We can share youth camp facilities, inner city ghetto work, and a multitude of other things where a spirit of rivalry would only weaken our plea. I am exactly opposite to our questioner in my thinking. I have to demonstrate my unity with all of God’s children “for the life of me!” “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” While you are sitting at home wondering how it can ever work, I propose, with God as my help, to be out working it. If you ever come to realize that the only real unity is “the unity of the Spirit” and not agreement upon modes, means, methods and things, you will see what I mean. And when you see it, it will really be “for the life of you.”

About Authority

Mission Messenger (September 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

In recent encounters with brethren outside of their own factions, certain orthodox spokesmen have been pitching their tents upon ground which they have staked out and are pleased to call “the authority of Jesus.” They now agree that there is room in the kingdom for diversity in understanding, opinion, and method of operation, so long as the authority of Jesus is respected as absolute.

At first this sounds as if these brethren are nobly allowing a greater degree of latitude in approach to fellowship, but closer investigation shows that this is not the case. The fact is that they still insist that respect for the authority of Jesus is equivalent to acceptance of their dictum upon every controversial issue. For example, to disagree with them on the question of the millennium or instrumental music is to trample underfoot the Lordship of the Son of God. One must not only affirm the authenticity of the scriptures but the infallibility of their partisan deductions upon every matter.

Such an attitude offers nothing constructive in dealing with the dilemma of division. It is precisely the spirit which prompted our schisms at the outset and has promoted them for a century. To accuse sincere brethren of denying the authority of Jesus simply because they have honestly reached different conclusions on matters of discussion within the family circle is unfair, unjust

and unscriptural.

There are many brethren who respect the authority of Jesus Christ who do not to the same degree respect the authority of a human editor. Brethren are becoming tired of the impositions of self-elected supreme court justices within the spiritual realm. They know the difference between the Lord of glory and the defenders of the party spirit, and they refuse to bow the knee to the latter under the guise that only in this way can they worship the former.

Actually the greatest contribution that some editors could make the cause of Christ in our day is to cease playing God with their brethren. If such men want to enforce respect for the authority of Jesus, let them first read what the Lord has said about the sin of division, and the crime of “setting at naught a brother” for whom Jesus died. It is not becoming of them to insist upon respect for the authority of Jesus in areas where he has said nothing, while they coldly disregard what he has repeatedly said in another area of such importance.

Our real problem lies in the fact that while every faction and sect among us overlooks a great many differences within their own ranks, they all insist upon unanimity of opinion in the one issue which they have exalted because it gives them their partisan status. Such inconsistency is beginning to work its own rebuke and some day brethren will throw off these authoritarian yokes!

Rivers of Living Water

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

Is it ever possible to fully understand or appreciate something that is said or done, apart from the circumstances which gave birth to it? Does a picture reveal its full beauty when ripped from the frame which was designed for it, or a diamond reflect the glow of its inner fire as brilliantly when it is pried from its setting?

The address of Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg causes the heart to pulsate a little faster when the details of its preparation and delivery are known. The invention of the incandescent light bulb becomes more interesting when one knows of the relentless search by Thomas Edison for a filament which would withstand the heat generated.

And thus it is with the words of Jesus, and with his deeds also. They were not isolated from life or divorced from daily happenings. Instead, they grew out of the constant struggle of those caught up in the human predicament. They were sparked by incidents and involvements, and lighted by encounters with persons and places. And the historical context lends richer value to the content.

This is illustrated in one case which is vibrant with meaning. John records it in these words: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying. If any man

thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”

There is no problem in identifying the feast. John tells us it was the feast of Succoth, or tabernacles. This was the third of the three annual pilgrimage festivals, and an account of its origin is given in Leviticus 23:33-43. It was a harvest celebration which lasted for eight days. During this time the people lived in outdoor shelters or booths which were constructed of boughs and branches cut from various kinds of trees. This rugged experience, which was always a picnic for the children, was to memorialize the wilderness wanderings when the families of Israel had been freed from the bondage of Egypt.

In the days when Jesus was upon earth the feast was celebrated for seven days with great pageantry, and the octave, or eighth day was a day of strict sabbath rest. During the week all of the priestly families were serving, and the offerings required the services of 446 priests, with an equal number of Levites as assistants.

On the last day of the feast the worshipers arose before daybreak and dressed in their best garments. They left their booths when the sound of the trumpets announced the dawn. Each carried in his right hand three branches of myrtle, willow and palm tied together. This was called the Lulabha and was intended to fulfill Leviticus 23:40.

The huge crowd was divided into three segments. One remained at the temple in preparation for the morning sacrifice. Another went outside of Jerusalem to gather branches of willow which they carried into the temple area to erect a huge canopy, or tabernacle, enclosing the sacred altar. The third company formed a procession which marched from the temple behind a

priest bearing a golden pitcher of about one quart capacity.

To the accompaniment of music they went to the Pool of Siloam where the priest solemnly filled the pitcher, and the crowd marched back, timing their arrival at the temple at the time when the sacrifice was being placed upon the altar. A triple blast upon the trumpets signalled the arrival of the priest at the Water-gate on the south side of the Temple terrace. Immediately another priest carrying wine for the drink-offering fell into step with him.

The two of them ascended the slope to the altar, turned left and halted before two silver funnels with narrow openings leading down to the base of the altar. At a signal the wine was poured into the one on the east and the water into the one on the west. This was a meticulous ceremony, in which not a drop of either liquid was to be spilled upon the ground. Upon one occasion when the high priest Alexander poured the water upon the ground, the multitude became enraged and attacked and beat him with the branches they were carrying. In the riot which ensued six thousand persons were killed in the temple precincts. (See Josephus' *Antiquities*, 13.13.5).

As soon as the water was poured out the great Hallel began. This was a chant of Psalm 113 to Psalm 118, to the accompaniment of the flute. The Levites chanted a line at a time and after each line the multitude responded with "Hallelujah," waving or shaking the Lulabha toward the altar. It was probably at the close of this great demonstration that the voice of Jesus rang out loud and clear, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Many who were present may have resented what seemed to them a fanatical outburst and interruption. They may have regarded the one who cried out as an opportunist seeking for notoriety. Few understood what he was saying. Twenty centuries

have passed and few yet understand.

THIRST AND BELIEF

At the very outset we must become aware of a great transformation to be wrought. One who is thirsty and dry may come to Christ and drink and through faith become a source of overflowing blessing to others. One whose heart is parched and sere will not only find relief but a fountain will burst out and satisfy those who come in contact with him.

Throughout the old covenant scriptures the deepest longings and yearnings of the human spirit are referred to as thirst. Just as the outer man becomes dehydrated, so the inner man, when deprived of the refreshing draught of God's presence, languishes and dries up. "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Psalm 69:3).

Man can no more live spiritually without the fellowship of God than he can exist physically without water. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek for thee: my soul thirsteth for thee: my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psalm 63:1). "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:2). The invitation of God to the weary and heartsick is, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1).

Jesus said, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink." All of the craving and the desire to be what one was destined to be without the blight and tragedy of sin is realized in Jesus. The need for forgiveness, the passion for identity, the eagerness to recapture the oneness fragmented by selfishness, can be satisfied only in him. He is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, and all who would find fulfillment must find it in Him.

The invitation is not limited by race, nationality, sex,

status, or previous condition of servitude. The only condition is that one realize that he is parched and tarnished and that there is no other fountain, no other place to which he can turn for hope. "If any one thirst!" "Let him come to me!"

To drink is to partake, to imbibe, to share in. And to drink of Christ is to partake of his life which is eternal life. Almost the final plea of Jesus is, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). God has provided for our need. There is no need for soul-thirst to go unassuaged. He is a fountain open for all.

This is but part of the story and if it ended here it would all be quite selfish. We would come and drink and go our way rejoicing in the personal refreshment and re-vitalization. But it does not work that way for eternal life cannot be contained. We become fountains. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The believer is to be the channel through which the Holy Spirit abundantly flows to accomplish all that rivers were intended to accomplish in the universe. There is to be cleansing, purification and refreshment. There is to be power and motivation, and this is to well up within the innermost being, the secret chambers, the subterranean caverns of the heart. Just as a river gushes forth from a cave in the hillside, fed by an unseen spring in the bowels of the earth, so the indwelling Spirit sends forth the rushing stream of love, peace, and all of the other elements of purity.

The key which unlocks this power is faith, or belief. It is not faith in a system, an institution or an organization, but in a person. "He that believeth on me." But this is an unfortunate translation for the word translated "on" is the Greek *eis*, and this signifies action from without to within. It is literally, "He that believeth *into* me."

This is a great deal different than believing on one. To believe on one requires only intellectual assent to historical facts related to his existence, life and work. It involves an acceptance of the testimony that what is alleged actually happened and the person is who he claimed to be. But to believe in one, or into one, is to become identified with him, to enter into a relationship so intimate that the two become a unit.

One does not become a fountain to bless humanity merely by believing on Jesus. He must believe *in* him and this requires the loss of selfness, the crucifixion of human nature and the embracing of the divine nature. So long as one insists that he is going to be himself regardless of what happens the Holy Spirit can never send rivers gushing from his inner depths.

The stream of holiness produced by the Spirit of holiness was not a last minute arrangement of God. He revealed it long before the Lord died. “As the scripture hath said.” So we have Isaiah declaring, “And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (58:11). The rabbis had a saying, “When a man turns himself to the Lord, he shall be as a fountain filled with living water, and his streams shall flow to all the nations and tribes of men.”

OF THE SPIRIT

The fountain of living waters is the result of the indwelling Spirit. This is explained by John in a statement which is rightly shown as parenthetical. John wrote his record many years after Jesus had returned to glory, and after believers had received the Spirit. He could explain what seemed so mystifying on that last day of the feast of the tabernacles. So he said:

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not

yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

From this we learn several things about the Holy Spirit. Let us mention some of them. (1) The Spirit was to be a gift. (2) He could be received only by those who believe in Jesus, that is, who are identified with him. (3) The Spirit, in this sense, could only come after Jesus was glorified. (4) We can only become channels of blessing by receiving the Spirit. Without the Spirit we are dry, dusty and despondent in heart. We are like cisterns without water and clouds without rain. We promise much but deliver nothing. We have a form of godliness but are devoid of power. We are like an automobile without battery or sparkplugs, or like a boiler without steam. Our lives are sterile, routine and stagnant.

Those who seek to reach us in the hope that they will find an oasis are disappointed to see only a dry stream bed, cracked and arid. There is no substitute for the Spirit. Nothing else can cause the river to flow from within. Nothing else can produce living water. Regardless of what else one may have, if he does not have the Spirit, he can never truly bless others.

Because of the transformation which the Spirit works a great many people would like to explain away John's explanation. They want to limit it, circumscribe it, fence it in and control it. We must face up to the fact that there are those who want to eat their cake and have it too. They want to surrender only partially to Jesus, holding in reserve those desires and inclinations which they would gratify in the flesh. Others are caught up in the grip of legalism and seek a righteousness which is by law rather than through faith. So we are told that Jesus was here speaking only of the apostles. This we cannot accept. Jesus stood up publicly and proclaimed to thousands of pilgrims, "If any man thirst, let him come to me . . . He that believeth on me" The promise of the Spirit was to every believer, and it has never been revoked. It is the boon to believers now as it was when the gift was first given. The rivers of living waters will flow

as freely as they ever have.

Again we are told that the Spirit is identical with the word of God, but it never was, and it is not now. The word of Christ was given and could be received before Jesus was glorified. In the case under consideration what he spoke about the Spirit was the word of Christ, but the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. When he did come he was to bring to the remembrance of the envoys the words which Jesus had spoken.

Before Christ could be glorified he had to leave the earth. If he had not gone he could not have sent the Holy Spirit. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). The Spirit is the divine presence in believers while Jesus is absent for the earth.

He said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." The term for ever is from *eis aiona*, to the age. The Holy Spirit as a Comforter could not be given while Jesus was resident among men, but having been given, He will continue to abide with believers throughout the age. This is the era of the abiding Spirit. "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The word "comfortless" is *orphanos*. It is used only one other time, in James 1:27, "to visit *the fatherless* and the widows." Now a child is still fatherless regardless of how many letters or books he receives. Moreover, Jesus uses the expression "another Comforter." There are two words for "another" in Greek. One is *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. The other is *allos*, which means another of the same kind. It is this last word which is here used.

The Holy Spirit is a personal comforter abiding with us, as Jesus abode with men while he was on earth. The Spirit has been given to believers so that they may become God's channels from within, sharing the water of life with others in a weary and sinful world.

But what about the objection that the promises contained in John, chapters 14 through 16, were made to the apostles. This is true because they were present as listeners, but it must be remembered that theirs was a dual role. They were both disciples and apostles. Whatever applied to them specifically as apostles and in view of their official function, belonged only to them. But whatever applied to them as disciples is equally applicable to all disciples of our Lord.

It will be noted that those who seek to restrict what Jesus said to the apostles, have no hesitancy about quoting profusely from the same speech and applying it to all believers in our day. For example, there are the words spoken directly to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Again, there are the words addressed to Judas, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The life of the believer is the life of the Spirit. And the Spirit is not a sanctimonious impulse, a righteous motivation, or an influence of one's own converted will. The Spirit is not a glorified "it" or a disposition to do good. He is personal. Jesus said, "If I depart I will send *him* unto you." The body of the believer is the tabernacle of the Spirit. It is the Spirit within who certifies that we are God's children, the sons of God. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

THE SPIRITUAL FRATERNITY

The community of God is a fraternity of the Spirit-filled ones who were once thirsty and who came to Christ to quench their desperate need for fulfillment. They are a commonwealth of the called out ones, sinners who have been washed and sanctified and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” They are in the world, but not of it; they use this world, though not abusing it, “for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

These are the true circumcision and they have three distinctive qualifications. They “worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3). Ponder these items carefully. They identify those who have no righteousness of their own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Worship by the Spirit is not confined to ritualistic acts performed at certain times upon certain days. It knows no shrine except the contrite heart. It has no special holy days for every day and hour is holy. It has no special holy places, no dimly lighted piles of brick and stone. It is not confined by a program, regulated by a code, or captured in an agenda. All of these are wineskins which must explode when the wine of the Spirit ferments and expands and seeks room for expression of praise and glory.

Glory in Christ Jesus is bathed in denial of self and in recognition that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. It is the response of the heart stricken with a sense of the futility and frustration of trying to achieve righteousness by law when an unseen hand reaches down to snatch one from the yawning jaws of death and despair. It is the relaxation of the frightened child in his father’s arms, the choking sob of the slave set free, the trembling frame of the prodigal stumbling into his father’s embrace. It is the glad cry of one who has groped in blindness all of his life and whose outstretched hands touch the cross only to

have the scales drop from his eyes and the dawn break upon his vision.

No confidence in the flesh! None! The Spirit lifts one out of the shame and scandal, the dishonor and disgrace which always attend the life that revels and glories in the flesh. All of those things which were regarded as imposing, superior and splendid, are seen for what they are— the icing on a cake that is poison in the center, the skin graft over a putrid wound, the paint over a rotten post. The things of which we boasted belong in the garbage can of life. They are flung on the dunghill, never to be picked up again.

Those who have a partnership in the gospel have the Spirit within as another Comforter since Jesus went away. The word *parakletos* is so rich and full of power that, as Albert Barnes writes, “No single word in our language expresses fully the sense of the original.” The verb form means to call one to us, then, to summon one to aid us.

It was used of an attorney who stood beside one in court to present his petition, make a plea, or offer a defence. It was used of a teacher who stands beside a pupil to point out the true meaning of a lesson. It was used of a helper who suddenly appears by the side of one to help him shoulder a load with which he was struggling. It is also used of a friend who comes to sit beside one to comfort or console by suggesting reasons for hope in the midst of grief.

We now know what Jesus meant when he said that he would not leave his followers orphans. The Comforter would abide with them to help and strengthen and to supply their needs. As an advocate he would present their petitions before the throne of God in the language of heaven (Romans 8:26). As a teacher he would stand beside the earnest student in the school of Christ, to provide insights into the text which seemed so puzzling and difficult.

When burdens seem intolerable and one is ready to faint by the way, the Spirit comes to help lift the load and to walk beside the bearer to keep him from stumbling. In times of grief, when a pall of sadness hangs like a thick gray fog over the soul, and the heart is numb, and the hands are cold, it is the voice of the Spirit which gives hope and enables us to see the stars shimmering through our tears.

One simply cannot make it by trusting in the flesh. The arm of flesh will fail. While we are living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, are at work in our members to bear fruit for death. To set the mind on the flesh is death. The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Romans 8:9). This is my story, this is my song. It is my hope, my only hope. There is no other!

LAW AND SPIRIT

The community of God is a spiritual community because it is the community of the Spirit. The grace-sharers are also the Spirit-sharers. It is the Spirit who makes them one. Their fellowship is a *koinonia* of the Spirit (Philippians 2:1). Their unity is a unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3). There is no true unity except as created and motivated by the Spirit. Unity can never be secured by law, or by fleshly agreements, or by signed statements. Such agreements are only truces.

The flesh is selfish, jealous and ambitious. And “where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:16). “For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?” (1 Corinthians 3:3). To try to settle differences merely by conference, debate, or purely human dialogue, is to attempt the impossible. It is like

putting a patch on a rotten inner tube only to have it puncture elsewhere.

A community of saints whose lives are permeated with the Spirit can never remain hidden. The rivers of living water will touch every thirsty person who comes among them. Their boast will be this, the testimony of their conscience, that they have behaved in the world with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God (2 Corinthians 1:12).

Now it is evident that those who walk after the flesh will disparage the Spirit. They will seek to cram, crush and contract him into law. Laws can always be manipulated by men. They can be interpreted to bind heavy burdens and free the interpreter from lifting a finger to remove them. They can be made to draw keen distinctions so that if one swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if he swears by the gold of the temple, you can tighten the screws on him and make him come through to the uttermost farthing.

Laws can be loosened to let camels slip by without touching a hair, and then tightened up until a gnat cannot find a hole to go through. Every legalist becomes a camel gulper and a gnat gagger. It is imperative that carnal men stifle the Spirit for the Spirit makes men free— free from bigotry, sectarianism and that species of littleness that only religion can produce. The Spirit enters in and expands, enlarges and dilates the personality which was shrunken by selfishness and egotism. It sets the captive free.

The Spirit pulls back the curtains and throws open the windows of the heart. And the creatures of the night who have burrowed into the sub-conscious squeak and scurry for the darkness. Men simply cannot always keep the Spirit stifled or quenched. The very symbolism employed demonstrates that this is so. The Spirit is like wind and one might as well try to capture a tornado in a toy balloon as to attempt to capture the Spirit in

his sectarian shopping bag.

The Spirit is like rivers of living water. No denominational dam can stand against the pressure. It is true that until the fulness of time comes, the dam may stand, but when the time of fulness comes it must give way. All of the frantic efforts of editors, professors and preachers to patch and plaster the leaks will prove unavailing. They will have as much luck as a colony of beavers trying to control Grand Coulee. The Spirit just does not belong to sect or segment, splinter or fragment. He will burst the bends and sweep all before Him.

It is axiomatic in the scripture that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). The sanctuary of the human heart is sacred ground upon which no other has a right to intrude. Here no outside force can come. No mailed fist can crash down upon the conscience. This is the domain of the Spirit.

But what is liberty? It is necessary that we define it anew in our day, and I know of no better statement than that of Judge Learned Hand, which follows:

What then is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit which weighs their interests against his own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded; the spirit of liberty is the spirit of him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned, but has never quite forgotten; that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest.

The community of the reconciled is composed of those who were once separated from Christ as aliens and strangers, having

no hope and without God in the world. They have been brought near in the blood of Christ. They have gained access in the one Spirit to the Father. Now they are no longer strangers and sojourners. They are fellow citizens. They are members of the household of God. They are a unit, cemented together as a holy temple in the Lord, built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The community is a divine creation. It is not a human organization composed of elite thinkers who have discovered the golden key of doctrinal knowledge hidden from the eyes of the rest of humanity. It is not a club composed of men of superior goodness, an aristocracy of the sinless, or a confraternity of the perfect. Instead, it is a gathering together of sinners who have nothing of their own of which to boast, and are forced to glory in the person and presence of Another.

Their very cohesiveness must be given. The love which holds them together in spite of errors, frailties, weaknesses and differences, is not produced by their own power. God's love is poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given unto them (Romans 5:5). It is the love of the Spirit by which they strive together in prayers to God for one another (Romans 15:30). The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22).

Those who deny the Spirit cannot truly love. They have cut themselves off from the source. "It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 19). "No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit" (1 John 4:12, 13).

If our God wills, we shall present in our next issue a treatise on "Body and Spirit." It will not deal with the human body and spirit, but with the one body and one Spirit, and the

mutual relationship which they share. We trust that you will read it with interest and concern.

The Big Mistake

Mission Messenger (October 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

The latter part of a wise man's life is taken up in curing the follies, prejudices, and false opinions he had contracted in the former.— Jonathan Swift.

Suppose you were asked to state your opinion as to the gravest error contributing to the division in the religious world. What would be your reply? Would you mention the assumed infallibility of the pope of Rome? Or the doctrine of inherent total depravity? Or the dogma of transubstantiation? It is not one of these great items of controversy. Actually, there is almost universal agreement in the error and few Christians have ever given it a minute's thought.

To lessen suspense let me say that I think the most fertile source of difficulty is the mistaken view that the new testament is composed of twenty-seven books or letters. The truth is that not one word of the new testament has ever been written with ink or put on paper, and the Bible clearly teaches that this is so.

You must remember that the word "testament" means "a covenant." The two words are used interchangeably in your Authorized Version. The new testament is God's new covenant, the old testament was God's previous covenant.

The old covenant was given to the Israelites at Mount

Sinai. It was written on two tablets of stone. It consisted of ten commandments. Those to whom it was given broke it repeatedly. The result was that God, the party of the first part, predicted that the day would come when he would make a new covenant. It would not be like the one he made when he freed his people from the bondage of Egypt.

The distinctive difference was clearly stated. "For this is the covenant I will make with them after those days . . . I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them." The result of this new covenant is defined, "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Careless students have always assumed that this meant that God would give his followers a series of apostolic letters, and through study they would absorb them into their minds and hearts. If this were the case there would be no real difference between the old and new testaments. The first one could also be written on hearts and minds in the same fashion, for what was written down could be studied.

But the first testament was definitely said to be written in tangible fashion on a material medium. The second was to be different. It was not to be inscribed on a secondary substance. It was to be written directly on minds and hearts.

The word from which we derive "covenant" or "testament" can probably best be translated *agreement*. It is interesting that J. B. Phillips so renders it. "But Christ has been given a far higher ministry for he mediates a higher agreement, which in turn rests upon higher promises. If the first agreement had proved satisfactory there would have been no need for the second."

What is this agreement, this new testament? It is eternal reconciliation with God, won for us by Jesus Christ, when his own blood acted as the key for his entrance into the Holy of

holies. Upon the basis of that redemption, purchased while we were yet sinners, God proposes to receive us as his own. He accepted Jesus in our stead because we had nothing to offer, and now if we accept Jesus in our stead as all we have to offer, the agreement is ratified by blood.

This is not as easy as it sounds. From one standpoint it appears that we are merely on the receiving end and this is true. But from another standpoint, to accept Jesus in our stead actually means the death of all we have held dear. Our dreams of personal greatness, our ambitions, our intellectual attainments, our social prestige, and in short, all of the things in which we have trusted and exulted, are found to be useless, fit only to be buried into the garbage can.

It is a little like bringing an armload of currency out of your private safe only to have a numismatic expert tell you it is counterfeit. All of your dream castles are shattered. At first you cannot believe it. You frantically try to salvage something good out of the worthless heap. You say that this bill or that one looks real. It is all a fake, you are told. And precisely at the moment when you are willing to admit to God that you have nothing with which to purchase salvation, he tells you it was never for sale anyhow.

All of these years you have just been deluding yourself, promising that somehow, some day, some way, you would be good enough that you could step up to the window and say to the recording angel, "I'd like to speak to the manager, please!" You've lived over a hundred times the imaginary encounter when you piled your treasured thoughts, your wisest words and golden deeds, on the divine desk, and said, "Count them!" And now you have to give all of it up and admit that you are penniless, bankrupt, homeless, and naked, and that you always have been and did not know it.

It isn't easy for one who has been so wise to acknowledge

abject ignorance, or for one who basked in imaginary affluence to admit that he has actually wallowed in penury. But when we arrive at that place where we fling out everything, every minute fragment of self-esteem, and we are down to the bare walls, we are ready to start living. Up to that moment we have been dying!

Please forgive me for saying that one reason we have been so far off is because of the Big Error. We've always thought of the new testament, the agreement, as being a collection of letters and short documents written by the apostles or their contemporaries, and so we have regarded the covenant as being a law, the new law of God. If we could understand every statement and implication correctly, and keep it meticulously, we would be saved. If we missed any point or overlooked anything, we would be damned.

The basic problem in our thinking was that with our philosophy we were hopelessly damned before we started. No one can keep a law perfectly, and unless you do, you die. The very minute we convert God's dealing with us into a code, and predicate salvation upon it, we are gone, for no law can give life. And we need life, because we are dead in trespasses and sins!

A little clear thinking should have shown us the fallacies in our thinking, for they are as big as balloons. I cannot take time to detail them all, but allow me to mention one or two. If salvation is predicated upon law-keeping the law must be enunciated fully before any one is inducted into the relationship created by that law, else those under it will be committed to that of which they are wholly ignorant.

The first covenant was legalistic and God led the people to Mount Sinai where he spelled out the law and had it written in a book, after which Moses sprinkled the book and all of the people. In the case of the new covenant many had died for the faith before a single apostolic letter was written, and it would not have been written then if the brethren in a remote province had

not developed warped ideas about the second coming of the Lord.

Moreover, if the apostolic epistles constitute the new testament, or covenant, only one of the apostles could have possibly understood all of its requirements, and that only because he outlived all of the others. But it is certain that eleven of the apostles did not see all of the epistles, and doubtful that the twelfth did, since they had been written to widely scattered areas.

Again, the primitive saints could never have known whether they were fulfilling the terms of the covenant or not, since only a few localities had apostolic letters, and these were not collected and compiled as we now have them for several centuries. There were even questions at first about whether some deserved to be in the canon, and these questions had to be resolved.

The new testament is not a book. It is not a compilation of writings. Letters and books are written with pen and ink and paper, as John plainly says (2 John 12; 3 John 13). Paul says just as plainly that the new testament is not written with pen and ink (2 Corinthians 3:3). Thus, what Paul wrote, and what John wrote, was never referred to as the new testament, or agreement. The Bible does not say there are twenty-seven books in the new testament. It plainly says that the new testament, of which the apostles were made able ministers, is not written in ink.

The new covenant is a person and the relationship created by the new testament is a personal relationship. God said, concerning Jesus, as the context clearly shows, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). Again, "I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isaiah 49:8). Jesus is God's new testament. To receive him is to embrace reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

This is the real difference between the old and new agreements. The first was written on tablets of stone, the second on fleshy tablets of the heart. The second is written with the Spirit of the living God, and not with ink. The first was of the letter, the second is of the spirit. The letter kills but the spirit produces life. No law, no written code could ever produce life.

Men and women were under the new testament and were a part of it, who never saw or read a single one of the letters which the apostles wrote. The new covenant was complete on Pentecost. It was perfect that day. Nothing was ever added to it. Those who embraced the testament on that day, embraced it in all of its life-giving fulness. They were born again. They were children of God. They shared in the indwelling Spirit and he brought to their whole being new strength and new vitality.

Our relationship is a covenantal one. There is no other divine-human relationship. God is our God and we are his people on the basis of a covenant. That covenant is proclaimed by the gospel. We enter into it by proper response to the gospel. The gospel is not a system of doctrines, a collection of letters, a code of laws, or a compilation of apostolic principles.

It is good news about the person of Jesus, the covenant personality. It consists of seven facts, established by creditable witnesses. These relate to his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification. The assent to these facts, accompanied by the reformation of life demanded by them and the initiation into the divine sharing of life eternal, validates the agreement through the Spirit. God offers Jesus as the basis of reconciliation. Man accepts him as that basis. This is the agreement, the new testament ratified in blood.

Every individual on the face of this whole earth who has personally shared in the death of Jesus Christ and has thus broken the tyranny of sin over his life, is in Christ, and Christ is in him. Such persons are themselves “a letter that has come from

Christ . . . a letter written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, written not on stone tablets but on the pages of the human heart.” If “you have been adopted into the very family circle of God” you are a new testament letter, the only kind there is, for it is specifically said that the new covenant is “a covenant expressed not in a written document, but in a spiritual bond” (2 Corinthians 3:6). Nothing can be plainer than this. The new testament is not expressed in a written document!

Then, what are the apostolic epistles? The answer is quite simple. They are letters written to a covenant people. Not one of them has anything to do with bringing people into the covenant. They are no part of the new testament. They were all written to people who were already in the testamental kinship, and precisely because they were in it. They are doctrinal, intended for the instruction of the children of God.

The gospel is for the world, the apostolic doctrine for the saints. The gospel introduces into the testamental association, the doctrine teaches us how to live in it. There is as much difference between the gospel and doctrine as there is between a daily newspaper and a marriage guide or a mechanic’s handbook.

There is the same difference as there is between a seed and plant food. The gospel is the sperm from which we are begotten, the doctrine is the bread upon which we feed after we are born.

Why is the mistaken identity of the new testament so tragic? The answer is obvious. If our relationship to God is a covenantal one, contingent upon our grasp of the new testament, and if we conceive of the new testament as the collection of twenty-seven letters, we must conclude that no one can be a child of God who does not fully grasp every point of those letters.

Most of those who postulate that this is the case have never calmly thought about the absurdity of such a position. This

would mean that those who were initiated into Christ in the morning would have to be excommunicated in the afternoon, unless in the meantime they had come to a perfect understanding of every apostolic statement. If they were permitted to stay until they had time to learn, some infallible soul would have to determine the time required, or they would have to be allowed to continue so long as they were learning. If this latter situation prevailed it would be an admission that the apostolic doctrine was not the basis of fellowship or covenantal acceptance.

If it be admitted that God accepts one at baptism with certain mistaken views and erroneous ideas, then those views and ideas can never afterwards be urged as a basis for rejection of the one who holds them, else God will be placed in the position of discarding a child for a birthmark even though he accepted him into the divine family with that disfiguration at first.

In the physical realm no one expects a person at birth to eat all of the food he will require through his life, and if he lives for eighty years he is required to eat daily. By the same token a child of God cannot be expected to eat at the time of the new birth all of the truth he will ever digest or assimilate. Just as one's digestive ability has nothing to do with his acceptance into the physical family, so one's knowledge of apostolic doctrine has nothing to do with his being God's child.

All of this simply means that it is the gospel, not the apostolic doctrine, which brings us into the fellowship, and thus it is the gospel which is the basis for our given unity, the unity of the Spirit. One should not use the apostolic doctrine in such a manner as to destroy the work of the gospel, for the kingdom of God must not be divided against itself. There are some fairly ignorant children in God's family, as is demonstrated by the fact that some cannot distinguish between seed and bread, but we cannot start driving out those who do not know it all, else we will

utterly divest the divine commonwealth of all of its citizenry.

I shall regard every person who has obeyed the gospel as a letter of God, the new testament written with the Spirit upon human hearts. I shall remain one in heart with all such persons on earth regardless of where I find them for the new testament has also been inscribed upon the fleshy tablet of my heart. I know that the Spirit of God has written upon my heart. I know that I am redeemed, reconciled and justified. I am in the covenant and the covenant is in me. Because I am in the new covenant I shall read the letters addressed to a new covenant people. But I will not confuse my birth certificate with a cookbook or a text on mathematics. It is one thing to be born, a wholly different thing to learn how to solve problems as you grow up.

(Editor's Note, Those who desire to pursue this subject further may do so by reading the author's book, "Covenants of God," a 384 page volume which examines at length the nature of God as a covenantal being. The price has recently been reduced to \$2.95 per copy).

An Open Proposition

Mission Messenger (October 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

“My brethren, I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken.”

These were the words of Oliver Cromwell, in a letter addressed to the General Assembly, Church of Scotland, before the battle of Dunbar, August 3, 1650. I have borrowed them to head this appeal addressed to those brethren within the religious movement designated in the United States Census Bureau records as “Churches of Christ.” Because this movement is fragmented, I shall specifically concern myself with those brethren who support the general philosophy and policies as projected at Abilene Christian College, and in the journal *Firm Foundation*.

I shall be plain but will write in deepest love. The position of my brethren on fellowship is untenable to those students of God’s word who refuse to be carnal and sectarian. That position is a flat denial of the principles of the restoration movement, as set forth in “The Declaration and Address,” which gave us historic entree and existence. It is contrary to the fundamental teaching of the apostolic epistles, and is both unscriptural and anti-scriptural.

It is carnal, spiritually immature, and divisive in its very nature. It has splintered the movement of which we are a part

and has nothing to offer a distraught world seeking for unity, except more division. It will be increasingly rejected by thoughtful and perceptive men and women, and will be dashed to pieces upon the rocky shores of its own factionalism.

I unhesitatingly charge that the approach it takes toward unity is dishonest. It professes to lift the whole discussion to the high plane of respect for the authority of Jesus, but cloaks the fact that it substitutes the partisan interpretation and system as the real authority. In the final analysis the hope of oneness lies not in a surrender of the will to Christ but in submission of the conscience to the authoritarian structure.

Suffer me to be even more specific. The exaltation of personal or congregational views relative to such things as the millennium or employment of instrumental music, to the realm of tests of union or communion among the saints, is sectarian and schismatic. Such tests of fellowship negate the divine dynamic of brotherly love, and cause those who project them to forfeit the respect of those who love Jesus and the one body more than their own views and deductions.

We are charged with the responsibility of being peacemakers. In this regard we must be activists. In view of the fact that my brother and fellow-editor, Reuel Lemmons, is highly respected as a defender of the tests of fellowship we have mentioned, I make this sincere proposal. I will meet our brother publicly in Abilene, or any other city of his choosing in Texas, at a time convenient to the two of us, for the purpose of discussing the scriptural grounds of fellowship. Since neither of us favors the use of instrumental music in corporate worship or the pre-millennial position, we can discuss objectively how we may heal the breach between ourselves and the brethren who espouse either or both.

I propose that we hold at least three two-hour sessions. In the first, let each of us speak for one hour on our personal

position, making it as clear as possible. In the second session, let us question each other for two hours in order to clarify further our views. In the third session, let us sit down together as brothers in Christ, and submit to questions addressed to us from the audience. Let our aim not be personal victory or vindication but an earnest striving together to bridge chasms in the restoration movement. Let us not meet as rivals but as mutual researchists. Obviously, the principles we enunciate with reference to these major issues will apply to all of our other problems as well.

I respectfully petition the brethren in the Administration at Abilene Christian College to consider providing facilities for such a dialogue and issuing an invitation to all segments of the restoration movement to attend. I suggest that they appoint a member of the faculty to act as moderator, and any such member who is acceptable to Brother Lemmons will be so to me. If the college administration does not see fit to invite such a dialogue, I will meet with Brother Lemmons in any city of his choosing. However, I do believe that Abilene will provide the best site for such a meaningful dialogue. We must not hold up a confrontation by haggling over places and details.

Such a dialogue session should be announced in news media accessible to the Disciples of Christ, Independent Christian Churches, and various parties within the Churches of Christ. All should feel free to attend and to question. I pledge that I will conduct myself with politeness and decorum, and will act in kindness and love toward Brother Lemmons and all others who attend.

I am taking this means of issuing a proposal because I know of no other that will be so effective. This public invitation to dialogue may be taken as your own invitation to write to Brother Lemmons and the administration at Abilene Christian College, and urge upon them the necessity of taking active measures to solve our problems and adjust our attitudes. It is

tragic for us to continue divided and dividing while the rest of the world thinks in terms of unity and uniting.

If my position on fellowship, which has now been before the reading public for more than ten years, is incorrect, let its failings be revealed openly and positively for all to see. If we must maintain our divided status in order to honor the authority of Jesus, then let us labor to make the gaps wider so that there will be no danger of anyone closing them, and thus make the memory of the crucified Lord inglorious by our unity.

But let us do something, for Christ's sake. We can no longer dwell in our ivory towers when a world writhing in agony extends a hand asking for help. I may be called an opportunist, or worse, for the suggestion in this article, but this is a part of the price we must pay. Let us never retreat from reality.

Body and Spirit

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

Sectarians are those who would make fellowship with Christ their exclusive privilege. They are not satisfied with belonging to Jesus, they would make Jesus belong to them. (Kokichi Kurosaki in “One Body in Christ,” page 42).

Once upon a time all the world had become guilty before God. Men were dead in their sins and wickedness. They obeyed the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit now at work among God’s rebel subjects. One who was freed from this dire state wrote about it in these words, “In our natural condition we, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgment of God.”

When the condition seemed hopeless because of the ignorance, alienation and enmity of man, God intervened. This represented no change or alteration of character upon the part of God. He did not suddenly realize that he must do something to correct an intolerable situation. It was just that “the fulness of the times” had arrived and grace reacted as it had to do in order to display in the ages to come how immense are its resources.

God’s direct involvement with mankind occurred through the Word becoming flesh. Although the divine nature belonged to the Word from the first, he assumed the nature of a slave, and bearing the human likeness, was revealed in human shape. This

culminated the divine program of sacrifices for sin which previously had required the death of lower animals. Even though sacrifices, offerings and sin-offerings had been prescribed by law, God did not desire or delight in them, but used them as object-lessons until a body was prepared for the Son who declared, "Here I am, as it is written of me in the scroll, I have come, O God, to do thy will."

The divine encounter with man since the incarnation of the word has always been through the body of Christ. At first it was the body of flesh which was prepared, but now it is the spiritual body. The same word— *soma*— is used for both. Jesus entered the physical body of man to do God's will; man must enter the spiritual body of Christ to do God's will.

The body embraces all who are in covenant relationship with God, but it is not enough to say that such believers alone constitute the body. Inseparably connected with it also are Jesus and the Holy Spirit. One who is not in Christ is not in the body, and one in whom the Spirit does not dwell is not in the body. It is believers who are *incorporated* in Christ by the Spirit who are in the body. The body is more than just members, it is a unit.

The divine community is made up of the new humanity, those who have been born again and who share in the life of the Spirit. These died to sin but were quickened by the Spirit. They received the divine nature by the indwelling Spirit, and they are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

These are the *ekklesia*, the body of the called out ones. The call is by proclamation, and it is an invitation to reconciliation. The message is designated the good news, the gospel. One responds to it by faith and obedience. The belief of one fact and the obedience of one act is all that is necessary to induct one into covenant relationship. That relationship is the result of the call and those who are in it are the called ones. It is a living and vital relationship, throbbing and pulsating with the divine life.

The community of saints is not a human organization. It did not originate with men, it is not perpetuated by men, and it cannot be maintained by human wisdom, ingenuity or power. No man can add another to it, no man can remove another from it. The citizenship of those within it is inscribed in heaven.

Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the previously prepared disciples of the Lord and the body became a living reality. Just as the body of Adam was inanimate until God breathed into his nostrils, so the company of believers was powerless until invested with the Spirit of God. And it is only as the Spirit operates in and through the members of the body that the new man can accomplish God's design now. The motivating power of the body is the Spirit. The body without the Spirit is dead.

We are asked if the Spirit was not given before the new covenant was validated. The answer is that the Spirit was bestowed upon certain select individuals under the old covenant, but not upon the community as a whole. Upon the day of Pentecost the apostles were all in one place, constituting a unit. It was in this sense the Spirit was shed forth, and upon that day all who had acknowledged that God had raised up Jesus and made him Lord and Christ were promised the Spirit as a gift and were added unto them.

The body of Christ is a fellowship of the Spirit, and it was created as a historical community, a holy temple in which God could dwell through the Spirit. It is true that each stone in this temple is a living stone, and a recipient of the Spirit, but they do not receive the gift in isolation. The purpose of the Spirit in each one is to bind all together in a holy structure for an habitation of God.

To view our life in the Spirit from the standpoint of purely individual gifts is to return to the old covenant view. It is simply to extend the old covenant system to more people while it ignores

that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead to make him head over the called-out community, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

THE SPIRIT AND LIFE

It will be worth our time to investigate the written word and from it to ascertain what is involved in the Spirit as the life of the body. We use the word life not merely as existence in the world, but as the activity and functioning of God in the world. The life is the atmosphere breathed by the body, permeating every cell and organ as oxygen does in the human body. There is no part of the body of Christ divorced from contact with the Spirit.

It is important to remember that the body is a creation of the Spirit. It is the action of the Spirit in and through baptism which brings us into our corporate relationship with one another and with Christ. “For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we were all brought together into one body by baptism, in the Spirit, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13).

This passage says a great deal about the *soma*, the body in which the Spirit dwells. We propose to mention a few things which we believe to be important for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The body of Christ is not composed of sects, denominations or parties. No combination or federation of these into any kind of council or alliance can ever produce the one body. It is possible for man to create a religious organization by a merger of sects but this will not be the body of Christ. “Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). The limbs or organs of the body are

individuals who are joined to Christ as the head.

2. The Holy Spirit never created a sect or faction. Every sect is a work of the flesh, and results from a refusal to be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:20). The Spirit baptizes only into one body, never into a fragment, splinter or party created by men. Men may try to capture baptism and use it as a portal to a party, but no man can baptize a sincere penitent believer in the Lord into a party. The Spirit will defeat all attempts to restrict, restrain and confine him, and will bring the humble trusting soul into relationship with Jesus.

Men may define baptism in terms of a sectarian sacrament, they may hedge it about with intellectual requirements and impose their own criteria by which to judge its validity, but the Spirit will ignore all such attempts to dictate to God. They mean nothing in the standing of one who “dies with Christ and passes beyond reach of the elemental spirits of the world.” Every person on this earth who surrenders himself unreservedly to Christ and is baptized on the basis of his trust in Jesus as God’s Son and the Messiah, is in the one body. He may be ignorant of many things, and even of some things related to baptism, but his incorporation with Christ is not based upon knowledge, but upon faith.

3. “Christ is like a single body.” “We were all brought together into one body by baptism.” The body of Christ is a historical entity, a community of grace— sharers, a fellowship of the hopeful, which was vitalized by the coming of the Spirit upon Pentecost. That body has never died. The Spirit has never been withdrawn. Indeed it was the promise of Jesus that the Spirit would abide with his disciples throughout the age in which he is absent from the earth.

It is a constantly recurring symptom of human pride that men create movements which they then identify with the one body. The motivations for these vary and many of the ideals are

commendatory. Some are attempts to recapture personal holiness and sanctification, some a reemphasis upon the supernatural, some stem from a desire to restore the original faith and order.

The sectarian spirit is very strong and very alluring since it pampers egotism and produces assurance based on the belief that the party is favored by God above all others and is composed of the elect. There have been many restoration movements which crystallized when reformers were driven out of the existing religious framework, and regardless of the special emphasis, almost every one of these has been designated “the Lord’s church,” and has arrogantly disdained association with any of the others.

In every case, as the unity of the Spirit receded from view, and conformity to creedal interpretations came into ascendancy, the tests of loyalty devised would exclude even those who launched the movement and gave their lives in its defense in an earlier day. Of course, none of the debates or arguments engaged in by proponents of such movements have any real relationship to the one body.

The vital principle of each party is the thing which it was created to propose or oppose. It lives, eats, breathes and proclaims this thing. It is this thing which gives the party being and a sense of destiny. It searches the scriptures, prints journals, writes books, and purchases radio time to advance this thing. The party owes its life to this issue. But the vital principle of the one body is the Holy Spirit. Thus God’s word says, “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (Galatians 5:25).

4. The party spirit is always working to divide. It is a manifestation of our lower nature and this nature “sets its desires against the Spirit.” One who is a victim of his lower nature is happy only in an atmosphere of strife and dissension.

He is arrogant, rude, dogmatic and implacable. Because he dethrones God and enthrones self he feels most loyal when he is attacking those who will not bow to his authority. "These are they which set up divisions, sensual men, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19).

The party spirit always seeks to perpetuate divisions which exist. It finds excuses for evading every honest attempt to narrow chasms made wider by the erosion of time. It creates barriers of suspicion, throws up roadblocks of hate, and monotonously repeats the old clichés and slogans which have been used as sedatives for years.

But the Holy Spirit is actively at work always promoting unity, and the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the party spirit. The Holy Spirit is of God and possesses the dynamic of God; the party spirit is of the flesh and possesses the weaknesses of the flesh. The party spirit with its doctrinal fences and creedal iron curtains can contain men only so long, and then the Spirit bursts its bonds and seeks freedom.

As deep calls to deep, so the Spirit in one heart cries out to the Spirit in another heart, and an invisible cord draws their possessors closer to one another. The Spirit transcends all sectarian alliances, for these are based upon artificial or secondary considerations. All of the clay vessels may remain in their own environment but those which contain the Spirit may feel closer together than each does to others on his own shelf.

The community which results from the undeserved kindness of God is not composed of mechanical men or human robots. Its citizens were not stamped out by a cookie cutter like so many gingerbread men. There is a healthy divergency of views, attitudes and insights. They can never be united on the basis of attainment to a certain level of knowledge. The fact is that their oneness stems from the Spirit which dwells within them all. And "there is one Spirit."

5. The unity of the Spirit is absolutely unaffected by racial or social differences. “We were all brought together into one body by baptism, in the Spirit, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men.” The apostle Paul says “there is no distinction.” Those who make such distinctions do not walk in love. “They are inconsistent and judge by false standards” (James 2:4).

There is no “color problem” among men who are led by the Spirit. Where such a problem does exist it is because men walk after the flesh. To talk about “white churches” and “colored churches” as if Jesus drew a color line at the Lord’s table, is a clear indication that one is not being led of the Spirit. In the body of Christ there is no such thing as black power or white power. There is only the dynamic of the Spirit. Power has no color but the ambition to exercise it may color our whole approach to life.

6. We must not forget that the work of the Spirit does not cease with our introduction into the one body. “That one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink.” We are refreshed and invigorated by the Spirit and thus sustained in our relationship as a family. Perhaps it is lack of recognition of this which causes so many to become spiritually de-hydrated and to languish by the way.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

In the wonderful treatise on the body as given in 1 Corinthians 12, there are important lessons for all of us. Of course the subject is spiritual gifts (verse 1) and it is introduced because there were some things of which the apostle did not want them to remain ignorant. Almost the first thing that is affirmed is unity in diversity. There are varieties of gifts, services and forms of work. But these have a common origin and a common purpose. “All these gifts are the work of one and the

same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will.”

The members of the body are those in whom the Spirit dwells. They are members in the sense of being limbs and organs, that is, they sustain a vital organic and functional relationship to the body. There is no word in the Greek for member in the sense of belonging to a society or institution. And the word “member” always occurs in conjunction with the word body. The Bible never speaks, for instance, of a “member of the church.” Because we are organs in a body we are all dependent upon each other.

One organ cannot tell another it is not needed. Nor can an individual conclude that because he does not possess the same ability as another he is not of the body. All are in their respective positions by divine appointment. All are to feel the same concern for one another.

We are liable to think of the body in a purely local sense and may conceive of our obligation to the body as limited only to those whom we see at meetings or who have their names on a congregational roster. But God is not so limited in his vision. He views the one body as containing every saved person on earth. If the Spirit dwells in me I am a unit with every other person in the universe in whom the Spirit dwells.

I dare not limit fellowship to the adherents of any one historical movement, or consider that such a movement embraces the *ekklesia* of God to the exclusion of all others on earth. The brotherhood which I am to love must involve every child of God in the universe, else I am sectarian in heart and mind. I must not treat any of the saints as second-class citizens of the kingdom, for to do so is to flout the work of God. “And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God’s doing; it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given us the Spirit to

dwell in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22).

Two Letters

Mission Messenger (November 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

An ever increasing load of mail brings some interesting letters to our desk. Here is part of one received several months ago from a young brother in a large state university:

I cannot adequately express my joy at having discovered your publication, *Mission Messenger*. I was so disillusioned with “Church of Christism” that I was thinking seriously of investigating an Episcopal or Presbyterian Church in the hope that I could find some people somewhere who were really interested in solving the problems of today and not in just reiterating the same old line I had heard for years. I feel very similar to the biology student whose words your publication quoted in the January issue. I am a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in history here at _____, and I really have a hard time getting anything out of a church service. I think that now, however, I can see the way a considerable amount clearer than before, thanks to you.

In the very same delivery we found another letter from an older brother who is one of the bishops in an Oklahoma congregation. Here is the introduction to his letter:

Someone sent me your paper and I’ve been reading about these young college people who think they know more than the old faithful gospel preachers who planted the church at a great sacrifice. Well, I’ve been an elder for

years and I've got some questions to ask too. If these people are tired of the Lord's church, why don't they get out and go to the denominations? We'd be better off if we got rid of all these critics. Why isn't the word of God good enough to guide us like it always has in the past? Can you tell me just what this college-educated bunch of complainers don't like? I want everyone to know I am satisfied with things just like they are and we ought to be working together to build more churches like we have.

These letters point up an interesting fact. A few years ago I sought to list the areas of tension which present problems in any movement, religious or otherwise. I finally boiled them down to five, one of which is the ever present struggle between youth and age. Without realizing it both are seeking the same ultimate goal, but one believes it can be attained by cutting loose from the past, the other believes it can only come through inflexible defence of the status quo. Both are partly right, and both partly wrong.

Although I am not young I'd like to be a humble instrument in the hand of God to help bridge this and other gaps, because all of us need each other. I know I need the tremendous insights of the brilliant young intellectuals of our day, but I need no less the steadying influence of those who have borne the heat of the day. And since I have so often answered the questions of the collegiate segment I'd like now to answer the questions of my respected elderly brother.

In many respects our younger brethren do know more than those of us who are older proclaimers of the word. They have access to many tools of learning which we did not have. New discoveries in the linguistic field, coupled with new versions and translations of the sacred scriptures, have given them a greater knowledge. Too, we live in an intellectual age which provides a powerful incentive to learning. Some of us grew up in factions where advanced formal education was feared and where it was believed that ignorance was a guardian of the faith.

I am thrilled that we have left the swamps of credulity and crawled out to higher ground and I learn a great deal indeed from earnest and sincere young men and women. Granted that some of their views are impractical and unrealistic, but I've had some peculiar ideas of my own from time to time.

Our younger brethren are not tired of the Lord's church. I think they love it a great deal and that is why they become incensed when we take that noble organism and squeeze and shape it into a narrow partisan mould. Our beloved brother is the victim of our past sectarian thinking which has equated the Lord's church with a particular fragment of a specific restoration movement. The Lord's church is the one body. It is composed of all the saved of all the earth. Every born again person in the world is in it.

Unfortunately, because of our divided and strife-torn condition, many of the Lord's people are scattered over the sectarian world. No one of our factions has gathered them all into its own corral as yet. I do not regard myself as separated from a child of God in "one of the denominations." The brand of love which fills my heart can penetrate any wall, batter down any gate, or soar over any barrier to reach and touch the heart of any of God's children or my brothers. I challenge any sectarian to plant a thicket which my faith cannot pierce.

I'm sure we would not be better off if we drove out those members of the family who are dissenters. God loves all of his children like I do mine and my love does not operate for my loved ones only when they agree with me. Actually, we need critics more than we need yes-men and sycophants. I would not want to see any of my brethren leave, although I will not hate those who do.

The word of God is good enough to guide us, but it is too good to guide us as we have been guided in the past. Actually we have not been guided by it. For example, nothing is clearer in

God's word than that division in God's family is a sin, a work of the flesh, and a badge of carnality and immaturity. Yet we could not be more divided if God's word had commanded it. We have not really been guided by God's word but by a system we have devised and contrived by scrapping the Bible for prooftexts for what we already believe and do. Brethren are beginning to see this and revolt against the deceit in it.

I am not sure that I can tell our aged brother all of the things that "the college educated bunch of complainers" do not like, but I have talked with many of our younger brethren and have some idea of the things which cause them deep concern. Probably a lot of them are like the rest of us, they can tell what's wrong a lot easier than they can tell how to correct it. I think there is a general revolt against the following attitudes.

1. The pre-occupation with matters of secondary importance and the exaltation of partisan issues above the welfare of human beings for whom Jesus died. There is a feeling that man is not only worth more than a sheep, or many sparrows, as Jesus plainly taught, but that he is also worth more than any idea about the millennium, cups, classes or colleges.

2. The arrogance of clericalism which projects one man as the official spokesman for the congregation while silencing others who have proven themselves capable in the educational and professional world but who are never invited to share their convictions publicly before the saints. There is growing contempt for that kind of hypocrisy which pretends that we do not have a professional clergy when actually we are more clergy-dominated than almost any other group in our contemporary society.

3. The assumption of our infallibility in the interpretation of the holy scriptures, resulting in dogmatic and authoritarian unwritten creeds which may never be questioned.

4. The studied refusal to take a positive stand upon those important problems which threaten the world of mankind, such as the population explosion, birth control, racial inequity, hunger and famine, under the guise that human concern is a God-denying social gospel.

5. The hypocrisy involved in making it appear that we have no partisan power structures to restrict or restrain brethren, but all are free under God to serve him without fear of journalistic attack or reprisal.

6. The unwarranted equation of the historic restoration movement with the one body and the conclusion that no one can be saved outside of one of our factions or splinters and that all of God's sheep are found securely hiding behind our barbed wire fences.

7. The scrapping of scriptural texts and the picking through the Word, selecting isolated passages, to create a system, with the consequent quoting of the same texts to validate and defend that system so devised as the will of God. It is this to which many refer as Church of Christism.

8. The closed door policy toward meaningful dialogue with other sincere students of God's Word, and even with brethren in other segments of the restoration movement. This attitude promoted under the banner of loyalty to Christ is recognized for what it is— a conceited view of our own place in God's world program and a fear of what direct encounter on all theological fronts will do to some of our cherished traditions.

9. The intrusion of censorship groups into the personal lives and even into the reading habits of the individual saints and the judging of their fidelity to Christ by the brotherhood journals or literature to which they subscribe. The utter abrogation of freedom in Christ by a clerical caste or a presbytery which regards itself as a divine bureaucratic police

force over God's other children is deplored.

10. The vanity which exhibits itself in some who have majored in Bible and who conclude that this makes them experts in all other fields, including science, psychology and behavioral patterns, and which betrays them into making authoritative pronouncements in those areas where they are utterly lacking in both research and training.

Whether we are justly criticized in all of these areas we must allow each reader to form his own conclusion. In this article I am seeking only to list the complaints as requested. I suspect our aged brother reacted too strongly and I doubt that any of us are "satisfied with things just like they are." But whether we are or not, we are going to see great changes. The lines we have drawn in the past are losing their relevance in a new day and in a different world.

The gentle rays of the Sun of righteousness are thawing the icy hearts of bitter partisans, the healing of his wings will act as balm to the rents and wounds we have made in his body through our misguided zeal. If our good brother cannot stand to see fellowship transcend our sectarian attitude he will be sad indeed, for such a time is fast approaching. Already the partisan categories of yesterday grate upon the ears of the saints and the Spirit is purging our hearts and purifying our speech.

And I urge our young brother who is majoring in history not to defect. He will not better himself in this age of thought ferment and he may surrender a great many values for which he and his newly-found associates will some day be reaching. I am here to stay, an imperfect person among an imperfect people. My consolation in my own weakness is that my hope does not rest on one's perfect knowledge but upon knowledge of the Perfect One. Don't count me out as long as he counts me in!

The Moral Being

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[Abstract]

A moral act is not an act in obedience to an external law, human or divine, it is the inner law of our true being, of our essential or created nature, which demands that we actualize what follows from it.— Paul Tillich in “Morality and Beyond,” page 20.

That man, by his very nature, is a moral being, seems to be a proposition which will evoke little dispute. His nature endows him with rational powers, and the exercise of these powers leads to the development of an idea concept that there is a law, or rule of action, a principle within the human self, to which he is obligated. The function of the intellect in that realm which we call conscience “endorses the existence of such a law, for there is something which condemns or excuses their actions,” as the apostle Paul states it.

It is this innate principle which produces a sense of moral obligation, or oughtness as it is sometimes called. The Greeks had a word for it— *dei*— and they applied it especially to the constraint which arose from relationship to the divine. But since it involves the nature of man as a rational being it is a concept as universal as mankind. There is no nation or tribe without its ideas of right and wrong. All men have some sense of the fitness of certain actions and of the obligation to perform those actions.

This idea of moral obligation is not subject to definition because it is an initial idea arising from the simple exercise of the rational powers, and being primary, there are no simpler terms into which one can break it down, and define it. The universal idea of oughtness exists even in the minds of the most primitive peoples and we cannot go back beyond it to employ simpler word images to explain it.

Obviously, in cultures which we refer to as uncivilized, although this is a relative term, the sense of oughtness often gives rise to superstitions and taboos, but this is no argument against the validity of moral obligation. It rather enforces the fact that this obligation is powerful, even in the untutored mind and produces a corresponding sense of responsibility to a force superior to the person, and even to the community of persons.

Since man is a moral agent, and thus under moral obligation, it is essential to his development of true selfhood that he understand the conditions imposed upon him by virtue of the rationality of his being. Moral agency grows out of the fact that man cannot only conceive of the fitness or impropriety of certain actions, but that he can choose to perform what his conscience endorses as right. He possesses will and through it he can act voluntarily.

I do not like to employ the term “free will,” which is so current in the language of systematic theology. It appears to me that the word “free” is redundant. The very power to will implies, and I think, even necessitates freedom to choose or elect, and freedom to act in accordance or conformity with that choice.

Moral obligation, then, is first the obligation to choose an ultimate end of life as the highest good in the universe. To aim below this potential, or to fall beneath it by voluntary action, is immoral. Mediocrity by choice or neglect (which is actually choice), is immorality, because it consists of taking the powers provided for the achievement of the highest good, the divine plan

for one's life, and wasting them upon that which provides only momentary pleasure or ease.

We have no trouble in seeing that the expenditure of sexual potency in prostitution falls within this category, but we forget that there can be also a prostitution of talents or abilities. One can "waste his substance in riotous living" without spending it on harlots. Immorality is not limited to sexual exploitation.

The obligation to choose the ultimate end which will work for the highest good is always accompanied by a correlative obligation which is just as imperative, that is, the choice of the necessary means by which to obtain that end. The means by which the ultimate purpose can be achieved is holiness, or sanctification. It is the deliberate choice of the disciplined life.

It will at once be ascertained that man cannot be made a moral being by law or statute. He cannot become such by imposition of authority from without. It is true that such authority can enact, and if powerful enough, can enforce, guidelines for social conduct, that is, rules to govern man in his relationship to and dealings with his fellowbeings. But neither the rules nor the subservience to the authority which imposes them can make one a moral being.

Man possesses intellect and sensibility, the power of knowing and feeling. As a conscious being he knows that he knows, and he knows that he feels. Consciousness is the mind in the act of knowing itself. But man is also conscious that he is free. He knows that as a moral agent he has the right, and also possesses the freedom to choose. He may deny this, or speculate that it is not so, but this will not alter the fact of his own consciousness.

Man may seek to convince himself and to influence others to think that he is not free because of environmental or other factors. These do not abrogate his moral freedom. They only

produce consequences from which he shrinks if he makes a certain choice. It is not that he does not have the choice but that he does not want to pay the price which its exercise will require.

One knows that he is free exactly as he knows that he is, and it is this nature of which he is conscious that makes him a moral agent. Thus no man, who is not deranged, can ever be wholly unaccountable. Moral agency produces responsibility and responsibility demands accountability. Degrees of responsibility exist and these determine the extent of accountability but they do not deny the fact of it.

Any religion which attempts to make man be good, according to its definition of good, by authoritarian pronouncement, is doomed to failure. In making man conform by such a method it destroys him as a man. If you could inject a serum which would deprive a person of all knowledge of evil and all desire or inclination for it, you would make him good, but he would be a good machine, and not a good man. It is precisely because tension exists and we feel the tug of it that we are moral beings.

When Karl Marx wrote in his "Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right," in 1844, that, "religion is the opium of the people," there was a great deal of truth in the statement. No one with a knowledge of history can deny that religion has often been used to stupefy the masses so they could be used and manipulated for unworthy ends. Cruel and senseless wars have often been fought in the name of religion which were in reality attempts of political factions to gain supremacy. Russia furnishes a good example.

But the freedom for which Christ set us free is not an opiate. It is a stimulant to the best that lies within. It is an eye-opener. Under its influence I can see clearly and it is in the full beam of this light I reject the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx, and choose the "spiritual dialectic" of Jesus of Nazareth

as the basis of my hope here and hereafter!

“He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure.” When I make my decision for Jesus I include in that decision all that goes with it, and that includes striving for his likeness.

The Spirit and Liberty

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Volume 30

[Abstract]

Perhaps no other journalistic ability should be coveted quite so much as that which would enable one to portray the relation of the Spirit of God to the community of saints when the believers were first welded into one body by this divine Agent. More than nineteen receding centuries have subjected the majestic dream of heaven to the abrasive action of human stubbornness and the corrosive attitude of human reasoning, and now the vital pulsating faith which drove men on to almost incredible conquests seems but a faint whisper from a faraway yesterday. But it was real!

The company of the reconciled ones lived in the Spirit, walked in the Spirit and rejoiced in the Spirit. Apart from the Spirit they would have been helpless, a mere coalition of men set free to wallow in a sea of indecision and insecurity. But in the Spirit they were fearless and powerful and “more than conquerors.” Once they had not been a people. Now they were the people of God. And to be “the people” is the most important thing in the universe when they are the people of God.

The people of God are more than a mere group of individuals who believe in God, or who acknowledge that he is the creator and benefactor of the world. They are God at work in his world, actively affecting it according to his ultimate design. They are the salt which preserves, the light which

penetrates, and the heaven which permeates. They are the temple of God, not as a shrine to be venerated by men who come to it, but as a living vehicle to take God to men. God dwells in them through the Spirit.

One of their number prayed in their behalf in these words, "As you live this new life, we pray that you will be strengthened from God's boundless resources, so that you will find yourselves able to pass through any experience and endure it with joy." They experienced persecution of every kind. Their houses were entered, their possessions stolen, and their property destroyed. They were arrested, humiliated, imprisoned and beaten. But they drew upon the boundless resources and their joy was undimmed.

They had come to know "how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Seldom indeed do we think of tremendous power as available unto us. We are occupied in printing programs, preparing brochures, and designing advertisements which we hope will catch jaded eyes and entice tired hearts. In a world of clever propaganda we have been seduced into believing that if we can just get the right set of words and phrases, they will act as a magnet and reluctant souls will inevitably be drawn into our systems.

And we must work constantly to keep our dynamos in repair, oiled and running smoothly. For when there is no power from above we must generate our own. And this means that we must have our plants clean and sanitary, meeting the requirements of the city inspection. We must give attention to the liturgy and ritual for the timing must be perfect. The hand of the clock rather than the hand of God must determine when the "Amen" is pronounced.

The workmen who man the machinery must be trained.

There must be no sabotage through ignorance or inefficiency. The co-ordinator must check everything in the weekly movement of the body, for a body which functions but once per week may be rheumatic, stolid, and dull of senses. A body which has no power within itself must create a power structure which is of it and yet outside of it, and which can supply the power lacking in the organism. It is like a man who carries a battery in his coat pocket with wires running into his heart to keep it palpitating in rhythm.

It would help us, I think if we could bring ourselves to be absolutely frank and honest, and admit that the structure which we have created is dead. Of course this is very difficult to do and probably we will never arrive at the point where we are that objective. We have so long equated our own creation with the creation of God which cannot die, that to admit our own structure is dead would seem almost like accusing God of failure. And this is unthinkable, for God could not accomplish his purpose without us.

Too, we like to deceive ourselves. It is easier to live in a realm of dreams and fantasy. None of us want to be jerked rudely back into a world of reality. We point to our spasmodic muscle twitches and to our blinking eyelids and urge that the body is alive. But the truth is that the lungs expand and contract by artificial respiration. The system provides for one who has taken a course in lifesaving to breathe down our throats, but the life really is not that of the body at all. It is the life of the system. When the system cannot supply "a breather" the body expires.

In such a state we must develop projects, crusades and movements. There must be rally days and spiritual emphasis weeks. Because we mistake mass enthusiasm for the dynamic of God we mill around and congratulate one another on our success and assure ourselves that God is with us. In our frustration we know that we cannot overcome the world so we create a little universe of our own to attack. In this lilliputian

world every anthill becomes a mountain and we go on a binge of attacking first one and then another as if it were the last great stronghold of Satan.

The congregation is whipped into a fever pitch. Tracts are distributed, fears are aroused, and whatever the hated thing may be it can be seen leering from behind the most innocent-looking objects. A few weeks of high pressure campaigning and the fervor subsides. The gallant knights hang up their armor and start nodding in the pews again. The leaders of the host start reading Time magazine and the third class mail to determine from what direction the next dragon is approaching. And the devil smirks in glee that the energies have been expended upon a phantom. The world makes no record of the skirmish in its annals.

LEAVING OUR NETS

Is there no hope? A great many who are disillusioned and pessimistic answer in the negative. But to say there is no hope is to say that there is no true child of God left upon earth. Wherever there is such a person there is hope, because hope is there. Hope dwells in sons of God. There is no such thing as a son of God without hope. This is the real difference between the children of light and the children of darkness. The latter are hopeless! "We were saved by this hope, but in our moments of impatience, let us remember that hope always means waiting for something that we do not yet possess."

In spite of all the horror and despair which exists upon many parts of our globe I must confess that I know no sense of despondency. I have come to appreciate the words of the apostle, "We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone; we may be knocked down, but we are never knocked out!" And I can also acknowledge the validity

of the statement, “Every day we experience something of the death of Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours.”

But what can we do? The answer is quite simple. We must leave our nets and follow Jesus. This is what he said. What are our nets? Obviously they are the things with which we have been fishing. They are the things in which we have trusted for our security, our support, our success and our welfare. But have we not heard the call of Jesus? Of course we have, but we brought our nets along. We were not ready to trust in his power so we have lugged along the schemes and methods that we used in the world to build up powerful organizations and corporations. And we have reasoned that by employing these same means we could build a strong organization to “sell Jesus” to the world. Jesus was our product! We were to promote him!

We succeeded in building up the structure. We constructed the plant. We organized it, installed the machinery, and created the auxiliary institutions to supply material and manpower, including the trained personnel. We now have sprawling institutions and trust funds to sustain them. But we overlooked one thing. You cannot “sell Jesus” to the world. Jesus is not for sale. So here we are caught in our own trap. We have the latest scientific nets, the most powerful propulsion machinery to eject them into the teeming sea of humanity, and the most elaborate winches to draw them back into our shores.

But where is Jesus? He is still passing by and saying, “Leave your nets and follow me!” There is every indication that his voice is being heard. The clanking and the clanging of our machinery cannot drown it out. The roar of the breakers cannot stifle it. It is not lost amidst the raucous calls of the peddlers nor amidst the cries for power tinged by color or tainted by creed.

Men and women who are weary of pouring time and money and effort into machines which isolate them from Jesus

even while making the claim that they exist to lead others to him, are leaving their nets. They have heard the call anew. They want to be close to Him. It is easier to carry a cross if you are going somewhere— even to Calvary— than to turn the crank of a merry-go-round day after day until you drop in the same track where you started.

Our task is to recover for our generation the sense of closeness to God which results from a recognition of the power and purpose of the Holy Spirit. There must come again the feeling of urgency and destiny. The expectancy of the coming of our Lord must give meaning to what transpires in our world and in our lives. We must stop tinkering with gadgets and gimmicks to allure and entice, so that we may say as did one of yesterday, “Our only object was to help you to live lives worthy of the God who has called you to share the splendor of his own kingdom.”

POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Let us consider what the Spirit did for that host of believers who first set out to take possession of the world in the name of Jesus Christ. If we knew what their secret was perhaps we could lay hold upon it and claim its blessings and benefits in our own lives.

1. The believers who were incorporate in Christ Jesus were granted strength and power through the Spirit in their inner being, out of the treasures of God’s glory (Ephesians 3:16). The vast resources of heaven constituted a depository upon which they could draw in order to face any emergency and do so unflinchingly. They were scourged, stoned and subjected to imprisonment. Death stalked their steps by day and by night, but they faced it without fear.

We are afraid of dying because we do not know how to die. And the reason we do not know how to die is because we do not know how to live. When we have something worth living for, we

will have something worth dying for. If we live dangerously we can die dramatically. Both life and death will be an adventure in which we can glorify Christ. The design of the Spirit makes every act of life a curtain call, and the final one is the key which gives meaning to all of the rest.

2. It was through the Spirit that the saints overpowered and overcame the temptations of the flesh. There are some habits and inclinations which render men powerless in their grip. They are prisoners under the law that is in their members, slaves to the law of sin. Their very struggles to overcome add to the pain of their predicament as one in handcuffs cuts his wrists to the bone by straining and tugging at his fetters.

In such an emergency the Spirit can provide freedom by killing or destroying the frightful desires and urges which drive men onward to the brink of despair and destruction. “It follows, my friends, that our lower nature has no claim upon us; we are not obliged to live on that level. If you do so, you must die. But if by the Spirit you put to death all the base pursuits of the body, then you will live” (Romans 12:13). The Spirit is the deliverer who slays the great red dragon which holds us captive inside the castle of our own body.

3. The Spirit makes possible a life on an altogether different level for those in the flesh. It lifts men from the cave to the penthouse. Those who flounder through the swamps of sin, exposed to every moral malady bred in such a miasma, are elevated to the peaks of the mountains of faith. Here they can breathe the life-giving oxygen of the higher realms.

“Those who live on the level of our lower nature have their outlook formed by it, and that spells death; but those who live on the level of the Spirit have the spiritual outlook, and that is life and peace. For the outlook of the lower nature is enmity with God . . . those who live on such a level cannot possibly please God. But that is not how you live. You are on the spiritual level,

if only God's Spirit dwells within you" (Romans 8:5-9).

4. The believer who is declared guiltless before God upon the basis of his trust in Jesus Christ is allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace. Here he is introduced to a whole new set of values created by this transcendent spiritual relationship. By reconciliation he achieved a state of harmony with God where his being is attuned to the vibrations of the divine, so there is no discord. This is designated "peace with God." The apostle puts it thus, "Through him we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things he has for us in the future" (Romans 5:1, 2).

The thing that sets the Christian apart is his confidence, his happy certainty. He knows what the ultimate future holds, because he knows Him who holds the future. And because he knows this he can meet his current condition without wrath and doubting. He endures present sufferings, because suffering trains in endurance, and endurance develops a mature character, which produces a steady hope. "Such a hope is no mockery because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us."

The Holy Spirit breaks up the dams and barriers, and overflows the heart with the love which is God's essence or nature. This enables us to love all men without regard to color, creed, ethnic or cultural background. We can love our enemies. We can pray for our persecutors. In short, we can love like God loves. "Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection within us" (1 John 4:12).

5. The Spirit articulates our deepest yearnings, translating them into the language of heaven. In spite of the tremendous advancements made in the realm of communications and of the multiplied thousands of words appearing in our dictionaries, we

realize that the sound combinations which we verbalize are always too limited. We are continually adopting and adapting new words to convey our sentiments in interpersonal relationships.

Hidden within our spirits are longings which struggle to rise to the surface and clothe themselves in expression. But we are weak and helpless as we confront our own frustrations. We want to be free to soar toward the infinite but we are held back by the skeins of habit and environment which hold us imprisoned in a backlash of the flesh. The indwelling Spirit cuts the red tape and breaks the sound barrier for us. He decodes our groans and translates them into words which appear on the news-tickers of glory where all is made plain.

This service is available only to the saints. Only these have their directional finders beamed toward heaven. The Spirit does not force the longing upon those who have no feeling for God. "In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's own people in God's own way."

We conclude by saying that our life in Christ is dependent upon our relationship with the Spirit through faith. If we have not the Spirit we are none of His. Power is available to us, power that will make us more than conquerors. We can rise above the bigotry and sterility of the sect and party only as we are led of the Spirit. We pray for all of our readers that you will be spiritually vital. May your lives be real!

Throwing Down Error

Mission Messenger (December 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

Recently a fellow-editor in Texas wrote an editorial entitled, “Undenominational Christianity,” in which he demonstrated a different spirit than he sometimes manifests. People who are sick of the narrow image of the *ekklesia* as frequently projected by orthodox journalists hail such declarations with delight. I join them in commending the general attitude expressed by our brother.

However, I confess to being a bit wary at predicting any tremendous result, knowing as I do that future articles may express a complete reversal of policy, and realizing how often hopes have been dashed in the past. It is evident that a growing number of our brethren would like to have the world believe that they are more open and charitable than they have been in years gone by, but “when the chips are down,” they reveal the same sectarian spirit as always.

Even in the most encouraging statements there is frequently concealed a barbed hook, so that what appears to be a noble and forthright declaration may be interpreted so as to reassure the establishment if some of the old guard of the party express undue concern over the liberality shown. The real hard fact is that these brethren equate the particular segment of the restoration movement with which they are identified as the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth, and no

one is a part of the *ekklesia* who is not affiliated with this party. They are exclusively “the Lord’s church,” and everyone else is on the outside looking in.

The article to which I allude concludes with this paragraph. “The one common denominator of all groups is Jesus Christ. Upon him they can unite. On no other basis is unity possible. When we turn down Jesus, there is no other to whom we can go. He alone has the words of life. Upon him, and upon his teachings we can unite. When each has thrown down what error he may have possessed and embraced the truth his brother has been able to show him, we will have pulled down all the strongholds of sectarianism that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and will have undenominational Christianity.”

Before our brethren accept such statements as the precursor of a brighter day we urge them to ask a few questions. In this instance there is a concealed “booby-trap” and when it is uncovered it will be seen that our brother is offering absolutely nothing new or relevant in the current unity dialogue. Instead he is advancing once more the same divisive principle which fragmented us originally and has perpetuated our shameful and sinful schisms for a century.

In new language, dressed up for the occasion, he is simply predicating unity upon conformity. The statement, “When each has thrown down what error he may have possessed and embraced the truth his brother has been able to show him,” is as loaded as a Gatling gun.

Does our brother affirm that he has proper understanding and is absolutely free from error? If not, is he in the fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ? If he is in that fellowship in his ignorance and error, does God endorse his ignorance and condone his error by receiving him into his fellowship? Is there any person on this earth in the fellowship of

God who is not possessed of some error? If one does not need to “throw down what error he may have possessed” as a condition of entering the fellowship of God, on what ground does one assert he must throw it down to be received into the fellowship of men?

God is free from all error, and if he can in such an exalted state, receive an editor who is possessed of error, why can that editor not receive others in the same condition? I deny that freedom from error is a condition of fellowship among fallible and finite men. I have never been in the fellowship with any man on earth who was free from error. All the brethren I know are brethren in error. If one thinks he is not, he is the worst mistaken of the lot.

Of course our brother would not deny that he is in the fellowship with brethren in error, but he would point out that they are not in error where it really counts, that is, on those items which have been selected from the error heap, and given primacy by the party, being elevated to tests of union and communion. This is what promotes division. Every faction and sect exercises selectivity in the field of errors, but whatever is made a test of partisanship thereupon becomes a matter of life and death. If you are wrong about that thing you “turn down Jesus.”

Let us be specific. We need to get away from glittering generalities and get right down to the nitty-gritty of our problems. Does our brother hold that a child of God who sincerely loves Jesus but can see no harm in using instrumental music has turned down Jesus? Does he believe that a saint who honestly interprets the scriptures to teach the pre-millennial coming of our Lord has turned down Jesus? Or, would he hold that all pre-millennial brethren were dishonest? Will he make an honest opinion about music or the millennium a test of fellowship and divide the body of Christ over either view?

How much error can one hold and still be in the fellowship? Has our brother changed his mind about anything in the past ten years? If not, he has not learned anything. If he has then he was in error ten years ago. Were the brethren with whom he was affiliated guilty of sin by receiving him before he threw down “what error he may have possessed?” Who determines the degree of error at which one ceases to be received of God? Who is the official interpreter and the infallible arbiter who decides what is error on every point?

Any person who makes freedom from error the basis of unity can never make Jesus the common denominator for oneness. Freedom from error is the result of the rational faculties exercising themselves in research in an attempt to arrive at the truth. Belief in Jesus is the response of the heart to testimony related to historical facts. When you substitute knowledge of propositions for faith in a person, as the basis of unity you become a schismatic, and you are divisive and disruptive. If a person is right about Jesus, he can be wrong about a lot of things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus he can be right about everything else and still be lost.

Let us be fair with struggling mankind. Let us renounce all guile. Let us tell it as it is! Our brother talks about the “desire to translate into reality all of the talk we engage in about unity.” That is a laudable ambition. The place to start is with a firm resolution to quit playing God with the consciences of other men. We will be a long way on the road to unity when we make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

In one respect the problem is quite simple. All we need to do to exhibit our unity is simply to welcome and receive all whom God has received, and on the same basis that He has received them. If God receives people before they “throw down what error they may have possessed,” let us not judge God, but let us follow His example. Freedom from error is not a condition

of entering heaven or none of us would ever make it. It is your attitude toward truth, and not how much of this precious commodity you have at any given time which determines your worth.

When one is in Jesus he is in *the truth*, for Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. It is not that such a person has the truth on every matter, but the truth has him, caught up in a divine-human relationship because of grace. One who trusts in Jesus obligates himself to accept all truth as it becomes known to him. He will not deny any truth for he loves truth for truth's sake. But it is being in Christ that makes fellowship possible and not being in "the know" on every point of theological doctrine or deduction. Until we admit this we will continue to be the advance agents of schism and strife.

At the Milepost

Mission Messenger (December 1968)

Volume 30

[Abstract]

We have now reached the close of another year, and we shall make use of that fact to lean upon this milestone and chat informally with the beloved friends who make up our family of readers. The family circle is larger than it has ever been before, and we have been privileged to welcome a number of new names this year. For this we are grateful to the Father of us all.

Our expenses have climbed ever higher, and it costs much more than a dollar per year to send out each paper. Some of the brethren, good businessmen, have urged us to raise the price to two dollars. They tell us that we would not lose a single subscriber who really reads the paper. Perhaps they are right, but we shall keep it at one dollar. I cannot keep from thinking of the young men and women in college who can use that extra dollar for a meal in the cafeteria.

We are again ending the season with all of our bills paid. This is made possible because each month, our brothers and sisters who act as volunteer rope-holders send in what they can spare to help us. Many of them are sick and tired of turning their money over to the institutional church to build up a sectarian image, while damning all other honest believers. And whether the amount they send is large or small, Nell and I put it all in the fund to send forth the good news of peace on this old earth to men of good will. In thirty years we have never taken a

cent of this money to spend on ourselves.

I suspect that I am a little peculiar for this age. I have never set a fee or specified an amount for my services. I simply go if I can and if I think it will be to His glory. I trust Him to work it out. Not too many months back I went to the west coast at the earnest solicitation of brethren who thought my presence would lend strength to a meeting. I spoke three times to large crowds and conducted two very lengthy question sessions. The check they handed me was exactly \$75.00 less than my round-trip fare. When I arrived home I deposited it in the bank. The same day I got a letter from a brother in the east saying that he felt an urge to help us in our work. There was a \$75.00 check in the envelope. I do not try to explain things like that. But He never fails to work it out somehow and I just keep on in absolute faith that He knows and understands and works through the brethren whom I love.

One thing that helps, I guess, is that we are old enough now that we can see that there are a lot of things that money cannot buy, so we have deliberately ordered our lives along simple lines. We do not even have a television set. This represents no prejudice against television, but we live very busy lives, working many hours each day. When I am at home, which is not too much, we have more than we can do, and when I am away Nell bears the burden of it all. I have no secretary. I answer all of the letters with my own hand. But you can see that our personal overhead is not too great.

That is enough about personal matters except to say that it always thrills us when any of our readers take time to sit down and write us about their views, their families, their problems and their work. We like to hear about your children and grandchildren. Most of all I am always glad to hear from the college kids. A great many of them are terrific thinkers and I learn a lot from them. I have never seen such frankness and honesty as they exhibit in our day. I am not at all frightened

because they think for themselves. I would be sorry if they did not. They are a real challenge to me!

Perhaps we'd better talk a little about our future. Our series next year will be entitled "Commandoes for Christ." We would like, if our God wills, to deal very realistically with the problem of how we can bring the weight of spiritual armament to bear upon the real enemy at our gates today. Many of our methods belong to a time when we were a frontier people or a rural society. To continue to use them in the hope that they will again become effective is like shooting a blunderbuss at a nuclear bomb.

There must come a complete revolution in our concept of ministry, and in our relationship to structures and centers of influence. We can no longer flatter ourselves that we are winning the war. We become more of a minority with each tick of the clock. All of us are resistant to change and this is especially true when we confuse what we have concocted with what God has created. So some of what I will write will not be popular. It will be written in a prophetic strain and prophets are not always welcomed with open arms. But that is all right, for we will love those who disagree as much as we do those who concur with us.

We may be looked at askance because it is our aim to present an occasional article from a brother who is "different." We will print such articles not because we agree with them, but precisely because we do not. If conditions warrant we may express our views in connection with such articles. We hold that honest dissent is wholesome. It should be encouraged rather than stifled. This does not mean that we will publish diatribes sent in by those who have a partisan or factional axe to grind, but we want to give room for those who differ with us to be heard in the family circle once in awhile.

Those of our readers whose blood pressure will not allow them to read after those who differ can always ask for their

subscription price to be returned. We will cheerfully refund it with no questions asked. There are still some who think that the editor should be the supreme judge of all the earth and throw out everything that does not repeat the party slogans. Our position is that none of us have all of the answers and we ought to listen to one another. We are not editing an orthodox party organ and we have no vested interests to protect. When you have nothing to lose but your soul you can afford to be more adventuresome. It is nice to know that only death can “fire” you.

I think it is very difficult for most of the brethren to realize that we are not running a journal for either the “liberal” or “conservative” restoration establishment. We are not the official spokesmen for any school of thought, or for any school that doesn’t think! The fact is that no one among our brethren can really define “a liberal” any more. They have used the term to apply to everyone from one end of our sectarian spectrum to another. One man’s liberal is another man’s conservative.

If I have learned anything, it is that, according to our partisan jargon, one is not a liberal or conservative because of where he stands, but because of where you stand as you look at him. A person who is left of one is right of another. So it is a little silly to stand around and exchange meaningless epithets. It would be an interesting experiment to get all of our folks together and ask them to draw up a document listing all of the views that make one a liberal. I think a good working definition for a lot of them is, “A liberal is one who knows more than I do about a subject, a conservative is one who knows less.”

I have said all of this to lead up to the statement that I will allow each man to stand upon his own merits. I will judge what he says each time by God’s word, as I understand it, but I will not condemn it ahead of time because someone has placed him in a partisan stereotype. I no longer fit any pigeonhole, and I shall not cram others into one.

Forgive me for saying that to me there is really nothing more stale than the fare regularly dished up in some of the brotherhood journals that I read. In some of them there is not one thing said which touches life as we have to live it. Our good brethren are going around and around on the partisan treadmill, answering questions no one is asking. Many of the “sound” brethren in all of our factions are frightfully out of touch with life. They are unfortunately consecrated to the ignoble task of perpetuating prejudice and patching up partisan parapets in a world that is coming unglued and falling to staves. It is a sad commentary that most of the world beyond the Texas border does not even know that “the fastest growing church” is in town. And there is a fairly good sized chunk of the world outside of the Lone Star state.

I am not saying that Mission Messenger is a shining example of relevant journalism. I have no illusions about it and recognize that ours is a feeble attempt to face up realistically to some of our problems. But there is one thing this paper will not become and that is a narrow exclusivistic propaganda piece for any party. We will not use it to promote hatred against any of God’s dear children.

When I write like this, I always get a few letters from brethren who are experts in the field of communication, and who express the thought that such articles as this are “countrified” rather than dignified. I suspect that they are right. But my heart is in the country while my feet pound city pavements. And I would rather visit than write. Since I cannot see all of you personally I do trust that God will bless all of you and give you strength to serve. I also pray that the series of articles for 1969 will help us all to walk honestly before our God.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1969)

Volume 31

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Commandoes for Christ

Mission Messenger (January 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

If there is any period one would desire to be born in, is it not the age of revolution, when the old and the new stand side by side and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and hope; when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? The time, like all times, is a very good one if we know what to do with it.—
Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Commandoes for Christ! This will be our theme for a year. You will have to read what we write for several months before the appropriateness of the title can be really seen. We will not say all that should be said on the subject, but we will speak frankly and positively about those aspects which we do cover. We expect to make our meaning clear and plain. We shall pull no punches.

I confess freely that I am motivated by a sense of inner urgency, impelled by a fire which burns within my bones. I have examined my heart to be certain that what I say will be but an outburst of passion for the Lord, and not the clamoring for expression of some baser desire. I write because I must do so, for if I do not write I can no longer live with myself and I would not dare face Him in the great by-and-by.

Some of what I say will appear revolutionary. It is

intended to do so. We cannot continue to mill around inside of our partisan enclosures, shielded from the very world which we are expected to penetrate and assault, and truly be the people of God. We must tear the blindfolds from our eyes and strip the masks from our faces. We must give up our clever little sectarian ruses and sly little stratagems by which we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are something, when we are nothing!

Any illusion that we are conquering the world for Christ must melt away in the glare of reality. We are losing the battle. After nineteen long centuries we are becoming an ever growing minority. Even the “numbers game” which we have adroitly played by manipulating statistics only serves to show the widening gap between those who are born once and those who are born again.

It was not intended to be thus. The host was to be “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” The language employed in the inception of the heavenly invasion of our earthly domain was military language, studded with such words as fighting, victory and triumph. The soldiers of Christ were to be “more than conquerors.”

There was to be discipline, hardship, suffering and endurance. We were to grapple with the foe in hand-to-hand combat, swinging the sword while climbing over alien parapets. There was to be blood on our armor but glory in our eyes. We were to share in the Great Adventure, pressing back the enemy under the leadership of the Prince, singing as we went, “Where He leads me I will follow!”

But, somewhere along the line the bold endeavor came to a grinding halt, except for an occasional sally or skirmish. The minions of the Enemy infiltrated our ranks and convinced us that we should withdraw from the combat zone and build fortresses into which we could retire and find safety and security. We became imbued with the idea that we must hold our

own and save the truth, by shielding it from exposure.

It was no longer a matter of coming together to repair our armor and to lick our wounds. The armor was hung up in the arsenal and the only wounds we received were the unkind cuts given by our fellows in the mess-hall. We now have an army top-heavy with those who do not want to fight. They will desert before they will go to the battlefield. They enlisted for the entertainment provided at our weekly bivouac and for the pension at the culmination of the term of service.

If there is any fighting to be done it must be carried out by trained mercenaries, men who want to make a career out of defence of the status quo, and who study the use of the sword primarily as a fencing weapon. A great part of the taxation must be spent upon their upkeep, providing a salary for their administration of company policy, officer's quarters for the comfort of themselves and their families, and vehicles for their use in carrying out the responsibility abdicated by others. There must be an office at the base headquarters, not a field office with a dirt floor in emergency facilities, but an air-conditioned room with soft rug and matching furniture. And there must be provision for stamps and stationery, and for the printing of the weekly agenda of sacred services and entertainment features for the troops.

The result is that we are victimized by our own creation, slaves to a system which we have developed, and which now dominates our lives. The tragedy is that we confuse this with that for which he agonized at Golgotha, and drive ourselves to perpetuate it because of a false sense of loyalty. We bring our twentieth century equivalent of "burnt offering of rams and the fat of fed beasts," and do not realize that our often heartless services may be a burden to our God and that He is weary of bearing them. Often we draw nigh with our lips and honor him with our mouths while our hearts are far from him.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH

Absolute candor requires us to say that the institutional church as we have propagated it can never bring forth judgment unto victory. It can never enter into the strong man's house and bind him and plunder his goods. It is not a camp of men eager for encounter and spoiling for the fray. Instead, it is a rest home, a shelter from the storm, whose inhabitants are "at ease in Zion, and who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria." We cannot win a war with people who are too apathetic to fight.

Then what shall we do? A great many, especially among our more youthful compeers are deserting the structure and "going over the hill." They have become disillusioned and discouraged with life in the monastery, and want to get out where the happening is. And a lot of them like to think of me as an antiquated die-hard because I do not "fly the coop" and flex my wings for a flight into "the wild blue yonder."

I share their eagerness to get on with the task, but I do not share the same enthusiasm for the strategy by which they hope to accomplish it. There are a good many reasons for my own thinking and they probably mean more to me than they do to a lot of the rest of you. Because they are important to what I shall be writing this year, I shall take the risk of boring you with a few of them.

1. I recognize that what we think of as "the church" bears but slight resemblance to the *ekklesia* of God about which the apostles wrote. We have taken a divine-human community idea and subjected it to pressures and tensions and political and cultural influences for a good many centuries, and we have constructed an institution which has satisfied us and given us a base from which to launch out in an attempt to share the message of Christ with the world. Our institution and his glorious ideal are not necessarily the same.

It is true, however, that the *ekklesia* has been in the world all of this time and while men may have submerged it beneath their fads and forms they could not drown or destroy it. It will continue to be here until Jesus comes. It has proved its hardiness by surviving the attacks of its foes and the mistakes of its friends. And while it may not be always, or even frequently, identified with the image we have projected upon the screen of history, it has permeated the hearts of many of those who have watched the projection with mixed emotions, and has involved them in the one body through the Spirit. If one works in a fellowship (and there is no other way to work effectively), he must work through that which exists. And that is exactly what I intend to do.

2. It has been my observation in the study of history that those who defect from the existing community because of the sectarian attitude of its constituency always end up creating another which eventually becomes more sectarian than the one which they abandoned. The quickest way to fill the world with “disloyal” churches is to pull out and start “loyal” ones. If the congregations planted by the apostles could get in the mess they did during the lifetime of the men who started them, it is not likely the ones we start will “hew to the line” or “stay in the beaten track.”

Most of our brethren would not have stayed in the congregation at Corinth a week. A bunch of them would have gotten their heads together and pooled their resources and rented the Odd Fellows Hall on the corner of Tenth and Main Streets, and put an advertisement in the Saturday evening edition of *The Corinthian Times*, under the heading “Church of Christ (Non-Tongues).” Those who did would have missed hearing Paul when he was in the city for he wrote that he intended to meet with “the liberal group.”

Although every “pull-outer” would deny it, the real reason why a separatist protest group turns out sectarian is because it is

started by sectarians at the outset. The very essence of sectarianism is the self-righteous exclusivistic attitude. The very word “Pharisee” means “separatist.” And God did not think very much of the idea since he had Jude to write, “These are the ones who separate themselves, worldly people, who are empty of the Spirit” (verse 19). When sectarians separate from other sectarians, you end up with two groups of sectarians. One is too much!

I am not referring here to those brethren who are sometimes ejected from the party because their loving disposition embarrasses those who do not possess it. There is a great deal of difference between jumping overboard because you just do not want to be around the other passengers, and being thrown into the sea by the other sailors. Jonah found that out. There are some places where the wineskins are pretty old and if your thoughts begin to ferment you have to get out before an explosion occurs and everyone in reach gets doused!

3. I am not imbued with the idea that you have to give “book, chapter and verse,” for every little action as are some of our brethren who spend their time cooking up slogans for which they cannot give “book, chapter and verse.” The early saints had no book, and when they finally got one they could not give chapter and verse for about fifteen hundred years until someone came along and divided it up. The man who did it was blasted as a modernist, and some of his contemporaries said he was moved by Satan to number the verses as David had been to number the people. If you would have asked any of the apostles to “give you book, chapter and verse,” they would have looked at you in amazement.

Recently one of the congregations in our city advertised that the preacher would engage in “Book, Chapter and Verse Preaching.” Since I had never read of that kind in my Bible, I went and listened, but it was no different. It consisted of very little “book” and a great deal of explanation, elucidation and

exposition. It did not take God very long to say what he wanted to say, but it takes quite awhile for our brethren to tell what they think he meant by what he said. And I am always made to wonder how the Philippians made out with the letter they received, without the one to the Romans and the Ephesians to flip over to and explain their own. There couldn't have been too much rustling of the pages when Onesimus handed Philemon the little note Paul wrote to him from his prison cell.

I have said all of this because I want to ask my brethren who specialize in the practice, to give book, chapter and verse, for rending and dividing the family of God as a means of obeying God and as a step toward unity. Is there any scriptural authority for the jumbled disarray and hotchpotch which we have created? I confess that I am a little suspicious of doctors whose only treatment for any ailment is amputation, and who are walking to and fro in the earth waving the sword of the Spirit and seeking whom they may decapitate. And I hold no brief for those who fly off into space like splinters from the butt-cut of humanity. There is not much life in a splinter.

4. I have done a lot of thinking lately about the last letters which Jesus dictated to the golden lampstands which his envoys planted in Asia Minor. By the time these were written the Enemy had gotten in his work and things were in a rather sorry state. A lot of the original luster had faded. "The silver had become dross, and the wine mixed with water." Accordingly, this provides a fine opportunity to determine how God would have us react in congregations composed of those who are cantankerous and contaminated. I want to make a few statements which may appear a little shocking to some in our day of warped thinking!

One can be saved even though he is in a congregation where some hold to and advocate doctrines that are actually vicious and destructive. He can be victorious and receive the hidden manna, the life-sustaining food from heaven which is

unknown to those who are agents of false propaganda (Revelation 2:14-17).

One can be saved even though he is in a congregation which tolerates a woman who claims to have the gift of prophecy and uses this as a guise to encourage immorality and idolatry. Those “who do not accept this teaching and have had no experience” with the esoteric realm of black magic, can hold fast to what they have, and persevere in doing God’s will to the end, and they can receive the morning star (Revelation 2:20-29).

One can be saved even though he is in a congregation that is dead, while it has a reputation of being alive, although it has never completed any work it ever planned or attempted. He can keep his own garments free from stain and pollution, and walk with Christ in white, because he is deserving (Revelation 3:1-6).

One can be saved even though he is in a congregation which is so proud and arrogant as to think it has it made, when it is actually like a pitiable wretch, poor, blind and naked. The secret is to listen to the knock at the door, and when you hear the voice of Jesus, to let the Savior in. One can sit down with Jesus in pleasant company even in a congregation which nauseates God with its tepid condition.

Some of the congregations in Asia, in whose midst Jesus stood, were so far out and so bad off, they would make our worst ones look like they had a mild case of measles. But not once did Jesus recommend that “the good guys” grab their white hats, pull out and start a rival institution down the street. God’s lamp-stands in Pergamos, in Thyatira, and in Laodicea, might be tarnished and the wicks untrimmed, but they were his and they were all he had. He made no provision for some crusader to split them open for the sake of oneness.

5. There is another reason why I shall not abandon the institutional church. In a very limited way and in a very

restricted sense, I helped to make it what it is. I contributed to its factional stance, and aided and abetted its tragic resort to legalism which has made it rely upon externals rather than upon “the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith.”

My influence was limited by a lack of opportunity and not by desire, for I would no doubt have made the situation worse if I had gained a greater influence. I sincerely thought that our movement was the people “and wisdom would die with us.” While this is somewhat frightening when it is recognized how thoroughly one can be brainwashed, it also holds forth the greatest hope. If a partisan so thoroughly saturated with a sense of factional self-righteousness can come to know the meaning of grace and the extent of brotherhood, others may certainly do the same.

With all of the faults attributed to it by those who mature in a sense of personal relationship to Christ Jesus, the institutional church contains the best people on earth. Their very dogmatism is an overt demonstration of a desire to be faithful to God, even though they are sadly deficient in a knowledge of the divine nature. They have fragmented themselves into rival tribes, but their motivation has been a fierce determination to preserve what they mistakenly regard as “the faith.” But the Spirit can do wonders with the great smouldering backlog of apathy if enough splinters catch on fire and snuggle up close to it while aflame. Separation may extinguish both the splinters and the backlog.

This does not mean that I propose to become a mere constituent of the great mass of unconcerned and indifferent ones who are entangled in “the system.” Instead, by God’s grace I shall seek to be a humble tool with which He can crack the shell. I regard the institutional church of our day as a vast mission field, an area of fallow ground which needs to be broken up by the plow of the Spirit. It must be penetrated with the

dynamic of concern and melted in the blast furnace of God's white-hot purpose. It is not my intention to write aimlessly about how this can be done, but to develop a strategy of involvement and to outline a campaign for the conquest by our King.

SURVEYING THE SITUATION

But what is the "institutional church"? On this point we need to be clear, and yet we shall have a great problem of separating the chaff from the wheat. This is understandable because there has long been a mistaken view that a thorough separation took place when men joined the institution. The institution is thus regarded as a granary in which only wheat is stored. For one to move his threshing machine into the granary and proclaim that it is a field brings animosity and recrimination. And yet there is nothing more essential than this very thing. We have been trying too long to feed starving humanity with bread made from chaff.

Foy E. Valentine thinks that our institutionalism may be the result of a deep fear that the church's power and glory are slipping away and that we must build boxes in which to keep these qualities, or we may lose them entirely.

Elton Trueblood declares that the church is the hardest problem of Christianity, and that we cannot live with it or without it. Many other writers in our generation are wrestling with the paradox which we are compelled to face, after divesting ourselves of the colored glasses which have been gratuitously furnished to us. Some will never take them off because they do not want too much light.

It may be easier to define the institutional church by what it does and does not, than to give a satisfactory dictionary definition. That is, we may describe it easier than we can define it. One of its outstanding characteristics is the preoccupation with forms, structures and power bases designed for its own

preservation. These take a hundred varied shapes.

There are written creeds, and what is worse, unwritten creeds. There are the traditional headquarters, the radial centers of influence and judgment where doctrinal emphasis is decided and where a top echelon of recognized human authorities exercise control in subtle ways, effectively and piously destroying those who do not “play ball” under their coaching.

There are the supporting agencies, the vested interests, which draw their substance from the party and then furnish the pap upon which the party feeds. For these the party fights with the ferocity of a mother animal whose cubs are attacked or threatened. All of these are woven into a complex machine in which there is an interchange of supervisory personnel so that a pressure upon one area is felt throughout the whole system.

There are the huge cathedral-like piles of brick and stone, glittering palaces of modern architecture which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and enhance the image. It is always these temples which are photographed professionally to adorn the covers of the institutional catalogs and appear on the pages of the orthodox journals. In conjunction with these has grown up peripheral businesses hawking various kinds of commodities and services, urging that you purchase your soap and paper towels from faithful Christians and thus help to channel the profit back into the party treasury.

This is “the System” which is repeated in every rival party in the land in a major or minor fashion. And it is always introspective and selfish. It proposes to thwart the dictum of Jesus that life is gained by losing it, and that the cross is the key to glory. It regards men as potential cogs in the development of greater wheels and serves humanity not so much from a sense of sheer compassion as with a view to its own gains and interests.

When all of this is said it appears that “the church” needs to be saved, not so much from its sins, which are many, but from itself. The attitudes which it possesses are the same as one finds in the world, but they are much more dangerous because they are sanctified and maintained and justified under the banner of Christ. This makes it much more difficult to change the church. It is always hard to save those who do not know they are lost. It is even harder when that which is lost suffers from the hallucination that it is in “the saving business” and has an exclusive franchise on the territory.

The reason that a lot of glittering idealists “wash out” is because it is easier to encounter the evil that is not entrenched or glorified. One hears upon every side the statement, “I’d rather try to plant ‘a church’ in a heathen country than to try and get an old dried-in-the-shell congregation to start serving Jesus.” It is altogether possible that it is easier to slay a dragon in the open field than to attack one in his cave, but statements such as the one we have quoted may tell as much about those who make them as about the “hard-shells” among us.

If we have enlisted in “The Light Brigade” to fight the forces of darkness we must oppose darkness regardless of where it is found. We cannot just choose the easy spots. It is true that by going into an area which has never seen the light at all we can shine brightly with relatively low wattage, but we may also end up in that species of mediocrity which only sharp, incisive encounter can overcome. Real combat troops are not averse to clearing up “the trouble spots.” Sometimes these are behind the lines.

It is quite obvious that the royal army cannot continue with its “business as usual” attitude. We are losing the war. To continue on our present course is suicidal. A genuine reformation is long overdue. But people do not like reformation. They especially dislike it when it involves revolution. Reformers are always denounced as heretics and traitors. In spite of this,

and regardless of the consequences, I am going to plead this year for a complete tactical change. Among other things this will include the following factors.

A TEN-POINT PROGRAM

1. A candid admission that “the church” as we have known it in our day is not an army of finely-honed fighting men with an invincible esprit de corps, but a mass of individuals assembled together around some lesser or inferior principle which is not worth dying for, and therefore, not worth living for.

2. An utter abandonment of the idea that the war can be won by a group of professionals hired to pamper the enlistees and entertain them by public dissertations. No group of recruits can ever be trained to fight a bloody battle of hand-to-hand encounter merely by the lecture method. The soldiers must learn discipline under fire. We must develop a “get tough” policy or we have had it!

3. A complete re-assessment of the purpose of buildings and structures maintained as property holdings by the armed services, and a re-evaluation of the kind of meetings held on these premises in an effort to determine whether such meetings contribute materially to the equipment and morale of the troops.

4. A recommendation that we train commandoes as a part of a well-designed strategy for regaining those areas from which we have withdrawn and which have been occupied by the opposition. This cannot be done by a haphazard, trust-to-luck program. It must be the result of a plan involving proper procedures on a long-range basis.

5. A renunciation of fellowship in the ranks on a vertical basis with its consequent divisions and animosities, in favor of a recognition of fellowship on a horizontal level, cutting across the vertical lines and involving the concerned ones who sincerely

regard Jesus Christ as Lord.

6. The formation of cell groups composed of those who want to share a deeper experience with one another and The Eternal, and who will meet in homes for the purpose of exchanging accounts of encounters and experiences, and to pray for doors of witness to be opened unto them by the Spirit. In this “church in thy house” approach there must be no thought of abandoning the institutional church. Instead there must be an earnest entreaty to God to be sent into it as kindling wood aflame to light a fire in the great bulky backlog of apathy and indifference which mark the church in our century.

7. A stubborn insistence that we relinquish our sectarian jargon which contributes to the unhealthful state in which we find ourselves, and recapture the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit so that we communicate the will of God in and to our generation. This will mean the complete abandonment of a lot of our pious pet phrases.

8. A bold approach to the task of infiltrating our culture in this secularistic age, making full use of the technological and scientific discoveries to speak meaningfully to men where they are about God as He is. This will involve the employment of every legitimate skill in confronting modern man with the claims of God. It may require a complete transformation of our ideas of worship and service.

9. A realistic translation of the word of God into living letters composed of men and women, so that in a post-literate age the once-born will see history being made before they read about its roots, and will be driven to the Book by an insatiable curiosity as to the motivating force behind the kind of moral integrity and spiritual transcendence which they observe in the lives of the twice-born ones. This is the new translation most needed in our day, not a new volume to hold in our hands, but a new life to be held in His hands.

10. An honest rejection of the sectarian stance as having any potential or possibility for the fulfillment of the divine kingdom concept among men. This means the surrender and giving up of our own brand of crazy-quilt sectarianism and not merely calling upon others to cease being sectarian, or to adopt our brand. It means the re-affirmation of the one body as composed of all who are joined to Jesus as Lord by the indwelling Spirit. It further means the removal of barriers which hinder the functioning of any member while he moves in meaningful and decisive fashion toward a mutual sharing with others.

These ten points represent areas of exploration and stress for the coming year. The magnitude of the task which we have assigned to ourselves neither frightens nor staggers me. I am resolved to press relentlessly on in the battle to win men's minds and bring all of their thoughts into captivity unto Him "whom having not seen we love." It is our intention during this year, if our Lord wills, to show that we can win this battle if we have the daring to get into the fray.

Arthur O'Shaughnessy, the Irish poet, has said, "Every age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth." I embrace no dying dream. I cherish the living faith that a dream is being born and I covet the hope that I may help in the delivery.

The Place

Mission Messenger (January 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

There were just the three of us and we were sitting in the den, quietly talking about our faith. He had been here once before when he came to apologize for having formed an opinion about me based upon what others had said. Now he had a few more days respite from college and he had brought his fiancée, for he wanted me to know her also. We all seemed to be relaxed with each other and there was no reserve created by the need to be formally polite. We were members of the same family and there were no barriers.

He said, “You seem to exhibit such positiveness. Don’t you ever have any doubts? I mean the kind that gnaw at you deep down and in the dark.”

I thought for awhile before I replied for I did not want to project a false image. I confessed that there were a lot of areas in which I was not sure, and I thought this was good because it made me cautious where I might be impetuous. But there was no doubt in my heart about the existence of God, or his providential concern for my life, or my hope of seeing him face to face after the mists have risen from the final valley.

I pointed out that such doubts belong to those who are younger, those who have time. They flit through the mind like a sparrow fluttering through the living-room, and you not only

must drive them out but also repair the aperture through which they entered. Some of us do not have time left to chase sparrows or to fix windows, so we must be careful to keep our mind on the task at which we are working.

The girl spoke up. “Even if one doesn’t have any real doubt, don’t you think there may be some special place where it is easier to believe, where you can just close your eyes and lean back and somehow know that God is there?”

Then I told them of Abraham and the place of the smoking lamp; of Jacob at Bethel, which to him was “the gate of heaven;” of Moses and the burning bush; of Samuel and the stone pillar, called Ebenezer; and of Elijah and the cave mouth on Sinai. Everyone has a place, I think, and it is *the* place to him only of all the teeming millions of the earth. No one else would ever understand its magnetic pull on his heart.

I am a native of the hill country. One who was born where the blue haze of the Ozarks dips gently down to kiss the brow of distant cedar-clad mountains, may find his faith meaningful when he lifts up his eyes to these hills. As a barefoot youngster I imbibed faith when I drank from clear springs, when I smelled the fragrant wood smoke from a cabin chimney, when I heard the echo of honking wild geese in a flying wedge against the setting autumnal sun. Every sense said there was a beneficent Creator.

So there is a moss-covered ledge extending out above a gently winding river, which I can still see in my dreams, although I have not been there for years. It is completely hidden from sight of any human habitation. As a young preacher still going to high school I used to go there often. It helped to clear the cobwebs from my brain and air out the musty corners of soul.

Sometimes it was spring and the dogwood tree, of which

legend says the cross was made, was in full bloom. The redbud also gave startling beauty to every slope, while on the ground there were patches of delicate wild violets which looked as if someone had carelessly thrown down a purple carpet.

Again it was summer, and the rasping sound of the cicada was heard, demanding attention above the melody created by the birds, nature's sylvan choral society. If it was late evening there might be the booming bass of a bullfrog hidden in the weeds along the bank of the stream, or the sudden splash of a leaping fish. And always there was the faraway bawling of the cows as they plodded homeward from pasture to milking-shed.

Or, perhaps it was autumn, and the golden persimmons were ripening from the first frost, or the wild grapes were hanging in tangy clusters upon the vines. If one sat without moving, sweeping only his eyes across the panorama, life was everywhere manifest. On the opposite hillside a fox might be seen slipping through the hackberry bushes and sumac. Closer at hand, a squirrel, wholly oblivious to your presence, would be gathering hickory-nuts or acorns to add to the hoard in his secret cache.

And then there was winter. I've visited the place when the sleet pelted my face like leaden shot, and when it rattled against the stiff canvas of my hunting coat as it did against the window panes. I liked this world of white with its ghostly shadows above, a world which belonged for a few fleeting minutes just to myself and the great wraith-like owl whose enormous wings made hardly a rustle while slipping through the gloom on a bloody mission of survival.

And I never turned back toward the world with its arteries of rushing traffic, of whining rubber and throbbing steel; with its narrow streets and alleys filled with misery and squalor and sin, that I did not stop and repeat aloud for my ears and for His, "And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the

ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth . . . While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Yes, there are places where you can just close your eyes, and lean back and know that He is there. And when you have known such a place you can go anywhere else on earth without doubting. For once you have come to know the Presence in your life, nothing else that ever happens can stifle or erase it.

The Concerned Remnant

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or an assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.— John Milton.

As one reads the account of the activities of the primitive saints, and studies the letters written to congregations and individuals, he is made aware of the power and mobility which seems to throb in almost every page. The Greek language was very versatile and capable of making keen distinctions. There were a great many words for power to be found in it but the apostles almost exhaust that vocabulary of power in presenting their picture of the ancient order.

It is at once apparent that we are reading about an army on the march, advancing relentlessly against the foe. There is here no thought of entrenchment or of retiring to a fortress for safety. The soldiers are not holding a fort, but storming one. They are pulling down strongholds, casting down armament from elevations and bringing opposing forces into captivity (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5).

Our words dynamite, dynamo and dynamic are power words. They conjure up mental images of explosive energy, yet they are only transliterations of an original term applied

frequently to the functioning of Spirit-filled saints. The apostle Paul was not ashamed of the good news of Jesus because it was God's dynamic unto salvation for both Jew and Greek. There was no reluctance in confronting legalism or philosophy for this message was capable of cutting its way through either maze with its keen edge.

It is unnecessary to belabor the point that "the church" in our day is wholly unlike "the Way" about which we read in the books written by the Greek physician, Luke. We seldom think of "exceeding greatness of his power," or "the working of his mighty power." We are involved in programs, building fund drives, and committee meetings. The fighting in which we engage may be in the form of argumentation over paving the parking lot or purchasing cushions for the pews. The liveliest session of the year may be the business meeting in which we discuss the color of an aisle runner or a pulpit rug. There is no thought of wrestling with the cosmic forces of the universe or with the invisible king of the region of the darkness of this world.

It is probably not nearly so important that we know what factors contributed to the production of our state as to know what we propose to do about it, but we may profitably pause for a little while to assess the situation. In no attempt at being exhaustive I will list a few items which seem to be germane.

1. We have watered down sin until it is no longer considered as an offence against the Majesty on high, but merely anti-social behavior. The sinner may be more of an eccentric in our culture than an enemy of God. And the blame for his condition may be charged to the social structure rather than to the individual. But man is so constructed, as a rational animal of choice, that by intuition he recognizes that he cannot divorce the choice from the result or consequences, and fine-spun behavioral theories only confuse him.

In the confrontation of men with the Good News in the

early years of *the ekklesia* there was no attempt to throw a mantle of respectability over man's corruption. Without Christ men were dead in trespasses and sins. Their behavior was occasioned by lust, and they were children of wrath. They gave themselves over to lascivious practices. They worked all uncleanness with greedy hearts.

Thus, those who embraced the Message had a consciousness of the futility and helplessness of their own efforts, and a realization that they could be rescued or extricated only by the undeserved kindness of the One against whom they had voiced their enmity. They were slaves bought by a new master and given a writ of manumission signed with blood. They were like shipwrecked sailors drifting on a sea of floating filth, and plucked out of the jaws of death by a kindly hand. They were criminals facing the gallows and the darkness of oblivion, handed a pardon as they were climbing the steps to the noose.

And they had a personal testimony, a thrilling story of the Great Adventure. Once they were dead, but now they were alive; once they were lost, but now they were found. Men who may be unmoved by a magazine article dealing with how a maladjusted individual becomes socially re-oriented, can become so engrossed with the tale of a rescue of a shipwrecked crew or the restoration to life of a dead man that they will read a whole book without once laying it down. The disciples of Christ in the first century had a story to tell and the world listened. It is difficult to save one who does not know that he is lost.

2. We have lost the sense of the need for personal reconciliation with God. In some cases this is due to the fact that we are oblivious of the Great Gulf, the Grand Canyon created by the erosion of sin. In other cases God seems so remote that it is useless to dream of a bridge that can span the expanse. But whether we think of Him as so close that anyone can touch Him regardless of sin, or so far away that no one can do so regardless of desire, we have little consciousness that he can be "touched

with the feeling of our infirmities.”

The ministry of reconciliation has no relevance for our lives. We are not angry with God and we cannot see why He should be angry with us. Least of all are we angry with ourselves because we are sinful, falling short of the high calling, failing to follow the beckoning finger of glory. We are satisfied to wallow in the valley without foiling up the steps to where the mist hides the Presence. We flatter ourselves that if we ignore Him He will not see us. If we are not troubled by our sin, He will not be.

Thus we become reconciled to our sin instead of being reconciled unto God. We learn to live with it rather than with Him. We settle for the cheap grace dispensed by our own warped character rather than the costly grace which requires the blood of atonement as the red seal of its validity. In such a state we have nothing to offer a blighted and frightened world except a vain hope and a fleeting shadow.

The word of reconciliation is plainly stated. It is simply that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Sin does count unless God chooses not to impute it. We cannot choose not to count it because it is already posted to our account. We must be reconciled or stand naked, not being clothed in righteousness. Reconciliation provides the only covering for our shame, the only protection from our guilt. God was in Christ and I must be in Christ if I am to meet God.

3. We have been betrayed into resting our hope in an institution rather than in a Savior. Thus we are not so much members of a body through action of the Spirit as we are affiliates of an organization by complying with terms. We lack the throbbing, pulsating, tingling sensation of the blood circulation which binds us all together in the unity of heart. And we are among those who by implication are condemned because they “glory in appearance, and not in heart” (2 Corinthians

5:12).

The difference between the primitive saints and ourselves is well illustrated in the first genuine encounter of two former fishermen who were filled with the Spirit, and the entrenched theological and political leaders of the Establishment in a prominent city. Taking advantage of a favorable climate which had been created by a phenomenal happening in the life of a publicly known character, the two men spoke unto the people without securing permission from City Hall.

Members of the local clergy, accompanied by representatives of an anti-supernatural sect, had them arrested late in the day, so there was no opportunity to secure bond, and they were held in the city jail overnight. The intense feeling which resulted in this action was prompted by the fact that “they preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

The next day the hierarchy assembled in formal court session and demanded of the two men that they reveal by what authority, or in whose name, they were acting. The answer was “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” The court was astounded. They saw two men of unflinching boldness, and upon enquiry learned that they were without formal education or scholastic degree. The only way by which informants could explain their fearless demeanor was by pointing out that they had been with Jesus.

The court bailiff removed them from the room so that the judges could confer as to what disposition should be made of the case. It was finally decided to issue an injunction against their speaking to any individual in the name of Jesus. The men were returned to the courtroom and solemnly and sternly charged that they must under no circumstances speak or teach in the name of Jesus. The men were undaunted. When given a chance to address the court they said, “You are capable of determining whether it is proper in God’s sight to listen to what you say

instead of to what He says. We cannot desist from speaking those things which we have seen and heard.”

The angry judges threatened them again but decided to free them in order to avoid a civil rights march against the courthouse, since community feeling was running high at the time. The men went at once to their own company and rehearsed all that had transpired, whereupon they all prayed with such fervency that the place was shaken where they assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness.

The account is significant because of the prominence given to the relationship with Jesus. The message was the resurrection through Jesus, the authority for the activity was Jesus, the secret of their boldness was association with Jesus, the great grace which came upon them all was through Jesus. There was no plan, no program, no pre-conceived campaign. Instead there was a simple moving into every situation as it arose with Jesus. The talk to the crowd, the testimony to the court, the prayer with their own company; all of these were unstructured. It is difficult to draw up a speaking agenda when your speakers may all be locked up in the calaboose or called into court.

The danger of institutional connection is that men may not be free to speak without securing permission from other men to do so. It should be the opposition which forbids, threatens and restricts the saints, but too often the religious institution is more dangerous to the exercise of freedom than the political realm. Men cannot go *everywhere* preaching the word until they are free to go *anywhere* and preach it. Men who belong only to Jesus can heed his command to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. All too often “the church” comes between men and the will of Jesus. It may be to our own brethren in our day that one must say, “You are capable of determining whether it is proper in God’s sight to listen to what you say instead of to what he says.”

SECULAR AND SACRED

4. We have limited our relationship with God by allowing ourselves to be brainwashed into dividing our lives into areas called secular and sacred. In doing so we have come to think of serving God at certain times and in doing certain things. We have consecrated and dedicated holy places which we call sanctuaries, and we have hallowed days which have come to be regarded with special reverence. Yet this is directly opposed to the very genius of The Way inaugurated by the blood of Jesus. It belongs to Judaism which was but a shadow, instead of to Jesus who is the body, or substance.

Jesus died to destroy and remove the walls separating and fragmenting life into areas marked sacred and secular. Those who erect such walls are living B.C. lives in an A.D. world. There are no holy places now. There are only holy people. We are God's only temple. We are God's only building. "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

It is ridiculous for us to talk about "going up to the house of the Lord." We are the house of the Lord. The only sanctuary God has on earth is the human heart. Whatever I do is done as a member of Christ. One can no more separate himself from the body of Christ while he does certain things than he can unscrew his own arm while he performs a task. It is this which makes the life of sin unthinkable. If one were holy only while in a place of ritualistic performance he could live as he pleased at other times without reflecting against God.

It is precisely because we cannot "check in" and "check out" in service to God that every word and deed must be done to the glory of God. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid." Either all

that we do is worship of God, or nothing is. Worship is not the performance of acts but the prostration of the heart in the presence of God. It is no longer a performance upon mountains or in special cities, it is deep reverence in spirit and in truth.

We have negated one purpose of the cross and forsaken grace for the law. We proceed as if the law had not been fulfilled and we are still involved with jots and tittles. In our spiritual immaturity we demonstrate our deficiency of faith. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Christ set us free from the bondage of the law but we have erected our own prisons for the spirit. We call them “churches.”

Now the real question is how we shall recapture our freedom and regain the power which can again make us “more than conquerors through him that loved us.” The problem, is intensified because of the structures we have created. These always inhibit freedom because they have grown up out of fear, and fear enslaves. “Fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18). We must be free to take risks or we will think only of preserving the status quo. This latter is the real purpose of institutions.

Just as liberty is stifled by regimentation and conformity so power is siphoned away by the need to keep the wheels turning, even though they are spinning without any real traction. We expend more energy in keeping the machine in condition than in a forward thrust into the world. Our manpower too often consists only of stationary engineers. We have organized ourselves to live and have organized ourselves to death. It requires more personnel to care for the barracks than we have in the field.

The primitive saints had some things going for them which made it easier for them to get into the fight than it is for us. In the first place they were imbued with the idea that Jesus was coming again, and many of them lived in happy anticipation of this great event transpiring during their lifetime. It was

necessary for Paul to write one company and tell them that they should not allow themselves to be deceived into thinking that the great day was at hand. He urged them to return to their daily employment and manual labor so they could support themselves with honest toil.

Twenty centuries have passed and the Lord has delayed his coming. The bright hope is no longer a subject of conversation. It has ceased to be a magnificent obsession. Life has become routine and humdrum, and the thought of a longer vacation with pay has supplanted the coming visit of the King in importance. Somehow we must recapture the sense of urgency, and the importance of the *now* because of what will happen *then*.

Too, the first disciples were fortunate enough to be allowed to suffer persecution. This served a great many salutary purposes. It weeded out hangers-on and mere camp-followers. There are very few who will go along “just for the ride” if they know that the destination is prison or the stake. It amounted to a stiffening of the conditions for membership by eliminating “the fearful, and unbelieving” (Revelation 21:8). This created an elite corps of the brave and trustworthy with the consequent high degree of morale always found in such a group. Persecution served also to keep them from putting down deep roots on earth which would make it more desirable than heaven. The order from the central command post was plain—when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. The mobility of the troops was assured by recognition of the fact that “here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” Earthly possessions were expendable and subject to the fortunes of war. “You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

Another favorable circumstance was found in the fact that every company was active in the field and was not hampered by or cumbered with jointly owned barracks or real estate. As a fluid underground movement staff meetings, which always

involved every soldier, were held in caves, underground tombs, third-floor halls or private homes. Secret codes or signs were used to direct the enlisted men to the temporary quarters and infiltrators who did not have the password were not received into the house.

When their houses were ransacked in Jerusalem, and male and female troops were arrested and imprisoned, the ones who escaped scattered, with the exception of the corps of officers. The scattered ones began immediately to inaugurate guerilla tactics wherever they went. One of them went down to a recalcitrant city and in a single-handed effort took possession of it in the name of the absent King. When couriers took word of this back to the staff officers in Jerusalem they immediately sent two of their most versatile men down to consolidate the area. On their return trip they effectively secured the surrender of many villages.

Others infiltrated territory farther afield. Some who were natives of a foreign sector quietly entered the capital city. Because of their knowledge of the customs and language they were able to secure a great many enlistees, and a training program was set up for a year under the direction of two outstanding storm troopers. Always held before the eyes of the trainees was the goal of world conquest. They had no money to devote to the purchase of comfortable headquarters and no time to attend meetings purely for pleasure or pastime.

Although we commonly claim to be *heirs* of these valiant men we have come to settle for a lesser goal and for a cheap victory. The glory is departed. The vision has grown dim. We have been like a woman with child who draws near to the time of birth and is too weak to deliver. "We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen."

What shall we do? What can we do? We cannot expect in

our culture to experience physical persecution in this generation! Can we be purged and purified without it? Can gold lose its dross without passing through the fire? Can our silver be refined except in the furnace of affliction? Must we pray for hardship, suffering, loss of possessions and threat of death in order to drive us to trust in the Lord rather than to lean upon the arm of man?

How can we gain again a sense of the imminent coming of our Lord while he still tarries? What can we do to avoid unconsciously joining the ranks of the “last days scoffers” and asking, “Where is the promise of his coming?” Can we escape that philosophy which predicates continuity of the future based upon conformity of the past? How can we make the coming of Christ real to those whose hearts have grown fat, whose ears are dull of hearing, and whose eyes have been closed through willing ignorance?

I think it is evident that in our twentieth century world we cannot dispose of all our real estate holdings and resort to caves and catacombs. Some of the more radical will write their brethren off and forsake them, but most of these will not be any more loyal to Jesus. They will rail against the institutional church with its monastic structures but they will not themselves be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love. They will not be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

We do not live in a misty dream world, but in a real one. And we must live in the twentieth century world, not in one of centuries past. Our problem is that because we are frightened by the big world which God has made, we make little artificial worlds of our own. The situation we face is not ideal and neither are we. We must move into it without the power to see into the immediate future. And even our best judgment is not always faultless. We must learn to take calculated risks.

It is for this reason we point out that the situation is not

necessarily hopeless unless we relinquish our hope and trust. The ground for optimism lies in the fact that in every religious community in our day there is a group who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done. These compose the remnant of God and God is always in the remnant business. He places a mark upon the foreheads of his people and he puts a new heart and new spirit within them.

This remnant becomes God's salt or leaven. They are an *ekklesia* within the *ekklesia*. Just as people are called out of the world and yet remain in the world to leaven it, so the remnant is called out and yet remains within the *ekklesia* to leaven it. In order to achieve the most good we must restore fellowship on a horizontal rather than a vertical basis. Let me explain.

Our fellowship has been regulated by vertical lines. When brethren disagreed with us we drew vertical lines which kept us enclosed and excluded others. Those who were driven out then drew another vertical line beyond which others dare not think or go. The whole realm of Christendom is divided into separate sects or parties by such lines, for vertical lines always become walls of separation. The vertical lines are based upon deductions, inferences and doctrinal interpretations.

Now we are seeing that in all parties created by such vertical lines there are some who are not satisfied with their sectarian status or with the dishonest methods used to defend it. These are actually closer to one another than to many others within their vertical lines. It now becomes a question of whether the things which divide us are as important as the things upon which we can agree. It is even more germane to ask whether they are as important as our goal.

The remnant between each set of vertical lines constitutes a fellowship. Fellowship is the sharing of a common life, and these share in a common concern. They are a fellowship of concerned ones with an interest in answering the prayer of Jesus for the

unity of all believers as a means of causing the world to believe that God sent Jesus to die for our sins.

It is time that the concerned ones ignore the vertical lines which separate them and flow together. This does not mean that they come out from between the lines and create a new unity party, for this would result in another vertical line and a new faction or sect. This new vertical line would keep them from exercising any influence upon those who were within the original lines. They must stay where they are and merely melt the lines between themselves and others of the concerned ones. Thus they will flow together because the lines will no longer have any relevance to them although they are in direct contact with those with whom they have always associated and who are still between the lines. They will be God's salt to touch the mass of partisans who are unsalted with the unity concerns.

Jesus specifically declared that his purpose was to start a fire on the earth. In order to do this he must have kindling wood, and the fellowship of concerned ones must be such flammable material. When they are aflame they can then set fire to the great backlog of material in each party. If they leave where they are and form a kindling wood party they will have a hot flame for awhile but they will finally be consumed and die out and the religious world will be unaffected. They will leave only a small pile of ashes to mark their place of expiration.

It can thus be seen that we need to remain in contact with the pile of material which has smouldered and smoked but never really caught on fire. That pile of material in our day may be the institutional church in the world. The temptation is to leave and create a flash fire of our own, but such fires are of no real permanent value. They burn out and leave the real problem untouched. But let us pursue our analogy a little further.

If we do not have direct contact with other flaming or glowing material we soon turn to gray ash and become cold. We

must have a kindling of our own motivation and spirit. This means that there must be a genuine closeness of the fellowship of the concerned to keep the flame alive while the backlog can be ignited. This can only be achieved by cell groups which meet in private homes, in dormitory rooms, or in other places which are “a little way apart.” These are our catacombs of today! The *ekklesia* within the *ekklesia* must again become “the church which is in thy house.”

In gatherings of such cell groups there should be no structured agenda, but room should be left for the Spirit to work and blow upon the kindling wood to make the flame burn brighter. It is very essential that such meetings not become ends in themselves. This is a great temptation. Satan is a clever strategist. He knows how to take advantage of our human nature. We like to be with others of the same interests as ourselves. If he can turn our gatherings into chummy little “righteous club” meetings, he will do so.

One of the prime purposes of cell groups should be to strive together in prayer that their service may be accepted of the saints, that great doors and effectual may be opened, and that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet. It is probably best that those attending kneel in prayer and thus bow their knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the gatherings are held weekly, those in attendance should recount any victories that have been won through God’s power since the previous meeting. This is essential if morale is to be built up.

In subsequent articles it is our intention, God willing, to show what changes we must make in vocabulary, method and attitude, if we are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. We will deal objectively with the steps required to qualify ourselves to speak boldly as we ought to speak. It is not our intention to simply be critical but rather to suggest measures to be “the sons of God,

**without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,
among whom we are to shine as lights in the world.”**

The Touch of Life

Mission Messenger (February 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“The company that Jesus chose to keep was the company of ordinary men. He was more at home with fishermen, farmers, shopkeepers and tax gatherers than with the religious leaders and the priests. His talk was of seedtime and harvest, of buying fields and building houses, of boats and nets. The neighborhood he chose was secular life, the world of ordinary men and women.”— God’s Frozen People.

It is generally believed that the religious establishment of our day exists to further and promote the ideals of Jesus upon the earth. It is unfortunate, but true, that the exact opposite is often the case. The truth is hardly ever spoken about it for the simple reason that it is inimical to one’s status or hope of gain. The tendrils of men’s hearts are entwined in the traditions they have inherited and cultivated and one who challenges them is regarded as a dangerous usurper who would tear up religion from its roots. Our Lord found this out and Calvary was the result.

In spite of this I am willing to risk my reputation and future in presenting my honest sentiment about some reforms which are long overdue and which must be effected if we are to be workers together with God. I believe that it is demonstrable that certain cherished concepts and practices in which we indulge are actually defeating the will of God in spite of the good

intentions of those who promote them.

It will seem startling at first to my readers when I say that Jesus did not come to establish a new religion in the earth. He actually came to put an end to “religion” as a means of serving God. Religion is involved in holy places and sacred days, in rituals and sacrifices, and in written codes and priestly cults. Until the world was considered mature enough, God placed mankind under the governing hand and tutorship of religion. It was a faithful slave entrusted with the task of leading us to faith. Now that faith has come we are no longer under a custodian. We have been set free by the grace of God.

The only “religion” which is acceptable unto God and the Father is life itself. It is not related to acts performed as rites at all. It consists of going personally to ascertain the needs of widows and orphans with a view to relieving them, and of guarding against contamination in daily contact with the world. There is no intimation of anything done in a sanctuary or chapel made with hands. It involves worship in spirit and in truth. It is expressed in concern for the helpless and with the life of integrity. It is pure and undefiled.

Jesus came that we might have life and that we might possess it more abundantly. He is the bread of life. He said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Immediately the Jews who first heard this became involved in a heated argument as to how this could be done. It did not fit into their theological concepts.

They thought that eternal life was contained in the scriptures, and that it could be secured by searching, debating and disputing until one could quote “book, chapter and verse” for every minute act he performed, regardless of how mechanical it might be. They could not grasp the fact that life

came through a vital personal relationship. Jesus said, “You search the scriptures because you think eternal life is found in them, when their real purpose is to point you to me. And you will not come to me, that you might have life” (John 5:39, 40).

In the same breath he put his finger on their trouble. “How can you believe which receive praise from one another, and are not interested in seeking the praise which God bestows?” Praise accorded by men is always based upon externals, upon things which may be seen. It often seeks a return and is part of a barter system. Praise from God is not based upon the things that are seen, but upon things which are not seen. “Man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh upon the heart.” It is important as a prelude to faith that we decide whose praise we prefer to receive.

This brings us to the question of how we should employ the scriptures. It is a vital question because upon the answer we make to it depends whether we shall seek to develop the kingdom of heaven into a police state with certain of the citizens riding high in the saddle, or whether it will be a realm of understanding and mutual concern inhabited by sinners whose only claim to recognition is grace which originated outside themselves and leaves no ground for boasting.

If we turn back the pages of history and convert the love letters growing out of the new covenant into a legalistic code in which we assume that life is contained, we nullify the purpose of the cross. We also doom ourselves to a life of fruitless searching for something which is not there. It seems almost elemental to say any use of the written word to defeat the very design of the Living Word is misuse and a cruel hoax practiced upon the weary pilgrims dying from thirst. One who cannot distinguish between a road map and an oasis, or between a directional sign and a fountain is hardly to be regarded as a safe guide to the water of life.

The scriptures are to take us by the hand and lead us to Jesus, and when we arrive his message is always, "Follow me!" Jesus established no institutions, erected no buildings, put on no drives, and established no headquarters. He simply invited men to live in a world where death was all around. He said, "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He also said, "Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies." If that sounds paradoxical it is because life and death are always paradoxical to men in the flesh.

It is possible for us to get so wrapped up in religion with its boards and bureaus, its modes and methods, that we actually forget about the life that Jesus came to bestow. Even worse than forgetting, we may confuse all of the activity and bustle which is necessary to keep the machinery running with that life. This is the greatest tragedy of all. Life is the gift of the Great Physician, and we may employ vehicles in which to get to Him, but we never want to confuse an automobile with the doctor.

The life of Jesus touched all of life about him. It was free and outgoing as real life always is. The body is merely an earthen vessel for conveying the life from place to place. But life is not material. It can never be contained and bottled up in an earthen vessel. So wherever Jesus went life reached out and touched and changed and transformed men and women. Some of them were sinners, social outcasts, and down-and-outers. But when the life touched them they became kingdom material.

It is one of the fallacies of "religion" that it tends to think of people, not as whole persons, but as fragmented and compartmentalized. Jesus came to save men, and men are beings who bear the image of the earthy, and can bear the image of the heavenly. Jesus was interested in anything which contributed to manhood, whether physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual. He was touched by all of our infirmities. And he was no less God's Son when dealing with the physical than when dealing with the spiritual.

The word for salvation is *soteria*. The word for save is *sozo*. It means deliverance from any peril, danger or abnormal condition. It is rendered save 92 times, heal 3, and make whole 9. It has to do with the restoration of one to a state of normalcy. Sin did not affect one part of man, but man as a whole, as a person. It was sin which caused sickness, pain and death. For this reason one actively opposes sin in the world when he overcomes its effect upon the body, mind or heart. Thus the word used to describe what happened to the sick who touched the garment of Jesus (Matthew 14:36) is identical with that used for the effect wrought upon those who hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn to God (Acts 28:27).

Jesus did not turn his divine Sonship on when he started preaching to the multitudes and turn it off when he began passing out bread and fish. He declared that he came to do the work of Him by whom he was sent, and whatever he did was the work of God. We must assume that it was the work of God to relieve the embarrassment of a host by providing wine at a wedding, feeding the hungry, washing the feet of the disciples, and healing the sick. In other words, to exercise compassion and to share with men in their need was a part of the work of God. "My Father works always, and I must also work" (John 5:17).

On the one occasion when Jesus described the final judgment scene he depicted a separation of humanity, based not upon doctrinal correctness or aptitude, but upon active concern for the needy. "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me." Jesus identifies with the needy rather than with those who are intellectually correct. "I tell you indeed, whenever you did this for the least important of these brethren of mine, you did it for me!"

It is vital to remember that the Father blessed those who had compassion and did something about it. It was for these the

kingdom had actually been prepared since the creation of the world. The “least important” are those who cannot return our favors. Our help for them cannot produce any personal gain. They cannot reciprocate economically or politically.

I am quite convinced that selfish men who wish to project an image of following Jesus will resort to every form of subterfuge to keep from really doing so. Following Jesus is a costly, time-consuming business which brings no earthly profit that can be rung up on a cash register. One of the cleverest dodges of the institutional church is to brand compassionate sharing as “the social gospel.” This shibboleth, mouthed by partisan preachers is enough to shut up the bowels of mercy and close off the feeblest attempt at sharing.

Thus, well-dressed, perfumed, jewelry-wearing men and women can sit in air-conditioned temples and worship God without giving a thought to the fact that less than a mile away, human beings arise from troubled sleep in rat-infested, stinking ghettos where an air of hopelessness and despair broods like an evil spirit over their grimy tenements. Those who profess to love him who allowed the decaying flesh of lepers to touch his own, contrary to the law which branded these unfortunates unclean, shrink away from the contamination of their hands and garments through contact with those whom they regard as social pariahs.

To take the money heaped up on collection plates carried by immaculate ushers and use it to relieve the stark tragedy of the forgotten masses would dishonor the Lord. There are those who actually teach that the funds deposited in huge bank accounts as a part of the institutional treasury cannot be dispensed to any of the poor except those whose names have been safely enrolled on the church roster. It is not according to “the pattern” as interpreted by these ecclesiastical lawyers. But they start with an institution, a weekly collection, a treasury, and a bank account, without once remembering that these have all

been dreamed up in the fertile brains of a clerical caste. Jesus and the early disciples knew nothing about any of them.

In the thinking of these men there is nothing wrong with “the social gospel” if it is limited to members of our exclusive society. We may even help those outside if there is a good possibility that our charity may get them to come in with us. Our hand-outs must be regarded as bait to increase our attendance statistics and to pad our membership rolls. Such manipulation of human misery to pamper our own selfishness is a sin of the deepest dye. The only reason that Jesus relieved human suffering was because of the deep feeling of compassion which welled up within him when confronted with pain and misery.

The sharing of means with the less fortunate is not a social gospel. The true disciple knows there is no such thing as “another gospel.” Men may pervert the gospel of Christ and many do. But to act as Jesus did in the world will not pervert it. Jesus moved on earth in a body. He still does so, but we are that body now, and when we minister to the sick, the feeble, the hungry, and the distressed, we are ministering to Jesus. And Jesus is ministering through us.

Jesus said of his disciples, “I sent them into the world just as you sent me into the world.” The disciples are not bringing another gospel when they act as Jesus did in the world. They are prolonging and extending his mission. When they set captives free, bind up the brokenhearted, and set at liberty the bruised and downtrodden, they are fulfilling God’s purpose as they do when they proclaim glad tidings to the poor.

We are always confronted with priority ratings by legalistic minds. “Which is the more important,” we are asked, “the bodies or the souls of men?” Jesus never allowed himself to be caught on that hook. Once he was walking through the wheat fields on a sabbath day, and his hungry disciples began to pick the grain and to eat it. The Pharisees immediately said, “Look, it

is against the Law for your disciples to do this on the sabbath.”

The reply of Jesus was a classic. All modern Pharisees ought to read it. Our Lord plainly showed that human need always takes precedence over law. He cited the case of David and his men who were hungry, and who went into the holy place and ate the consecrated bread in direct contravention of the law which strictly forbade any but the priests to eat it. He mentioned the fact that the priests actually broke the law every sabbath in preparation of the offerings, yet it was not held against them.

He said, “There is something here I tell you greater than the temple.” That something was the principle enunciated by God, “I require mercy and not sacrifices.” Jesus said that those who learn this will not condemn the innocent. The thing which takes precedence is the need at the time. If your enemy hunger, do not preach him a sermon, but feed him; if he thirst, do not hand him a tract, but give him drink. It is not true now, and it never has been true, that preaching sermons will solve all of the needs of men, either in the body of Christ or out of it.

“Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, ‘Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,’ but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing.”

We are again forced to examine the quality of our faith in this day. We live in a different world than the one which most of us entered at birth. It is no longer a quiet, placid rural culture in which we exist. Secularization and urbanization have married and brought forth technopolis. We are in a world of ferment and torment. Roots have been jerked up. People have been shunted from their places of security. Many have been forced to migrate to large centers of population which have a way of life for which they are not adjusted and to which they cannot readily adapt.

The result is that city centers decay and rot, and human beings for whom Jesus died are forced to live like animals. Our social fabric is best described in the prophetic words, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole even unto the head there is no soundness in it.” What has the institutional church done? Has it closed the wounds, bound up the bruises, or mollified the stripes with oil? Candor forces us to admit that generally it has fled the scene to protect and preserve its image. It has sought refuge in the suburbs where it can pretend that the noise and the stink and the putridity are not there, that it is all a bad dream from which we will awaken to laugh at our fright.

There are those who have not retreated. In bold new approaches they have attacked the problem. They have recognized “religious” buildings and structures for what they are—mere tools to get the job done. They know that these tools will not always fit the task in our day. “Church buildings” are useless when people will not enter them, and it is people for whom Jesus died. Abandoned store buildings, private homes, remodeled garages, these have been pressed into service as oases in a desert of despair, where men can secure food, clothing, counselling, and see Jesus at work in His members.

But all too often even such meager attempts have been attacked and condemned by the church now safely ensconced in the shiny new edifice on Greenacres Drive. The converted slum building in which ghetto children are shown how to cook and sew, where Bible classes are taught and subsistence meals are served, is casually dismissed as a part of “the social gospel.” The old store building with the broken whiskey bottles at its side, which has been made into a center where dope addicts can receive help and strength is scoffed at. The coffee house maintained by young people as a bridge between the world of the “ups and ins” and the frightful world of the “down and outs” is sneered at as a project of starry-eyed do-gooders.

But Jesus may be nearer to the slum dwelling, the ramshackle store building, and the coffee house, than he is to the modernistic suburban cathedral with its plush aisle rugs and its stained glass windows. This is so utterly unthinkable to most of us that it appears as heresy. We are hooked by the fact that we “dedicated” the churchly structure to God, with a welcome speech by the mayor.

Of course the word heresy is simply another escape hatch which we have developed. All we need to do is to label a thing “heresy” and we can file it in the “limbo file” and forget it. We overlook the fact that every reformer whom we now honor was branded as a heretic during his lifetime. A hero is merely a heretic who has been dead for a century.

Our plea is that we cease to trust in our rites and rituals as means by which we seek to purchase God’s approval; and move into the world in meaningful encounter, grappling with all of those sinister forces which destroy the dignity of man, and reduce him to a mere animal level. There is not one degrading aspect of life that is not traceable to sin. Sickness, filth, squalor, pestilence, poverty and immorality are the spawn of sin in the world. If sin had not entered as a result of man’s decision, none of these would have troubled us.

And all of us, without exception, have the taint of sin clinging to us. Not one of us can escape its effects. We are sinners seeking to mitigate the consequences of sin because grace has burst upon us in its shining splendor. We could have been the drunk sprawled in the doorway with the sour odor of our own vomit sickening the passerby. We could have been the dope addict puncturing a vein to inject the substance which would temporarily halt the demon tearing and clawing with fiery talons at brain and flesh. We could even yet become either, for temptation, like God, is never far from any one of us.

Can it be that God is fed up with our psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs, our pious recital of cliché-laden prayers, and our empty, vacuous, pointless sermons, which are carefully slanted so as to detour around our real sins, and which are filled with innocuous generalities? We seem to forget that God can get enough, even of the stuff which he has asked us to bring. "I have had enough of the burnt offerings, of rams, and the fat of fed beasts." We can drag ourselves reluctantly to meetings and bring things which we think will make God happy, but He may say, "I do not delight in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." What is the twentieth century substitute for a bullock or a he-goat?

The prophet represents God as saying that a great deal of what goes for ritual is mere trampling of his courts. This means a milling around aimlessly in so-called holy places, with a sanctimonious expression and a frozen smile. It means going through a performance automatically and mechanically, without ever really involving the heart or inner man. Stilted programs may make God as weary as they do some of the earthly participants, and He may be as bored by some of our midweek prayer meetings as a lot of the members are. "And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

What is the liturgy in which God delights? The answer is unequivocal. It is the sharing of life and love. "Seek Justice, relieve the oppressed, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." The prophet Jeremiah states it thus, "Execute justice and righteousness, and deliver him that is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence, to the sojourner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place."

On the face of this clear declaration, the real service to God may be rendered in the civil courts where Christian attorneys plead without charge the cause of the poor. It may be in statesmanlike conduct of legislators who pass laws against

unjust discrimination. It may be in the board of aldermen where men of deep conviction take steps to deliver the depressed ghetto dwellers from the oppression of tyrannical landlords or venial storekeepers who exploit the poor and the ignorant for gain. The treading of sacred courts by cold, indifferent, and unconcerned men and women, who use their votes and ballots to further selfish interests, will not impress God. The Father of all mankind will not be deceived by vain oblations or the noise of solemn assemblies.

All too often the religious establishment has crushed the people of God and ground the faces of the poor. It has not existed to help widows but to take from them. It has equated itself with God and taught stewardship to the institution as the equivalent of faithfulness to God. It has threatened men with hell and perdition if their money was not poured into the coffers. Perhaps the time has come for an impartial investigation of what constitutes service to God and how it differs from the treading of the courts in our generation.

Once the voice of God spoke through the prophet, "Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream." Is this not the God whom we serve?

Opening Our Windows

Mission Messenger (March 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“The ultimate test of what a truth means is the conduct it dictates or inspires.”— William James.

Our ridiculous and inane divisions constitute a galling yoke bearing down upon the shoulders of the restoration movement. They effectively nullify any appeal for unity which we might make in the halls of religious discussion in our day. They give the lie to any vaunted claim that ours is a superior knowledge of the will of God. Unless we face up realistically to the problem of our own schismatic state we forfeit the right to be heard by honest men and women seeking the road to oneness.

We started out as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” How did we come to be one of the most divided movements on the current American scene? The answer is not a simple one. It involves human temperament, cultural development, changing environment, and factional animosity. But primarily it stems from adoption of a false philosophy with its attendant train of fallacious premises, and this produced the will to divide. It has left us fragmented, splintered and torn to bits.

What is the approach of orthodox “Church of Christ” editors to our predicament? They have only one. It is to assert over and over in a monotonous fashion that it is a simple

question of respect for the authority of the word of God. They saw away at it like a fiddler with a single string and a tight bow. And they only contribute to the division. The fact is that anyone who reads the “official journals” of the party soon realizes that they have no solution to the problem of division. Instead, they actually promote and perpetuate it.

Thinking men and women are becoming a little tired of the arrogant assumption that only one minority group has any real respect for the authority of Jesus while all others are deceived or deceivers. And they are increasingly concerned about which Church of Christ has such respect, seeing that there are a couple of dozen of them, and all of them regard the others as outside the pale. In the intellectual climate of our age it is doubtful that we can fool a great many calm reasoners in the future. We may even have a difficult time keeping a lot of our own members fooled. Thinking is catching, and if it becomes epidemic in proportion, brethren will scale our walls as if they were not there.

It is a little silly, when you sit down quietly and ponder about it, to blame everyone else for the mess in which we find ourselves. Each one of our factions gives itself a clean bill of health while stigmatizing all of the others. All are “loyal” in their own sight. But so long as we are divided none of us are faithful, because our divisions themselves are condemned in no uncertain terms. We are exactly where our thinking has brought us, and we will be tomorrow exactly where our thinking takes us. We are divided because we have thought in terms of division. If we are ever to be united we must think in terms of unity.

I deny emphatically that our problem is lack of respect for the authority of God’s word upon the part of everyone else. That is an escape hatch which we have constructed and into which we can retreat to keep from facing up in meaningful encounter to those who differ with our interpretations and insights. If we can project the idea that all who use instrumental music, or hold

pre-millennial views, despise the authority of God's Son and do despite to the Spirit of grace, we can scamper into our bunkers and slam the iron door shut over our heads, and sit inside breathing the perfumed air of our own self-righteousness and let the world go to hell.

The same thing can be done by others who regard support of orphan homes, contributions to Herald of Truth, Sunday schools, individual cups, fermented wine in the Lord's Supper, and a host of other issues, as indicative of a wholesale denial of the authority of the Son of God, and a deliberate attempt by "liberal rebels" to storm the gates of glory and unseat him from his position at the right hand of the Father on high. The result is that instead of having one holy temple composed of living stones, we have pock-marked the earth with little factional hummocks which look more like a prairie dog village than a kingdom of saints. It is a tribute to the longsuffering and patience of God that He has not long ago swatted us into oblivion for our pride and arrogance.

It is sinful enough to have created the kind of sectarian complex which we mistakenly equate with God's purpose, but it is even worse to be satisfied with it and to defend it as the last best hope of a universe wallowing in iniquity. It is time for a reformation, a sweeping reformation, and it should begin with Church-of-Christism. It must begin with an honest renunciation of those false propositions upon which we have constructed our architectural monstrosity with its isolated rooms filled with "brethren in error" gunning for each other through shattered windows. It is time for all of us to regain our integrity regardless of cost. It will no doubt be easier for those who have nothing to lose but their souls.

Let me suggest some things which we must surrender, as I view it, if we are again to become effective as leaven in our age. I do this sincerely, and ask only your sincere consideration of what I say. In reality, there will be little new in what I say, but it

must be said in this fashion.

1. We must reject the concept that the restoration of the ancient order means the reproduction in our age of any congregation established by, or existing in the days of the apostles. We cannot go “back to Jerusalem” and we should not want to do so. The congregation at Jerusalem was made up of human beings and was subjected to all of the passions and prejudices which men bring to an institution.

There were problems created by murmuring over food distribution and by dishonesty caused by greed. There were cultural and environmental involvements, and sectarianism within the number. Racial prejudice was a constant source of trouble. It is questionable whether any uncircumcised person was ever invited to eat with the Jerusalem saints.

What we seek to recover is the ideal of God as manifested in Jesus. That ideal was never fully reproduced in any congregation of people in the past. It will not be in our own. But each congregation in every age becomes its own “Jerusalem.” The word of the Christ comes to each group of saints, “So must the change of heart which leads to the forgiveness of sins be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

We make a mistake when we locate Jerusalem on a map of the earth’s surface. Jerusalem is now defined in terms of spirit and reality. “Believe me,” returned Jesus, “the time is coming when worshipping the Father will not be a matter of ‘on this hillside’ or ‘in Jerusalem.’ Nowadays you are worshipping with your eyes shut . . . Yet the time is coming, yes, and has already come, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and reality.”

God declared that Jerusalem was the center of the earth. But the center of the earth for you is where you are. And beyond you lie your Judea, your Samaria, and the uttermost parts of

your earth. Renewal does not come by going back to a certain time or place. That which is temporal and spatial belongs to what is visible. “For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things which are really permanent.” Renewal comes through recovery of proclamation, purpose and power!

2. We must divest ourselves of the notion that every method of Jesus in the implementation of his divinely ordained purpose is equally important with that purpose. This is essential for two reasons. It will deliver us from the hypocrisy we manifest in arbitrarily sorting his actions into two bins labeled “Contemporary Customs” and “Continuing Concerns.” And it will enable us to distinguish between that which was incidental to the doing of the act and its design.

It is a mistake to reason that Jesus intended to provide for us a detailed and meticulous pattern filled with its own jots and tittles. I am old enough to recall when congregations almost split over introduction of a baptistery and even after this convenient accommodation for immersion was installed there were still those who had to be taken to the river and baptized in running water as Jesus was. One purpose of baptism is to introduce all of us into one body, yet there were those who would have fractured the body into bits over the matter of where the act was performed.

In exactly the same vein is the idea that the Lord’s Supper cannot be observed with anything but unleavened bread. Jesus did not *choose* unleavened bread. He had no choice. He simply took the kind of bread which was the regular diet of the Jews at the time of the Passover and used it. It is an interesting fact that not once is the word *azumos*, unleavened bread, ever used in connection with the Lord’s Supper. The word is always *artos*, a loaf, whether leavened or unleavened.

There are those today who are so legalistic they would

make even the way the loaf is broken a test of fellowship. I know some brethren who would turn away from the Lord's Supper and refuse to eat and drink in memory of his death if the fruit of the vine was fermented. I know of others who would do the same if it were not. All of these mistake the very genius of the Way and are Judaistic in their approach. They are under law and not grace.

In spite of the fact that they claim to be ardent sticklers for the truth and defenders of the faith, their problem is that they do not know what constitutes either the truth or the faith. In their blind adherence to the letter they crucify the spirit and drive a factional dagger into the very body they claim to revere. The Lord's Supper is a visual depiction that we are all one bread and one body, and any insistence upon a purely incidental feature which will make it impossible for us to eat and drink together is inimical to the very ordinance. The kingdom of heaven is too majestic for its citizenry to spend their lives in nit-picking and finical namby-pamby.

Jesus said, "Surely life is more important than food, and the body more important than the clothes you wear." If this is true of the physical body of man composed of dust, surely the life in Christ is worth more than arguments about individual cups or fermented grape juice. And surely the body of Christ is worth more than any man's opinion about orphan homes or television programs. How long will we continue to frustrate the work of God by our own littleness? How long will we continue in the perverted sense of values we have projected?

3. We must forever free ourselves from the grave error that fellowship is equivalent to endorsement. The very act of equating the two is factional and divisive. It would make all fellowship of men with God impossible, for if God is forced to wait until we are free from every mistaken view before he can be in fellowship with us, there can be no fellowship. It is God's grace which makes it possible for him to accept us. It is sharing

in that grace which makes it possible for us to accept others as brethren, even though we cannot sanction all that they do.

If Paul could call the Corinthians a “congregation of God’s people at Corinth, dedicated to him in Christ Jesus, claimed by him as his own” (1 Corinthians 1:2), we should have no problem with any of the brethren whom we know. If he could repeatedly call them “my brothers” and designate them as “God’s garden,” “God’s building,” and “God’s temple,” we should be ashamed of our unlovely attitudes toward our brethren.

The fact is that brethren who refuse to recognize and call upon God’s children to pray, simply because they hold a different view about instrumental music or the millennium are not mature saints. They are infantile and childish. It is difficult to imagine those who claim to be children of the Father “setting at nought a brother” because of a divergent view of orphan homes, colleges, cups and classes.

That we could ever become so irrational and undiscerning as a people seems almost unthinkable. Those who defend such a fatuous course should be ashamed to live and afraid to die.

Regardless of what is said about the mistaken ideas relative to such things, it is the man who makes such matters a test of fellowship who is guilty before God of creating division in the body of Christ. No man can be held accountable for endorsing what he personally disavows. I am in the fellowship with many brethren with whom I disagree, and with thousands who engage in practices I cannot personally endorse. But I cherish our family relationship and our unity in Christ Jesus as of more worth than any view or opinion of those in my Lord, and I shall not separate the saints, nor drive them away because of our lack of mutual understanding of some things.

We have charted a course which makes us appear as a group of inconsistent eccentrics in the very religious realm

which we started out to penetrate with the glad tidings that unity is possible in Christ Jesus. Our present philosophy forces us to be modern Ishmaels, with “our hand against every man and every man’s hand against us.” It is time for us to renounce what God calls “a wild ass” existence of extremism and exclusivism. Let brethren hold their views about supporting orphan homes, the Herald of Truth, cups, colleges, classes, etc., but let us search for situations where we can labor together. Why keep up a continual clamor and a din of agitation about those things which have not one thing to do with our relationship in Christ Jesus?

4. We must rebel against the factional leadership of preachers and editors whose purpose is to maintain our sectarian status quo and who are dedicated to the inglorious task of thwarting every meaningful move toward a greater sense of oneness among the believers. In spite of all the exalted tributes paid to congregational autonomy by partisan journalists, our congregations are not free from fear. It is a farce to claim that they are. Every faction has an earthly headquarters to furnish an “infallible interpretation” as a guideline for the adherents of the party and almost everyone of these is built around a paper. By carefully filtering out opposing views and by lop-sided editing the people can be kept in ignorance of what goes on in the religious realm. Government by “editorcracy” enables the central power structure to reach into far-off places and ruin the courageous souls who will not conform.

The news that is printed is slanted to favor the factional position, playing up every gain from other sources but never hinting at defections from the party. To read only one paper regularly one might be led to believe it was the only one being published. A conspiracy of silence forbids favorable mention of any other journal. There is abundant evidence that many of the more perceptive students in our day are beginning to resent self-appointed censors and a rough time ahead can be predicted for those who have confused brotherhood with “smotherhood.”

We must recapture the right of brethren to read the word of God for themselves, to form their own conclusions, to question and to be questioned. The day of the dictatorial “Curia” is gone. It belonged to the Dark Ages of superstition and ignorance when men could not read and the printed word was a “sealed book” until someone literate happened along. It is time to throw open the window and let in fresh air. It is time to turn the full glare of the spotlight of truth upon our positions and practices. Let’s rip apart the paper curtains which separate us and let the sun shine into all of our darkened factional cubicles. We are not rats that we should cherish the gloom of isolation. We are brethren. Let the truth be known.

5. We must develop the courage to speak out boldly against the intolerance and bigotry which characterize the sectarian attitude of which our brethren are victims. We must restore a prophetic ministry with its power and penetration. The word of God must be to us as a fire, and as a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. We dare not to sell our souls for money or barter away our integrity for a position. “Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God!”

Let lesser men cringe and cower before the forces of tradition and custom, but let those who love the Lord rise up and batter down the walls of hate and spite which keeps God’s children apart. Let us ignore these human barriers and share with our brethren wherever they are. Shall we continue to be like barnyard fowl, tamed, domesticated and with wings clipped by the scissors of conformity? Shall we cluck in contentment inside of our pens while a world goes up in flames around us?

The time has come for the saints to unfurl the flag of brotherhood, to transcend the human limitations imposed by those who have usurped the prerogatives which belong to all the citizens of the kingdom. It is just not true that all of the brethren who differ with us reject the authority of Jesus Christ. Many of

them simply reject our claim to be the supreme court to interpret for all mankind the revealed will of the Father. To reject our authority is not to deny the authority of heaven. Those who really deny the authority of Jesus are those who assume for themselves the role of official interpreters to whose dicta every knee must bow and every tongue must confess.

I want the whole wide world to know that, as a free man in Christ Jesus, I shall serve all of my brothers in Him. I refuse to forfeit my liberty to pope, prelate, preacher or priest. I shall not bow the knee to canon, curate or cleric. To my own Master I shall stand or fall and to him I shall allow all others to give answer. We can overcome the ecclesiastical serfdom into which we have fallen if we love God enough to make the sacrifice. But we must convert our dreams into decisions. It is not enough to gaze at the Star; we must start following it if we are to find Him.

As John Tyndall put it back in 1871, “The brightest flashes in the world of thought are incomplete until they have been proven to have their counterparts in the world of fact.” Come on, brethren, let’s go!

The Unmistakable Scent

Mission Messenger (March 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are, on Christ’s triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him spread throughout the world like a lovely perfume! We Christians have the unmistakable ‘scent’ of Christ, discernible alike to those who are being saved and to those who are heading for death. To the latter it seems like the deathly smell of doom, to the former it has the refreshing fragrance of life itself” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

At first glance it seems rather incongruous to compare the spread of knowledge in the world with the pervasion of the atmosphere by perfume. On second thought it may be agreed that the illustration is quite appropriate. Men tend to breathe in the glory of Christ and are affected by it exactly as they are stimulated by the sense of smell.

The picture in the mind of Paul was the stirring one of a Roman triumph. This was the most elaborate spectacle ever staged in the Empire. A conquering general returning to his homeland was accorded this glittering honor. The conqueror was arrayed in a lustrous robe of rich purple, embroidered with gold thread depicting his victories. A crown of pure gold rested upon his head, while a branch of laurel, the symbol of victory, was carried in his hand.

He rode in a beautiful chariot decorated with plates of

ivory and chains of gold. The chariot was drawn by a team of white horses. Standing at the back of the general was a slave who continually screamed accusations and described in a loud voice his weaknesses and vices. This was a provision to keep him humble and to overcome pride.

Musicians led the procession, while the chariot was followed by wagons loaded with spoils, and by a train of kings, princes and captains who were captives of war. Attendants accompanied the parade waving censers of perfumed incense reserved only for such occasions. Always some of the captives who had violated covenants and rebelled were led to death, while others who had been submissive were liberated. Frequently these became allies.

Thus, some of those who smelled the perfume wafted upon the air from the swinging censers knew that it betokened the approach of death, while others recognized that it was a portent of the life and liberty which would soon be accorded unto them.

The apostle knew that his description would be understood at Corinth. Two centuries before he wrote, Lucius Mummius, a Roman consul, had swept across their province and laid Corinth and other cities waste. The Roman senate accorded him a triumph, and bestowed upon him the name Achaicus because of his devastation of Achaia. Written into the official annals of the city were the names of those who had been taken to Rome, some to be killed and others to be saved from death.

Now the apostle was in the vanguard of another conquest of Corinth. This one was made with the sword of the Spirit and not the blade of steel. So he wrote to them in this same letter, "The battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not those of human warfare but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds. Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defence that men can erect against the true knowledge

of God.”

In our lead passage he ascribes thanks to God for the divine leadership which makes possible the triumphant procession of Christ everywhere. Throughout the world the incense of the testimony of the apostles is wafted upward like a lovely perfume, and the atmosphere of every nook and cranny of the Greek world is infused by it.

Wherever Christians go the scent of Christ is perceived. It is unique and unmistakable, a blend of the finest qualities of grace and truth. It purifies the air and makes life more pleasant and endurable. Yet it is a heady fragrance which has a varied effect. Those who are heading for death imagine it to be the smell of doom, bringing with it the anticipation of grave disaster. To the rest it is the very breath of life itself. I know because I am in the victory train by adoption of the captain of my salvation, through his grace.

Spiritual Pioneers

Mission Messenger (March 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

The spirit of adventure! This is the thing which Christians have often lost in our day. It is this loss which reduces our lives to a treadmill existence, which makes us heavy and stodgy. This is what contributes to a mere “treading of the courts” by weary, bored and apathetic worshippers. There are no frontiers to conquer, no forts to storm. The dream of world conquest has faded. The vision of the King before whom the celestial princes cast down their crowns has blended with and become lost in the murky haze of the passing centuries.

It does not need to be so. There are greater dragons breathing destructive fire in our day than were ever conjured up by fertile imaginations in the bygone days of myth and chivalry. And ours are real! There are giants stalking through our land wearing seven-league boots and threatening to crush all that we hold dear and revere. But we have allowed ourselves to become blindfolded with the rags of tradition and of the status quo until our imagination has drained away and our will to fight has been washed down the drain.

There is little courage required to drive to the “church parking lot” on Sunday morning and enter the educational building to discuss the lesson of the day as set forth in a quarterly so designed as to offend no one. Nor does one have to be especially brave to sit in a cushioned pew designed for his

bodily ease while watching a presentation in which the chief actor must manicure his lines so as to start evacuating the clock-watchers promptly at the stroke of twelve.

This kind of thing is called “Christianity” by millions in our day. And it has produced a smug, complacent, lukewarm institution which makes even God want to vomit. There is the soul-warping pride in property and real estate holdings, the glory in the glamor of bricks and concrete, the shameful boasting in temples made with men’s hands, despite the plain statement that God is not worshipped in such. And there is often the even more detestable sin of influence peddling, of political wirepulling, of base maneuvering for positions of power by clerical aspirants, who are not honest enough to admit they are a special clergy. We earnestly wish that such language could be proven extreme, that someone could show indisputably that the conditions we have mentioned simply do not exist. It would cheer our hearts to know that we are wrong. But our hope lies not in the apathetic mass. Rather it is found in the lives of the venturesome few, the spiritual vikings who dare to turn the prows of their boats into uncharted seas. I know some of these pioneers.

There are missionaries who are sick of being mere forerunners of a sect, and who have dared to cut themselves loose from the financial apron strings which bound them to the alma mater which we have fashioned. They are setting their faces toward strange cities and forbidding jungles, going only to tell men of the resurrected Lord of life, and to lead them into a vital relationship with Him, unfettered by American ways and culture.

There are the schoolteachers who are turning their backs on plush positions in suburban educational plants, and by deliberate choice going into the fetid, stinking ghettos, to teach the hopeless and deprived human spawn, gasping to hold their heads up and to swim in a slimy sea of despondency and

desperation.

There are the college young people turning a deaf ear to the enticing offers of great industrial complexes to open up “talk shops” and “coffee houses” in the inner city where dope-pushers, pimps and prostitutes ply their devious trades and sell living human flesh as nonchalantly as dead animals are peddled in meat markets. These young Christians are literally trying to throw out the lifeline to sinking mariners battered and buffeted by waves of passion and storms of hate.

There are the university students who dare to challenge the smut-merchants and obscenity-hawkers, and who bring a witness to bear where secularism has planted her inglorious standard. These trust in God and in the power of His might and refuse to be deterred from their dedicated service to Him whose name they bear.

There are the fathers and mothers who maintain unswerving discipline motivated by love, the men and women in shops and offices who refuse to lower their ethical standards, the neighbors who dare to be different from a decadent society, and others who have heard the clear ring of the trumpet on distant heights and who would plant their feet on higher ground.

All of these are bold followers of Him who ran the gauntlet of men’s passions and sins, and fearlessly faced the foes wherever He met them. The spirit of daring is not dead. There are still those who stand athwart the path and battle evil without flinching. To them the Way is not one of cold indifference or calculated neutrality. And these will be the vanguard on that day “when the saints go marching in.”

In the meantime they must cut their way through our own labyrinth of red tape and meet the opposition which resents taking the battle to the streets and market-places for fear that it will besmirch our image. We must maintain at all costs our

clean-cut suburban look so that an affluent society will compliment us for our community spirit even while they resist the Holy Spirit. It would be wonderful if we could entice the forces of Satan to come to our vantage points where we could anesthetize them instead of battling them. Since they will not do so we hail those who have the courage to go where the action is. Too many of us confuse the vineyard with the storage shed and spend a lifetime “picking over” the same grapes.

Vocabulary Problems

Mission Messenger (April 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“Abuse of words has been the great instrument of sophistry and chicanery, of party, faction, and division of society.”— John Adams (March 31, 1819).

Jesus did not come to earth merely to create an institution, composed of folks who are nice to be around. The tears which coursed down his cheeks when he bade Jerusalem farewell, and the sweat and blood which caked with the dust on his thorn-lacerated brow as he died on the cross give silent witness that there was more to it than that.

Actually, his advent marked another decisive stage in a cosmic conflict. It was not the last event in the battle of the ages by any means, but it set the stage for it, and guaranteed that when the final trumpet blast dies away, victory will be on the side of the forces of righteousness. It is difficult for mere mortals to realize that there is a realm of darkness, inhabited by demonic forces, a kingdom of conspiracy engaged in a malevolent plot against all who have chosen to march under the crimson banner of the Messiah.

In our sophisticated age it is popular to deny that there are intelligent beings in either a celestial realm or an infernal region. When man becomes his own god he has no need of angels or heaven. The concept of evil spirits antagonistic to a world of

peace and order is regarded as a relic of an age of fantasy and superstition. It is a myth from the misty past unworthy of notice by enlightened moderns.

Allow me then to announce that, in spite of all the arguments set forth by brilliant theologians and philosophers, I am unmoved in my conviction that there is a prince of the power of the air, and that he has at his command malignant legions who are desperately concerned with what is transpiring in our world today. We are not wrestling with flesh and blood. There are principalities and powers, a hierarchy of rebel spirits cast out of heaven because of anarchy. There are world rulers of darkness. There are malicious spiritual forces in the heavenly places. They operate according to the strategy devised by the evil one, responding to his orders and commands.

The war which resulted in defeat for the insurrectionists in heaven has been transferred to earth. We are engaged in it, wittingly or unwittingly. No one who is rational escapes involvement. No one can “sit this one out.” Jesus took upon him the form of a slave and was made flesh, that by means of death he might destroy him who had the power over death, that is the devil. He laid down his life that he might take it again.

Although the ultimate decision is certain, the struggle goes on in unabated fury. Only man has a low estimate of it. The angels know the stress and the strain. The demons also know. It is war to them, war to the hilt, war in all of its stark reality, war in all of its destructive power and force and tragedy. The prince on the black horse is a master strategist, capable of plotting the end of a world made by the Creator himself. His slavish minions follow unquestioningly in his train.

I have neither the time nor the inclination to set down here all of the means which I believe are employed by the forces of the Dark Brigade. But I do want to mention a few things of which all of us should be made aware “lest Satan take advantage

of us.” We must know something about the tactics of the foe if we are to acquit ourselves with honor in the struggle.

After the second great world war it was revealed that Germany had printed millions of pieces of counterfeit currency to be bootlegged in the allied countries and placed in circulation. This is a device which has been utilized many times in the past. It is intended to demoralize the economic structure of a nation and create panic by destroying confidence in the government.

This ruse is also applied in the spiritual realm where Satan’s emissaries upset values by alteration of the terminology used by the Spirit. Language is the currency which is the medium of exchange in the domain of thought. To attach meanings to words which are foreign to their original implications is to undermine God’s purpose. When God wanted men to scatter in order to populate the earth they sought to remain together in defiance of his purpose. It was necessary to bring about a confusion of tongues to separate them.

It is now the desire of God to gather his people, but Satan, taking a cue from the episode at Babel, has kept them from all speaking the same thing by again causing a confusion of tongues. There is hardly a word of any significance which was coined or employed by the Spirit that has not been counterfeited or devalued. One of the most essential things in our day is the recovery of the vocabulary of the Spirit. This means more than merely speaking where the Bible speaks. It also entails speaking as the Bible speaks. Such words as church, faith, repentance, baptism, predestination, atonement, bishop and priest, have all been warped or twisted and made to represent a different set of values than that intended by God. They should be recaptured and restored to their proper place. Instead of that, well-meaning individuals contribute to the confusion by their injudicious usage of expressions which are alien to God’s word.

A CASE IN POINT

A good example is found in a practice which is all too common. In some youth camps a highly emotional setting is created and while the embers of a campfire are dying down, a special appeal is made to Christian boys and girls to step forward and volunteer for “full-time Christian service.” Those who do so are given special commendation and are designated as “life recruits.” It is expected that they will study to be missionaries, “local ministers,” or special functionaries to be supported by the rest of their brethren.

It is not my intention here to examine the wisdom of bringing pressure upon those who are entering puberty and are beset by strong internal feelings involving doubt, fear and developing idealism. To take advantage of pliable and plastic minds which are under the trauma of turmoil and force upon them a grave decision of vocation which they are not prepared to make does not appeal to me. One reason that it does not is because I have talked to too many who have grown older and feel that they were “conned” into something by undue persuasion.

Some of these have come to suffer a guilt-complex because they found that they were not temperamentally or otherwise equipped to carry out an impulsive decision made in immaturity. And this is intensified by the thought that their emotional response constituted a covenant with God and they do not want to “go back on God” by entering another occupational field for which they are much better adapted.

However, my chief concern here does not relate to the personal or psychological angle, important as I consider it to be. I am rather disturbed by the false concept of the kingdom of heaven exhibited by those who promote such things. To imply that Christians must do something additional to being born again to become “lifetime recruits” is to imply that those who do

not do that something else are not lifetime recruits.

The fact is that every child of God is a recruit for life and the initial pledge of allegiance to Christ, validated by baptism inducts all who obey into “full-time service.” To have some Christians step forward and “enlist for full-time service” is to leave the impression that those who do not engage in such a public demonstration are not obligated to serve the Lord full time. I can think of nothing which will create more apathy in the hearts of the majority than to relegate them to the status of second-rate Christians by such methods as are employed.

Every psychologist is aware that there are always some who will come forward at any appeal and volunteer for any task. Sometimes these are the least qualified. Others more modest and unassuming may have greater potential, but will shrink from any exhibition. But this is not the chief objection. It is simply that every Christian surrendered his life to Jesus upon acceptance of him as Lord and Christ. It is harmful to the life of the body to make it appear that some members only function on a part-time basis. Indeed, such a thing would disrupt bodily functions and paralyze the organism.

To this it is objected that the call is only made for some to volunteer for full time “church work.” And I answer that there is no such thing. What we call “the church” is the community of saints, and whatever I do in word or deed as a member of that community in the name of Jesus, is a response to the Spirit. Not only is the expression “church work” not found in the sacred scriptures, but there is nothing equivalent to it. The very idea is pre-Christian and stems from Judaism, under which one tribe constituted the priests who ministered unto God while all others were limited in service.

Jesus died to remove such differences and distinctions. In Him we are all members of a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation, and a purchased people of God. There

is no distinction between clergy and laity. The word for clergy means “lot, or portion,” and all of us are God’s lot or portion. The word for laity means “people,” and we are all God’s people. All of God’s laity are his clergy, and vice versa.

It is true that we have varied talents and functions but one is no more important than another. The man who goes to Africa to teach black children to become literate, and to bring glad tidings to native villages, is no more valuable to God’s purpose than one who labors all day at desk or lathe to support his family, and spends a night each week in the inner city ghetto teaching school drop-outs how to read and bringing the Presence into such an environment of dark despair and abject hopelessness.

I know women who teach all day in a school room, and men who work many hours in service stations, and who take a part of what they earn from tiring and exhausting labor and contribute it to the support of families on mission fields. The apostle calls such assistance “a lovely fragrance, a sacrifice that pleases the very heart of God.” He designates it as “the fellowship of giving and receiving.” Those who give are “fellow-workers whose names are in the book of life.”

There is an idea extant that God calls men to the pulpit or to mission fields, and that this is “the high calling.” Such an idea is without scriptural foundation. It was to the whole body of “God’s people at Ephesus, believers incorporate in Christ Jesus,” that Paul wrote, “I entreat you, then, as God has called you, live up to your calling.” Our call is to be reconciled to God, to pledge allegiance to Christ. How we implement that call is up to us. All of us are called.

We cannot all do the same things because we are not all adapted or gifted to do the same things. But whatever we do in honor to his name is part of our calling and we all need each other. Priscilla and Aquila were serving God as much while

making tents as while teaching Apollos. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Let it be your ambition to keep calm and look after your own business, and to work with your hands, as we ordered you, so that you may command the respect of those outside your own number, and at the same time may never be in want.”

This instruction is sandwiched in between an admonition on brotherly love and a brilliant revelation about the resurrection from the dead. It is evident that manual labor and gainful employment occupies a high priority in heaven’s thinking. The point is that all of us are God’s ministers and we are ministers all of the time. A man who operates a garbage truck all week and speaks to a little country congregation on Sunday is not just a minister on Sunday. He is a minister every day and may actually contact more people out of Jesus while on his route than while in the pulpit.

We make a mistake when we think that the only way to reach men for Christ is to deliver “a sermon.” The word “sermon” is not in the Bible. Origen was the father of “the sermon” and the president of the first theological seminary. We overlook the fact that people may be won simply by observing how we behave. “In the same spirit you married women should adapt yourselves to your husbands, so that even if they do not obey the Word of God they may be won to God without any word being spoken, simply by seeing the pure and reverent behavior of you, their wives.”

It is true that the wife has a more constant and intimate relationship with her husband than one has with other clerks in a store, or with other mechanics in a shop, or with customers on the route. But the pure and reverent behavior can be observed anywhere and it is affirmed that men may be won to God by seeing it, even when no word is spoken. We are to be as lights in a crooked and perverse generation. Lights do not make a noise or call attention to themselves. They simply shine.

Peter puts it this way, "After all, who in the ordinary way is likely to injure you for being enthusiastic for good? . . . You need neither fear their threats nor worry about them; simply concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ in your hearts." To be enthusiastic for good is the real need for our day, but this is not necessarily the same as going all out for some specific method or program of doing good. Let me illustrate the point.

In these days of organized activity a special "calling night" may be set up and pressures brought to bear to get as many as possible to come to the meetingplace and go out in pairs to call upon unsaved persons in the neighborhood. Often those who feel unqualified for such activity do not show up, and there may be a tendency to think of them as slackers. This may not be the case at all.

It is not my intention to speak derogatorily of such efforts. I rejoice at every person who may be won to Christ by whatever means. Yet it remains that a formal program may not be a proof of faithfulness but an admission of weakness. When men do not assume their responsibility naturally we seek by organization to coerce them into doing something through a sense of duty. However, neighbors may resent being disturbed in the evening by those who come simply because they want to make a report and add them to a statistical chart.

And it is true that those who do not appear for a structured calling program set up by the chairman of an organization designated for the task, may do more good by simply being a neighbor all of the time. When a lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" the answer in the form of a human interest story was simply that it was one who helped another along the road when he was helpless. It is possible that more good may be done by sharing in the burdens and problems of others than by calling on them because you drew their file card and they unwittingly became your clients by remote

assignment.

It is the very essence of our life in Christ that we be constantly concerned about humanity and the needs of those about us, regardless of race, creed or color. This concern cannot be turned on one night per week because that is the announced time for calling. Instead of setting up a program for a few who are already overworked why should we not rather instill in the whole company of the saints an unselfish commitment until they will automatically and spontaneously respond with compassion to every need in whatever way they can? In one place of which I know the man who had charge of the calling program would not speak to one of his fellow-elders.

Certainly there is nothing wrong about a systematic canvass of a neighborhood to solicit opportunities to talk with others about the meaning of Jesus in our lives, nor is there anything wrong about having a calling program. But to go reluctantly to engage in such work simply because of a fear that one will be thought disloyal, and to regard as unworthy those who may seek to influence others in a different way and at other times, is not an especially Christian attitude.

We need to be cautious about activities dreamed up and drummed up by men in authority and saddled upon all of the saints without their previous knowledge or consent. It is very easy for men who are extroverts to promote a scheme which they think will “enhance the image of the church,” and to make those who are not qualified to push it, feel like second-class citizens of the kingdom if they do not actively participate. Some of the most effective service is rendered to our Lord by those who simply go on quietly sharing daily with those who are burdened by the demands of life.

As I view it, one of the most unspiritual manifestations of the institutional church is its crass manipulation of human beings in such a manner as to promote the ends of the

organization. Man was not made for the church, but the church was made for man. Too often this is reversed and men are valued according to what they contribute to the power structure. The “church” forgets that it is on earth to serve, and becomes imbued with the idea that it exists to be served.

We live in an age of rivalry and competition. We are part of a success-oriented society. This is a time when that which counts is limited to the data which can be fed into a computer. We are caught up in “the numbers racket.” In such a culture men are reduced to statistics. The nose count becomes more important than the heart throb.

PLAYING GAMES

This is seen in the attendance games which “churches” play. One challenges another to see which one can get the most bodies inside the door for Sunday School during a given month. The promotional material goes out and publicity releases are mailed. When the whistle blows for the start of the game there is a flurry of excitement. Announcements are given from the speaker’s stand after long distance calls have been made to see which one is setting the pace. The box score is published each week. If it is close the “world” stands still until the winner is announced and the horseplay is ended, after which a return can be made to the plush-lined rut.

We are becoming accustomed to the pranks played by those on the college campus who seek to overcome their boredom by devious methods involved in getting “the most” into something. Once it was seeing who could swallow the most live goldfish, then who could pile the most persons into a telephone booth, and finally who could cram the greatest number of people into a Volkswagen. It is apparent that our own image-formers are not wholly anti-intellectual. They are willing to learn at least some things from those on the college campus.

Along the same line may be noted the current procedure in holding what one segment calls “revivals” but which another carefully designates “gospel meetings.” A good case may be made out that both are mistaken in their designations. It is a frequent procedure to engage in an intensive visitation program a week or more in advance and get the prospects to commit themselves to “go forward” at the invitation on the first day. This “saving up” of converts creates a mass appeal and makes the visiting preacher look good.

Actually this amounts to skillful manipulation of men for whom Jesus died in order to adorn the organizational image. There is some indication in our day that people are tired of being pawns. In our age of increasing knowledge they can see through the schemes devised to make the church and the preacher appear to be something which they may not be. I am not a prophet but I predict that it will become increasingly more difficult to get people “down the aisle.” For those who become discouraged at such a prospect we point out that this has no real relationship to getting them into the Christ.

The burden of our message in this article may be summarized in the following points.

1. Almost every word employed by the Holy Spirit through the envoys of Christ has been abused and given a misleading connotation in our generation. It should be one of our tasks to rescue the terminology from error and restore it to its proper place so that it will once more communicate the thought of God.

2. We need to emphasize that every Christian is a life recruit in real service for Jesus. Every one is a member of the body, a living part of a vital organism, in whatever circumstances he finds himself. Jesus was the Son of God while attending weddings, visiting friends, presiding at a fish fry, walking through a wheat field, or riding a donkey into town. And we are God’s children wherever we are.

3. We must abandon our unscriptural and misleading distinctions which perpetuate the idea that life is compartmentalized into tidy little boxes called “secular” and “spiritual.” No labor is secular labor when performed by a Christian, for God is there. And his presence sanctifies the place. A man who works with his own hands is obeying God as surely as one who spends his time preaching, supported by those who engage in manual labor.

4. The “high calling of God” is not to a special few to enter a pulpit and talk down to those who sit in orderly pews before them. Instead, it is the call to all to come into Christ and then go into a disorderly world of sin and shame as He did. It is not to shut ourselves off from all temptations, but to be tempted in all points as he was, and yet to be without sin.

Our “churches” are too often “heavens” of our own construction where we imagine that we can dwell with God aloof from the world. But Jesus left heaven to penetrate the world of mankind. If we will follow him we must get the salt out of the shaker, the dynamite out of the box, the heaven out of the refrigerator, and the bushel off the lampstand.

5. There must be a recognition that we cannot all do the same thing in the same way, but that whatever we can do we must do, and we are all important to the body. The hand cannot do the work of the foot, nor the ear the work of the eye. We tend to emphasize and even glorify the speaking function, but Paul might ask us, “After all, if the body were all mouth, for example, where would be the sense of hearing? Or if it were all tongue where would be the sight?” He would no doubt remind us that “God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body, as he chose.”

6. We must avoid the conclusion that the only way men can function is through organized activity or by a program conceived in the minds of a few and then “sold” to the

congregations. A program is a tool, and it may or may not be a good one. It always appears good to its inventor for one loves a brain-child as he does a natural child. But programs, like all other human expedients and devices, are expendable. They are not absolutes. The essential thing is to get the job done for the Master. No one else can do the work which I am obligated to do, nor can I do the work of any other. We can plan and work together in many areas but one need not join me in every enterprise to be faithful to God's design for his life. We must allow freedom for all to work as they are able to do so under his authority.

7. We should examine our hearts constantly and very carefully to determine if we are motivated by a spirit of sectarian rivalry. This is one of the most subtle weapons in the arsenal of Satan. There is ever a danger that we will use the church, the gospel, or even the souls of men, to elevate ourselves into positions of prominence. I am sure that this temptation gripped me during a lot of my earlier life. I rationalized that I was serving Jesus when really I was concerned about my own image in the faction which constituted our miniature universe and which we conceived of as exhausting the possibilities of the kingdom of heaven.

I have come to realize that the sectarian spirit breeds dishonesty and cowardice. The party elevates one into prominence because it can glory in his ability, which often is very insignificant when seen objectively. Most of us are egocentric and selfish, and we can be easily led to prostitute our talents if others fawn upon us. We deceive ourselves and project a false image, even concealing our real feelings, in order not to jeopardize our standing. Our braggadocio and strutting may serve to conceal our own emptiness and insecurity.

What a thrill it is to be knocked down by the light and arise to realize that all of your past values are flushed down the drain by a crimson stream of blood. When the scales fall from

your eyes and you can see men as God sees them, you are free from your crying human need to be sure that your mask is on straight and that your halo rides at the right angle. You do not even need to smile if your heart is breaking. You can cry and not be ashamed.

One of the greatest things we can do for our brethren is to lift from their backs the yoke of sham and pretence which the factional spirit with its masquerade and mummery forces them to wear. Let us free men to be real, to love and cherish as their hearts yearn to do. “Why do you now provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?” I want to dedicate my life to lifting and smashing yokes hewn by men to saddle as burdens upon their brethren, for “God who can read men’s minds, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, as he did to us” (Acts 15:8). Turn God’s people loose!

8. Finally, we must cease to think of our brethren as cogs to keep the wheels turning. While it is true that by love we are to serve one another, it is not true that God intended for men to become serfs or vassals of a mere institution. There is no indication that service is to be commanded under threat. We are not puppets dangling on a string which can be yanked from a remote office. We are not expected to dance to the tune of self-appointed pipers.

The fact is that the welfare of man is the chief concern of heaven. All ordinances, orders and arrangements have been given, not as ends in themselves, but because they contribute to this greater end. Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath was made for man. And the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath. This means that we must think of the body of Christ as having come to serve and not to be served. Jesus did not suffer to create an institution to provide authoritative positions for a chosen few. He died for men, for sinners. And whatever offices and functions are among us must be utilized for

the common good.

The apostles were first in God's arrangement, yet Paul wrote, "Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your own happiness." He asked the question which all of us should ask. "For what point is there in my depressing the very people who can give me such joy?" (2 Corinthians 2:2).

The Planned Experience

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

“We want our transitory life to be absorbed into the life that is eternal. Now the power that has planned this experience for us is God, and he has given us his spirit as a guarantee of its truth” (2 Corinthians 5:4, 5).

There are some thrilling bits of literature, both ancient and modern, which deal with the meaning of death, but for sheer beauty of expression and encouragement to hope, none of them can hold a candle to the words of Paul as written to the former pagans at Corinth. Probably I am impressed by them because I am aware of what a change they wrought in the lives of those who were slaves to superstition. But they are timeless words and they also penetrate my consciousness like a stray sunbeam in an attic.

To wonder about pain and suffering, and of what lies beyond their reach is as universal as death itself. If death is all there is, if it is the ultimate, the end, then there is no sense at all to existence. It is a nightmare which ends not in an awakening, but in oblivion. But if suffering and death are part of a plan leading to a transcendent experience, they are at least understandable. And that is the thesis of the apostle.

Paul begins by saying, “We wish you could see how all this is working out for your benefit,” and immediately involves

God's grace in the whole scheme of things. He affirms that, "This is the reason we never collapse." It seems evident that if one can grasp the significance of grace and come to rely upon it, he has a foundation for a sane evaluation of self and destiny. Grace supports us in every trial and the greater the suffering, the more grace God gives.

One must not be naive, nor should he generalize beyond reason, but is it possible that one reason why there are so many who fold up under the strain and tension is because there is so little comprehension of grace? Has our legalistic approach which makes God a police judge instead of a Father, unfitted us for a life free from worry and concern for self? Are we moving about with inner doubts and fears until we are actually "haunted houses?" Do the ghosts of our past transgressions pour out of the darkened crannies of our hearts?

Grace frees us from inner dread. It also enables us to endure suffering, to be reconciled to a life of pain. And it all comes about because we are empowered to see the things that are invisible. This is the secret of abounding Joy. If one sees only the things that are visible— poverty, dirt, filth, squalor, crime, wounds, and putrefying sores— he may actually lose his balance. If he envisions war, agony, lacerated flesh, and the pallor of death, he will grow bitter and become disillusioned.

But if he sees beyond these into the unseen, he will be strengthened with might in the inner man to press on untiringly. Somewhere there is a place where the rivers are not polluted but a clear stream flows pure as crystal. Somewhere there is a city whose heart is not a decaying ghetto and where sin cannot corrupt. Somewhere there is a fadeless day and the sun does not go down by night, because the glory of God is the light. If one believes this he can then freely admit that he lives on earth as an exile and foreigner. And the things that happen to him are natural for one who is not in his native land.

Of course, we can always get hooked on the problem of whether this is literal or figurative, but this does not bother me one bit. I am not always sure of what I can see, when it comes to classification and interpretation. A few generations ago what was classed as science fiction is now known as reality by every schoolboy. With faith in God I can proceed in hope and allow him to work out the details. It is only when I am tempted to play God and get everything on the shelf and properly labeled that I get into difficulty. Not everything in the universe fits the labels prepared in advance and handed out by science.

So “these little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain.” One may even choose pain if he realizes that it is the road to a better life. Thus, a cripple with a twisted foot is willing to subject himself to surgery and weeks of discomfort if he knows that at the end he will be able to walk straight. Pain is only intolerable when it seems aimless and pointless. One who would never enter a tunnel when it is endless has no reluctance to enter one which terminates in a bright and beautiful valley on the other side of the mountain.

Life on earth is likened to living in a tent. This is an apt figure, because such a dwelling is adapted to a nomadic existence. But we have the promise that when the tent is taken down, we have a permanent house in heaven, made by God. Death actually does the Christian a favor, freeing him from a body of pain, and preparing him for a life of closeness with Christ. A Christian does not leave home when he dies, he goes home!

I am a believer! I believe that this transitory life will be absorbed into eternal life. I believe that this experience has been planned by God’s power. I believe that the Holy Spirit personally dwells in me as a guarantee that the divine purpose will be carried out. I’m standing on the promises. I’m resting on his grace. I’m leaning on the everlasting arms. And that’s the

reason I can say with the apostle, “This makes us confident, whatever happens.”

In distinguishing between security and joy, C. S. Lewis writes, “The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God: a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bathe or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.”

The Complete Eclipse

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[Abstract]

“And while it is true that the former temporary glory has been completely eclipsed by the latter, we do well to remember that it is eclipsed simply because the present permanent plan is such a very much more glorious thing than the old.” (2 Corinthians 3:10, 11).

Our more immediate fathers in the faith, when dealing with the evolution of revelation, divided history into three eras which they designated Patriarchal, Jewish and Christian dispensations. In order to show that God’s light was given on an increasing scale of intensity, they spoke of the Starlight, Moonlight and Sunlight Ages. The Moonlight Age began with the covenant announced at Sinai, the Sunlight Age with the covenant at Mount Sion.

In the chapter from which our initial statement is taken, the apostle Paul refers to these two as the old covenant and the new covenant. His purpose is to show the superiority of the latter as compared to the former, and provide for us an incentive to fulfill our role in the significant reflection of the glory of God. He did not write to provide “sermon material” for a formal address on the subject, nor to furnish argumentative fuel for debate. The design was to enable us to translate into life “the ever-increasing splendor” which comes from seeing the glory with unveiled faces.

When God directly steps into the arena of human affairs, that splendor which accompanies the ultimate purity dazzles those mortals who catch even a glimpse of it. I use the term “catch a glimpse” to imply that if one were suddenly to see it in its fulness he would die. God appeared on Sinai to announce the terms of the covenant which he made with liberated slaves. He identified himself by saying, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” When Moses asked to see God’s glory, he was told that to look upon God’s face would result in death. The Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.” This is another way of saying that Moses could see the receding glory of God, or behold the afterglow of divine radiance.

The reflection of this glory in the face of Moses was so great that it was necessary for him to put a veil on his face while talking to the people. The apostle writes that, “The administration of the Law which was engraved in stone (and which led in fact to spiritual death) was so magnificent that the Israelites were unable to look unflinchingly at Moses’ face, for it was alight with heavenly splendor.” He reasons that if a transitory system had such heavenly splendor, even though destined to end in condemning men, surely “the new administration of the Spirit of life would be a much more glorious thing.”

It is at this juncture he states that “it is true that the former temporary glory has been completely eclipsed.” This means that the moonlight age has been blotted out or obscured. It is very difficult for most people to concede that this is true. They prefer to think of a merger rather than a complete change of economy. They want a little moonshine mixed with the sunlight.

But the language employed will not justify such an interpretation. We are said to be free from the law and dead to it. It is affirmed that the law has been done away, disannulled and abolished. It is distinctly said that we are not under law, that we have been redeemed from its curse, and that it was a yoke of slavery from which we have been freed.

It is not, however, merely the law given by Moses from which we have been freed, but law as a means or hope of justification. It was the old economy of legalism, the idea of a written code as a basis of righteousness, from which we have been set free. “For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him” (Romans 10:4). That is what was completely eclipsed!

The glory of the law was temporary. It was given until faith should come. We are now subjects of a “present permanent plan” much more glorious than the old. It is unfortunate that among the Jews “to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds.” But it is even more unfortunate that a veil lies over the minds of many who read the scriptures growing out of the new agreement.

These epistles of love are changed into a written code to be interpreted by judgmental men whose interpretation must be regarded as final. The honest souls who dissent are subjected to threat and excommunication by the arrogant usurpers of power. Their hearts are hardened like those of the Jews who cannot realize that Jesus did away with the veil.

When a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. “For the Lord to whom they could turn is the Spirit of the new agreement, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, men’s souls are set free.” Let us remove the veils from our faces so that we may see clearly that we are not under law but under grace. The glory of the Lord in grace has completely eclipsed the glory reflected by the law.

“Now that we stand clear of the Law, the claims which existed are dissolved by our ‘death,’ and we are free to serve God not in the old obedience to the letter of the Law, but in a new way, in the Spirit” (Romans 7:6). The eclipse was total. It was complete.

The Cultural Challenge

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[Abstract]

Every new truth which has ever been propounded has, for a time, caused mischief; it has produced discomfort, and often unhappiness; sometimes disturbing social and religious arrangements, and sometimes merely by the disruption of old and cherished association of thoughts. It is only after a certain interval, and when the framework of affairs has adjusted itself to the new truth, that its good effects preponderate; and the preponderance continues to increase, until at length, the truth causes nothing but good. But, at the outset there is always harm. And if the truth is very great as well as very new, the harm is serious. Men are made uneasy; they flinch; they cannot bear the sudden light; a general restlessness supervenes; the face of society is disturbed, or perhaps convulsed; old interests and old beliefs have been destroyed before new ones have been created. These symptoms are the precursors of revolution; they have preceded all the great changes through which the world has passed.— Henry Thomas Buckle, in “History of Civilization.”

It doesn't require a great deal of ability to be an “armchair general.” Any mediocre field captain can sit in the plush lounge of the Officer's Club and say, “He should have ordered an attack on the right flank.” The same is true of a “grandstand quarterback.” It is one thing to call the plays while shrouded in a warm blanket with a thermos bottle of steaming coffee by your side, but a totally different thing down on a soggy field with a

throbbing black eye and an ear full of mud.

I'm saying this to let you know that I'm not seeking any praise for "calling the shots" after the game is over. A lot of us are like lightning-bugs. We have our headlights on the tail end and cannot see anything until we are already past it. One does not deserve particular credit for saying, while floundering through swamp-muck up to his belt buckle, "We should have taken that other road."

All of this leads up to the fact that I am again going to deal with a ticklish subject in this issue. Once more I'm casting myself as a critic of our status quo. Really, I have no aspirations to be a gadfly, which the dictionary defines as "an irritating, bothersome individual." It takes a philosopher like Socrates to make a genuine gadfly and I'm not qualified to be a philosopher. I even have difficulty spelling it. Moreover, I do not like hemlock. I've never quaffed a goblet of it, but I have a sort of prejudice against strong drink of any kind.

So I am not taking the part I would deliberately choose. I am simply moving into it because of conscience and inner compulsion. I do not consider it particularly daring but I am going to challenge our whole general approach to the life and needs of this latter half of the twentieth century. I am going to affirm that in many respects it is irrelevant, out-moded and ineffective.

Whether you like to admit it or not the Enemy has us "punch drunk" and "hanging on the ropes." Some of the combatants who talked a lot bigger fight in college than they put up in the arena have already climbed through the ropes and staggered groggily up the aisle to watch some of us who have no intention of quitting, from a relatively safe distance. If all goes well and we reverse the tide, they will return in time to be in on the final banquet celebrating the victory. I'm not bothered too much by their "voices of concern" echoing from the twenty-fifth

row of seats. I'm so busy flailing away that I haven't got time to count the spectators or to try and identify them. That's a good way to get knocked into the next county.

No, I am not ignorant of the fact that my thesis is wholly discounted in some areas of the great southland, notably the two T's— Tennessee and Texas. The information services from these two command centers indicate that we are winning on every sector and it is just a matter of time until every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that “the Church of Christ is right, and instrumental music is wrong.” We are the “fastest growing church in America,” and last year two Christian Church preachers were converted and are now working with “the Lord's church.” A few more crusades, a few more exodus movements, and all that will remain will be little mopping up actions. Then we can move on to the conquest of the Jews, Muslims and Chinese Communists. All of this would be quite encouraging were it not for the credibility gap in “Church of Christ” reporting, and our proven ability to juggle figures, a talent which has landed some of our folks in prison when they applied the gift in the political and economic fields.

I am by nature as optimistic as a high school freshman on her first date, but in this case I am too much of a realist to paint a rosy picture of our prospects if we continue to track along in the safe and comfortable rut we have worn down while the rest of the world zips by on its way to the moon or Venus.

Let me here inject a candid admission that what we do now was once very appropriate and was adopted for that very reason. It was not original with us and we can claim no credit for discovering it. We developed it spontaneously because it satisfied longings and assuaged hunger. That is why the Baptists and Methodists also fell into much the same format. But we now live in a wholly different world. What amused our fathers as science fiction has now been relegated to a scrap-heap of discarded realities by surpassing knowledge. And we face problems of

which our sires never dreamed even while riding their wildest nightmares.

If I can revert, like Paul, to the vernacular of the ring, we must either “roll with the punches,” or we will be battered into oblivion. We must adapt our strategy to the style of our opponent or we will be sent into orbit, to land in the lap of the timekeeper, to the tune of imaginary birds twittering in our ears, and galaxies of stars floating past our glassy eyes. For quite awhile we have been “beating the air” and mistaking the training dummy which we created and stuffed with straw, with the real foe.

THE NECESSARY CHANGE

The body of Christ must change as human demands change, if it remains alive. Of course, we can embalm it and exhibit the corpse like they do that of Lenin in Moscow. It would not require too much alteration to change some of our meetinghouses into morgues. The atmosphere is already there, and a lot of our preachers have developed “the undertaker tone” and handshake, and like morticians, they regard every one who comes as a future client if they can get in good with the family.

But the one body was not intended to become a cadaver. The one, who at the time had the power over death, tried that on its Author. He swathed Him in grave-clothes, rolled a stone over the door of the sepulcher, and set a watch. But angels rolled the stone aside while He was folding up His wrappings, and Satan lost that important encounter. He also lost the power over death.

I can already hear the hue and cry which will be raised over the statement that “the body of Christ must change.” Our brethren are notorious for reporting things that others neither thought nor said, so I must take a little precious time to explain. Obviously the body must never sever itself from the head nor cut itself loose from the Spirit. Either of these would bring about its

demise, and our argument is that it must live— vibrantly, powerfully, irresistibly. Somehow I think it is fairly well off as long as it holds to the head, and is motivated by the Spirit.

The change must come in our approach to life and the environment in which destiny has placed us. We are still acting and reacting as we did fifty or a hundred years ago. It may or may not be a sin that we do so. It is not a sin to continue to drive a horse and buggy down the highway as do some of my good Amish friends, but it may encourage those who have to follow in automobiles to sin in word and in deed when they cannot get around them.

And yet we cannot ignore the fact that moral issues may be involved. For instance, if a child is choking to death, it might be a sin to take it to the hospital in a horse-drawn vehicle when a high-powered automobile stands ready to perform the task at our bidding. So it is with the institutional church. When life and death are involved it may be criminal to plod along in a “business as usual” attitude when means are available to get the job done and relieve the crisis.

Our hang-up stems from the fact that we are still part of a relatively new movement, although we divided into more factions in a century than did the Roman Catholic Church in a millennium. Of course they only had one pope at a time, with few exceptions. That makes a great difference. We had our inception primarily as a rural movement and we have not outgrown our bucolic background. But our world has shifted to an urban culture, and this makes some of our methods as outmoded as a scythe in a thousand acre wheatfield.

A RURAL SCHEDULE

A good example is our three meetings per week used as a thermometer to test the spiritual temperature of the institutional membership. In pioneer days meetings began at ten of the clock

on Lord's Day to enable the folk who arose at daybreak to get the hogs fed and the cows milked, and eat their simple breakfast of sausage, fried potatoes, gravy and hot biscuits, and drive the team to the hitchrack around the meetinghouse.

Generally whole families went home with others for dinner and after the visitors had helped with the evening chores, and the youngsters were worn out from playing "Anthony Over," they gathered back at the community center to talk and visit and have another meeting. This provided a good chance to sing lustily together and listen to someone who was able to read. Many of the attendants were illiterate. They needed such outlets.

Since there were few newspapers or telephones, and no radios or television sets, it was a long time between Sundays to go without news, so a midweek meeting was scheduled. Most families lived in small cabins and cramped quarters. They saw no one but their own circle day in and day out. They needed respite from the family, for they often worked, ate and slept together in a couple of rooms. Wednesday evening broke the monotony and the religious structure became the social center. Women exchanged recipes, talked about their gardens and compared statistics on their laying hens. Men discussed crops, farm implements and current events. They also had "religious services." It was a change from the quiet, uneventful life.

Unfortunately, this became a fixed and formal pattern. It is now a wee bit ridiculous in a lot of places. Take for instance, the Wednesday night meeting in a large city. Men drive to work on crowded highways, inching along in bumper-to-bumper traffic. They work all day in a tension-laden atmosphere which saps human vitality and sets nerves on edge. Then they battle the traffic back home where they have to hurry to change clothing, gulp down their evening meal and rush "back to church." Those who attend are frequently those who least need to listen again to what they have heard a hundred times and knew before they left home.

They do not need the stimulus of the crowd as did our pioneer ancestors, for they are a part of a shoving, pushing mass of humanity all day long. They work in crowded factories, eat in crowded cafeterias, and drive on crowded thoroughfares. They do not need to get the news by word of mouth, because the happenings of the world are brought into kitchen, bedroom and livingroom by radio and television. They need not go and listen to a preacher because he can read, for many of them can read with greater skill than the preacher.

Actually, what men need to do in our day is to stay at home more and become better acquainted with their families. Our fathers were almost constantly with their families. All of them ate together and worked together. Now, in a shift work economy, the family is seldom together as a unit. Instead of drumming up more meetings to further exhaust “the faithful few” we ought to eliminate every such meeting with no relevance to real life and urge members to stay home and do things together as a family. I know of a preacher who attended so many meetings to save others that he lost his own son.

Do not think me sacrilegious when I say that God may be as pleased when fathers stay at home on Wednesday night to help the children with their homework, or aid the boys in making model cars or airplanes, as when they go to midweek services reluctantly, out of a sense of duty or fear, and answer such questions as how many times the word “the” occurs in the first chapter of John. The fact is that we “go to church” so much we haven’t time to serve God. There is nothing else quite as meaningless as some of the Wednesday night meetings I have attended— or conducted— when worn out physically and so tired I could hardly move.

I wonder how long men will tolerate being censured and condemned for not coming thrice weekly, by a man whose house is furnished by the very ones whom he lambasts, and which house joins “hard by the synagogue.” It isn’t too difficult to walk

next door and judge those who have to drive twelve miles through a snowstorm to come and sing “O Happy Day,” and listen to what you have prepared to hand out to them about “the Patriarchal Age.”

Why do we perpetuate that which is so incompatible with our need? There are several reasons. One is that we have come to assign undue importance to what we do inside of so-called “holy places.” Too, we have done certain things in a certain way for so long we are afraid to change. Because we have made thrice-weekly attendance a criterion of loyalty, we would prefer to drag ourselves out of our homes and into our cars and go maintain our little rituals, than to have other congregations question our faithfulness, or imply that we have “gone modern.”

I know of an elder who moved to a large northern metropolitan area from the south, and who insisted that the brethren have what he called “a prayer meeting” like “we do down home.” As he put it, “I’d rather meet on Wednesday night with a dozen loyal souls than to have people think we had forsaken the house of God.” He missed the very first night because a long train blocked the main thoroughfare and the Diesel engine broke down.

Do not misinterpret what I am saying. I am not opposed to brethren getting together any time they want to and can serve a real need. They can do so on a regular or sporadic basis, and that is fine. What I am saying is that dragging weary people across a city to demonstrate their faith by a nose count in a “hallowed structure” is not at all a vital fulfillment of our pledge of allegiance to Him!

CITY REVIVALS

And this goes for “revivals” in large centers of population. When I was a lad we worked with little respite from early spring until late autumn. We arose before daybreak and labored in the

fields until dusk. When we had finished the chores, and had eaten late at night by the fitful glow of a kerosene lamp on the oil-cloth covered table, we finally fell into bed thoroughly exhausted. There was no opportunity to read and little encouragement to increase knowledge.

But with the coming of the fall months and the gathering in of the harvest there came a surcease from rigorous labor and there was time to think life through again in its broader aspects. There was a great round of gospel meetings involving all of the surrounding congregations. Every night there was some place to go. It was made to order for visiting, courting and spiritual growth. There was an air of excitement and intensity in the community. A “big meeting” might last for three weeks. Every day groups of people gathered at the home which was host to the preacher for the day. There were discussions, questions, and even sometime interesting political arguments.

In our humble home the only books were the Bible and the Sears-Roebuck catalog. Our only source of information of the wide world was *Grit* or *Copper’s Weekly*. Anyone who had been a hundred miles from home was regarded as an authority. We lived and planned for the occasional visit to the county-seat. In such a social structure, the preacher who came from another state by train was regarded as a man of stature and renown.

Now that we are in a complex situation for which we have coined the word *technopolis*, such an approach is ineffective. Why is it necessary to move two or three hundred people across the city every night for a week in order to get two or three unsaved persons into a house to tell them about the love of Jesus? Each one of the three hundred saved ones will pass ten thousand unsaved ones on the way to the meeting. If each one just “peeled off” out of the traffic pattern and stopped to tell one person about Jesus they would reach more people in one night than they would in a month of “protracted meetings” as we used to call them.

I have attended a good many “gospel meetings” conducted by my brethren the last couple of years. I go to all of them when I can regardless of which clique, clan or circle arranges them. But I confess that I have been utterly astounded at the caliber of the messages. Men from “down home” have been brought in to conduct meetings and have been given a build-up in the “church bulletin” and it is apparent they are wholly oblivious of the problems we face in the city.

It is difficult for me to believe that in this enlightened age so fraught with major crises that men will be imported from a thousand miles away to deliver childish, inane addresses so completely out of tune with life all about us. I watch those brothers and sisters who are paying for it, sit stolidly and sleepily through these exercises in futility, and I have a deep compassion for them. It is no wonder that educators and professional men tell me that the only way they can remain “in the fold” is to tune out a lot of what goes on and become so busy personally they do not have time to think too much about the inutility of the average sermon.

As the “down home type of revival” loses its appeal for even the country folk who have migrated to the big city, there is a frantic effort by the preachers to promote something which will salvage a little of the former influence. I have known them to rent a lavish ballroom in a big hotel and put on a drive to secure the huge sum necessary to broadcast or televise the services. A “big name” preacher is brought in, but his name is big only to the party. It means nothing even in the theological realm of the city. Every cooperating congregation sends a delegation to help fill the space and yellow buses with the inscription “Church of Christ— Romans 16:16” are seen in unfamiliar places. There may be a dozen or more “responses” (a newfangled word for additions) from among those who were hauled in from the suburbs by friends and relatives, with several of them being baptized.

But outside the ballroom, in the foyer, the lounge, the restaurant and the street, life flows by untouched, untapped and unaffected by the revival which does not revive. And a few blocks away a baby screams out as the fangs of a tawny rat sink into the flesh of its tender cheek, a drunken man grunts and gasps as a switchblade tears into his vitals, and a woman screams obscenities in a room filled with half-crazed addicts. "The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice; for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see.'"

The fact is that the preacher is no longer an authority. In almost every aspect of life which is throbbing through the world's arteries today, the preacher is a *layman*, if you will pardon my borrowing the expression. He is often ignorant and uninformed about the subjects the world is discussing. He cannot communicate. In our simple rural life he was on a pedestal. His word was law. People who could not read brought him the letters which they received, and he deciphered them and answered them for their recipients. He knew more about what was going on in the world than anyone else except the schoolteacher. Often he was the schoolteacher.

Now the "located minister" may have an inferior education to many in the congregation. Before him may sit men with advanced degrees in sociology, history, linguistics, medicine, science or microbiology. There are brilliant and erudite men and women who are active in the educational or business administrative fields. Some are psychologists, counsellors, or medical doctors, daily working with human beings with problems. They are able to detect the trite and shopworn sermon outlines which enable men to talk without saying anything. And it is all they can do to stay with it. Many of them come on Sunday morning to remember the Lord's death and return home to forget the preacher's platitudes.

A PROPOSED REMEDY

Here we are, a people of rural heritage set down in an alien culture, a world of crisis and revolution. What shall we do? What can we do? Shall we call it quits and “toss in the towel”? Shall we confess that it was all “a big mistake” and that we do not have what it takes? Not me! Instead of sitting around bemoaning things we need to get up and get with it. There is a lot to be done. We must pitch in with both hands, and you can’t do that while wringing them in despair. Here are some recommendations which seem appropriate to me. You may not agree with them. That’s fine, I will love you just the same.

1. We need to re-evaluate our meetings to determine if we are simply maintaining a tradition which is no longer meaningful. Holding meetings for the sake of holding meetings, or to secure celestial “brownie points” or “heavenly merit badges” for the number of times you show up, is unworthy of the name we wear or the cause we espouse. Our real task is not to get our brethren into our monasteries but to get them out of them. If you wear soldiers out going to lectures until they are too tired to fight, they become “sitting ducks” for the enemy.

It might be very helpful in our day to turn Wednesday night into “home night” and urge everyone to stay at home and have a family devotional sharing period. In such a setting the time spent at the evening meal might be extended with everyone who is old enough saying a sentence prayer at the table. Each family might think of someone who is lonely or bereaved, and compose a letter to that person with each one signing it. Think what it might mean to an aged person in a convalescent home, or to a widow in affliction, to receive a letter from a family, signed by every member including the youngest.

Of course, it is very important to avoid a rigid structure or program for such a family night. It need not always be on Wednesday night. Sometimes another family might be invited to

come over and share in it. It is not necessary that the Bible always be read. Occasionally, a stimulating contemporary article, or poem can be read and discussed. Room must be left for spontaneity. The Spirit must not be stifled or smothered.

2. We must play down the idea of church and recapture the idea of a divine *family*. Of course, the word “church” never did translate *ekklesia*, the called out ones. Now it has a flavor about it which makes it almost impossible to convey the nature of the body of pilgrims who are sojourning in an alien world. The institutional church is often cold and aloof, preoccupied with forms and structures, interested in its own image.

The term “family” speaks of warmth and acceptance, of understanding and compassion. A good illustration of the difference between church and family is seen in the attitude toward the grievously ill and hospitalized. When announcement is made to the “church” that an aged sister is in the hospital, it hardly registers on the consciousness of those in the pews. They forget all about it before they get to the parking lot. It is taken for granted that “the minister” will keep in contact. He is the “hired hand” to carry the charity of the church and dispense it where needed. He is the front man, the organizational representative. The motto is, “There he is, Lord, send him!”

But when a member of the family is ill, every other member is concerned. Work becomes secondary, recreation is forgotten, and all seek means of ministering to the needs of the stricken one. A canopy of personal love (the only kind there is) is thrown about the sick one, which is probably worth more than all of the drugs prescribed by the doctor. The family would not think of ignoring the one who was ill. They would not go about their routine business and send the chauffeur to the hospital, “because we have him hired to run our errands.”

Nothing is more important in a large metropolitan area than to again become “the household of God.” Only by this

means can we alleviate loneliness and heartache. We must once more realistically enter into a state where “the body should work together as a whole with all the members in sympathetic relationship with one another. So it happens that if one member suffers all the other members suffer with it, and if one member is honored all the members share a common joy.” We must come to literally bear one another’s burdens *and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

How can we recover this sense of family in the organizational church of our day? The answer is that we probably cannot do so. Our very structures defeat any such attempt. Our meetinghouses are not family gathering places. No one would think of lining up chairs in straight rows in the living room at home so that most of the children were doomed to see only the back of the heads of the rest of the members of the family. No one would think of putting a raised platform to be mounted by the father or mother while “laying down the law” in matters of discipline.

If we recover the family concept we will have to do it in a family context or environment. Large congregations will find it impossible to function as a household so they will be forced to organize as business concerns or big industrial plants. But there is an answer to their problem. Let them break down into cell groups where the members have a sense of closeness and intimacy. All may gather on the first day of the week at a central location, but they may meet from house to house in their various areas, districts or suburbs. There was but one congregation in Jerusalem and the brethren met together in the Temple, but they also shared in their homes. “Day after day they met by common consent in the Temple; they broke bread together in their homes, sharing meals with simple joy.”

3. The meetinghouses should be put to use to serve real needs. They are tools to get a job done, and they are expensive tools. They can be used as food and clothing depots for

distribution of needed commodities to the helpless. Here women volunteers can sort and repair the clothing contributed, and here application can be made for it.

Facilities can be provided for counselling so that distraught adults and young people can find a sympathetic ear into which to pour their problems. There can be tutoring classes for those who otherwise would become school drop-outs, film sessions dealing with alcoholism, dope addiction, and other problems of society. To these the people of the community should have welcome access. In a rural society the meetinghouse was actually the social center, although this would probably have been vehemently denied. It should become a life clinic in our day rather than just a place for the membership to assemble for its own satisfaction—or dissatisfaction!

4. We must stop the brain-drain and the talent waste by drawing upon the intellectual resources of the whole body of believers. If a justifiable case could be made for one man addressing a group all of the time in a pioneer culture, because he was the only one in the community who could read or who had a meager library, the argument breaks down in an intellectual age such as ours today.

It is unrealistic to have one man speak month in and month out, filtering his thinking, prejudices and predilections to those who are just as perceptive and brilliant. Our gatherings should be devoted to sharing actual experiences and showing how Christ helps us to meet them. This is what happened in the primitive community of believers.

“After their release the apostles went back to their friends and reported to them what the chief priests and elders had said to them.”

“Peter, however, made a gesture to them to stop talking while he explained to them how the Lord had brought him out of

prison. Then he said, ‘Go and tell James and the other brothers what has happened.’”

“When they arrived there they called the church together and reported to them how greatly God had worked with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

“These words produced absolute silence, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul while they gave a detailed account of the signs and wonders which God had worked through them among the Gentiles.”

Notice that the key to these passages is found in two statements: “tell what has happened,” and “how greatly God worked with them.” These must all have been interesting sessions. Why should not a returning Vietnam veteran report to the saints on the situations he faced and the conclusions he reached? Why should not college men from the congregation speak on the campus rebellion and the witness for Christ, when they are home for special holidays or at the semester break?

Why should not school administrators or teachers share their thinking about the Christian role in education? Or attorneys and brethren elected to public office discuss our relationship to the powers that be? Why muzzle sociologists in the family who can help us all to understand the problems of population explosion, hunger and poverty? Why not listen to our black brethren describe the feeling of those who grow up to realize that they are regarded as “different” in a country which affirms that all men are created equal? In short, why not take advantage of the great reservoir of knowledge which is tapped and utilized everywhere else on earth except “in the church”?

Of course one reason for our tragic waste is that we have been made victims of a concept which promotes an institutional image at the expense of individual spiritual initiative. We have emasculated the great majority of Christians and forced them

into a sterile spectator status. We have urged men to go away and “prepare for the ministry” and have succeeded in convincing those who do not that they have no right to intrude upon this “sacred function.”

Nothing can be farther from God’s design, or more drastically opposed to the very essence of the Way. It is argued by the ignorant that when one is sick he should call for a graduate physician, and when he has car trouble he should secure a factory-trained mechanic. On the same basis it is contended that when he needs an exposition of scripture he must seek a factory-trained theologian who is a professional gospel dispenser or a diplomate didactic.

All of this overlooks one thing. The revelation of God is given to all and all are expected to digest it and witness to it. The word of God is the bread of life and you cannot arrange for another to eat for you. Truth is as the air which expands our lungs and you cannot turn your breathing over to another. The Christian armor is for every soldier to wear. It is not designed to fit only an elite corps. The sword of the Spirit is not a fencing foil, to be waved and swung about by a professional in an entertaining demonstration of dexterity. It is to be gripped by every soldier and employed in constant warfare.

It is not the purpose of God that some saints prepare to be doctors, others mechanics, others nurses, others university teachers, others truck drivers— and others ministers, that is, servants of God. Instead, it is His design that doctors, nurses, teachers, garbage collectors, meter readers, lawyers, farmers, fishermen, mechanics, and truck drivers, prepare to minister. Of course, not all are qualified to minister in the same way, but all can do so in some way!

Now we have to be very realistic about our predicament. We are simply not going to get anywhere by suddenly demanding that professional preachers resign as “the ministers”

and allow all of the saints to start in functioning in edification of the one body. In the first place, some ministers are still jealous of their position in spite of the fact that it is wholly unknown to the new covenant scriptures. They resent others intruding upon the “sacred desk” and usurping the functions for which they are paid. They do not realize yet that the very system we have devised usurps the privilege of the other saints.

Moreover, the saints have not been trained to edify one another. Instead, they have been taught not to do so. That is why men with doctoral degrees in vital disciplines are forced to sit and listen to a mere stripling whose inexperience often shows through his homiletics. It would not be to our credit in trying to regain the ideal of God to destroy the faith of many and plunge the congregations into a welter of confusion and disgust. It took Rome a long time to convince the saints that they were not priests of God and it will take us a long time to convince them that they are.

PARENTS AND COACHES

What we must do is to place the preachers in a scriptural context and relationship. We must free them from being mere congregational flunkies and errand boys, and utilize their skills and gifts for the good of all. They have abilities which are desperately needed. We must take advantage of these for training our soldiers to become militant fighting units. We must stop thinking that we “own” preachers because we support them and start treating them like men instead of draft horses. When some people speak about “our preacher” they mean it literally.

Fortunately we have the example of Paul as a guideline in working with a congregation. At Thessalonica he said that he adopted the dual role of a father and a nursing mother. As the latter he exhibited gentleness and tenderness. Again, he wrote, “You will remember how we dealt with each one of you

personally, like a father with ‘his own children, stimulating your faith and courage and giving instruction.”

The first goal of a nursing mother is to bring her children to the point of weaning. One who would refuse to wean them would be considered eccentric. Good parents are those who work themselves out of a job. They train their children to stand on their own feet and to become independent. That Paul fulfilled his task is evidenced by his words, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as ye also do” (1 Thess. 5:11). He wrote to the Romans, “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).

In a more modern frame of reference the preacher should be a coach, with the congregation regarded as a team. The coach does not carry the ball. He trains and disciplines each member until he responds automatically to the openings and opportunities which are presented. The coach inspires the players, provides incentive, and makes an aggressive force marching toward a goal. He does not do the running for the whole team.

But what happens if the preacher is successful and trains the whole body of saints until they can carry on the regular activities without the necessity of his presence? Must he leave the congregation and move on? Of course not! He may remain there for life and should be supported by the brethren to do the work of an evangelist. Actually, this is the work of the preacher.

He is not expected to be a pastor or shepherd, but a proclaimer. One cannot evangelize saved persons. The evangel is for the lost. You cannot proclaim the gospel to the saved. You can remind them of what you did proclaim unto them and urge them to live up to its implications in their lives and the commitment they made to it. Preaching the gospel is not for the

church but for the world.

The problem is that we have called the evangelists from the field into the church. We have tied them down with detailed administrative work and record-keeping in the packing-shed until they have no time to labor in the vineyard. We condemn them to the thankless task of threshing over and over the same grain. Let the preachers become recruiting agents and take them off of “kitchen police” duty.

If it is argued that this will require a complete tactical change as to the nature of the *ekklesia*, the argument is correct. It will, but we must someday choose whether we can afford to continue interminably as we are or become what God intended for us to be.

It is rather ridiculous to follow a system of force-feeding babies who are never allowed to exercise and have no intention of ever growing up. God never intended for us to tend a perpetual incubator. How long will we continue to lecture enlistees who are never entrusted to use their weapon? We can never fulfill our mission on earth by our present procedure.

We must either change our approach or we will continue to produce inept and helpless brethren who, in spite of their eagerness and sincerity can never defend the faith. We are not so much bringing people to the new birth as we are hatching out birds which will never grow beyond the fledgling or pin-feather stage. Please permit me, in closing, to share with you this lengthy quotation from Alexander Campbell, taken from page 77 of *The Christian Baptist*. It was very unpopular when first written and the passage of time has not increased its popularity.

This everlasting sermonizing! What good is in it? It resembles nothing that is rational in all the compass of thought. A. B. professes to teach arithmetic; he gets a class of forty boys from 12 to 15 years old, we shall say. He tells them to meet once a week and he will give them a lecture

or a sermon on some important point in this useful science.

The first day he lectures on the cube root for an hour. They sit bookless and thoughtless, heedless, and, perhaps, often drowsy, while he harangues them. He blesses them and sends them home, to return a week hence. They meet. His text is arithmetical progression. He preaches an hour, dismisses as usual. The third day of the meeting up comes vulgar fractions: the fourth, rule of three; the fifth, addition; the sixth, notation; the seventh, cube root again.

Now in this way, I hesitate not to say, he might proceed seven years and not finish one accountant. Who ever thought that a science or art could be taught this way? And yet this is the only way, I may say, universally adopted of teaching the Christian religion. And so it is that many men have sat under the sound of the gospel (as they call it) for forty years, that cannot expound one chapter in the whole New Testament. And yet these same Christians would think it just to prosecute by civil law that teacher who would keep their sons four or five years at English grammar or arithmetic, and receive their money, and yet not one of their sons be able to expound one rule in syntax or arithmetic.

They pay the parson— they are of maturer minds than their children, and they have been longer under his tuition, and yet they will excuse both the parson and themselves for knowing just as little, if not less of the New Testament, than their striplings know of grammar or arithmetic . . .

They can never be taught the Christian religion in the way of sermonizing. Public speeches may be very useful on many occasions; but to teach a church the doctrine of Christ, and to cause them to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to enjoy them, requires a course essentially different from either hearing sermons or learning the catechism.

God's Man Yes

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[Abstract]

“Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . is himself no doubtful quantity, he is the divine ‘yes.’ Every promise of God finds its affirmative in him, and through him can be said the final amen, to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 1:19, 20).

This interesting statement as to the nature of Jesus, like almost every other apostolical declaration, has both a written and a life context. The letters written by the envoys of Christ did not just happen. They grew out of a need to solve human predicaments, and explain human problems.

In this case the situation is quite clear. Paul had signified his intention of visiting Corinth enroute to Macedonia, and of again stopping on his return “to give you a double treat,” as he explained it. In the meantime he received word from an unimpeachable source that the congregation was in an unholy mess, created by schism, immorality, and civil suits in pagan courts.

Accordingly, he changed his plans and wrote them a letter. He justified his action by saying, “I declare before God that it was to avoid hurting you that I did not come to Corinth . . . And I made up my mind that I would not pay you another painful visit.” Unfortunately, there existed in the congregation a small clique of vocal critics of the apostle, of whom he said they

“profess to be God’s messengers on the same terms as I am” (2 Corinthians 11:12). These seized upon the situation to declare that Paul was not a man of his word and could not be trusted.

So the apostle wrote, “Because we had to change this plan, does it mean that we are fickle? Do you think I plan with my tongue in my cheek, saying ‘yes’ and meaning ‘no’?” He then made an appeal for them to recall the original proclamation of Jesus Christ as brought by Silvanus, Timothy and himself. He used the language with which we head this article. So much for the background. Our real interest lies in the implications of the statement for those of us who have accepted Jesus on the basis of the apostolic proclamation.

1. Jesus is not a doubtful quantity. Faith in Jesus must be established on the basis of human testimony, and that testimony must be subject to the same guide-lines and criteria which govern all establishment of fact by witnesses. If there is a sufficient number of witnesses, if it can be shown that they had ample opportunity to ascertain the facts to which they testify, and if their veracity cannot be impeached or their motivations be successfully impugned, the honest mind has no alternative but acceptance of the fact of their testimony.

One *knows* what he experiences through the function of his own senses. He *believes* what others experience, upon the basis of valid or credible testimony. There are witnesses to the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus. No one can deny these facts. To do that he would have had to be present at the time and prove that they did not happen. The only recourse now is to attack the witnesses and demonstrate by established rules of jurisprudence that they were either honestly mistaken or that they were deliberate deceivers.

I have examined the witnesses. I have subjected their testimony to the rules of evidence. I am convinced beyond doubt that Jesus lived and that he was the Messiah, and God’s Son. I

am staking my life on it. If I did not believe in Jesus I could not believe that any person lived who died before I was born. It is either faith or prejudice, and I choose faith. I don't want to bet my life on a prejudice.

2. Jesus is the divine "yes." This at once spells out the difference between existence under law and life in the Son. A system of law requires a codified compilation of "dos and don'ts." It fails on two important counts. It cannot make men good and it cannot give life. Law has the built-in power to justify but man does not have the potential to achieve it, so law actually brings the sentence of death. It is negative!

But Jesus is positive. He is the expression in personality of the power which made the universe. He is creative. The tragedy of our day is that we have tried to cramp the Way into a legal system and by so doing we have emasculated it and destroyed its virility. It is no longer creative or transforming. The spirit of adventure and of conquest has departed and we have settled down to the long grind. We were not so much born to live as we are bored to death.

Man was made for adventurous and imaginative living. He must search for transcendent experience, and the greatest experience of all should be the plugging into the power source of the universe. When he is shut off from this by false theological concepts he will turn to something else for a thrill. It is for this reason we need to investigate carefully those things to which men turn for relief from boredom and seek to determine the reason for their popularity.

Now there are two things to which modern man looks for a thrill— gambling and drugs. These have always been prevalent in some parts of the world, but until recent times they were to be found as a way of life principally for the non-Christian parts of the earth. This is no longer true. They are actually more pronounced in our own country now than in the Far East. Why

is it that, in a world where Christianity once dominated the thoughts of men, they are turning in increasing numbers to gambling and drugs?

The answer seems to be that man no longer conceives of himself as a worker together with God. His job is slavery because he is chained to a desk or production line with only a paycheck as an incentive. He seeks for excitement in artificial ways, risking his money, which is now equated with his life, upon the horses or at the gaming-tables in Las Vegas. Religion, which is actually intended to cause us to lose our lives in order to gain them, has been turned over to professionals trained for the job. We are bored with it because, as a spectator sport, it cannot begin to compare with pro football with its actual crunch of direct encounter with the opposition.

Those who turn to drugs are seeking to penetrate a world beyond the sensuous, to lift themselves out of the humdrum existence and soar into a realm of the “out yonder.” Both gambling and drugs appeal to men because they offer exactly what relationship with Jesus was intended to offer. Indeed, early Christians were actually called “The Gamblers,” because they literally risked their lives in a way that pagans did not dare.

The church will have no real effect upon gambling and drug addiction by sitting in cushioned pews and listening apathetically to a polished preacher condemn them. Indeed, it is just such unrelated actions which cause some of the professed Christians to turn to drink, unlawful sex, or drugs. Our task is to put the element of risk or gambling back into life with Christ, and to demonstrate that the Way can put us into orbit in a manner which makes psychedelic drugs as tame as aspirin tablets. Jesus must again become the divine “yes”!

3. Every divine promise finds its affirmative in him. There never was a promise given or a prophecy made by God that was not directly or indirectly related to Jesus. He is both the center

and circumference of God's relationship with us. So true is this that we are told, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

Every promise God ever gave is validated by the resurrection of Jesus. Upon this event, Jesus hinged the proof of his divine Sonship. Before his death he affirmed that God would raise him from the dead, and since God would not raise an impostor, the fact of his resurrection was the positive proof that he was who he claimed to be. But it also was the certification of the genuineness of all of the divine promises.

4. Through Jesus the final Amen can be pronounced on all of God's purposes in the universe. The "amen" is the sanction or agreement which recognizes the truthfulness of that which is so attested. Man was made to glorify God and will find his ultimate in spiritual enrichment in sharing that glory. It is only through Jesus that such attainment is possible. Amen!

Living Letters

Mission Messenger (May 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

A great deal of confusion exists in our world because men confuse the covenants, or testaments, of God with the scriptures written to a covenant people. God exhibited himself as a covenant-making God, having chosen this method by which to establish relationship with the rational beings of his creation who inhabit the earth. He announced numerous covenants, but there were two of such importance as to be designated the first and second testaments, or the old and new covenants.

Both of these were designed to create a people for God, and both began with a signal deliverance, the first from a nation which had its own gods; the second from the shackles of sin. The initial one was made at Mount Sinai in Arabia, the second at Mount Sion, a symbolic name indicative of the heavenly Jerusalem which represents a redeemed state rather than a geographical site.

Both were written covenants, but neither was written by man. The first was written upon two tablets of stone, by the finger of God; the second upon fleshy tables of the heart by the Holy Spirit. There was no difference in the writing instrument, because “the finger of God” is simply another designation for the Spirit. When the Egyptian magicians failed to reproduce a miracle by their enchantments, they said, “This is the finger of God” (Exodus 8:19). Matthew says that Jesus attributed his

miracles to the Spirit of God (12:28), Luke says he attributed them to the finger of God (11:20). Both were talking about the same event.

Not one word of the new testament was written with pen and ink, as Paul points out in a wonderful chapter dealing specifically in a contrast between what he designates “the old testament” and “the new testament” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

He affirms that the new testament was written with the Spirit of the living God in living men and women. And he asserts, “We dare to say such things because of the confidence we have in God through Christ.”

It is that very same confidence which makes me dare to say that there are not twenty-seven books in the new testament. The new covenant is not a written code as was the old, because “a written code leads only to death, it is the Spirit alone which can give life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). The new testament is the glorious new agreement, announced by God, and inscribed on the sensitized heart of every recipient of grace. It is personal, enabling us to “reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord.”

This glorious relationship is actually a new birth, introducing us into a new humanity through a process of inner transformation. It cannot be described in mere words. Peter says, “At present you trust him without being able to see him, and even though he brings you a joy that words cannot express and which has in it a hint of the glories of heaven; and all the time you are receiving the result of your faith in him— the salvation of your souls.”

Then what is the purpose of the new covenant scriptures? What end is served by the epistles of Paul, Peter, James and Jude? The answer is quite simple, but it depends upon the metaphorical relationship which you have in mind at the time.

If you think of the disciples of Christ as citizens of a

kingdom, the epistles are directives from the king providing instructions for the development of responsible citizenship. But there is as much difference between the new covenant and these epistles as there is between the oath of allegiance before a federal judge which changes one from alien status and a textbook on civics.

If you think of disciples as members of a family, the epistles are love letters from the Father, regulating conduct and behavior. But there is as much difference between the new covenant and these epistles as there is between the orgasm in which one is begotten and the letters he receives when he is away at college.

If you think of the saints as soldiers, the epistles are the manual of arms, but there is as much difference between the new covenant and these epistles as there is between the swearing-in ceremony and the daily training schedule or the orders of the day.

In short, our relationship with God is created not by conformity to a written code or a legalistic system, but by personal surrender to the claims of Jesus as heralded in a message called “the Good News.” The agreement is carved into the heart by the Spirit, so that each of us is a letter written by the finger of God. God’s new testament is not a compilation of letters bound together in a book, but a collection of ransomed lives bound together in a body!

The apostle says it better than I can. “You are an open letter about Christ which we ourselves have written, not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women.” It is my prayer that we may be always reverent, righteous and readable!

Commandos I Have Known

Mission Messenger (June 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

Today I am going to write about some commandos for Christ whom I have met. It may be easier for you to grasp what I mean by commandos through learning of actual examples. But first, I must mention that I am spelling commandos differently than I did in January. Then I spelled it “commandoes.” The change is not an accident. It is an illustration of how we may help one another.

Our daughter, Sue, who lives in Denver is a critical reader of what her father writes, and not long ago she wrote that she wished I would not spell the word “commandoes,” because the preferred spelling was without the *e*. I have long ago learned that I can profit greatly by listening to my children and grandchildren. Besides that, I checked in my own dictionary and found that Sue was correct.

Commandos are soldiers who often fight apart from the regular army, but always as a part of it. They may drop behind the lines and have to fight their way out singlehandedly. They are where the action is! They must be versatile and inventive, adapting their strategy to the changing tides of the conflict. Sometimes they are misunderstood by the regulars, and frequently are under criticism by “the brass” who want to run “a spit and polish army” careful of its image.

Commandos are rugged in-fighters who must stand up and slug it out with the foe. With them it is “do or die.” They either win or perish for there may be no rescue squad when they are hemmed in and cut off. There can be no “gold-bricking” or “goofing off” because all that they hold dear is at stake. They are not rocking-chair soldiers or front-office generals.

One of the first such soldiers of the cross whom I remember was a man with very little formal education. He was born in a rude cabin in the Missouri Ozarks to humble parents who were also illiterate. He grew up in a community where the settlers spent much of their time in drinking and fighting, but even as a boy he believed there was something better beyond the hills. As a young married man he came to know about Jesus in a backwoods campmeeting, but when he sought to become a preacher for the group his answers were too Biblical for the examining committee.

Eventually he came in contact with the restoration movement and was intrigued with the possibility of being a Christian only. By this time he was a lead miner laboring each day for meager pay in the bowels of the earth. But each night in the glow of a kerosene lamp he hungrily read and studied the sacred scriptures. He was obsessed with the idea that he must share the good news with others. Soon he had the neighbors in the village coming to his primitive home every evening, sitting in the yard and listening to him as he spoke from the porch.

So fervent was his proclamation, and so honest were his rough hearers, that one after another of the hard-rock miners gave up drinking and swearing to be immersed of him in a clear stream which flowed nearby. All day long he talked to his fellowhelpers underground and they enlisted under the banner of the King. At first these humble folk met in an open grove, but as the chill nights of autumn came they pooled their meager resources and purchased an abandoned saloon and converted it into a meetinghouse.

Here men of little education, but caught up by a sense of urgency, exhorted one another and testified of the grace of God in their lives. Years went by and the one who began it all grew older. His spirit was never quenched. Congregations were established in the hill country and in villages. He walked hundreds of miles with the message. Always poor in this world's goods, his home was still ever open to the needy. The latchstring hung on the outside.

In the closing months of his life, though retired from gainful employment, he labored almost singlehandedly to erect a meetinghouse where there had never been one before. Here he gathered a small handful of saints together and taught and shepherded them as he had done with so many other little bands in the past. With a firm resolution to visit every home in the town, he started out one morning on a task expected to cover many weary weeks of walking and knocking on doors. Before he had gone the first block, he threw up his hands in a convulsive gesture and fell in the street. A massive hemorrhage had exploded in his brain. His body hardly twitched where it had fallen in the dust. He died doing what he loved to do, with his armor buckled on and his face toward Jerusalem's walls.

I know another man, who still lives, and who has been an inspiration to me. When I first met him he was a cotton farmer with a very meager education, laboring hard and long to eke out a living and educate his children. There were but few books in his plain home, and his vocabulary was limited, but he read the Bible with such avidity that he actually began to talk in the lovely cadence of the English of King James.

In a home where hospitality ruled and no stranger was ever turned away the conversation soon turned to a discussion of the word of God, and it became so interesting that those who came for a few minutes lingered for hours. There was never an opportunity overlooked to share insights in the revealed truth of the ages.

Finally, circumstances came about so that the little farm was sold, and the farmer began to work with a road-repair group. These men represented various shades of religious belief and opinion, but the one of whom we speak taught and shared constantly while working with the crew. One rainy day when the men sought shelter in a country schoolhouse he took advantage of the opportunity to go to the blackboard and lead a study for those who sat in their mud-stained overalls. His theme was the priesthood of all believers, and he illustrated with a crude chalk diagram as he talked.

I cite these two cases to show that commandos for Christ are not necessarily drawn from the ranks of the intellectually elite. An uneducated lead miner and a humble cotton farmer, with hearts aflame for Jesus, have done more than thousands who have advanced degrees in some scholastic discipline. They labored without acceptance or encouragement because of their commitment to Him “whom having not seen we love.”

A FEMALE COMMANDO

I have a sister in Christ Jesus who is married to a very successful salesman. For several years they were nominal members of a congregation which met near the apartment in which they lived. They attended on Lord’s Day morning and the rest of the time gave themselves over to the pleasures of this world. Eventually they moved into an attractive house in an affluent suburb ten miles from the meetingplace of the congregation which they continued to attend.

Then something happened. One night when the husband was in a distant city at a sales convention, the wife found herself strangely troubled and depressed, and unable to sleep. She arose and put on her dressing gown and went into the living-room. She felt an irresistible urge to pick up the Bible and read. She selected a copy of The New Testament in Modern English, and

opened it at random. By sheer coincidence, she began at Matthew, chapter twenty, which records the parable of the farmer who went out early in the morning to employ workers for his vineyard.

Although she was reading in a detached manner, a certain sentence seemed to leap out of the page and burn itself into her consciousness. "Then about five o'clock he went out and found others standing about. 'Why are you standing here all day doing nothing?' he asked them?" When she read this she could not erase it from her mind. A horrible feeling of emptiness and futility swept over her soul, bringing with it a gushing flood of memories.

She saw again her childhood home in the country and the little rural meetinghouse where she had made her confession of faith in the Christ. She remembered the surge of joy which enveloped her when she was baptized and she thought of how far she had come to be able to dwell in such a beautiful home. All of a sudden the things in which she had shown so much pride seemed like ashes in her sight. She began to weep uncontrollably. She returned to her bedroom and got down upon her knees, placing her head on the edge of the bed as she used to do when a child. She prayed as she had never prayed before, confessing her guilt and failure, asking forgiveness and pleading with the Father to show her the way He would have her go.

Finally she made a vow that she would not draw back but would accept any work in the vineyard without doubt or quibble. When she had said this a burden lifted from her heart and a feeling of peace came in to take its place. She lay down and slept beyond her regular waking time. The very next day the preacher called her and asked her if she would teach a class of little children in Vacation Bible Study. He explained that the church was going to make an all-out effort to improve its image in the community and see if they could offset the influence of the

Baptist Church two blocks away, which had always enrolled a majority of the neighborhood children.

Even as the preacher was talking there flashed over her being a feeling that she did not want to be a part of a political power struggle, in which little children were the pawns to project a partisan image. She would not give an immediate reply, but promised to pray about it. True to her word, she began to talk aloud to God while she was doing the luncheon dishes. She found this was strangely easy to do, although she had never done it before. And even while she was praying in this informal strain a thought struck her like a bolt out of the clear blue. Why should she drive twenty miles each day to teach a class of little boys and girls to enhance a “church image” when there were scores of boys and girls, Jew and non-Jew, playing in the streets of the very subdivision in which she lived?

Immediately she dressed for calling and went to the homes of her neighbors and told them she would like to have their children come to her home each morning for two hours. She was going to convert her family room into a schoolroom where she would teach the children songs and choruses, tell them Bible stories and have them do memory work and present little skits and plays. Because there was no sectarian organization involved she found Jewish, Catholic and Protestant mothers willing to send their children.

Soon these mothers were taking their turns coming and bringing cookies for refreshment, and listening to the recitations. The daily studies lasted during the entire school vacation and when the children returned to school the mothers requested a study period one afternoon per week, and they met to probe the Bible for the meaning of life— women who had been poles apart only a few months before.

I must not leave this account without mentioning that the sister whose prayers had launched this invasion “behind the

lines” was criticized by the preacher. She was told that she should have brought a carload of children ten miles to the church building where the teaching was under the supervision of the elders. The question was raised as to what would happen to the church if everyone began teaching somewhere else than at the “proper location.”

INDUSTRIAL COMMANDOS

I want to relate the story of a brother who was employed in a large industrial complex as a fork-lift operator. Although the company provided an employee cafeteria, a good many men brought their lunches from home to save time and money. Several of them began to eat together because, while they were of different religious backgrounds, the language was more wholesome than with others.

One day the brother of whom I write suggested that they each bring a copy of the new testament scriptures the following day and begin studying together thirty minutes daily while eating. Several opposed the idea because of a fear that it might lead to arguments but five agreed to participate. The next day nine men were in the group sitting on boxes in the warehouse, but four were mere listeners.

They started with the gospel according to John at the suggestion of one of the men and when they begin sharing their views about miracles the group of onlookers grew until there were about twenty in the circle. More and more of them began to show up with testaments and the daily studies increased in interest. A sub-foreman who had scoffed at the idea at first began to edge closer and finally became convicted of his sin and privately asked the brother to baptize him. Others began coming to his house at night to talk with him further and eventually he had baptized seven men. In turn these influenced their wives and children for the Lord, so that families were united in the Christ.

I know a man who operates a gasoline service station on an excellent corner who became convinced that Jesus had placed him there to witness of his faith, and that selling gasoline was merely a way to pay expenses while he was doing so. He had a very attractive little folder printed with the caption on the front page, "I'd Like To Have You Meet My Best Friend!" On the inside he told the story of how he once drank and lived an immoral life, and of how he sought the help of psychiatry to no avail, and then, when contemplating suicide, he was introduced to Jesus, and how this made the great difference.

When he fills the tank and the customer signs the credit card slip, the brother says with a kindly tone and a gentle smile, "I do not know how you feel about things like this, but I'd like to have you read this little folder when you find time." Literally scores of people have returned to talk with him about it and his business has grown beyond expectation.

Then there was the college student who resolved to take Christ's claim upon his life very seriously. He needed a job for the summer in order to secure funds to go to school in the autumn. He prayed very earnestly for God to have his way in the matter and to lead him into a situation where he could testify of his faith. He drove his car to the filling station as soon as he had finished praying, and while the owner was filling the tank with gasoline he said to the brother, "Do you know where I can find a young man who would like to work for me this summer?" Although he could not see how this would provide the opportunity he wanted the Christian student decided to accept the job and trust in God.

He also resolved to take advantage of every opportunity to speak of Jesus and many openings were given. While repairing a tire one day he began talking with the owner and ascertained that he was the Presbyterian clergyman from the largest congregation of that denomination in the area. The preacher invited him to come and address a youth meeting, and as a result

of his Biblical knowledge, asked him to speak to his whole congregation one Sunday while the preacher was on vacation. When young people with special problems came to the Presbyterian clergyman they were sent to the young man at the service station, and he taught them the way of truth more perfectly.

I must not leave this part of my theme without mentioning another brother who owns a filling station and automobile repair business in a community of black residents. He talks to his customers about the Savior at every opportunity and with such effectiveness that he has been invited to speak at their several denominations to huge crowds on special occasions. These men are waging the battle where the action is. Their pulpits are grease racks, gasoline pumps and car fenders. They are being heard because they are fighting on the life front!

GHETTO COMMANDOS

A few years ago a young white man who came of Mennonite stock but who had identified with the Churches of Christ was working as a pharmacist in a metropolitan hospital. Here he met a young black Christian who had come from a broken home and who had a deep compassion for children who were tossed like flotsam and jetsam on life's sea. As they talked they decided to do something positive to help. The young white man moved out of his apartment and rented a frightfully dilapidated house in the very heart of the worst tenement district. Enough cast-off furniture was scrounged from members to make the place habitable on a minimal basis and work began with black boys and girls. Some of these were homeless waifs, gathered off the streets, dirty, unkempt and smelly. They were given baths, furnished with used clothing and shoes, taught the Bible and how to pray. A recreation program was started by the black brother, and boys who were potential gang fodder were channeled into constructive enterprises.

Women from different congregations began to take hot subsistence meals and serve up to fifty or more children each Saturday. The run-down facilities were soon outgrown. A congregation of white saints purchased a condemned building and spent a great deal of money and hundreds of hours of hard labor before it would pass city inspection for use as a teaching facility.

Meanwhile the white brother married an outstanding girl who was dedicated to the frustrating task of working in the black ghetto, and they were able to expand their efforts. They found it necessary to defend their neighbors from political exploitation by City Hall, and this threw them into definite involvement in opposition to the white structure downtown. They learned from bitter experience the manipulation of depressed and downtrodden humanity by the government hand-out programs.

They have now won the confidence of the black community and are the elected representatives on self-help projects such as "Operation Bootstrap." They are concerned with one of the most outstanding and rewarding programs in our nation to train men for needed labor, to rebuild the community without direct government aid, and to bring in industry to provide jobs. Through all of this, they have never lost the sight of their chief objective which is to bring a knowledge of the Christ to culturally deprived human beings.

It has not all been smooth sailing— but incredible as it may seem, the greatest opposition has come from some Churches of Christ. In spite of the fact that the work is under the supervision of the bishops of an autonomous congregation, vigilante committees composed of elders from other congregations have felt called upon to investigate it. Some of these have withheld support on the basis of a species of bigotry which seems almost unbelievable even among some of us who used to make a specialty of it. The charge is that some of the

workers who volunteered to help are from congregations which use instrumental music.

Of course the Spirit of God will triumph over this kind of provincial and factional thinking, but one finds himself saddened by the thought that in a world writhing in crisis, where human needs are an engulfing flood, that there are those who would prolong human misery and suffering in the midst of abject squalor while they stand afar off and debate their doctrinal differences. It is apparent that there are two classes which we shall have always— the poor and the Pharisees!

I salute a group of young Christians in another city which I shall not name who have established a store-front oasis manned by a young brother who became hooked on dope while yet in high school. He was not a believer at the time and was being reared by his mother who had been deserted by the father. The lad drifted from bad to worse. He began by smoking reefers or pot, and soon went on to become an acid-head. He became a police character and spent a good deal of time in the lock-up. Twice he was institutionalized for “the cure” but it did not last. Then one evening someone took him to a crusade conducted by Billy Graham and he felt an uncontrollable desire to surrender his worthless existence unto Christ.

The counsellor assigned to him was a young man from the Churches of Christ and he met with him every evening for a week, and finally immersed him in the name of the Lord. The two of them decided they would penetrate the gray world of mental fog where frightened men and women fight the “monkey on their backs,” and bring a ray of hope to that world of despair. They rented a storefront building and with the help of a group of college young people, scrubbed and cleaned and painted the inside. They furnished it with cast-off furniture, refusing the offer of new equipment as being out of place in such surroundings.

Now a coffee urn stands always ready for those who drop in. There is good wholesome reading material. There are impromptu prayer sessions which are unstructured except by human need and agony. The members of two congregations help support the work with their money, although some have expressed the hope that not all of those who are reached will start attending with them because it might hurt their influence in their suburban communities to have converted “winos” and former street-walkers among the membership.

One cannot help but think of the worn-out story of the old colored man who made application to affiliate with a white congregation. The “somewhats” in the group suggested that he not be too hasty in pushing for membership recognition, but rather pray about it for awhile. Three weeks later, when one of them asked him if he had prayed about the matter, he replied that he had, and the Lord had told him not to worry, that He also had been trying for years to get into that congregation and had not been successful either.

It is not always a ghetto area where such commandos operate. I know of a couple who were so thrilled when the Shepherd found them and rescued them from the pit, that they decided to turn their home into a rescue mission. The very informality of their approach has made possible a tremendous success. They have had boys who were adjudged delinquent paroled to them by the courts and have introduced those who were “turned on” and “tuned out” to Jesus.

These have brought other young people in dire need. The family room has been turned into a place of open conversation and confession. Each night of the week a prayer session is held and all seek to draw near to God, although the words addressed to the Father may be in the jargon or argot of “junkies” and drifters.

It is amazing what has happened in the lives of those who

feel that they are understood and accepted in spite of bizarre dress and unconventional hair lengths. All of us need to learn that Jesus never got any one out of where he was to love him, but he loved him to get him out of where he was. It makes a difference if our love reaches in to taverns, dives and off-beat places, because light always shines brightest on the darkest nights.

POLITICAL COMMANDOS

Recently I have been in contact with several young men of high ideals and tremendous dedication who are resolved to infiltrate the political spectrum and bring the claims of Jesus into the very halls where laws are made and debated. They are fully aware of the fact that the general cry is the rottenness of politics, and they know the risk that they take. But they hold that if a nation is saved it must be saved by the leaven of the righteous and that this leaven must touch the heart of the corrupt mass.

It is their theory that they should actively seek justice, relieve the oppressed, defend the fatherless and plead the widow's cause. They hold that this cannot be done by men who put their official standing ahead of principle. They are sick of bribery and chicanery. So these young men are studying civics and sociology, and probing into the science of government with a sense of commitment which is seldom seen in our day.

There will be opposition to their planned invasion of the political field. Some of it will come from the cynical "city hall crowd," and some of it from gang leaders who call the political shots and control the political "big shots." But a good deal of the opposition will proceed from Christians who hold the idea that to mess with politics is to forfeit your character. It is their view that, regardless of motives, one will be contaminated if he takes an active part in the making or enforcement of laws. He should

limit his efforts to criticizing officials.

I do not share this rather morbid view and I cannot help but wish that Christians were in every office in this land. The men of whom I speak, who are majoring in the field of jurisprudence as a high calling, are of high caliber. If they maintain their ideals they can and will make a difference. I know a number of brethren who are serving in the political arena as the elected servants of the people and they feel that they are ministers of God called to perform a great task.

I do not wish to prolong this article unduly. For example, it would take much time and space to describe the faithful men and women who are teaching the various disciplines on the college and university campus. They are bringing a sense of The Presence into the seething, fermenting academic complex of today. I hold that the field of higher education should belong to Christ and we should bring its very thought processes into subjection to his sovereignty.

It would please me if we could develop a strategy of penetration by which we could infiltrate and secure the entire domain of education for the advancement of the principles of that righteousness which is found in Him. I am not talking about making it the tool of any party or sect. This would be disastrous. I am simply saying that all education should be slanted toward perfecting the skills and abilities of men according to the ideals exemplified by him. All truth is one truth, whether arrived at by revelation, experimentation or rationalization. No one ever teaches any truth without teaching God's truth! The God of ethics is the God of mathematics. He is also the God of my salvation!

This is my Father's world, and every good gift comes from him. It must be channeled into his service. Whether one has a talent for teaching psychology, biology, history, science, literature, or home economics, he must realize that in its exercise

he is a servant of the Most High. God is concerned with every person on earth “from him that sitteth on the throne to the maidservant behind the mill.” There is no area of life that is left untouched by our witness. To go into all the world means much more than simply putting a missionary in the capital city of every country. The world is more than a shrinking ball spinning thru space. “All the world” is not simply a geographic expression. The concern of God is not alone with land or cities or oceans, but with human beings and human hearts—the world of reason and will and conscience. The commandos for Christ are the fearless fighters who are even in advance of the well-drawn and recognized front lines of battle.

They parachute into dark asphalt jungles where the foe lurks in every dark corner of the stinking streets and alleys, they invade the ranks of the sophisticated where the sword strokes are parried with keen scintillating mockery, they drop from sight in the suburban world where sin is refined and distilled into a product of tantalizing aroma appealing to the languid and sensuous culture of our day. But wherever they choose to fight, the commandos never forget their allegiance unto him. One of the best of their number put it thus: “It is our aim, therefore, to please him, whether we are ‘at home’ or ‘away.’ For everyone of us will have to stand without pretence before Christ our judge, and we shall be rewarded for what we did when we lived in our bodies, whether it was good or bad. All our persuading of men, then, is with this solemn fear of God in our minds.”

Harvard Experience

Mission Messenger (June 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

On the afternoon of April 7 it was my privilege to address a distinguished group of men and women assembled in Braun Room, in The Divinity School, Harvard University. The meeting was opened by Don Clark, who presented Barry Willbanks as moderator. Three reactors to my thesis were then introduced: Dr. Krister Stendahl, Dean of the Divinity School and John Lord O'Brian Professor of Divinity; Dr. William Robert Hutchison, Charles Warren Professor of History of Religion in America; and James Valentine Fisher, Ph.D. candidate. The last named was of special interest since he is the son of my good friend and brother, G. C. Fisher, Retired Chaplain of the Air Force, through whose kind invitation I conducted a Week of Spiritual Emphasis upon the largest air force base in the United States.

My theme was "Toward A Conservative Ecumenism," and I had resolved to present a positive alternative rather than a negative approach to the ecumenical drive in our generation. Accordingly, I broke the prayer of Jesus down into four components, and analyzed these on the basis that any form of unity which did not answer this prayer could not be called *Christian* unity.

My first point dealt with the *extent* of the unity for which we seek. Since the prayer for oneness was to include all who believed in Jesus through the apostolic proclamation (kerygma),

it was my contention that any approach to an answer must be based upon two considerations— the centrality of Christ and the instrumentality of the apostles. My thought was that both occupied a unique place in the kingdom constituency and to overlook or negate this uniqueness would be abortive of the will of God.

As to the *nature* of the unity, I suggested that it was personal, rather than organizational or institutional, and that it stemmed from possession of the divine nature, thus was a work of the Holy Spirit, transforming the individual from within. Such unity cannot result from plans, programs or projections, nor be produced by concordats, creeds or conventions. Men are powerless to either create or destroy it.

As to the *place* of the unity, my contention was that it was in the fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is useless to unite all men if, in the process, you separate them all from God. In dealing with the *purpose* of unity I pointed out that Jesus made belief in himself contingent upon the oneness of his disciples. The world will not be won to believe in Christ, until those who believe in Christ in the world are one.

In summation I stated that renewal is not the creation of something new, but the recapture of the ideal of the new creation. Renewal can only result from recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power.

The first reactor was Dr. Stendahl, a recognized leader in the World Council of Churches who presented a position paper at the Uppsala Convention. He concurred in the emphasis upon recovery of proclamation, and referred at length to the apostolic directive on division and fragmentation as found in First Corinthians. He dissented from that part of my thesis which dealt with structural or institutional unity, and felt that I might be muddying the ecumenical waters so that my own would appear clearer. He posed the question to me of whether the on-

going Spirit might not create new structures more valid for our age, and produce unity within such structures.

Dr. Hutchison, a former Presbyterian turned Quaker, proved why he is ranked as one of the top-notch scholars in American religious history. Having been born in the vicinity of Washington, Pennsylvania, he knew as much about the Campbell movement as those of us within that heritage. But his question got to the “gut issue” as it relates to us. He wanted to know, in view of *The Declaration and Address* what we proposed to do about making an impact on ecumenical circles today. It was apparent that this perceptive theologian felt that we must either find a definitive role in the twentieth century or “fold our tents like the Arabs, and as silently steal away.”

Jim Fisher concerned himself primarily with who has the Holy Spirit and how we may know who possesses the *Pneuma*. He questioned the restoration principle upon the basis of our limited application and suggested that if we were going to use it as a basis we should not go back and stop at a fixed historical point like the apostolic era, but back to Adam, and restore the principle of the brotherhood of man, for all men on earth.

Following a brief break for refreshments and a get-acquainted period, I replied to the questions of the reactors and then accepted questions from the audience for the remaining time. The entire colloquy lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes. The attendants included faculty members, divinity students, preachers from Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, the secretary for the Catholic Archdiocesan Council of Boston, and a reporter for the *Boston Globe*. This personable young feature writer did a rather lengthy article, but unfortunately made it appear that I was engaged in a debate with Dr. Stendahl, an impression which I diligently sought to avoid.

What we did may have been “a first,” for no one could

recall ever having heard of exactly this kind of encounter at Harvard during our generation. I am indebted to those who made it possible and to those who participated. I remained in the Boston area for a week, attending cell meetings of the saints in homes for four nights, and concluding with a rally conducted in the Junior High School Auditorium at Bedford, Massachusetts. It was an unforgettable experience.

One feature of our final meeting will interest “the fellowship of the concerned ones.” Brethren came from four states and from various segments of the restoration heritage. Although the gathering was arranged by and was under the auspices of a local Christian Church, a brother from the non-instrument congregation nearest to them directed the singing, the preacher of the congregation led in prayer, and a choral group sang a medley of spiritual numbers. The attitude shown by all who attended, both black and white, was commendable and bespeaks a lessening of tensions and gives hope for a brighter day. We have found the same spirit of brotherly love exhibited in almost every community where it has been our privilege to work recently and we thank God and take courage!

Meeting an Author

Mission Messenger (June 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

Several months ago I resolved to do a series of articles on “the new morality.” It seemed to me that, as commandos of Christ, we ought to face up to the questions being raised a little more honestly than most of us had been doing. I decided that I would especially analyze two books— *Christian Morals Today*, by John A. T. Robinson, and *Situation Ethics*, by Joseph Fletcher. At the time I had no idea I would ever meet either man personally, but while I was at Harvard, an opportunity was presented to go to Episcopal Theological School, in Cambridge, and sit in upon a two hour discussion on “Verbal Tools in Christian Ethics,” by Dr. Fletcher.

When I was introduced to him I learned that he already knew about my presence in the city, and he welcomed me to the seminar. I had supposed that I would meet a relatively youthful professor of “the swinging type,” scoffing at the mores of traditional Christianity and whittling opponents down to size with a rapier-like wit, while making a play for the girls in the class. Imagine my surprise to be confronted by a genial, almost gnome-like gentleman, more than sixty-five years old, dressed in a conservative gray suit and wearing a subdued blue-striped shirt with a rather unevenly knotted polka dot bow tie. He possessed a cheerful smile and radiated good cheer which endeared him to the students.

The theme had to do with what Dr. Fletcher called “Pauline ethics,” and followed the familiar route traversed by most liberal theologians, postulating a difference between the ethical teachings of Jesus and those of the apostle to the Gentiles. It was suggested that the gospel writers were not concerned with a theological approach, but simply with narrative. They collected the ethical teachings of Jesus and from them compiled “the sermon on the mount.”

Paul’s ethics cannot be understood at all, according to Dr. Fletcher, without understanding his idea of salvation. In dealing with the matter the professor conceived it was his task to point out the problems, and not resolve them. He confessed that he had not found a satisfactory answer to all of them, but because of his age he had no time left for messing around with non-controversial issues.

I shall not bore my readers with details, but will mention a few items of interest to me. It was argued that Paul faced the problem of how to avoid legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other, or how to transcend the letter and preserve the spirit, that is, the intent or value concerns of Christ. Paul concluded that Christ was “the end of the law for righteousness,” but by law here is meant merely “rules for righteousness.” This was superseded by the law of Christ, which is love, and not codal prescriptions to be swallowed like medicine.

It was suggested that the new covenant invites Christians to accept the vulnerability and jeopardy of freedom, never obeying any law simply for the law’s sake. Grace was set in the Torah’s stead, but many preferred to stick close to a custodian or tutor and be children. Here they took no risk and accepted no blame. But to avoid such irresponsibility, God wrote the new law in our minds, internalizing it so that now righteousness is incorporated in our persons rather than in a code.

In contrasting Jesus and Paul it was suggested that Jesus assumed the moral capacity of men, and took them seriously as men, laying blame on them and holding them responsible for not hearing the prophets. On the other hand, Paul took man's incapacity more seriously than did the gospels. Man can will what is right but cannot do it. Jesus said men were responsible and should be challenged and judged. Paul regarded men as helpless and said they needed help.

It was further said that Paul was concerned with sin generically, that is, with root sin. Jesus was concerned with sin specifically, dealing with acts of sin, rather than the condition of sin. Paul regards sin as something given in the human situation, something inherent. Jesus regards it as something chosen. Dr. Fletcher denied that Paul set faith over against works. With Paul it was not a question of faith or works, or even of faith and works. Rather it was the simple proposition that *faith works!*

I asked the professor if there was a difference in the way Jesus regarded love (*agape*), and the way Paul regarded it, seeing that Jesus said the law and the prophets were suspended from it, while Paul said the whole law was fulfilled in it. He thought that both might have regarded it alike. This seemed to me to lessen any supposed area of divergence as to ethics.

I further asked Dr. Fletcher to define love as he used the term. He said that philosophically *agape* was a radical divine and human commitment, but for a working definition he preferred to think of it as concern for persons. He insisted that it was an act of will, and thus was rational and volitional, rather than emotional.

He graciously asked me to explain my personal view of *agape* to the students and I did so. I suggested that if Jesus and Paul were present and could be questioned any apparent difference in their view of ethical behavior might melt away. We are always limited in an attempt to understand even those with

whom we can converse and even more so when we examine what was written by or about them.

It was noticeable that the students were very penetrating in their questions and did not hesitate to pursue their investigations even to the point of embarrassment for the teacher. They showed every evidence of wanting to search for truth, and were not inclined to accept any theory or system without carefully scrutinizing it from all angles. After the two hour session was finished I made it a point to meet some of the future candidates for the Anglican clergy and found them very interested in our own approach to the Christian faith.

My analysis of situational ethics will be made available in this paper later on. I am meeting the problem everywhere I go and I do not feel that we can either ignore it or set up a straw man and annihilate him under the guise of handling the issue. We trust that you will continue to read MISSION MESSENGER this year.

Student Revolution

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

It was my fortune, good or bad, to be at Harvard University during the inception of the student revolt and strike. On April 9 a group of activists almost two hundred strong, led by members of the Students for a Democratic Society, occupied University Hall and ejected the deans and other administrators. A list of grievances and demands was drawn up and sent to Dr. Nathan Pusey, president of the venerable ivy league institution.

The charge was made later that the occupation forces sacked the private files and some of the confiscated secret documents began to appear in *Old Mole*, the student newspaper of the campus revolutionaries. In any event, before dawn on the following morning several hundred police assaulted the bastion and ejected the trespassers. A few were injured in the melee and many were arrested and hauled away in buses which had been converted into oversize paddy-wagons. This served to electrify the campus and in the afternoon a capacity crowd gathered in the famous Memorial Church auditorium and called a strike.

I was especially concerned with the Divinity School, which voted on Thursday evening to support the strike. The next morning I sat in on a meeting of faculty and students called to determine the direction of the revolt. Richard Niebuhr represented the administration until Krister Stendahl could come from another meeting. Harvey Cox and other members of

the faculty were present.

The student president is an avowed revolutionary, thoroughly committed to overthrow of the existing order. The proposal was made to seize the Divinity School building, Andover Hall and the World Religion Center. When the conservatives carried through and defeated the motion, confusion resulted, and the meeting was like a deflated balloon. It adjourned without reaching a consensus and we went to Harvard Yard.

Several thousand people were milling about, some putting up signs and others tearing them down. Two hundred of the more raucous were marching in a parade up one street and down the other, shouting in a rhythmic but monotonous chant, "On Strike! Join Us!" They did not attract too much of a following.

Every conceivable kind of bizarre dress was manifest. Some Harvard men were as seedy as tramps, and a convocation of these looked like delegates to the National Hobo Association. Others were neatly attired. Women from Radcliffe were present in force, many of them wearing micro-mini-skirts, and some of them looking like accidents going somewhere to happen.

The Communists had moved in to take advantage of the unrest and these were passing out some of the rankest and rawest propaganda to be found this side of Cuba. The brand in predominance seemed to look at Chairman Mao as the epitome of all wisdom, and were lauding Fidel Castro on the sly. One could not help but believe that the strategy for conquest originated in Cuba.

A rock band, *The Albatross*, set up for business on the steps of Memorial Church, and the electrical amplifiers drowned out everything else for a block. We have come a long way since the poet wrote, "Music hath power to charm the savage breast." The

frenzied players with thatches of long hair like unruly stacks of hay dumped precariously upon their heads, blew and pounded out the beat. They gave the impression that Harvard had discovered some of the missing links in the evolutionary chain and had placed them on public exhibition.

Everything seemed to hinge on an afternoon faculty meeting. The president was jeered as he walked through the milling mass to the place, but never lost his cool. Photographers from the news media were everywhere. Inside the hall the various angles of the revolt were recalled and discussed. Witnesses were heard. When a vote finally came after several hours of tension, the faculty decided by a big majority that the act of occupying University Hall was a serious error and breach of trust. But they also censured the action of calling in the police.

When I flew out of Boston the ferment was still seething. A school probably never fully recovers from the effect of such an action. The students were protesting against ROTC and other military installations on campus, the expansion of the campus through wreckage of a subhousing area occupied by poor blacks, and the authoritarian power structure of the school which is alleged to be aloof and unapproachable.

I have been asked several times recently to voice an opinion as to our current travail. I am reluctant to respond because most of us are still living in the dreamy past, in an era of the easy answer philosophy. We still want to stroll down the violet-bordered lanes of childhood, in a world where everything was either black or white. In spite of our longing for "the good old days," we cannot go back. And if we did we would find only a filmy illusion.

And so we have revolution! We plaintively ask why people cannot be satisfied with the good life of ease and comfort. We have worked hard for what we have and now why can we not enjoy it? We point to our gleaming automobiles, our sparkling

appliances, and our shiny gadgets. But we have reared a generation which sees these things as symbols to hide sham, pretence and hypocrisy. They do not equate life with things, and in their idealism, they renounce things to seek for life, or for what they think of as life.

They are not unaware that there are millions on earth who are starving, nor do they forget that often our foreign policy is quite selfish, carried out either to purchase favors or freedom from attack, or to increase our trade abroad and further enrich our coffers. There is sometimes the feeling that the government uses education as a means of enslavement and even of exploitation. There is also a feeling that the church is sometimes concerned only with its institutional image rather than with the basic needs of suffering humanity.

On the huge sprawling campuses of our day, students feel they are part of a faceless mass. The professors whom they see only at a distance, often seem to regard them as cogs in the machinery. Disillusionment frequently sets in and the result is that more college students die of suicide each year than by any other means.

I do not think most of us condone the principle of civil disobedience as a legitimate means for attainment of goals in our society, but we are faced with the fact that there are those who do. And they are not all ignorant rabble-rousers and hell-raisers. So we must enter into dialogue and discussion with those whom we would like to ignore, hoping they will disappear as a mere symbol of our times. They will not!

I think it is important that we keep our lines of communication in repair. There's no use of talking into the telephone if no one is on the other end of the line. And a good conversation requires that both listen occasionally. I beg parents in times like these to listen to their young people. We must not be "bugged" by lengthy sideburns, moustaches and long hair, until

we forget the humanity of our sons. These young people are saying some vital things. They are impulsive it is true, but they have proven their willingness to suffer for their ideals. They are not apathetic. They are not coldly indifferent to the needs of the world.

I trust, too, that the family of God will not drive out our young people or set them adrift. All of us need a shelter from the storms of life. If we are unwelcome in one we must construct another. If the community of saints is to provide the shadow of a rock in a weary land it must not exclude from the shade those who most need a haven. The status quo is not perfect. We can stand correction in many of our attitudes. Let us hold on tenaciously to our value judgments, but let us not turn a deaf ear to others.

We can have a very great impact upon our contemporary world if we can work together in compassion and understanding. If we fight among ourselves and divide into rival camps on the basis of age and youth, we will lose one group and perhaps lose them both. We must prove that there is room in Christ for all of God's precious children.

About Our Buildings

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

From time to time in recent months I have been delivering a lecture which I entitle “Strangled By Structures.” In the course of it I take a quick rundown on the book of Acts to learn where the Good News was announced. I point out that it was proclaimed in the Jewish temple, on an outdoor colonnade, in the Sanhedrin court, in a vehicle traveling on the main highway, in private homes and in Jewish synagogues. It was preached by a river side, in a jail, in the inner city of a university town, in a heathen courtroom, a Greek lecture-hall, a third story tenement, the stairs of a military barracks, in a Roman judgment-hall, and in a dwelling rented by a prisoner.

The only place it was not preached is about the only place we do proclaim it— in a house owned by the congregation of saints, and kept for that purpose. The primitive saints owned no “church edifice.” They knew nothing about what is today termed “religious architecture.” They had no idea of a material sanctuary, a pulpit or cushioned pews. All of these were as foreign to their minds as a cathedral or a basilica. The fact is that the Christians constituted an underground movement, flexible and not tied to earthly sites. This was one source of their strength.

A candid survey of contemporary society forces us to realize that we are being herded into a corner because of the

traditional approach we have developed. It is not easy to admit this and most of us will die without doing so. We have equated spiritual strength with real estate holdings, and frequently have gauged the success of a congregation, not upon its service to humanity, but upon the size of the pile of brick and stone which has been cemented together in a strategic spot.

Now we are faced with areas where it is unwise to erect “church buildings” as we have come to quaintly refer to them. And these are precisely the places where the penetration of the Presence is most desperately needed. It is a little bit ridiculous to move into the stark poverty of the ghetto and purchase a lot for a fancy sum and erect upon it a shining edifice attesting to our affluence elsewhere.

But when I mention this it “bugs” the brethren no end. Warnings go out that I am dangerous and fanatical. Folks keep a wary eye upon me for fear that I have a hatchet under my coat and may start hacking away the pillars which support the arched roof of “the sanctuary.” Few such complaints come from the ghetto where the brethren are too busy spraying for cockroaches and putting out rat poison to pay much attention to what I say. But brethren who do not have to worry about lice invading the hair of their Sunday School children allow some of the things I say to get in their own.

Be of good cheer, brethren! I am not going to set any of our monasteries on fire. I’m simply trying to spark a flame in the hearts of those who are stacked in our glorious woodsheds and turn them into kindling wood for the Lord. I am as neutral toward buildings as I am toward a claw-hammer or monkey-wrench. I do not get a passion about tools, but I do hate to see some of our mechanics vainly wrestle with a lug wrench that will not fit, and skin all of their knuckles. And I am arguing that the institutional church concept which is hooked on worshiping God “in temples made with hands” is often as inappropriate to our day as a country store with a hitchrack in front of it. Both have

had their day and the heyday is over!

I do not recommend that we abandon our structures to the moles and bats. Enough of the brethren are already evacuating them without a planned strategy of retreat, and if some of the black saints show up and “place their membership” the white sheep in some areas will knock the gate down trying to get away from those who will not “stay in their place” and hold the line—the color line, that is.

All I am suggesting is that we re-examine our structures and their purposes and convert them into meaningful units in the service of the Master. As places for reaching the world of the lost they are becoming less effective with each passing year. In great inner city structures which once were packed with proud and aloof worshipers, the small minority which remains rattles around like a handful of dried peas in a gallon sirup bucket. They bask in their former glory and hang pictures of yesterday on the fading walls, but the word “Ichabod” can be written above the portals.

In our day of radio, television and mammoth Sunday newspapers with their colorful supplements, the neo-pagans are not going to sit in front of a wooden stand and listen to someone orate from a borrowed sermon outline on the grave sin of contributing to the Herald of Truth program, or of using individual cups on the table of the Lord. If they are going to be forced to yawn they will just remain in bed where they will not have to fumble in a pocket when the plate is passed. If it keeps on and the men of our age become more complacent we are going to be forced to go into all of the world and reach them. That will be a new wrinkle for some of us!

What can we do? One thing we can do is to “zero in” on the world by regarding our buildings, not as fortresses, but as mobile bases from which to attack. Our problem will then reverse itself. It will not be a question of how to get more in who

are out, but of how to get more out who are in. If the early saints had been trapped as we are the Way would never have gotten one foot off the ground. But those saints permeated, penetrated and pierced the culture because they were “Go” oriented instead of “Come” organized. Here is what I think our buildings need to become.

LAUNCHING PADS

We are God’s ballistic missiles and communications satellites. He has made available to us the same dynamic of the Spirit by which he caused the planets to go into eclipse, the earth to rock and reel like a drunken man, the graves to be blasted open, the bodies of the saints to arise from the dead, and his own Son to be resurrected. It is the dynamic which freed the Son from the gravitational pull of the earth and the whole material system, and provided the thrust by which he returned to the glory sphere to take his place at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The purpose of a pad is to place us in orbit. It is not a squatting place for duds or a showplace for “mock-ups.” Unfortunately a lot of us have been “gutted” of our “works” by the Enemy, and although we have a dynamite Message we are living firecracker lives. Even then we sometimes just sizzle and splutter. We only fizz in the fuse and pop off in the pack. Let’s get ignited and set this world on fire! The most sophisticated missile on earth is as useless as a broken crossbow as long as it is merely sitting on the platter.

Our problem is intensified because we have sold tickets to a lot of spectators who have come to hear a lecture on “the way that is right and cannot be wrong,” and they don’t want to be missiles. They will come up missing if they are expected to get on with the job. It will not take much to “get them up in the air” but it will take a lot of thrust to keep them there. I am serious

when I say that the devil probably does not care how many we get into the church if they act like a lot of those who are already there. It is time we turn on the heat and open up the flame jets!

FILLING STATIONS

It is not being too facetious to say that those who speak to the saints should be pumps dispensing high octane fuel into the “think tanks” of those who are parked on the ramps before them. But they must also be road guides and tour directors and get the customers on the way. The real purpose of a filling station operator is different than that of a parking lot attendant. The first provides power to go, the second a place to stop.

It is obvious that few people in their right mind would choose to spend their vacation on the service station apron. Indeed they are generally upset if delayed. Unfortunately, there are many who never use their spiritual fuel to do anything except to go from home to the filling station. Since they never use anything but the “regular grade” they do not have the “no-knock” additive, and frequently expend their only energy in complaining and bickering. They rust out rather than wear out. After a lifetime of routine they end up as “clunkers” filled with bitterness and resentment. We must somehow “get the show on the road” and go where the action is!

ARSENALS

Soldiers who are under fire and who are expending their ammunition must have a periodic replenishment or they will be helpless. The Enemy who engages us is clever and adroit, changing strategy constantly and using maneuvers adapted to divergent circumstances. We must keep abreast of the techniques or be hopelessly outclassed. If we are simply kept penned up or pinned down in the barracks we will make no effective contribution to the struggle.

Part of our problem today is that we have confused standing firm with standing still. As a result we are not being furnished the firepower essential to meeting the attack buried against us in our day. Because the way we said and did things a century ago seemed effective then, we conclude that to be faithful we must perpetuate the method. Many of our brethren are involved in polishing up our flintlock muskets and developing gadgets to make them easier to wield, but we have left the age of the blunderbuss and even the “buzz bomb.” It is one thing to walk in the old paths, but a wholly different thing to wallow in the old ruts!

There is little to be gained by making breathless assaults on positions which are no longer occupied and drumming up fervor for an attack on abandoned fortresses. Frequently men become fervid in decrying the position of “liberal theologians,” when no theologian, liberal or otherwise, has espoused the view for many decades. It is obvious that we do a better job vanquishing the foe when he is not present. One who is cock of the walk in his own chicken yard may be merely a plucked rooster when he flies over the fence.

The point I am making is that we should stop our simplistic approach and equip our brethren to cope with life as it is and where it must be lived— in school, office, shop and neighborhood. We must stop passing out a list of hand-me-down answers which force us to tailor and trim the questions to match and meet our solutions. We live in a complex world. Everything is not in apple-pie order and cannot be settled by supposing that it is and covering it with frosting. You cannot fight the devil with cream-puffs.

All of this points up the fact that we must consider our buildings in new perspective. They must not become monasteries to house a cult of the withdrawn, but radiation centers from which power reaches out to touch life where it is and as it is. We must not enter them to hold a service, because service is to be

rendered and not held. Service is what we do in the world, not what we do in a “church building.”

We must also realize that there are places where such buildings are not feasible. It is absurd to reason that there can be no *ekklesia* where there is not a communal-owned structure. Small bands meeting in tenement living-rooms or ghetto apartments are as precious to our God as those who sit in cool comfort with the filtered light of stained glass windows casting colorful reflections on the clean pages of new hymnbooks. In many areas the money which would be poured into vaulted edifices might well be used to purchase food for starving frames suffering from malnutrition.

Jesus was standing in the shadow of one of the most magnificent structures in the world when he declared, “A greater than the temple is here.” And that greater thing was the principle, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” I thought of this recently when brethren conducted me through a beautiful temple made with hands where the rug alone cost thousands of dollars. As I passed by the bulletin board I saw the picture of a little skeletal lad with eyes looking out of cavernous depths— a starving Biafran child. A typewritten note pasted on the picture read: “Help us raise fifty dollars for Biafran relief.”

In our day we must again become militant and mobile. We’ve allowed ourselves to become mired down and entangled with reams of red tape. It is time to start marching. We must put the “go” back in the gospel and take the “miss” out of our concept of mission. We are building as if we were going to stay here always. Our struggle is no longer in the battlefield but on the parking lot. Let’s go forth unto him without our camps, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come!

Our Real Purpose

Mission Messenger (July 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“And ever since the Reformation, when or where has existed a Protestant or dissenting sect who would tolerate a free enquiry? The blackest billingsgate, the most ungentlemanly insolence, the most yahooish brutality, is patiently endured, countenanced, propagated, and applauded. But touch a solemn truth in collision with a dogma of a sect, though capable of the clearest proof, and you will soon find you have disturbed a nest, and the hornets will swarm about your eyes and hands, and fly into your face and eyes.”— John Adams, Letter to John Taylor.

I do not want my readers to forget that the purpose of this journal is to plead for the unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever else we write about is subsidiary to our real goal. This is not to say that unity is the ultimate end of our faith. The end is to lead the whole world to believe that God sent His Son. The unity of believers is the means by which this end can be accomplished. Jesus made conversion of the masses contingent upon our unity.

The reason why our present emphasis is upon oneness is because we are divided. If we were united and working together we could get on with the paramount task. As it is, our condition contradicts our contention. Unless we can demonstrate that we have a unitive principle which is magnificent enough to hold us together we will labor in vain to influence those about us to think

in terms of the one body and the one Spirit.

We have been the victim of certain fallacies. As long as we equate these with God's will and seek to bind them upon others we will only confound and confuse. We must face up to these erroneous views honestly and sincerely, and we must openly renounce them, or we will foster schism and disunity. Our fathers were not infallible. They made mistakes. It is no honor to us to adopt and perpetuate their errors. We should divest ourselves of them and heal the breaches which were caused by those whose zeal ran far ahead of their knowledge.

I am not inclined to speak in glittering generalities and allow my readers to guess at my meaning. The time for ambiguity and equivocation is long past. Let me specify some of the perversions of the truth which have splintered and fragmented us until we have been made a laughingstock in the eyes of perceptive people who know that our divided status belies our words.

1. We have abused God's revelation by applying scriptures designed to separate us from pagans and idolaters to our relationship with other children of God. A good example is found in the misuse of 2 Corinthians 6:15-16. The command, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," has been deliberately used by factional promoters to break the tie that binds believers. The context plainly shows that "unbelievers" are those who do not recognize Jesus as Lord. They are heathen. "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?"

The word of God consistently distinguishes between brethren in the Lord and unbelievers. A good example is found in 1 Corinthians 6:5, 6. Here the apostle is dealing with litigation between brethren. "Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before

unbelievers?” The unbelievers are the unrighteous (verse 1). They are heathen judges.

No one who was in Christ Jesus was an unbeliever in the scriptural context. There were a lot of things wrong with the members of the body at Corinth. Some of them thought that an idol might have real existence. Others were confused about the resurrection, and still others about spiritual gifts. But in spite of their errors they were never designated as unbelievers. They were called saints. They constituted the temple of God. They were Christ’s as Christ was God’s.

There is nothing more calculated to create schism than to apply to citizens those statutes which relate to aliens. This is subversive of all law. It is destructive of all peace. To call upon God’s precious children to come out from among His other children and be separated is to become an apostle of discord. It is immature, carnal and shameful. To create parties of the redeemed ones over personal views concerning instrumental music, the millennium, cups, classes, colleges, radio programs, and such things, is sinful and sectarian.

Every time the Spirit refers to division among the brethren it is condemned. Not once does an apostle even hint that fragmentation of the saints is approved as a means of maintaining purity of teaching. Factions are works of the flesh. They are inimical to the purpose of God, negating the design of the cross, and defeating the plan of heaven for the universe. When men quote those passages intended to build a barrier between those who follow Christ and those dominated by Belial, and use them to erect barriers between those who are brethren in Christ, they are frustrating the work of God.

I care not how sanctimonious such men appear, or how couched in scriptural terminology their pronouncements may be, they are still profane and unspiritual, using the sword of the Spirit to carve and chop into bits the very body it was intended

to defend and protect. The purpose of God is to gather together all things into one body, to unite us to each other by uniting us all to Christ. What species of arrogance and bigotry causes men to think they have uncovered a malignant mystery and that the real purpose of revelation is to set us at odds with one another, rending the body into bits?

It is time to repudiate the philosophy of those men and papers dedicated to the inglorious task of widening the chasms and deepening the cleavages between God's children. Let men of courage rise up and batter down the walls of senseless division. Let us challenge every attempt to misuse and misapply the words of the Holy Spirit to justify that unholy spirit which rips and ruptures the body of which we are members. Let us resist every ignorant application of God's word intended to alienate, separate and estrange members of the family from one another.

2. We have been guilty of propagating the inconsistent and untenable view that fellowship in Christ Jesus is contingent upon conformity of opinion and interpretation of doctrinal matters. I use the term "inconsistent" because there is not a single party among us, regardless of how extreme and exclusive it may be, that does not make some provision in its unwritten creed for differences of opinion within its constituency.

Every faction allows for latitude upon many points and while the members may differ seriously upon such matters they do not divide. There is no other basis for any kind of community action than a recognition of and a provision for men to differ. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. To set up an accepted mental standard for the new humanity is as ridiculous as to formulate a recognized physical stature for citizenship in our own nation. Men's thoughts will differ in weight as their bodies do. The only unity possible for rational beings is unity in diversity, and every sect among us proves it even while loudly denying it.

This very fact makes it imperative that every faction arbitrarily select and elevate to prominence some point upon which agreement must be absolute in order to be deemed faithful and loyal. It is this point which calls the party into existence and becomes its breath of life. It is the creed of the party, the thing which must be believed in order to be accepted. For its defence the party lives, moves and has its being. On other matters you may be free to differ, but on the “root issue” you must swallow your doubts, shackle your thoughts, and warp your mind into submission. Otherwise you become a traitor, a renegade, and an apostate.

Suppose, for example, the party standard around which “the loyal brethren” are to rally and encamp is opposition to the present method of support for a television program, Herald of Truth. The banner is unfurled over the gates of the party bastion. All who enter must salute it and pledge allegiance to the segment for which it stands. Once inside, they can differ about the morality of war, contraception and birth control, the work of the Holy Spirit, the qualifications of elders, and a hundred other things, including divorce and remarriage. But these do not count in the world of pious pretext where casuistry conceals the duplicity of the factional attitude. None of these things affect the “loyalty” of the partisans so long as they are “sound” on the real issue.

But who authorized fallible beings, including editors, to sort out the issues, and decide which one would mould the Procrustean bed upon which to measure men to see that all of the zealots reach the same height— or depth? Who prescribed this species of pharisaism which regards all of the geese in one’s own party as swans, and all of the swans in other parties as geese?

Who authorized men to interpose themselves and their thinking between other men and the kingdom of heaven? Who gave them the right to beatify and canonize one issue and damn

another? Shall our faith stand in the wisdom of men? Will we allow ourselves to be herded and driven into one corral or another by self-appointed whip-cracking guardians of the faith? Let me serve notice right here and upon all who feel inclined to rope and brand me with their partisan irons that I shall not become the pawn of any sect or faction. I belong to the great Shepherd of the sheep. I shall never wear the stigma of another! Never!

The simple truth is that fellowship in Christ Jesus is wholly unrelated to our differences of opinion and interpretation in the one body. Not one passage in the new covenant scriptures urging us to be at peace or to live in harmony was written to bring us into the fellowship. Every such injunction was addressed to those in the fellowship, and precisely because they were in it. Harmony is not essential to fellowship, but fellowship is the foundation for attainment of harmony. We do not come into the fellowship because we have achieved harmony, but we strive to achieve a greater degree of harmony because we are in the fellowship.

Men who make tests of fellowship out of either the pro or con of such matters as instrumental music or the millennium are schismatic and sectarian. Children of God may hold diverse opinions about such matters, and they always will. They can and should discuss them at any length they deem profitable, but to elevate them to tests of fellowship is to make them more important than the cross. It is an effective testimony of the little regard men have for the cross, that they permit such secondary and inferior issues to destroy the relationship secured by the blood of God's dear Son.

Jesus did not die to purchase an instrumental or non-instrumental party. This is not to be the culmination of the plan conceived in the divine mind before the foundation of the world. It was not for this that myriads of angels waited and prophets suffered and died. No man is true to the Lord who predicates a

communion upon such a flimsy basis and trumpets it loud and long as God's will for the redeemed of all the earth.

It is time to recover the majesty and might of the kingdom which Jesus came to proclaim. It is time to recapture that sense of oneness in the divine family which is kept inviolate in spite of human failings and misunderstandings. Let the men of God arise and assert their faith in the eternal values and refuse to dabble longer in the puddles of trivia which besmirch all who splash in the muddy shallows.

Let us answer the prayer of Jesus in our generation. Why should we postpone that answer until future ages through our timidity and fright? It is as valid for us as for our posterity. Our fathers were wrong when they divided and created factions and parties. We will be wrong if we perpetuate them. Let us cease the sectarian double-talk and forego the weasel-words and let the world know that we are for unity— not unity at any price, for the price has already been paid. He paid it at Calvary.

To the promotion of the divine program of unity in Him, and in Him alone, we dedicate this paper and our lives. Will you dare to join with us in welding our warring brethren into a unit “according to His purpose set forth in Christ”?

The Magnificent Concern

Mission Messenger (July 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“Now, my brothers, we must tell you about the grace that God has given to the Macedonian churches. Somehow in most difficult circumstances, their joy and the fact of being down to their last penny themselves, produced a magnificent concern for other people” (2 Corinthians 8:1, 2).

It is an interesting fact that many times those who are the poorest in this world's goods are actually the most generous in helping share the burdens of those who are distressed. There seems to be a willingness to give which acts in inverse ratio to the amount of possessions. What is true of individuals frequently becomes true of the congregations which they constitute.

All of us have known of groups of saints who struggled to get started in rented halls or storefront buildings, with a spirit of love and compassion which was unsurpassed. But we have seen the same communities of believers come unglued and fall to staves, when they became wealthy and moved into imposing structures in an elite neighborhood. It seems to be easier to handle poverty than to manage affluence.

Paul was concerned about collecting funds from the Gentile world to relieve the serious needs of the poverty-stricken saints at Jerusalem. When he reached the compromise with the other apostles by which it was agreed that they would continue

to take the Message to the circumcised, while he went among the uncircumcised, he promised that he would not forget the poor in Judea. There is no indication that he ever forgot or evaded the promise.

Corinth was in Achaia, the southern province of the Grecian peninsula, of which Macedonia was the northern province. Corinth was a bustling transfer point for cargo ships and a place of wealth. When Paul wrote the congregation there to urge them to collect a sum to be carried to Jerusalem, he mentioned that the community of saints in Macedonia had been urging him for a year or more to take their contribution to relieve the suffering ones whom they would never see.

In the passage under consideration here he mentions the state of the saints in Macedonia, pointing out their generosity in the midst of abject poverty. This spirit he calls the grace that God has given. We seldom think of our sharing in this fashion. Sometimes we regard it as a sacrifice that we make, or a drive that we put on, or a concern that we feel.

When we are touched in the depths of our being about the report of starvation in Biafra or India, and we feel an impulse to send the small sum which we have been saving for something special, do we ever think of this feeling as grace which God has bestowed upon us? When we are reminded of the squalor and destitution in the ghetto, and we empty our pantry shelves of the cans which we have collected and contribute them to the food drive, do we recognize our desire for what it is?

We may feel that the recipients of our gifts are fortunate enough to share in grace because they share in our things, and all too often we look upon ourselves as the dispensers of grace rather than the receivers of it. There is the danger that we may feel that we are essential to God and that grace could not come without us, when the fact is that we could not go without grace.

The purpose of life is to glorify God and we do this when we share unselfishly with others. The achievement of empathy with others in their straitened circumstances is the magnificent concern. It is this which makes us more Godlike and heavenly. The Macedonians were in difficult circumstances. But they were not defeated by them. Instead, the surging joy which bubbled up within, coupled with their almost penniless state, caused them to react in such a manner as to give generously and freely. Like the widow who cast in the two mites, they gave their living, and in doing so found the secret of life.

Student Attitudes

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[Abstract]

It is becoming ever more evident that there is a growing state of student discontent in the liberal arts colleges maintained by members of the Churches of Christ. Much of it takes the form of a seething inner revolt against the parochial stance and dogmatic attitude so frequently reflected by administration and faculty. There is a general feeling that the student body is walled in from real life with its multitudinous problems, and is subjected to over-protectionism more adapted to juveniles and scholars on a junior high school level.

A good example of this is found in the lectureships which feature speakers who are “safe” and “sound” by establishment standards, men who will say what they are expected to say, or who can couch their message in such language as to render it fairly vapid and nebulous. Students would like to hear controversial figures and be able to openly question them. They would prefer dialogue to monologue, especially when the latter specializes in repetition of old cliches and stereotyped expressions.

The administrators are generally dedicated to maintaining the status quo and regard as the first and greatest commandment, “Don’t rock the boat.” But while they can regulate who may speak to the students they cannot police the conversation of the students among themselves. A great deal of

vital thinking is being done by some brilliant young men and women, and they are no longer “buying” all that is dished up by professors who want to “make their calling and election sure” with the source of income.

Students find themselves relatively helpless when a teacher is summarily dismissed because of a depth of spiritual experience or a developing breadth of fellowship reaching across our nonsensical walls, but they lay these things up in their hearts, and some day they will be in a position to make a difference. They are not unaware of the fact that often it is the one most dedicated to Christ who is filtered out while those who are willing to parrot the party line are lauded as the hope of maintaining our factional future.

We do not share the feeling that college men and women ought to sit supinely and gulp down all that is fed them without question. We believe that it is healthful to challenge whatever is said. Some of our traditional interpretations are pretty childish and a wee bit silly. If we have become the most ardent challengers of the whole religious world, we ought not to object when we are asked to sup from our own spoon. Socrates was right when he said that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” but I should like to add that “the unexamined faith is not worth having.”

It is too much to hope that we will regain our integrity as a religious movement overnight, but it is comforting to know that there are those who are willing to work for it. I welcome the questioning attitude when turned inward upon our own views and interpretations. Each generation must honestly face up to its own errors in thinking if it will eliminate rather than perpetuate them. Truth needs no buttressing of false rationalization. Let men be free and let the truth be known!

“Our colleges” are making their pitch for public recognition and support by causing it to appear that the students

are a docile lot who will remain properly curbed and harnessed. That may not be exactly “cricket” because there is more than one way to have a revolution. It isn’t necessary to carry a supply of Spam and soda crackers into the administration building and settle down for a spell until the police arrive and clobber you and toss you out into the yard. Nor is it essential that you set the library on fire with gasoline-filled Coke Bottles. The really effective revolution occurs in the hearts and minds of men who seek for truth regardless of obstacles, and who will adopt it regardless of cost. It is here that many of our younger brethren will measure up to the best of men.

Men and Morals

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[Abstract]

Morality is not properly the doctrine of how we make ourselves happy, but how we make ourselves worthy of happiness.—Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason.

As one grows older and becomes more serious about the problem of how he must order the remainder of his life, he seeks for some expression which will provide for him a guideline, or a point of reference, to which he can refer for measurement of his attitude and accomplishment. Since my own life has been so Biblically oriented, it is not strange that I would select from the sacred pages the motto which hopefully is engraved upon the walls of my inner consciousness.

I must confess that the choice was not the result of diligent search. Rather, it seemed to capture my mind upon an occasion when I was casually reading the speech of Paul which was made one Saturday to the attendants of a synagogue in Pisidia. He was, as usual, reasoning with them out of the law and the prophets, and having made reference to David, he said, "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell asleep." At once it occurred to me that this best summarized my personal responsibility— to serve my own generation by the will of God, and then fall asleep to be laid with my ancestors.

With this philosophy I can never be passive, for service by

the will of God makes one an activist. It will also deliver me from that tragic fate into which so many drift as they age, grumbling because they are not served by others, and whining and complaining that they are laid on the shelf. No one is laid on the shelf, but many crawl up on it and call down maledictions upon the heads of others, including their own flesh and blood.

If I meaningfully serve any generation it must be my own. I cannot serve the generation preceding. My fathers served it, sometimes well and sometimes not. I dare not scrap the values they discovered, nor perpetuate the errors which they made a part of their legacy. It would be a disservice to my generation to do either. Nor can I keep fighting the battles of yesterday as a retreat from the conflicts of the present, for there are new foes to be met.

I know a veteran of the first World War who delights in recounting every facet of his life in the military in 1917-18. He has told the tales so often and embellished them so gradually that they are vastly more interesting than the facts must have been. But he knows nothing about the war in Vietnam, except that “they don’t make soldiers like they use to make them.” No doubt he served a past generation of men well, and he is still serving that generation, but it is no longer here.

A lot of good brethren are still part of a nineteenth century restoration movement. They are storming positions long since abandoned and flogging dead horses which will never be revived except in their imagination. As an exercise in futility this might be harmless if it were not for the fact that while they are battering at walls no longer defended a vigorous enemy is pressing in upon us from other quarters.

I cannot serve the next generation directly, because I will not be here. I am not so foolish as to think I am indispensable, and I am quite content to believe that God will raise up men much more qualified than myself to fulfill his purpose. I will be

thrilled if I can pass on to my posterity a sense of freedom in which they can serve without my skeletal hand reaching from the grave to restrain or restrict them. I want them to make their decisions, not in the light of relationship to a fallible progenitor but in the love of God.

It seems to me that one small contribution which might be made is to face up honestly and unflinchingly to issues being raised in my generation. I am not certain that we rate very high on the scale of integrity when it comes to dealing with contemporary problems. This is especially true when those problems relate to controversial matters. We sometimes indulge in “the easy answer approach” which dismisses a thing without really dealing with it.

A CASE IN POINT

I think this is true, for example, of our glib treatment of what has come to be called “the new morality” or “situation ethics.” This is such a loaded proposition that one risks his standing if he even suggests that facetious remarks and ridicule do not adequately answer the questions raised. College young people are perceptive enough to see this and we make the chasm between them and ourselves wider by our demonstration of ignorance of what it is all about.

I know preachers who profess to speak learnedly and authoritatively about the subject and have never even read *Situation Ethics*, by Joseph Fletcher; *Christian Morals Today*, by John A. T. Robinson; or *Ethics in a Christian Context*, by Paul Lehmann. University students cannot stand sham or pretence. They can see through fake scholarship like looking through a window-pane. And one who does not know what he is talking about is soon dismissed with contempt by youthful intellectuals.

Perhaps I am wrong, but I do not believe we can sweep such things under the theological rug much longer. We must

meet them eyeball-to-eyeball and on their own ground. I propose to give them some notice because I think we will be forced to do so eventually. I want to have my say before circumstances drive me to the place where I must act under compulsion instead of voluntarily. And I want to be open and above board in my analysis and evaluation. This will not be easy because I confess to a natural bias in the matter.

There are at least three factors about situation ethics which cause many of those who register a wholesale condemnation of the concept to have an uneasy conscience. I say “many” because it is obvious that a number of brethren who make such an arraignment know nothing at all about the matter. They are simply opposing something because it appears to them to be new and modern, or because they have heard a preacher who knows no more about it than themselves, inveigh against it. Such people are like a jury which prepares its verdict when sworn in and before hearing the evidence. They are guilty of a breach of trust, wholly unethical, and are therefore unqualified to judge any approach to ethics.

But those who have studied what is being said, not merely to discover what is wrong, but simply to discover what it is all about, must face up honestly to the fact that all of us have practiced situationalism in some degree. And to compound the problem most of us somehow feel that it was precisely by doing so that we attained to our kindest and noblest moments in life. We have been confronted with poor unfortunates caught up in a web of exigencies, and we have said, “Circumstances alter cases,” and instead of cracking the whip which we flourish in the pulpit, we have pleaded for mercy in spite of “our laws.” That is really the basis of situation ethics.

Secondly, we have the uncomfortable feeling, the more we read about Jesus, that he exemplified this attitude, and that he felt that people were more important in the long run (and also in the short run) than legalistic pronouncements or propositions.

He seemed to be always in hot water with the lawyers because he emphasized the spirit which was behind the law, instead of the law which conceals the spirit. And this is the foundation of situation ethics.

Those who deeply immerse themselves in the new covenant scriptures soon come to see that they were never intended to be an inflexible law, wholly unconcerned with backgrounds, tension and pressures, but that they actually grew out of human situations and predicaments and are (as I believe) God's response to such conditions, telling us how Jesus would react under such circumstances. Even then, they not only allow, but actually urge the employment of our best judgment in handling cases which arise. All of this I will document when the time appears proper.

Why do I raise these issues at all? The answer is quite simple. I am a commando for Christ, and am constantly infiltrating areas of opposition in which I must seek to bring every thought into captivity to my King. I work in the black ghetto where revolt is seething and where, upon one memorable occasion, a young militant got up while I was speaking and yelled out, "Take your damned blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus and get the hell out of here!" I am in dialogue sessions with brilliant Jewish men, eminently successful in business and professions, who publicly question my whole basis for belief in Jesus. And I purposely meet with young revolutionaries on the university campus, shrewd and perceptive, who sometimes demand in language formerly reserved for latrine walls, that we quit feeding them mental fecal matter and "tell it as it is."

Once upon a time this did not concern me. I "went to church" three times per week, and often much more than that. It was a wonderfully comforting experience, with no danger or excitement. It was soothing to the spirit to be able to assemble with nice clean middle-class white Americans, in such a chummy spirit of glorified camaraderie. Then something happened to

upset the spiritual apple-cart which had been hauled so smoothly along the highway of life. And when it occurred the fruit was spilled all over the surrounding landscape.

Of course what really happened is that I met Jesus. He wasn't hard to recognize. I had been talking about him and describing him to others most of my life. But the strange thing is that when I met him he said "Follow me!" I thought I had been doing that for years, and I conjectured immediately that he meant I must "go to church" more frequently. Instead he turned his head on where I had been going and led me out into the world which I thought I had forsaken for his sake. And there wasn't anything comfortable about it.

I was on the defensive at once. I had to fight or go under. But I was amazed to find how sharp and keen was the sword which the Spirit had furnished. All of a sudden it came to me that I had never really been in battle before. I had engaged in sparring sessions with brethren in the same company upon such breath-taking issues as to whether it was a sin to plunk on a piano while singing, or as to whether Jesus was going to show up before or after the millennium, but we used the flat side of the weapon to clobber one another. We had never really intended to kill one another, for then we wouldn't have had anyone left to fight, and a majority of our best sermon outlines would have become obsolete.

But when Jesus called me out of "the church" (not the body of which he is head), to go into all the worlds, life took on a wholly new perspective. The things we had been fussing about for years— cups, classes, colleges, etc.— suddenly became very inconsequential. When pirates are attacking the ship the crew cannot continue to argue over who gets the next move in a checker game. And when someone is bombing the house with incendiaries, there is no time to fuss with your wife about which tie you will wear to meet the fire engine.

One reason why we have elevated our pusillanimous issues out of all proportion is because we have been lured off the main road and into a nice family picnic ground on a side road. If we get back in the traffic on the turnpike we will not have time to argue about how to pass the bread. There isn't anything wrong with a picnic unless it wastes time that should be used in going somewhere. And we have "miles to go before we sleep," as Robert Frost put it.

I think that before I go on I had better explain the bit about meeting Jesus. That kind of talk makes our brethren as uncomfortable as a society matron with poison ivy on the evening of the big ball. I am not implying that anything mystical took place. I did not go into a trance or have a vision. There was no speaking in tongues or getting the shakes or weak trembles. My hair did not stand on end and I did not have goose-pimples. I am too pragmatic for that kind of thing. Instead, I contacted Jesus personally in the only way and place that I could meet him — in the consciousness of my own heart. It was like coming home in the evening and turning a key in the lock and opening the door to find an old friend sitting there, as big as life, in the living-room.

FACING UP TO LIFE

After this little diversion I am prepared to say that I am convinced that if we plan to make any impact upon our culture we must deal definitively with the moral questions now being raised. We cannot continue to engage in indiscriminate wholesale charges, lest we end up doing an injustice to our own position and ideals. As a poet of yesteryear so quaintly expressed it.

Full many a shot at random sent,

Hits mark its sender never meant;

As gun when aimed at duck or plover,

Flies back and knocks the hunter over.

What is meant by the term “new morality?” It was first employed by the pope of Rome in a document issued on February 2, 1956. It related, in its inception to existential ideas, which were confused with situational ethics by Pius XII on April 18, 1952, and because it was feared that it would be used to defend birth control such an approach to ethics was barred from Catholic seminaries. The tag “new morality” at once became suspect and guaranteed that it would come under attack. Immediately men began to brand it as the old immorality in modern dress, with Lord Shawcross of Great Britain being at the forefront, calling it “the old immorality condoned.”

John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, introduced the subject of situational ethics in his popular volume *Honest to God*, and thus tied it in with the nature of Deity. This created such a furore that he felt obliged to publish another work called “Christian Morals Today” and consisting of the text of three lectures delivered in Liverpool Cathedral. He expressed a deep concern for mutual understanding and communication and urged his detractors to credit him with an equal passion for Christian truth and integrity. He denied that he was “primarily impelled by the pressures of the contemporary situation and by the impossibility of ‘selling’ the old medicine because it is unpalatable.”

The bishop divides his thesis into three parts, plugging for freedom over fixity, love over law and experience over authority. I have never seen a very careful analysis of his position by any of our brethren. Probably there are two reasons for this. A great many have not read it and those who have do not want to get their heads into a hornet’s nest. They have been stung by

“brotherly hornets” before and they prefer to let sleeping dogs lie— and lying dogs sleep! But I have yet to meet with a university group of any size whose members have not read the treatise and are anxious to discuss it.

I doubt that we can much longer continue to brush it aside with a wave of the hand. And to take a haughty, supercilious attitude in which we profess that such a thing is beneath our dignity goes over like a lead balloon. Modern college students are a pretty irreverent lot who delight in pricking pomposity and knocking the wadding out of a “stuffed shirt.” If you attempt to soar above them on waxen wings, and look down from lordly heights, they will turn the heat on and melt your pinions.

It is true, as many contend, that we do not necessarily have to enter into direct confrontation with the intellectuals. We can stay in our own structures and behind our barricades and talk to one another about what they must be like. But there are two things wrong with that. First, we will eventually be beaten by attrition. We live in an intellectual age, and with the rapid expansion of knowledge we must either go into the intellectual world, or there will be no world into which to go. God has just not promised to keep enough people ignorant so the Churches of Christ can survive. Either we capture the intellectual world for Christ or we’ve had it, so far as our generation is concerned.

Secondly, we cannot serve our generation according to the will of God, by ignoring either that generation or God’s will. One cannot escape the feeling that if Jesus were still here in the flesh he would be “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” We cannot move the battle to our ground where we can conduct it according to a timetable from prepared positions. We have to go where the action is, and we might have to ride “into the Valley of Death” and “into the jaws of hell” if we are really the *Light Brigade*!

Moreover, we face another possibility which has concerned

me a good deal lately. Our brethren are still contending for law in a loveless fashion, while blasting away at the hippies for advocating love in a lawless fashion. But it remains that love is the ultimate dynamic of transformation for the simple reason that God is love, and God is absolute. If we continue to “lay down the law” while others start “living up to love” we will be hanged on our own gallows. I am sure it must be humiliating to an eagle to be shot down while soaring in the wild blue yonder, but it must add insult to injury when the arrow which does the job is tipped with his own tail feathers, plucked while he was asleep on the perch.

Probably it will not make much difference to the Bishop of Woolwich whether I deal with his thinking or ignore it. He will probably never hear of me, and he appears to be a pretty independent kind of chap who does not worry too much about criticism. That is one thing we have in common. It does make a difference to me, however, whether I face up as honestly as I can to the issues being raised. I have learned to live with the castigation of others but I confess that I have not yet found a way to silence my conscience or inner compulsion.

It seems to me that there are three approaches I can take to *the body* of thought called “Christian Morals Today.” The first I shall call the “coroner-mortuary approach.” I can simply pronounce the whole thing dead and decaying and take it out and bury it with my solemn (and relieved) blessing. But what happens when a mortician has duly interred a corpse, and drives back home to find the chap sitting on the back steps of the mortuary whistling, and honing a switchblade knife?

The second approach I refer to as the “dissecting-room approach.” Here the body is assumed to be dead and is placed on a sanitary table, with the tools for taking it apart laid out in proper array. The white-coated attendants gather around prepared to find out the congenital weakness which resulted in early demise. But what is the appropriate reaction if the cadaver

suddenly sits up and winks at the doctors? There isn't room under the table for all of them.

I have decided on using the "diagnostic technique." I recognize the body as being alive and energetic, but I propose to examine it to see why it cannot walk a straight line. As I make a chart on my findings I shall expect to set down with approval what I consider to be normal, as well as to list deviations from the norm. I fully expect to get into heated arguments with the patient over what is normal and whether my line is straight or not. That will not make me nervous, because the whole medical fraternity in which I interned has been fighting over these matters for years. As a matter-of-fact we now have more than two dozen schools of thought, although that may be using the word "thought" a little loosely.

I would hope that I might be able to state the position of Dr. Robinson in language and terms which he would approve as accurate. If I did otherwise I would be quite unethical. "What doth it profit a man to overcome an approach to ethics, and lose his own ethic?" However, I am not sure I can do so. This is probably one of the most difficult tasks one can assign himself. I shall try to retain my integrity, and will be ready to apologize for any unfairness.

First off, Dr. Robinson does not believe there is a Christian ethic, pre-determined for all time and static. It is his contention that as times change Christians must change with them, and that such changes do not make us less Christian in spirit, but actually more so. It is argued that the complex technocratic processes to which we are exposed force us to constantly reassess our values and revise our views as to what is moral and non-moral. The changing stance of the theological establishment in our day toward war, capital punishment, homosexuality and suicide is cited as proof of this.

I am a little reluctant to express my views on some of these

things, not because I am afraid to discuss my position with those who accept the “new morality,” but simply because I do not care to argue with those of my brethren who do not. I am not at all sure that the popular position taken on any of them represents attainment to a greater sense of moral values.

THE PROBLEM OF WAR

Take the question of war, for example. I am not a pacifist, a fact which brought me into conflict with some of the finest and noblest saints I have ever met, my brethren in Great Britain. I doubt that anything is really moral which is wholly unrealistic, and it seems to me that nothing is more unrealistic in the present state of the world than to say that war must never be used as a means of thwarting wilful and deliberate aggression.

This position ignores the fact that God employed war as a judgment upon nations, and even upon Jerusalem (Ezekiel 14:21). Surely he was not immoral. This does not mean that God likes war any more than I like it. I did not punish my children because I derived pleasure from the experience but in order to produce “the fruit of real goodness” in their characters. I am reminded that William Tecumseh Sherman said that “War is hell,” and I concur, but I do not forget that God also made hell. And it was made as the result of war.

If Michael and his angels had been pacifists, the devil might have taken heaven over, and if this had happened those who went to heaven would have gone to hell. I do not concur with the view that the coming of Christ changed the nature of God and reformed the Father. This would have had to happen if all war is now sinful. Certainly war is an evil, but it is not necessarily a sin. All sin is evil, but not all evil is sin. Obviously not every war is justified, but that is not the question here.

I will be thrilled when the nations beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks. But it will be

necessary for all nations to desist from lifting up the sword against each other, for so long as one learns war with a view to the destruction of others, the others will have to defend themselves. We are not living in an ideal social framework, but in a world of sin. And just as individuals may sin against each other, nations may trespass upon and trample down the rights of other nations. God will turn those nations which hate him and his rule into hell. War is the judgment of God upon such sin here and hell is the judgment of God upon such sin hereafter.

Civil government has been ordained by God and is thrice said to be a minister of God. Civil authority is divinely authorized as God's minister to act as "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." When I assist in the work of rewarding good or in striking terror into the hearts of evil men, I am aiding God's minister to fulfill a responsibility to God. I cannot take this into my own hands for it has been given into the hands of the civil authority.

In view of this I do not agree with the idea that we will ever reach the place where we will need to regard war now as being immoral. If nations arrive at the point where this type of judgment is no longer requisite I will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I trust that they will mature so that war will not be necessary just as we hope that our children will grow up so physical chastisement and restraint are no longer required. But when children attain such stature we need not regard the spankings which we once gave them as having been immoral.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

When I ponder the problem of capital punishment I find myself again out of tune with modern psychiatrists and advocates of penal reform. Understand that I am not opposed to reform, for I am sure that administration of many of our

institutions is often calculated to make criminals of some and harden others. Sweeping changes should be made in jails and corrective centers. This is especially true of those within the state where I reside.

But it seems to me that those who advocate abolition of all capital punishment ignore three vital factors: (1) The absolute sovereignty of God as the creator and giver of human existence on earth; (2) The malignancy of sin which left unchecked would destroy the universe; (3) The divinely delegated authority to human society to remove from its fabric those who are incorrigibly devoted to the destruction of that fabric by acts of violence against the innocent.

Our modern problem stems from a denial of all three of these postulates. It is here that the theory of evolution may have injected its most fatal venom. If man is simply an animal which wiggled out of the primordial ooze and clambered clumsily up the ladder of social development with a few missing rungs on the way, there is really no debt or obligation owed to God. There is no real reason for loving or respecting God, for there is no real proof that God loves man or regards him with any different view than he would a tadpole or a reptile. Indeed, if God loved “man” at every stage, this is how he would have had to love him at some stages, if the evolutionist is correct.

But if (as I believe) God made man uniquely in his own image, then to brutally assault man is to attack and seek to destroy the image of God. Any theory of the origin of species which makes man merely an animal, regardless of how superior an animal he may be, can only postulate ultimate chaos and return to a jungle existence governed by fang and claw. Certainly the fangs will be polished and sanitized, and the claws be sheathed in silver and gold, but one who is disemboweled by a “cat” in an asphalt jungle shaded by skyscrapers instead of palm trees, will not know the difference.

Men prey upon one another when they have animals for ancestors, but they pray for one another when they recognize God as a common Father. I do not regard it quite so important that man was made a great deal higher than the animals as that he was made a little lower than God. In Psalm 8:5, an answer is given to the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" In the Authorized Version, the rendering is "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels," but the word translated angels is *elohim*, and that is the word used for God in Genesis 1:1.

It is not the distance from animals but the proximity to God which makes man unique. So the next verse (Psalm 8:6) says "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Man abdicates his responsibility when he gets on the animal level or when he seeks to dethrone God. The first shows a disrespect for himself, the second an irreverence for the creator. And he does both when he becomes a wilful and malicious murderer. He attempts to be under what he is over and aspires to be over what he is under.

And it is here that God decrees that man forfeits his right to continue to live with those who remain within the status for which man was made. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: *for in the image of God made he man*" (Genesis 9:6). Now there are two broad classes of sociologists who oppose capital punishment in our day— those who deny the existence of God and regard the Bible as a compilation of folklore, and those who accept the existence of God and the concept of revelation, but who think that God has changed or that conditions have altered to such an extent that the original decree has been outmoded or repealed.

Among the non-sociological scripturists will be found varying degrees of knowledge (and ignorance) which do not especially require our attention. Some who are affected by

simplistic symptoms, think that the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” settles the question by forbidding judicial execution. This is ridiculous because only twenty-seven verses after this command was first recorded, God said, “If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die” (Exodus 21:14). God has always distinguished between murder and killing by judicial decree. All murder is killing but not all killing is murder.

Again, there are those who think that the decree made in the first book of the Bible has been abrogated, yet we read the same thing in the final volume. “He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Revelation 13:10). And it is Paul who points out that the civil power is God’s appointed agent to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil, and he does not bear the sword in vain.

It is argued that capital punishment as currently administered is discriminative, with the poor and ignorant the victims, while the well-to-do and shrewd escape. This is probably the case as statistics indicate, but it does not concern the morality of capital punishment. It concerns the morality of administration. The same thing can be said about the political administration of affairs in other areas, but the fact that the tax burden falls heaviest on the poor only indicates that the situation should be cleared up, and not that the tax structure should be abandoned as immoral.

It is also objected that the action is so final and irretrievable, but it is not any more so than the death of a victim shot in the heart by a robber, or the death of a woman choked or bludgeoned to death in her own home by a rapist. Why is it that modern “morality” seems always to be on the side of the criminal aggressor without taking account of the rights of the innocent victim?

The sociologists debate among themselves as to whether capital punishment is a deterrent, but on this basis all punishment will have to be eliminated. It is obvious that prison and parole systems provide no effective deterrent for many criminals commit the same crimes again on the day of their release, thus compounding the offense. It could be that laxity of enforcement and long delays in bringing anti-social characters to justice is the real trouble. Solomon said, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

But our argument is that capital punishment for murder is not to be exacted simply because of its effect upon others, but because it is the divine judgment to keep the land from being drenched in innocent blood. The effect is secondary. The forfeiture of one's right to continue in the realm of the living is conditioned upon his blatant disrespect for the person of one made in the image of God. Certainly we agree that there are variant degrees of responsibility and there are mitigating circumstances. We already recognize these in our categories of first, second and third degree murder and manslaughter. This is for the proper agents of civil authority to determine, but this has nothing to do with the morality of capital punishment.

It is our proposal to deal concretely with some of the questions raised by Dr. Robinson in *Christian Morals Today*, and to this end we trust that you will read our next issue. Please remember that it is not necessary for you to concur with my ideas and views to be loved and respected as my brother or sister. I do trust that you will credit me with an earnest desire and a sincere intention to face up honestly to the current conflict as a true commando of my Lord.

The Authority Totem

Mission Messenger (August 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

The influence of this little journal now reaches far beyond the limits of the particular religious segment in which I grew up and I am deeply indebted to a kind providence which has lent wings to my words beyond their deserving. However, my concern for our immediate problems is in no sense lessened. As one broadens his acquaintanceship he need not forget those with whom he is more closely allied by choice and circumstances.

I have a deep sense of compassion for those of my brethren who are the constituency of the Churches of Christ. They are heirs of a movement which began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects,” but they were fragmented into so many rival factions and warring tribes that any real witness attempted by them for unity is virtually negated among thinking people. Even the type of approach toward unity by most of them only serves to widen the existing chasms and create new cleavages.

The reason for this is quite understandable. Our brethren have a veil over their faces in the reading of God’s message and they cannot distinguish between the divine revelation and their own human interpretation. They confuse their deductions with his declarations and seek to bind all equally upon the hearts and consciences of those who are willing to be servants of God but are not willing to be slaves of men. Unless our brethren are

transformed by the Spirit and renounce their false premise they are destined to become the most narrow and antagonistic sectarians of our age.

At the risk of becoming offensive when my only aim is to be objective, let me be as specific as possible. One of the mainline journals published in Texas in defence of Church of Christism has a very personable and well-informed editor. He is, of course, as all such editors are, caught in a partisan trap which makes it essential for him to trim his sails according to the factional winds, and this means that he cannot keep a straight course but must steer by tacking from one week to another. Thus his editorials must veer from left to right and back again, as the passenger load shifts from one side to another.

This method may eventually land him, or a succeeding pilot, close to the goal, but it is a costly way to travel and makes for a lot of seasick voyagers who are going along for the ride. Recently our fellow-editor has had to take note of other godly, sincere and consecrated brethren in the Lord who are heading for the same goal but who see no harm in using instrumental music in conjunction with their expression of praise unto the Father. How does he justify our fragmentation of God's wonderful family over such an issue?

The answer is made over and over. "It is a question of the authority of God's word." It is just that simple. Our Texas editorial brother respects the authority of the Bible. Those who have instrumental music reject and despise that authority. They do not recognize the Lordship of Jesus over their lives. If they say that they do they are dishonest. If they did they would throw the instrument out, confess their sin for ever having thought it was justified, and then the loyal brethren who have always respected the authority of the word would forgive and receive them, and we would all be one. Unity is that simple! It is just that easy!

Is it really? In order to keep you from becoming more confused I will designate the editor of whom I have here been speaking as Editor Number One, for there is another paper published in Texas, and its editor also opposes instrumental music. But he is equally opposed to the support of Herald of Truth and orphan homes which Editor Number One endorses and defends. Editor Number Two says it is simply a matter of respect for the authority of God's Word, and that division between them is wholly unnecessary and caused by Number One.

All that Number One needs to do is to repent and renounce Herald of Truth and the institutions, and acknowledge his sin in once defending them, and the loyal brethren who have stood for the truth will forgive him and receive him, and unity will follow as day follows night, or better, as night follows day!

In the meantime. Number One calls those who use instrumental music "liberals," and those who oppose Herald of Truth "antis." He brands the first as sectarian and the others as extremists. He calls them hobbyists. Number Two brands those who use instrumental music as "liberals" but he also labels the supporters of Number One as "liberals." He tries to put them in the same boat, but Number One refuses to allow this. He thinks that his is the only boat that has a ghost of a chance of making the crossing. Number Two laughs at this. He thinks that Number One is already on the rocks and doesn't know it!

However, this is just the beginning of sorrows. There is another paper published in Texas by a genial and perceptive editor. He is opposed to instrumental music and Herald of Truth, but he is also opposed to Sunday Schools, of which Number Two is an ardent defender, even to the point of pushing and promoting the sale of literature to perpetuate the classes. Number Three says that it is simply a matter of respect for the authority of the word of God. He concludes that he reveres the Lordship of Jesus whereas Number Two rejects and denies it.

Number Three declares that unity is not a complicated matter at all. It can be achieved very easily. All that Number Two needs to do is to study the Bible without his preconceived prejudice for classes, repent and renounce the classes, and send a letter to the loyal paper asking for forgiveness, and the faithful brethren who have remained sound on the issue will receive him, and together they can labor to help the world see the glorious majesty of the kingdom of heaven and the awful sin of having Sunday Schools.

As the situation now stands. Number Three regards Number One and Number Two as “liberals.” He also regards those who use the instrument as “liberals” but he thinks that Number One and Number Two are more dangerous than those who use instruments because they are more nearly like the genuine, and the counterfeit dollar that is most like the original will fool the most people. The genuine is represented by Number Three and the folks who oppose Sunday Schools. They are the real true Lord’s church. Number One and Number Two are sectarian.

Number One and Number Two both agree on one thing and that is that Number Three is an “anti” and an extremist. He is a hobbyist and would rather oppose the Sunday School than to have peace. They both agree that he does not need to have a Sunday School to be accepted by them. All he needs to do is to keep still about the Sunday School they have and quit trying to proselyte their members by making it appear that the Sunday School is like the missionary society.

Do not become bored or aggravated with my little recital for there are at least two dozen of our factions, all of which deserve mention. Just to say there are twenty-five divisions in the non-instrument ranks doesn’t impress us very much because we are all holed up and hibernating in our own monasteries and we never meet any of the others. Thus we can shrug them off as inhabitants of Never-Never Land. But when we get right down

to the nitty-gritty of it, they are all here and must be reckoned with in all of the inglorious shadow which they cast over a once noble unity experiment. They are all alive and kicking—especially the latter!

So let's move along to Number Four who edits a paper in California. He opposes instrumental music, orphan homes and Sunday School classes, but he also opposes individual cups on the Lord's table, while Number Three endorses these. Number Four declares that Number Three is not sound in the faith. He has caused division and offences contrary to the doctrine. He must be marked and avoided. He says that peace can easily be restored. All that is required is for Number Three to begin respecting the authority of God's Word by renouncing individual cups and requesting forgiveness for his sin in countenancing their use. The prodigal simply needs to return to the Father's house and take up life again with his "elder brothers."

Meanwhile, Number Four says that Number One, Number Two and Number Three are all "liberals." But Number Three calls Number Four an "anti" and an extremist. The others do also but they are not "bugged" by him so much, because Number Three is between them and Number Four.

But this has gone far enough! If you don't get the point by adding two and two together, you'll not get it by tacking twenty more on. If you think all of this is funny, you are mistaken. There is nothing more shameful than to see the children of God split up into warring tribes, hacking away at each other with the sword of the Spirit, blunted though it may be by their rashness and ignorance.

What we have done is to carve out a restoration totem pole with a couple of dozen grotesque figures squatting on each other and representing the traditional image passed along to us by our factional forefathers who were just as wrong as they were

sincere. We may have inherited their sincerity but we have also adopted their errors. Look up and down the entire pole and every party considers every other either sectarian or extremist.

A sectarian is one who has what we oppose, an extremist is one who opposes what we have. This is unvarying in its application. So here we are, all carved out of the same trunk, and every one of us is a sectarian to some, and an extremist to others. That is, all of us except the one on the top and the one on the bottom. There are no sectarians for the one on top for no one has anything which he does not have. There are no extremists for the one on the bottom for he has nothing which anyone would take time to oppose. The one caught in the middle has an equal number of sectarians and extremists to bother with.

Let not Editor Number One flatter himself that he is better than the others because he is “nearer right” for this would be denied by every other on the totem pole. He would be charged with being ultra-liberal, for what he calls “nearer right” is what they tag as being more liberal. Besides this, the spirit which puts him where he is, is the same identical spirit which puts the rest of them where they are. The Church of Christ in Texas (or anywhere else) which denies fellowship on the basis of an honest opinion regarding instrumental music or the millennium is just as bigoted and intolerant in spirit as the lowest faction on the totem. It does not manifest itself in as many items but the sectarian spirit is not really a relation to things at all, but an attitude toward brethren.

And if Editor Number One were to be “converted” by Number Two he would automatically increase the number of things regarded as tests of fellowship, and decrease the number of those whom he regards as in it. Thus, fellowship has little to do with relationship to Jesus, but is regulated purely by the rationalization of human minds up and down the scale of all those controversial items dreamed up and drummed up by those who confuse being sticklers for opinions with standing for the

Lord. In the final analysis this hinges fellowship on the mental meanderings of the most extreme and anti-social exclusivist.

This crazy-quilt pattern results in absurd simplistic propositions for eliminating division. Editor Number One suggests that if those who use instrumental music love their brethren more than they do the instrument they should give it up and thus restore peace by removing the cause of offense. Since he has adopted the policy of peace by surrender of offending items, Editor Number Four now has a tool for effectively removing individual cups from every congregation in the land. Instead of debating the issue, which always intensifies the sectarian spirit, all he needs to do is to plant a brother in every “cups church,” as he comically and quaintly refers to them, and let these infiltrators demand that what the brethren preach on the instrument they practice on the cups. “What is sauce for the goose is applesauce for the gander.”

Seriously though, what is our difficulty? It is not a question of attitude toward authority at all. Our brethren who keep parroting this moss-covered cliché should realize they are divisive. I know brethren who love Jesus as much as anyone on earth and they feel justified in using instrumental music, not because they do not study the Bible but because they do. The point is that they highly regard the authority of God but they just do not acknowledge the authority of Texas editors. And they can tell the difference! They insist on reading the scriptures for themselves. They acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus but not that of men.

Editor Number One does not regard Number Two as the supreme court and both reject Number Three from the same position. How shall we extricate ourselves from our predicament? We can do it by refusing to play God with the consciences of other men. Not one of our petty divisive issues has one thing to do with fellowship in Christ. We are in that fellowship because we are called into it by God. We are children

of God by the Spirit, and not citizens of a pro or con party on any of these matters.

Our brethren do not need to accept instrumental music, the pre-millennial interpretation, cups, classes or colleges. All they need to do is to accept brethren. But I am asked, "Shall we accept brethren in error?" Certainly so. There are no other kinds of brethren. No one knows it all. No one is infallible. If brethren accept you they will have to do it in spite of your error. You do not accept the error because you accept the brother, any more than you have to become cross-eyed because a brother in your physical family has such a defect.

And all of this talk about "full fellowship" is sheer poppycock. It is wholly without scriptural warrant and has been conjured up by little minds and dwarfed hearts. God has no stepchildren so we can have no half-brothers. If we are in his family we are in it wholly or not at all. The idea that you can be in partial fellowship is like loving the right side of your wife and hating the left side. You cannot parcel God out and you cannot carve up his spiritual offspring either.

I have some brothers who use instrumental music and some who deplore its use. I have some brethren who think Jesus will precede the millennium and others who think the millennium will precede Jesus. I have some brethren who support the Herald of Truth and never look at it, and others who never support it and always look at it. I have some brothers who attend where there are Sunday Schools and others who could not be dragged to such a place. I have brethren who pass a container of wine to every person, and others who pass every person a container of wine.

They are all my brothers, not because we share the same opinion but because we share the same Father. I was not begotten by a class nor born of a glass, and no position on either will ever affect my relationship in the wonderful family of God.

Nothing will ever blot out for me the cross which makes us one, not even if it is as big as a pipe organ or as little as a “communion cup.” I have a deep sense of compassion for those who are trapped in ridiculous factional positions. I know exactly how they feel. I know their inconsistencies, their vain professions and their empty protestations. And I pray for all of them to be delivered from the dead albatross draped about their partisan necks.

We can never offer anything tangible to a world hungry for peace and serenity so long as we think that because men differ with us over music or the millennium, cups or classes, that they are disowned by the Father. Our fathers were wrong when they made the deductions of men on music a test of fellowship. I do not care how honest and earnest they were— they were wrong!

And I was wrong when I followed their factional spirit and made tests of union and communion out of opinions about music, homes, colleges, and all of the rest of that motley horde of things which we turned into devil’s wedges to splinter and divide the royal family into which we were adopted through grace. No man is wrong when he speaks out against that which he cannot condone in the family, but that man sins who destroys the family ties over matters of difference.

I refuse to continue in the wrongs of yesteryear and perpetuate the consummate folly of factionalism. I refuse to project the arrogant and silly position that we have a corner on “respect for the authority of the scriptures.” I regard all of “our” editors in California and Florida as my brothers. I love all those who squat on our totem pole, even those who detest one another as brothers in error. But I go farther than that— much farther. I receive and accept as my brothers and sisters all those upon this whole wide earth whom God regards as his children. It is not their attitude toward a restoration totem pole that makes the difference, but their attitude toward the blessed cross of

Calvary. We carved out the totem pole but God drove the cross into the earth. I have brethren on earth who never heard of Alexander Campbell or Barton Warren Stone. So long as they come to Christ they need not come by any group of men. We are saved by the grace of God and not by the favor of the "Church of Christ."

Let us have done with the silly bickering which has negated our influence and made us the laughingstock of serious people in our generation. Let's remove the stigma of schism which manifests itself in six or seven divisions in some cities, with brethren hurling thunderbolts of wrath and indignation at one another over the air waves. Shall we perpetuate our shame and glory in it? I thank God that our younger men and women are seeing a vision that their fathers have not caught. It is with these that the hope of our future lies. They are sick of the rehashing of the outworn arguments and the dishing out of slanted interpretations which are dishonest and irrelevant.

I pray that our brethren will sing out for freedom and speak up for liberty in Christ Jesus. We can no longer be held down and held back by skeletal hands reaching out of partisan sepulchers. Do we esteem the praise of men in our own little segments as of more value than the praise of God? The fact is that the kingdom of heaven is greater than any of our factions or all of them put together. Let us find the way to unity of the Spirit by rising above the smoking ashes of our hopes, slain and burned by our unwritten creeds.

It is time for a new day to dawn. We have led in dividing, now let us lead in uniting. We have walked the dreary path of strife and left it strewn with the bloody corpses of our slain hopes, now let us resurrect the ideals which gave us birth and unfurl the flag of peace as the rallying standard for the Christians in all the sects. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of our salvation! It is for such a time as this that we have come to the Kingdom. Let us not fail!

Authority of the Word

Mission Messenger (September 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

This is the text of an address delivered at the Fourth Annual Unity Forum, conducted at the West Islip Church of Christ, Long Island, New York, July 3-5. Previous forums were held at Bethany College, Milligan College, and Southeastern Christian College.

In presenting this little dissertation on the authority of the word of God, to those of my brethren who are gathered for this occasion, I feel like a doctor called upon to read a paper on the symptoms and proper treatment of stomach ulcer, in the measles ward of a children's hospital. There is nothing at all wrong with developing the theme, but it is not directly related to the ills which we suffer and provides no remedy for our current condition.

I say this in spite of the fact that all of our vocal diagnosticians are loud in their insistence that it is an "attitude toward authority of the Bible" which is at the bottom of all of our troubles, and makes us the most divided, strife-torn and fragmented religious movement on the contemporary American scene.

Those of our brethren who think that the fruit of the vine which Jesus blessed was fermented, and to employ unfermented liquid in the Lord's Supper is to trample underfoot "the divine

pattern” and count the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified an unholy thing, say it is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us.

Those who think that we must distribute the drink element in one container and that individual cups are an innovation introduced among us by the machination of Satan to deceive the very elect, say it is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us.

Those who think that the precepts of heaven must be taught in one undivided assembly, and that division into classes upon the basis of age, aptitude or ability constitutes a grave infraction against heaven and a sin against the eternal purpose of God, say it is a question of attitude toward the scriptures which divides us.

Those who think that the current method of financing our best known propaganda tool, Herald of Truth, by mailing money to a congregation in Texas, is part of a deep conspiracy to rob other congregations of their autonomy, say it is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us.

Those who think that funds collected and deposited in the corporate treasury of the congregation can only be expended in behalf of those whose names are duly enrolled on one of our rosters, and who regard any use of such money to alleviate the misery and squalor of the world about us as “the social gospel,” say it is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us.

Those who think that the corporate praise of a community of saints must be rendered only by the vocal cords in congregational participation, and that any accompaniment on any type of mechanical instrument is a defiance of the dogmas and decrees of heaven, say it is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us.

What is the result of this simplistic rationalization and silly repetition with parrot-like monotony of the statement that, “It is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures which divides us?” The answer is all too obvious. We have splintered the majestic household of God into conflicting tribes, constantly on the warpath against their own brethren, hailing with almost unbridled glee every bloody scalp dangling from the poles which support the scattered factional tepees.

Every child of God among us, without a single exception, is regarded as a sectarian by some and an extremist by others. We are all “liberals” and all “antis” at the same time, not because of where we stand, but because of where others stand as they view us. Every brother and sister in this gathering is both a sectarian and a hobbyist. A sectarian is one who has something we oppose; a hobbyist is one who opposes something that we have. All of you have something that others oppose; all of you oppose some things that some others have.

We have tied the restoration movement into a huge Gordian knot, with divisions over missionary societies, instrumental music, centralized control, colleges, orphan homes, national radio and television programs, leavened bread, unleavened bread, the manner of breaking the bread, fermented wine, individual cups, Bible classes, uninspired literature, evangelists, hired ministers, the pastor system, the marriage of divorced persons, speaking in tongues, divine healing, foot-washing, the hour of meeting to eat the Lord’s Supper, and a host of other things too numerous to mention, as they say on auction sale bills.

How shall we extricate ourselves from this labyrinth which we have created? Must we thresh out every angle of every wrangle before we can realistically recognize each other as brethren? Must we argue to a standstill every action of every faction before we can have the satisfaction of a combined effort in any department of service to a world writhing in crisis? Must

we debate until we wear one another to a frazzle, and then wear the frazzle off, before we can join hands in any kind of project?

I reject this immature approach created by a childish attitude toward the problem of schism. After hundreds of others in ancient Phrygia had worked their fingers to the bone trying to untie the original Gordian knot, Alexander the Great came, and with one keen stroke of his sword cut through every snarl and tangle in the rope. And that is the only sane and sensible way for us to approach the mammoth and monumental muddle we have made of this movement which began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

I deny emphatically that we are divided because of a disregard for the Lordship of Jesus or because of wilful disrespect for the authority of the sacred scriptures. I do not deny that there are those in the religious world who deny the right of the scriptures to govern life and conduct, nor do I deny that there have arisen within the ranks of the restoration movement men who have rejected the scriptures as the revelation of God’s will. But I do deny that this is the basis of our fragmentation and factionalism.

Those who use unfermented grape juice in the Lord’s Supper, accept Jesus as Lord, which is the reason they partake of the Supper. Those who use individual cups love Jesus every bit as dearly as those who pass one container to an assembly. Those who employ Bible classes are not seeking by this method of investigating the word of life to crucify the author of those words and put him to an open shame. Those who take part of that which they have jointly contributed as a body and use it to feed starving children in the ghetto, or to reach alcoholics in a coffee-house ministry, are not denying the claim of the Son of God over their lives.

The brethren in Texas who arrange the details relating to Herald of Truth and receive contributions to make it possible,

are not engaged in one vast conspiracy to wrest the kingdom from the hands of Jesus and manipulate it for their own prestige. Our brethren who use instrumental accompaniment in conjunction with voicing their praise to our common Father are not apostates from the truth, or irresponsible rebels who deny the right of Jesus to reign over them!

It is absurd and asinine for our aspiring and perspiring theologians to perpetuate the farce that men who have been born of water and of the Spirit, who read the same scriptures, sing from the same hymnbooks, partake of the supper of the Lord on the same day of every week, and seek earnestly to imitate the life of Jesus in their daily walk, reject the authority of Jesus and the Bible. What is the problem, then, if we read the word of God with equal reverence? Why are we divided?

Of course the answer is not always simple and it is made more complex because we allow our traditions and emotions to get entangled in it. But there is one thing basic to it. We are not divided over the authority of the scriptures at all, else we would not appeal to them, even in debate. We are divided over our deductions from the scriptures, and this is a wholly different thing. Revelation is what God has said; interpretation is what men think he meant by what he said. Revelation is perfect. It is the unfolding of a divine and infallible mind. Interpretation is imperfect, because it is the application of a human and fallible mind to what God has revealed.

We do not approach the sacred scriptures, or anything else, with a mental vacuum, or an intellectual void. We must go in the only way we can, caught up in the human predicament, the heirs of our own environment, the victims of our own limitations and shortcomings, and of the indoctrination of others. Our teachers were imperfect in knowledge, and their students are no different.

We examine the word of God upon the basis of our pre-

suppositions. These have been formed by a compilation of isolated and remote scriptures. They grow out of an examination of God's action in specific cases, from which we construct our generalizations. These make up our philosophy of interpretation of the word of God which we regard as authoritative. But the problem comes when we confuse our philosophy of interpretation with the basis of authority, and seek to bind it upon others as the divine will.

Let us take the question of instrumental music as an example. Our brethren who defend their right to use it do not flaunt the authority of Jesus. They are trying to serve him as diligently as those who do not use it. Both sides appeal to the same Bible, and even quote the same passages. It is silly to assume they have no respect for the authority of that which they quote as authority. What is the difficulty? It lies in the divergent philosophies with which they approach the question.

One postulates that whatever is not specifically authorized in the scriptures as an expression of worship is forbidden, and its introduction or employment constitutes a sin against the authority of Jesus. But where does the Bible say this? Nowhere!

The other postulates that whatever is not specifically forbidden in the scriptures as an expression of worship may be allowable and permissible, provided that it does not violate some other clearly stated principle of divine revelation. Where does the Bible say this? Nowhere!

Both of these rules of interpretation attempt to measure what God has said by something he did not say. Each is a pair of spectacles donned by men to aid them in reading the word of God. Each contains lens ground according to criteria which have been deemed to be correct. But spectacles are put on before men start reading. In both cases men have searched the scriptures in an endeavor to understand the basis of authority and they have selected and tied together various scriptures which seem to

substantiate and lend credence to the position they have adopted. But they are still spectacles and not the word of God. That they may help us even as do spectacles, goes without saying, but we need to be careful lest we fall into the error of thinking we can best exemplify the spirit of God's Word by arguing about the respective merit of our spectacles.

Both rules are conclusions resulting from deductions and these deductions are themselves attempts to interpret the scriptures in order to determine a proper basis for interpreting the scriptures. Thus they actually stem from an attempt to peer behind the scriptures—to look through them by looking into them—and understand the intent and motivation of God, although using as tools in the process his various acts and words. We have fostered schism by imposing our deductions upon our brethren, and by laying down the law instead of living up to love.

Our problem is not that we do not speak where the Bible speaks, or remain silent where the Bible is silent, but that we approach the speaking and the silence from different positions, neither of which is dictated by the Bible. But why do we need a philosophy of interpretation at all. Why not just go straight to the Bible without interpretation? The answer is the same as if someone asks, "Why not go straight to the moon without fooling around with space capsules and vehicles? If it is there, just land on it and forget all about the expensive in-between stuff." The reply is that we cannot do this because we are human beings. An angel might make the trip without the tedious process, but we cannot. And neither can we obtain God's meaning without thought vehicles as do rational creatures. Our brethren have been "just obeying the Bible without interpreting it" for years and we have more than two dozen faithful churches now which have nothing to do with one another!

Does this mean that it was a sin to divide God's family over instrumental music? It means exactly that! Our fathers were

wrong in fracturing the saints into rival parties, pro or con, over such a matter. Regardless of “who split the log” in the factional terminology of yester-year, I unqualifiedly affirm that he who makes a test of fellowship, or a term of union and communion, out of an opinion such as this, is guilty of formulating another creed. Whatever a man must believe in order to be in my fellowship is my creed and it takes precedence over the cross of Christ.

I refuse to be guilty any longer in heaven’s sight of perpetuating a narrow, bigoted and arrogant attitude, which can only continue to splinter us until we divide ourselves out of existence as we have already divided ourselves out of effective influence in many areas of the world. Our brethren do not deny the authority of God’s word. They simply resent our self-appointment as a supreme court to interpret it for them. They insist upon reading it for themselves without benefit of clergy—even “our clergy.” They can distinguish between the revelation sent down from heaven and the explanations handed down from Texas. They are willing to be governed by theocracy but not by partisan editorocracy. We need to quit playing God with one another and start praying to God for one another.

The monotonous repetition by all of the sectarian champions in the restoration movement, of the statement, “It is a question of attitude toward the authority of the scriptures,” has served no real purpose. It has been turned into a schismatic slogan and a conflicting cliché. It has become a rug of many colors, woven by factional looms, and used as a cover under which to sweep every responsible attempt to bring order out of our chaotic condition. It has served to erect walls and barriers behind which men may hide to snipe at their brethren who ride by in different party vehicles.

Why is it that those who chant loudest and longest about the authority of the scriptures, ignore what those scriptures plainly teach about the sin of “setting at nought a brother”?

Why do they misrepresent those scriptures by quoting what God said about our relationship to unbelievers and applying it to our relationship to other believers? In view of the fact that the scriptures unvaryingly condemn all division in the family of God as sinful, how does it happen that we could not be more divided if the scriptures commanded it?

I know not what course others may take, but my own course is clear. I shall receive all whom God has received, and upon the same basis that he received me. Wherever my Father has a child, there I have a brother, and if I can get to where he is, I will demonstrate my love for him. I shall ignore the artificial walls which men have erected to separate and segregate themselves from others. Love makes walls transparent which once were opaque, and because of it one can see brethren on both sides.

To me, the majestic kingdom of heaven is manifestly greater than any of our groups, and greater than all of them put together. It transcends any movement sparked by men, even the restoration movement. God has children on this earth who never heard of Alexander Campbell or Barton Warren Stone. The sheep of God are still a scattered flock. No partisan corral holds them all. It little matters whether they ever hear me speak or not, it is the voice of the Shepherd which calls them out!

I am united with all of my brethren in that unity of the Spirit which, in its human aspect, must always be unity in diversity. Some of my beloved brethren use one container, and others individual cups; some have many classes for study, and others have none; some contribute to orphan homes from their treasury and others do not; some support Herald of Truth and never see it, some refuse to support it and never miss seeing it; some use instrumental music and do not advertise it, some do not use it and advertise their place of meeting with signs proclaiming "Vocal Music."

I have brethren who claim to speak in tongues, and others who have difficulty with English; I have brethren who believe in divine healing and go to the doctor; and others who believe in doctors to whom their wives cannot get them to go. No two of God's children are alike, any more than my own were alike, but I love them all in their unlikeness as I loved my own in theirs. If there are those who hate me I love them also. If they are good enough for the Father to receive, they are not too bad for me to accept. I shall allow them to stand or fall to their own master, and shall not try to dominate their thinking or lives. His love is an umbrella for all of us, and my love, although too meager, is at last great enough to embrace all who are with me under that umbrella. I have found that the umbrella which God created is a lot larger than the one I once helped to manufacture, and I feel a lot happier now that I can sit on the love seat and allow God to sit on the judgment seat.

I believe that God exists. I believe that he has communicated to man what is essential for man's wellbeing. The idea of a non-communicative God is incongruous. I also believe that the divine communication is contained in the sacred scriptures. It is a wee bit ridiculous to think of a person who would accept this as factual and then deny the authority of the scriptures. And I have found few of our brethren indeed who do not recognize the authority of the Bible over their lives.

We are not divided over the place of God's word in the divine order. All of us freely confess its importance, and regard it as containing our rule of faith and practice. We are divided because we ceased to love our brethren as much as we loved our ideas and interpretations. By making it appear that they did not respect God's authority when they disagreed with us we were able to rationalize our divisive spirit and justify our exclusivistic attitude.

When we start loving men because they are in Christ and not because they are in conformity with us, we will transcend

our differences and be able once more to walk in peace. We will never see every point alike. There will always be differences, but they will be occasions for discussion and not excuses for division. This raises several questions and I would be derelict in my duty if I did not pay some attention to them.

1. Will this not place us in fellowship with brethren in error? That is the only kind of brethren with which any of us will be in the fellowship, for there are no other kinds of brethren. None of us know it all. We are all in error on some things, and if anyone denies this he is in greater error than anyone else. But one need not embrace the error of another in the family of God any more than he needs to become cross-eyed because a brother in his physical family suffers from this affliction. We are in the fellowship through an act of God by the Spirit and we can no more choose our brothers in the Lord than we can choose our brothers in the flesh.

2. Is not one condemned who brings another gospel, or perverts the gospel of Christ? Certainly so, but our divisions are not over perversions of the gospel. Our brethren have all obeyed the gospel. That is what makes them brethren. The gospel is the good news of justification by faith in Christ Jesus. It consists of historical facts, seven of them in all— the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the burial of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, the coronation of Jesus, and the glorification of Jesus.

All of our brethren accept these facts and the implication of them for their lives. When the apostle wrote about the perversion of the gospel he had in mind the tacking on to these facts of circumcision as an additional term of admission to the grace of God. One might practice circumcision, or he might deplore it, and still be in Christ. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love." But anyone who made either circumcision or uncircumcision a test of acceptability into the fellowship

perverted the gospel of Christ.

It is those of our brethren who are so trigger-happy in gunning down everyone who does not conform to their legal demands who are really in danger of perverting the gospel. If I tack on to faith in the Lord Jesus which works by love, any additional criterion of loyalty such as a special position on music, missions or the millenium, or on cups, classes or colleges, then I preach another gospel, another means of access to God, for I confuse his grace with the favor of the faction.

Our problems are generally not related to the gospel at all, but to matters of doctrine. The gospel is the seed by which we are begotten. The doctrine is the bread of heaven upon which we feed after we are born. Some of our doctors and dietitians cannot distinguish between conception and digestion, and they think that every time some one makes a mistake in judgment they should collect his birth certificate. Since theirs is the worst error of all they should turn in both their birth certificate and their spiritual driver's license.

If God's children are not free to make mistakes they are not free at all, and anyone who denies this has already made a big mistake. But mistakes in judgment or understanding do not cancel the family relationship. When we were little, and misunderstood the directions of our parents, they did not return us for a refund, or put us out in the woodshed until we learned better. In spite of the fact that we exasperated them and got on their nerves, they kept us around in the hope that our association with such nice folks as themselves would eventually straighten us out. That is what love does!

I think that we are very unfair. We are even a little dishonest. We tell people that our only creed is Christ until we get them in, and then we lower the boom on them and drag out of our toy box all of the other things which they must believe in order to play ball with us. We've got more fine print in some of

our unwritten creeds than a Philadelphia lawyer could discover in a crooked insurance policy. This enables us to bring people in at the front door on one basis, and throw them out of the back door on a score of different reasons.

If we want to deal justly, we should type up a list of a hundred or so items of controversy among us, and when someone comes forward to confess his faith in Jesus, we should hand him the list and ask him to check off the ones with which he concurs. If he gets the wrong ones, or misses some of the right ones, we should flunk him and refuse to baptize him until he can graduate in our catechism program. It is not right to baptize a person and label him as a sectarian or an “anti” before he can get his clothes changed and get out of our dressing-rooms.

3. But can two walk together unless they be agreed? Of course they can. You walk with your wife, do you not? If a man comes to me and tells me that he and his wife have lived together for thirty years and never had a disagreement, I know that he will lie about other things, too, if he gets a chance. Perhaps there has been no other passage twisted, contorted and wrested more than Amos 3:3. The translators appointed by King James could hardly have realized what a club they were furnishing to men of a divisive spirit, with the rendering, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?”

This in no sense conveys the idea of the original. In my book “The Twisted Scriptures” I analyze the entire context of the woefully misunderstood question as well as the purpose of the prophet. The word “agreed” is from a Hebrew original which means to arrange beforehand, to make an appointment, to agree to carry out a joint enterprise. Amos is showing that he is in Samaria because he had an appointment with God. The time had come to blow a trumpet of warning, and it was agreed that Amos was the one to blow it. He asks the question, which is the first of a related series, “Can two walk together unless they have made an appointment?”

Amos was not providing a text for advocates of unity based upon conformity. He was talking about two agreeing to walk together, and not about two walking together because they were agreed. Two people might make an appointment to walk together to discuss their differences. But the use of this passage, jerked rudely from its context, points up one of the more serious aspects of the factional spirit. It destroys integrity and causes men to resort to unscrupulous means to bend the sacred scriptures to justify the very division among his children which God condemns.

There is not a faction in the restoration heritage whose members all agree. Those who are vocal in their demand for separation from others on the basis of usage of individual cups, Bible classes, or instrumental music, disagree with one another on a score of things. They walk together in partisan acceptance although they may disagree on the qualifications of elders, birth control and contraception, going to war, divorce and remarriage, the work of evangelists, the nature and function of the Holy Spirit, and a host of other things. The only thing on which there must be agreement is the arbitrarily selected and elevated item which gives existence and status to the sect. If honest divergency were allowed here the factional balloon would burst and fall to the earth in that inglorious disgrace which it deserves.

There is no unity except unity in diversity and all of our factions exhibit undeniable proof of it. They all practice it and they all deny it! This is the only place where they openly achieve uniformity. But God will judge men who elevate other things above the cross and demand that their brethren bow and kowtow to such a partisan standard, and he will judge those of us who perpetuate such a sectarian division in our more enlightened day. It is because of this that I renounce the whole mixed-up mess and messed-up mix of our silly divided state.

If the ideal of the restoration movement was to go back

beyond all of the sectarian fractures which resulted from exaltation of human opinions and interpretations, and recapture the simplicity and oneness which characterized the primitive family of God, I propose to go back beyond all of our own sects and schisms, factions and fractions, parties and politics, and take my stand for the original foundation of the restoration movement. I am tired of the sham and hypocrisy that causes us to build our own little worlds in which to mill around because we are frightened to go into the big world which he made.

If the restoration principle was valid for a divided Christendom, it is valid for a fractured restoration movement. I do not have time to wait for my brethren to quit floundering around in the swamps of strife, and start for the shore. I am standing on that shore now and I intend never again to be dragged back into the muddy quagmire of partisan debate. I shall help all of my brethren, not just some of them. I love them all, and whether they agree with me or not has nothing to do with it. We are blood brothers, brothers by the blood of the Lamb, and nothing will ever again negate the power of the blood in my life.

Freedom and Ethics

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[Abstract]

In the preceding issue of this journal I wrote the first of a series of articles on what has been dubbed “the new morality.” Perhaps you wonder why we are taking the time and space for such a discussion. You will recall that a certain mountain climber upon being asked why he purposed to assault a specific peak, replied simply, “Because it is there.” It could be that will explain my moving into this realm of involvement, although I should like to believe it is a little more profound than that.

It is true that “the new morality” is here, and I predict that it will be around for a long time. It will not go away by ignoring it, or by misrepresenting it! But we do not have to challenge everything to a duel just because it is here. I am doing so because I feel that as a commando for Christ I must face up to the problems of our day, and do so without quibble or fear.

I think, perhaps, I am not too thrilled by the fact that some attacks on situation ethics have not been ethical, although I should not be surprised at it, realizing as I do that all of us are caught up in the human predicament. Our brethren have been putting forward a very talented and perceptive champion who has publicly discussed “the new morality” with such worthy foes as Anson Mount, religious editor of *Playboy* magazine, Bishop Pike, a sort of playboy without a magazine, and Joseph Fletcher, who is neither a playboy nor a magazine editor. If I am any

judge, I think our brother has done a remarkably good job.

What disturbs me about the affair is that I keep running into folks who think that we ought to push these discussions with limelight figures because this is our chance to put the Church of Christ on the map and in the news, and get some free publicity. One cheerful soul said, “It doesn’t make too much difference who wins the skirmish. The important thing is for the world to know that the Church of Christ can turn out someone who can appear on the same platform with the big guns in theology.” With “old ethics” like that it is obvious that a “new morality” could be somewhat of an improvement. One is reminded of the policeman who forgot to slip on his trousers in his haste to get out and arrest a man for indecent exposure.

Probably one of the easiest and safest ways to deal with “situation ethics” is to deal with something else. There is a lot of straw floating around in the intellectual realm right now and it would be easy to gather up enough of it to stuff into some wornout mental overalls, and make a rather gigantic scarecrow which one could cuff and clout around with a great deal of gusto and absolute safety to purse and person. But straw-men are generally fought by straw-Christians, neither of them being genuine.

So I shall try to deal with the real proponents of the disturbing philosophy, and not simply because it is disturbing. We need to be disturbed, one meaning of which is to have the mind agitated. It will do us good to have the mental waters troubled so we do not stagnate and develop a thick green scum over the surface of our consciousness. We need to re-assess and re-evaluate some of our positions but we also need to scrutinize with care what is being offered in their stead.

I have known men to swap cars and before they had gone a hundred miles they were wishing they had the old one back. I am on a journey to a destination and I want to be sure that what

I “buy” will take me there before I allow a glib salesman to push the pen on me to sign the contract. I insist on reading the fine print. And I am convinced that there are some real flaws in the new morality structure.

With these few lines let us get on with the task of reviewing ethics as propounded by John A. T. Robinson, of “Honest to God” fame. We must not overlook the fact that Dr. Robinson does not title his book “Morals Today,” but “Christian Morals Today.” That makes it of special concern to me, for what is advocated by the Bishop of Woolwich claims to be an explanation and development of the Christian ethic. The book consists of three lectures given at Liverpool Cathedral, the first of which was titled “Fixity and Freedom.” Although careless critics may associate freedom with license, the author insists that his employment of the term “the new morality” was “certainly no invitation to license.” Still we must not forget that the opposite of fixity may not be freedom. It could just as well be “looseness.” And if the bishop prefers to use the word freedom, we have a right to enquire “Freedom *from* what and *for* what?” Freedom in a vacuum would be useless.

It is charged that opponents have made the term “the new morality” a slogan— relieving those who use it of any need to distinguish between widely different views, or even to know what they are. This complaint is probably justified. I know what happens when people are sold on slogans, having grown up in a movement where slogans were often used as a substitute for genuine faith. So I shall not be jolted or jounced about by terminology, nor allow the expression “the new morality” to turn me off or tune me out. After all, I am not interested in whether what I am investigating is something novel, but if it is Christian.

But if the good bishop is bothered because critics tend to misrepresent his views, I find myself a little critical of the impression he seeks to create about those who have found

comfort in what he calls “the old morality.” It is implied that up until now Christians have accepted a written code consisting of a set of rules which must be applied to every situation which arises, with inflexible rigidity. I question this. I know of a lot of fine Christians who never did endorse that approach, and I know of a lot more who thought they did, but never did practice it. They were better than their creeds. And if morality has to do with thought expressed in action, I can truthfully say that I have never met a Christian who did not believe that circumstances alter cases— that is, in some circumstances and in some cases! And I have met some pretty rugged ones in my time.

The bishop should be willing to eat from his own spoon and if he accuses more humble folk of being unreceptive and aggressive when on the defensive, he should not exaggerate the thing which he is attacking when he comes under question by its proponents. I find myself quite ready to concede that a lot of what he says is valid and I concur with the following, among other views, as he states or implies them.

1. It is impossible for a person or society to continue for any period of time without a recognized and accepted ethic. Either one is doomed to “come unglued” or fragment in the absence of a proper standard or guideline.

2. Jesus did not come to earth to give us a code of ethics, properly classified, catalogued and indexed, pre-scheduled to fit specifically every contingency, and with a ready answer to cover any behavioral emergency or temptation.

3. The ultimate in our relationship to God and men is embraced in love, and every other requirement or injunction is suspended from this supporting and sustaining principle. I grant that it is the one absolute in the divine-human encounter, the golden chain that binds all together.

4. The ideal, or pure center of our relationship, is the

realm of greatest certainty, and it is in the outworking or application of the eternal verity that we experience the greatest diversity and ambiguity.

To some philosophic minds it will appear that this last is a complete surrender to the bishop's position. I trust, however, that the philosophers will not deliver me up prematurely and without reading further. The mere admission that I do not know, in some cases, how to apply the dynamic of love, in no sense argues that there is no rule for its application in such cases, or that there is not a right way to do it. I may recognize the claim upon my citizenship of the principle of taxation without knowing exactly how to fill out my income tax form in every detail. One can be quite conversant with the center of the city and become confused in the suburbs, but this does not prove that there are no maps or street guides.

This will suffice at present for the areas of agreement, and I shall get on with the task of the critic. In listing a few of the things to which I do not subscribe I do not overlook the fact that between Dr. Robinson and myself there is "a great gulf fixed" with reference to our attitude toward the scriptures. This same thing can be said about every other prominent advocate of contextual ethics with whose writings I am familiar.

1. I do not accept as a proven fact the documentary hypothesis as applied to the sacred writings of the old covenant. This is the theory that the scriptures as we have them, are not necessarily the works of those to whom they are credited, but are a compilation from various and unknown sources, and that they simply grew out of the experiences of men in their struggle to achieve meaning in life. The idea of most of the modern theologians is that there was no revelation of a moral pattern of behavior from God but that man evolved a system of taboos and talismanic superstitions which took on special significance. I just do not believe that!

2. I do not agree that there is a basic difference in the ethical teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles, especially Paul. Too many people think that the early Christians simply wrote books to attempt to fit the teaching of Jesus into the life situation which arose in their contact with the world. In this view it is held that the epistles do not necessarily represent an exemplification of the divine will, but rather the attempt of men to explain how they felt the moral values of Jesus could be best applied.

I regard the apostolic writings as unique, different from those of others who followed them. The Spirit spoke to and through the apostles as the chosen envoys of Jesus. The apostolic writings have a sense of authority not possessed by other writings. And properly understood there is no difference between what Christ taught and what the apostles wrote. The epistles are simply to tell us how Jesus would have reacted in the situations which gave rise to them.

3. Dr. Robinson holds that there are no changeless principles which we are to apply. It is his contention that God is in history speaking to us through various forms and altering values. I agree that God is our contemporary and that he is a history-making God. But he does not fluctuate with the changing fortunes of history. History does not create God, but the reverse. It is incongruous to think of a God who became morally better or more enlightened as he worked with men. To conceive of such a God is to be guilty of mental idolatry, to make God after the image of man. And each generation will have a better God, but never a real one.

The God of the old covenant is the God of the new, and he has not changed. Man has grown toward maturity, but God cannot become "more perfect." If there are things which seem strange in his dealing with the ancients, they are only so to me, and not to him. And the reason they are strange to me is because I am limited by time and space. I cannot see the end from the beginning. Actually, they are not inconsistent with God at all, for

not being divine I am unable to postulate what God-like consistency demands. They are only inconsistent with my ideas of what God should do under certain circumstances, but if I am not careful I will get my ideas confused with God and end up worshipping the ideas.

If I believe that God is, I must accept that he is God. And if he is God I must accept on faith a lot of things that I cannot explain with my finite mind. A God who can be captured and confined by man is not the God of the universe. In the consummation of all things when human ignorance gives way to perfect knowledge I may be able to look back and see the answer to all of my questions and I will no doubt find that the answer lies in my transcendent knowledge of the divine nature which I cannot grasp here.

The good doctor has a catchy phrase he likes to employ, affirming that God is in the rapids as much as in the rocks. By this he means we need not fear the tumbling, frothing waters of change, and that we may cast ourselves freely into the flux of relativity. He declares that Christians are free to swim and not merely to cling. All of this sounds good. It is an interesting metaphor. But Dr. Robinson fails to identify the rocks. A careful reader of his thesis comes to the conclusion that he may think God is only in the rapids and not in the rocks. Thus, he is guilty in reverse of the very same thing of which he accuses some of us.

What is it to which we are free to cling? If the rapids represent the relativity and change, what do the rocks represent? Or, does he have rapids flowing over nothing? Remember that the figure of speech is his and not ours. I agree that there are rapids and that we are forced to swim in them, but I also accept the concept that there is something abiding, unchangeable and eternal. Man is not a fish and he cannot swim all of the time. When he is forced to find the banks between which the stream of relativity flows, and climb out upon the rocks, to what will he then be clinging?

Are there no bounds of relativity? Is there no line drawn beyond which relativity cannot go, no voice to say, "Hitherto, and no farther shall thou come, and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed"? If not, then relativity itself is an absolute, a universal. Is relativity not a measuring rod or criterion? If so, who is to do the measuring and upon what will he stand that is firm and immovable while he gauges the universe or plumbs its depth?

But I must not tarry longer in dealing with "fixity and freedom," or, with what may turn out to be "fixity and looseness." I must get on to the lecture which is the real crux of our problem and which is titled, "Law and Love." And once again I find myself in agreement with a great deal of the content. Obviously, all of my readers should also read the original thesis of Dr. Robinson. We should see for ourselves what is being criticized and not accept a second-hand version. I hold no brief for that kind of arrogance which feels that an elite corps of preachers may safely read a thing and forbid everyone else to do so. My experience is that preachers are about as gullible as any other group.

Dr. Robinson argues that since we are under grace, and not under law, that love not only fulfils the law but also abolishes it as the foundation of our vital relationship with God and man. He contends that the Christian ethic can never be set forth as law plus love, or as law qualified by love. And I concur with this. For several years, and before I read one word from Robinson or Fletcher, this was my contention. I reached the conclusion from my own study of the sacred writings that the law of Christ, or "the perfect law of liberty" was love!

My statements may not have been as trenchant as those of the much more erudite Anglican scholar, but an examination of my writings will show that I have sought to say in substance what he has said so succinctly, that if law usurps the place of love because it is safer, that safety is the safety of death. It is

impossible to take the sayings of our Lord, and his exemplification of them in attitude and deed and warp them into a legalistic code to cover every exigency of life. The “Sermon on the Mount” cannot be defined into an inflexible creedal system. It was delivered to offset that very kind of system.

What then, if anything, is the difference between my thinking and that of the situational ethicists of today. To begin with, let me state that I am not a defender of either “the old morality” or “the new morality.” I do not belong to either camp and am not fighting under either banner. I am fully aware that the advocates of the latter are vociferous in denying that there is such a thing as a system of morals which must be studied and applied to every situation. And I concede that it is not their intent to devise a systematic code of regulation.

But their very use of the terms “the old morality” and “the new morality” seems to me, at least, to indicate that they are shot down with their own weapon. For if there is such a thing as the new morality as opposed to the old morality, it appears that, whether the latter is codified or not, it is systemic. And it is made to appear that one must be encamped in one valley or the other. This I deny for the simple reason that there cannot be two valleys without an elevation to separate them, and I may choose to remain on that elevation.

The superiority of such an alternative is at once apparent. It enables one to look at what is going on in both bivouacs without being committed wholly to either. I am confident that the same God who gives us love as the fulfillment of the law is the one who gave the law of which love is the fulfillment. As I examine his law as a basis for justification, impossible though it was for sinful beings to attain, I am made more aware of the provisions of love. Indeed, the giving of the law was not in itself an act of law upon the part of God, but an act of love.

Our problem goes deeper than some situational ethicists

may realize. It is not enough to say simply that love is the fulfillment of the law, for we must then face up to the question of the nature of that love which fulfills law. There must be a definition of love for men use the term to apply to a great many attitudes, and it is possible for love to be employed to “cover a multitude of sins,” in a sense which the Biblical writer did not intend by that statement.

No one will deny that love has sometimes been confused with selfishness, and selfishness is a tricky thing. Since it is a negative quality which derives from a deficiency of justice or benevolence, it projects itself in different shapes according to the dispositions of men, but always seeks justification through rationalization. With his propensity for evil and motivated by temptation, it is not difficult for man to be misled into thinking that his concern for self is a concern for others.

There must also be a definition of “situation.” Does it apply simply and exclusively to an immediate personal confrontation without antecedents and consequents? If so, is life composed of wholly unrelated actions, without connection or continuity? If not, then what all is involved in a “situation”? How can one make an immediate and “one-shot” decision which professes to be based on concern while actually showing unconcern for many factors and persons?

Since man is a social being he tends to conform to the standards of the culture in which he resides. Will he not be inclined to go with the tide in his decisions as to behavior in the situations which he confronts, rather than to weigh the effects of his actions dispassionately? If so, will not the general standard retrogress rather than otherwise? Will not the current be turned into a channel of lowering moral values?

We propose to discuss in a future article love as the divine nature and show that love as a fulfillment of law can never be workable on a universal basis but must be implemented by those

who have been born again and are a part of the new humanity. These have been made partakers of the divine nature and in them the love of God can be perfected. Meanwhile, those who are not a part of the new humanity must still be regulated by law in their social conduct.

The Spring of Action

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

“What we are is utterly plain to God, and I hope to your conscience as well . . . At any rate there has been no selfish motive. The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:11, 14).

Not long ago, while walking down the street, I glanced at my watch and saw that it had stopped several hours before. When I took hold of the stem to wind it I noticed that there was no tension. I walked into the office of a nearby jeweler and he immediately confirmed my own diagnosis of the trouble. The mainspring was broken.

Now a watch is like a human being in some respects. Both receive their motive power from within. It is an interesting fact that both have a face and two hands, but these would be immobile without the “works” on the interior. Man is a creature of motivation. He is subject to drives, desires and ambitions. Some of these are worthy, some are not. And because man is also a creature of will he can surrender to these or subjugate them.

The Bible is the history of God’s dealings with man, so it runs the whole gamut of behavioral patterns and the motivations for them.

There was the case of the young woman who was seduced

by a man in an upper social bracket while she was visiting some of her girl friends. Two of her brothers conspired together and murdered the young man and a number of others. They were driven by deep anger and wounded pride.

There was the case of a man who wanted to engage in an inter-racial marriage and when thwarted by his prospective father-in-law, turned to the use of fire in an aggravated incidence of vandalism, which was motivated by revenge. His motto evidently was "Burn, baby, burn!"

It was abject fear which caused a ruler to attempt genocide when he became concerned that there would be a slave uprising and a general revolt in time of war.

Even a noble work such as proclaiming the gospel can be prosecuted by those whose motives are debased. Paul wrote from his prison cell, "I know that some are preaching Christ out of jealousy, in order to annoy me. But some are preaching him in good faith . . . The motive of the former is questionable— they preach in a partisan spirit, hoping to make my chains even more galling than they would otherwise be."

It is refreshing to have the apostle declare that his own heart was an open book, plainly readable by God, and that there was no trace of selfishness in it. Every action which he performed grew out of the love of Christ. It is implied that this love and selfishness are antithetical, and this is correct.

The very essence of the Way is that Jesus gave up everything, including the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He was the great unselfish One. He stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. So, in this very connection, the apostle says, "Let Christ be your example as to what your attitude should be."

If the love of Christ is the motivating force of life, that life

will be different. Gone will be the pride, anger, revenge and fear which often drive men to drastic and unprincipled deeds. If one can cleanse his heart of such unworthy motives and allow the spring of action to be love, his whole existence will be transformed.

John said, “It is true that no human being has ever had a direct vision of God. Yet if we love each other God does actually live within us, and his love grows in us toward perfection. And, as I wrote above, the guarantee of his living in us is the share of his own Spirit which he gives us.”

Law and Morals

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

Occasionally some person is thrust into the limelight as a controversial figure and his very name becomes a symbol of all that is good or evil in a certain area of thought. When this is the case, men who have never met him or read a single paragraph that he has written, will react with almost violent emotion when his name is mentioned in their presence. Such a person, I think, is Joseph Fletcher who is Robert Treat Paine Professor of Social Ethics at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Dr. Fletcher has been a rather prolific writer in his special field but it was not until he launched his volume *Situation Ethics* on the stormy sea of modern polemics in 1966 that he became generally known. Many students were excited by its affirmations, and many were offended. Using the ten commandments as an example, Fletcher said of the last six, that situation ethics has good reason to hold it as a duty in some situations to break them, any or all of them. He propounded some questions with which even the most highly incensed find it difficult to wrestle.

The basis of the book is that there are, in the final analysis, only three approaches possible in reaching moral decisions. These are designated as the legalistic, the antinomian, and the situational. The latter affirms that there is only one absolute,

love, and that each encounter in life must be approached in the light of love, and not with an apparatus of prefabricated regulations designed in advance to cover every emergency.

It is not necessary to my purpose that I review meticulously the book by Dr. Fletcher. After all, the question with which I am particularly concerned deals with God's will as I conceive it, and I shall write from that standpoint. The current controversy over morals provides an excuse (if I need one) to have my say about the question. It is not really a question of what Fletcher, or my own brethren say, but of what God says, as I understand His will.

The brethren with whom I have been more closely associated have been legalistic in their approach, I think, although they, like all other legalists, have been forced to resort to a great deal of casuistry. Recently they have been driven to deny their legalism, sometimes in a quite legalistic fashion. When William Banowsky met Joseph Fletcher in debate in Indiana he occupied a considerable amount of his time in denying that he was a legalist. The fact that he labored so diligently in trying to prove he was not, created a little suspicion in the minds of some who heard him.

Obviously, the antinomian position, which is lawlessness, can have no place in the Christian life, so we may dismiss it from consideration. But legalism is always a genuine temptation since it frees from the responsibility of making decisions. It is my contention that the covenantal relationship which we now enjoy in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a legal system at all. Prior to the advent of the Son, God placed man under a written code, the purpose of which was to keep him confined until faith came. With the coming of faith, he was released from this bondage, set free from the demands of law.

It is distinctly affirmed that "the Law was given by Moses, but undeserved favor and reality came through Jesus Christ"

(John 1:17). This does not mean that Moses gave one law, and Jesus gave us another. It does not mean that Moses provided the old law, and Jesus furnished a new law, another written code. Law is one thing, grace and reality create a wholly different set of values. That is why we are told that, “Sin shall no longer be your master, because you are no longer under law, but under the grace of God” (Romans 6:14).

ABOLITION OF LAW

Jesus came to fulfill the law, and by doing so, he abolished law as a basis of justification for all time. Many careless students assume that because it was the Mosaic law which he fulfilled, that he simply substituted another of his own. This is not true. He forever set aside a legalistic code as an approach unto God, and provided himself as the means of our justification. “By following legalistic regulations, no person can be acquitted in God’s sight . . . but now, independent of law, the righteousness of God has been made available . . . that righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:20-22).

All law constitutes a stockade, a prison in which men are kept penned up. Because of immaturity and carnality God thus confined men before Jesus came. “Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law, pending the revelation of faith. Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith; and now that faith has come, the tutor’s charge is at an end” (Galatians 3:23-25).

Here is another version of the same passage. “Before the coming of faith we were all imprisoned under the power of the Law, with our only hope of deliverance the faith that was to be shown unto us. Or, to change the metaphor, the Law was like a strict governess in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in him. Once we had

that faith we were completely free from the governess's authority."

Jesus removed the stockade fence. He did not build another. He battered down the prison walls with the cross. He dismissed the governess. He set us free. "Christ set us free, to be free men. Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again . . . When you seek to be justified by way of law, your relation with Christ is completely severed; you have fallen out of the domain of God's grace" (Galatians 5:1-4).

Let us not compromise at this point, for if we do we create a hangman's noose for our own necks. If we convert the Sermon on the Mount, or the apostolic letters to individuals and communities into a written code of which we then become the high sheriffs and enforcers, we doom ourselves. We reverse God's purpose and deny the efficacy of the cross. We build up that which he broke down by his death. "We are not to look upon ourselves as the son of the slave woman but of the free, not sons of slavery under the Law but sons of freedom under grace."

Law, by its very nature, cannot meet our needs. "We are unspiritual, the purchased slaves of sin." We need life and no law can give life. "If a law had been given which had power to bestow life, then indeed righteousness would have come from keeping the law" (Galatians 3:21). Remember that when you attempt to be justified by law, you must either keep every jot and tittle of that law, or you must die. You cannot have your cake and eat it too. You cannot be justified by faith and by law at the same time, for if you are under law faith cannot save you. Only absolute and perfect obedience in every minute detail will do.

This is clearly brought out by the apostle Paul. "All those who follow regulations are under a curse, for it is stated, 'Cursed is everyone who does not adhere to and observe all the precepts set down in the Code of Law'" (Galatians 3:10). "Now

law is not at all a matter of having faith: we read, ‘he who does this shall gain life by what he does’” (verse 12).

THE NATURE OF LEGALISM

Let me now define what I mean by legalism. A great many brethren have a mistaken view of it. They think of a legalist as a sort of nit-picking individual constantly insisting upon conformity with every microscopic point of obedience. What they overlook is the fact that if we are under law we had better all be involved in such minutiae, for if we overlook even the shadow of a shade we are in for it. If we are under law as a hope of justification this kind of “legalist” is the highest type of example to follow, although none of us will make it anyhow!

But I mean something else by my use of “legalism.” I refer to the concept that we will be saved by works through strict adherence to a written code. To be quite specific, I mean simply that a legalist is one who holds that God has handed over to us a law, and that our hope of acquittal or justification lies in our perfect understanding of that body of statutes and judgments, and in our undeviating adherence to all of its regulations and specifications. I reject that theory of righteousness by law, for if it were true, Jesus would never have needed to come, but since he did, he died in vain. “Christ is the end of the law for justification,” says the inspired record.

This disturbs some of my good brethren no end. Like all adolescents and immature persons they prefer to be under law. They are afraid of freedom and liberty. So, in spite of the fact that we are specifically told that we are not under law but under grace, they busy themselves in an attempt to systematize grace and turn it into a legal written code. It is astonishing how many people actually think of grace and the collection of new covenant scriptures as being synonymous. If you doubt this watch how such scriptural scrap-doctors twist and manhandle Titus 2:11.

It seems never to occur to such brethren that the earliest saints would have been without “grace” if the grace of God is identical with the apostolic letters. And since these letters were not all compiled into a single collection for many years, the best any of them would have had was a “partial grace.” If grace is a system, and if the writings of John are a part of “grace” every one of the other apostles died without knowing the fulness of grace. This is a wee bit ridiculous when you analyze it, but most prooftexts in sermon outlines should not be examined too closely, if you love the outline.

Of course the brethren who scrutinize the love letters of God to his children rejoice every time they find a passage which makes it appear that we are under law. They jump on such a passage like a duck on a June bug! And they quote them all to me with an air of triumph as if happy to find the apostles and myself mistaken and inconsistent.

For instance, Paul wrote about his adaptability to various classes in an endeavor to win some, and said, “To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law of God, but under the law to Christ).” It is obvious that whatever Paul meant by the law to Christ, he was not talking about a written code, because he said to the very same congregation, “God has qualified us to dispense his new covenant, a covenant expressed not in a written document, but in a spiritual bond; for the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life.”

MOTIVATING PRINCIPLES

What the legalistic seekers overlook is that the word for law is not limited to a single meaning. True, it always refers to a governing or motivating principle, but it may differ in manner a great deal. This was recognized by Paul, who wrote, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.” W. E. Vine renders the second question

thus: “By what manner of law?” and says it means, “by what sort of principle (has the glorying been excluded)”? The New English Version catches the meaning, “What room is left for human pride? It is excluded. And on what principle? The keeping of the law would not exclude it, but faith does.”

There is a great gulf between a written code trusted in for justification and the motivating principle of the life of Jesus. Paul expresses it clearly in Romans 8:1, “No condemnation now hangs over the head of those who are in Christ Jesus. For the new spiritual principle of life in Christ Jesus lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death.” Another version reads, “The conclusion of the matter is this: there is no condemnation for those who are united with Christ Jesus, because in Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

The principle of life is the indwelling Spirit who transforms us from within so that “we have the spiritual outlook, and that is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). The Spirit within enables us to put to death all the base pursuits of the body (verse 13), and “joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children” (verse 16). If we are under a written code as a basis of righteousness we cannot be in Christ.

When all else has been taken from the legalist, he resorts to James 1:22, 25, and reads, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only . . . But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein . . .” He assumes that the word is the new covenant scriptures as we have them, and that this constitutes the “perfect law of liberty” and since the new covenant scriptures have been written, we are under a written code of law. This sounds good in a sermon outline, but unfortunately, it is wrong on all counts.

In the first place the twelve tribes in the Dispersion to whom James wrote had no new covenant scriptures into which

to look. They didn't even have the epistle of James prior to this time. They had only the old covenant scriptures, but few indeed would affirm that these constituted a "perfect law of liberty." What was "the word of truth" which they had, and to which reference is made? The answer is quite simple.

In verse 18 it is identified as the message by which we are begotten, and Peter distinctly says, "And this is the word which by the gospel was proclaimed unto you" (1 Peter 1:25). The Authentic Version translates James 1:18, "Of set purpose he begot us by the Message of Truth, so as to be in the nature of first-fruits of its creative activities." The New English Version reads, "Of his set purpose by declaring the truth, he gave us birth to be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

In verse 21 it is identified as "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." The Greek *emphutos* means implanted, and this word had already been implanted in their hearts, whereas the new testament scriptures had not yet been written or made accessible. Paul points out that it is the gospel which is able to save (1 Corinthians 15:2), and declares that "it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe" (Romans 1:16). The apostolic letters are not the gospel, for everyone of them was written to those who had already obeyed the gospel.

It is clear then that when James speaks of the word, he is not talking about the epistle he was then writing, even though it was probably the only apostolic epistle most of his addressees would ever see. He was talking about a Message by which they were begotten of God and thus introduced into the new humanity. It was a Message which demanded personal purification and renunciation of evil and firm reception of the saving pronouncement.

"Away then with all that is sordid, and the malice that hurts to excess, and quietly accept the message planted in your hearts, which can bring you salvation" (New English Version).

“Have done, then, with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has sown in your hearts, and which can save your souls” (The New Testament in Modern English).

“So clearing away every foul weed and rank growth in our moral nature, let us gently receive the implanted word that is able to save our lives” (The Authentic Version).

The Good News makes demands upon men. It requires the killing out of foul weeds and rank growth, but it does not permit the heart to lie fallow. It is a dynamic which must be allowed to fill and transform.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

“Act on the Message and do not merely listen to it, deluding yourselves. Whoever hears the Message and does not act on it is like a man who observes his natural appearance in a mirror. He takes stock of himself, but when he goes away he immediately forgets what he is like. But he who has looked into the untarnished law of liberty, and stayed to gaze, being no forgetful listener but an active doer, will be blessed in what he does.”

One must never forget that although James acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus, he remained an orthodox Jew, zealous for the law as long as he lived. Hugh J. Schonfield points out that every time James refers to “the law of liberty” he is talking about “the law of the gospel” as enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, interpreting the Law of Release in Deuteronomy 15:1-15. This would make sense to the recipients of this letter, as does the usage of synagogue, instead of *ekklesia*, translated “assembly” in James 2:2.

James declares that love is the royal law according to the scripture (2:8). And he affirms that we must speak and act as

those who are amenable to the principles of liberty (2:12). Love and liberty make it possible to judge each individual case on its own merits, and to extend mercy in every case where possible. All decisions are to be made in the light of love, therefore, one will be judged on the basis which he sets up by which to judge others. “For he who acts without demonstrating mercy will receive judgment— without mercy being shown to him. Mercy will actually triumph over judgment.” This means that in the day of judgment the man who has been merciful will find that the mercy he has shown will blot out or cover his own shortcomings and sin.

In conclusion I would like to summarize briefly the concepts which I have reached from my study of the word of God.

1. The Christian is not subject to a written code containing a list of regulations imposed upon him from without. Instead, the law of God is internalized, being written in the heart and mind, so that one is self-governed and disciplined by the love of God which is a fruit of the Spirit.

2. The new covenant scriptures were never intended to be compiled into a code of statutes and judgments to be enforced by minions of “the law” but they are a collection of love letters addressed to individuals and communities of the saints to serve as guidelines of behavior for those in the precious Lord Jesus Christ.

3. In interpreting the new covenant scriptures I must recognize that any application must be made under an umbrella of love, and with mercy shown for the unfortunate brother who has succumbed to temptation. I must resist the impulse to show myself as an “enforcer of the law” or God’s policeman.

4. If I postulate that the new covenant scriptures are a legal code I must either live up perfectly to every implication

and demand, or die, for the slightest infraction or deviation will spell my doom. Legalism requires absolute obedience based upon complete knowledge. I cannot claim law as a basis of divine favor and grace as a means of justification. I cannot have law for what I am able to do and grace for my failures. It is not law and grace, it is law or grace!

5. The absolute in our relationship to God is love *agape*! It is the motivation for our moral and spiritual relationship. It is the royal law, and just as all subjects of a king are in subservience to his rule, so all principles and rules of action are subject to the kingly law.

We sacrifice no truth of heaven when we admit that love, rightly understood, properly defined, and correctly applied, is the foundation of Christian ethics. It is a divine universal, deep as the heart of God and wide as the universe which he made. We must not take a legalistic approach under grace, for to be under law is to fall from grace. We dare not be antinomians for then we will become our own God.

Why should we retreat from encounter on the field of love, and seek to discover another area upon which to meet the advocates of “the new morality”? Love is of God. God is love. Let us defend the love of God— its source, its demands, its sacrifices and its rewards.

It will be our own purpose, God willing, to discuss in our next issue love in contrast with legalism. We trust that you will read carefully what we say at that time and we pray that all of us may love one another in deed and in truth, and not just in word or in speech.

Ministry and Ministers

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[Abstract]

*“A Christian layman is one who discharges his God-given vocation in the secular calling of life. That is his vocation. He is called a ‘priest unto God’ in the life of ‘the world outside.’ A realization and actualization of such a priesthood is one of the greatest needs of our time. If this fact was firmly grasped by the whole People of God, it would undoubtedly lead to a Christian Revolution, a new Reformation that would transform the life of the contemporary church.” —Cyril Eastwood in *The Priesthood of All Believers*, page 256.*

Not long ago a brother in Christ came to see me while passing through our city. He was greatly disturbed in mind and heart. A few years ago, while a student in a Christian College, he was present at a missionary rally, and was moved to go forward at a special call for “full-time workers” and pledge his life to the mission field. After having graduated and gone up and down the land visiting congregations in an attempt to arrange support, he and his young wife went to a foreign country and began the difficult task of learning the language and of making friends.

After laboring there for almost six years, his ideas began to change. He found himself distressed by the fact that those who supported him back home wanted him to reproduce in another culture the American-type religious community which they had constructed in a wholly different background and environment.

The brethren who visited him from the homeland brought pressures upon him to conform even though they knew nothing about the lives of the natives whom they regarded as mere statistics justifying the expenditure of money required to convert them.

The missionary wrestled with his soul and finally came to the conclusion that he was not a free man in Christ, but the front man of a system, and that the hands which controlled the purse strings would also control his life. It seemed to him to be ever more apparent that to be really free he would need to become a “tent-maker” and support himself and family. Accordingly, he made up his mind to return to school and secure a degree which would enable him to teach, with a view to returning to the mission field as a fellow-laborer, rather than as a professional missionary.

When this intent became known he was deluged with letters protesting against his decision. A member of the faculty in his alma mater wrote him a highly emotional letter, reminding him of the night he walked forward to dedicate his life to taking the message to a foreign field. He tearfully implored him not to “give up the ministry.” Former classmates wrote him begging him to reconsider and not give up the vocation to which he had been called.

It became necessary for him to mimeograph a lengthy letter of explanation. In it he insisted that he was not deserting the Lord or the body of Christ. He expected to be as much of a child of God as he had always been, and to serve the Master “acceptably and with godly fear.” He even pointed out that he thought he might be more effective because there were certain feelings against a missionary whose very presence tended to make native peoples appear inferior. As a teacher in college he would be working directly with younger minds and might influence more thinkers than he could reach by any other means.

This explanation was rejected by some who had been his closest associates. Some intimated that he was motivated by a love of money and others accused him of betraying the church and the school which had trained him. His wife became nervous and upset because all their former friends were regarding them as covenant-breakers and traitors. As I listened to him talk, and sensed the agony of his soul, I came to understand more fully than ever how ignorance and the party spirit have blinded our eyes.

It is altogether possible that you will grow tired of my recurrent emphasis upon the theme of this article, but I am like the man who kept sawing away on his fiddle which had but one string. His exasperated wife exclaimed, "Why don't you get a violin with four strings and run your fingers up and down them like other men do when they play?" He replied, "Those fellows are just hunting for the right place and I have already found it."

Our brethren are sure that they are "a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, and a teacher of children," but they have no adequate concept of ministry as set forth by the Holy Spirit. Until they get straightened out on this matter they will confuse sinners and confound the saints. Most of them think of ministry as preaching, but these are not necessarily the same at all. Preaching is but one facet of ministry, and in our culture it may be a very insignificant part. It may be indulged in as a substitute for real ministry and frequently serves as an escape hatch to keep from really ministering. Many of God's best ministers could not say three sentences in public to save their lives if they were threatened with hanging. I have known some excellent ones who couldn't sign their own names or read "Little Miss Muffet."

Every child of God on this earth is a minister, and the same act which makes him a child of God makes him a minister. Ministers of God are made by God and not by men. One does not "go away to become a minister," and if he was not one before

he left he will not likely be one when he returns. We are not ministers because we go away to study, although we may well go away to study because we are ministers. Study does not make us ministers although it will certainly improve our ability to minister.

We do not become ministers of God because other men lay hands upon us but because we place our lives in the hands of Christ. Nor can one be made a minister by handing him a diploma or granting him a degree. A diploma signifies that we have listened intently to what men have said and given the answers they wanted to the questions which they asked, but a diploma can no more make you a minister than a birth certificate can make you a baby.

It is downright silly to talk of one “leaving the ministry” so long as he is in Christ Jesus. We enter the ministry by accepting Jesus and we leave it by rejecting him. One no more leaves the ministry when he quits pulpit proclamation and starts teaching history in Junior High School, than he forsakes the family of his physical father when he stops plowing corn and starts painting houses.

There certainly is nothing wrong with one answering a call in college to step forth and declare his desire to serve God in some other nation. Neither is there anything wrong with one keeping his seat when the pressure is on and resolving to continue serving God in this nation. I knew a brother who had a good job and a big salary, and who went out to a little rural congregation in Arkansas, and blistered the brethren because they did not support a missionary with their cotton money. When he finished one of the brethren arose and said that their hearts had been mightily touched by the plea, and he proposed that they send the speaker to Africa. He did not bother that congregation any more. His motto was, “There he is. Lord, send him!”

But suppose a man volunteers to go to South America or to Asia Minor and then becomes convinced that he is not cut out for the work. What should he do? Must he hang on and wear himself out, breaking his health and causing his wife to have a nervous crackup, because of a sense of loyalty to his “commitment”? Of course not! His commitment to go may have been made to his brethren in a time of emotional stress, but his original commitment (and the one that matters) was made to Jesus at the time of his baptism. That commitment was to serve wherever he could best do so. Baptism is not intended to destroy one’s judgment or to warp his mind.

If one becomes involved in an effort for which he is not qualified, or in which he experiences no genuine joy or satisfaction, he ought to get out of it, and get into a work for which he is better adapted. In doing so he is not “abandoning the ministry.” God needs sociology teachers, bakers, policemen, automobile mechanics and laundromat operators. His world would be in a real mess very soon if the only thing anybody could do was to mount a pulpit and hold forth on a sermon outline. The man whose drive is created by his “gift of gab,” would get nowhere if someone did not have the gift to drive a cab.

Our problem stems from the fact that we pay lipservice to the ministry of all the saints but never put it into practice. It is a little bit dishonest to pretend that we do not have a clergy-laity system. There is not one bit of difference in the *functioning* of the average “minister” in the Church of Christ and that of the Baptist pastor down the street. The clever dodge that “the elders are the pastors” is another illustration of the semantic chicanery in which our brethren often engage. It consists of giving a scriptural designation to an unscriptural practice, or of denying the applicability of a term to an unscriptural practice in the hope that such practice may be hallowed or sanctified, or that an ignorant world may not know the difference.

Once in awhile some artless soul lets the cat out of the sack. I recall a debate in Indianapolis where two gladiators were hacking away at each other nightly before a packed arena over the cataclysmic and world-shaking problem of whether it was right to send money to a town in Texas to help pay the tariff on a television program designed for propaganda purposes. In the daytime sessions opportunity was provided for various ones in the audience to address the brethren. One affluent elder from the Lone Star State began his remarks by saying, "I may be out of place in speaking today, because I am not a minister, and must appear before you merely as a layman."

It was this kind of casuistry which got next to a good brother whom I know. He came out of a Christian College with a noble ambition and high ideals for service to humanity. He tried out for a position in a congregation and "won the toss" because he was hired over more than a half-dozen other disappointed rivals and competitors. For three years he tried to preach peace to a group of people who preferred to "take the low road." The elders were jealous of one another and were touchy and sensitive. They were dominated by a self-appointed "bishop" who used his wealth to throw his weight around and control the situation.

It soon became apparent to the preacher that he was a stooge, and that the members had no intention of changing their unlovely attitudes. They were married to their beautiful building and basked in the prestige which it gave them in the community. They gloried in their real estate instead of in the reality of Christ. Their "services" were rendered to their ego instead of to God. They made no impact on life. They wanted to remain aloof from the world and its problems, and resented reference to the racial question, population explosion, birth control, and the other things which trouble many sober minds in our day. Upon three occasions the preacher was called into session by the elders, and "the leading elder" warned him that the members were complaining that he was bordering on the social gospel in

his insistence that Jesus wanted men who would share with others in every aspect of the human predicament.

Finally it became obvious that he could not stay, and he decided that he would not seek for another “pastoral” position. He entered the employ of an insurance company and almost from the very first began to make a success as a salesman. Doors for personal witness to the faith opened on every hand. On weekends he was free to assist small and struggling bands of believers, and he did so, always refusing to take a cent from them for his labors. With more time to spend with his own children his family life improved and tensions fell away.

The strange thing about this case is that some of the very ones who were responsible for his decision to serve God in another capacity criticized him for “leaving the ministry.” Yet he was actually touching more lives in a meaningful fashion than while seeking to placate those who manifested hostility at every attempt to get them to overcome unreasonable prejudice. And he was helping congregations of saints who were really in need. Perhaps Satan has never hoodwinked us more effectively than in causing us to equate “ministry” with regularly trying to pamper groups whose chief concern is to maintain the status quo.

Sometimes men have had to completely re-orient their thought patterns in order to maintain their personal integrity. I think this is what happened to a fine young Christian in one of our northern states. He came out of college with a dream of the kingdom of heaven and with a real prayer life. From the first night of their marriage, he and his lovely young wife had kneeled together and talked to God so unashamedly and free from inhibition, that Jesus had become the most vital and realistic factor in their lives. When they began work with a suburban congregation they did so with a fervent expectation of sharing their dream.

It was not to be so. The congregation was legalistic and

anxious to convey an image of success in the community. They talked of “expansion” but limited it only to the thought of a new building with all of the latest gadgetry. Their concern was for indirect lighting rather than for letting their light shine directly in the community. In vain the preacher strove to get them to erect a modest structure and use their means to touch real life needs. But they became more engrossed with planning the parking lot, landscaping the plot and designing the edifice of brick and stone. As the only congregation of the restoration movement in the area they felt called upon to uphold the traditions.

With sad heart the preacher announced that he was resigning while his love for all of them remained unabated. He secured a job which now pays him much more than the congregation gave him. His present position is unique. He is part of a “church in thy house” group. There are some two dozen people, including children, who gather every Lord’s Day in the family room of one of the members. The coffee table is the “Lord’s table.” The order of the meetings is not static. No two meetings are ever alike.

Anyone may start a song, anyone may read a scriptural portion, any one may make a comment. There is always a season of prayer in which the names of the needy are borne up to the throne of mercy. Those who are present kneel for the prayers and petition God with fervency. When a contribution is taken up, mention is made in advance of the purpose for which the collection is made. That very afternoon it is taken and given to the needy.

Most of the time the members eat together, with each family bringing food which is spread out upon the table at noon. In the afternoon they visit hospitals or go to the homes of shut-ins or widows. There are no Sunday evening meetings but most of the family groups have a prayer session in their own homes to close the Lord’s Day. Here is active ministry but the brother is

referred to, almost with sadness, as “a former minister.”

Please understand that we are not herein criticizing those saints who have held “try-outs” and hired someone to “minister” to them for so much per week or month. Recently we have seen some elaborate contracts which spell out like legal documents all that is expected of the “minister” even to the point of telling how many meetings he may hold elsewhere, and of what length, and specifying the length of his “vacation from the pulpit” and in what month such vacation must be taken. Our brethren are developing a rare degree of sophistication when they can plan the work of the Spirit in their community that far in advance.

But our point does not deal with the right or wrong of such contractual matters. What we are saying very simply is that one who follows his conscience and chooses to minister for Jesus in another way does not thereby forsake the ministry. Actually, he may minister more effectively, and where human need is the greatest. In many places there are two strikes against one who must identify as a professional minister and people may turn him off automatically. One does not need to give up his service station or store in order to minister, and one does not necessarily cease to minister when he relinquishes the pulpit to work as a plumber, painter or policeman. He that ministers should wait on his ministering regardless of where he may be!

Inside the Circle

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

“But now through the blood of Christ, you who were once outside the pale are with us inside the circle of God’s love in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:13).

What a thrill should surge through us as we read these comforting words. The writer is actually talking about us, for we are Gentiles. He has just pointed out that those who were not of the seed of Abraham were without Christ, utter strangers to God’s chosen community of Israel, with nothing to look forward to and no God to whom they could turn. No other scripture paints so graphically the lost and undone condition of those who were “strangers to the covenants of promise.”

There is a world of meaning in that little expression “But now!” It is in startling contrast with another expression, “At that time.” What happened between the two periods represented in those words? Something occurred which transformed the divided world with its ethnic prejudices and racial bitterness. The outcasts became part of the in-group. The hated ones suddenly became “accepted in the beloved.” Hostility was slain. Animosity was banished. Read the passage again and savor its majestic truth. “But now through the blood of Christ.”

That is the secret. There’s power in the blood. Nothing else can cleanse the heart of sin and purge the conscience of guilt. It

is sin and guilt which make us hate those of another race, to despise those whose only “crime” is that by the accident of birth, by a combination of genes and chromosomes which they did not choose, they are in another strain of the family of man than ourselves.

Guilt makes us uneasy. We are driven to sham and hypocrisy, as if outward pretence of love can atone for the buried cancer of hatred which eats away within. It is only the blood of Christ which can make us real by making us whole. That blood reduces all of us to a common level. In the crimson stream which flowed from Calvary, none of us can stand tall while others grovel. Here we are all proclaimed to be sinners with no advantage accruing from circumstances of birth, race or social standing.

The blood reaches to all, even to those who were “once outside the pale.” That is an interesting expression. It literally means “outside the fence, or across the barrier.” When I was a youngster we called a fence made of upright slats, or pickets, a “paling fence.” We did not know the origin of the term, nor did we realize that in history certain restricted areas had been called The Pale, because foreigners were not admitted.

Jesus removed the fence. He battered down the barrier. Those who were once outside are now “inside the circle.” It was not our goodness which eliminated the fence. We did not suddenly become kind and forgiving. It was the action of God in allowing the Son to die which suddenly showed us that actually all of us were “outside the pale” and therefore, we could all be “inside the circle” which is no longer limited because the circumference is the boundless love of God as manifested in Christ Jesus.

This is the divine answer to racial problems. They can never be settled by legislating new laws for the statute-books, nor by the decisions of courts and juries. True, those who are

hostile can be kept apart by a wall of steel, by glistening bayonets and shiny rifle barrels, but these are powerless to stop the green bile of hate emptying into human hearts. The circle of police and militia must always enclose some and leave others out.

But what cold steel cannot do, the warmth of love can accomplish. It can free us from our own prejudice and littleness. No one can be “with us in the circle” who is not first with us within our hearts. When I cease to see red men, black men, yellow men or white men, and see only men for whom Christ died, I am on my way to the removal of the pale from my heart so it will no longer be a part of my world. No external wall was ever built that was not first laid, stone upon stone, in the hearts of men.

If I would follow my precious Lord I must dedicate my life to removing the pale, to bringing men within the circle. Being human, there is the tug of the flesh to erect walls and to build fences. Fear causes us to seek for protection behind our own barriers, and to hold men aloof. But the perfect love which casts out fear causes us to draw men unto Him so that we can say, “you are with us inside the circle.”

We need to have our hearts gently touched and strangely warmed by Jesus until the glow of a transformed life acts as a magnet to draw those inside who are still without the pale. The ministry of reconciliation is the great and abiding need of the alienated and frustrated ones in our day. Once we tune them into Jesus and they become committed unto him unreservedly, their fruitless existence will become meaningful and hopeful. There must be in us a passion for souls which transcends all other interests and which drives us relentlessly into the wilderness of life to rescue the sheep who have gone astray. We should not be able to rest until we have helped these restless ones find peace inside the circle of God’s love. It is for this we have been called in this day!

The Supreme Dynamic

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[Abstract]

*We must not only approach other people with the love of God in our hearts, but we must know how to express it. I heard recently of a schoolmaster who was teaching his children Religious Knowledge. "What did Jesus come into the world for?" he asked. There was no answer. "What did he come for?" shouted the exasperated man. Still no answer. "Love!" he roared at them, striding around the classroom, hitting each child over the head, "Love! Love! Love!"— Stephen Verney, in *Fire in Coventry*.*

In this last of the series of articles on morality and ethics, I shall not appear as a defender of either a new morality or an old one. I prefer to be a researchist, answerable to no one but God, and seeking only for truth. I am not obligated to advocate anything simply because it is old, nor reject anything simply because it is new. I am a slave to no system and a lackey to no time. Best of all, I am free to change as I learn and grow as I discover additional truth.

Because I believe that our relationship as Christians stems from our relationship to God, our moral standard must be grounded in the nature of God as it has been revealed to us in both the written and the living Word, that is, propositionally and personally. I am convinced that God sought to keep men united and pure for fifteen-hundred years by law. The law could not accomplish its purpose, not because of inherent flaws but

because of the weakness of men.

What God once attempted by law he now proposes to accomplish by a dynamic so far superior to law, that it operates in a field where law is neither needed or found. A great many men, frightened by what is called “the new morality” and feeling called to rush to arms against it, decry its emphasis upon love as an absolute, and actually end up attacking and denouncing love, a thing which no inspired writer ever did.

When someone says, “love is a monolithic and jealous standard, a univalent norm. It shoulders aside all other, lesser goods,” why do we have to fear it? Sometimes we are influenced more by who says a thing than by what he says. Our concern is often for the camp in which he is rather than for the value of what he states. I shall take the position in this article that love is the standard by which all else is measured, and I do so because I believe the word of God teaches just that. If a situation ethicist also affirms it this does not negate it. Rather it just proves that he coincides with the Bible to this extent.

Our whole problem centers around the nature of love, and while the Greeks had several words which we translate by the English word “love,” our concern is with *agape*. This is the love God had for the world (John 3:16), the love which Jesus manifests for his disciples (John 15:19), and the love we must have for both God and our brothers (1 John 4:21). It is also the love we must have for our enemies (Luke 6:37). In my analysis of love I want to make a few general observations as a foundation for our study.

1. This love is not an emotion or sentiment, but an act of the will. It represents, therefore, not so much an involuntary response to conditions, as a deliberate choice, a calculated set of the mind. This is why it can be commanded. “A new commandment I give unto you . . . that ye love one another” (John 13:31). One cannot command or maintain full control of

an emotion. He cannot always direct it.

However, I think there is much more to it than this. I may be wrong, seriously wrong, but I do not believe that one who is not a member of the new humanity, can really demonstrate *agape*. There is nothing in the purely human nature which can produce or stimulate it. Indeed, that nature is definitely opposed to it. It is an attribute of the divine nature. God is love. Thus it belongs to those who are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and is distinctly declared to be “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). From this it is obvious that this love can never be adopted as a universal basis of moral conduct. Men who walk after the flesh must be restrained by laws of society. It is only those who are Christ’s who have “crucified the flesh with its inordinate affections and base desires” (Gal. 5:24). These only can “walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh” (verse 16).

2. The love of which we speak is always active in the accomplishment of its purpose, which is also the divine purpose. It cannot be passive for by nature it is creative. Man has being because of divine love. The universe was not brought into existence purely as a demonstration of superior power, nor does it exist simply as an exhibit of awesome wonder. The Almighty does not need to show what he can do to satisfy a super-ego. He cannot “point with pride” at some accomplishment. The world is not a transcendent “county fair.”

God is love— love unlimited and unbounded— and love seeks an object upon which it can lavish itself. Life is not so much a gift of love as it is love itself, animating, throbbing and thrilling in a new-found relationship. “For God is love, and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life” (1 John 4:9). We need to be careful here,

because of the way we think of “sending” and “bringing.” Jesus did not come as a special delivery carrier to ring the doorbell and hand us a neatly-wrapped package of life.

He is the life, and he came to live in us, identifying with us, and merging with us, so that just as he became flesh then, he is now incarnate in us. “God is love; he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Because we are human we find this difficult to accept. We want to explain everything, to capture it in our little mental box and slam the lid shut on it. The greatest temptation on earth is to reduce love to human terms, to talk love instead of living it. So John says, “My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine and show itself in action” (1 John 3:18). God disclosed his love for us by sharing himself, we can only show our love for others by sharing life. It is easier to share money, time and things. The tragedy of our day is that we so often substitute these for love. Sometimes we commit a greater sin in mistaking them for life.

3. The opposite of this love is not hate, but selfishness. Hate is simply lack of love, as darkness is absence of light. The Latin *oppositus* is a compound of *ob* and *pono*, to place in the way. Darkness does not get in the way of light, and hate does not get in the way of love. Darkness recedes before light and hate is a shadow which flees as love is turned on.

But selfishness opposes love, as the flesh opposes the Spirit. It is antagonistic, adverse and stubborn. This is an important distinction for it is possible to hate a brother without exercising any conscious feeling of animosity toward him at all. Love is concern, and to be unconcerned is not to love, and not to love is to hate. “But if a man has enough to live on, and yet when he sees his brother in need shuts up his heart against him, how can it be said that the divine love dwells in him?” (1 John 3:17).

4. Other forms of love exhibit themselves toward that

which is loveable in the object. The value exists before the love is bestowed and it is recognition of the value which calls forth the love. Such love is an automatic response to the beauty or other attribute which attracts it. In the case of *agape* the reverse is true.

Here the love creates the value in the object. It is not loved because it is loveable, but it becomes loveable and capable of loving because it is loved. "We love because he loved us first" (1 John 4:19). It is not that "we love *him* because he first loved us," but we love. His love transforms us, dries up the fountain of selfishness within, and makes us capable of loving through the indwelling Spirit. "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love for us" (Romans 5:8). God never got anyone out of what he was in to love him, but he loves men to get them out of whatever they are in.

It is this kind of love which makes it possible for us to love our enemies, a thing which no selfish or egotistic individual can ever do. Jesus is very specific. "Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:45). The converse must also be true, that only children of the Father can exhibit this love. One need not be a child of God to love only those who love him. "Surely the taxgatherers do as much as that" (Matthew 5:46). To match love for love, or to meet love halfway, is not *agape*, for no one can bargain or barter with it.

In our generation there is a lot of sticky sentimentality and trifling twaddle which parades as love. We use the word to describe our feelings for bicycles and Buicks, sandwiches and scenery, weather and wives. Thus the term has been washed out and squeezed dry of any transcendent quality. We need to study again the nature of a value so great that its essence is of God, a dynamic of such a vast potential that it is greater even than faith and hope, those twins of the forward and backward look. Let us consider the following truths.

Love gives assurance that we have been safely transported across the border into life. “We know that we have crossed the frontier from death to life because we love our brothers. The man without love for his brothers is living in death already” (1 John 3:14).

Love makes possible a divine-human relationship in spite of the limitations of the senses such as sight. “Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another, his love is brought to perfection within us” (1 John 4:12).

Love completely banishes fear. “Love contains no fear—indeed fully-developed love expels every particle of fear, for fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty” (1 John 4:18). This is vital to our thesis because fear is one of the most potent forces in the universe. Thomas Carlyle wrote, “We must get rid of fear; we cannot act at all till then. A man’s acts are slavish, not true but specious; his very thoughts are false, he thinks too as a slave and coward, till he have got fear under his feet.” Gandhi said, “Where there is fear, there is no religion.” That which can eradicate fear and the guilt-complexes which accrue from it is indeed a mighty dynamic.

Love is ultimate and universal, indestructible and enduring. It is destined to conquer all else. “Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen” (1 Corinthians 13:7). As the New English Version has it, “There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.”

This is enough to demonstrate that we are not talking about a weak or vacillating influence, but a vital and energizing quality which knows no bounds or restraints. We have already written about the folly of trying to define love, but still we must describe it, so that we may recognize it if we cannot fully explain

it.

Joseph Fletcher says that “*agape* is goodwill at work in partnership with reason.” He also says that “love and justice are the same, for love is justice distributed, nothing else.” Those who have been regular readers of this paper through the years know that I have repeatedly affirmed that love is that “active and beneficent goodwill which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object.” In reality it is the life of God at work in and through us, to transform the universe, for God is love!

When I thus affirm that love transcends all legalistic codes, and exists in a realm superior to imposed regulations, I am simply saying that life divine, the life of God, is not, and cannot be made, subject to prison walls. It cannot be confined to statutes and codes. These may act as guidelines but not as imposed laws. And that brings us to the place where we are ready to consider love in relation to law under the new covenant.

In the days of Jesus the rabbis had agreed that there were 613 commandments in the Torah. When a scribe sought to tempt Jesus by asking which was the great commandment of the Law, the reply was to love God with the undivided personality. The second was to love man as one loves himself. Jesus did not stop there. He employed a well-known Jewish expression about suspension, saying, “Everything in the Law and the prophets hangs on these two commandments.” What does this mean?

Alfred Edersheim says that all sprang from these two as their root and principle, and stood in living connection with them. No law was to be kept for the law’s sake, or for mere love of law. Such love is impersonal, misdirected and may be cold and calculating. Laws are things. They are to be used. But love is for persons, God and man. Jesus declared that the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Human welfare has priority over laws or statutes.

Paul writes, “He who loves his neighbor has satisfied every claim of the law.” He then cites the law against adultery, murder, stealing and covetousness, and adds, “Any other commandment there may be, are all summed up in the one rule, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Note the expression, “satisfied every claim of the law.” Law has no more claim upon one who really loves, than a collection agency has upon a man who has received a receipt marked “paid in full.”

Every command that was ever given is summed up in the one rule of love. This offers no licence to ignore, break or violate any commandment. The apostle says, “Love hurts nobody; therefore love is the answer to the Law’s demands.” Love is the answer! Does this not mean that every situation must be approached, not with a lawbook in the hand, but with the love of God in the heart?

“Love cannot wrong a neighbor; therefore the whole law is summed up in love.” It is not that love ought not, might not, or should not wrong a neighbor, but it cannot. Love can do no wrong. That which hurts or wrongs is not love. This is difficult for us to accept because we are always bending and warping concepts to justify and condone our actions regardless of their effect upon others. But if we can once embrace the significance of this our whole attitude toward self and others will be transformed.

In a magnificent treatise on freedom, found in Galatians 5:13-15, Paul writes, “You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you go on fighting one another, tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction.” Does this not say that the ultimate purpose of our relationship is service rendered in love?

So long as love is regarded as the divine nature, operating in active concern through us, it is the basis for ethical behavior. It is both the center and circumference of our commitment, linking us to God and men in a redemptive fellowship. It creates of us a community of the reconciled and a reconciling community.

I am not afraid of turning men loose with love as the tie that binds. “If you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfill the desires of the lower nature” (Gal. 5:16). “If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law” (verse 18). “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (verses 24, 25). As Augustine said, “Love with care, and then do what you will!” I concur with this, for it has a built-in spiritual safeguard. Can you find it?

The Fading Fear

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[Abstract]

The cold snows of division in the higher peaks are beginning to melt. The spring thaw is starting and the first gentle rivulets are commencing to trickle downward, skirting the boulders and other obstacles and finding their way toward that unity which some day will become a broad and placid river. The heirs of the restoration movement are beginning to think in terms of oneness rather than of divisiveness.

It was almost a century ago that our fathers in a frontier culture, many of them uneducated and illiterate, possessed of quick tempers and touchy pride, began to splinter and fragment a movement which began so auspiciously as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” The first cleavage was the signal for others to follow, and the sin of schism with its sectarian segregation and isolation became a way of life for thousands.

The first rupture ruined the restoration movement as an effective force for unity. Subsequent fractures intensified the confusion and multiplied the problems. From the first day that I began writing about healing the breaches, I have emphasized that we must go back to the first ghastly laceration and repair it, or it would stand as a monument to our inconsistency and mock us for our hypocrisy. At that time there seemed little hope that any consideration would be given to my plea.

I was hailed as a visionary, attacked as a liberal and branded as a traitor. Since I anticipated all of this I could say that “none of these things move me and neither count I my life dear unto myself.” I have always felt that the brethren whom I love would someday recognize the futility of preaching unity and practicing partition. Now that faith is being realized.

More than two years ago a meeting of top-level men in the Churches of Christ was held in an eastern city with a prominent brother from the Christian Church. It was agreed that these leaders in the non-instrument ranks would tone down the factional approach in their articles and broadcasts, eliminating such material as would intensify tensions between the two groups. No mention of the meeting ever leaked out to orthodox journals but the effect has been seen from coast to coast.

In New York, the Manhattan Church of Christ entered into “the fellowship of giving and receiving” with an important and wealthy Christian Church family. In California, across the nation, the administration of Pepperdine College reached the conclusion that the use of the instrument was no barrier to fellowship in Christ Jesus. Since that time, the president and vice-president have both spoken at the North American Christian Convention, hailing those in attendance as their brethren. One of them made an address on the campus of a Christian Church school, and the other addressed a banquet of friends and alumni of the same institution. Both made it clear that they recognized they were among the children of God.

A front-rank man in the Bible department at Abilene Christian College recently said that if the instrument was being introduced now, the brethren who oppose it would look at it a long time before they would divide over it. This is a clear-cut admission that the division has cultural overtones and it is now time for the Bible department at Abilene to take a second look at its role in condoning and continuing a division which was sinful in the first place.

A ranking professor at another college told one of his good friends, who is also a good friend of mine (but secretly for fear of the Jews), “Carl is right about fellowship and has been all along, and if he had come up in the right group, he would be headlining every lectureship program in the brotherhood.” In the face of such an admission I’m not sure it is much of an honor to speak at a lectureship, and I am very grateful to God that I did not “come up in the right group.”

I hail with genuine pleasure every attempt of brethren to meet and discuss our sinful schism. Such a meeting took place in a southern city several months back, and the proceedings were all conducted in an amiable fashion. One of the ironic twists of fate is that present for the occasion was my esteemed brother, James DeForest Murch, who has lived down his detractors on both sides, and is now able to meet with men who once heaped opprobrium upon him for working on what was known as the Witty-Murch plan for unity.

The brethren who oppose the instrument agreed to work for lessening of the tensions on the mission field where the question is not even an issue. They also disclaimed any intention of becoming involved in public partisan debate over the matter. They conversed and prayed together in a spirit of harmony and fraternity, and parted with a mutual resolution to promote other such meetings on an expanding scale in the future.

This points up one great phenomenon which must not be ignored. Brethren can treat each other with decency, politeness and even affection, on the street, in public eating places, in private homes and in motels. It is only when they get into their church buildings that they clam up and retreat into the deep-freeze posture. There is a psychological reason for this. Our meetinghouses have become symbols of our partisan loyalties, bastions of orthodoxy, and citadels of the status quo. Outside of their walls we approach one another with cool heads and warm hearts, inside of them we resort to cold hearts and hot heads. If

all of our temples of party pride were burned down we could get together in a month. This is merely an observation, and not to be taken as a suggestion.

We must face up to the fact that a great many preachers and professors in Christian Colleges now realize that it was wrong and sinful to divide over instrumental music and the millennial question. They are undergoing inner trauma because they would like to speak out plainly and say so. They are caught in a vise which they helped to construct. They have taught the brethren to be bitter and sectarian in attitude, and they are afraid of the legalistic monster which they have created. Their prestige, salaries and jobs depend upon keeping still about their real sentiments. They have a lot to lose.

I can sympathize with them and have compassion upon them. I was as narrow and factional as any of them. I regarded as faithful only those who were attached to our little party. All others were “brothers in error,” to be stigmatized, scandalized and humiliated. I taught the members of our splinter group that they alone were loyal to Christ and that they should dwell in unsullied isolation to save the truth. But when the blessed Spirit of God opened my eyes to the realization that what we called righteousness was simply damnable self-righteousness, I openly and publicly renounced the whole sick and sordid mess.

Church of Christism is no better than any other “ism.” It is parochial, provincial and sectarian. I am ashamed of the bigotry and intolerance which once enveloped my heart and caused me to turn the cold shoulder upon good brethren whose only sin was that they could not in pure conscience see everything as I did and bow the knee to our unwritten creeds. I am astounded that I could have been so brain-washed while proclaiming the grace of God to others. I have no intention to conceal the fact that such a schismatic course was a sin against my Lord and against His body.

My frightened brethren are choosing a different course. They are resolved to play down the troublesome questions of the past and allow them to gradually pale into insignificance and fade into the dusk of coming ages. They realize that these trifling issues will be eclipsed by the greater and more burning problems of a secular age. They will take no chances. They will rock no brotherhood boats. I do not doubt that they will achieve a measure of success. I only pray that their silence is truly golden, and not merely yellow.

But I do not have time to wait. I must repair the breaches my fathers made, and seek to undo the sectarian attitude which I helped to promote, and do it now. "I must work while it is called today, for the night cometh when no man can work." I am compelled by an inner sense of urgency, a compulsion which will not be stilled. The way to unite is to unite! After all the conferences have been held and the bone-weary negotiators have completed their awesome studies of "ham on the Lord's table" and "gopher wood in the ark" in relation to instrumental music, the only way they can unite is to unite. I am starting where they will be ending! I have fiddled away too much of my life already. I have no more to waste!

I trust, therefore, that I will not be thought presumptuous in suggesting the following steps which I think our brethren ought to take if they expect to seriously attempt to answer the prayer of Jesus for all who believe in Him through the apostolic testimony. I especially commend them to my brother and fellow-editor, Reuel Lemmons, who is in the forefront of arranging for Church of Christ participants in the dialogue sessions.

I think it is rather useless to get together to exchange the same old tired clichés and parrot the moss-covered stereotyped expressions. We need a new approach, a bold approach, one that will challenge us all with its freshness. It was just such an approach which gave the restoration movement birth. It is such an approach which will revive it in power in our cynical society.

1. Let us freely admit our error in equating the restoration movement with the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom has always existed and did not need to be restored. Restoration is an approach toward solving the problems of schism in the body, and the restoration movement is not the body of Christ moving exclusively in this fashion and through its adherents only, but it is a movement within that body.

We have employed the term “Church of Christ” in a sectarian sense, and when we use the expression “the Lord’s church” to designate those only who are members of a faction, segment or movement, we sectarianize it. Even if we bring together all of the dissident parties in the restoration movement, we have not yet achieved the unity of all God’s people. We will only have made the restoration movement a more effective agent in working toward that end.

God has children whose names are not found on the roster or in the directory of any Christian Church or Church of Christ. Certainly they are members of the body of Christ and it is the church of Christ. But the term church of Christ as God sees it embraces many more people than are embraced in the term as employed in the *Gospel Advocate* or *Firm Foundation*, and all of God’s children are my brothers and sisters. And I do mean all of them!

2. Let the non-instrument brethren openly admit that our fathers were wrong when they made a test of fellowship out of instrumental music, and created a non-instrument party or sect. This has nothing to do with the right or wrong of instrumental music. Certainly one could not say it was right to use it if he thought it was wrong to do so. But it is a sin to “set at nought a brother” for whom Christ died, over such matters, and we need to quit pussyfooting around and say so out loud.

All of the sparring and fencing around over whether *psallo* includes plucking or twanging on something while you are

singing is beside the point when it comes to fellowship in Christ Jesus. Lambasting each other with lexicons and pasting each other with patristics may be a good diversion for those who have time for it. But whatever the final decision is when the referee sounds the last whistle, cannot alter the fact that we are brothers *now* in one body by baptism, and we are charged with maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We need to rise above that species of petulant partisanship which causes us to jockey around for a favorable concession from “the other side” so we can appear justified. This is childish, frivolous and silly. We inherited a factional set-up, we supported and defended it. It was a sin to start such a faction, it is a sin to perpetuate it. Let’s say so. Never mind whether other factionists evade the issue or face up to it. Let us free ourselves from the short-sighted sophistry into which we have been betrayed by tradition. I do not favor the use of instrumental music in the praise service of the community of saints, but I shall not allow the devil to motivate me to use this to try and club my brothers into conformity, or drive them from me.

3. Let us candidly concede that we have betrayed the original restoration ideal as enunciated by Thomas Campbell in “The Declaration and Address.” To try and make it appear that we are upholding that ideal while making tests of fellowship out of such things as instrumental music or the millennium, exhibits either a deep-seated ignorance or blatant hypocrisy. Nothing can be clearer than proposition six in the “Declaration.” Here it is.

“That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet they are not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and

progressive edification of the Church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession."

For years I made deductions and what I conceived of as inferential *truths* part of the church's confession, or unwritten creed. During that time I spoke fervently about the efforts of the pioneers of the restoration movement, but I was wholly ignorant of the platform of that movement. I had not even read "The Declaration and Address." All I knew about it was what other preachers in the faction said about it, and a lot of them had not read it either. We were learnedly professing to defend something about which we were almost wholly ignorant.

When I finally read "The Declaration and Address" and saw what a noble document it was, and how far I had missed even the basic principles which it spelled out, I became convicted of the sin of factionalism and sought to clear my heart of the whole sordid mess of inept and inconsistent reasoning which was equated with loyalty by the party chieftains. The party spirit makes for dishonesty and breeds arrogance and self-righteousness.

Our position on instrumental music is a deduction from Scripture premises. One need not be profound to see that. The same holds true for our interpretation of the millennium. Granted that what we believe is a truth (and both sides firmly believe they have the truth), it is an inferential truth, and neither can bind it upon the other as a term of fellowship.

Let us admit that we have sinned in creating separatist parties over such things as instrumental music, cups, classes, colleges, and the rest of the catalogue of issues over which we have stultified ourselves and caused the rest of the religious world to regard us as magnifiers of the minute and crucifiers of the concrete. We can hang up charts from now until Jesus comes, and devise arguments that are complex and intricate, but

when the gong sounds to end the struggle, whatever we have said about instrumental music will have been a deduction and an inferential truth.

I do not intend to sit around on the fence twiddling my thumbs and wait while the party “somewhats” continue their puerile palavering and their legalistic lacing of one another. I am through with all of the factional huddles and higgledy-piggledy. My brothers are my brothers. All of them are. It is just that simple. Whatever they think about instrumental music or the millennium, or about cups, classes or colleges, they are still my brothers. I am in the one body with them. I am united with them through the one Spirit. And I shall recognize them as my brothers in the Lord.

In the encounter between the select representatives of the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, the former asked the latter what they thought of me and of my work. The Texans who were present hastened to say that I was too liberal. And measured by their standard I think that I am. I just do not believe that any orthodox faction in the restoration movement is the Lord’s church to the exclusion of all others. I do not believe that all of them together exhaust the possibilities of God’s grace. I do not believe the restoration movement is the whole body of Christ on earth. I no longer defend any party, splinter, sect or segment as the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of God upon earth. That is what these men mean when they say I am too liberal. I will not be confined in my love for God’s children by any arbitrary and authoritative fence which men construct.

For this, of course, I am branded as liberal, and I thank God and take courage, for at last I am a free man, free in Christ to serve all of my brothers without fear or favor. My allegiance is to the risen Lord, my Comforter is the Holy Spirit, my brethren are all those who have been born from above. Not for all this world contains would I again barter the grace of God for the favor of men. It is a thrilling experience to look back and

recognize one's errors, and be empowered to confess openly, "I was mistaken," and never worry what men can do to you. I have been set free by the grace of God. I shall never again wear the yoke of partisan bondage!

The Capture of Thought

Mission Messenger (November 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defence that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

We are engaged in a struggle for the minds of men. This is the real basis of our war against atheistic Communism. It is not essentially a conflict between two political theories— between democracy and socialism. One nation cannot impose its governmental structure upon another without its consent, except in violation of basic human rights. But the kind of communism of which I speak dethrones God and enthrones the state, so that man is made the vassal of the latter instead of the servant of the former. Communism erects an imposing defence against the true knowledge of God.

Man’s heart belongs to God. It is His chosen dwelling-place and whatever else occupies that territory is a usurper. It must be dislodged and driven out, and the flag of the kingdom must be planted in the soul, and possession be taken in the name of the absent Sovereign. The soldier of Christ is committed to unrelenting and aggressive warfare against every such intruder regardless of how imposing his defence may be.

Communism is not the only such enemy we must face in

our day. Another is scientism. I did not say science. There is a difference. Science is a hand-maiden of God. It is his servant. But scientism is the elevation of the slave to the throne. God gave us science, but scientism is the mistaken view that science gives us God. That which was intended to serve our needs is regarded as the supplier of them. And this is idolatry!

Communism and scientism originate in men's minds. They are the brainchildren of human rationalization. In spite of their opposition to the divine purpose their very existence is proof of the creative power of God, just as Satan is. God did not create Satan, but he created angels and archangels, and one of them by rebellion against God made himself to be Satan. So false "isms" spawned by fertile minds, only serve to show the length to which concepts may go when started on a tangent away from God. The very devilishness of such ideologies is indicative of how ingenious and inventive is that mind which could come only by the power of One whose mind is infinite.

It is here that we need to be very careful. Our task is not to discourage men from thinking and certainly not to destroy the power to think. In our zeal for victory we must not crush men's spirits in order to soften their hearts. When we make men flabby and thoughtless we make them useless. In the past "religious systems" have often operated on the basis that to avoid wrong thinking it is better not to think at all. Their communicants have been blessed when they exhibited a rubber-stamp mentality, and cursed when they rose above partisan mediocrity.

To stifle original thinking is not to bring a man closer to the image of Christ, but to eradicate the image of God from his heart. Bland conventionality and blind conformity are not conducive to creativity. We are to channel thought, not crucify it. Read our heading text again. It is one thing to capture a man, and a wholly different thing to crush and kill him. We are to capture every thought and bring it to acknowledge the authority of Christ. That which is dead is incapable of recognizing or

acknowledging authority.

Please notice that our responsibility is to every thought. We are always tempted to categorize thoughts into “religious” and “non-religious.” But thoughts affect men’s lives and behavior. They make us what we are. Though some of them appear irreligious they are not non-religious for they are wrapped up in life as we live it. And our life is our “religion.”

Whether our thoughts are labelled as literary, scientific, mechanical, poetical, fictional, or whatever, they must be captured and led to the throne and brought to bow before the authority of the Christ. We must not stop men from writing fiction and thus dry up the wells of imagination which God hollowed out in human hearts. Let us only bring our stories, plays, television scripts, and magazine articles to serve his purpose in slanting men’s minds toward his glory. We need as much as anything else to encourage literary genius in our day.

Let us not deride those whose creative hearts seek to express their inner visions in various art forms. The great Artist of the universe is not jealous when his children walk in the steps of their Father. Let men be free to probe the far reaches of space, to experiment in their laboratories, to explore the depths of the sea. Let them postulate, theorize and speculate, and let the world know that God sets no limit upon our right to knowledge of the universe except the limits we impose upon ourselves through fear or false humility, which is not really humility at all.

All truth is one truth! Whether given by revelation, discovered by scientific investigation, or arrived at by rationalization, if it is truth, it is His truth, and He wills it to be ours if we arrive at it. Let us capture every thought, but let us not torture our captives, or brutalize and murder them. Dead thoughts are like dead men, they can acknowledge no authority, not even His!

I believe that the throne-room of consciousness is the rightful domain of the King. Every concept which invades it must come in proper homage to his majesty. No alien thought can long be tolerated which arrogantly refuses to be naturalized and bow before him. But foreign ideas which stray into the sacred premises must not be smitten down. Instead they must be placed under tribute that they may bring to his coffers all the riches of the universe. The Lord of glory is also the Lord of thought. The infinite Mind must capture and embrace the minds of the universe!

Words of Lipscomb

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

It is interesting to read the writings of those brethren who lived in a previous generation and sought to face up to the problems of their day. One such brother was David Lipscomb, for many years editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. Upon one occasion a preacher wrote that during his meeting at Cedar Grove, Tennessee, a little fourteen year old girl who was one-eighth negro, was baptized. The question was “Now, as there is no negro congregation in that community, where should she worship? Should the white members fellowship her, or should she be deprived of worshiping God?” Here is the reply as given by Lipscomb:

I have never found any sanction or authority in the Scriptures for different churches in the same community for different races of people. In the days of Jesus and the apostles the antipathy and antagonism existing between the Jews and Gentiles were as great as that now existing between the white race and the negro race. I find no intimation or suggestion of separate congregations for the two antagonistic races. On the other hand, it is distinctly stated that his mission was to make of the two races one body in Jesus. I believe that is the only correct course to follow in any and all other ages . . . Whatever we do to the least disciple of Christ, we do to him. If we refuse to recognize as a brother or sister the most despised of his disciples, we refuse to own him. I doubt if one who refuses

to fellowship and encourage and help one who is his disciple because he or she is of another race can be saved.

Another reader of the paper which he edited wrote in to ask, "Is it right or wrong to ask a sectarian to get up and read a chapter in the Bible where they take a part with us in the Sunday School, and should they offer prayer after reading?" Here is the way David Lipscomb faced up to the matter in print:

I would say it is wrong to encourage sectarianism in any way, if we can tell which are sectarians; but my observation is, it takes a sectarian to ferret out a sectarian, just as 'it takes a rogue to catch a rogue.' Unfortunately, all the sectarians are not in sectarian churches; and I hope some in sectarian churches are not sectarians. Things get badly mixed in this world. Sometimes people who wish to obey God are born and raised in sectarian influences. A man who loves party more than he loves God is a sectarian. A man who divides the church of God for a theory or teaching not required by God is a sectarian. A person who pushes an idea or practice not required by God to the disturbance of the peace of the church, or that exalts a human opinion or practice to an equality with the commands of God, is a sectarian and a heretic.

There are some in nonsectarian churches who are sectarians, who violate the laws of God in order to oppose sectarians. They are sectarians in their opposition to sectarians. There are some in sectarian churches who will obey God and follow him in spite of the sectarianism of the churches in which they find themselves. As examples, there are persons in the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches who were baptized to obey God rather than to please the sects. In this they rise above the sectarian spirit, despite the parties in which they find themselves. They ought to get out of the sectarian churches, but they see so much sectarianism in the nonsectarian churches they think all are alike.

Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, all met with the

sectarian Jews at their times and places of worship and participated with them, that they might find an opportunity to speak a word for the truth. I do not think it hurts any man, sectarian or sinner, to read the Bible anywhere or at any time. I do not think it hurts any one to hear the Bible read by sectarian or sinner at any time or place. The great end is to be true and faithful to the truth and at the same time kind and sympathetic with those in error. The nearer we can do these two things, the more like Jesus we will be and the more sinners and sectarians we will save.

Upon another occasion, Lipscomb said,

Every man has those predilections and preconceptions that warp his judgment and blind his vision to a greater or less extent. Some have them stronger than others. Some desire to know and do the will of God with more earnestness and singleness of purpose than others; hence some learn the truth much more slowly than others, even where natural ability is equal. No human being in the beginning of his religious life can, with a true and perfect heart, desire to know and do the will of God. To have such a heart, unblinded by prejudice, unwarped by other desires, would be more than human. If God did not accept service from imperfect and prejudiced hearts, he would never accept service from human hearts.

It is quite evident that if David Lipscomb and other brethren of his day could come back to life, they would be rejected and repudiated by the very congregations they helped to plant. Lipscomb would be branded as a liberal and would be shut out of the pages of the very paper he once edited, as well as being debarred from speaking on the lectureship of the school which he founded. This only serves to show what happens when movements harden into sectarian attitudes, and little men continue to build monuments to the very prophets whom they would stone if they were still present.

Things to Come

Mission Messenger (December 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

There comes a time in the life of a man who has fought for a cause when he must risk his all on the result of a single decision. To me, that time has arrived. It was twelve years ago that I turned my back on my former factional attitude and committed my life to the task of helping in a weak way, to bring peace to the schism-wracked heirs of the restoration movement. During that time great changes have occurred in the world about us and these have affected men in every religious movement.

Many who were laboring within the framework of our own movement have abandoned it for other fields. Some have argued that the restoration ideal has no validity in this secular age and that it is a sheer waste of time to expend efforts upon those whose arrogant attitude toward others of God's children only serves to widen existing gaps. I do not concur in that type of thinking. Our brethren have a great many faults, of course, and I am no exception. But one will not find perfection by going somewhere else. He may only run into more problems and some of these will be worse than those from which he fled. In any event, I am staying. I intend to be neither frightened nor bought off.

But I do think the time has come for a real searching of God's word, our present condition, and our own hearts. We are

divided, strife-torn and rent into factions. No amount of congratulatory writing can eliminate this cold fact. In some cities there are as many as eight or ten separate groups of restoration heirs, meeting in selfish exclusivism, often hating and being hated by the others. Each faction equates its own adherents with the people of God, while those who gather to memorialize the Lord elsewhere are regarded as traitors and apostates.

Citizenship in the kingdom of heaven is no longer a matter of commitment to the King, but is judged by one's concurrence with the partisan test proposed by the faction. Humble prayers, a consecrated daily walk, and a deep spiritual concern count for nothing. All of these are negated by a special view of music or the millennium, or of cups, classes, colleges, or some other secondary matter hoisted into prominence by a "pro" or "anti" party. Even the most unassuming servant of the Lord is attacked with animosity and bitterness if he merely transfers his attendance to a place of meeting sponsored by another segment. Hostility and hatred are manifested toward other children of a common Father in journals, church bulletins and radio programs.

Our present course is shameful. It disgraces the name of the Son of God. It bespeaks our own shallow thinking when we allow the relationship created by his precious blood to be broken up over our trivial matters of controversy. That there should be even two rival parties operating in one community, each claiming that it alone basks in divine favor while the others are all reprobates is frightening; that there should be ten or more is an unthinkable tragedy. Can we continue to go on in such a state until death claims us? Dare any of us be coldly concerned for our own faction alone and never seek to make peace with our other brethren? Has it come to pass that the very peacemakers who are blessed by the master are damned by his disciples?

What is the real basis for our division? Every one of the factions says it is lack of respect for the authority of the

scriptures. Every one believes that it alone respects that authority while all of the others do not. Each is righteous in its own sight. Each is wise in its own conceits. If the Word is as plain and simple in every detail as the brethren declare it is, why are there any divisions at all? Do only dishonest persons divide? The time has arrived to go deeper than our superficial answers which are parroted from one generation to another while divisions increase and chasms grow wider.

We cannot continue in our childish and petulant course, blaming all others while proclaiming our own innocence and freedom from guilt. It must be admitted that our attitude toward the new covenant scriptures has created division among honest and sincere brethren. Our divisions are no monuments of disregard for God's word, but living testimony to our attempts to follow its teaching. There is not a single faction among us that does not credit its very isolation and separation to its solemn adherence to the Bible.

Whatever our thinking in the past it has solved nothing. Under its influence we have grown to be an ever-decreasing proportionate minority in an expanding world. We cannot even stay together or work together among ourselves. We have shattered and fragmented the very movement of which we are a part, a grand and noble effort in its incipency with the goal of "uniting the Christians in all of the sects." I refuse to believe that my brethren in any of our own sects are deliberate rebels and malicious rogues. They are eager to serve the Lord and to please him.

Even a casual reasoner can see that if all of our warring tribes declare that basic to our unity is regard for the sacred scriptures, and if every splinter party declares that it alone is following the scriptures, there must be something wrong with the way in which we regard the scriptures. And it is apparent from our history that so long as we regard the scriptures as we do we must continue to divide and tear the body of Christ. We

are doomed to a new schism in every generation if we continue on our mad course!

In 1970, if the Lord wills and I live, it is my intention to probe our difficulty in the restoration movement in a way I have never done it before. I am going to ask my brethren questions which will cause those who are honest to evaluate anew their concept of the role designed for the new covenant scriptures in the ongoing life of the people of God. My brethren have posed as champions of the truth of heaven in the field of religious polemics. They have been bold in challenging the very ground upon which others stand. I propose very humbly and sincerely to let them see how they appear on the other side of the fence.

The reason why we must anticipate a united attack on all fronts is because I am not waging a factional battle. I am not defending one party in the restoration movement as opposed to other parties. I am not a factional champion. What I shall do is to challenge the whole ground of Church of Christism. And I shall be striking at what I believe is the root of our problem, which is a mistaken view of the design and purpose of the apostolic writings. I will not be questioning whether this faction or that has recaptured “the pattern.” Instead, I will be questioning if it was ever the design of heaven to provide for us a meticulous and stereotyped formula of procedure for all ages and climes.

I am going to ask what things were said and done by Jesus purely as a part of a contemporary and cultural setting? I am going to ask what was absolutely essential to please God in the life of the apostles, and what things were incidental, products of the place and time. It is my intention to show that what our brethren call the pattern was not prescribed by God at all, but is a compilation and collation of partisan deductions and traditional preconceptions, so that each group has constructed and cobbled up its own “pattern” so that we now have two dozen different patterns, all of which profess to be a restoration of the

divine order.

In this, I intend to be as gracious and generous as I can, but I shall be as relentless in the exposure of our fallacies and pretences as I will be in the search for truth. I think the time is at hand when we should be forced to face up to the fact that our brethren have built a “house of straw” upon a foundation of sand. This will mean that I will be called upon to deal with our divisions as they exist. I shall try to do this without rudeness for I have a deep sense of compassion for those who are gripped by partisan fear. However, I intend for my readers to know what I am talking about when I uncover the weakness inherent in our crazy-quilt pattern of strife and division.

I accept the new covenant scriptures as a revelation of the infinite mind and thought. I shall defend them against all who would abuse them, either by denying their divine origin or by warping and twisting them into a position their giver never intended. Which Church of Christ today, of our two dozen sects, has the divine pattern? Which of these respects the authority of the Book and the Lordship of Jesus? We cannot much longer deal with these matters as we have in the past by biting and devouring one another. I shall explore these and other questions as pertinent without fear or favor.

In the ensuing year we can promise you, God being our helper, that your hearts will be challenged, your minds stretched, and your lives enriched. The series of articles for 1970 will all be written around the theme, “The Living Pattern.” We pray that you will continue to read what will be said, and we urge you to pray for us as we write.

We are grateful to God that we are again closing a year with all bills paid. Our readership list is the largest it has ever been. This means that our expenses are heavier because the subscription rate does not nearly pay the cost of printing and mailing the paper for a year. Inflation makes one month of the

publication cost us more than a whole year when we started over thirty years ago.

Spirit-filled brothers and sisters make up the difference, God bless their precious hearts. Some of them send every month, choosing to support what we are doing as a vital mission of peace to our brethren torn by strife and disunity, rather than placing their contribution in the institutional church to aid and enhance a factional image. We never use a cent of money contributed to the paper for our own use. All of the work done in conjunction with it goes without remuneration. It is a work of faith and labor of love shared by some of the most wonderful saints in our world of crisis.

The subscription price will remain at one dollar per year, and we shall use any overplus to mail the paper to those who cannot pay for it or might never see it except through the generosity of someone who really cares!

Actually, our 1970 series will begin with the February issue. The January number will contain a reprint in full of the editorial "Faith or Opinion" by Brother Ruel Lemmons, which appeared in the *Firm Foundation*, for September 30. I expect to analyze that editorial point by point, and show how the attitude taken by our brethren in current unity talks will only serve to enhance the factional and divisive course of the past. It is sectarian to make tests of fellowship where God has made none, and to fracture the family of the Father into warring tribes over artificial issues. It is time that we start facing up to the real troubles which beset us, and my reply to this article will zero in on the problem in an honest appraisal which you will want to read.

The Secret Plan

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Volume 31

[Abstract]

“For God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposes in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in him” (Ephesians 1:9, 10).

The human mind partakes of and assimilates ideas as the mouth introduces food to the stomach. That is why we use such expressions as “food for thought,” or “digesting new truths.” As food strengthens and nourishes the body, so ideas cause the mind to grow and expand.

But not all food is equally tasty, and when one gets a morsel which is especially delectable, he wants to hold it in his mouth and swallow it slowly, savoring every bit of it. The same thing is true with the thought-processes, and one of the most wholesome and palatable bits I have ever found is the one in our heading. I never tire of meditating upon it. Here are a few things that thrill my soul about it.

1. God is the God of a plan. Our universe is not the result of blind chance. It did not result from a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms. We have not been condemned to a meaningless meandering or a senseless striving from the cradle to the grave. Everything in creation is composed of related

systems, and all of these combine to form greater systems. In the physical body the digestive system, the nervous system, the genito-urinary system all inter-relate to form the body, and each would be functionless outside of the ultimate combination.

By the same token, the planetary system, the terrestrial system, and countless others, are part of a grand design. Can we deny that all that is made, visible and invisible, is not linked together by the Maker into an unfolding pattern which some day will reveal itself in such transcendent beauty that man must have a transformed nature to even appreciate it?

2. God is the God of a secret. Parents sometimes have a noble desire to make their offspring heirs of such wealth as will provide them happiness and security beyond their fondest dreams. But they dare not disclose their ultimate aim while the children wrestle with the struggle toward maturity. The closely guarded secret must be kept without disclosure until the children are ready to understand and appreciate it.

Thus it was with the secret of the ages. God sent his children to the primary school of the patriarchal economy, then to the elementary school of the Mosaic economy with its governors and child-conductors, and finally to the preparatory high school conducted by a special tutor, John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Then, when the children graduated he told them the great secret. So it is written, "You must realize that so long as an heir is a child, though he is destined to be master of everything, he is, in practice, no different from a servant. He has to obey a guardian or trustee until the time which his father has chosen for him to receive the inheritance."

We are fortunate indeed to live in the age of the shared secret. Paul writes, "This secret was hidden to past generations of mankind, but it has now, by the Spirit, been made plain to God's consecrated messengers and prophets." Again he says, "that sacred mystery which up till now has been hidden in every

age and every generation, but which is now as clear as daylight to those who love God.”

3. God is the God of human history. The march of mankind is not a tramp through the darkness with no definite starting place and without a designated destination. It is not an upward groping from flecks of spume or slime in primordial ooze, or the reaching out of fleshy tendrils or tentacles to clamber up to a rocky shore from the depths of a sea of gaseous mud. Instead, it is the ongoing procession of men made in the image of God, with that image soiled and defaced through sin, but always tending toward “the hope that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God.”

There is no question about the terminus of our existence. It is determined according to the purpose grounded in God’s will, and that will is sovereign, not subject to external or changing conditions. Man is not in a rat race. He is part of the human race, come from God and destined for fellowship with the Eternal One. It is not always easy for one who is caught in the eye of a hurricane to see the way out, but we need not be too concerned for the One who watches over us does not slumber nor sleep.

Human history will be consummated in Christ. This is the secret. We have now been cut in on it so we know what life is all about. We were made flesh by the Word of God, and then the Word was made flesh to become like us. He shared our lot so we could share his life. He came down that we might be lifted up. He is our existence, our motivation, our ground of being. “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” We are because he is! He is not merely God up there or out there, but God down here and in here. He is not just Alpha, but also Omega. The alphabet of the divine has its final letter as well as its first, so he is perfecter as well as the pioneer of our faith.

4. God is the God of fulfillment. There are no dangling threads in the divine pattern but all are caught up in the loom of the ages and woven into the warp and woof of the infinite coverlet of love. There are no spare parts scattered over the workbench of time but all are fitted into the enmeshed gears of the machinery of destiny. Every desire, every thirst, every hunger, every drive which is legitimately a part of our nature finds its fulfillment in him who bridged time and space to fling out the lifeline which drew him unto us by the same act which drew us unto him.

The secret is out and gone are the frustrations which result from peering intently into the darkness. The secret is out and gone are the fears of hacking our way through a labyrinthine jungle filled with frightening sounds and sights. The storm is subsiding, the waves are receding, the breakers are quieting. The secret is out, and the dawn is coming, and he stands on the far-off shore beckoning. He is the Reconciler of the Eras, the Desire of all nations, the Peace of God. “In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own” (Romans 8:18, 19). Praise God!

Consecrated Diversity

Mission Messenger (December 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

An address delivered at The School of the Ministry, Milligan College, August 20, 1969, by James M. Swiney, Educational Director of Mountain Mission School, Grundy, Virginia.

We all know that as Jesus tied the towel around His waist and washed the disciples' feet. He gave us an example that instructed us to serve, to be ministers— each and every one of us. In effect, Jesus tells us that Christians not only should, but must incorporate some ministry into their personal lives. Just as the salt in Jesus' parable flavors food, so Christians must flavor the life around them as they minister through their own personal service.

I'd like to consider with you some of the diversity found within the teaching ministry— not only as we express it in mission work such as that at Mountain Mission School— but also the areas of public and private school classrooms, the home and also the non-teaching job. For while opportunity exists for a teaching ministry in parochial type schools, greater opportunities for greater numbers exist in the public sector.

It is interesting to note that Jesus, the incarnation of God, came to men not primarily as a preacher as John the Baptist had done, nor principally as a worker of wonders and miracles (though he accomplished much along these lines), but rather

Christ came to us primarily as our teacher.

As God chose to present Himself to mankind as our teacher rather than as our judge, though He does judge us; or as our mediator, though He mediates for us; or as our healer, though He heals our infirmities; His example tells us something of the real importance, character and diversity within the teaching ministry.

We tend to think of the priest as someone special in our society and so we should, though we should not necessarily treat the priest as a hands-off, sub- or super-human, the way some people do. Christ, our eternal priest, gave us the example of true, effective priesthood when He came as one of the people. He further loved His pupils and prepared Himself for almost three decades before He began to teach them.

To reach people, to successfully minister to their intellects, their bodies and their life force, God chose to present Himself to mankind in a secular light, rather than a sacred one. God presented us with a divine paradox— He revealed the sublimely sacred as being truly secular. In this act God revealed the misnomer of our system that places the priest on an imprisoned pedestal that often totally prevents him from doing the type of job he most wants and needs to do.

God tells us to mingle with people and make them know that the secular and the sacred are one and the same experience. Rather than to fragment our lives while we divorce science from religion or the arts from spirituality, God indicates that as we live we will both minister and live more successfully and effectively if we recognize that everything comes from God and therefore points back to Him, one way or another.

God was a teacher-priest. So also the professional teacher can minister most successfully as a priest in our world. If he acts responsibly, his teaching position carries respect and honor with

it. The populace looks to the teacher to help it solve problems with its children. That populace sometimes blames the teacher for the child's failures or for failures of discipline within the home environment. Still, the opportunity exists to help the children *and* their parents.

While the teacher sometimes faces problems that are prevailingly academic in nature, he most often deals with problems directly related to the human personality or a developing child's social habits. And the teacher deals intimately with these problems.

The teacher gets down to the "nitty-gritty" of human life at a most important time—the time of home and childhood. The teacher deals with the human person as that person develops his personality and outlook toward life.

The teacher-priest deals with these problems not one day a week but five, six or even seven days a week. Thus, the opportunity to serve, to minister to a human person, remains constant within the world of that teacher who follows God's example of the teacher-priest.

Few people realize the tremendous impact the teacher can make, not only upon children and their parents, but also upon a community at large. A teacher finds he has a reputation. It may be good, bad or indifferent. However, the teacher who studies his teaching art and brings high excellence into his classroom causes talk that opens up opportunities of service to him as a teacher-priest.

People want to know about the teacher of excellence. Students strive to get into classes taught by the teacher of excellence. Administrators exult over the teacher of excellence. Colleagues want to imitate the teacher of excellence. Communities honor and mightily strive to retain the services of their teachers of excellence.

In short, the more the teacher extends himself to grow as a teacher, the more opportunity he has to minister to others as their teacher-priest. This principle prevails within the entire scope of the teaching ministry. The more we grow, the more we can grow.

Working with the young also offers the teacher a concrete opportunity to actually affect the course of society. The teacher also finds opportunity to retain the fresh, idealistic— even altruistic— outlook of youth, tempered with the wisdom found through experience that helps him communicate with the young and their elders as he serves them as a teacher-priest. And they need never fully know he serves them as a priest.

The teacher-priest also finds ample opportunity to help those who cannot help themselves. The student from an economically deprived background can receive a direct ministry from the teacher-priest. The child who needs a substitute parent can find solace and instruction at the feet of a teacher-priest. The child who bears strong emotional scars, a psychological neurosis of the more worrisome type, or even a mild psychosis can receive aid and instruction from the teacher-priest.

Teacher-priests often find that people, whether young or old, come to and inquire of the teacher before they consult their preacher. Whether or not these people are right or even wise to do this is beside the point. The teacher who wishes to serve as priest finds a vast array of opportunity to serve, that's the point!

The Scriptures tell us we all have a contribution to make to the church. Just as a woven blanket needs every thread of its warp and woof in place to be complete and warm, so also the church needs each person within its membership to act as ministers, as a holy priesthood for God.

The attitude that says, “let the preacher do it” slows down the effective ministry of Christ’s church. It is at this point that

the idea of a “fulltime Christian service” often comes back to haunt us. There’s enough work for everyone in God’s service. Every Christian has a duty, an obligation to God and the grand privilege to engage in fulltime Christian service.

Christ ministered as a carpenter. Peter ministered as a fisherman and Paul ministered as a tentmaker. Each was a teacher-priest. There do exist only two kinds of people in this world— practicing Christians and non-Christians.

Let us not neglect the man in the pew when this is where our numbers and our potential strength lie. If we do neglect this source of strength then we will find ourselves wasting our opportunities to develop a truly diversified teacher-priesthood and will further add to the woes caused by the “let the preacher do it” syndrome. We will then find our people coupling that syndrome with the natural human tendency to avoid strangers. And finally, we will find that the strong commitment of an effective personal teaching ministry escapes the great majority of our people almost entirely. We thus weaken the church, young people reject an organized and yet uninvolved Christianity and we should know better. It would seem that those of us who now hold positions within the teaching priesthood have the solemn duty to train as many recruits to this service as we possibly can.

Let us go to this man in the pew and get him to roll up his sleeves and get on to a personal teaching ministry. Let us realize that few men are really good at nightly visitation. Also, in today’s urbanized society, doors get slammed in the visitor’s face for the occupant within considers the visitor without to be an encyclopedia salesman in disguise. Even if the average working man can make it out to the evening sessions after fighting the evening rush hour and a hurried evening meal, he usually finds such slamming doors and late evening calling discouraging.

Why not encourage a home teaching ministry? We can develop a church program that vitally encourages such a

ministry with all the necessary instruction sprinkled with plenty of “how to” examples. Then the man in the pew can competently conduct an in-depth teaching-priesthood within his own home.

Doesn't it seem reasonable that such a man who teaches in his own home and sees his own growing proficiency there will then look for and subsequently find more opportunity and courage to teach on the job? Won't this same reaction occur with mothers as well? Do we encourage the teaching ministry in all its true diversity or do we think only people with a professional license can teach?

Let us encourage all our number to act as teacher-priests whether our vocation lies in the area of preaching, professional teaching, machine operation, secretarial services or the too-often neglected energetic and intellectual powerhouse called the housewife. The opportunity exists to develop a truly diversified teaching-priesthood that will have continuing impact wherever Christians live or work.

At Mountain Mission School, our teaching ministry deals with rejected, orphaned children and children from homes in crisis. Our teachers come from all over the country and they have graduated from Bible colleges and major universities. We have a specialized teaching ministry at Mountain Mission School that deals mostly with the scared and the scarred. We find the more we learn the more we can apply our knowledge. The challenges to our minds, our emotions and our physical stamina are enormous. Our teaching program is diversified itself as it covers the sciences, humanities, the fine arts, physical development, sex education, plus Sunday school and church. This keeps us busy.

The Slave Mentality

Mission Messenger (December 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“So then, my brothers, we are not to look upon ourselves as the sons of the slave woman but of the free, not sons of slavery under the Law, but sons of freedom under grace” (Galatians 4:31).

The Galatians had been set free by the Good News, free from “the authority of gods who had no real existence,” and free from “dead and sterile principles,” which had held them enslaved, the victims of superstition and terror of the unknown. But then there came those intruders who seduced them into believing that the God whom they now knew was a stern law-making, whip-cracking Deity, and under this delusion they forgot that they had been set free, adopted and made heirs as sons of the family. Immediately they began to think as slaves and act accordingly.

The apostle turned their own weapon upon them. “Now tell me, you who want to be under the Law, have you heard what the Law says?” He then told them the interesting story of Abraham who fathered two sons, one by his wife according to promise, and the other by an Egyptian slave girl. He likened these women to God’s two covenants, and pointed out that those who were under the Law must be ejected from the family, for the slaves cannot inherit with the sons. Our heading quotation in this article is the conclusion of the allegory.

The way in which we look at ourselves is going to affect our whole attitude toward God and our demeanor toward one another. There is something about the slave mentality which makes it difficult for one to react as a wholesome social personality. This was demonstrated at the time of the American Emancipation Proclamation. Although the former slaves were legally free they could not think of themselves as so, and the previous feeling of inferiority bred into and forced upon them was only augmented in the presence of their one time owners who were now no more free than themselves.

The law enslaved and made prisoners of men and thus filled them with unnatural fears and inhibitions. If God is regarded as a tyrannical slave-owner we will get the idea that the community of saints is a group of unreconciled individuals living in slave-quarters behind the big house, but if we recognize that we are sons, born of a free woman, we can sit down together at the table without latent hostility and inner trauma.

The way in which we look at our parentage will determine the way in which we regard one another. We will not browbeat and seek to destroy those who are beloved as brothers and sisters. We will not set up false standards and demand conformity, for the freedom we inherit in spite of our shortcomings will prompt us to make allowances for others. As recipients of mercy and forgiveness we can be forgiving.

For several years I have been aware of the insecurity which characterizes those who seek security in law-keeping. I know men who continually hold "revivals" to save others and who dare not testify that they know they themselves are saved. They purport to bring to others that which they are not even sure they possess. And they cannot really forgive for they are not sure they are really forgiven.

These brethren are afraid to live and die. Their bravado and braggadocio is like a frightened lad whistling in the dark.

They bank their hope of everlasting bliss on the chance that they will not be killed suddenly. They must have the last few minutes of rationality to breathe a prayer asking forgiveness for their last mistake. There must be time to utter the cliché, “And if we have done anything else contrary to thy will for which we have not requested forgiveness.” Eternal life in the Father’s home is contingent upon bookkeeping with exactitude, of getting credit on one side of the ledger to balance and offset “acts of omission and commission” on the other. One sin, one prayer, and the latter wide enough to cover the former. What a whittling down of grace this is!

The result of all this is the development of a kind of smug hypocrisy which makes one bold in his claims to others who are regarded as “brothers in error,” and outside the pale, while he is filled with inward doubt right down to the last gasp. I thank God for deliverance from this “off again, on again, gone again” philosophy. What a sense of freedom comes when grace stoops down and lifts the crushing burden off your back. I know I am saved! I know I am in Him!

It is my prayer and heart’s desire for my brethren that they be delivered from the slave mentality. I bear them record that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. Being ignorant of God’s method of justification, and going about to establish their own system of justification, they have not submitted themselves to that justification which is of God. For Christ is the climax and culmination of justification through law-keeping to every person who believes.

We are not to look upon ourselves as sons of the slave woman— law! We are sons of the free woman— grace! Too many of us have mistaken our mother and nursed the paps producing the curdled milk of trust in our own righteousness. Like the son of Abraham’s slave, we have grown to be like a wild ass in the wilderness, dwelling in the presence of our brethren while inwardly despising them. Our hand is against every man,

and every man's hand is against us. It is time to realize that we are sons of freedom, and can move out of our factional tents and into the Father's house.

The Priority Value

Mission Messenger (December 1969)

Volume 31

[Abstract]

“In Christ Jesus there is no validity in either circumcision or uncircumcision, it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses itself in love” (Galatians 5:6).

The big issue of Paul’s day was circumcision. It was the subject of more debates and the cause of more bitterness than anything else. It divided the saints in every locality into “pros” and “antis.” Even the big name preachers were involved. Paul and Barnabas engaged in such a heated dispute with some brethren from Jerusalem, that it was decided to call a central conference in an attempt to resolve the matter. Paul said the gathering was infiltrated by “some pseudo-Christians who wormed their way into our meeting to spy on the liberty we enjoy in Christ Jesus, and then attempted to tie us up with rules and regulations.”

Peter vacillated in the matter and split one congregation “out of sheer fear of what the Jews might think.” Brethren were careful to act differently when certain ones were present lest they be branded and tagged as “soft” or compromising. When Peter was trying to straddle the fence with both feet on one side, Paul wrote, “The other Jewish Christians carried out a similar piece of deception, and the force of their bad example was so great that even Barnabas was affected by it.”

Circumcision is no longer an issue. It seems a little ridiculous to us now that it ever caused such a furore. It was displaced by other problems which were fought back and forth and which have now been relegated to the pages of history where the follies and foibles of succeeding generations are recorded. Now we are confronted by new issues which have supplanted the old, and which seem as grave and important to us as did the others in days of yore. There are some things we seem never to learn.

We are always getting caught on the “either-or” hook. “Either circumcision or uncircumcision.” We say that a thing has to be either right or wrong. What we overlook is the fact that regardless of which it is, it still may be relatively unimportant, and have no effect whatsoever on our relationship to God, and should have none upon our relationship to each other. Future generations will see this and wonder at our childishness even while they fight over matters as trivial.

All truth is equally true but not all truth is equally important. So all error is equally error, but not all error is equally important. All truth is to be desired for our wellbeing, but not all of it is essential to being. That which is required for life is more essential than that which is incidental to it, or enjoyable within it. It is not true that everything in the Bible is equally valuable to know. It is not nearly so important to know that Methuselah died at the age of 969 years as to know that Jesus died for our sins. Paul wrote that he left his overcoat with Carpus but that is not so valuable to know as that “the Lord’s servant must not be a man of strife; he must be kind to all, ready and able to teach.”

There are some things which have no real validity in Christ Jesus. The essential thing is to be in Christ. A man might be circumcised, or he might not be, but whether he was or not did not affect his state in the Lord. To be in Christ is to lift us above a lot of things and place us on a wholly different plane. It

is like mountain-climbers whose porters are arguing about how to build a fire at an elevation of 8,000 feet, while the main body passes upward to establish a camp at 10,000 feet, so that the contention is no longer relevant.

It is certain that most of the things about which we have wrangled and travailed have no eternal significance. They are all transcended by our tremendous adoption into grace through the new birth. The thing which is valid is “faith which expresses itself in love.” Because of the King James translation— faith which works by love— our brethren have seized upon it to answer and offset a theological concept of salvation by faith only. This is probably a grave abuse of the statement made by Paul, but it is employed because the words “faith” and “works” appear in proximity.

The apostle was not seeking to establish a theological base, nor arguing against one which was established. He was simply showing that the big issue of the day was without any real validity in Christ Jesus, and the one thing which really counted was “faith which expresses itself in love.” If that is still true, why have we allowed issues of our day to gain such importance in our thinking? If Paul were writing directly to our situation, would he say the following?

In Christ Jesus there is no validity in either Sunday School classes, or the absence of such classes; it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses itself in love.

In Christ Jesus there is no validity in supporting Herald of Truth, or in not supporting it, it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses itself in love.

In Christ Jesus there is no validity in using instrumental accompaniment, or in not using it, it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses itself in love.

Our problem lies in our mixed-up sense of values. With

many of us “faith which expresses itself in love” counts for nothing unless brethren have the external marks which make for acceptability. Our priorities are out of adjustment. We spend a much greater amount of time studying how we may defend our views about the issues, than in the cultivation of that deep faith which rises to the surface and showers love upon all about us. After Paul’s statement with which we have been dealing, he said, “You were making splendid progress, who put you off the course you had set for the truth?” That question comes with equal force to us today.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1970)

Volume 32

Our Living Pattern

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Facing the Issues

Mission Messenger (January 1970)

Volume 32

[Abstract]

I dislike to stand on the threshold of a new year, tendering an apology to our readers. But I must ask your kind indulgence for postponing until next month the beginning of the series of articles on "The Living Pattern." I am not so inflexible that I cannot alter my editorial plans where necessity seems to require it, and I want to place upon record certain feelings and attitudes related to contemporary matters. You may feel that it is poor judgment to do so, and if you do, I will not dispute the point with you.

Since 1957, when I wrote the first article entitled, "Thoughts on Fellowship," I have been urging brethren to set up dialogue sessions across lines and to discuss the fact that we have allowed carnality and immaturity to divide us until our witness as a unity movement has been negated and destroyed. Now we are seeing attempts being made to bridge chasms and span the gulfs. We stand upon the brink of what could become a historical breakthrough in the history of the restoration movement.

Although numerous meetings are being held in our day I will confine my remarks to one particular attempt, because it will tend to be more publicized than any other. It has been obvious for sometime that gradual changes are being made in the thinking of orthodox Church of Christ men, and that some

of these brethren are becoming uncomfortable with their own attitude in an ecumenical atmosphere. When Reuel Lemmons wrote an article in *Firm Foundation*, in which he expressed the thought that the time had come for non-instrumental brethren to explore their thinking with representatives of Independent Christian Churches, James DeForest Murch wrote him asking how the matter should be implemented.

It was suggested that each select six brethren who would meet in Memphis and converse together about the divergencies, and become better acquainted. This meeting was characterized by a real spirit of fraternity and amiability. It was thereupon agreed that fifteen men from each group would meet in Saint Louis to continue joint exploration, and that the meeting remain on an invitational basis. At the Saint Louis gathering positional papers were presented and discussed, and all was done in a very brotherly and encouraging attitude.

In view of the fact that my name was publicly injected into both gatherings, and that I have no means of making my own position known except in MISSION MESSENGER, I am going to ask your gracious forbearance while I comment at length upon such a time of concern for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. Since thousands of our readers do not receive *Firm Foundation*, I am printing in full herewith an editorial by Brother Lemmons, which appeared in the issue of his journal, dated September 30, 1969.

FAITH OR OPINION

by Reuel Lemmons

For three days, September 18-20, in St. Louis, Mo., 15 preachers and elders from among churches of Christ met with a team of fifteen brethren from the Independent Christian churches, in an effort to further explore possibilities of the two

main bodies of brethren having a common heritage in the Restoration movement coming closer together. Those from among churches of Christ were Frank Pack, J. W. Roberts, Raymond Kelcy, Norvel Young, Bill Humble, Jimmy Allen, Tom Olbright, Earl West, Harold Hazelip, Jay Smith, Hulen Jackson, Hardeman Nichols, Robert Bell, Eldred Cayce and this editor.

We believe such meetings are productive of much good. Conscientious and sincere brethren who are willing to grapple with the issues and who are really concerned over any division among the Lord's people always do good when they become better acquainted and when they understand each other better. This was a blunt meeting in which issues were faced squarely, and yet one in which brotherly love and consideration for each other were evident.

The real issue between the two groups, as it has always been, is the issue of faith versus opinion. This was clearly brought out. There are several other grounds upon which there is disagreement other than instrumental music, but this issue illustrates the two divergent views concerning faith and opinion. We believe that the exclusion of instrumental music is demanded by faith; they believe it is a matter of opinion.

We tried to show, and we believe we did show, from the scriptures that such issues belong in the realm of faith. An action of faith is an action having as its motivating force the word of God. Singing is a good example. An action of opinion is an action having as its motivating force the mind of man. Inferences drawn from careful study do not qualify as opinions. Instrumental music is a good example of an action which admittedly stems from the mind of man, and which is not based upon inferences drawn from study. Therefore: faith does what God commands; opinion *ventures* anything God has not specifically prohibited.

The Bible is filled with both practices. Actions of faith are

always commended. Actions of opinion— where human judgment is interposed as an extension of the divine command have been severely condemned. We believe we can show that God, who never changes, has, in both the Old Testament and the New, placed his approval upon actions of faith and his disapproval upon extensions beyond faith into the realm of opinion. In this respect opinion becomes presumption, and presumptuous sins are more serious than is implied by simply using the word “opinion.”

Let us consider some examples of presumption beyond faith. For example, Nadab and Abihu (Num. 16) were commanded to offer incense as a sacrifice of praise. They were to burn it with fire from the altar. God did not specifically prohibit strange fire. What God commanded they could do by faith. When they ventured into opinion they were destroyed.

There were various sacrifices commanded in the Old Testament. The plain command of God concerning each sacrifice made it possible to offer those sacrifices by faith. God did not have a “thou shalt not” law eliminating every other possible sacrifice. The very commandment which specified a certain sacrifice excluded all others.

Hamburger would pervert the Lord’s supper, not because God has said, “Thou shalt not use hamburger,” but because God’s plain prescription concerning the elements of the supper circumscribes the limit to which we can go and still observe it by faith.

We cannot accompany prayer with incense by faith. We cannot accompany the gospel with added elements in teaching— by faith. We cannot accompany giving with a raffle by faith. We cannot accompany the Lord’s supper with hamburger— by faith. Why would one think we can accompany the praise service with instrumental music by faith?

We believe a valid argument can be made on the authority of God in areas of silence. And the Holy Spirit thought so, too. In Heb. 1:5 the Spirit argues that Christ is superior to angels and the single argument that he made was that God was completely silent on the superiority of angels. The silence of God established the superiority of Jesus. Again, in Heb. 7, the priesthood of Jesus is proven to be different from that of the law on the sole basis of the fact that “the law spake nothing concerning priests” from the tribe of Judah. And still again, certain brethren who troubled the church in Acts 15 in an attempt to accompany Christianity with circumcision “*to whom we gave no such commandment*” were severely rebuked. These men were going beyond the commandment, but they were not violating any “thou shalt not” law.

Repeatedly we hear both inside the church and out of it, the challenge “Where is the verse that says you can’t use it?” Is nothing a sin unless there is an explicit law against it? Those who want to gamble or sprinkle babies or practice open membership or pray to Mary can say “Where is the law against it?” Really, if we must find a specific prohibition for everything, before it can be sustained as a position of faith rather than opinion, there is actually no such thing as perversion in the absence of specific prohibition.

We walk by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith cometh by hearing the word of God. What we do in praise to God must be done by faith. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We can easily sing by faith, but we seriously question whether we can play by it.

Such meetings as the St. Louis meeting should be held all over the country. The two groups have too much in common not to try hard to solve their few differences. There was not, and should not be, any attempt at compromise of truth on either side. It is only through the sincere study of the word that we can ever hope to come to a unity of faith. And a unity of faith is what

we must come to if we please the Lord. It behooves all of us on both sides of the issue to face up to the necessity of locating the issue in either faith or opinion. Just simply to express the opinion that it is in the realm opinion gets us nowhere. We are attempting to set forth in this article our reasons— from the Bible— for placing this issue in the realm of faith. If it is in the realm of opinion these reasons must be shown false and other reasons— from the Bible— set forth to put the issue in the realm of opinion. This simply must be done before we can come to a unity of faith. We did not get in our present condition overnight, nor will we get out of it overnight. We have little sympathy for unity efforts that seek to sweep under the rug real differences and simply refuse to face up to them. Such efforts are doomed before they start. But when brethren who love the Lord, and who are sincere in their love for each other, sit down together to really grapple with the issues that divide us, as did these men in St. Louis, then there is hope.

REMARKS ON THE EDITORIAL

Although the Hilton Inn, where the meetings were held in Saint Louis, is less than a five minute drive from my home, I was not in attendance at the discussions. The brethren who use instruments could not invite me; those who do not would not invite me. I no longer belong to any kind of a party founded upon either the “pro” or “con” of the instrumental question. I represent no sect or segment in the religious realm, and since the problem of the fellowship was settled for me at Calvary, nineteen centuries ago, nothing that is said about it now will settle anything for me in the twentieth century.

I personally know most of the brethren from “the two main bodies” and I respect and regard them all as God’s children and my brothers. I have no concern at all for “the two main bodies of brethren having a common heritage,” or for any of the lesser bodies. So far as I am concerned there is only one

body, even as there is only one Spirit and one hope. There never was but one body of brethren in Christ, and there will never be another. All who were present at Hilton Inn are in that one body which God created. If they are in anything else it is by their own creation, and it is sectarian. None of them were inducted into the one body because they endorsed instrumental music; none of them were adopted by the Father because they opposed it. I receive them all as brothers exactly as he received them all as children.

This does not mean that I oppose brethren from various parties coming together to discuss their religious hangups. Contrary to that, I rejoice exceedingly, and have pleaded for this very thing. I commend our brothers, Lemmons and Murch, for their concern and willingness to do something to remedy our shameful schismatic state. I am especially grateful to Brother Lemmons for demonstrating how the Spirit can use and transform us in this age. When I first began to go among the very same men who were at the Hilton Inn, our good brother wrote me up for going among what he then called “rank digressives.” He predicted that if I had my way “the digressive element” would capture us all.

I am thrilled that these men are now “conscientious and sincere men who are willing to grapple with the issues.” Really these brethren have not changed on the issues, or in their attitude toward them. Brother Lemmons has changed, and those who love him as I do are overjoyed at that fact. Perhaps my brother will deny that his attitude has changed. He may not even know that it has. The Holy Spirit can change us from one degree of glory to another and we might not recognize it, or give him any credit for it. But let us not quibble over such things. It is enough that we all be grateful that those who were once “rank digressives” are now “brethren in the Lord who are sincere in their love for each other.” Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Let me not seem critical in review of some things, for if I engage in “blunt *writing* in which issues are faced squarely,” I want brotherly love and consideration to be as evident in this little journal as it was in the conference room. The editorial will do a great disservice if it leaves the impression that “the real issue between the two groups, as it has always been, is the issue of faith versus opinion.” That is not the case at all! The brethren who use instrumental music make a clear distinction between faith and opinion. Many of those who were present teach in Christian colleges. I have visited their schools and spoken in chapel to the student body. Without exception all believe that “in matters of faith there should be unity, while in matters of opinion there should be liberty.”

The Real Issue

The real issue is not faith versus opinion. The real issue concerns who shall be the infallible interpreter of scripture for other men, and who shall determine what is a matter of opinion for the consciences of other “conscientious and sincere brethren.” This is the unenviable position which Brother Lemmons is forced to occupy by reason of the philosophy of Church of Christism. He must rule that what he has that other men oppose is a matter of opinion, but he must also rule that what other men have which he opposes is a matter of faith. He must be the official arbiter for the consciences of others.

Take the problem of Bible classes, for example. A lot of wonderful brethren think the Sunday School is “interposed as an extension of the divine command.” Brother Lemmons roundly rebukes them for claiming it is a matter of faith. He calls them hobbyists. But when brethren who have the instrument contend that to them it is a matter of opinion, Brother Lemmons rebukes them also, and says it is in the realm of faith. This is the real issue and it was not clearly brought out in Saint Louis, nor will it be brought out in any future meeting

of the brethren unless they forget and invite me to attend. It will be clearly brought out then!

Our good brother believes that he showed all in attendance that the issue related to instrumental music belongs in the realm of faith. Apparently his arguments sounded more convincing to his ears than to others, because they still all use the instrument and consider it is a matter of opinion. Brother Lemmons says, “An action of faith is an action having as its motivating force the word of God . . . an action of opinion is an action having as its motivating force the mind of man.” It really isn’t that simple. All that God says is addressed to the mind of man. There never has been a disclosure of revelation that was not subject to reason and interpretation.

There are three spheres in which the mind operates—knowledge, faith and opinion. And when an eager student of God’s word investigates all that God has said, and forms an opinion based upon his over-all concept of God’s will, concerning a matter which is not clear to him, it is God’s word which motivates to that conclusion as a working hypothesis for himself, although not so for another. It isn’t all quite as “black” and “white” as a lot of people think it is.

Our good brother seeks to escape from an anticipated noose by postulating that “inferences drawn from careful study, do not qualify as opinions.” It is apparent that he thinks that inferences drawn from casual study do qualify as opinions. Now, who is to determine of what *careful study* consists? Is it the number of commentaries you read, or the number of hours you spend upon a subject? I know some “conscientious and sincere brethren” who have read all of the commentaries and studied for years and they still think that instrumental music is in the realm of opinion. Is careful study that which leads you to agree with Brother Lemmons in his views on a topic?

Are inferences identical with knowledge? Are they

identical with faith? If they are either, why call them inferences? If they are not, are they left in the realm of opinion? Does not one *opine* that a thing is correct, based upon a consideration of factors involved, although there is no clear statement of fact? Is this not inference? Since our brethren universally hold that, “In matters of faith unity; in matters of opinion liberty; in all things charity,” where does that leave matters of inference, or deduction? In the realm of charity? If so, let’s start practicing love in spite of our inferences.

Our brother exhibits a failing common to men accustomed to laying down laws for others who do not engage in “careful study.” He defines a thing arbitrarily, and then attacks his definition as if he were dealing with the thing itself. He defines opinion as “human judgment interposed as an extension of the divine command.” He says that such has been severely condemned. Yet, in another editorial (May 4, 1965) he wrote, “There is plenty of room for diverse opinions in the church. The fact that we are Christians does not rule that out. Diverse opinions are often good. And in opinions there should be liberty.”

If “an action of opinion is an action having as its motivating force the mind of man,” and if “actions of opinion where human judgment is interposed as an extension of the divine command have been severely condemned,” then how can there be liberty of opinion? I think that, in the final analysis, our brother would be forced to the position that the only opinions for which there is liberty are his own. No one else is entitled to an opinion, for to exercise an opinion would be to “make extensions beyond faith into the realm of opinion.” Let us trust that he will not evade this by saying one is at liberty to hold an opinion if he never expresses it or acts upon it. That would condemn Brother Lemmons for having Bible classes and individual cups, both of which he says are in the realm of opinion.

Nadab and Abihu

Our brother equates opinion, as he defines it, with presumption, and adds that “presumptuous sins are more serious than is implied by simply using the word ‘opinion.’” Surely he realizes that every word translated “presumptuous” or “presumptuously” in the word of God has inherent in it a sense of pride, arrogance, or rebellion. Does he imply that our brethren who sincerely think that instrumental accompaniment in conjunction with their praise service is justifiable, are acting in insolent defiance of the will of heaven? I know some very humble saints who assemble where an organ is played. I also know some very arrogant ones who do not. I doubt that an opinion about instrumental music constitutes a presumptuous sin, even though brethren may be mistaken about it. Brother Lemmons needs to know the difference between rebellion and a mistaken view.

It is amazing how much a lot of sermon outlines are indebted to Nadab and Abihu. But honestly now, do they really fit into this situation? Brother Lemmons got them mixed up with Korah, Dathan and Abiram. He told the story of Nadab and Abihu, and cited Numbers 16, which relates to the other case. This was an honest slip but it shows what happens to editors. I know, because it happens to me a lot more often than it does to Brother Lemmons. In any event, Nadab and Abihu offered *unholy fire* before the Lord, under a legalistic system where nothing common or ceremonially unclean was accepted.

Is it possible they were drunk and couldn't tell the difference between holy and unholy fire? In direct connection with their death, the Lord said to Aaron, “Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which

the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.”

These priests, whether drunk or sober, did not distinguish between that which was holy and that which was unholy, and thus did not teach by example. They died for their failure. They were in rebellion against God. But we are no longer under a legalistic system. We are under grace. Does our brother think that God is going to burn all of his children who love him and respect him, and seek to serve him acceptably and with godly fear, even though they may be mistaken about some element of their praise? Will fire come out and destroy them all? May they not believe that God has sanctified to his use their praise, and that it is no longer common or unclean?

Even under the law Aaron and the others continued to serve with Nadab and Abihu until the Lord smote them. They did not anticipate what God would do and start beating his other servants. On what grounds do our brethren today play God with their brethren and start cutting them off in advance of the judgment of God?

For years I have been waiting for some of my brethren to get beyond verse eleven in Leviticus 10, and tell about Eleazar and Ithamar, the brothers of Nadab and Abihu, but they never do. Nadab and Abihu suit their needs. But Eleazar and Ithamar also made a great mistake and disobeyed a direct command on the same day their brothers were killed. It is recorded in the same chapter. And Moses became very angry. These young men were to take the goat of the sin offering into the sanctuary and eat it there. It was specifically appointed to them as a thing most holy, so they could bear the iniquity of the congregation and make an atonement for all the people before the Lord. It was a positive command.

But upon this day they did not even bring the blood into the inner part of the sanctuary, and they did not eat the flesh of the sin offering as they had been commanded. Moses instituted a

search for the goat and learned that it had been burned contrary to the law. He was highly incensed and jumped all over them. But Aaron pleaded that the things which had befallen the family that day had caused so much sorrow of heart that they were not in the proper frame of mind to eat the holy things, and did not feel that God would accept their services if they did obey the command.

“And when Moses heard that, he was content.” Is this a case of situation ethics? Did human values transcend specific precepts? Did mercy rejoice over judgment? Why do we never hear about Eleazar and Ithamar and the forgiveness granted to them in spite of their violation of a command? I must mention one more thing. Our brethren bear down heavily upon the statement that Nadab and Abihu “offered unholy fire before the Lord, *which he commanded them not.*” But George Bush, one time Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York City University writes, “This, by a figure of speech called *meiosis*, is probably equivalent to saying, ‘which the Lord had pointedly forbidden.’” If *careful study* should sustain Professor Bush it will certainly shoot a big hole in some well-worn sermon outlines.

Hamburger and Sacrifices

It is true that God commanded certain sacrifices and established a ritual under the Mosaic economy. Those who arrogantly rebelled against it were severely punished. But it is also true that not every one who failed to keep the due order was killed, because there is a difference in being rebellious against God’s requirements and being mistaken about them. Nothing is clearer, even under the old covenant, than that God showed mercy upon his anointed. Those who are in Christ are his anointed in our day.

In the days of Hezekiah a great many of the people ate the passover, “otherwise than it was written.” The record says, “But

Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people” (2 Chronicles 30:18, 19). Since the things written aforetime were written for our learning, perhaps this was written to show what leaders of the people, like Brother Lemmons, ought to do when their brethren prepare their hearts to seek God, but worship “otherwise than it is written.”

Why does our brother not follow the example of this godly king? Does he think that God is less likely to hearken to such prayers under the economy of grace? It is true that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but it may be worse to fall into the hands of dying brethren who specialize only in the people God slew without ever breathing a word about those whom he spared. If the situation was as bad as our brethren paint it under the old covenant how did anyone ever muddle through?

Forgive me for saying so, but I think the hamburger in the Lord’s Supper bit has run its course. Certainly it would “pervert the Lord’s Supper.” The two elements in the Lord’s Supper are specific symbols of the body and blood of the Lord. To add a third ingredient would serve to confuse the purpose and design of the Supper. But, right, wrong, or neutral, playing an instrument does not pervert the purpose and design of the singing, which is to praise God. If it did so, it would have been as true under the old covenant dispensation as under the new. In mature discussion of our present problem, grown-up brethren might well leave the childish “pork and beans” and “hamburger” argument at home. It in no sense parallels the situation and is introduced to bolster a presupposition.

Areas of Silence

A good many brethren feel that after the Memphis meeting the brethren who oppose instrumental music went home to “shore up” their argument on “the authority of God in areas of silence.” At Saint Louis, Brother Lemmons gave the results of the research. It was alleged that in Hebrews 1:5, “the Spirit argues that Christ is superior to angels and the single argument that he made was that God was completely silent on the superiority of angels.” Note that “single argument.”

This statement is as full of fallacies as a sieve is of holes. In the first place, on the basis of logic, the superiority of one person cannot be established simply by silence about the superiority of other persons. The very best you can argue from this is *equality*. If God was silent about the superiority of the Son, and silent about the superiority of the angels, one would have to depend upon sheer conjecture to determine the superiority of one over the other.

But the argument of the Spirit is that God bestowed upon *the Logos* a title which is indicative of rank, and the very fact of its bestowal indicated superiority over all who did not receive the title. The Holy Spirit argues from a positive angle while Brother Lemmons argues from a purely negative posture. If the army authorities designate a man “Commanding General,” it is not the fact that they do not say anything about the other soldiers which proves his superiority, but the conferring of the title.

It seems incredible that a student of Hebrews 1 would state that the Holy Spirit used “a single argument” to show the superiority of Christ. Actually, he used seven arguments. He affirmed the authority of Jesus on the following grounds: (1) Reception of a more excellent name, verse 4; (2) Superior relationship, verse 5; (3) Reverence demanded, verse 6; (4) Nature, verse 7; (5) Coronation, verse 8; (6) Authority granted, verse 13; (7) Type of ministry, verse 14.

Even more revealing, in the light of the present analysis, is the fact that the Spirit specifically quotes from Psalm 45:6, 7, where the throne and sceptre are accorded to the Lord, and where it is affirmed that because of his attitude toward righteousness and wickedness, God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, or companions. In the contextual light many scholars of note with whom I am familiar hold that the “fellows” are the angels. If this be true, the Spirit is arguing from the old covenant scripture that God specifically decreed the superiority of Jesus over angels and even recorded it in Psalm 45:7. That certainly is not an argument based on silence of the scriptures. It is just not true that “the silence of God established the authority of Jesus.”

Our good brother is just as mistaken about Hebrews 7, where he goes to show that “the priesthood of Jesus is proven to be different from that of the law on the sole basis of the fact that the law spake nothing concerning priests from the tribe of Judah.” That was not the sole basis of proof at all. The priesthood of the Son, which was after the order of Melchizedek, was different than that of the law because, while the head of the legal priestly tribe was still in the loins of an ancestor, that progenitor was already paying tithes to Melchizedek (verse 7).

It differed in that the priesthood under the law had “a legal requirement concerning bodily descent,” while the Son was made a priest “by the power of an indestructible life” (verse 16). It differed in that priests under the law were not inducted into office by an oath, while the Son was (verse 21). It differed because priests under the law were prevented by death from continuing in office while the Son has a permanent priesthood. The argument that the law said nothing about the tribe of Judah in conjunction with priesthood is not an argument for *the authority* of silence, but simply for the confirmation of silence. It was only one in a sequence of arguments.

But Brother Lemmons has now switched sides. In the case

of instrumental music he argues that he cannot accept brethren who use it because the scriptures are silent on it, but in the case of the priesthood he argues that Jesus was to be accepted as a priest in spite of the silence of the scriptures. I have no doubt that the Jews put up the very same argument to reject Jesus as Brother Lemmons does to reject his brethren.

I confess that I am a wee bit leery of “the law of exclusion” and even more so of its application and interpretation by finite brethren. A lot of good humble people think that when someone talks learnedly about the law of this or that, it is a definitive rule spelled out in so many words, and if you know where to look in the statute-book, you can run your index finger down the page, and there it is in black and white. They do not realize that these “laws” are mostly in the minds of preachers, filed away with a clutter of generics and specifics, ready to be aimed at any unwary soul who commits the frightful error of differing with them on any point of deduction.

Most of the brethren are of the opinion that “we speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where it is silent,” so when they hear one of us speaking, they automatically think it is the Bible speaking. But such terms as “the law of exclusion” are not in the Bible, and if we are going to call Bible things by Bible names, we will have to lift that one out of the slot. In other words, the law of exclusion excludes “the law of exclusion.”

This does not generally bother brethren who contrive laws with loopholes to govern conditions, and then go off on a talmudical tangent and compile a lot of precedents which are a part of our tradition. Actually, of course, we do not have traditions. Only the sects have traditions, in our case it is “just the way we have always done it.” It is sanctified by our practice and that keeps it from falling or being tossed into the barrel where traditions are stored, to be dragged out when needed, and when scripture is lacking.

The only thing that can really be *proved* about instrumental music from the silence of the scriptures on the subject, is that the scriptures are silent on the subject. You can speculate on the reason for that silence and can work out elaborate and complex arguments for your conjecture, but this does not amount to proof in the absence of testimony. For example, you may conclude, on the basis of a presupposition about authority, that God intended by his omission to show positive aversion to and condemnation of the use of instruments in conjunction with praise publicly rendered, but you are always faced with the possibility that God may not have been sufficiently concerned about the matter one way or another, to mention it. It is not always certain that heaven gets as worked up about some things as do mortals on earth.

Too, we dare never forget that what we have in the new covenant writings grew out of contemporary problems in the day when they were written. They are heaven's response to life events, and there may have been historical and cultural problems in the world of Ephesus and Colossae which made any statement about instrumental music irrelevant and immaterial. A lot of good brethren think this was the actual case. The point is that our final discovery of God's revealed purpose may not yet have been made. The last word on our understanding of this facet may not yet have been written. None of us know all there is to know about the matter, and that is probably why we differ.

Beyond the Commandment

Our brother next refers to the conference regarding circumcision which was held in Jerusalem. Certain disciples from Jerusalem had gone down to Antioch and taught the Gentile brethren that unless they were circumcised according to the custom of Moses they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas challenged them and it was arranged for a deputation to visit the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and ascertain their feelings

about the matter. It resolved in a decision of the apostles, elders and the entire congregation to send chosen men back with Paul and Barnabas to personally confirm a letter which was addressed to the Gentile saints in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

According to the King James Version, the letter began, “Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment” (Acts 15:24). Our brother fastens upon this as one proof of his thesis on “the authority of God in areas of silence.” But the word for *commandment* is one which means “to set forth distinctly,” and then, “to enjoin, order or instruct.”

In this instance it simply means that those who went down to Antioch and stirred up the furor did so without a commission from the brethren in Jerusalem. If Brother Lemmons is not careful he will be establishing the authority of the church and we will then be in trouble with Rome. The New English Bible rendering is, “We have heard that some of our number, without any instructions from us, have disturbed you with their talk.” The Authentic New Testament reads, “Since it has come to our attention that some of our number, to whom we gave no such *instructions*, have been confusing you with their statements.”

Since our brother introduced the Jerusalem conference, let me ask why the Saint Louis conference did not follow the pattern set at Jerusalem? That conference ended in a compromise and thus avoided forming a “circumcision faction” and an “uncircumcision faction.” Unity was maintained in spite of some deep problems. It was agreed that Paul and Barnabas would go among the Gentiles and not advocate circumcision for them, while James, Peter and John would go to the Jews and insist upon their circumcising their children and keeping the customs of Moses (Acts 21:21). On this basis the right hand of fellowship was given.

Why did the brethren at Hilton Inn not give each other the right hand of fellowship, and agree to allow each congregation of saints to be free under God to approach him as they understood the divine requirement? Who gave the non-instrument brethren a “commandment” to disturb other communities of the saints, and unsettle their minds by teaching the brethren, “Unless you rid yourselves of your instruments according to the custom of Texas, you cannot be saved.” I make no more of an appeal for instrumental music than I would for circumcision. I do not advocate either one. I do not defend either one. But instrumental music is no more of a problem in our day than circumcision was in the primitive *ekklesia* of God. If our brethren want to go back to Jerusalem, why not adjust our problems as did the apostles and elders of that city?

If the brethren in apostolic times could live in fellowship with some congregations insisting upon circumcision for their constituency, and others taking an opposing stance, surely we can, for the sake of unity in the blood-bought body of the redeemed ones, live without fragmenting over such things as a congregational decision to accompany their singing with the strains of an organ.

Motives for Meeting

There is some indication that brethren are coming together to spar for a factional victory. They are not really seeking truth because they think they already have it. It is possible that continued association will cause them in the distant future to forsake their defensive posture which makes them regard one another as rivals and brotherly enemies. If they do they can then start listening honestly to one another. At present they are bandying around the same old slogans and arguments with which they have bombarded each other ineffectively for years.

It would be regrettable indeed if the non-instrument

brethren approach the dialogue with a pontifical attitude as if they were the infallible interpreters of God's will and all the other brethren can do is to capitulate and bow to the ultimate and inevitable. It would be regrettable for the instrumental brethren to do this also, but I understand that they are not insisting that we see the matter as they do to be in the fellowship of the reconciled. They are not coming to the meetings to bind their practice upon others.

There is something about the "easy answer" attitude which has been bred in us by Church of Christism, which causes a lot of the brethren to feel that they are a superior breed and can look down from the brow of Olympus upon lesser mortals. This kind of tragic arrogance causes them sometimes to get up and go through childish "sermon outlines" in an attempt to vanquish others who may have a doctoral degree in Biblical study. While they earn and deserve the compassion of real scholars they occasionally congratulate themselves that they have won a victory simply because others choose to ignore them. Even a horsefly may think it has conquered a horse if the tolerant animal does not swat the pest in the first five minutes with a well-aimed switch of its tail.

Brother Lemmons agrees that the brethren have much in common and few differences. He is right in pleading for a sincere study of the word of God. All of us need that, and sincere study will lead us to see that God never did authorize division as a means of settling differences among brethren. It is condemned every time it is mentioned by the Spirit. But our brother is confused if he thinks that unity of the faith demands absolute agreement upon music, methods or the millennium, or on cups, classes or colleges. Thousands of good brethren are in the faith and are one in Christ Jesus, who disagree upon these and other matters. They will never agree upon all of them while this world stands!

Did not most of these brethren hold their present views

when they embraced the faith at baptism? Did not the Father accept them into the faith as his children while they were holding such views? If God could welcome them into the family circle with their varied and mistaken views, on what ground can Brother Lemmons later reject them for the same views? Is anything more required of me to accept a man as my brother than is required of the Father to accept him as a child?

I deny that we have to face up to the necessity of locating all of our issues in either faith or opinion before we can be one. One man's faith is another man's opinion, by our definition. We can stop categorizing and pigeon-holing these things and make them merely matters of understanding and spiritual intellectual development. This will provide for brethren making any changes necessary with increasing knowledge. I refuse to think that we need to sort every issue into its proper little box before we can be one in Christ Jesus and start treating each other as brethren.

It is true if all come to agree that instrumental music is in either the realm of faith or opinion we will all be one on that issue. All of us agree we should unite on matters of faith. All of us agree we should not divide over opinions. At the present time Brother Lemmons holds the opinion that instrumental music is a matter of faith, while Brother Murch holds the opinion that it is a matter of opinion. They are obligated not to divide over their opinions, so they must work together until honest brethren finally decide whether it is a matter of faith or a matter of opinion.

Why does not the "much in common" have as great a power to hold us together as the "few differences" have to drive us apart? Are we guilty of the factional spirit so that a few differences mean more to our divisive hearts than the many mutual concerns? Are we victims of the Satanic will to divide? Why can we not at least work together up to the point of difference? Must we splinter the trunk of the tree because the topmost branches point in different directions?

Our brother is right in pointing out that we will not get out of our condition overnight. We will never get out of it unless we allow the Holy Spirit to crush the party spirit in our hearts. Our schism will be healed in many places. It will require a little more integrity and a little less fear of men, and we can labor together in many areas. At least one of the brethren invited by Brother Lemmons has already been speaking to Christian Church gatherings and recognizing those present as his brothers. And he sings while they are playing the instruments. I know because I was there.

If this brother had gotten up in Saint Louis and told the brethren that he was through making a silly test of fellowship out of the matter and would have advised them to follow suit, it would have jerked the magic carpet out from under the whole group. But it is probably best to let the brethren go through with their speeches, dreary as the experience may be, so they will be able to save face “down home.” We have played politics so long now in the Church of Christ that we would not want to quit abruptly and kill it with withdrawal symptoms. In any event, I know a whole lot of brethren in the Independent Churches who do not practice what they preach, and a whole lot of them in the Church of Christ who do not preach what they practice!

There is a difference between throwing a mantle of love over our brethren and sweeping our differences under the rug. Brother Lemmons wants to reject the brethren first and then discuss how we can get them back together. I propose to receive the brethren first and then seek to resolve our problems. Our fathers sinned when they divided over instrumental music, and I shall not be guilty of perpetuating the sins of the fathers. My brethren are more important to me than our issues. Jesus did not die for a particular position on instrumental music. He died for men! I do not propose to “destroy a brother for whom Christ died” by my views on any of our issues. Man was not made for music, but music was made for man!

About the Future

Brother Lemmons recommends more such invitational, semi-secret, closed-door sessions be held all over the country. While there are many undesirable features about such gatherings it is probable that it is about all that can be done by the participants in our present party-ridden, fear-driven state. Some of us have long since thrown off the yoke of factional bondage and moved on to more open encounters where no one is debarred and all are free men in Christ Jesus.

This prompts me to say that while I am glad the brethren are conversing together as they did at Saint Louis, it is possible that they are twenty years too late to have any real bearing on the restoration movement. The new generation, the restless ones, are no longer hooked on the issues discussed at Hilton Inn. They do not suffer from the hangups and neuroses which wreaked havoc on the restoration movement of the nineteenth century. The “real issues” do not concern whether a child of God can play a piano in a priestly structure on Sunday, or use Sunday School quarterlies in teaching a class.

The “real issues” which throb and pulsate through the incisive minds of the “jet set” in all of our camps have to do with denial of common human dignity to minority groups in our midst; the morality of war in the nuclear age when civilians are shot far behind the lines, maimed, blinded, and their intestines blasted out; the hypocrisy which builds huge temples made with hands in which to worship God, while people suffer from hunger and malnutrition a few blocks away; the blatant pretense of loving our Father while hating and despising his children.

Meetings like the one in Saint Louis will act as a purgative for the hostility which men nourished up inside by their years of partisan attack and debate, but whatever decision is reached will have a hollow ring. It will not be nearly so important as the principals would like to make it appear. It is as if Rip Van

Winkle had aroused from twenty years of slumber to call a conference to discuss the implications of the British Stamp Act, or as if a few Roman Catholics and Lutherans met at a Holiday Inn to read papers dealing with the morality of eating meat on Friday.

History did not stop and wait for our brethren who “fell out by the way.” And history will not wait for them to catch up, even though they are now riding together in the same chariot, arguing and reading papers to one another as they come. We are in the Space Age and we face problems of such magnitude that they make our little internecine squabbles of the past appear like a dispute over which brand of paper cups to use in the meeting of the local Parent-Teacher Association.

If you have read this far, you are to be commended for your patience, but I crave a little more of your generosity while I again enunciate my personal position. I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Whether my brethren use instruments of music or not, whether they are pre-millennial or post-millennial, they are my brothers. I will work with them, share with them and help them as they will allow. I will love them regardless of how they treat me. I will not return evil for evil if I know it.

All of those who gathered in Saint Louis are my brethren. Nothing they conclude about their issues will affect my regard for them. My faith will not be decided at the Hilton Inn. It was decided long ago by him for whom there was no room in the inn. “My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” Wherever my Father has a child, I have a brother. It is just that simple!

The Supreme Need

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

“Oh, my dear children, I feel the pangs of childbirth all over again till Christ be formed within you” (Galatians 4:19).

The letter which Paul addressed to the Galatians differed a great deal from those addressed to any other community of saints. Here he was dealing with an impulsive and impetuous people, descendants of the headstrong and volatile Gauls from whom the country took its name.

J. B. Phillips transliterates and has him referring to “you dear idiots of Galatia” (3:1).

It seems quite possible that the apostle proclaimed the message to them rather accidentally to start with. He had not intended to stop in their territory but was waylaid by sickness. “You know how handicapped I was by illness when I first preached the gospel to you.” But the inhabitants received him with uninhibited hospitality. “You didn’t shrink from me or let yourselves be revolted at the disease which was such a trial for you. No, you welcomed me as though I were an angel of God, or even as though I were Christ Jesus himself.”

The message had its effect. They came “to know God, or rather are known by him.” They received the Spirit “by believing the message of the gospel.” But something went wrong.

The apostle wrote, “there are obviously men who are upsetting your faith with a travesty of the gospel of Christ.” The gospel sets up faith in hearers, a false message upsets faith in them. The Galatians began “reverting to outward observances.” They began to go back “to dead and sterile principles and consent to be under their power all over again.” Paul said, “Your religion is beginning to be a matter of observing certain days or months or seasons or years.”

Sometimes I think that some of us miss the very essence of the Galatian letter. It stands as a constant reminder that men may be formed in Christ without Christ ever being formed in them. The apostle had travailed in their initial hearing of his message and had been rewarded by seeing them delivered into the sonship of the family of God. “For now that you have faith in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God. All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on the family likeness of Christ.” But it was now necessary that he feel the pangs of childbirth all over again “till Christ be formed in you.”

What thwarted the growth of Christ within? The answer is plain. “Surely you can’t be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances” (Gal. 3:3). Christ begins to be formed in us by the Spirit, and when we begin to trust in legalistic performances as the basis of our justification, we stifle the Spirit and thwart the further development of the transformed life.

The image of Christ can only grow in an atmosphere of freedom, and this freedom is a product of grace. “If you try to be justified by the Law you automatically cut yourself off from the power of Christ, you put yourself outside the range of his grace.” When we cease to trust in grace we create a short circuit. We throw the breaker switch, and we are automatically cut off from the transforming power.

The recommendation of Paul is to, “plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery.” All of us have seen men who heard the gospel, were baptized and came into the community of believers, but whose lives “were bound in shallows and in miseries.” Arrogant, bigoted, and self-righteous, they trusted in their own goodness but made life intolerable for those around them.

Such persons are often meticulous about outward observances and may truthfully boast they have not missed a midweek meeting in years. Sometimes they may have a head full of scripture but a heart empty of Christ. They brag about how they have put sectarians to rout without realizing that their very bragging is indicative of a raw sectarian spirit.

It is only through complete surrender and utter abandonment of self to the Spirit that one can free himself from the flesh, that state of alienation from God where law reigns and one is under its dominion. Paul wrote, “For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not free to do what you want to do. But if you follow the leading of the Spirit, you stand clear of the Law.” Do you accept that last sentence? Read it again slowly, emphasizing every word and see if you really acknowledge it without reservation.

Nothing is more important to our inner peace and serenity than having Christ formed in us. It is this which will give us a sense of community, for as Suzanne de Dietrich has said, “Real community is not a matter of feelings. It grows out of a common call and a common goal.” It is this also which will make us leaven in a world which needs reconciliation more than any other thing in this universe.

According to the Pattern

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

I never met the man of whom I write but he was a graduate of one of the Christian colleges before the turn of the century. He was a diligent student of the Bible and a devoted disciple of the Master. It was his desire to follow in the path of righteousness and to do all things pleasing unto God. As he read the sacred pages he became aware of the fact that the primitive saints constituted “a church of the upper room.” Jesus ordained the Lord’s Supper in “a large upper room furnished and prepared.” After the ascension of Jesus the apostles and others abode in an upper room. In Troas the saints were gathered together “in the upper chamber.” The brother to whom I refer constructed a two story building and during his lifetime the congregation met to break bread upstairs. This was deemed essential in order to “do all things according to the pattern.”

I personally knew the sister to whom I now refer. She was a humble saint but possessed of strong convictions. She was a member of the congregation I attended as a mere lad. It was our custom to do our baptizing in a clear pool of a small stream that flowed through a pasture owned by one of the elders. It was a lovely spot shaded by the overhanging boughs of a large tree, although it was inconvenient in the winter when icy winds swept across the fields and chilled the observers. But when the brethren decided to construct a baptistery under the pulpit there were objections raised at once. The aged sister was more

adamant than any of the others. I can recall her saying, “There’s just as much scripture for an organ on top of the pulpit as for one of them things under it. The day they put it in they can put me out. There’s no pattern for it. The Lord was baptized in a river and I don’t want to see anyone baptized in a box.”

A number of years ago my father went to speak for a congregation on the Lord’s Day. By enquiring in advance he learned that he would speak following the Lord’s Supper. Imagine his surprise when the congregation stood following the Supper, and while singing a hymn, all marched out of the building. Thinking he had misunderstood the arrangement, Father got his hat and book and started out, only to meet them all coming back in. They informed him that they followed the divine pattern for the Book teaches that “when they had sung a hymn, they went out.” Father did not have the nerve to tell them that the record said, “they went out *into the mount of Olives*.”

In 1836, Francis Whitefield Emmons, a respected contemporary of Alexander Campbell, took the position that Acts 2:42 contained a divinely ordained order of worship and that to be scriptural a congregation must observe the sequence therein set forth for its “items of worship.” Both Campbell and Robert Richardson took issue with Emmons, denying that “this order should be considered as of divine order.” Sixty years later the controversy was revived by publication of a tract on December 1, 1897, under the heading, “The Worship.” So heated did the discussion become that one participant wrote, “That there has been haste on both sides of this unholy war is not a question. This is to be regretted and repented of. Unfair methods have been employed. Men, regardless of character have been justified; and men, without regard to character, convictions or conscience, have been condemned.” He ended with a challenge to debate.

A short time later another furore was created when a well known brother reached the conclusion it was wrong to eat the

Lord's Supper "at dinner time." He presented the case for partaking of the loaf and fruit of the vine after dark, and continued, "History shows it was kept at night in the first centuries and never in daylight." He said, "I think you will conclude with me that the evidence for the Supper at night is as clear as for the first day of the week. Those who contend for a restoration of New Testament Christianity will not ignore the argument for long without drifting to the common ground of indifference to the whole matter. It comes with poor grace to contend for loyalty to one example, and ignore the other. But Paul says, 'Ye have us for an ensample.' Phil. 3:17."

Recently I have had letters from two sisters in Texas who tell me that they are worshiping with those who had to leave "the daylight worshipers" in order to follow the apostolic pattern. They have pleaded with me to direct my energies toward fighting the spiritual decadence evidenced by partaking of the Lord's Supper in the daytime. I am asked to insist that everyone "come out from among them and be separate."

On a trip to the east I learned of two small groups of brethren in the mountain regions who have declared a state of non-fellowship with the congregations around them that do not practice "washing of feet" as a proof of loyalty to the commands of Jesus. It is their contention that nothing is plainer than the statement of the Lord, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

When brethren began to become conscious of microbes and germs and the emphasis upon hygiene caused laws to be passed to abolish the common drinking cup at schools and on trains, there arose a tendency to adopt an "individual communion service." This launched a struggle which has not ceased to our day. Many places which had always used two or three glasses took up the cudgel against individual cups. As usual, both sides quoted those who had previously been recognized as heroes of the faith and claimed them as favorable

to their positions. Debates have been held in many places with a constant emphasis on the divergent views, one side contending that we must have one container “according to the pattern,” with the other just as vociferously affirming that the cup of which Jesus spoke is “the fruit of the vine.”

In an endeavor to be even more literal there are two congregations of our acquaintance which will not use a glass or goblet at all but insist upon using *a cup*. In the community about them they are designated as the “One Cup With a Handle Church of Christ.” They seem to appreciate rather than resent this as it serves as a means of distinction from those whom they regard as “liberals” or “glass digressives.” It is not at all uncommon for adherents of the several groups to call each other “one-cuppers” or “cups churches.” It is a strange, and almost ludicrous commentary on our condition to read in some reports of “cups preachers.”

In several areas small groups have reached the conclusion that “the pattern” calls for fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper. They have severed themselves from what they term “the grape juice churches” and claim no “fellowship” with them. Others have divided over a method of breaking the bread, with certain ones insisting that the one who presides at the table must first break a bit from the loaf and eat, then pass it to the other communicants and allow each to break off a portion in turn.

A special field of literature including magazine articles, tracts, booklets, and printed debates, has grown up around what is called “the Sunday School question.” The right to teach in classes has been challenged and discussed with intensity, and even with resultant partisan bitterness in many places. The Sunday school has been labeled, “a missionary society for the children which differs no whit from the organized missionary organizations for the grown ups.” Those who have classes have been dared to find a precedent for their practice in “the pattern.”

In recent years a question has been raised about the scripturality of congregations contributing their funds to a congregational treasury remote from them for the purpose of propagandizing by national television and radio programs. The problem of institutionalism has reared its head again as it often has through the years, but this time in relation to charitable organizations. The non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood has been fractured into three fragments— called “liberals,” “antis,” and “middle-of-the-roaders.” In these areas the feeling has been so deep that divisions have occurred and those who met in the same building a few years ago have set up rival encampments from which to assail each other.

What shall I more say? Time would fail me to tell of all the other ideas which have splintered and shivered the heirs of the restoration movement through the years. The things of which I have written are but a small minority of those which have been documented as having caused schisms among the brethren. I think that it is time that we should study objectively the underlying causes and basic reasons why our brethren divide periodically. Why should a movement which began as “a project to unite the Christians in all sects” end up as the most bitter and strife-torn in our generation? Is it possible for a people who have spent their time in unmitigated attacks upon others to turn the searchlight upon themselves and explore the philosophy which has wrecked their influence in many communities? Certainly it is dangerous for one who attempts it, for those who have been conditioned to regard themselves as “the elect of God” and to treat all others as “heathens and publicans” will bitterly resent any implication that they are as guilty as those whom they have accused.

THE TRUE RADICAL

I can no longer be content to continue in a factional program and insulate my heart from some of the real elemental

problems which make us behave as we do. I regard those things over which we have divided, and even the divisions themselves, as mere symptoms of a deep underlying fallacy in our thinking. It has betrayed us into bitter strife in the past and will lead us into such civil wars in the future as will decimate us and render invalid any plea that we make to the religious world at large. In short, it will make of us a bitter and bigoted sect with “our hand against every man and every man’s hand against us.”

Unfortunately, certain concepts become entrenched in the thinking of a people and are eventually sanctified by the passing of time. To attack the traditions of a group is regarded as equivalent to an attack upon the word of God. We cannot deny that the interpretation of scripture is substituted for the scripture and becomes the real criterion. We have seen this demonstrated too often in the sectarian creeds of those about us. “Our way of looking at it” is equated with God’s message and one must be bold indeed to fling down the gauntlet in the face of ingrained position and practice.

Men are not too concerned with critical investigation provided that it is not radical. So long as it consists of lopping off twigs and snipping away at small under-growth, they will debate and skirmish without being particularly perturbed. But the word “radical” is from a term meaning “root.” That is why we call a certain root vegetable a “radish.” Jesus was a radical. He got to the very root of life and sin and so he was crucified. Most real radicals must be removed because men cannot stand what they reveal. You “dig up things” when you get to the root of them. Few people want to be really disturbed. In the final analysis, it has been the radicals who have always been responsible for our progress.

I know why I am writing this way. It is because I realize that I will be branded an extremist. In our parlance an extremist is always one who opposes any position we hold. One who opposes instrumental music is regarded as an extremist by one

who employs it; one who opposes classes is an extremist to the one who has them; one who opposes individual cups is an extremist to the one who uses them. We are all extremists as viewed by someone. It does not hurt me to be labeled an extremist for this is a term of universal application. I have learned that the word is never applied to oneself. It is always reserved for application to others. It is obvious, then, that one is not an extremist because of where he stands in his views, but because of where others stand as they view him.

There is a difference between an extremist and a radical. The former has to do with the horizontal, the latter with the vertical. One is an extremist because he stands to the right or left of us but a radical may cut the ground right out from under us. If we are to the right or left of Jesus, one may be to the right or left of us and be closer to Jesus than we are. Or he may be farther from Jesus. The whole point I am making is that there may be nothing seriously wrong with being called an extremist or radical. There may be something *seriously right* about the one so designated. I will have one thing in my favor in this current investigation because I will not be examining the position of one faction as opposed to another. Instead, I will be probing the question of what has created all of our factions.

I am sure that opinion will be divided as to the worth of what we write. There will be some in every faction who will hail what we say as true, others in every faction will regard it as the greatest threat of our day, while the majority will continue in complacency and unconcern. They are not moved by what Jesus said so there is little hope they will become aroused by what I say. I am personally convinced that a lot of us would be perfectly content to pursue our factious course and engage in occasional tilts and tussles with brethren provided no one ever really reflected against "The Church of Christ" as such.

We can permit a contest over colleges or a contention over classes and the din of battle dies away, but when someone

challenges our standing as a people, or implies that we may be sectarian, that is going too far. We do not mind the members of the family having a tug of war provided no one reflects on the family honor. Some of the things with which I shall deal may get beneath the surface. Perhaps it is time that we rise above banalities and superficial examination. We are where our thinking has brought us and it has brought us division and schism. This is where God does not want us to be. I suggest it is about time to change our thinking. In order to proceed with as little misunderstanding as possible let me make some points at this juncture.

VIEWING THE PATTERN

1. I have a very deep reverence for all of the brethren in every faction growing out of the restoration movement. I do not think that those who disagree with me are dishonest. I do not regard as sectarians those who have things I cannot endorse, nor do I regard as hobbyists those who cannot, in good conscience, endorse things I have. They are all my brethren for whom Christ died. I do not look with disdain upon some nor with obsequiousness upon others. Those who choose not to have classes or cups and those who choose to have colleges and instrumental music are alike my brethren. They are accountable unto God and not unto me. There is no compunction about moving among any of them because I love them all— not because of what they have or do not have, but because they are children of my Father.

2. All of us are victims of a heritage of division which has given us certain traditional backgrounds of a partisan nature. I am aware that there are those in orthodox “Churches of Christ” who deny that there is any division. They constitute the elect of God and all others are separated from them. They have “arrived” while everyone else has “departed.” Of all our various groups, these deserve the greatest pity and compassion. It is the

person who is sick and does not know it, the one who is seriously ill while he thinks he is well, who deserves our commiseration. In many places the faction which puts on the biggest front has the least behind it and arrogant exclusiveness is merely a cloak for an empty spiritual shell. No faction is “the faithful church,” no segment or splinter constitutes “the loyal body.”

3. One of us is not divided from the other. We are separated from one another. No group is completely guilty nor wholly guiltless. Those who project all of the guilt to others have the least to commend them in the sight of God and their fellows. We are divided because of a philosophy which confuses division with fidelity to God. Each party feels that the thing it elevates as a test of fellowship is vital and essential to relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Brotherhood is thus conditioned upon an attitude toward cups, classes, colleges, or other things. It is not knowing Christ but “the right stand” on these issues upon which one must rise or fall with the party.

4. No faction among us can be wholly discounted. The smallest group may have something of value to contribute to others. Each has emphasized a different area of thought and has specialized in a certain field. Not all that any faction does is completely wrong. The factional spirit is a sin but that which it seeks to exploit may be right. None of us should become so arrogant or spiritually sophisticated that we cannot listen attentively to any of our brethren. “Setting at nought a brother” is a dangerous procedure.

5. I think we may concede that all of our divisions have resulted from a proper desire. All of the brethren have sought to do what they earnestly believed would meet God’s approval and avoid His chastisement. Those who oppose individual cups believe they are contrary to the pattern; those who oppose classes believe they are contrary to the pattern. The same thing can be said of those who oppose colleges, institutional homes, societies and instrumental music. The opposition does not stem

from a desire to be reckoned cranky or cantankerous but from a fear of violating a divinely ordained pattern. All who practice or endorse things believe they are justified by a proper interpretation of the pattern; all who oppose them believe just as firmly that they are forbidden by the pattern.

It is evident that we have disagreed so violently over *the pattern* that we have fragmented ourselves into warring tribes and clashing clans. Yet the word of God reads identically the same to everyone of us and all are equal in their anxiety to understand and obey it. It is not enough for one party to say that all that is necessary is to take the word of God for what it says. That is precisely what each party feels it is doing now. The party that makes such a statement simply implies that everyone should take the word of God for what that particular party thinks it means by what it says. Each party feels that it has an infallible interpretation and those who do not concur with the party exegesis do not understand the Bible at all. They misunderstand it. This is a simple and naive approach. It merely begs the question, it does not solve the problem.

For example, take the question about the container for the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. So long as one ardently believes that *the cup* is the pattern and another believes that the "fruit of the vine" is the cup about which Jesus speaks, there will be contention. So long as this is esteemed vital to walking in the Spirit there will be division. Which is in accordance with the pattern— one container, multiple cups, or both? Would it shock you too greatly if I came directly to the point and suggested that perhaps God gave us no pattern at all in the commonly accepted usage of the term by the various factions calling themselves "The Church of Christ."

If Jesus ordained a Supper instead of a pattern, one might partake of it in memory of Him without regard to minute details, and there could well be several different ways of handling the details by consecrated disciples who could "proclaim the Lord's

death until he comes.” To bind a method as *the pattern* when no pattern was intended would be fallacious, and might become sinful. We are not divided over the Lord’s Supper, but over “the pattern.” We are not divided over teaching the Bible, but over *the pattern*. We are not divided over caring for the needy but over *the pattern*. In every instance the basis of division is “the pattern.”

Regardless of how we view the various items which divide us, all of us without exception will acknowledge that division among brethren is a sin of grave consequence. All admit that the purpose of God’s revelation was to unite us and to create harmony where division previously existed. It is evident that any use of God’s word for the purpose of creating or justifying division among humble and earnest saints is an abuse and misuse. Nothing has been more productive of dissension among us than the concept that God intended to provide for us a specific pattern complete in minute detail and that this pattern constitutes an inviolable law for His children in all ages, climes, and conditions. It would seem that the attempt to establish the new covenant scriptures as a legalistic blueprint or temple with every insignificant and incidental matter spelled out has resulted in an overthrow of God’s purpose.

To merely suggest that the new covenant scriptures may not have been intended for such a positive pattern will bring down upon the head of the one doing so a storm of acrimony and resentment. He will be denounced, proscribed and anathematized. The fear of being harried and harassed through brotherhood journals acts as a constant deterrent to the exploration of new areas of thought. In spite of this, I am urging that the whole “pattern concept” which makes of the apostolic letters mere legalistic documents be examined calmly and dispassionately. This is not an adoption of liberalistic philosophy. It represents no renunciation of the faith upon my part. It is merely a suggestion, made in all humility, that, in the light of present knowledge and available information, we

measure up to our responsibility in our generation by examining the ground for our spiritual procedure.

It is an admitted fact that every faction among us rejects as being a part of *the pattern* that which every other faction accepts as an essential part of it. The brethren who use individual cups reject the idea that there is a specific pattern for one container; those who employ classes reject the idea that there is a specific pattern for teaching methods. The same holds true for those who set up chartered institutions to care for the needy, as well as for those who employ instrumental music. Every detail which means so much to some is lightly esteemed by others in the brotherhood of saints so that a compilation of composite views would show that if these views were universally adopted as a criterion there would be no detailed pattern at all. Yet to suggest this will bring indignant response from every segment. This indicates that the pattern in each instance is the partisan interpretation and this is equated with the will of God. This is creedalism in its worst form!

It is obvious that the person who does not believe there is a technical specification for each requirement of God can worship with his brethren regardless of how they carry out the requirement, so long as it is not in violation of good order and decorum. The reverse is not true. One who has no qualms about instrumental music can enjoy a service where the praise is rendered *a capella*. The same is true of one who believes it is proper to have classes and individual cups. The man who has no scruples about the state of the fruit of the vine can drink in fellowship with his brethren wherever he may be, whether they use fermented or unfermented fruit of the vine. If it be true that God did not design to give us an exclusive pattern, those who interpret the sacred writings as such, do themselves and other brethren an injustice. Despite their good intentions and zeal they run counter to God's purpose by binding laws in areas where he intended for us to be free. Let me be candid enough to say at this point that I believe every faction among us is guilty of this very

thing in its relation to other factions. I will go one step further and say that it is my conviction that “The Church of Christ” has done the same thing in relation to other segments of our religious world. While this will be hailed as treason we can never recapture a real sense of destiny until we face up to the stark truth about ourselves.

We are prone to look with disdain and condescension upon the scruples of others. Those who contend for them are agitators and busybodies. When we do the same thing we are “contending for the faith.” Recently a congregation in Iowa engaged in a prolonged and somewhat heated business meeting engendered by a preacher who protested against “taking up the collection” before partaking of the Lord’s Supper. The congregation had inherited a tradition stemming from the “order of worship” controversy in which “the fellowship” in Acts 2:42 was regarded as the contribution, and thus was attended to before the breaking of the bread. The preacher referred to insisted that they were violating the pattern because Paul gave instruction for observing the Supper in chapter 11 of First Corinthians, whereas he did not give orders for the collection until chapter 16. I mentioned this to a brother of my acquaintance who laughed in high glee at such naivete. The very next Lord’s Day he was in high dudgeon because the brother who presided began the service with meditation and prayer rather than with a song. It all depends upon “whose ox is gored.”

I would like to believe that all of my brethren are sufficiently mature to face up to some questions which will help us to scrutinize our philosophy and practice openly and fearlessly. I suspect that it is too much to count upon this but I do believe that we live in an era when a sufficient number are beginning to think independently that we can suggest some matters for concern and study. I have no desire to arouse additional bitterness nor to increase areas of tension. I would like to relieve these if possible. However, I cannot make myself think that we better ourselves in the ultimate by ignoring truth

as we go along. For that reason I crave your kind indulgence while I propose a series of questions which may serve as guide lines for exploration in subsequent articles. A careful study of these will enable you to properly evaluate what we shall say in the immediate future.

1. In the fulfillment of any responsibility there are things essential and others which are purely incidental or accidental. The former are inherent and grow out of the nature of that which is to be accomplished; the latter are adherent and provide a setting in which, or a means by which, the thing may be furthered. This is a principle so universally recognized that any attempt to elucidate it would be superfluous. Was this true of the things which Jesus performed and of the principles he enunciated? If so, how can we determine that which is essential and that which is incidental? That this demands the exercise of judgment and requires an application of the faculty of discretion and the powers of discrimination must certainly be plain to all. Whose judgment must prevail and who is to be the final arbiter unto whom all must submit?

2. Every teacher, in spite of his grasp of truth, lives among a people who are products of their own environment. Unless he becomes a hermit and retires to solitary exclusion, he must face up to practical problems growing out of the circumstances of his day. His teaching is affected by, and must directly affect, the culture in which he lives and labors. I doubt not that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God and a universal Savior, but he was instructing a provincial and parochial people in a land which constituted an occupied territory. Is it possible that some of his statements were directly relating to conditions then obtaining and have relevance only under such conditions? I am fully aware of the fact that principles may be enunciated which are applicable under all circumstances and I am certain beyond question that our Lord gave such ecumenical truths.

But is it possible that Jesus, while in the flesh, recognized

and followed the customs of his day and time, without intention to bind these upon all men in all ages, or without expecting conformity in these respects? If so, what is universal and exhaustive and what was temporary and localized? What will be our standard for differentiation and whose mind will apply the measure? Admittedly this is no problem to those in an authoritarian and monolithic structure. My friends who are Roman Catholics are not at all disturbed by the problem but neither are they free men in Christ. Who is to determine such things for free men and if they surrender the right for someone else to do so, are they still free?

3. In view of the fact that the apostolic epistles were written to meet situations arising in congregations of their day and would probably not have been written at all if such conditions had not obtained, to what extent did these epistles urge conformity to customs and modes which are no longer acknowledged and recognized? I am sure that everyone of our readers would regard some of what is written as being within such a category and while there would no doubt be disagreement as to what should be included and what should be excluded it would be admitted by all that certain portions of the apostolic coverage would have to be relegated to this sphere. Who is to rule as to what matter was purely contemporary and what was to continue? By what standard can we reject the command to “greet one another with a holy kiss” or substitute for it a different and more modern form of salutation? On what ground can we dispense with the Agape (love feast) which was practiced by the primitive saints with regularity?

4. The apostle Paul specifically wrote of the new covenant that it was “not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). When we regard the new covenant scriptures as a pattern in the absolute, do we not convert them into a written code? Have we not regarded these scriptures as a legalistic basis of justification? I am not questioning the inspiration or authority of the sacred

scriptures. I believe in both. I believe the apostolic writings have the authority of God behind them, but if we have used them as God intended, why are we divided contrary to the word of God? Have we changed the scriptures into something they were never intended to be? Could Paul become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some, if he was operating under an inflexible set of rules as unalterable as the law of the Medes and Persians?

To state it in slightly different fashion— is every word spoken by authority of equal importance? Are there “weightier matters of the law” if so, what makes them weigh heavier? Granted that there are some absolutes in God’s revelation, does it follow that everything is in that domain? What is central to the Christian way and what is on the fringe or border? What things *must* be understood to be a Christian and what things may be misunderstood without severing or impairing the relationship? Are the latter the same with every individual?

In the physical realm some members of the body are essential to being and some to wellbeing. God created the little finger as well as the head, but if you cut off the latter you will die. This is not true of cutting off a finger. Can the same distinction be made with reference to the body of revealed truth? Surely all that God has said is valuable but is all of equal value in our Christian life? Is it possible to fight over certain things which are not worth the effort? Can we exalt some things to a position of prominence they do not deserve? One would not willingly dispense with anything that has been written any more than he would cheerfully cut off his finger, but if there is a serious question about interpretation should not the salvation of the other man be given prior consideration? Should we not incline to that interpretation which would achieve and maintain unity seeing that this was one of the prime purposes for writing the new covenant scriptures?

There may be more than one method of doing the right

thing. In a simple operation such as gaining entrance to a box tied with a string, one man may labor patiently to untie the knot, another will cut the string with a knife, while a third will slip it around the edge or corner of the box. That which is effective for one may be ineffective for the other, but there is nothing wrong about either way. In many instances it appears that God has not specified the means of accomplishing an objective. He has left it to us to decide the manner best adapted to our individual ability and temperament. We are not free to set up such a method as an absolute and demand that all others work on this basis or be lost, nor should others legislate for us where God has not done so.

It is difficult for most of us to realize that we are not under a legalistic code. The record declares, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The contrast is not between two laws. It does not say that the law came by Moses and another law came by Jesus Christ. The law is contrasted with grace and truth. Perhaps the contrast is nowhere else seen as clearly as in Hebrews 10:28, 29, "A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?" On one hand you have as the greatest crime the violation of law; on the other hand is the spurning of the Son, profaning the blood and outraging the Spirit of grace.

It is characteristic of Pharisaism to "bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matt. 23:4). This is the spirit of partisan righteousness. In the primitive church "some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.'" Peter asked them a pertinent question, "Why do you make a trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our

fathers nor we have been able to bear?” Was he talking about the written code with its meticulous observances of rituals and forms? Is it not significant that the apostles, elders and whole church at Jerusalem, wrote to those who were being subjected to legalism, “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28). The necessary things did not include circumcision or legalism. How many things are really necessary according to the Holy Spirit and the apostles? How many things are simply laid as burdens upon men to “hold them in line?”

The Roman Catholic hierarchy makes no apology for binding certain things simply as authoritative and disciplinary measures. They do not profess to find scriptural authority for commanding to abstain from meats on Friday. This is a law of the church and not of God. It is accompanied by threats which are effective only because of the hold that the church has over its communicants. Are there any forms or requirements in traditional “Church of Christ” practice designed for the same purpose? It is one thing to perform an act voluntarily, willingly and spontaneously, and doing the same thing under threat of reprisal and to avoid public castigation.

I think it would not be quite honest with our readers if I did not tell you that it is my conviction that the system which constitutes Church-of-Christ-ism is the result of a degeneration of noble restoration principles into a narrow and sectarian framework. For this reason the haughty and arrogant back-patting done by some of the larger factions does not affect me for this is a clear demonstration of the truth of my claims. The self-righteous criticism of the smaller groups by these larger ones, and their utter denial that there are Christians outside the restoration movement background— these do not betoken that the spokesmen for “the loyal church” have a better vision of truth. It only means they are in a worse state of blindness as to their own condition.

Those who think they have arrived and are therefore in a favored position from whence they can summon all others to come and take their stand, have a great deal yet to learn. It will help them to begin their spiritual education if they will realize that “the pattern” which they insist on imposing upon all others may be a compilation of explanations and interpretations handed down by men whom they would not allow to speak in their pulpits nor call upon to lead in prayer. We still garnish the tombs of prophets whom we would stone if they lived among us. *The pattern* in most cases is the partisan interpretation, and just as each faction among us has built up its own exclusive body of beliefs in a mistaken view that its foundation is divine, so “The Church of Christ” in its relation to other sincere seekers after truth may have done the same.

It is this kind of writing which will be called treason. I do not want to unduly upset my brethren nor to cause them concern. I wish that I knew of a more diplomatic approach. I would gladly spare all of those whom I love from exposure to any apparent crudity in expression. But the truth must be known and “I am weary from holding in.” Regardless of personal attacks which I may incur I cannot live with my own conscience if I do not decry the spirit of sectarian exclusiveness which is rampant in many areas of the disciple brotherhood.

Let me mention again that inter-factional squabbling and criticism will be condoned. So long as one equates the elect of God as those within the confines of the non-instrumental “Church of Christ” and denies that all outside of its bounds are children of the Father, he can be tolerated. But what we are doing is challenging Church-of-Christ-ism as a modern system. This challenge cuts across all lines and falls with equal force upon all segments of the disciple brotherhood, instrumental and non-instrumental alike. In short, we are doing the same thing with all of the factions growing out of the restoration movement that Alexander Campbell did to all of the Protestant sects growing out of the Reformation movement, and we are doing it

for the same reason.

We believe that in a century and a half we have, as a people, compiled a body of interpretations which we have made into an unwritten creed. We believe that variations and modifications of this have produced our divergent factions. The composite views create an affinity which enables us to regard all of these factions as constituting "The Church of Christ" and this body of believers regards all other believers exactly as each faction within it regards all the other factions within it, as respects *fellowship*. We have concocted a basis of fellowship which we project into the sacred scriptures and refer to as "the pattern." In each instance the pattern is actually the party position and honest men who cannot in good conscience subscribe to it in every minute detail are labeled as heretics and apostates.

While our natural inclinations would deter us from writing thus, our love for the truth prompts us to pursue the crusade for a brighter day based upon better understanding of the word of God and the motivation of all who seek to do His will. We are expendable. What happens to us personally is of little consequence. We are content to await the verdict of time and the final judgment of the Prince of peace. We submit ourselves wholly and completely into His care and surrender unreservedly to His will and purpose. It is in that spirit we write with love for all, including those who disagree. None of our brethren need accept what we write to be loved and revered as children of the Father. We can only hope and trust that what we write will be sufficiently provocative to stimulate a greater study that we might come to really know Him who is the source of all Reality.

If God wills I shall, in our following issues, examine some of the questions raised in this one. It will be my intention to give special attention to the statement, "See that ye do all things according to the pattern showed you in the mount." I shall expect to demonstrate that this is one of the most abused

passages of the sacred writ, that men have ignored its contextual setting and purpose, and have used it to effect the very opposite of what God intended. I shall deal with the psychological problem of why men convert grace into law and with the equally important question of how we can have freedom without having anarchy. I can promise you that the coming months will provide the most challenging approach to the Christian concept in our generation. It is our hope that you may continue to read and think with us.

Our Personal Pattern

Mission Messenger (March 1970)

Volume 32

[Abstract]

We are attempting an unbiased investigation of the underlying cause for division among the heirs of the restoration movement. Our aim is not to uphold any faction as opposed to others nor to defend any party as “the loyal church.” We have no partisan axe to grind. We are simply trying to face up realistically to one of the gravest problems in our religious life, that of division in the ranks of the believers in Christ Jesus. In our previous issue we proposed a number of questions. We are convinced that they are germane and pertinent to our aim and announced purpose. We intend to pursue them with the intent of arriving at a correct solution.

There is a difference between what we are attempting and the course generally pursued in inter-factional discussions and debates. In these the purpose is to determine which faction conforms to scriptural procedure and precedent with reference to some specific point of difference. Regardless of who wins such forensic skirmishes the factions will still continue to exist and they will still be factions. Our accepted task is much more profound than this. It is to find out what basic philosophy gives rise to factionalism and sustains and nourishes it. Although we are concerned about the things over which our brethren *fall out* we are primarily interested in why they do not *fall in* and march together as a united army.

Unless we succeed in finding and isolating the germ or virus which produces division we will continue to fracture and fragmentize ourselves. The treatment of symptoms is not enough. If we debate every currently divisive issue into oblivion our children will find others over which to divide. We must make a radical departure from our previous methods and explore on a deeper level than ever before. We have been too shallow and superficial in the past. It is obvious that we must also be prepared for a shock because what we find may run counter to our every tradition. It may actually frighten us by some of its implications.

Each faction justifies its separate existence on the basis that its procedures in work and worship are true to “the pattern.” Each accuses the others of having forsaken “the pattern.” It is taken for granted by all that the new covenant scriptures constitute a detailed blueprint designed to meet every exigency and provide for every emergency and that loyalty to Christ consists in seeking out these details and binding oneself by them and binding them upon others. Every faction claims to follow the pattern while denying that the others are doing so. None plead guilty to violating it. All are willing to affirm that they, and they only, are identical in every particular with the original.

It will readily be seen that if anyone suggests there is no such legalistic pattern he will draw the wrath of all. Those who cannot work together in pursuance of “the pattern” would all unite their forces in joint attack upon such an intruder. There are two things the brethren cannot tolerate. One is to deny there is a pattern; the other to affirm that anyone else is following it. We are willing to brook the disfavor of all and suggest that it was never the revealed intention of God to provide for us a meticulous bill of specifications covering every facet of procedure and the attempt to convert the new covenant scriptures into such a code of particulars has warped and thwarted the divine purpose.

Let us get one point clear at the outset. We believe the apostolic letters contain a revelation of the will of God. We believe their message is a transmission of the Holy Spirit. We neither doubt nor question the authenticity or genuineness of these writings. To us they are the *sacred scriptures* as opposed to all other writings of men. It is essential that we understand this because in the eyes of many, to question the use they make of the scriptures, is to question their divine origin. We affirm that the scriptures are divine with the same boldness that we deny that the application of them as made by our brethren is inspired. In short, we believe in the infallibility of God's revelation but we do not believe in the infallibility of any human interpretation.

It follows, then, that what we write is not infallible. To this we would be the first to agree. Therefore, what we write is not offered in a dogmatic or arbitrary sense. The word of God, and not MISSION MESSENGER, should be our court of appeal. As we explore some of our cherished traditions, and even explode them, we are not doing so in an authoritarian sense. While we exercise our freedom we shall in no sense *exorcise* yours. We respect your right to differ and to doubt what we say. We encourage you to place your trust in God and His word and not replace it with confidence in men. We shall not be guilty of undermining the faith of others nor of surrendering our own. Neither will we be reluctant or hesitant about a candid examination of all we have accepted as truth. Truth has naught to fear from the searchlight of investigation.

AN IMPORTANT QUOTATION

We begin with a study of a basic quotation as found in Hebrews 8:5, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." It is generally assumed that these words spoken to Moses with reference to the tabernacle in the wilderness are applicable to us and that the new covenant scriptures sustain the same relationship to us as

did the law of Moses to the children of Israel. We believe that such an exegesis is not only faulty but is the exact opposite of the meaning which the writer of Hebrews intended to convey. Since this is so fundamental we ask your kind indulgence while we make a careful study of the impact of the meaning ordinarily attached to these words. In order to make our statements clearer we shall number them.

1. A pattern or blueprint is needed only by a builder or construction agent. Moses was commissioned to build the tabernacle and no such a structure had ever before been seen. It was necessary for him to have a pattern to follow. God gave no man a pattern for building the true tabernacle. It would have been useless to do so for it is distinctly stated that Jesus is “a minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.” We are “the building of God” (1 Cor. 3:9). We are “built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple” (1 Peter 1:5). Instead of a pattern for constructing an edifice what we need is the cement to hold us together as stones in the building. Later on in this series we shall show that this is exactly what God has furnished us.

2. A pattern must exist prior to the rearing or erection of a structure and those who do the building must be familiar with it. In the Jewish dispensation God established a system of legalism “as a temporary measure pending the arrival of the ‘issue’ to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). In any such system the law must be complete and announced in advance or the subjects may be guilty of violating something of which they do not know. Accordingly God called Moses into the mount and wrote for him the constitution on stone tablets and showed him a pattern of the tabernacle. In the new covenant arrangement we are not under law but under grace. It was more than twenty years after the community of saints was planted before the first letter from an apostle was written. By that time the gospel had been taken to the Gentile world and it was to such a congregation the first letter was addressed.

3. The passage which occurs in Hebrews 8:5 is found in a context in which the writer is contrasting the priesthood of Jesus with that of the priesthood prescribed by law. The argument is that the latter is an inferior priesthood because the priests ministered “in a sanctuary which is only a copy and shadow of the heavenly.” That this is true is proven by the fact that the tabernacle was constructed by human power and skill. “This is implied when Moses, about to erect the tent, is instructed by God: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” The pattern is mentioned, not to prove that we have one by which to make everything, but to show that any system based upon such a pattern is inferior. The very next sentence declares, “But in fact the ministry which has fallen to Jesus is as far superior to theirs as are the covenant he mediates and the promises upon which it is secured.”

The whole point of the Hebrew letter is that Moses needed a pattern for the first tabernacle because he was a mere servant in God’s house. No pattern was needed for the real tabernacle since it was constructed by God himself. “For every house has its founder; and the founder of all is God. Moses, then, was faithful as a servitor in God’s whole household; his task was to bear witness to the words that God would speak; but Christ is faithful as a son, set over his household” (Hebrews 3:4, 5).

4. The apostolic letters were written because of local conditions which arose and demanded attention. If the Thessalonians had not been disturbed about the state of the righteous dead and if some of them had not continued their slothful and indolent work habits, the first epistle would not have been written. If there had not been a misunderstanding of the tenor of the first letter as related to the coming of Christ there would have been no second. The first epistle to the Corinthians was called forth by a report from the family of Chloe and in reply to a letter of enquiry carried by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. The Philippian letter was primarily one of thanks and appreciation which would not have been

penned at all if a contribution had not been sent to the “ambassador in bonds.” The letter to Philemon was one of commendation for a fugitive slave returning to his master.

Since these letters were written to meet conditions as they arose among congregations existing in a pagan society, it is too much to expect they will cover in detail every condition which may affect the church of God in all ages, locations and cultures. I hold the view that the letters were not written as a pattern at all but to call men back toward an ideal involved in their acceptance of Jesus. As men deviated from the path leading toward this ideal it was necessary to recall them. It is obvious, then, that these letters create an understanding of a norm for those who attempt to be “laborers together with God.” Later, we shall attempt to define the ideal and when we do we believe that the purpose of the new covenant scriptures will be brought into sharper focus.

5. While the apostolic letters constituted a response to needs and conditions then existing they set forth principles which should govern the people of God in all ages until the absent King returns. These letters represented the will of that sovereign expressed by his special envoys. The ambassadors were endowed with the Holy Spirit to guarantee that the things they wrote corresponded with, and were actually an expression of, the divine purpose. It was not the purpose of these letters to give minute specifications but to create the kind of character or nature which would automatically and spontaneously respond in every contingency in a proper manner.

In this age of the Spirit it was not the intention of God to make his people mechanical robots moving jerkily when a particular law was quoted or realized, nor to constitute them puppets jumping with the manipulation of certain strings behind the scenes. Instead, the record declares “You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into license for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love”

(Gal. 5:13). Law does not free, but confines. “Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law, pending the revelation of faith” (Gal. 3:23). Law seeks to affect men from without, so no one can be made truly good by law. It can never justify nor give life. The new covenant scriptures are not new legislation but letters written in love to a new creation. Those who have been made “partakers of the divine nature” respond in a divine manner to every situation. Those who seek to gain the response by law “have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.”

6. The apostolic letters were never intended to be exhaustive in specifying details even in dealing with the situations which called them forth. After having written at some length about the problems at Corinth, the apostle says, “The other matters I will arrange when I come” (1 Cor. 11:34). The RSV renders this, “About the other things I will give directions when I come.” What were the other things? How did they affect the life of the congregation? What directions were given? Surely it must be admitted that the letter to Corinth did not deal with every problem in that congregation.

The apostle John closes his letter “to the elect lady and her children” with the words, “Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face.” He concluded his letter, “to the beloved Gaius” in this fashion, “I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon and we will talk together face to face.” What was included in “the much” that John would like to have written? What instructions, admonitions and exhortations did he impart when he met the addressees? We shall never know nor is it important that we know.

All who love the Lord can agree that while these letters were not exhaustive as to methods, manners and modes, the things that are written are for instruction and admonition. I am

convinced from my own study that the principles enunciated cover every *category* of our relationship. It must be remembered that despite the multiform outworking of such relationships, they still fall into relatively few species or types. We do not need a detailed bill of specifications. We simply need to know how “the picked representatives of God’s new creation” are to respond within a certain sphere or domain. It would be foolish to reject the new covenant scriptures as containing no norm. It would be just as foolish to search them to find a scriptural precedent to meet every trivial problem in a modern congregation. The child of God can better employ his time than by engaging in either gnat-straining or nit-picking.

7. The content of the apostolic letters demonstrates that it was never the intention of the writers to compile a code of laws. One who writes statutes and judgments does not insert little matters of personal interest and concern at intervals throughout the document. What would you think if you were reading a copy of the Missouri Statutes and found tucked away among the “whereases” a request for the reader to pick up the writer’s overcoat and also bring along his writing materials? Does one insert in a legal code of jurisprudence a suggestion of a remedy for the stomach ulcer of the proofreader?

In the letter to Philemon in which the apostle refused to “pull his rank” as an ambassador in order to have his desire fulfilled (verses 8, 9) he inserts a casual request for a room reservation. “At the same time prepare a guest room for me” (verse 22). All of this makes these letters much more appealing unto me. Of course there is a natural curiosity about some of the things which were written and have not been preserved. I cannot help wondering what was in the letter John wrote to one congregation which their leader rejected with false accusations against the writer. “I sent a letter to the congregation, but Diotrephes, their would-be leader, will have nothing to do with us. If I come, I will bring up the things he is doing. He lays baseless and spiteful charges against us; not satisfied with that,

he refuses to receive our friends, and he interferes with those who would do so, and tries to expel them from the congregation.” I wonder if John ever went, and if he did, what happened when he brought up the things this character was doing. I’m especially interested because I have met some of his “relatives” around over the country. They also refuse to receive some of my friends and have tossed out of their congregations some who would like to receive them.

There is no question but what the Mosaic dispensation was governed by a legalistic arrangement which is designated as “a written code” in contradistinction to the new covenant which is called “a spiritual bond” (2 Cor. 3:6). A simple comparison of the apostolic letters with the Pentateuch will show the difference. Take, for instance, the regulation of the law with reference to birds. This covered every contingency from robbing a bird’s nest of eggs or squabs (Deut. 22:6, 7) to the kind of birds which could not be eaten— “the eagle, the ossifrage, the osprey, the kite, the falcon, the raven, the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk, the owl, the cormorant, the ibis, the water hen, the pelican, the vulture, the stork, the heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.”

Unwittingly, I think, but nonetheless certainly, many of our brethren have drawn up almost such a list of particulars with reference to the Lord’s Supper and other aspects of Christian witness. This is the result of a mistaken concept, a reversion to Judaistic attitudes of justification. It culminates in confusion by exalting incidentals to essentials. It seeks to establish human judgment as being an infallible criterion by which to measure all others. Traditional procedures become hallowed in each party and division is finally enshrined as the divine objective. When this occurs men are discouraged from attempting any real reform. They trudge the weary rut of factional debate and wearily walk on the treadmill of partisan orthodoxy. They dare not question the whole structure of sectarian exclusiveness for fear they will be accused of denying

the word of God or the revelation from heaven.

I hold no brief for the empty mouthings of modernism nor for the vapid vagaries of what is mis-called “liberalism.” I accept without question the fact that the sacred scriptures are a revelation from God just as I do not hesitate to affirm my belief that Jesus of Nazareth was a revelation of God. But I do challenge the use being made of the new covenant writings which reduces them to a repository of factional texts and purports to discover within them a specific prescription for every detail of current controversy. I am asked if it is not dangerous to thus write and speak. The question is raised as to whether some who are weak may not be encouraged to disregard the authority of the word. To this I reply that there is always an element of danger when anyone challenges an entrenched view with truth. Faith itself is not without its risks. Shall we continue in mistaken attitudes simply to “play safe”? Is it really being safe in a spiritual sense to maintain and defend the *status quo* at the expense of our integrity? All freedom has about it an aura of danger. Certainly one feels more secure behind the walls of exclusivism. Shall we purchase security by bartering away our freedom to investigate and our right to speak and act? Is it not an act of weakness upon our part to conceal truth by hiding behind the skirts of the weak? There will always be men who will seek for justification for their departures from the truth. Will we be held back from discovering and affirming the truth on the basis that they will use it as an excuse for their own undue latitude? It is not a sin to regard the word of God in its proper perspective.

THE TRUE PATTERN

Our pattern is not a law, not even a divine one. It is a person. Even the previous written code of legalism was temporary in nature and designed to bring us to him. Mistaking this fact the Jews set their hope on the written law. Jesus said,

“Your accuser is Moses, the very Moses on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses you would believe what I tell you, for it was about me that he wrote” (John 5:46) He further declared, “You study the scriptures diligently, supposing that in having them you have eternal life; yet, although their testimony points to me, you refuse to come to me for that life” (John 5:39, 40). Before Jesus ascended he opened the minds of the apostles to understand the scriptures and this understanding helped them to see for the first time the purpose of those scriptures. “Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms was bound to be fulfilled.”

Jesus is our everything! God has made him “our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” If we have any right to boast it cannot be because of our own program, performance or perfection. “Therefore, as it is written, Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31). The New English Version reads, “If a man is proud, let him be proud of the Lord.” So long as we regard the scriptures as a legalistic code we will be as proud as any other lawyer of our knowledge of the law. “This knowledge breeds conceit, it is love that builds. If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of knowing. But if a man loves, he is acknowledged by God” (1 Cor. 8:2).

The great envoy to the Gentiles reaches his peak when he writes to the Philippians. Referring to those who placed their confidence in ritualism of the law, he said “We are the circumcised, we whose worship is spiritual, whose pride is in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in anything external” (3:3). Several things need to be noted here. Our pride must not be that we are in Christ, but it must be in him. It is his status rather than our state which counts. We did not find him, he found us. Worship which is spiritual is also contrasted with confidence in external things. This is a definition and distinction which many need to learn.

Paul could have predicated his hope on externals. He writes, “If anyone thinks to base his hope on externals, I could make a stronger case for myself.” He then mentions some of these, including racial purity, tribal identity, attitude toward the law, pious zeal and legal rectitude. He says, “But all such assets I have written off because of Christ. I would say more: I count everything sheer loss, because all is far outweighed by the gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I did in fact lose everything. I count it so much garbage, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith.”

Jesus is our pattern and love our guiding principle. It is a summation of all law as well as the consummation of all law. “He who loves his neighbor has satisfied every claim of the law. For the commandments, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet,’ and any other commandment there may be, are all summed up in the one rule, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love cannot wrong a neighbor, therefore the whole law is summed up in love” (Rom. 13:8-10). “Every claim— any other commandment— all summed up— one rule.”

In view of the fact that we have only one pattern (a person), and only one law (love), we fulfill the demands of God by pledging allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ and loving one another. “We can approach God with confidence, and obtain from him whatever we ask, because we are keeping his commands and doing what he approves. This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded” (1 John 3:22, 23). This is one of the most difficult things for men to grasp. So long have they regarded the religion of Christ as one of rules, regulations and rituals, they simply cannot accept the fact that the scriptures teach there is just *one rule*. Paul wrote that, “The whole law can be summed up

in a single commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14).

PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURES

Why do we have the new covenant scriptures? This is a legitimate question as was the one asked by the apostle, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” The writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, constitute the written testimony related to our Lord. These are not biographies at all although some biographical features are found in them. The writers had a definite purpose in giving their accounts. They were selective of the mass of material available. One of them wrote, “There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). It is obvious that their treatment was not exhaustive. John said, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” These records point men to Jesus as the source of life.

The book of Acts is the story of the struggle of the message of Jesus to free itself from narrowness, bigotry and prejudice. It is the dramatic account of how the story of the cross overcame the limitations of class and race. It ends with the messenger in prison and the message liberated. The envoy in chains was “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.”

The purpose of the apostolic letters was not to formulate a pattern for our pattern is a person. Peter wrote to the Christian slaves, “For to this end you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). The context shows that the purpose

of Christ was not to bring a new religion or a systematic theology to mankind, but to develop a character in harmony with the divine nature—a character which would spontaneously react to every external situation and do so in harmony with God’s design. Since the pattern is a person and the law is love, when the saints exemplified the proper character they were commended and when they did not they were reprimanded, rebuked and encouraged to alter their conduct in conformity to his life. The purpose of the letters was to call men back to the pattern of the divine nature as exemplified in Christ Jesus.

Take the first letter addressed to the Corinthians as an example. They were divided over men who had special gifts and over the special gifts which men had. Paul did not lay down the law to them. Instead, he showed that to boast of men was inconsistent with their call.

“Consider your call, brethren” (1 Cor. 1:26). The source of life is not in our association with each other. “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord’” (1. Cor. 1:30). Division among brethren is an exhibition of the lower nature. “Can you not see that while there is jealousy and strife among you, you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature?” (3:3).

“There can be no other foundation (for Christian unity) beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself” (3:11). It is important to catch the significance of this statement in its context. The letter is not the pattern of unity at all. It does not propose to specify a foundation upon which Christians can unite. The foundation has already been laid. No one, not even an apostle, can lay another foundation than Jesus Christ himself. Men who belong to Christ should not divide over anything which belongs to all of them. “For though everything belongs to you— Paul, Apollos and Cephas, the world, life, and death, the

present and the future, all of them belong to you— yet you belong to Christ, and Christ to God” (3:22, 23).

As men divide over gifted men only when they forget their allegiance to Jesus, so they divide over the gifts men have only when they forget the principle of love for each other. The answer to the problem of division over men is to reaffirm Jesus as the center of our life. The solution to the problem of division over gifts is to re-establish love as the only true absolute in the Christian frame of behavior. “The higher gifts are those you should aim at. And now I will show you the best way of all.” That way is the way of love. “You are, I know, eager for gifts of the Spirit; then aspire above all to excel in those which build up the church” (14:12). Regardless of what gift a man possesses he cannot build up the church without love.

Look at the other problems in Corinth. The man who used his father’s wife for fleshly gratification violated every principle of love and enthroned lust. It held dominion over him. He did not love his father, the woman, himself, or the community of saints. Notice in 1 Thessalonians 4:2-9 how closely associated is the subject of love for the brotherhood and illicit relationship with the wife of another. “No man must do his brother wrong in this matter, or invade his rights” (verse 6). In Corinth, a Greek city, the apostle makes a strange allusion in dealing with the fornicator. He refers to a Jewish festival, the Passover, and does so for one purpose— to introduce our true pattern. “For indeed our Passover has begun; the sacrifice is offered— Christ himself.”

Those who haled their brethren into court before heathen judges disregarded the real law, the only law of the Christian, love for the brethren. Christians do not go to law for the law has come to them. Paul reasons that it would have been far better to suffer harm from and be defrauded by a brother, than to retaliate in a way that shamed the brotherhood and brought it into disrepute. “Indeed, you already fall below your standard in

going to law with one another at all. Why not rather suffer injury? Why not rather let yourself be robbed? So far from this, you actually injure and rob— injure and rob your brothers!” What was the standard below which they fell? It was not a law at all, but a person. “It is better to suffer for well-doing, if such should be the will of God, than for doing wrong. For Christ also died for our sins once and for all. He, the just, suffered for the unjust, to bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:17, 18).

I would that time and space permitted an analysis of every part of the Corinthian letter, and each of the other letters, from this standpoint. Paul writes about an escaped slave and sends him back, “no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave— as a dear brother, very dear indeed to me and how much dearer to you, both as a man and as a Christian” (verse 16). He is not hesitant about returning Onesimus to Philemon because, “My prayer is that your fellowship with us in our common faith may deepen the understanding of all the blessings that our union with Christ brings us” (verse 6). To the community at Philippi he exhorts, “Let your bearing toward one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first” (2:5, 6). To the Ephesian community he writes about the follies of paganism, “But that is not how you learned Christ. For were you not told of him, were you not as Christians taught the truth as it is in Jesus?” (4:20, 21).

It is apparent to the thinking reader that the apostles nowhere set up technical legal procedures for handling the various problems which were presented unto them. We are living proof that they did not. Do we not all love the Lord? Are we not all in Christ Jesus? Why are we divided? The answer is simply that we have regarded the new covenant scriptures as a legalistic framework and we have read into these letters our own interpretations. Every law needs an interpreter, or interpreting body, to apply it to specific cases and instances. The Constitution of the United States has its Supreme Court and the decisions of this august body become the official interpretation of the written

code, whether popular or not. Because the interpretation is official that interpretation actually becomes the law of the land.

If we look upon the new covenant scriptures as a code of laws we must have an official interpreter, for no law can be adapted to cases which come before it unless someone rules upon the applicability of the law and the degree of culpability involved in the alleged infraction. This is what has happened. Each party has made its interpretation official and regards it as infallible. The party interpretation has become the will of God. Partisan traditions are accepted as precedents by which to judge contemporary problems. Thus division is multiplied and strife increased.

It will be asked if the “law of love” has no interpreter. Indeed it does and the interpreter is our pattern. He interpreted by action. “It is by this that we know what love is: that Christ laid down his life for us. And we in turn are bound to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16). “The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another” (1 John 4:10, 11).

If Jesus is the interpreter who is the judge? I answer that there is both an immediate and an ultimate judge. The immediate judge is the conscience. The final judge is God who gave us both conscience and Christ. No man must ever be forced to act contrary to conscience. “This is how we may know that we belong to the realm of truth, and convince ourselves in his sight that even if our conscience condemns us, God is greater than our conscience and knows all. Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, then we can approach God with confidence and obtain from him whatever we ask, because we are keeping his commandments and doing what he approves. This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded” (1 John 3:19-23). It is for this

reason that “Those of us who have a robust conscience must accept as our own burden the tender scruples of weaker men, and not consider ourselves” (Rom. 15:1).

If in our approach to an understanding of God’s will the conscience is to be a monitor I must respect its decisions even if I do not agree with them. I do not concur in all of the decrees handed down by the Supreme Court but I respect them as a citizen of the United States. Respect for a present judicial decision does not mean that I may not labor for a reversal of it within the framework provided by the Constitution. I must defend the right of brethren to examine the scriptures for themselves and this includes a recognition that they may form certain conclusions which my own conscience cannot accept as correct. Within the framework of love I can work for an amended decision, or even for a reversal of the current one, based upon new evidence. But I have no right to deny the citizenship of those who differ any more than I have a right to affirm that members of the Supreme Court cannot be Americans if their interpretation of the Constitution differs from my own understanding of that august document.

I need not be concerned about the ultimate triumph of truth. It is not necessary that I attempt to coerce or force the consciences of others into a strait-jacket of conformity. “God is greater than our conscience and knows all.” Some day each of us will give an account to the Lord of all. “To his own master he stands or falls.” It is not my prerogative, while the Lord delays his coming, to smite and beat my fellow servants. We will be measured by how well we have manifested our allegiance unto him. We will be saved, not because of our perfection, but because of his perfect sacrifice.

Not even a divine being could write a document which would be proof against abuse by its recipients and readers. Our attitude toward the love letters of the Spirit will regulate our attitude toward our brethren. If one receives a letter from a

fleshly brother or sister he does not subject each word to a microscopic scrutiny in an attempt to determine what may be concealed in it that other members of the family have overlooked. It is assumed that the intent and purpose of such a letter is not to destroy but to augment and encourage the family ties. No one would assume in advance of perusing a letter from his parents that every word or statement would be of equal importance, although because of the relationship of love there is a pervading interest in all that is said.

We do not minimize the value of linguistic research but it is possible that one can become so involved in word studies that he forgets the Living Word. One may develop such an obsession for minute details related to the Lord's Supper that he cannot really eat the *Lord's Supper* and only partakes of the "proper kind" of bread and the "proper kind" of wine. But are we not to hold fast "the form of sound words"? Indeed we are, but the purpose of sound words is to develop sound lives and attitudes. The proper criterion by which to measure how well one holds to sound words is by the hold they have on his disposition toward others of God's children to whom the same words were written. When one makes it his chief aim in life to announce his own soundness and denounce all others, we may question if it is not the sound of his own words to which he holds fast.

Perhaps we have become tiresome and tedious in this presentation and lest we provoke your patience beyond endurance, let us summarize what we have been saying.

1. Our pattern is the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to reveal how sons of God should behave. Ours is a personal relationship with the Father, so the Son of God became the Son of man to demonstrate how the sons of men may become sons of God. We have been "chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood." Since he has "called us to his own glory and excellence," he has seen fit to grant "to us his precious

and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.”

2. The purpose of the transformation from our lower nature to the divine nature is to make it possible for us to react spontaneously to whatever temptations or problems we meet in life. When the primitive Christians did this they were commended, when they did not they were reprimanded. The design of both commendation and condemnation was to assure their conformity to His life and character.

3. The apostolic writings provide a normative basis for the Christian life in that they constitute a revelation from God as to how His children must conduct themselves to please Him. We cannot deprecate the value of the new covenant scriptures because they constitute our means of knowing what is involved in the divine nature. Every person who gives his allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ must seek to understand and implement in his own life the things taught by the Spirit.

4. While every facet of our relationship is provided for in the new covenant scriptures, not every detail or method of implementation is spelled out. The church of God is ageless and timeless. Its members must apply the principles set forth to the best of their ability and according to their discretion. This was true of the communities of the saints to whom the letters were originally addressed. It is equally true of those who read them nineteen centuries later.

5. As knowledge and discernment increases, alterations and amendments will be made, both personally and corporately, in order to conform more fully to the demands of the divine nature. Such changes should always be within the framework of scriptural reference while love abounds more and more. These changes undertaken to come closer to the ideal of the Master must not be regarded as digressive but as part of a spiritual

maturing process.

6. Since the new covenant system is not one of legalism we should avoid making the new covenant scriptures a written code of justification. This means an avoidance of judging those in Christ Jesus whose character and behavior is above censure and who demonstrate their allegiance to Christ Jesus. We should not judge the eternal worthiness of one upon his ability to see every detail as we do, lest we set up as laws or tests of fellowship, our own reasoning or interpretation. For example, it would be sinful for me to speak disparagingly of one of God's children who does not share my views relative to the use of multiple cups in distribution of the Lord's Supper. The feast is the Lord's and I must love all of his brethren who sit down at his table. They are my brethren too. If Paul could recognize as brethren those in Corinth "who came together not for the better but for the worse" surely I can revere as brethren those who do not share all of my views about externals which have no power to save or to damn. It is enough for me that "he has put his seal upon us and given his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

7. I shall not be so concerned about how much my brethren know about the written word at a given time as I am about how much they love God and the brethren at all times. Surely I want to increase in knowledge and I want others to do so, but if one could "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" he would still be nothing without love. The more I learn of God the more I will know about love because "God is love." The blueprint is not written in a book. It is inscribed on the heart by the Spirit. If I interpret the Book to inspire hate or to create and justify division, I have missed the whole point. I must believe everything God said and I must believe in Him whom God sent.

Let me once more assert my conviction. I love the revealed word of God as contained in the new covenant scriptures. It is a light to my path and a lamp to my feet. But to pervert it from its

divine purpose is to take the staff intended to support one who walks with his brethren and turn it into a club to kill the brethren with whom it is intended he should walk. Signposts are to be followed and not jerked up as weapons to kill other pilgrims. God has not given us a blueprint for an institution, but a green light to proceed in the Living Way, and I am ready to go.

If God wills, it is our intention, in the next issue, to discuss very openly and frankly, some of the practical implications of what we have said about “the pattern.” Please remember that we will love you as sincerely if you cannot concur with what we write as if you do! Like Paul in his letter to Corinth I can truly close with the words, “My love be with you all in the Lord Jesus.”

A Pattern of Freedom

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[Abstract]

How shall we regard the new covenant scriptures? Do they constitute a body of laws, statutes and regulations, which spell out in minute detail every action we must perform in order to please God? Or, do they provide for us a revelation of the divine mind in love, enunciating certain great principles consistent with the exemplification of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ? The answer to these questions will determine our whole philosophy of Christian behavior. The way we treat God's children depends upon our concept of God. If we regard him in the role of a stern and inflexible lawgiver we will make the church a law-enforcement agency with about as much warmth and human compassion as one would find in the criminal investigation bureau of the local police station. If we regard him as a loving parent interested in the welfare of all of his dear ones, they will be treated with personal concern by ourselves as part of the family.

It is our conviction that the new covenant scriptures were never given as an arbitrary pattern in the sense that the term "pattern" is commonly used. It is a mistaken view at this juncture which has created most of our strife and division. Men have attempted to ride roughshod over the consciences of others under the false impression that they demonstrated fidelity toward the Father by laying a heavy hand upon His children. The love letters of the Spirit have been converted into an iron

scepter and a whip of scorpions. The apostolic epistles have been regarded as a yoke to be riveted about the necks of the humble by clerical despotism. It has been made to appear that God has placed his subjects under martial law.

In no sense do we deny that the scriptures are the word of God. We respect both their origin and the authority for which they were given. We are not skeptical of the word of God but we are a little skeptical of the way it is employed by a lot of people in the world, some of whom are our brethren in the Lord. We do not conceive of the new covenant scriptures as supplying a rigid pattern for every exigency that can arise among us. If our view is correct, then to force them into a peremptory and rigorous role is to wrest them from the real purpose for which they were bestowed upon us by a beneficent God. It is actually, to run counter to the divine will by making that which was intended to unite us a divisive instrument. Let us catalog for you certain points which we believe to be of utmost significance to such a discussion.

1. God has always sought to insure the togetherness of his people. In previous ages he did this by *law*, he now accomplishes it by *love*. The law constituted a stockade inside which men were confined. It provided unity at the expense of freedom. "Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). Such a system is not adapted to free men. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). We are not under law but under grace. We are held together, not by a wall or fence around us, but by a mutual attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews were held together by that which enclosed them on the perimeter; we are held together by a magnetic power which attracts us to a common center. They were hemmed in, we are in Him!

2. The previous covenant was written upon tablets of stone. It was a legalistic system as unyielding and inflexible as the

stones upon which the ten commandments were inscribed. The new covenant is “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3). The envoys of Jesus were “qualified to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Observe that the man who wrote the majority of the new covenant epistles positively declares that he was not ministering unto us a written code. Those who take what he did write and convert it into a code of legalistic procedure violate his very purpose.

3. The difference between God’s treatment of us and his attitude toward the people in previous ages is found in the maturity to which mankind has attained. While his people were children they were no better off than slaves. They were under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. When the time arrived, God sent forth His Son to redeem those who were under the law, so they might receive the adoption as sons. Confinement under law is slavery, freedom in Christ is sonship. “So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.” Few of us have recognized that if we seek to be justified by law we forfeit our inheritance. Only those free from law are sons, only sons are heirs! To convert the grace of God into a law is to deprive us of the very thing we hope to achieve by such action.

4. The coming of Christ made the difference! “The law was our custodian *until Christ came*, that we might be justified by faith.” Sin separated man from God and broke up the personal relationship which existed between them. No law could ever be devised or imposed which could restore such a relationship as sin destroyed. Law can confine, keep under restraint, and act as a custodian. It can point out and identify sin and provide a penalty for it but it cannot give life to the dead. Reconciliation had to be provided by a person. The law was holy, but God was not in the law reconciling man unto himself. The righteousness

of God is not revealed in a law but in persons. Since the new covenant is written upon our hearts, we are the righteousness of God. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, . . . For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:19, 21).

5. Many of us seem incapable of accepting fully the implications of such transcendent glory as that with which God invests us. We still want to view it through a veil. Consider the import of the statement, “But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian” (Gal. 3:25). “The law was our custodian until Christ came.” The very function of law is custodial. If we make of the new covenant scriptures a written code, or law, then we are under a custodian. We have merely swapped a previous custodian for a present one. When the apostle says we are no longer under a custodian, he simply means we are no longer under a law. We are free in Christ Jesus. To take the apostolic injunctions, admonitions, and commandments, and forge these into a law for justification and righteousness; to impose them as a written code to restrain men and hold them “in line,” is to create another custodian as certainly as we do it.

6. All law requires interpretation and he who interprets it regards his interpretation as the law, or its equivalent. He may, or may not, enforce his interpretation, depending upon his temperament, zeal, and inclination, but whether he does, or does not, enforce it, he will regard those who do not conform to his interpretation as violating the law. The hope of securing proper reverence for all who are in Christ Jesus lies in a recognition that we are not under law at all, but under grace. “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (Rom. 7:6).

Such a noble concept when enunciated always brings a

question about the rise of anarchy. A goodly number of brethren trust themselves and distrust everyone else in Christ Jesus. They regard themselves as the divinely appointed “keepers of orthodoxy” and “detectors of heresy.” By some indefinable means God has blessed them with such profound wisdom and proficiency in judgment that they can relay to the rest of mankind the official meaning of the messages from the Throne. They cannot furnish others with an unadorned copy of the sacred writings and trust them to understand what they read. They must embellish it, explain and emphasize it, and then “withdraw” from those who do not accept their interpretations as the divine *law*. It is obvious that they are much more frightened by anarchy than by tyranny, unless someone seeks to do unto them as they do unto others!

As for myself, I am not too fearful of any who are in Christ Jesus and who seek to walk “not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” I rather suspect there would have been faithful children of God if I had never been born. Our real problem is that we have filled our congregations with people who know nothing about the indwelling Spirit and we have to continue “cracking the whip” over their heads to keep them coming and contributing to the support of their taskmasters. Let us not forget that only slaves require taskmasters to be “urgent, saying, ‘Complete your work, your daily tasks’” (Exo. 5:13). Loving sons will do the wish of their Father, prompted by an inner feeling which no law can create.

Let us think together about the origin, nature and purpose of the new covenant scriptures. I consider these to be an expression of the will of God through chosen ambassadors. The Father gave this revelation to an age of the world which had attained its spiritual majority. This maturity was reached by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our pattern. It was not the intention of God to provide for us a detailed program for every spiritual activity. This would have been a reflection against those who were no longer slaves, but sons. Moreover, the

Father desires to preserve the individuality of His children as does a careful earthly parent. It was never His desire to stifle our rational powers but to channel them. Can we agree on the following suggestions relative to the new testament writings?

1. The apostles wrote to deal with specific conditions which had arisen or which threatened. They did not specify the exact method in every instance for application of the principles they set forth but entrusted this to the sanctified hearts and consecrated commonsense of those to whom the messages were addressed. The administration of those same principles in our own age must be subject to the discretion and judgment of the saints.

2. The problems confronting the Christian system change from one generation to another and vary in different localities on the earth. However, all such problems resolve into questions of relationship and neither the categories of relationship nor the principles governing such ever alter. Any problem of relationship is always complex and latitude must be allowed in working it out. There may be more than one manner of approaching such a problem and we should not conclude that the employment of a different approach necessarily negates or destroys the relationship.

3. While the adaptability of divinely enunciated principles to our present state and needs is a demonstration of superior wisdom, their validity does not inhere from this, but from the authority of their author. As the source of all power, God is greater than any principle he has announced, and since every principle has been stated to secure a certain objective or goal, that objective is superior to any method which may be employed to attain to it. This in no sense affirms that the end justifies the means but it does warn us that when we become so involved in discussion of the means that we lose sight of the goal, we are sacrificing the greater for the lesser and our sense of values is distorted. It is astonishing how many debates have been held

about modes and means by those who never pray together about the real goal to be achieved by such means.

4. In carrying out the divine purpose the primitive saints made use of such means as were at hand to accomplish their objective. Their employment of such means was not intended to be either exhaustive or exclusive, and we are free to make use of such means as we have at hand in implementation of the divine will, provided that the use of such means is not forbidden, or is not contrary to some other feature of the divine will as expressed. The selection and utilization of such means must be by the function of human judgment and in its exercise one is accountable to the Master and not to other servants. In other words, one slave cannot sit in judgment of another slave. "To his own master he stands or falls." A member can exercise his own judgment to reject the judgment of another but he cannot reject the other Person. There is a difference in disagreeing with a man's judgment and in judging him as being unworthy of the family relationship.

5. Inasmuch as the Lord lived among men at a given place on the globe and at a given time in history, some of what he said, and some of what the apostles wrote, was directly related to conditions then and there obtaining, and must be understood in that frame of reference. All truths are equally true but they are not all equally important. The relative importance of certain truths may fluctuate in different eras and in diverse areas. A truth is not always equally relevant in every spot on our globe. Certainly that which is essential to being is more important than that which merely contributes to wellbeing.

6. The method of implementation of principles or truths may vary according to custom, environment or tradition. Such variations need not be assessed as a denial or abrogation of the principles, nor should a specific method be bound as uniformly required regardless of circumstances or conditions. We suggest two examples, one related to an act of Jesus, the other to an

apostolic declaration, which may serve to illustrate our point.

1. Washing of Feet

“Before the feast of the Passover . . . Jesus . . . rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.”

Due to the terrain over which they traveled, and because men wore sandals or walked barefoot, it had long been a custom to set a basin of water before a guest that he might bathe his feet. Eventually this act was performed by a servant, or slave, of the household, who washed the feet of the visitor and dried them with a towel with which he had girded himself. In view of this, it came to pass that when a host wished to demonstrate special honor to a guest, he personally performed the task, thus relegating himself to the role of a menial in kneeling before the guest.

Jesus enforced the point of his action with the words, “You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” He then added, “A servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

Upon the basis of these words some followers of Jesus in an age and place remote from his time have felt called upon to practice the washing of feet as an ordinance to be observed by the congregation. We do not speak derogatorily of any sincere attempt to be like Jesus when we mention that the observation of such a practice in our present circumstances may have exactly the opposite effect of that intended. No longer is the custom

followed generally in the homes and lives of the people. It has completely lost its significance in our culture. To offer a guest a basin of water and to volunteer to wash his feet as soon as he arrives in the home would only insult him.

Under such circumstances to make a ritualistic observance of such an act may actually engender pride in partisan orthodoxy. There is a possibility that a group may place so much value on externals as to say, "Lord, we thank thee that we are not as other men, even as those who do not follow the example of our Lord in the washing of feet." In such case the washing of feet may become a matter of sectarian glory and not be an exhibition of the humble spirit at all. It was the very casualness with which our Savior arose and carried out the ablutions which made his deed so outstanding. To arrogate to such an act a creedal significance and to bind it upon men as a ritual when it has lost all of its original instructive value is to foster partisan vain-glory. This is the ever present danger in all ritual observances. It is easy to *display* our faith to men rather than *dedicate* it to God from the heart.

No thoughtful person will deny that we need to recapture for our age that sense of genuine humility and concern which characterized the life of Jesus. We live in a world where "luxury's vile contagion" has affected the whole social structure. It is an era of braggadocio, bluster and boasting. From our international relationships to our local traffic congestion, it is often the biggest bluffer who wins. This makes for glorification of the artificial and superficial. It is precisely at such a time that men are tempted to place their trust in externals as the means for demonstrating intangible qualities. A ritual may be created which, when performed, will enable them to say, "That takes care of my humility for this week— or year." Under the group pressure to participate in such a ritual for ritual's sake, the truly genuine man may be the one who declines to do so.

You will note that we spoke of the humility which

characterized the life of Jesus. We need to develop that type of character which will respond in proper fashion in every circumstance that may arise and which will exhibit itself in any recognized custom or procedure. It is absurd to suppose that if Jesus visited America this year that he would insist upon washing our feet as an indication that we should be in subjection to each other. He would adapt himself to our manner of existence and give force and meaning to our recognized modes of expressing values. He would demonstrate the difference between empty forms and vital requirements. The record of John is not authority for washing feet but for cleansing hearts of pride. The former was but incidental to the latter. He who takes such an incidental and exalts it into a law mistakes the purpose of the divine example. The grave danger is that one may give such emphasis to the incidental that he neglects the essential.

2. The Feminine Veil

In the same category, as we see it, is the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. No doubt there are a good many things the apostle had in mind which we may never clearly understand. Without a complete knowledge of the circumstances which called forth the letter we can only surmise its direct application. It seems that certain of the sisters in the congregation were praying or prophesying without wearing a veil and this practice was bringing reproach upon them and upon the community of the saints. We think that a careful study of the passage will show that its central theme is the subordination of the woman to her husband. There is no degradation involved in this for “In the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor. 11:12).

In Greek cities, as well as in Eastern cities, it was the custom for women to wear a veil in public. This was a visible token of the fact that the woman recognized a status of social

subordination. It was a badge of authority on her head (verse 10) and was indicative of that becoming modesty associated with the finest quality of feminine grace. Only the women of bad character who depended upon their physical charms to enhance their profession appeared without the veil. Apparently, the women in the community of saints at Corinth, mistaking certain aspects of the apostolic instruction, concluded that Christianity was intended to disregard all customs and abolish existing social structures. Their action created a scandal in the eyes of the heathen populace and if persisted in, would have rendered the divine message useless and ineffective.

Christianity did not have as its goal the destruction or abrogation of social customs. It did not interfere with funeral customs, wedding customs, or legal proceedings. True, it has had an effect upon traditional patterns by the gradual dissemination of truth about human relationships, but Jesus and his apostles were not “social reformers” in the current usage of that term. Therefore, those who were Christians conformed to social customs which were without moral significance when considered objectively, but which would have made those who disregarded them liable to moral stigma.

A great deal of writing has been done about whether or not the women in our society must wear a veil in the public services of the saints. It is not at all my plan or intention to enter into controversy over the matter. I have read all that has been written on all sides of the question and which has been available to me. In most instances, brethren are willing to settle for women wearing a hat (quite a gaudy creation in many cases which would really have created a stir in Corinth), or a token covering of some sort. I do not believe that either modesty or subordination is judged by our society on wearing a veil or hat. Since the criterion no longer obtains it would be a useless gesture. The veil is not now regarded as a badge of authority and a woman who appears publicly without a veil does not thereby dishonor her husband.

The principle of subordination will last as long as time continues. The distinctive differences between the sexes must always be recognized and maintained. We must differentiate between improving a state and abolishing it. Christianity has worked as a constant leaven to elevate woman from the plane of a chattel to that of a companion, in all the fulness of meaning and dignity attached to this latter term. But the overt demonstration of subordination will vary in different social structures, and to bind upon all and sundry, traditions which have been out-grown or lost their significance, is merely to rivet a yoke which God has not authorized. To use as a measuring rod of modest behavior a standard which has been discarded or outgrown would be like insisting upon paying your taxes with a *denarius* because Jesus did. Standards of social judgment change as do those of coinage.

Of course the real danger lies in the literal adoption of a thing as a symbol of a state of heart. Modesty and subordination are inner qualities of Christian character. It is possible that we may become so involved in discussions about a covering for the head that we fall into the error of supposing that the mere act of wearing such a covering constitutes the proper attitude. Thus a woman may sit in a public meeting with a hat on her head and a heart full of hate and revolt toward her husband. It is one thing to wear a veil in a society where it is universally regarded as a symbol, but a wholly different thing to wear one in conformity to a legalistic procedure where society is wholly oblivious of whether one has a hat on or not. A short time ago I was in a congregation where a husband affirmed in class that he did not believe a woman needed to have her head covered in the public assembly. His wife disagreed. After the service she said to me, "You just wait until I get him home!" She wanted to get her hat off before she started in on him.

The new covenant scriptures are authority for a recognized standard of subordination. "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of

Christ is God.” They are also authority for conformity to recognized social customs which publicly demonstrate the Christian character of modesty and humility. But the church of God is universal. It is ageless and timeless. It must exist in every clime and amidst varied cultures and traditions. It must not be made the excuse for that arbitrary action whereby one nation or people impose their own culture and traditions upon all others. It is a little difficult for some people to separate their loyalty to Jesus from their patriotism!

Preserving Our Freedom

Perhaps it would be well for some of us who think we have a correct understanding of the relationship of foot-washing and veil-wearing to Christian character, to take a second look at some of the other things which we regard as vital to fellowship with God and Christ Jesus. It could well be that we are making the word of God authoritative in matters where it was not intended to be such at all. Few of us would be willing to place the scriptures in the hands of others without some commentary and explanations accompanying them. Our plea for the authority of the scriptures means that they are authoritative “as explained by us.” The real authority, in the final analysis, is not the scriptures at all but our interpretation. If you doubt this you need merely to observe what happens to a man who questions the orthodox and traditional viewpoint. Regardless of how godly in character he may be, or how much he loves and values the word of God and seeks to emulate it, he is driven forth as a pagan and publican.

We do not trust the rest of God’s children as much as he trusts them. He gave them his revelation unencumbered by our interpolations and footnotes. Apparently thousands of saints died for the faith, and in the faith, before we came along. They did not have the advantage (?) of our erudition and interpretative skill. They were forced to go to the stake with only

the Bible for comfort and without one of our debate books clutched in their hand. In this generation the word is authoritative as it has been digested, collated and officially explained by partisan heroes and editors. If we immerse one into Christ we hand him a Bible and give him a subscription to a partisan journal. It is the word as filtered through that journal which is authoritative. The word as explained in other and rival journals is not authoritative at all.

What sect or party would simply send the word of God, the revelation of God's will, to enlightened parts of the world, and tell men to obey its teachings? The American Bible Society has as its mission the publication of the holy scriptures in the language of the people, without note or comment, and most of those who plead the loudest for the authority of the sacred scriptures would not even support it in its mission. They would not announce its programs and they might "withdraw fellowship" from any who supported it. The word of God is not enough to save the world. Men go to the very countries from which they import many of the Bibles they carry and announce that they are taking the gospel to them for the first time.

The Wycliffe translators are doing a tremendous job in translating the scriptures into the languages of tribes which have never had the Word of God. Young college students are devoting their lives to going among savage peoples, living with them and sharing in their lives. They exist among these primitive folk in almost indescribable conditions. Through use of tape recorders and other means they capture the gutturals and grunts which constitute a mode of communication and from these construct an alphabet which may be employed in translating the message from heaven into another language of the world. It is doubtful whether we would support a brother who felt called upon to labor with the Wycliffe group. The constituents do not all belong to our party. It would be considered a compromise to give the heathen the message of God unless it was sponsored by "a faithful church."

Yet, every translation of the sacred scriptures that we so readily employ in our own study and services, was the result of painstaking labor by men who were not connected with “our movement.” We do not hesitate to use the King James Version despite the fact that it was commissioned by a foreign monarch and those who gave it to us were all connected with the Church of England. We will stand before an audience and read the J. B. Phillips’ translation, but if Phillips himself visited us we would not call upon him to stand up and read it in our hearing. We are not averse to warming ourselves by fires that others have kindled provided the others do not attempt to stand with us and warm themselves.

It is true that we spend *hundreds* of dollars sending the inspired scriptures to other lands but we spend *thousands* in sending uninspired men along to give the natives our “official” slant on the Book. This also includes the transportation of our feuds and fusses into remote areas where they have little relevance. We must be sure that primitive headhunters not only find Jesus, but also find out the correct way to break the bread, so they will be “loyal.” In no sense am I criticizing the ambition of humble men to go into all of the world and take the gospel to all who are enslaved by sin. However, most of the brethren are confused by what constitutes the gospel over here. It is not to be marveled at that they manifest the same confusion *over there*. It is for that reason we have sent our missionaries from a half dozen different kinds of “Churches of Christ” to create division *in Christ* of those who were relatively united as heathen. Our history is replete with incidents in which the long arm of American domination has reached across oceans to exercise control over congregations made up of simple people whose humble and unadorned devotion to the Master should shame us in our theological sophistication and pride.

I am not certain whether it is God’s revelation or orthodox American Church-of-Christ-ism which is our real authority. Many of our missionaries must keep one eye fastened on heaven

and the other on Texas or Tennessee. The reaction in the latter places to any move or teaching will generally determine “heaven’s will” in the matter. This is not written sarcastically. It is a simple statement of conditions as I view them. Our brethren are sincere but they are victims of a system of exclusivism and legalism unparalleled in our age outside of the Roman Catholic Church. They employ the same tactics of enforcement— boycott, censorship and excommunication. They are frequently coerced by the very clergy to whose support they must contribute under threat of eternal damnation. All of this is done (as by the Catholic Clerics) in the mistaken view that such an attitude is pleasing unto God.

Our real mistake was to confound the church of God with the restoration movement launched by Presbyterians and others on American soil. This has led us to think of Christianity in our age as a sort of American possession to be shared with less fortunate regions of the earth. That it is a kind of “white man’s religion” is evident from the attitude of many in the United States who will contribute copious sums to take the gospel to Negroes in Africa while refusing to allow them in their meetinghouses over here. Our hypocrisy in refusing to develop the kind of character Jesus came to reveal, while at the same time insisting upon the authority of divine revelation, ought to prove to us that Pharisaism is not dead. “The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do, for they preach, but do not practice” (Matt. 23:23). When we send missionaries to other lands it is not to share with them what is *ours* but to take to them what is also *theirs*.

It is rather astonishing how we have learned to “explain away” those things in the sacred writings which we do not wish to accept or practice. Take the “holy kiss” as an example. Here is something for which we have repeated command of the apostles. In addition to the commands we have the actual example of the primitive saints in conjunction with an apostle (Acts 20:37). We

need not depend upon a “necessary inference” with regard to it. The last half of Romans 16:16 is very precious to a lot of us. “All the churches of Christ greet you.” But we have a clever way of evading the first half, which says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

The average “Church of Christ preacher” when confronted with this, seeks to evade its force by ridicule. He may say, “It’s all right with me if you want to kiss me provided you don’t chew tobacco or dip snuff.” Or he may arouse levity by saying, “I’ll let you kiss me if you insist on it, if you’ll let me smell your breath first.” This approach to what the apostle may have written as tears streamed down his cheeks, is unworthy of one who professes to be a teacher of God’s will. If the word of God is our pattern in every particular, and if what the apostles wrote to the congregations, constitutes an exact absolute guide for every Christian action, why do we dispense with this command?

The truth is that the strict legalist can neither laugh this off nor scoff it out of application. If the new covenant scriptures constitute a specific law, compiled as a written code, the holy kiss is obligatory upon saints today. When the legalist explains it away he forfeits in the process that which is vital to his “blue print” concept. When it is stated that the command is to greet, the regulation is expressed by the word holy, and the custom was by a kiss, and that we are free to substitute our own custom as practiced in our culture, it is evident that the scriptures *must* be interpreted (for this is an interpretation), and they *may* be interpreted (at least in some instances) in the light of contemporary customs. Who is to be the Supreme Court and determine which scriptures can be so regarded and which may not?

In my own concept of the divine purpose, which is simply that Jesus is our pattern and the development of a character consistent with the divine nature is our goal, this scripture

presents no problem. If Jesus went among the Chinese he would shake hands with himself in greeting; if he went among the Eskimo people he would rub noses with them. Whatever he did would be holy and free from guile. The Christian character must be exhibited in various forms and methods dictated by the recognized customs of the time and place. While it is true that we are free we must willingly submit to regulations and restraints. In this we exercise our freedom.

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law— though not being myself under the law— that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law— not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ— that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

The Law of Christ

What is the law of Christ to which Paul alludes? Note that it is one which obligates a free man to become the slave of all and to do this voluntarily to achieve a greater cause— to win the more. The law of Christ is not the new covenant scriptures for these had not been written when Paul declared himself to be under it. Moreover, Paul was beheaded before all of these scriptures were written, so if they constituted the law, he was never under it in its perfection.

Any law acts as a restraining force for this is the nature of law. It restricts one in the exercise of freedom by bringing him up short when he reaches its bounds. What law is it which makes the welfare of others superior to your own and thus compels you

to sacrifice your own inclinations in order to win others? On this point there can be little question. “You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:13, 14).

Love is the law of Christ. In one of his final discourses, Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples” (John 14:34, 35). Love is the only absolute within the Christian framework. Augustine was correct when he declared, “Love God and do what you please.” This is a perfect law of liberty. The exaltation of any other law or code must always infringe upon this. I have never known anyone who regarded the new covenant scriptures as a legalistic code who did not violate the law of love — the law of Christ. When anything except love becomes law, love is restricted or excluded by that thing, for that is the function of law. It is only when love itself is the law that it is uninhibited and unrestrained.

The new covenant letters were not written to comprise a legalistic code for the people of God. If they were, the community of saints existed for some sixty years without part of that law and for two decades without any of it. The epistles were written to commend those who observed the law of love (e.g., the one to the Philippians), or to call back to that law those who deviated from it. Nothing is clearer from these Spirit-filled letters than the fact that Jesus is our pattern and love is our law. This runs like a golden thread through all of them without exception. They constitute for us a norm of Christian behavior because they reveal how a character founded and grounded in love should react under given circumstances.

These scriptures were not written in full and imposed upon the saved ones as a law from the inception of the community of

saints. From the beginning they were under the law of Christ—love. “Dear friends, I give you no new command. It is the old command which you always had before you; the old command is the message which you heard from the beginning. And yet again it is a new command that I am giving you— new in the sense that the darkness is passing and the real light already shines . . . Only the man who loves his brother dwells in the light: there is nothing to make him stumble” (1 John 2:7, 8, 10). As difficult as it may be for those who have been reared behind a fence of legalism to admit the truthfulness of what we write, it is our conviction that it is true.

The commandments are the outgrowth of the love of the Father and they should be kept out of love for Him. It makes all the difference in the world whether you regard these commands as the statutory requirements of a police state or the uplifting requests of a loving parent. Jesus did not say, “If you fear me you will obey my commands,” but “If you love me you will obey my commands.” Legalism is always concerned with the precept; love is concerned with the person. In the former, if there is any conflict between mercy and law, the law must be fulfilled regardless of circumstances. Judgment rejoices and triumphs over mercy in such a system, because it is the dignity of the law, not the dignity of the person which must be maintained.

This is not true of the law of liberty. “Always speak and act as men who are to be judged under a law of freedom. In that judgment there will be no mercy for the man who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:12, 13). The law of liberty is the law of Christ. It allows one the liberty to show mercy. No one requires mercy who keeps a law in its perfection. It is only when honest intention and purity of motive fall below the legal standard that mercy is required. The thing that makes “a perfect law of liberty” is its provision for imperfect beings. We must ever speak and act as those who will be held responsible for showing mercy. If there is a question as to enforcement of law or extension of mercy, the law of freedom

makes love for men, not love for law, our chief objective.

The translation of this passage by J. B. Phillips is a very fortunate one. “Anyway, you should speak and act as men who will be judged by the law of freedom. The man who makes no allowances for others will find none made for him. It is still true that mercy smiles in the face of judgment.” It is not amiss to cite his translation of Ephesians 4:1-3 at this juncture. “As God’s prisoner then, I beg you to live lives worthy of your high calling. Accept life with humility and patience, making allowances for each other because you love each other. Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another.”

It is our intention, in our next issue, to deal practically with some of the problems confronting those of us in the non-instrument segment of the disciple brotherhood. For instance, I believe that in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper, some have elevated certain incidentals and made of them essentials, and that this course has been divisive and disruptive. I do not intend to speak censoriously of those who have done this, because their action is simply an expression of the “specific pattern” philosophy which is generally characteristic of all of our factions. Some exhibit it with reference to certain details, while others do so with reference to other details. All of us have been guilty in certain aspects.

My intention is to help all of us to re-evaluate our current condition in the light of God’s purpose for our lives. We will gain little by biting criticism or accusation. I am not so much concerned with assessing fault as with alleviating it. We believe that all of our readers will welcome the next issue of the paper which will be sent forth “with malice toward none; with charity toward all.”

The Supper Pattern

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[Abstract]

A few years ago an American evangelist visited a congregation of saints in another land. When the Lord's table was uncovered he saw that it contained a small loaf of leavened bread. He was undecided as to whether he should partake of it, because he had always been accustomed to unleavened bread on the table. That afternoon he voiced his feelings in the home of one of the elders, pointing out that Jesus chose unleavened bread. The elder informed him that Jesus did not have a choice. The Lord's Supper was ordained in conjunction with the Passover which ushered in the feast of unleavened bread. During this time Jewish families ate unleavened bread as their staple diet. Jesus simply took the kind of bread they ate at their regular meals and consecrated it. The elder pointed out that they followed the example of Jesus and used the kind of bread that was used in their ordinary meals.

Tradition is a powerful force in moulding religious practice. So the preacher pointed out that Jesus took unleavened bread and we should do the same. It was quickly pointed out to him that when Jesus or the apostles spoke of the bread they used the word *artos*, which means a loaf, leavened or unleavened. They did not once use the word *azumos*, which is the Greek for "unleavened" in any of their instructions relative to the Supper. Jesus used unleavened bread because he was a Jew. This was the only bread at hand. To argue that no one can observe the feast

acceptably while eating leavened bread is to impeach the standing of thousands of God's children in the world, as well as to set up *as a law* that which was an incidental feature. The family should not be divided into a "leavened bread party" and an "unleavened bread party." Such factionalism is a sin.

Speaking of sin reminds us that some are so careless as to state that the Jews ate unleavened bread at the Passover because leaven was a type of sin. This is not the case at all. Unleavened bread was used to remind the people only of the haste in which they fled Egypt. "They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry" (Exodus 12:39). Moses declared, "You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in hurried flight—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 16:3). Unleavened bread had a special relevance to the Jewish passover. It has none to the Lord's Supper.

The interesting thing about the preacher to whom we referred is his attitude toward some of his brethren in the United States. He was a champion of individual cups and regarded those who insisted on the use of one container as extremists. He opposed those who advocated the use of fermented wine in the Lord's Supper as radicals. He accused them of creating division by making laws where God had not made them, yet he had no hesitancy of trying to bind his view of unleavened bread upon congregations in another part of the world. One evident feature of the "rigid pattern concept" of the new covenant scriptures is that it renders inconsistent every one of its proponents and adherents. The pattern which all of them really follow is one concocted of partisan traditions, explanations and interpretations.

Perhaps the Lord's Supper will serve as a good illustration

of how honest men divide over what they think is involved in “the pattern.” It is especially important because it was to serve as a visible witness to our oneness. The word for fellowship (*koinonia*) is actually applied to it and translated communion (1 Cor. 10:16). The record says, “For we being many are one bread and one body: for all are partakers of that one bread.” Surely if we are agreed upon any matter it should be this. The truth is that no other single item has been as divisive among us. Since it was divinely authorized as a demonstration of our cooperation, but has become the foundation for our disintegration it may furnish a clue to the nature of our trouble.

In spite of the fact that volumes have been written about the Lord’s Supper what is said about it in the scriptures can be contained in very limited space. It is not even alluded to in most of the apostolic letters and had it not been for serious controversy existing at Corinth there is no indication it would have been mentioned in the first letter addressed to the saints in that city.

Christianity has no sacred places, no sacred days, and no sacred rituals. Its only earthly sanctuary is the human heart. Here the Spirit dwells and Jesus abides by faith. Its only law is love. It is universal in scope and makes no demands that cannot be met by half-clad aborigines in the jungles as well as by sophisticated intellectuals in other cultures. While its foundation is the union of individual hearts to the Lord through the Spirit, this union creates a fellowship by its very nature. Those who are called out of the world and into Christ Jesus share in a new relationship with him, and through him, with all others who have responded to his call.

It is a *koinonia* of death and life. Those who compose it do so because they are dead to sin and are alive unto God through Jesus Christ the Lord. The watchwords of the fellowship are faith, hope and love. These sustain life in the three dimensions of which we are capable— past, present and future. Faith reaches

back to the historical event of the cross which gave value to life; hope reaches forward to the consummation of the divine purpose and gives meaning to life. Love exists in the present and gives expression to life.

The ordinances of our Lord are two in number and both are designed to manifest our relationship to God in all three temporal dimensions. God is a divine economist. He imposes nothing that is superfluous. He requires nothing extraneous. Only two ordinances are required, one to mark our entrance or admission into the fellowship, the other to signal our continuance in it. Since those who are born into a family relationship need never re-enter, the first requires no repetition; but inasmuch as the family endures, the act expressive of it is continuous and repetitious.

Baptism, as a demonstration of our trust in Jesus, is simply a direct participation in “the passion play” drama of the ages. By faith we look back to the cross and are crucified with him. Through hope we look forward to justification in his presence. In love we are raised to walk in new life, the life of love. As Jesus died for us and was raised but one time, so we need to die and be raised only once. Death brings a cessation of all past relationships and their consequences and results. Resurrection introduces us to a new relationship with all of its blessings and privileges, whether we understand them all at the time or not. Baptism is an initiatory act. It is not to be multiplied. One may be born *again* because he should sustain a relationship to both flesh and spirit, but since these are the only two relationships into which he can come he should not be born again *and again*.

The Lord's Supper

In the Lord's Supper we give constant testimony to faith, hope and love. We proclaim the Lord's death (past) until he comes again (future). We do this as a communion (*koinonia*) of

the body and blood of our Lord. This is an overt and public declaration that the called ones constitute the one body and that they are held together by the mutual ties of love. So important is this that when cleavages exist and factions are present, those who meet as a congregation cannot eat the Lord's Supper. They may partake of the ingredients, but it is not the Lord's Supper. It is not eating the bread or drinking the cup which makes our attitude acceptable unto God, but our attitude toward each other which makes eating the bread and drinking the cup acceptable unto God. "I am told that when you meet as a congregation you fall into sharply divided groups . . . The result is that when you meet as a congregation, it is impossible for you to eat the Lord's Supper."

The Lord's Supper is a public witness that we are one body, the Lord's body. As to this fact the apostle said, "I speak to you as men of sense. Form your own judgment on what I say." The implication is that there is but one judgment to which men of sense can come as they contemplate the Supper. The apostle then says that about which he wishes the judgment to be formed. "When we bless the cup of blessing, is it not a means of sharing the blood of Christ? When we break the bread is it not a means of sharing the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body, for it is one loaf of which we all partake." If one partakes of the bread as a factional function or partisan privilege, he does not discern the body at all. Instead, he regards the faction or the party as the one body, a concept which counts the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified an unholy thing and of less value than partisan conformity. Such a person, by his very eating and drinking, brings judgment on his head. "For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment on himself if he does not discern the Body" (1 Cor. 11:29).

In view of this emphasis it is astounding how men have divided over various features connected with the Lord's Supper, and created factions to advance their divergent views. Those

who have done so do not wilfully and deliberately desire to disregard the word of God. All of them want to fear God and keep his commandments. Without exception they are trying to be faithful to what they regard as “the pattern” for the Lord’s Supper as they have been conditioned to do. All read the same Bible. All appeal to it for authority for their respective positions. Each charges the other with apostasy from the truth.

Why is it that honest and conscientious men cannot see “the pattern” alike? Is it possible that there is no meticulous and legalistic pattern and that all are searching for what does not exist? Can it be possible that men have been taught that the accounts of the life of our Lord and the letters from the envoys constitute a pattern, until they are trying to read a specific pattern into the text, elevating the incidental to the domain of the essential? To be explicit, brethren have divided over the use of individual containers for one thing. Did Jesus shed his blood to create a body to contend for the pro or con of such an issue?

In general, the debaters for each side assume that Jesus provided a pattern, that they both know what it is, and that the opposition is either ignorant or sectarian in attitude. If there is a plain pattern how can honest men who love the Lord disagree about it? It will avail nothing to impugn motives or imply dishonesty. Both parties have their share of sincere people. Both have their share of spiritual delinquents. If Jesus never intended to give “a pattern” for the things involved, and the word of God was not written for such a purpose as it is quoted during controversy, the dispute is much ado about nothing, and each congregation might well determine how it will proceed without attack or reprisal from any other.

Jesus instituted an ordinance designed to proclaim his death and to be a visible testimony to the unity of the one body. Such an ordinance had to be the essence of simplicity as it would be observed by unlearned and illiterate as well as by those of advanced knowledge. It had to consist of that which was

universally known and practiced so that elaborate instruction would not be requisite. It is a tribute to the divine mind that eating and drinking, the very acts essential to the preservation of life, were adopted and elevated to a plane of spiritual significance. To make these common acts a portrayal of fellowship or communion, it was ordained that they must be performed together with others.

For generations before Jesus came, the act of feasting together was regarded as one indicative of sharing in common with others. Even the eternal state was portrayed as one in which men would come from the east and the west and sit down *together* at a table with the fathers— Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This was fellowship manifested in a practical fashion. From it came a veritable vocabulary of togetherness. For example, it is said of Jesus that, “he raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places.”

Jesus was already eating with his disciples when he ordained the Lord’s Supper. As Jews, they were keeping the feast of the passover. “During supper he took bread, and having said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them, with the words: ‘Take this; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and having offered thanks to God he gave it to them; and they all drank from it. And he said, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, shed for many. I tell you this: never again shall I drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God’” (Mark 14:22-25).

It is imperative that we remember that Jesus ordained a supper. This requires two actions— eating and drinking; and these, in turn, require two substances, a solid and a liquid. Jesus used bread for the first and the fruit of the vine for the second. Thus, Jesus ordained that we eat the bread and drink the cup. This is the ordinance and I know of none of us who disagree on anything related to it. When we eat the bread and drink the cup as a memorial to him, we have the proper motivation as relates

to *Jesus*; when we do so to proclaim his death we have the proper motivation as relates to *others*; when we do so discerning the Body we have the proper motivation as relates to *self*.

Human Deductions

Jesus did not *ordain* that we have a certain kind of bread, nor did he ordain that we use one container. It is true that Jesus personally used a certain kind of bread and I am convinced that he used but one container. These features, however, borrowed from the passover setting in which the Supper was ordained, are incidentals and not essentials. They are not essentials to our eating and drinking together nor are they essential to the threefold motivation with which we are to eat the Supper. Those who use leavened bread and those who use multiple cups for distribution of the fruit of the vine, eat and drink together as certainly as do others who use unleavened bread and one container. Those who insist upon the latter procedure as the only acceptable and valid one must do so on their deductions based upon the following postulates.

1. The *historical account* narrating the action of Jesus was intended to be a meticulous and detailed law of procedure for all times and places where the Supper is observed.

2. That which Jesus did as a Jew and because of his national relationship to the passover is binding upon Christians in their observance of the Lord's Supper. Jesus used unleavened bread because he was a Jew and there was no other bread available to him at the passover. Unleavened bread was the kind used in the regular diet of the Jews at this season of their religious year.

3. That which Jesus did incidentally, and as a matter of course, must be crystallized into an exacting law and become a criterion for judging the spiritual worthiness of others. Jesus

took a cup for the simple reason that it is impossible to pass a liquid to others without some kind of container. But the container has nothing more to do with *communion* (fellowship), than a plate upon which to pass the bread. It is eating and drinking together, as in community, that makes communion.

4. All facts connected with an historical event are equally important and are as binding as that which we are commanded to do, so that it is better to forego any expression of fellowship as the aim of the command than to be in error about some detail of method for achieving it. This leads ultimately to the view that man was made for ordinances and not ordinances for men.

No one can prove these postulates to be scriptural by quoting a passage from the new covenant writings which even implies them. Nor will it do any good to resort to the common tactic of those who do not find specific authority and appeal to the essence or tenor of the scriptures, for it can be shown that the trend of the scriptures is generally opposed to them.

They constitute a philosophy of interpretation based upon rationalization and presupposition. They represent the approach made to the scriptures and the sin lies not in having a way of approach, for all men do this, but in dogmatically equating the approach with the will of God. To do this means we cannot correct the approach without feeling that by so doing we are denying God's will. We believe the approach represented in this philosophy needs correction and we give a few reasons for thinking so.

1. It renders its advocates inconsistent for they do not apply the postulates to all actions of Jesus with the same force that they do in the case of the partisan tests of fellowship. In his attendance at "public worship" Jesus stood up to read the scriptures and *sat down* to expound or explain them. When he prayed he "looked up to heaven" or "lifted up his eyes to heaven." Because we generally stand up to speak to an audience

and close our eyes when we pray, one who followed the example of Jesus would be called an eccentric and would prove embarrassing to the average congregation. We generally insist on “doing as our Lord did,” in those things only that conform to our traditional modes.

2. We can insist that the bread in the Lord’s Supper must be unleavened while at the same time we can glibly explain away such things as footwashing and the holy kiss. We are nowhere told to use unleavened bread because Jesus did, but he did say, “Ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). We have no problem with such phrases as “Ye should do as I have done,” nor with pointed commands such as “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” These are not part of a partisan pattern.

3. We tend to ignore or disregard the fact that if Jesus adjusted his methods to the background and environment of which he was a part and made use of such means as were available to accomplishment of his design, he set a precedent indicative of his reaction to our present environment and means if he were with us in the flesh as he most certainly is in the spirit.

The Basic Fallacy

It seems to us that the basic fallacy lies in the assumption that historical accounts, or letters, written because of local circumstances or conditions (which would never have been written at all had such conditions not arisen) were intended to be made a written code of legalistic procedure and to be applied irrespective of circumstances, discoveries, or cultural growth and development. The spirit of legalism knows nothing of mercy. It can make no allowances and if the one who affirms it does make such allowances he thereby condemns his whole philosophy.

One must become as near like God as possible, but he must choose whether he will do so in the realm of authority or in the domain of love. In the first he becomes a usurper of divine prerogatives, in the second he becomes a participant in the divine purpose. The first encourages him to lay down laws with which to enslave others; the second to lay down his life to help save others. The law of God as expressed in Jesus is summed up in love which is unitive. Any attempt to enforce human deduction to the point of division among brethren is not fidelity to God but failure to comprehend the divine purpose.

It is at this juncture that brethren sin when they divide over such issues as the manner of passing the fruit of the vine to the communicants, and become a “one cup party” or a “multiple cups party.” It is no doubt useless for those who oppose individual containers to argue that there would be no division if some had not adopted individual cups, because those who oppose them are divided among themselves over various other things, some of which are related to other phases of the Lord’s Supper. Actually we are divided because we have the will to divide.

We adopt the premise that the letters of the apostles constitute a detailed law, we then proceed to interpret it as specific law, and regard ourselves as the divinely authorized enforcers of the law. When there are two viewpoints of interpretation and those who hold them begin with the idea that there must be either conformity or separation, factions are inevitable. If we were not divided over individual cups we would be divided over numerous other things, as indeed we are. It is our fallacious philosophy which is factional in its very nature.

But what can we do when brethren regard “the pattern” as requiring but one container, and others regard it as allowing more than one? Must we form two parties? Indeed not! We will not do so if we discern the Body and love all of its members. Faced with such a problem, the first thing we must do is to

utterly reject division of the family as offering any proper solution. Division is a sin regardless of whether “cups” are right or wrong. There is no scripture which specifically condemns individual containers. Those who oppose them must do so by inference or deduction. But there are numerous specific passages which condemn schism and division among brethren as a sin. We dare not negate a specific declaration by a negative inference.

Second, we must recognize the right of sincere and honest men whose intellectual attainments at least equal our own, to examine the word of God for themselves and to form conclusions concerning what they read. And we must remember that this means they may reach different conclusions than ourselves. Since we are not responsible for their conclusions we must respect our brethren even while we dissent from their deduction.

Third, we must put such matters back where they belong, and that is in the realm of congregational determination. When a congregation of consecrated saints examines the word of God with the conviction that they exhibit more fidelity to its intent by use of one container they should be respected in their decision. When such a congregation is convinced that it can implement God’s will by use of individual containers it also should be respected. Neither should be placed under censure by the other. Neither should seek to bind its deduction upon the other. The autonomy, that is, the self-government of each congregation must be maintained without external coercion.

It will be asked if division will not result from the fact that the congregations differ in their conclusions on this one matter. It need not do so. The mere fact that congregations meet in separate areas and differ in their method of passing the fruit of the vine does not of itself spell division. Unity is not based upon geographical proximity but upon spiritual affinity. It does not consist of conformity in method but of oneness in Christ. We will not divide until one or both groups become factional. If one

binds its deduction as the law of God and demands that the other accede to it as the price of fellowship, division will result, not because of what the Bible says, or even because of our interpretation of it, but because of dogmatism.

Congregations of saints should regard each other as brothers in the Lord whether they use one container or many. They should cease to brand each other as hobbyists or sectarians. They should stop hurling insults and desist from accusations of apostasy. This exhibits a spirit of carnality and immaturity wholly unbecoming to the profession we make. We need each other as the eye needs the mouth and as the hand needs the foot. Brethren who use one container and those who use multiple containers all share in the same grace of God and are in the communion of saints. They may disagree about details of expressing that communion from one congregation to another but this need not affect the communion or fellowship. The communion of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus is one thing, the mode of distributing the elements indicative of it is a wholly different thing. It is not sharing in the same opinion about passing the fruit of the vine that makes us one but the fact that we all share as branches of the One Vine.

It would be sinful for me to go into an area where brethren have personal convictions as to the use of one container and wreck their peace and wreak havoc by insisting that they have multiple containers as the price of fellowship with me. If I have faith (personal conviction) about such matters I must have it to myself under such circumstances. They are men for whom Christ died. They are the work of God. I must not destroy the fellowship which He created over an incidental as to its demonstration. The love of a man for his wife is more important than any demonstration of it, and so must be our love for one another. Certainly we should seek to grow in an exhibition of love and fellowship but first we must possess it, for one cannot grow in something which he does not have.

Obviously the problem will be greater for a consecrated brother who has a deep conviction as to one container when he is among those who regard it as an incidental matter. It seems to me that it will help us all if we cease to categorize our divisive problems as matters of faith and matters of opinion. When we do this we automatically separate ourselves into two warring camps. One is then regarded as faithful to Jesus, the other as a betrayer of the faith, based upon an honest conviction as to the thing under discussion. But fidelity to the Lord cannot be measured by such a criterion. We cannot measure its magnitude by such a rule any more than we can determine the content of the Pacific Ocean with a gallon bucket.

We have borrowed the slogan, "In matters of faith unity, in matters of opinion liberty, in all things charity." In reality, however, there are no matters of opinion, as we apply the slogan, for someone regards everything as a matter of faith which others regard as a matter of opinion. The result is that love is exhibited in nothing for fear we will deny the faith.

If we could cease to classify our divisive problems as matters of faith and matters of opinion and regard them as "matters of understanding" it would help greatly to remove the barriers of division. This would make our honest attitude toward these things not so much a matter of fidelity to Christ Jesus as a matter of spiritual growth. One can be tolerant of others in their lack of maturity when it would be difficult to make allowances for those who are untrue to Jesus.

Faith could be left in the realm of acceptance of Jesus and trust in Him as our Savior and Lord. Our differences in Him would be distinguished from questions about Him. There is a distinction between what is requisite to come into Christ and what is necessary to grow up into Him in all things. We should not make every issue in life as important as life itself. Certainly every problem of association is not a matter of life and death. No partisan peculiarity about the method of showing the Lord's

death must ever become as vital to us as the fact of that death and its purpose as relates to fellowship.

Brotherhood in Christ

To some of my brethren it is very important to use only unleavened bread. To others it is very important to use only fermented wine. Still others regard the manner of breaking the loaf or the use of one container for the fruit of the vine as important. There are other details which are also regarded as important by many saints. Now none of these things are unimportant to me, but they are not important to me because of any intrinsic value I attach to them, but simply because they are important to my brothers— all of whom are very important to me because Jesus died for them. I cannot be unconcerned about anything which concerns one for whom Christ died. It is not that these things give validity to brotherhood or that brotherhood gives validity to them. Rather it is brotherhood which gives validity to *the concern* which brethren feel for such matters.

The personal scruple a brother holds may not seem important to me, but the brother who holds it, or is held by it, is important to me. The word *scruple* literally means “a little pebble in the shoe.” It does not take a large pebble to cause a brother to limp. Nothing may appear less important to me than a small rock in the shoe of a companion, but, at the same time, nothing appears of more significance unto him. I am not obligated to respect the pebble, nor to limp because he does. But if we are brothers I will sympathize with him and will slow down my pace so we may walk together. It may be urged that I should help him remove the pebble. This is true, but there may be complications.

I certainly am not free to remove it by force, and it may be that I shall first have to convince him that it is a pebble which is causing the difficulty. Moreover, even after it has been removed,

the effect of it may linger for a long time. One who has had a rock in his shoe all his life may still limp for some time after it is gone. This is especially true if he has always been taught that such a condition is normal and the only correct way to walk. Long after a scruple has been intellectually discarded it may be emotionally retained, and I may have to walk slowly in order to walk lovingly with my brother. Under such circumstances it will help me immeasurably to realize that Jesus is my pattern. I can receive my brethren as He has received them— *and me!*

The Lord's Supper is not observed in memory of a law, a precept or a code. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." My task is not to lay down laws governing the Supper but to live up to the love which it entails and embraces. I shall not conclude that brethren cannot remember my precious Lord when they deviate in some detail from our method of observance. I shall allow Him to be the judge as to motivations and achievements of their hearts.

If my human judgment causes me to err in my attitude toward maintaining brotherhood, I prefer that it is in the direction of mercy and leniency rather than slanted toward stringency and implacability. The former will make it possible for Him to be merciful unto me in the Great Confrontation when I shall need mercy the most. I am no longer concerned about answering to a small clique of my brothers for an exhibition of love to all. I am concerned with answering to Him about limiting to some of my brothers that love which He exhibited for all. He is my pattern! Let me close with this quotation from David Lipscomb:

The truth is, I have always tried to keep free from partisanship in religion and other things, and am glad to recognize and encourage every truth that exists among any people, and, instead of repudiating it, I would make it a starting point to lead on to other and fuller truth. In doing this, there is no compromise of truth; but we follow the example of Jesus and Paul, who seized and encouraged

every truth, found among Jew or Gentile, as a ground and starting point whence to lead them to more and fuller light. Paul quoted and approved what of truth heathen poets and philosophers taught, and sought from this truth to lead them up to fuller truth of God.

Sources of Our Patterns

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[Abstract]

I find myself almost reluctant to write on the subject which clamors for discussion in this issue. I could wish that I might deal with what I regard as a mistaken view of the apostolic letters without reference to particulars because I have no desire to be critical of my brethren. Certainly I do not wish to appear supercilious. I realize that I am lacking in knowledge upon many things. I have much to learn.

But fairness and candor demand that I not speak in riddles or dark sayings. And this requires that I deal in specifics and provide examples of that to which I allude. I am convinced that all of the two dozen factions designating themselves as “Churches of Christ” feel that they have discovered and correctly interpreted “the pattern” set forth in the new covenant scriptures. They have argued and debated with one another, made charges and counter-charges, and all have thought they were loyal to the Book.

The fact is that our brethren defend some twenty-five different “patterns,” and each disputant is thoroughly convinced that his alone is *the pattern*. The absurdity of men standing up and quoting the same passages, and finding justification for their varied and opposite views while proclaiming that the Word is so plain that even a blind man can see it, seems lost upon everyone except those thinking persons who are outside our movement.

I do not think that God intended to give us detailed prescriptions for every minute detail, so I can look with a great deal of charity and compassion upon those who become so worked up they cannot see their own inconsistencies. But this cannot cover up the fact that the party spirit is a work of the flesh and betrays men into all kinds of false ideas and unlovely attitudes. The great danger is that when men believe that God provided a specific detailed pattern they must find one for everything. To fail would be to charge God with neglect or imperfection.

I can recall how we used to stress that the priests and Levites had to count every tent peg in the tabernacle and they were responsible for seeing that everything was in its place according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount. We compared that to our life under Christ and reasoned that we had to get every item just so, or fire would come out and consume us. But we overlooked the fact that the Lord pitched the true tabernacle, and not man, and we were not given a pattern in advance at all. Our heart is now the holy place. It is the sanctuary of our God. Our only pattern is a person!

Since God did not provide us a pattern we set in to provide him one. That is where we went astray. We took the apostolic love letters and warped them into a code of jurisprudence and immediately started judging our brothers and measuring them by ourselves. What we call “the pattern” is not really derived from God’s revelation at all. We created the pattern and then searched the scriptures to find justification for what we already had.

Most of our patterns consist of a combination of elements derived from three sources: (1) Cultural and environmental factors; (2) Reactions to other religious groups whom we consider as apostates or compromisers; (3) Misconception and misapplication of scriptural passages lifted from their contextual setting and used to establish our preconceptions and

presuppositions.

Cultural Factors

Few of my readers will remember it, but I well recall what a hassle arose in our movement when men began to stand for prayer. In the simple rural climate of our day, men always kneeled, regardless of which sect was conducting the revival. It was argued that no one would address an earthly monarch on his throne while standing proudly before him, and how much more should we kneel before God. Tracts and booklets were written on “The Posture of Prayer.” I have some of these in my files even yet.

The scriptures were searched for passages showing that men kneeled and elaborate answers were prepared to refute those who declared that the bodily attitude made no difference. The three guns in the battery of restoration weapons—command, apostolic example, and necessary inference—were all trained on the dissenters. Prejudice was aroused by insinuating that pride was gripping men’s hearts and they were becoming too haughty to kneel. Suspicion was created when it was pointed out that standing for prayer originated among us in “city churches” where men no longer wanted to risk soiling the knees of their expensive tailor-made trousers.

I remember a debate in which one disputant triumphantly read, “And Solomon *stood* before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven” (1 Kings 8:22). The respondent could hardly wait to reply, “And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from *kneeling on his knees* with his hands spread up to heaven.” Touche!

Once, in our little rural congregation, an evangelist came

from elsewhere to hold a “protracted meeting.” At the very first service he asked “Pappy” Davis, who always sat on the front seat, to lead in prayer as the audience stood. The old brother was equal to the occasion. “Sir, I’d rather kneel,” he said. And kneel he did while the whole audience, with the exception of the preacher, followed suit. It threw cold water on the whole meeting. We realized that we had “a liberal” *standing* in the pulpit.

One thing that kept the controversy heated up was the fact that the *Gospel Advocate*, commonly referred to as “The Old Reliable” was all for kneeling. David Lipscomb repeatedly pointed out that Smith’s Bible Dictionary and other authorities “tell us that standing in prayer was introduced among Christians first on Easter.” That did it! We never thought of questioning Smith’s Bible Dictionary and other authorities. We’d as soon have questioned the Sears-Roebuck catalog. We never learned who the other authorities were, but that made no difference. If Brother Lipscomb said they were authorities they were. There was no other authority who could identify other authorities with such authority as Brother Lipscomb.

And when we learned that standing in prayer was first introduced on Easter, we became convinced it was simply another part of the world conspiracy of the pope to capture us lock, stock and barrel, by infiltrating our pure worship with a pagan ritual, such as standing to pray. We already knew that every monastery had a well-stocked arsenal of weapons, and that the Knights of Columbus constituted a secret order to train men for the great “takeover” when the Protestants were sufficiently hoodwinked and myopic. Not being either, some of us thought the Lord might work it around so they would kill each other off, and leave the whole landscape to us. So those brethren who stood to pray and stubbornly resisted the pattern were regarded as dangerous and unstable. They were the victims of German rationalism and “the social gospel,” whatever that was.

All of this seems hilariously funny to our young people today, but it isn't so humorous to me. I cannot forget the great and good men who were attacked clandestinely, branded and hounded by those who were so inferior to them both intellectually and spiritually, that they were not even in the same class. I recall how patiently some of them reasoned and taught when the subject came up. I also recall the anger and ire of those who blurted out, "If we don't intend to follow what the Bible says about praying let's just tear everything else out of it and go to hell with the covers clutched in our hand."

All of that is gone now! We no longer fight stained-glass windows, spires, and carpeted aisles as signs of digression and worldliness. Some of our buildings even have crosses on them now. Once these things were symbols of departure from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. In every meeting they were assailed. We were warned to flee from them as Lot fled from Sodom. They were "the unfruitful works of darkness." We were not to have fellowship with them, but rebuke them.

We now stand in prayer without fear or qualm. The world about us changed and we changed with it. The Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, ceased to kneel in their "revivals," so we quit kneeling in our "protracted meetings." Of course, what really happened is that with increasing enlightenment from God's word, and with better education, we began to see that ours is a life in the richness of the Spirit, and it is not necessarily affected by things. Not even such things as bodily posture.

It suddenly dawned upon us that we were fighting about aisle carpets, kitchens and baptisteries in "church-owned buildings," and we had no pattern for "churchly real estate" at all. The first "church house" was not erected until 280 A.D., and then it was put up by some pretty shady theologians. It is very doubtful that it had a sign "Church of Christ— Romans 16:16" over the front door. No one knows where we got *the pattern* for a million dollar structure with the approved sign on the

landscaped lawn. But it is a part of our westernized culture. We are doing our best to transport it to Africa and Japan so they will be sure to have the right name and the standard sign. But, at least we stand while praying for Africans and Japanese!

Sectarian Reactions

One of the amazing things about the restoration movement is the fact that it so rapidly developed an exclusivistic sectarian attitude which shut its adherents off from meaningful contact with even friends and relatives. Originally, the principal proponents of the restoration ideal were Presbyterians. They maintained a good relationship with all believers in the Son of God about them. The thought never occurred to them, as they gained new insights, to break their association with others who had not yet arrived at the same conclusions.

Late in life Thomas Campbell declared that philosophically he was a Calvinist and expected to remain such until he died. This made no flurry among those who came into the restoration movement holding other philosophies, for they could clearly distinguish between the good news which all held in common and their doctrinal deductions. The problem arose when lesser men, riding high in the saddle, began to draw lines and make tests of union and communion out of opinions and interpretations.

By the time of my birth the partisan spirit was rampant. Men equated the restoration movement with the church of God, and to be in the church one must be in the new party in the community which had adopted as a distinguishing title, "Church of Christ." The preachers in demand were the "sect-killers." Some of them were tobacco-chewing, or snuff-dipping, Bible-quoting individuals who announced from the pulpit that they were going to "skin the sectarian preachers and tack their hides on the barn door with the bloody side out." Every night a

challenge was issued for debate and notice was given that the sects were going to be run out of the community.

We were generally poor, limited in education and resources, and it gave us a sense of status to realize that our little group was the special object of God's love and mercy, and that, in the last great "roundup in the skies" we would march triumphantly through the pearly gates while our neighbors, from whom we borrowed flour or sugar when company came, would all be driven to the flaming pit. They had hearkened to their preacher instead of to ours. I do not think we worried that so many would go to hell. It was God's will. They deserved to be punished because of their ignorance. We could not tolerate ignorance!

One result of all this was a development of a pattern as a reaction to sectarians. Those who came in with us under the kind of preaching which was popular knew little about grace and mercy. They knew less about the Holy Spirit. They were not so much led into "fellowship with the Father and Son," as into membership with the Church of Christ. They were fleeing from sectarianism, renouncing everything pertaining to it. Anything which "sectarian churches" practiced was wrong, or they would not practice it. We purposely chose other methods which thereupon became right or we would not have adopted them. All that remained was to search the scriptures to find where God authorized what we were doing. I do not recall any failure to find endorsement for our action.

A good example has to do with the method of "taking up the offering." Few among us in this day recall what a furor was caused in some areas when brethren began to pass offering plates. Early restoration congregations never did this because it was sectarian. The sects all "passed the hat." This was literally true. In my childhood days the Baptist and Methodist folk would send their collectors among the audience passing felt hats lifted from the hat-rack for the purpose. When they became a little

more stylish they passed collection plates with felt noise-arresters to deaden the sound of dropping quarters.

When time came for this “item of worship” in our congregations, the brothers and sisters all marched up to the front, singing “There’s An Eye Watching You,” and laid their contribution on the Lord’s Table, returning to their seats by the way which they came. It was quite a procession. Sometimes there was a great deal of milling around in front when they converged on the table from two aisles. It was further complicated in some places by the fact that the marchers all took time to shake hands with the brethren on the front seat as a sign of fellowship.

As we grew in number and in sophistication, and began to crave less noise and more solemnity, changes began to be advocated. These did not come easily. Brethren mounted the pulpit to show that God had a pattern for doing everything, and we dare not deviate. We were reminded that the ark had to be made of gopher wood. We were again told of what happened to Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire. When such brethren were asked for scriptural grounds for marching up and laying their money on the table they were undaunted.

One of them pointed out that the symbol on all of our currency was the eagle, and that we were plainly taught that, “Where the carcass is, thither shall the eagles be gathered together.” He elaborated upon the fact that a carcass is a dead body, and the body of our Lord was upon the table. A schoolteacher spoke up and asked, “How will this affect other nations and countries where they have a lion or unicorn on their coinage?” The speaker was stumped. He probably did not know what a unicorn was. It had never occurred to him that God had a people elsewhere. America was the promised land, the special area of divine favor.

Later, when we were discussing the problem, one skeptic referred to the argument and said that in order to justify the

speaker, the passage would have to read, “Where the carcass is, thither shall the buffaloes be gathered together.” He never gave more than a nickel at a time, and our five cent pieces all had a lordly buffalo engraved upon them in those days.

I was present in one meeting where a preacher who specialized in lecturing upon and explaining the Revelation letter was asked to express himself about the encroaching sectarianism as evidenced in passing the hat. He arose and said that he was perfectly willing to abide by the scriptural pattern. Here was his argument. “My Bible says upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store. Where is him? Him is Christ, and his body is on the table. My advice is to continue to lay by him. If God had wanted a hat passed, he would undoubtedly have said so, for they had hats when Jesus was on the earth.”

Gradually we began to overcome our provincial and parochial attitudes, and to outgrow our fears of becoming like sectarians. We began to get bathrooms in our homes and the demand began to be heard for rest rooms and toilet facilities in our meetinghouses. When children began to sleep in their own little beds at home we began to put in nurseries and cry-rooms like the sects. Our babies became angry and screamed as loudly as sectarian babies, even in holy places.

And so it came to pass that we began to take up the collection in shiny plates. It did not come easy. In one congregation, two families I knew, always passed the plate by in cool indifference. After dismissal they marched up and laid their money on the table. They were resolved that when Jesus came he would find faith on the earth. After about a year of this they decided that their action bespoke stubborn pride. They “went sectarian” like all the rest of us.

This all seems ridiculous to the “new people” and the “now generation” among us, and of course it is. But please do not get

me started. I think I can point out several things to which we cling simply because of a reactionary policy. These constitute a negative pattern on an affirmative basis. In decades to come perceptive minds will look back upon our day and conclude that we had not come completely “out of the bushes” in 1970. It is a little risky for any generation to assume that it has arrived while all others have departed.

The Lifted Scriptures

I doubt that anyone would argue against the proposition that when men resort to misuse of the scriptures to sustain a position, that position is indeed weakly defended. And the more scriptures must be wrested from their context to make a point seem plausible, the weaker that point is. In spite of the fact that hundreds of my beloved brethren will disagree violently with what I say, I must confess that I do not think God intended to provide a pattern for the way a congregation should give instruction in the word.

It is my very honest conviction that the debate about classes and Sunday schools is over an artificial issue. It is a “tempest in a teapot,” a contrived issue without foundation. The fact that it has been blown up to such proportions as to rend the saints of God into two actual camps is almost unbelievable. I have several debates on the matter in the long shelf reserved for such volumes of controversy. I have a drawer full of tracts and booklets on both sides. I have read them all. Some of them I have read more than once, some many times.

I have tried to be honest in my reading. As always I have sought to place myself in the place of the writer or speaker, to understand his motivation as well as his reasoning. And I always come up with a feeling of sadness that such matters must become walls between brethren and barriers to sharing. I do not really take one side or the other. I cannot see that the Holy Spirit

created either by anything he said or intimated. I rejoice when the Word is taught, whether with classes or in one group. Those who teach in either fashion are my brothers.

Once when I was in Georgia a brother attended one of my studies. He insisted on going to the same place that I went for luncheon. He wanted to share with me a great truth he had found. After years of preaching he had come to see the full force of Paul's statement in Ephesians 2:6, "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us . . . hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places." Paul was laying down a principle which made it a sin to have classes. The "heavenly places" were the houses devoted to worship. Here God ordained that we sit together and not divide the assembly.

For a little while I thought he was joking, making a parody out of foolish arguments he had heard. Then I saw he was dead earnest, presenting this as undeniable proof that classes were sinfully wrong. I pointed out that the context was wholly out of line with his view and told him I was "sitting together in heavenly places" with Christ while lying on my bed or standing on the street corner. He became intensely worked up because I did not have sense enough to distinguish between sitting, standing or lying down.

Years ago, out in Kansas, a brother came to talk with me about the grave sin of dividing into classes to study the Word of the Lord. He quoted for me, Deuteronomy 32:2, where God says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." He contended that we should teach as it rained, showering it upon every one and letting the little ones assimilate what they needed and could get, while the older ones drank in more. I asked him if he thought that the mode of teaching was the point at issue with Moses. He thought it was the very reason the passage was included in Deuteronomy. God foresaw there

would be people like myself who would take little children aside to teach them and he “showered” his disapproval upon such a method through Moses.

I would not think of debating with my brethren on the so-called “class question.” To me there appears to be nothing which should command such time or effort. I do not think God is concerned with whether we teach in one class or a dozen. In our primitive one-room meetinghouses it probably would have been better to study in one group. It was difficult to concentrate with four classes going at the same time, especially with wasps flying around, or an occasional sparrow flitting about just over your head. But this was also the day of one-room public schoolhouses. When better school buildings were erected and more efficient educational methods were discovered we simply appropriated them and made them applicable to Biblical pedagogy.

I can honestly say I am not perturbed by the oft-cited fact that the Sunday-school movement began with Robert Raikes, and not with the apostles. I have no doubt that this great and generous man established the first such schools at Gloucester in 1780, as a means of furnishing both secular and religious education to children whose employment in the factories made it impossible to attend weekday schools. I am glad that he did what he could for these poor waifs who were chained like galley-slaves to the whirring looms.

I suspect that God wants us to discover new ways by which to make his truth known to the culture in which we labor. Just as the economic state in England in the last half of the eighteenth century gave rise to the Sunday-school movement, I think our own will probably gradually discard it. I will not mourn its demise as I do not deplore its inception. It is simply a tool devised to fit a need. Other and better tools will have to be created to get our task done in this age. In many places the standard Sunday-school is childish, immature and invalid. It is a place to retreat from reality by monotonous mouthing of

irrelevant material.

The fact that the apostles did not advocate this approach is of little real significance. They simply adopted the methods of teaching then in vogue and employed them without intent to bind them irrevocably upon all ages and climes. The synagogue was primarily responsible for the system which was continued in the Messianic communities. That system was not intended to be a pattern but a practical expedient for that time and place. None of us know how Paul would outline the work if he could return to Louisville or Lansing in our day. We must do our best to meet the demands of our day and to supply the deep needs of men and women whom we daily meet, using such tools as are available unto us.

So long as brethren think that God intended to provide us a microscopic pattern with all details filled in, we will be searching through our factional microscopes and arguing minutiae. If we realize that we have general guidelines and not a rigid set of regulations we will be free to work as best we can in whatever situation we confront. If I believe this I cannot bind a “must be thus” as to a method of teaching upon others, because God has bound none upon me.

If my brethren in a certain place deduce from the scriptures that they should not have classes, I will accept this and will not try to undermine or proselyte from them. It may be God’s will for them that they work in this fashion. I will help them in every way that I can. My love for them will not be affected by the method they use to teach his blessed truth. Certainly I will not put up some of the silly and ridiculous arguments about when “the worship” begins and when it ends, that have been advocated and indulged by partisan class defenders in the past. Such nit-picking is not for me!

If my brethren in another place sincerely believe they can best instruct those who come to them, through use of classes, I

will accept this as God's will for them. If they ask me to teach in any group I will share what I have learned and seek to edify those who listen. I will gain nothing by whetting their prejudice against brethren who do not have classes. I shall seek to help them overcome such feelings and regard others of God's children with love and kindness, allowing them the liberty to work in the manner that commends itself to them as best.

I believe that a great part of such problems stems from an anti-intellectual attitude which resulted from our frontier heritage. We were afraid of men who broadened their intellectual capacity. I can recall when a man was suspect who had even a lesser college degree. Formal education belonged to the world, the realm which one must not love or court. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." We ridiculed those who were not satisfied to remain untutored without realizing that such ridicule was a subtle form of praise for those whom we could not confine in our own narrow caskets.

This was what caused simple brethren among us to oppose with such venom "uninspired literature" in our corporate study. Even little children must be taught the Bible only. No colorful aids could be used. Anything printed within the leather covers was acceptable, including concordances, dates or dictionary. It did not come from "another book." As always, this created a lot of casuistry. Much of it was freely practiced by the preacher's who cried loudest and longest about usage of uninspired helps.

Men who would not dare to take a volume of *The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus* into the pulpit, could copy from it and quote from it as part of a sermon outline. There was a difference made between a printed book and a hand-written copy of some of its contents. It never occurred to us that there was not one bit of difference between what a preacher said orally, and what he would include in a quarterly which he wrote. The sects used quarterlies. That placed them under a ban for "the Lord's church."

There are some factions among the heirs of the restoration movement to this very day whose members are discouraged from reading anything not produced by “loyal brethren,” that is, by men approved by the party “somewhats.” In some cases there are so few men who are qualified to write that many of the members never read anything except the partisan journal which is the official mouthpiece. A great deal of the space is taken up in each issue reporting a weary round of “gospel meetings” by the same preachers, men who have been approved by the editor, and who will indulge in back-patting for one another. There are generally articles dealing with the “major issue,” written by some who want to prove they are still sound, and rehashing the same worn-out and frazzled arguments based upon a misunderstanding and misapplication of the same scriptural passages.

Such factions become inbred in their thinking. They develop a kind of sterility. They dare not think fresh thoughts. They abdicate the human family to take on the nature of parrots. The only thing which keeps them going is the flurry caused when someone learns something new and worthwhile and is “written up” as a liberal by the defenders of the status quo. These groups are seeing a gradual erosion of their forces. Young men and women can no longer engage in the kind of dishonesty which causes one to close his eyes to facts in order to remain “high and lifted up” on the sectarian totem pole.

There will come a great realignment of our forces which will ignore the battle lines of yesterday. Young people are coming to realize that most of the tests of fellowship have no validity at all. They are activities in absurdity. Brethren will gain the courage to reject the narrow and provincial limits prescribed for the kingdom of heaven by religious politicians whose financial and social well-being depend upon keeping Christians apart.

The Holy Spirit will come to be recognized as the divine

agent to promote “peace on earth to men of goodwill.” The great crises which demand the best all of us can give will drive us to find the path to unity. More and more we will come to see that God has not imposed upon us a rigid and stereotyped pattern, but has given us guidelines within a historic situation. We must use these as a starting-point. We must work toward maturity within their framework.

I am moved to insert here a statement by Fenton John Anthony Hort, in his book entitled “Lectures on the Early History and the Early Concepts of the Ecclesia.” Dr. Hort is best known as a collaborator in the Westcott and Hort *New Testament in the Original Greek*. Will you thoughtfully read the following?

In this as in so many other things is seen the futility of endeavoring to make the apostolic history into a set of authoritative precedents to be copied rigorously without regard to time or place, thus turning the Gospel into a second Levitical code. The apostolic age is full of embodiment of purposes and principles of the most instructive kind, but the responsibility of choosing the means was for ever left to the Ecclesia, and every Ecclesia, guided by ancient precedent on the one hand and adaptation to present and future needs on the other. The lesson-book of the Ecclesia, and every Ecclesia, is not law but history. (The Ecclesia, pages 232, 233).

We are coming to see that, in many cases, the pattern we have espoused is not derived from the sacred scriptures at all. It is merely an unwritten creed, hallowed by usage and hardened by debate. As the Word is read and searched through eyes from which the scales have fallen, there will dawn on the consciousness of students that the whole so-called pattern for our two dozen minor sects has been conjured up in the imaginations of men, being read into the scriptures rather than found in them.

Members of the Church of Christ should face up to the

question of what the apostle Paul would do if he returned to earth and came to the United States. With which of our partisan factions would he identify or “place membership”?

To which partisan journal would Paul report his preaching tours? Which one would he join as a staff writer? The Gospel Advocate? The Firm Foundation? The Old Paths Advocate? Gospel Tidings? Gospel Guardian? The Christian? The Christian Standard?

On which college lectureship would he participate? Abilene Christian College? Florida College? Would he address the North American Christian Convention? The World Convention of Churches of Christ?

Would Paul and Silas create a separate and exclusive patty over Bible classes, individual container’s, support of Herald of Truth, or instrumental music? Would they set at nought a brother over orphan homes? Would they destroy a brother for whom Christ died over the use of fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper? Would they fracture and splinter the heirs of heaven into clashing clans and rival parties?

Would they spend their time emphasizing the same issues which we elevate above the cross and count as more worthy than the blood of the Son of God?

Is it not time to crucify within our hearts that work of the flesh which causes us to hold aloof from so many thousands of God’s precious children, and to build bridges across our senseless chasms? Let us ignore our silly walls and barriers. Let us cross freely back and forth through them. Why should we perpetuate the stupid and asinine feuds into which our father’s were lured by the siren call of pride and ambition. Why should we continue our futile and farcical clashes, martialled for civil war by the sound of rival trumpets?

Let me make it clear again to all who read this, that I am

in the glorious fellowship of the Spirit, with every child of God in this whole wide world. No partisan leader will con me into believing that he alone has discovered the key of all knowledge and that his faction has a copyright on the real Simon Pure, unvarnished truth of heaven, to the exclusion of all others. I shall allow no one to do my thinking on earth who cannot be responsible for it at the judgment. This is my declaration of independence, and “if this be treason, make the most of it!”

That Glorious Generosity

Mission Messenger (June 1970)

Volume 32

[Abstract]

“He planned, in his program of love, that we should be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ— that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of his which has made us welcome in the everlasting love he bears toward the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:4, 5).

1. *The plan.* It is a source of great assurance that we are part of an infinite design. God did not bring us to our present state by a trial-and-error method, or as the result of a divine experiment. The earth is not a laboratory in which God tests theories, but part of a universe specifically designed for those of us who inhabit it. The community of saints is not an afterthought or an expedient but a fellowship designed for our spiritual growth toward maturity. It is obvious that the omnipotent one will not allow his plan to fail. As the apostle wrote to the Philippians, “I feel sure that the one who has begun a good work in you will go on developing it until the day of Jesus Christ.” We are not part of a fly-by-night venture doomed to explode in disappointment.

2. *The purpose.* The relationship of creator to created can be quite mechanical and even cold, but when God made man in his own image he envisioned having a family. God is love and love must be shared. It is active, not passive, and seeks a response that is warm and reciprocal. God could not truly be a

Father without offspring, and he purposed in love that we should be adopted as his children.

When we think of adoption, we automatically think of legal proceedings in which an outside authority transfers a child from one guardian to another. This is not a correct representation of what happened in our case, for God simply accepted us in his Beloved. That is why the process is sometimes referred to as adoption and sometimes as a new birth. Adoption has to do with God's action on our behalf, birth is our response through delivery into the family circle.

3. *The praise.* Man is a disciple, a learner. One of our mistakes is in speaking of one who became a disciple at a certain time, as if this is a one-action proposition which is over with the initiation. This is not correct, for one is always a disciple while he lives. It is a perpetual relationship. Our responsibility is to learn to praise, and the object of our praise is God's glorious generosity, the best description of the word "grace."

It is very difficult for those of us who are caught up in the human predicament to understand the wonders of grace, because we are selfish and restrained. We try to water down the concept and dilute it until we can explain and confine it, because our nature is opposed to it. In spite of this the scriptures break through our mental barriers with such passages as these, and we catch a glimpse of generosity so free and unbounded that it can only be described as glorious. This is the subject of our greatest praise.

4. *The perfection.* God's plan reaches its culmination in the welcome extended to us to share in eternal love. This is possible because we are justified through grace. To justify means to declare or pronounce one guiltless. We are not guiltless because of anything we have done, or because of anything we have abstained from doing. We are simply counted as guiltless because of that grace which accepts those who cease to trust in

themselves and their own righteousness and trust unreservedly in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

When one is in Christ God does not see him as a guilt-laden sinner, for his own sin has been laid upon Christ, and atonement was made for it at Calvary. God beholds Christ and his sinlessness, and if we are in him his righteousness is imputed unto us. We have none of our own, but that eternal love which is bestowed upon the Beloved becomes our heritage as well because we are in him. All praise for the glorious generosity which makes this possible.

The Money Pattern

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

The members of the Churches of Christ have been taught that in the new covenant scriptures it was God's intention to provide for us a blueprint with meticulous specifications governing every item of corporate praise and life. They have conceived of our highest aim and chiefest duty as being the careful scrutiny of that blueprint to determine the divinely perfect law of procedure and the implementation of the exact course in our lives. It has been constantly held forth that this is the only foundation for scriptural unity and upon no other basis can oneness ever be achieved.

Unfortunately for such a postulation, candor requires an admission that it has produced the very opposite result. There are now two dozen different kinds of "Churches of Christ," and each one of these believes that it has discovered and adopted the pattern, while all of the others are either too liberal to care for it, or too ignorant to understand it. Which of these more than twenty separate factions has recaptured "the scriptural pattern," so that its adherents can be in the favor of God, while all others are to be damned for their obduracy or imbecility? Which is "the loyal group?" Which is "the faithful church"?

Why is it we are divided into warring tribes? Is the blueprint so obscure that it cannot be seen? Is the language so ambiguous it cannot be understood? A united chorus composed

of every faction proclaims that “the way is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” Does one party have a corner on the intellectuals in the disciple brotherhood? If so, which one has collected all the brains? Are all of the honest brethren in one faction? If so, which one has all of the men of integrity? Which twenty-three, or so, are composed wholly of scoundrels and reprobates?

Why are we divided over the pattern in scripture? Our strife-torn schism-ridden groups cannot answer. I suggest that the reason we are divided over the apostolic pattern is because there is none. We have been pursuing a will-o-the-wisp, a nebulous invention and figment of our own imagination. Our pattern is a person, and the purpose of scripture is not to involve us in surveying areas, marking out plots, and measuring boundaries, but to bring us to him in a vital relationship which is known as eternal life.

Our problem lies in the fact that we are hooked on the blueprint idea, and because we believe it must be there we infuse it into the scriptures. Every one of our parties declares it has the blue-print, and every party has a different one. The partisans in every group have marked out a trail of passages which they have followed in journals and debates until they can cold-trail in the dark and never miss a crook or turn, and there are a lot of both!

It is astounding that brethren in the Lord can sign propositions for debate and affirm that two positions diametrically opposed to each other are scriptural. Frequently the wording reads “The scriptures authorize,” and on Monday and Tuesday nights they authorize one thing, while on Thursday and Friday nights they authorize the opposite. Wednesday night there is no discussion in order to permit all of the interested ones to attend prayer meeting at “the loyal church.”

If it were not so tragic and sad it would be laughable to see how brethren locate their patterns in God’s Word. A good

example is in debate on the use of classes in teaching. In one such discussion the affirmative located classes in the order observed in creation, the feeding of the five thousand, and the instruction of the twelve men in Ephesus who knew only the baptism of John. Although the man who thus reasoned was one of the chief debaters in the segment, he referred to his opponent as one of a group of “third-rate preachers, uneducated, untrained and riding a hobby so they can be the biggest men in their bunch.”

Men must resort to this kind of unscrupulous quibbling so long as they hold that the purpose of the apostolic letters was to spell out in detailed fashion the method by which we were to carry out God’s will in all ages until our Lord returns. They can never walk in the Spirit, but always in the letter. And where there is no letter they must provide one, else they cannot walk at all. In the final analysis, and carried to its ultimate, this will mean the rejection of every means for disseminating the truth which was not available in Palestine during the time of the Caesars. And this means fossilization!

We have been the victims of *eisegesis*, rather than the recipients of *exegesis*. The last word means to get out of the word what has been inspired, or breathed into it of God; the first to inject into it one’s own views and explanations. It makes no difference how sincerely our brethren desire to follow Jesus and to please God, it still remains that they have devised and bound upon others unwritten creeds and done so under the guise that these are authorized by the sacred scriptures.

In spite of the fact that I know in advance that I shall invite vitriolic attack in partisan journals I am going to illustrate what I mean by pointing out the fragile basis upon which a recent split has occurred in the ranks of believers within the “Churches of Christ.” The point at issue has been dubbed by such terms as “institutionalism” and “centralization.” Although there are many ramifications, the fight has been primarily over whether it

is scriptural to support orphan homes, homes for the aged, etc., out of the treasury, when such eleemosynary institutions are not the sole work of the local congregation and under its oversight. Allied to this is the question of whether it is scriptural to send contributions from other congregations to a congregation in Abilene, Texas, which produces and supervises Herald of Truth, a radio and television program which is a propaganda medium for Churches of Christ.

In oral and written debates, as usual, brethren on both sides have been driven to enunciate extended views which, in some instances, have become tests of orthodoxy in the faith. It is now alleged that it is wrong for a congregation to take money from its treasury to help any person who is not a member of the Church of Christ, although individuals may aid any one at any time. A side issue has been the question of providing kitchens in the “church buildings” and eating within these corporately-owned structures.

In many areas the community of saints has been divided and rival meeting-houses erected. A constant barrage of attack has been maintained on the air waves. Families have been riven by the civil war, debates held between brethren and the factional spirit crystallized into a concrete work of the flesh. Those who oppose the institutions are referred to as “antis” and hobbyists, those who endorse them are branded as “liberals.” Dire predictions of the future are made by the prophets in both camps.

Each faction has its own partisan periodicals, its own colleges, and its own brotherhood. Each maintains its sectarian recognition and its sectarian exclusiveness. The party “lectureships” feature only “sound men,” with the soundness being measured by the degree of adherence to the party line, as judged by the “somewhats” who have maneuvered themselves into a position where they can control policy at least on a relative scale.

Preachers on both sides believe they are in harmony with God's plan and purpose, and that the scriptures authorize what they are doing. Both sides profess to be able to give "chapter and verse" for their position, and frequently they both give the same "chapter and verse." Not being allied with either faction it is possible for me to look at all of these struggling brethren with a great deal of compassion, and to assess the real problem without the emotional involvement.

A perceptive observer will soon recognize that the whole thing centers around how a community of saints may spend its money, and I am quite convinced that the real hang-up stems from a mistaken view of both groups over what constitutes worship of God. Both believe that worship has been reduced to a series of acts performed on the first day of the week, one of which consists of giving money into an institutional treasury to be dispensed by certain functionaries without consent, or even approval of the expenditures by the contributors.

Unwarranted Assumptions

I trust it will not shock you if I say that the entire thing may be a mere cobweb constructed of gauzy filaments of human imagination. In the first place the word "worship" is never once applied by the scriptures to anything we do on the Lord's Day morning. The term "acts of worship" is not in the Bible. The word of God knows nothing of the expression "the worship." It was dreamed up to designate a legalistic arrangement of which the Holy Spirit said not one word. The idea of "five items of worship" as the divine plan, has been sucked out of a factional thumb.

Pursuing the thought further, the concept of a public collection from the members of the body every Sunday is based upon an interpretation which may be as full of holes as a sieve. It results from taking a specific instruction for meeting a historic

emergency, and elevating it to a general and universal law, which is then bound as the will of God on a weekly basis. Let us study 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and see what it really includes.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Out of this has grown a whole flock of assumptions which have been bound as dogmatic requirements. The giving of money every Sunday is an act of worship, or one of the “five items of worship.” It is a sin to take up a collection at any gathering of the saints other than on the Lord’s Day. Every one is under command to give or he will be judged as falling short of his duty. There must be a “church treasury” and a “church treasurer.” Money placed in the “church treasury” cannot be expended on the needs of “outsiders” but must be given only to the saints.

I challenge this whole system as a creedal fabrication read into God’s word. It is a clearcut example of what happens when men institutionalize the work of God. I want to deal with this doctrine which has been devised, openly and without fear of what men shall do unto me. I want my readers to see how easy it is to be brainwashed by tradition.

This was a special collection. It was *the* collection for *the* saints at Jerusalem. When Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem for the appeal to the apostles and elders on the subject of circumcision, and the question was resolved by a compromise, James, Peter and John urged them not to forget the poverty-stricken Judean saints. “Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I was also forward to do”

(Galatians 2:10).

Thus, it came about that sometime later Paul urged congregations in the Greek world to gather up what they could that it might be conveyed to Jerusalem “to minister unto them in carnal things.” Accordingly he gave instructions to the congregations in Galatia, and later repeated them to the saints in Corinth, advising them as to the best manner of handling the situation.

If this was an “item of worship” why did the apostle not bind it upon these congregations when he planted them? Why did he let them go for several years without saying a word about “systematic giving,” and then only mention it when a special occasion arose? Do you realize that there is not even a hint that the congregation at Corinth ever “passed the hat” from the time they began meeting until they received the apostolic letter? Do you realize that everything they collected was turned over to Paul and his co-laborers to be taken directly to Jerusalem? Do you know there is not even a suggestion that they ever collected another penny after this time?

A lot of my brethren are great advocates of “the authority of silence.” If God specifies a thing there must be no deviation, no addition, no substitution. Now, nothing is clearer than the fact that 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 specifies that the collection laid by in store upon the first day of the week was for the poor saints, and was to be taken to Jerusalem. On what ground can men justify taking part of the money which they affirm is collected under this specification, and use it to purchase elaborate meetinghouses, parsonages, automobiles, and just about any other thing they want. Don’t write and give me “the line” that is used to explain it. I already know the whole casuistic bit! But brethren who can parlay “poor saints” to include a million dollar building, landscaping, and a minister’s salary, ought to have no trouble getting one “little instrument” into singing. The fact is that the argument on silence can always be bent to include

what we want to get into it, and then snapped back to flip out what we do not want. There is nothing in all of our history which has been quite so downright deceitful as the so-called “law of silence.” The “law of exclusion” always exempts what we have or want.

The truth is that there never was a command of God to place money in a “church treasury.” The word “order” is from *diatasso*, to appoint, arrange, enjoin, charge, etc. As Albert Barnes puts it so succinctly, “It does not mean that he had the authority to *tax* them, or that he had *commanded* them to make a collection. But that he had left directions as to the best *manner* and *time* in which it should be done. The collection was voluntary and cheerful in all the churches.”

Writing about the very same matter, Paul says plainly, “I speak not by commandment” (2 Corinthians 8:8). In spite of this, I was taught all of my life that we are commanded to lay by in store every Sunday. Actually, the collection of which Paul wrote was a spontaneous desire of the givers. He simply wrote to tell them the best way to take care of the matter. “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution of the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Romans 15:26). If this was a “certain contribution” which the brethren determined to send, on what grounds do men reason that it was a perpetual and continuous practice to take up a contribution?

Paul said that the brethren in Macedonia actually prayed him with much entreaty to receive the gift, and take upon him the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. There probably never was a contribution taken except to meet a need, and the people who contributed knew in advance what the need was and gave to meet it. All of this talk about “giving of your means” every Sunday as a legalistic requirement of heaven and to build up a bank account for the institution is just so much froth dreamed up by the religious Establishment for the perpetuation

of its own image! Don't get fighting mad at that until you think awhile.

The Church Treasury

It has always been assumed that Paul was instructing the brethren to bring money to a public gathering each Lord's Day and hand it in to be placed in "the church treasury." This is not as certain as many preachers would like to make it sound. The book says for each one to "lay by him" in store. The Greek for "by him" is *par eauto*, and indicates that the laying by is to be done at home. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, plainly says, "by him, that is, at his home." *Green's Lexicon* just as plainly puts it, "with one's self, at his home." The term is closely associated to the original in John 20:10, "Then the disciples went away again unto *their own home*."

Faced with the overwhelming evidence of the original term, the commentators have generally sought to be honest in explaining the passages in the light of the apparent meaning. This is so in spite of the traditions of the religious world, and in spite of the questions that are sometimes raised. I propose to give you the result of a little of my own research, although time and space will not permit of my going into the matter thoroughly.

Albert Barnes writes: "Let him lay up at home, treasuring up as he has been prospered. The Greek phrase, 'by himself' means, probably, the same as at home. Let him set it apart; let him designate a certain portion; let him do this *by himself*, when he is at home, when he can calmly look at the evidence of his prosperity." Those who are interested in pursuing this investigation should by all means read further in *Barnes Notes on the New Testament*, and note his attempt at modification.

In Meyer's *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, the author translates thus: "*Kata mion*

sabbaton, on each first day of the week. *Par eauto*, at home. *Par eauto titheto*, cannot refer to the laying down of money in the assembly. Let him lay up in store at home whatever he succeeds in."

G. G. Findlay, B.A., in *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, says: "Verse two refers to the rule previously laid down for Galatia; On every first day of the week let each of you by himself (at home) lay up, making a store (of it) whatever he may be prospered in."

F. W. Grosheide, Th.D., in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, writes: "Upon the first day, i.e., on every Sunday. The reference is not to the church services but to a personal assignment which everyone had to perform. But the fact that Paul speaks of the first day of the week and calls that the day for the collection implies that Sunday was destined for the special service of the Lord. Paul trusts the Corinthians; he does not ask them to hand in their collection on a weekly basis, they are allowed to keep the collected money and thus little by little a sufficient amount will be saved up."

Dr. Herman Olshausen, in his *Biblical Commentary*, says: "Certainly it may not be inferred from this passage that collections took place among the congregations on the Sabbath, for it was Paul's intention that each should make a suitable contribution at home."

R. C. H. Lenski has a rather lengthy discussion of the passage in his *Bible Commentary*, as follows:

The term *logia*, "collection," is used only here in the New Testament, but it was discovered in the ostraca and the inscriptions found in Egypt and elsewhere and is there used in the sense of religious collections for the altar of a pagan god, etc., . . . Each member is to deposit with himself each Sunday the amount of his gift for that week and preserve it as a store or treasure, *thesaurizo*. The

participle completes the idea of the main verb: "let him lay by treasuring up." . . . Each member is to keep the growing amount by him, *par eauto*, in his own home, and is not to deposit it with the church at once. The probable reason for this advice is the fact that at this early date the churches supervised by Paul were not yet organized to the extent of having official treasurers who were duly appointed to take charge of congregational funds . . . Paul's purpose in ordering contributions from Sunday to Sunday is that, when he finally arrives in Corinth, the work may be entirely done. The plural *logiai*, "collections," refers to the accumulations made by the individuals; each would have his *logia*. The present tense *ginontai* accords with this: the collections are not to proceed after Paul arrives. Then it will be necessary that each individual simply bring in his accumulation.

Marvin R. Vincent, D.D., in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, says: "Lay by him in store. Literally, put by himself, treasuring. Put by at home."

Arthur S. Way, in *The Letters of Saint Paul*, writes, "On the first day of the week, let each of you set apart a certain portion of his profits, forming a little hoard, so that the raising of the contributions may not be postponed till my actual arrival."

F. Godet, in his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, has this: "The words *by him*, denote an act done by each in his own house, and not, as some have thought, a gift bestowed in the church and known to the giver only."

W. E. Vine in his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, writes thus: "The storing was to be private, wherever the believer lived. The amount was to be allocated by each giver according to his gains the preceding week, lit., 'whatsoever he may be prospered' (i.e., by God). No actual proportion was laid down; a tithe would be little for some, too much for others. Each would see week by week what income he had received through his calling, and store accordingly, so as to avoid immediate decisions or claiming

debts or selling goods, in order to make collections when the Apostle came.”

Marcus Dods, D.D., in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, says: “It is expressly said that each was to lay ‘by him,’ that is, not in a public fund, but at home in his own purse, what he wished to give.”

The Pulpit Commentary says: “The Greek phrase implies that the laying up was to be done *at home*, but when the money was accumulated, it was doubtless brought to the assembly and handed over to the presbyters.”

Scott’s Bible Commentary says: “Some are of opinion, that the sums, thus set apart, were brought to the treasury of the church at the time; but the words do not seem to admit of this interpretation; and if each separately laid by the sum which he purposed to give, the whole would be brought together at once, when necessary, without any trouble in soliciting contributions.”

John Peter Lange, D.D., in his *Commentary on the Bible*, writes: “*Par eauto*, at home. The phrase is therefore conclusive against the prevailing opinion that the collection was taken up in the church. It was an individual and private affair (this is confirmed by the exhortation in allusion to the same subject, in 2 Cor. 9:7, Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. —Stanley).”

The Comprehensive Bible Commentary, says: “Some of the Greek fathers rightly observe here, that this advice was given for the poorer among them. They were to lay by, from week to week, and not bring into the common treasury, that by this means, their contributions might be easy to themselves, and yet grow into a fund for the relief of their brethren.”

The Critical Commentary, edited by F. C. Cook, M.A., Canon of Exeter, has this: “Rather storing up whatever he may

prosper in, that when I come no gatherings may take place, for then will be the time not for collecting, but for producing the sum of what has been week by week hoarded at home in profits from trade.”

D. D. Whedon, D.D., in *Commentary on the New Testament*, writes: “Lay by him in store, so keeping a little savings bank at home, and bringing the whole to the church when Paul arrives.”

Despite the fact that Rome has been accused of seeking to get all the gain possible into her coffers, the commentators in *A Catholic Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, kept faith with the original as they wrote: “‘First day,’ i.e., Sunday. ‘With himself,’ by him, in his own keeping. It was not then to be handed in at Mass, apparently.”

A Dissenting Voice

One outstanding commentator, while admitting that most others make the treasuring up a private affair at home, files his objection to such an arrangement. Charles Hodge, D.D., in his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, says:

Every one was to lay by himself, i.e., most modern commentators say at home, *par eauto*. Compare *pros eauto* in Luke 24:12; see also John 20:10. The direction then is that every one would lay aside at home whatever he was able to give, thus treasuring up his contributions. To this interpretation it may be objected that the whole expression is thus obscure and awkward. ‘Let every one at home place, treasuring up what he has to give.’ The words do not mean to lay by at home, but to lay by himself, i.e., let him take to himself what he means to give. What he was to do with it, or where he was to deposit it, is not expressed. The word *thesaurizo* means putting into the treasury or hoarding up, and is perfectly consistent with the assumption that the place of deposit was some common

treasury and not every man's house. If Paul directed this money to be laid up *at home*, why was the first day of the week selected? It is evident that the first day must have offered some special facility for doing what is here enjoined. The only reason that can be assigned for requiring the thing to be done on the first day of the week, is, that on that day the Christians were accustomed to meet, and what each one laid aside from his daily gains could be treasured up, i.e., put into the common treasury of the church.

I am sure that Charles Hodge will become the hero of my brethren, who generally feel that the best commentator is the one who agrees with them. We like to have our practices condoned rather than condemned, and no one is more popular than the man who tells us that what we are doing is the scriptural thing. However, I should like to speak a word of warning for those who are prepared to adopt Mr. Hodge as a "patron saint" of giving, for John Peter Lange, replied to the above, in these words:

This is well argued in behalf of the solemn observance of the Lord's Day; but we can no more change the meaning of *par eauto* than we can parallel phrases in other languages. They are idiomatic expressions for "at home" and honestly require that we should so interpret. This is the rendering which even the ancient Syria version gives it.

In one of the previous quotations, reference was made to the Greek fathers, and their interpretation of the passage. We should like to share with you the words of John Chrysostom (about 375 A.D.) in his *Forty-third Homily on First Corinthians*. His words are:

He said not, "let him bring it into the church," lest they might feel ashamed because of the smallness of the sum; but having by gradual additions swelled his contribution, let him then produce it, when I am come, but

for the present lay it up, saith he, at home, and make thine house a church, thy little box a treasury. Become a guardian of sacred wealth, a self-ordained steward of the poor. Thy benevolent mind assigns thee to this priesthood.

Have you read other versions of the passage in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4? Since it is helpful and enlightening to pursue this form of investigation, we submit herewith the verses as translated in some of them. We hope they will be helpful to you in your honest research to determine the meaning of the passage.

Concordant Literal New Testament: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, even as I prescribe to the ecclesias of Galatia, thus do you also. On one of the sabbaths let each of you lay aside by himself in store that in which he should be prospered, that no collections may be occurring then, whenever I may come.”

The New Testament in Plain English (Charles Kingsley Williams): “On the first day of the week let each of you put aside and save something from his earnings; so that the money has not all to be collected when I come.”

The New English Bible New Testament: “Every Sunday each of you is to put aside and keep by him a sum in proportion to his gains, so that there may be no collecting when I come.”

The Authentic New Testament: “The day after the sabbath let each of you put by savings as he has prospered, so that collections do not have to be made when I come.”

The Modern New Testament (George M. Lamsa): “Upon the first day of every week, let each of you put aside and keep in his house whatever he can afford, so that there may be no collections when I come.”

The Modern Speech New Testament (Richard Francis

Weymouth): “On the first day of every week let each of you put on one side and store up at his home whatever gain has been granted to him; so that whenever I come, there may then be no collections going on.”

The Twentieth Century New Testament: **“On the first day of every week each of you should put by what he can afford, so that no collections need be made after I have come.”**

The New Testament in Modern English (Centenary Edition): **“On the first day of each week let each of you put aside something, keeping it in store as he may prosper, so that when I come there may be no collections going on.”**

The Revised Standard Version: **“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come.”**

Some Observations

Whether we like it or not, there is not one indication anywhere in the sacred scriptures, that any congregation of saints ever took up a public contribution every Sunday. Obviously the congregations in Galatia and Corinth did not take up an offering when Paul planted them, or for several years afterwards, and then the language used indicates that individuals simply laid up a sum privately each week, and kept it until the apostle came, when they turned the whole amount they had saved over to him to take to the relief of the poor saints for whom they had been laying by their weekly sums.

In spite of this I was taught as a child, and even taught it myself as I grew older, that all of our giving had to be done “through the church.” We were even led to believe that if there was a needy person in the community we should give our

contributions for relief into the treasury and let it be dispensed from it “so the church could get the glory.” Sometimes, after we put it in, the brethren would not pay it out. The church wanted the money more than it wanted the glory. We were told that it was a sin to take up a contribution on any other day of the week than Sunday, and we advertised this fact in the newspapers to prove our loyalty. Of course, we could bring clothes for orphans on Wednesday night, but not money. How silly can you get?

Stress was placed upon the term “every one” and we believed that, since this was an “act of worship,” every individual had to personally put something in the plate with his own hands. Thus, a husband would provide his wife with a token amount to put in so she could “worship.” Even little boys and girls were given a penny or nickel so they could early learn the importance of “giving to the church.” This was one “item of worship” that even the vilest sinner could participate in, for I never knew anyone to receive his money back on the basis that he could not “participate in the worship.” Money makes a lot of difference, as the world learned when the pope sold indulgences. But I now realize that our whole scheme was dreamed up by visionaries, and represents only an illusion based upon an institutional image. But I can never get out of my mind the case of an elderly widow who told the elders when they visited her, that the reason she had not been in attendance, was that she didn’t have “anything to put in” and knew that her “worship” would not be acceptable if she left out an item. So she stayed home rather than be embarrassed by her lack of finance.

I plead that you do not misunderstand what I am saying. It is no sin for brethren to pool their resources to carry on any work which they regard as acceptable. They may take up a regular contribution on Sunday, or any other day, and they may select one of their number to act as treasurer, and to give an account of receipts and expenditures. Indeed, I am of the opinion that such a method, while not the only one which might be employed, may be the best in our present state of affairs.

What I am saying is that it is an outgrowth of human rationalization, and has no more direct scriptural warrant than a lot of other things that we do. To declare that this was a heavenly program, properly prepared on high and presented to us in the sacred scriptures as the divine *law* for giving money is just not true. And to threaten men and women with hell because they prefer to put their funds where human needs are evident, rather than in the institutional bank account, is as bad as popery in its blackest moments.

A realization of this will free some of my sisters in the Lord from the role of second-class citizens in the majestic kingdom of the Father. I know school-teachers, secretaries, clerks and saleswomen who give money into the church treasury and are not even allowed to attend a business meeting where the expenditure of their funds is discussed. If that is not taxation without representation, I do not know how you could have it. My advice to these faithful sisters is to spend their money in helping the needy and where they can see how it is used. They can give their share of the funds needed to pay the light bill, heating costs, and upkeep of the building, but otherwise let them dispense their alms without allowing someone else to determine how their money will be spent, while they are gagged and muzzled by tradition. This is plain talk, but it is long overdue. Why should any member of the body in good standing be refused admittance to a business meeting of “the church.”

Let us be honest with God and one another. We have banded ourselves together through mutual love for our Redeemer to do a work. It requires finance to accomplish that work. It is only fair that all of us should share in communal ventures to the extent of ability, and under our present wage system, Sunday is as good a day as any for replenishing the community funds. It is more convenient because we meet on this resurrection day to share in the fellowship of the body and blood at the family table.

What I am saying is that we should quit saying that “passing the plate” for money every Sunday is the divine pattern. We should stop the silly and inane statement that this is “a prescribed item of worship.” What we are doing is reading into the scriptures what we are already practicing, and while the thing we are doing is not wrong, it is certainly wrong to misuse and misapply the scriptures. We ought not to wrest the scriptures to sustain even what is right.

The real tragedy comes when brethren in the Lord start with an unsubstantial and fictitious theory, as a basis for erecting a structured concept, over which they split and fragment the saints. This has happened in recent years when men have postulated a myth concerning “the church treasury,” which they have enforced with laws and statutes that are mere figments of fertile imaginations.

Right now the congregations of Christians in the United States are riven from stem to stern over how to take care of the poor and distressed. Debates as to what can and cannot be done “out of the church treasury” have fomented hate and hostility. It is possible that the whole thing is based upon sheer conjecture. There is reason for grave suspicion that the primitive community of saints ever had a financial drive, a budget, bank account, or treasury. When you are an underground movement meeting in caves and catacombs it is a little risky to sneak in every Monday morning with your deposit slip filled out.

I question whether God ever intended to lay down a hard and fast rule to regulate our method of caring for the poor. Certainly there are several different ways sanctioned and practiced by our Lord and his apostles, and no one seemed to get hurt over any of them, except Ananias and Sapphira. It would do well if preachers who elect themselves as brotherhood regulators would haul down their signs, and allow congregations of saints to handle their own affairs. The projection of a mythical pattern promulgated as God’s precise program for all

ages can only create unnecessary strife, and the exportation of our foibles to foreign lands will only serve to confuse humble natives. Let God be God!

Internal Power

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

“The Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you” (2 Corinthians 13:3).

A jet engine does not know the power within itself, nor the thrust which it develops. It is insensible and material and thus whines and roars without consciousness of its energy or lift. But man is more than a mechanism. True, he is a physical machine, wonderfully synchronized and composed of elements. But he is more than that, for he is made in the image of his creator, and possesses rational powers by which he can know himself and his capabilities.

It is, therefore, a tragedy that men live beneath their potential so often, and are oblivious of the power of Christ which can be theirs. That power is a transforming power when it is released from the inhibitions and restraints with which we so often shackle and sublimate it. It may seem incredible to some that we could limit the power of Christ. This is the power which was operative in the creation of the whole universe.

But we overlook the fact that man, in the image of God, possesses a will, and that it is sovereign. God respects it to the extent that he never imposes the divine will upon it. Man is never reduced to an automaton or mere mechanical device by

the power which made him. Jesus will not come in to dwell in the heart without permission, and once admitted will only work as we allow or permit.

Jesus is a tremendous power. Before he left the earth he declared that all authority was given to him. Principalities and powers are subject to him. Things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, are all under his direction. They will bow the knee to him! He is God's dynamo by which the world was created and by which it is still maintained. It is not simply that he possesses power as an attribute bestowed. His is power by nature.

This is personal power. In a sense I have thought that all power is personal when traced to its origin. Whether we talk about electrical power, magnetic power, physical power, or spiritual power, none of it was self-generating. Atomic energy began with a Prime Cause which created and contained it. The power by which energy is confined must be present before the energy to be confined and must be greater than that energy. If the universe is composed of atoms and thus of contained energy, there had to be a power preceding the universe and it had to be superior to the universe.

And that power had to be governed by intelligence, else it could not have created the design for the containment of the energy, and energy uncontained dissipates itself. Both the creation and continuity of the universe bespeak a divine and intelligible source of primal power. In Jesus this power is found in its fulness, the fulness of God. And that power is available unto us. Jesus is not a weak person outside of us. He is a tremendous power inside of us.

If one truly believes this it will work a change in him. For one thing, he will lose his fear of men. One who accepted the indwelling of Jesus as a reality said, "I will not fear what men shall do unto me." Jesus himself said, "Fear not him which is

able to destroy the body and after that has nothing that he can do.” He said that we were blessed when men persecuted and reviled us, and that we should rejoice and be extremely happy. John wrote, “For we realize that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. Love contains no fear— indeed fully— developed love expels every particle of fear.”

The indwelling Jesus frees one from fear of death. He now holds the keys to death and the unseen. Consider this statement, “He also became a human being, so that by going through death as a man he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might also set free those who lived their whole lives a prey to the fear of death.” Death sometimes creeps in on silent feet and in the darkness. It is not always loud and violent. And we need the assurance of his overcoming power so that death will be swallowed up in victory.

It is Christ within who gives us the power to overcome self. This is a greater victory than that over death, for it is victory by death and through it, the crucifixion of the old man who has dominated us. Paul describes our struggle. “My own behavior baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe . . . I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power . . . It is an agonizing situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In our outward thrust into the world Christ will open up the door and supply the divine propulsion to enable us to go as far as we are willing to go. This requires absolute trust and complete surrender. It means a sort of inspired recklessness, the courage to risk and adventure in knowledge of the fact that if we walked alone we would be helplessly crushed and beaten. It means playing for high stakes, throwing all we have and are into the game, keeping no reserve with which to cover. God must either have all or he can use none. It does not take much of a

man to be a Christian but it takes all of him there is. Only when we give in to him can he freely give out to us!

The Name Pattern

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

A number of years ago, the grace of God made it possible for me to labor in Red Cloud, Nebraska, a lovely little city where some of my best friends reside. I did a great deal of “personal work,” as it was called, visiting from house to house and inviting the residents to attend the nightly meetings at which I was speaking. It seemed apparent that I needed printed material to leave with them which would clearly distinguish between our little group as the true church, and the sects to which they gave allegiance, which were outside the pale.

It appeared obvious that the quickest and best way to do this was to point out the difference in the religious titles which we wore. Anyone who was not too blind to read a signboard could see that we were the Church of Christ, and could as readily determine that no one else was. It was all very simple. Those who met behind our signboard were in Christ. They belonged to him! Those who met behind other signboards were not in Christ, but had been captured by Satan.

So I wrote and had printed a tract under the heading, “Whose Name Shall the Bride Wear?” It became very popular indeed with those who thought they were the bride. Eventually more than fifty-thousand copies of the folder were distributed. Several years later I came to realize that what I was doing was actually more sectarian than those whom I was seeking to reach.

Like a flash out of the blue it dawned upon me that the called out ones had no official title, no party name. To promote and defend such a title was simply to make a denomination out of the group of believers who appropriated it and trusted in it.

The very word denominate, from the Latin *de* and *nominare*, to call by a name, means, “to give a name to; designate by a name or title; to call by a distinctive name or designation.” Any group which selects and appropriates to itself a specific name, title or brand, is a denomination, whether the title it selects is from words found in the Bible, or composed of words not even mentioned in the sacred volume. The source of the title has nothing to do with the act of denominating, and any group which denominates itself is a denomination. Since it thus segments itself it is also a sect.

The *ekklesia* of God had no specific name in its inception. The saints were corporately designated only by simple nouns. All of these describe a relationship. Not a one was used as an exclusive title. This is obvious, or there would have been only one. As to functional unity they were the body of Christ, as to divine origin the churches of God, as to present authority the churches of Christ. In relation to government they constituted the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of God’s dear Son. In relation to heritage they were the church of the firstborn ones whose names were enrolled in heaven.

To select any one of these terms such as church of God, church of the firstborn, or church of Christ, and make it the means of identification for a specific group in the realm of believers in the Messiah is to create a denomination, by the act of denominating that group. And to do it in order to define boundaries and to separate those Christians under the title from others who are not under it is the very essence of sectarianism.

Some very canny and contriving politicians among us have come up with the idea that by writing “church of Christ” instead

of “Church of Christ” we will avoid sectarianism. But sectarianism is an attitude of the heart and not an accident of spelling. A group can be as narrow and exclusive under a little “c” as they can under a big one. Making criminals wear short pants will not reform them.

It bugs some of my fellow-editors because I refer to “The Church of Christ” in my articles just as I do to “The Church of God” or “The Baptist Church.” They want me to try and fool the two latter groups by using a little “c” on *our* church. But if the Church of God started writing their title “church of God,” these editors would still blast away at them as sectarians. Our problem is not with the alphabet. It is with the Alpha and Omega. We want to stake out an exclusive claim on him and get him in our corral.

At the same time we are in a real quandary because of our own divisions. Not only must we make sure that no one confuses us with other groups of believers but we must also be certain that people do not get us mixed up with others of our own brethren. So we erect signs reading: Church of Christ (Vocal Music), or Church of Christ (Christian). This means we are denominational out of parenthesis and sectarian within it. It is bad enough to be singularly denominational as Methodists and Presbyterians. But we double the dose and go them one better.

Sometimes this back-fires. Instead of clarifying it confuses. A college professor who makes no commitment to Christ mentioned to me an advertisement he had seen on “the church page” of a northern newspaper which read: Church of Christ (One Container). I explained that these brethren used one container in passing the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper. As an economist and business consultant he had been working on the idea of *one container* loaded with a commodity at a factory and sealed for shipment across the ocean where it could be opened only by the consignee. He had wondered if the group to which he alluded had encapsulated themselves and sealed

themselves in an insulated container, expecting to be transported *en masse* to the glory world. I told him that he was probably not too far off, at that!

A Fact of Scripture

At the very outset we have to face up to the fact that the term “church of Christ” is not even found in the scriptures. It is just not there. The nearest we can come to it is “The churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). But in the very same chapter the writer mentions “the churches of the Gentiles.” He apparently refers to the same people. But I have yet to see a sign in front of one of our edifices reading, “The churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:4).

Our sophists have no trouble getting around the fact that the official title is nowhere found in the Bible. Such trivial omissions as “the name of the church” do not bother debaters who speak where the Bible speaks, and frequently where it doesn’t. So there is a stock argument that is triumphantly hauled off the shelf and exhibited on the pages of orthodox journals. “Where there is a plural, there must be a singular.” If there are churches of Christ there must be a church of Christ! This settles it!

Unfortunately, this argument is as leaky as a cracked gourd dipper. I mean it will not hold water. You cannot reason from a plural which represents all to a singular component of that plural which also represents all. A plural represents the total of those units involved in it, and any single unit cannot possibly embrace them all. When Paul wrote “The congregations of Christians salute you” he knew there were individual congregations in a lot of places.

I am not saying that there is no such thing as the church of God, the church of Christ, the body of Christ, the kingdom of

heaven, or the temple of God. I say there is! All I am saying is that the Holy Spirit did not apply to it the term *church of Christ* which we have argued (at least since 1906) is the scriptural title. We've lambasted others for having an unscriptural name and now our own denominational chickens are coming home to roost. I intend to help them find where the roost is located.

But did not Jesus say, "Upon this rock I will build my church?" Indeed, he said it and he did it. It is his church. But this statement only shows possession. It says not one thing about the name of that church. It tells us to whom the church belongs but provides no name for it except the simple noun "church." If I say, "Upon this lot I will park my car," you know to whom the car belongs but you do not know its name. You could not tell whether it was a Ford, Chevrolet or Plymouth.

And that is just the point. There is only one church. There never was but one. There never will be another. The church is a divine creation and not a human organization. A man can no more make another church than he can make another Holy Spirit. "There is one body and one Spirit." The church does not need to engage in the identification race with sects. It does not belong in that category. When it gets hooked on the signboard hang-up it gets on the sectarian level. The church on the rock is not "The Church of Christ" down the street from "The Baptist Church" or up the street from "The Presbyterian Church." It is the whole body of called-out believers in the community.

The body of Christ, the kingdom of God's dear Son, is not the church in town which *does not* have an instrument, or *does not* have classes, or *does not* have individual cups, or *does not* contribute to Herald of Truth. The body of Christians in any locality is made up of every saved person in that area. It is not the church of God because of what it does not have, but because of what it does have.

The Name of the Bride

Perhaps I'd better get on with listing some of the mistakes I made in my tract about the name of the bride. The whole argument falls as flat as a Swedish pancake when one realizes that the idea of a wife being called by the name of her husband is a product of western culture. And it is of relatively modern origin. Even now it is not the custom in many parts of the world.

Certainly such an idea is foreign to the Bible. In both the old and new covenant scriptures wives were called by their own names. Thus we read of Sarai, Abraham's wife; Rachel, Jacob's wife; Joanna, the wife of Chuza; Felix, and his wife Drusilla. No one ever reads of Mrs. Zechariah, or of Mrs. Aquila.

Even if the bride wore the name of her husband, the term "church of Christ" would not be that name. Christ is not the name of our Lord. It is his office or prophetic function. He is Jesus *the* Christ. He is the Christ because he was *christed*, or anointed, just as John the Baptist was so designated because he baptized. When you read of Simon the tanner, you do not think of tanner as being his last name. You certainly would not call his wife "Mrs. Tanner." Nor would you have addressed the wife of Simon the leper as "Mrs. Leper."

Our Lord's name is Jesus. The angel said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:21). When he was born Joseph "called his name Jesus" (Matt. 1:25). Paul declared that God gave him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (Philippians 2:10). If the church is to wear the name of the bridegroom, she should be called "Mrs. Jesus." The term church of Christ is no more the name of the bride than body of Christ, kingdom of Christ, or flock of Christ. Body, kingdom, flock and church are all just common nouns.

If a congregation decided, in its ignorance, to try and be "scriptural" and put up a sign reading "Church of Jesus" the

tourists from Texas and Tennessee, looking for “a faithful church with which to worship” before going to the zoo, would not even slow down. Is it not peculiar that the very same people who argue that church of Christ is the name of the bride also argue for spelling church with a lower case “c”? If that is the name of a bride or wife, it is a proper name. No one writes “nell ketcherside” when addressing my wife. Of course, our brethren are not especially noted for consistency, because they generally take a position first and then try to cook up arguments to fit it. They also bend a lot of scriptures around in some funny shapes for the same reason.

Actually, of course, if you want to be really technical, the church is not yet married to the Lamb. And when the wedding feast occurs she will not be called Mrs. Lamb. John places the wedding at the close of events as we now know them. “For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). When the ceremony begins the bride will be attired in white linen made up of the righteousness of the saints. I am helping work on the trousseau now, although I am not too good at it, and God’s grace will have to unravel a lot of my errors. But I am looking forward to the event for, “Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” That is one banquet I do not want to miss.

Christ wants to present the church to himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” If the wedding gown is to be woven of the righteousness of the saints, it is obvious to me that I will need a lot of spot remover, and a considerable amount of ironing out. I have had a lot of spots and wrinkles in my life. And I have never even thought of being without blemish. This once worried me a lot, because deep down inside, I knew I did not have what it took. I was trusting to legal rectitude to save me. But every time I tried to smooth out a wrinkle I generally made a couple of bigger ones.

Then I learned the magnificent secret from Paul. I had been trying to stay pure while dabbling in garbage. Legal rectitude will not get the job done. It only frustrates. It makes a pretender out of you. Paul said, “I count it so much garbage, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith” (Philippians 3:8, 9).

I am now incorporate in him. What a burden this has lifted off my heart. I am now riding with God and I leave the driving to Jesus. I am relaxed and I can lean back and enjoy myself and watch the scenery go by. In my life there is a lot of it to watch. I am still human and once in awhile when we are on a hairpin turn I may get butterflies in my stomach, but I really am not afraid as long as Jesus is at the wheel.

Best of all, I know that every person on this whole wide earth who has been received of the Father, and who has been given that righteousness which comes by faith, is my brother. We do not have all of these behind our signboards. I do not even know who they all are. “But God has laid a foundation, and it stands firm, with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows his own.’” Some day I shall know them also. And what a glad day that will be!

As for now, I am content to be in him and to try in my weak way to be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven me. I consider every sincere, conscientious believer in the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth, who has validated his faith in this sublime proposition by obedience to our Lord in baptism, as being born again. He is a part of the new humanity. He is a child of God. He is in the church of God, the church of Christ. He has been added to the one body. He may not be in “The Church of Christ” listed among the other denominations in the United States census.

You see, I am not simply opposed to sects. I am opposed to *sectism*, the nefarious spirit which breeds and begets sects. I am as opposed to it among *us* as I am among *them*. The whole sectarian mess created by vain wranglings about names, opinions and words, is as abhorrent to me as I think it is to God. I do not believe we can overcome and overthrow the sectarian temple by adding another brick of our own to the imposing structure. Let me draw upon a statement from Alexander Campbell which may serve to enlighten you further as to my position.

Dear sir, this plan of making our own nest, and fluttering over our own brood; of building our own tent, and of confining all goodness and grace to our noble selves and the “elect few” who are like us, is the quintessence of sublimated pharisaism. The old Pharisees were but babes in comparison to the modern: and the longer I live, and the more I reflect upon God and man— heaven and earth — the Bible and the world— the Redeemer and his church — the more I am assured that all sectarianism is the offspring of hell; and that all differences about words, and names, and opinions, hatched in Egypt, or Rome, or Edinburgh, are like the frolics of drunken men; and that where there is a *new creature*, or a society of them, with all their imperfections and frailties, and errors in sentiment, in views, and opinions, they ought to receive one another, and the strong to support the weak, and not to please themselves. To lock ourselves up in the bandbox of our own little circle; to associate with a few units, tens, or hundreds, as the pure church, as the elect, is real Protestant monkery, it is evangelical pharisaism.

Occasionally, since the days of Alexander Campbell, there have arisen men who have seen the true nature of our own sectarian spirit. One of these men was G. C. Brewer, and he evidenced his knowledge in an address during the Abilene Christian College Lectureship. We take this quotation from that speech.

It is never wrong to speak of the church as the church of Christ or the church of God, or the church of the first-born, but to repeat what has been said before, to exalt any one of these into *the patented name of the church* is to sectarianize that expression. If we have not done that very thing with the expression *church of Christ* then why do we not vary our terms in speaking of the church? Why is every deed made to the Church of Christ? Why is “Church of Christ” put upon every cornerstone or front of every meeting house? Why does the “Church of Christ” have a literature series? So fixed and uniform is this designation that if we would insert the name Jesus in the expression it would cause confusion. If a disciple were in a strange city and while looking for the meeting place of the saints he should come upon a house with this inscription, “The Church of Jesus Christ,” if he did not pass it up he would hesitate and make further inquiry before he entered that house. He is looking for a church of the Lord but he is not looking for this particular one. He is looking for the one that wears the stabilized, invariable name, “Church of Christ.” A name which therefore, distinguishes it from *the church of Jesus Christ, or the church of God, or the church of the saints* and all other of the Lord’s churches, implying, of course, that he has several. To use the term *church of Christ* to include any limited number of saints or to make it *the name* of the church is to sectarianize the expression.

Brethren, I do not expect you to get this point without some suffering but if you will endure the necessary pain caused by forcing the needle through the skin by which you get this anti-sectarian serum your suffering will then be over and your spiritual condition will soon be much better. So mote it be.

Apparently, the brethren were not willing to endure the pain and the shot did not take. They are still as sectarian as before our brother spoke. After listening to some of the sectarian pap produced in the lectureship for the past several years, I suggest that the new director take one session and read the speech delivered by our late brother Brewer. Perhaps another

injection will work the desired effect and inoculate us against further sectarianism manifested among a great many of us.

We must expect no sudden recovery. There will be no miraculous healing. The sectarian spirit dies slowly and lingeringly. The ghost will not be given up but with agony and suffering. We cling to it longingly. It pampers our pride. It speaks of safety and security, the protection provided by a prison. We love our parties. We are grateful for our walls and sequestered monastic paradises. So long have we basked in our own righteousness that we are frightened by freedom. We have trusted in our signboards rather than in a Savior. And we have sought to sanctify them by scripture.

For this reason, in our next issue, we shall take those passages which have been projected as proof of a particular title and show how they have been twisted, warped and wrested, to create a *name pattern* with which to belabor other believers and to exhibit our own factional feelings and partisan programs. We sincerely trust that you will not overlook this examination of the sacred oracles of God.

A Sectarian Name

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

The body of Christ, composed of all of the called-out ones, has no official denomination or designation. The sacred scriptures employ no exclusive term or brand by which to identify that body. It is variously described, defined and denoted by a number of common nouns. The selection and exaltation of any one of these as the recognized title is sectarian and partisan. It is a work of the flesh. This was clearly understood by the reformers who preceded us. For example, M. C. Kurfees, speaking at the Abilene Christian College Lectureship in 1921, said:

“In the present divided state of the church and under the influence of parlance growing out of a denominational environment, it is difficult to avoid being sectarian or denominational in our speech; and hence there is a growing tendency today to sectarianize even the term ‘church of Christ.’ This is invariably the case when it is used, as it frequently is nowadays, to mean merely those people of God who do not work through missionary societies and do not use instrumental music in the worship, and to exclude other children of God who make the mistake of working and worshiping in the said ways. The church of Christ in any city today, using the term in accordance with Biblical usage, includes all the children of God in the said city; and until these principles are observed, the primitive church, in its constitution, its

doctrine, its faith, and its practice will never be fully restored. Let us plead for the spread and recognition of these principles and for the complete restoration of the primitive church.”

That kind of talk is no longer indulged in the lectureship. The reason is clear. Our brethren had now rather be sectarian than right. They have “withdrawn fellowship” posthumously from Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, J. W. McGarvey and M. C. Kurfees. These “liberals” have been cast out of the synagogue *in absentia*, and one loyal theologian in Colorado said that if Paul had been a member of his congregation when he allowed James to talk him into going into the temple with the Jewish brethren who were zealous for the law, he would have called him on the carpet to confess his wrongs. If he had refused there would have been one apostle no longer in the foundation of “The Church of Christ.” You are not even safe now after you are dead!

One of our notable traits is to search the scriptures to justify what we have already adopted. In no other area is this practice more prevalent than as it relates to “the name of the church.” We really put the wire-stretchers to work on this one. One of the favorites is Acts 4:12, where Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Of course, Peter was not talking about the name of the church. He was talking about the name by which he had healed a lame man. “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). To the startled multitude, he said, “The God of our fathers glorified Jesus . . . and his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know” (Acts 3:13, 16). To the belligerent council he said, “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.”

We are not saved by the church. We are not saved by the

name of the church. The church has to be saved. “Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Ephesians 5:23). As Peter said, “There is salvation in no one else.” His name is Jesus. He is the Christ. He was from Nazareth. But you just put up a nice neon sign with the insignia “Church of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 4:12),” and see how many Texas license plates you count in your parking lot.

Did you know that Peter and John were not *Christians* when they healed the lame man? Do you realize there was not a single *Christian* in the whole congregation at Jerusalem then? If you had been on a “personally conducted holy land tour” at that time, and had slipped up and asked Peter if he was a member of the Church of Christ, he would have jumped like he would if you told him he was “the first pope.” Sectarianism plays funny tricks with men’s minds. It also destroys their moral integrity.

I am about convinced that the King James Version is responsible for most of our ludicrous arguments. Actually, the word “church” shouldn’t even be in the Bible. It isn’t a translation of *ekklesia*, and never was. Fenton John Anthony Hort, of Hort and Westcott fame recognized this. He gave up trying to find an Anglo-Saxon equivalent as he explains in “The Christian Ecclesia.” Alexander Campbell knew it. He never used the word in *Living Oracles*, always employing “congregation” instead. Perhaps the word “community” as used in *The Authentic Version* is the best of all. “Convey my regards to one another with a chaste kiss. All the Christian communities send their regards” (Romans 16:16).

When our brethren are confronted with the fact that the term “church of Christ” is not in the Bible, while the expression “church of God” is used repeatedly, they agree that it would be permissible to use that designation. None of them do it though. About a half dozen other parties beat us to that one and staked their claim before we got around to it. Now we cannot use it because someone on the highway might get confused and drop in

under the impression that we really were “The Church of God.” If we had not come into the census so late in the game, our title would probably be “church of God,” and we would be quoting scripture to sustain it. The *Gospel Advocate* would be a Church of God paper, and Harding College would be a Church of God school, according to common parlance.

We have worked out some pretty good answers. They are shrewd ones if you do not study too seriously or investigate too closely. Take Acts 20:23, for example. “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” It was Christ who shed his blood, so God is Christ here, and thus Paul meant “church of Christ” when he wrote “church of God.” All this, in spite of the fact that just seven verses back, and in the same speech, Paul clearly distinguishes between God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is pretty strong indication that the King James Version may be a wee bit misleading. *The Authentic Version* has it, “See to it that you tend God’s community, which he has acquired with the blood of his own (Son).” J. H. Moulton in a *Grammar of New Testament Greek* says, “I ventured to cite this as a possible encouragement to those who would translate Acts 20:28, ‘the blood of one who was his own.’” *The Concordant Literal Version* has it, “Shepherding the ecclesia of God, which he procures through the blood of his own.”

We used to make quite a play on this verse by using the deed to a piece of property and showing that the one who bought and paid for it would want it recorded in his name. It wasn’t a bad illustration, but it would wreck our sectarian playhouse. As I pointed out last month, Christ is the office of Jesus, and not his name. He is Jesus *the* Christ. If Mr. Brown, the carpenter, had his property recorded as belonging to Mr. Carpenter, his heirs and assigns would be in a real predicament. Even so, in our illustration from the verse, we should have come out with “church of God” like Paul did. But we never did, we always got

it adjusted and corrected before the recorder got hold of it.

I must not forget Ephesians 3:14, 15. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” It was easy to assume that this meant that the entire family bore the name *Christ*. But this argument is as shaky as a gelatin salad. First off, as pointed out by B. W. Johnson, in that perennial best-seller, *People’s New Testament With Notes*, “The Father is referred to. The words, ‘Of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ are not found in the best manuscripts, and are omitted in the Revision.”

That is a real blow! But there is another. The word translated “family” is in the plural. It should read “every family.” The subject under consideration is the universal fatherhood of God, not the name of the one body. Paul bows the knee to the Father because of his sovereignty. He is the origin and source of all fatherhood. There is not a chain of lineal descent on earth, nor an order of beings in the celestial realm which does not owe its beginning to the Father. “There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:6).

The Revised Standard Version has, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 3:14). This is consistent with the language of the apostle and we concur in it. Only those who are hard pressed to justify the existence of an exclusive sect would use this as our brethren have used it in the past. I am not interested in sectarian defence, not even our own. I am opposed to the very spirit of sectarianism.

The same observation needs to be made about the illogical mental gymnastics employed on Hebrews 12:23, where the apostle refers to “the church of the firstborn which is written in heaven.” Sermon outline books jump on the word firstborn, and then hie away to Colossians 1:18, where Jesus is referred to as

the head of the body, the church. “He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” The chain of reasoning is simple. Jesus is the firstborn, the church is the church of the firstborn, therefore, the church is “the church of Christ.”

But the word for firstborn in Hebrews 12:23, is plural, the firstborn ones. It cannot refer to Jesus. The writer is addressing Hebrews who knew that under the covenant, the firstborn belonged to God (Exodus 13:12). The church is made up of those who are God’s own people. It is “the church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven.” The reference is to the constituency, and not to Jesus as the head at all.

There is no official title for the *ekklesia* of the new covenant. Only common nouns are used to identify it and these are nouns of relationship. In a corporate sense the saints are referred to by such words as church, flock, temple, family and body. But church of God is no more the official name than flock of God or temple of God. The expression “church of Christ” may be employed as a name of the church. It must never be employed as the name of a church!

When I speak of the church in Saint Louis, I am not limiting the term to a special party in the religious realm bearing the designation “Church of Christ.” I refer to every child of God, every born-again believer, every member of the new humanity in this teeming metropolitan center. They are not all meeting behind signboards bearing the caption “Church of Christ.” God’s sheep are still a scattered flock. Some are wandering on sectarian hills. Some are caught in sectarian thickets. Some are feeding at troughs where they must subsist on fodder flavored and seasoned with sectarian salt.

But if they are in his family they are my brothers and sisters. I love them all, not with that cold detached love of the partisan who seeks to love by rote or letter of the law, but with a warmth and compassion which recognizes my own ignorance

and regrettable shortcomings. The body of Christ is greater than any of our parties. It is greater than all of them put together. It is greater than any movement of the body or in the body which seeks to reform its constituency. It is more majestic than any restoration movement!

Let me be clear and bold in my declaration. There are those who spend their time going over what I write with a fine tooth comb, seeking for scraps of information with which they can attack me in the minds of prejudiced readers. Allow me to save them the trouble of such meticulous research. I believe that there are Christians in the sects of our day. I believe that these are in the church of God by divine appointment, and in sectarian pastures through personal choice, influenced by tradition, teaching and early training. Our task is not to unite sects, but the Christians within them. We can never accomplish this task by creating another sect. It makes no difference whether such a sect is designated by a term lifted from the scripture or the English dictionary, sectarianism will never be overcome by creating additional sects. It is sectarianism against which I shall test the steel of my swordblade, and if that sectarianism is our own, it too must go!

The Apostolic Attitude

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[Abstract]

Tradition binds men to their past and often blinds them for their present and future. And every movement, political or religious, which survives for two generations, develops a tradition, a handing down or giving over from the prior generation to the successor. Traditional ways of looking at things may be bad, or they may be good. Often they are neutral and are neither bad nor good, being merely an approach taken to problems which have arisen.

Traditions become harmful when they shackle us to our own past and preclude any honest search for new truths and deeper insights. It is then we resent those who dare question our established position and regard them as heretics. Yet every advance in perception and understanding has been made by men branded as heretics. There has never been a reformer who has not been so castigated. We owe our gains of today to the heretics of yesterday. The heretics of today will be the heroes of tomorrow!

When Alexander Campbell was preparing to launch the journal which he designated *The Christian Baptist*, he said in the preface, “It is a rarity, seldom to be witnessed, to see a person boldly opposing the doctrinal errors or the unscriptural measures of a people with whom he has identified himself, and to whom he looks for approbation and support. If such a person

appears in any party, he soon falls under the frowns of those who think themselves wiser than the reprover, or would wish so to appear. Hence it usually happens that such a character must lay his hand upon his mouth, or embrace the privilege of walking out of doors. Although this has usually been the case, we would hope that it would not always continue so to be.” I also labor in that same hope.

It is a tradition with many of my brethren to regard the apostolic letters addressed to communities of saints and individuals as a meticulous pattern for every act of service and devotion to be rendered unto the Father until the return of our Lord. Their attempt to implement this tradition has fractured and fragmented them into more than a score of hostile parties and made them the most divided religious movement on the contemporary American scene.

Their very attitude toward the sacred scriptures will continue to split and splinter them. The only way to avoid such a dismal future is to freeze all knowledge at the current level and place a moratorium on all honest attempts to learn. If we are under law, and our “clergy” are the lawyers, interpreters and enforcers, then there is no freedom in Christ Jesus. The dullest conformist will be more faithful than the most brilliant and sacrificing researchist.

I deny that we are under a legalistic code of statutes, specifications and judgments. Such a system belongs on the other side of the cross. “Christ is the termination of law as a means of justification for every one who has faith” (Romans 10:4). And I have faith! Law was to last only until faith came. “Before faith came, we were confined under law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed” (Gal. 3:23). You are either under law or under faith. Take your choice. You cannot have both. Law does not rest on faith (Gal. 3:12). Christ has redeemed those that were under the law so they could receive the adoption of sons. I am in this category. Praise God, I have

been redeemed and adopted.

The only law under which I serve is that of love, overwhelming love for my redeemer and adopter. I am not under law, but under grace. This is what God said. I accept it without quibble, quirk or question. It is my strength and my salvation. It is my hope! But if I am not under a written code, what is the purpose of the scripture? This is a legitimate question. I am obligated to face it squarely and unequivocally. My answer begins with this article.

A Vehicle and Agent

The primary purpose of scripture is to bring me into a living vital relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord. It is the divine vehicle which transports me into his presence, a heavenly agent which introduces me to the author of my salvation. It is not familiarity with the machinery of the vehicle nor acquaintance with the agent which makes for life. I can know the agent all my life without ever having a personal relationship with the Son of God.

Indeed, if I think I have eternal life in the scriptures, I may become so devoted to them that I never come to him at all. He said this was possible. “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me, yet you refuse to come to me that you might have life” (John 5:39). These words were addressed to the most intense students of the sacred oracles this world has ever produced.

They revered the holy scriptures, literally binding portions of them to their foreheads and on their arms. The very entrance to their houses had small containers affixed and in these were written verses from God’s word in exactly twenty-two lines. Josephus wrote, “If anyone should question one of us concerning

the laws, he would more easily repeat all of them than his own name; since we learn them from our first consciousness, we have them as it were, engraven on our souls” (*Against Apion* 2:18).

Rabbi Hillel, whose school in Jerusalem Paul attended, said, “The more teaching of the Law, the more life; the more school, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more reasonable action” (*Sayings of the Fathers* 2:5, 7). After the Babylonian exile, the Jews literally became “the people of the Book.” A. R. S. Kennedy says that the Torah in its written form then became “the regulating norm in very relation of life.” But they rejected Jesus of whom the prophets spoke.

If life could have been achieved by law, there was no necessity for the coming of Christ. The law given through Moses was holy and just and good. But the purpose of the law was to bring us to Jesus as the source of life. No law can produce life. “For if a law had been given which could make alive, righteousness would indeed be by law” (Gal. 3:21). Obedience to law for the sake of law does not make one good. And it cannot make one live. Life is personal. “In him was life” (John 1:4).

Searching the scriptures is one thing. Coming to Jesus in order to have life is a wholly different thing. The scriptures bear witness of Jesus. This is their function. But if we are not led into a life giving relationship with him all of our scriptural knowledge will go for naught. It will only serve to condemn us. It may be argued that this was true of the old covenant scriptures but not of the new. But John was speaking of his own epistle when he wrote, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”

Believing in miracles does not produce life. Believing in the record of miracles does not produce life. The design of miracles is not to save but to make credible the claims of Jesus to be the

Christ, the Son of God. The testimony is one thing, the attestation another thing, and the belief of that testimony which establishes a personal relationship is still another. What is it to have life in his name?

In such usage the word “name” stands for the character, attributes and nature which constitute a person. Life in his name is life in his person. One may believe that the Bible is true and still not be saved. It is not intellectual assent to the veracity of a record which saves, even though that record has a divine origin. Rather, it is receiving him of whom the record testifies which spells the difference between life and death. “To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1:12).

The good news, consisting of the facts related to Jesus, was promulgated in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following his resurrection. This message was gladly received by some three thousand hearers who reformed and were immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. All of them being Jews, they continued to attend the temple together each day, although “breaking bread in their own homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts.”

Being ignorant of many of the implications of their new relationship, they had to rely upon instruction of the apostles. They did not regard this as a new law and would have deeply resented it if someone had suggested that it was to supplant the law of Moses. In fact, they had no intention of abandoning the law or its forms and ceremonies. They expected to constitute a Messianic synagogue within the framework of Judaism. Years later, after some of the apostles had already been killed, they said, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20).

It is obvious that the apostles in Jerusalem did not think of

their teaching as the laying down of a new law, and just as obvious that “the many priests who were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7) did not so regard it. Upon one occasion, an eminent Pharisee, Gamaliel, a highly revered *teacher of the law*, came to the rescue of the apostles by suggesting that “this plan or this undertaking” might be of God (Acts 5:38). He would never have said this if he had thought of it as another law.

The apostolic teaching was not then, nor has it ever been since, a written code or law for justification. The apostle who wrote twice as many of the epistles as all of the rest put together, plainly states, “But now, having died to that which held us bound, we are discharged from the law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the spirit, in contrast to the old way, the way of a written code” (Romans 7:6).

In spite of this, men seek to take the very epistles of Paul and warp them into a written code. A law requires lawyers to argue about inferences, meanings and deductions. It requires courts, trials, determination of guilt and assessment of penalties. It must create machinery to enforce conformity, to threaten reprisal and to close loopholes in boycott procedures. The lawyers are those who go to school to study legal matters and to become interpreters of divine meaning.

They bind “heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders.” They learn the keen distinction between swearing by the temple, which is nothing, and “swearing by the gold of the temple which is binding.” They learn how to discourse fluently about giving God a proper measure of mint and anise and dill, and become authorities on sacrificing the smallest garden herbs for the glory of God.

The Way of the Spirit

We serve God in a new way. It is a way of the spirit! We

are no longer under the old way, the way of a written code. But if the apostolic epistles are not a written code, what are they? Lay aside your legalistic spectacles for a moment. Read them without a veil over your face!

One of them was a letter of endorsement for a runaway slave being sent back to his owner and master as a brother in Christ. One was a letter of thanks to a community of saints for a gift sent to an ambassador in chains. One was a letter to a young man with a weak stomach, who was sick a lot of the time, encouraging him to keep safe and intact that which had been entrusted to him. Another was a farewell letter to the same young man asking him to come soon and bring an overcoat and some books, especially notebooks for writing purposes.

Still another contained a reply to questions about conduct in marriage. One was a letter encouraging the recipients to leave the ranks of the unemployed and not to expect the imminent return of Jesus, nor use it as an excuse for “idling their time away, minding everybody’s business but their own.” These are not items in a written code. They are love letters to saints and brethren. They were not intended to make polished lawyers but perfect lovers.

The new covenant epistles were designed to assure those who received them of the love of the writers. “God knows how I long for you all, with the deep yearning of Christ himself” (Phil. 1:8). “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see for myself or hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing firm, one in spirit, one in mind, contending as one man for the gospel faith, meeting your opponents without so much as a tremor” (1:27).

The letter to the Philippians was not a part of “the gospel of Christ.” The Philippians had long since accepted the gospel, and had taken part themselves in proclaiming it from the first day until they received this letter (1:5). Contending for the

gospel faith had nothing to do with arguing with brethren about the implication of anything which Paul wrote in the letter. By the absurd conclusion that the apostolic epistles are all part of the gospel of Christ, and a perfect understanding of the epistles is essential to obedience of the gospel, we have wrecked all hope of unity in the body of God's Son. Too, we have done with the epistles what their writers refused to do with them. We have made them a written code and reverted to a pre-Calvary means of justification, living B.C. lives in an A.D. world.

It is now time for us to renounce our childish and immature traditionalism and grow up in Christ Jesus. This means simply to adopt the same attitude and spirit as the apostles had. It is best exemplified in the words of Paul. "I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. My friends, I do not reckon myself to have got hold of it as yet . . . Let us then keep to this way of thinking, those of us who are mature. If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you. Only let your conduct be consistent with the level we have already reached."

The very next words are: "Agree together, my friends, to follow my example. You have us for a model; watch those whose way of life conforms to it." Amen!

If we can ever sense that Christianity is not a law but a life, that it is not a sacrificial code imposed from on high but the sharing in our lot of a God who came down from above, our fears will give way to faith, and our heartaches to hope. We will cease to ride herd on God's sheep and be willing to follow in the steps of the Shepherd.

Right On!

Mission Messenger (October 1970)

Volume 32

[Abstract]

Right on! This is the current cry of revolution. It is also my watchword. I am in revolt! I am sick of the sectarian *status quo*. I am tired of the treadmill trampling of the courts, the “let things take their course” philosophy, which will guarantee the survival of factional animosity for another century.

God’s children are divided. They are fractured and fragmented, splintered and separated. This is an unholy state, contrived in hell, fostered by Satan, and maintained in open defiance of the divine will. It is contrary to the eternal purpose, inconsistent with the prayer of Jesus, and in direct conflict with the sacred scriptures. It makes brotherly love a farce, perpetuates factional interpretations which are absurd, and holds up to ridicule a movement which began to “unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

How can we regain our proper course and proceed with the momentous task of “making all men see what is the mystery of the fellowship”? First, let me tell you how it will not be done. It will not be accomplished by craven men who pay lip-service to the unity of all believers and beat a hurried retreat into the bunkers of financial security the minute they are challenged. It will not be accomplished by those who hold out the olive branch socially and privately, and then publicly cater to the sectarian bitterness which pampers the pride of the congregations which

control their prestige and purse strings.

Nor will unity ever come from the meeting of two groups of select partisans gathering to spar suspiciously in the hope of capturing one another by some tired doctrinal elaboration or quirk of fate. Men who talk unity out of one corner of their mouths to others, then secretly rejoice in their adroitness and expertise at fending off their brethren are dishonest in their ingenuousness and unworthy of trust. Factional partisans will not produce unity. They are the very ones who have perpetuated division. The loyalty in which they glory is party loyalty.

Although I am no longer young, I doubt that much will be accomplished by those who are older and dependent for financial and emotional support upon our partisan establishment. They must maintain the party while they live. It is in building the exclusive factional structure they have achieved the little measure of glory which sustains their ego. They are not “heroes of the faith” to those in other factions who do not recognize their names and are wholly unaware of their partisan prowess or exploits, and their claim to fame!

I may be wrong, but I think our silly “Berlin walls” will be beaten down by courageous younger men and women, the dare-devils of the faith who refuse to be satisfied with the sop thrown to them by any party clique. They will early grasp the difference between being faithful to Christ Jesus and being a satellite to a sect. They will cross lines, ignore barriers, scale mountains, bridge chasms, and share their loving insights with the brethren wherever they find them.

They will not be tempted to become mere mercenaries, paid to trample over and over the same musty and mildewed grapes in the congregational winepress. They will not waste their time flailing straw from which the last possible grain of doctrinal wheat was long ago winnowed. Of course they will be “delivered up to councils and verbally flogged in the synagogues.” When

persecuted in one town they will have to flee to the next. There is nothing too cruel for the aroused sectarian spirit to perpetrate. It has burnt more martyrs, racked more saints, and crucified more innocents, than anything else in the history of mankind.

Those who would be in the vanguard of the struggle for peace must be willing to pay the price. Peace comes high! Brother will deliver up brother to partisan death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and hound them out into the world. They will be hated of all factional legalists for his name's sake. Withdrawal, boycott, hatred and violence—these are the weapons in the sectarian arsenals. But “if they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household?”

Knowing as I do that peace is destined to triumph over strife, as truth will over error, my chief concern is what I may do in the few years of my earthly sojourn to further the cause which I revere more than life. Fortunately, my course appears clear. I have no inner misgivings or forebodings, no qualms or doubts. The star by which I steer is clear before me. The compass needle of my life knows no vacillation in these days.

I conceive as my purpose the recognition, receiving and welcoming of all of God's children and my brothers, regardless of the enclosures in which they are sheltered. I do not ask them to come to me. If they allow, I will go to them, sharing and serving as I can. I will identify with all of them in Christ Jesus, but with none of their peculiar structures. That which makes us all one in him means everything to me. That which herds us into partisan corrals has no validity to my faith in Christ Jesus as my Savior and Lord. What I can hold in common with all who are in Christ—the common faith—is that for which I will contend. That which is a personal conviction about controversial matters, I shall “keep between myself and God” and not cause my brothers to stumble or be made weak.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Let me be specific, since our divisions have been specific. If a congregation of saints employs instrumental music in their public praise, I will love them and respect them as my brethren. I will go among them, share with them and encourage them both to live and to walk in the Spirit.

If a congregation expresses its adoration solely in vocal music, they are my brothers and I will labor with them and assist them to “put on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh.” But I will not go anywhere as the representative of an “instrument party” or an “anti-instrument party.” If it is a stipulation in either case that I come as a front man for one segment as opposed to the other, I will not go at all. I have rejected sectarianism, all of it, including our own. It is displeasing unto our Father. Brethren who want a sectarian to defend the party spirit must look elsewhere.

I accept all of my brothers. They did not become children of my Father by a position on music and I will not cast them out of the family on that basis. They were not begotten by a view of the instrument nor born again by a correct understanding of vocal praise. If they were good enough for the Father to grant the Spirit of adoption in spite of their ignorance and mistakes, they are not too bad for me to welcome in spite of my ignorance and mistakes. If, when my Lord comes, he wants to weed out all who sang with a piano, and all who sang four-part harmony instead of chanting as they did in the days of the apostles, that will be the divine prerogative. Meanwhile, I shall go right on loving them all, “not in word and in speech, but in deed and in truth.”

The same thing holds true for those who are separated into warring camps over what they are pleased to dub “institutionalism.” They are all my brothers. I love all of the brethren who attend Florida College, and all who teach them. I

also love all of those who attend Abilene Christian College, and all who teach them. I welcome as my brothers Roy Cogdill, Cecil Willis, Yater Tant and William Wallace, “but not for disputes over opinions.” I also welcome Reuel Lemmons, B. C. Goodpasture, Guy N. Woods, and J. D. Thomas, “without attempting to settle doubtful points.”

To me none of them are “antis” and none are “liberals.” They are just persons like myself, caught up in the human predicament, and doing what they honestly think God wants them to do. I do not want to pass judgment on them. I do not want to despise them. I am not anxious to argue with any of them about their “meats” and “days.” I prefer to allow them to stand or fall to their own master. I do not want to do their thinking for them and I assure you they will not do my thinking for me!

How they regard one another, and even how they treat me, no longer has any real significance in my life. That is between them and God, not between them and me. Since the love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, I can truthfully affirm that “with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by brethren or by any human court . . . I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.” If, in the final Great Encounter, God banishes from the glory world all who sent a dollar to the Herald of Truth or cared for fatherless children in homes with a board of trustees, I will submit to his sovereign and infinite will.

Meanwhile, I shall go on saying, “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice.” And I will praise his name for every little distressed human waif who is fed and clothed and housed by my brethren, individually or collectively. I have my preference, of course, but I could be wrong. It would not be the first time for that, either!

It appears downright silly to me to maintain rival camps as respects the millennium. From the very outset of the restoration movement many good brethren have thought the coming of Jesus would precede the millennium. Others, who were just as sincere, thought it would be the other way around. We have always had some who interpreted certain passages literally while others regarded them metaphorically. The great majority knew very little about the matter one way or another. I do not think we really divided over the millennial issue at all. We divided when ambitious leaders, motivated by hunger for power, sought for an issue to use as a scarecrow and bugaboo.

My brethren are now, as they have always been, on both sides. I shall not allow either side to manipulate me into disregard for the other. I am not sure that I know all that Jesus will do when he comes again, but whatever it is, I want to share in it. I am not pre-millennial but pro-millennial. Whatever it is, I am for it. It is not understanding the second coming that makes one a child of God, but believing it was the Son of God who came the first time. And all of my brethren believe that, praise God!

If brethren have time to argue and fuss about what has not yet transpired, they are welcome to it. But I have no time to foster hate and animosity over such things. We are taught to comfort one another with the thought of the resurrection, not clobber one another with it. It is a pretty big task for me to fight the devil and all of his angels, and to keep them from moving in on me. I haven't the time or desire to fight my brethren over something which God will take care of at the proper time, even if I am mistaken about it. I expect to meet my Lord in the air, but I don't intend to "get up in the air" ahead of time. I am willing to wait until I'm caught up with the saints, and not get hung with them now!

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Of course, the big hangup right now is the work of the Holy Spirit. It has created a real furor because we thought we had the Spirit bagged up and bogged down a long time ago. Not even the most optimistic prophet fifty years ago, would have been rash enough to predict that the Spirit would ever bother "the Lord's church." And now we are in a real dither. I am sorry that we are having trouble over the Holy Spirit but, viewed from one angle, it is a real sign of growth. It beats debating over such things as how to break the loaf, whether to use fermented wine in the Lord's Supper, and if women ought to be allowed to attend the business meetings.

We've finally moved out of the theological bushes and are playing in a major league park. A pretty good sprinkling of brethren testify that they became bored, bothered and bone-weary with our static and sterility and went on a spiritual safari to seek bigger game. Some of them wrestled and agonized in prayer, and as they paint the picture, suddenly found themselves uttering strange sounds without knowing what that they were doing or saying.

Such testimonies as these have caused the "Church of Christ Protective League" to go into action to "save the church." Preachers have been fired, brethren have been threatened, congregations have been split, and saints driven out of the buildings which they helped to erect. There are some disadvantages in the current outbreak. Formerly we thought of those who indulged in such things as ignorant, illiterate, over-emotional folks from across the tracks, people who lived down by the meatpacking plant. We could dismiss them with a wave of the hand when they got "hooked" and left us. They were not too bright to start with and the church would be better off without them.

But the present glossolalia crop has jerked the rug out from under us. A lot of them are graduates of "our schools" maintained to preserve the faith and to produce sound men.

Some of them have taught in the colleges. They live in beautiful homes and drive big air-conditioned cars. They fly all over the country and “give their testimony” and even fraternize with sectarians and “lesser breeds without the law.” If it is the Holy Spirit at work, he played a dirty trick on us by getting to folks with money and prestige whom we would hate to lose.

I keep getting letters from Oklahoma, Texas, California and Tennessee asking what I am going to do about it. Well, I am not going to do anything about it! If the Holy Spirit should be at work in a special way with others, I’m not going to step in and say, “Here, you can’t do that? What do you mean ruining my sermon outlines, and gumming up my past talks?” If it isn’t the Spirit at work, and the brethren are just caught up in excitement and ecstasy until they are beside themselves, they wouldn’t pay any attention to me anyhow. They’d listen and smile sweetly at my ignorance and simplicity and go right on doing their thing!

I certainly am not going to start a “Church of Christ (Tongues)” and a “Church of Christ (No Tongues).” We’ve already got a “Church of Christ (Christian)” and a “Church of Christ (Vocal Music).” That’s enough for me. It doesn’t take a whole lot of the sectarian spirit until “my cup runneth over.” I am fairly calm and pragmatic and nothing much ever happens to me, but if a brother looks me in the eye and tells me of a fantastic experience that grabbed him, I am not going to say, “Now, you know that’s a lie. Nothing like that happened to you!” I was not there and I don’t know what happened. Some pretty funny things have happened to some of my brethren, I guess.

My own purpose is to pursue “the more excellent way.” This is what Paul recommended to a congregation that was really upset by tongues. And I have quite a way to go before I fully mature in the one thing that validates all gifts and services. When one exercises the more excellent way it is no problem to receive brethren who differ with him, even about spiritual gifts. I would not think of driving out into the cold a brother who said

he had an experience I have not had, and don't expect to have. My real problem is not with those who claim to speak in tongues and do not know what they are saying. My problem is with those who claim to speak English and I don't understand what they are saying.

If that which is perfect has already come (and I think it has), I will love my brethren. If it has not, I will love them until it gets here. As it is, there is a lot of difference even about what it is, but there is no difference about the need for love and tolerance. Please remember that tolerance is not endorsing anything that is wrong, but simply enduring one who thinks it is right!

The only way to cure our divisions is to resolve never to create or promote another one, and to work to eliminate those which we have inherited. "If you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another." Someone has to cross over all of the lines and ignore all of the factional walls. I propose to do just that. I do not intend to be bought off or frightened off. I do not mean to quit talking about the consummate folly of our present condition. I do not intend to cease urging my brethren to abandon the philosophy of divisiveness which has cursed us for a century. Those who intend to "write me up" should lay in a good supply of typewriter ribbons for they will have a lot to do. I am just getting warmed up to the task of crying out against our sectarian stance.

The way to unite is to unite! The time to do it is now! Everyone says that unity is the thing. It is the will of God. We have talked about it, discussed it and dialogued about it. Now let's do it. If we are brothers, let's show it, and let's start now. Why hold more meetings to talk about how to have unity? Why not hold one to demonstrate the unity we already have, the unity of the Spirit?

Unity is not based upon conformity but upon community

in Him. Brotherhood results from a common fatherhood, fellowship from a common sonship. The only unity available to finite beings is a unity in diversity. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. There is as much variation in mental capacity and powers of rationalization as there is in facial lineaments.

It is not knowing all of the same things, but all of us knowing the same One that makes us one. It is absurd to allow our trivial arguments in the flesh to destroy the spiritual family ties. It is sinful to “set at nought a brother for whom Christ died.” I do not care what opinion that brother holds about any or all of the “issues” which we have inflated until they mean more to some of us than the cross and the blood which makes us united in Him.

I summon you to an answer to the prayer of our precious Lord as uttered on the night before His cruel death. Let us rise up now from all of the little parties and factions, and refuse any longer to be driven like dumb cattle. Let us be men, and show the world that the bond of peace is not an imaginary and visionary something but a real tie that binds. Let us preach peace to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh. Let us lose our fear of men and refuse to be manipulated as cogs in the party machines. The time has come for action. The world is waiting for our united plea! *Right on!*

The Happiness Pattern

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

The apostolic letters were not penned to produce eternal life but to inform those in Christ that they already had it. John writes, “This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life. It is addressed to those who give their allegiance to the Son of God” (1 John 5:13). Eternal life is the result of a personal relationship with the Son of God. The scriptures simply bear witness of this fact. “The witness is this: that God has given us eternal life, and that this life is found in the Son. He who possesses the Son has life indeed; he who does not possess the Son of God has not that life.”

There is as much difference between the apostolic letters and eternal life as there is between a birth certificate and physical life. No one considers that a birth certificate produces life although it bears witness to the fact that one exists. To this, the careless student objects that we are born of the word of God, and quotes, “You have been born anew, not of mortal parentage but of immortal, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).

This objection falls flat, however, when it is remembered that Peter is not talking about the letters written to the churches, but about the gospel. “And this ‘word’ is the word of the Gospel preached to you.” Certainly the epistles of Peter were not included in the word by which “God’s scattered people” (1:1)

were begotten, for they already had an inheritance laid up for them in heaven before Peter ever wrote them. The letters were sent to confirm that fact.

When the term “word of God” is used with reference to birth or begetting it never refers to an apostolic epistle. All of these were written to congregations or individuals already in Christ Jesus. When Paul writes that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), he did not include the Roman letter, for it was written to those who had already been justified by faith, and who had received the Spirit that made them sons and enabled them to cry, “Abba! Father!”

The very context of Romans 10 shows that faith comes by the gospel. “How could they invoke one in whom they had no faith? And how could they have faith in one they never heard of? And how hear without someone to spread the news? And how could anyone spread the news without a commission to do so? And that is what the Scriptures affirm: ‘How welcome are the feet of the messengers of good news!’ But not all have responded to the good news. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?” We conclude that faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ.”

Alexander Campbell wrote: “We preach, or report, or proclaim news. But who teaches news? Who exhorts news? We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or those who have received it.”

A modern theologian, Alan Richardson, Canon of Durham, agrees. In his *Theological Word Book of the Bible* he says, “In the N. T. preaching has nothing to do with delivering sermons to the converted, which is what it usually means today, but always concerns the proclamation of the ‘good tidings of God’ to the non-Christian world. As such it is to be distinguished from teaching which in the N. T. normally means

ethical instruction, or occasionally apologetics or instructions in the faith.”

The apostolic epistles do not comprise a written code. They were never intended to be a compilation of laws. They were written as love letters to “all who are dedicated to him” (2 Cor. 1:1). The purpose of the writers is carefully stated, “Do not think that we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your own happiness” (2 Cor. 1:24). If the apostles did not write to dictate “the terms of your faith,” on what grounds do lesser and later lights take what they wrote and try to use it for just such a purpose?

The apostolic writings are guidelines to happiness No one confuses the guide lines on the highway, provided for safety and convenience, with a statute book. It is recognized that such lines and signs are fixed by authority, by one of the higher powers. There are some no passing zones where one must never cross the center line, but in many places one must use his judgment and take the responsibility. He may “pass with caution” or “drive with moderate speed.” The good driver is one who adjusts to circumstances and conditions.

The Living Way has marked out the way for us. In most cases we must use commonsense and judgment, tempering our actions according to the needs of our brethren, and being cognizant that the eyes of the world are upon us. Some things are always wrong. Others are wrong only under certain circumstances. “Happy is the man who can make his decision with a clear conscience” (Romans 14:22). Happy, too, is the man who allows another the liberty to decide without trying to impose his own judgment and opinion upon him.

In every generation there are those who have tried to play God with the lives of other men. They have taken general passages and given them specific application, finding in them a

way to condemn what they have already decided is wrong. Under the guise of promoting “holiness” they have compiled their arbitrary list of things deemed unholy in contemporary culture and measured the character of men by their own yardsticks. They have legislated where the Spirit has not and claimed infallibility for their dogmas. Nothing is more unholy than for men to exalt themselves to the position of divine interpreters of the sacred oracles.

To drive out God’s precious children because they cannot conform to partisan whims, fancies and rulings, and to elevate opinions to terms of union and communion, is to assume the role of false apostles, and not truly follow the leading of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. To turn epistles of grace into a lash with which to lacerate the hearts of the brethren is not to follow the example of one who wrote, “For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement.”

Our pattern is Jesus of Nazareth. The good news about Jesus leads to faith in him. That faith implies more than intellectual assent to his role in history. It is belief that he is the Messiah of the prophets, the Son of God, the Lord of life. It is not merely belief on him, or in him, but belief into him, the kind of faith which involves commitment or surrender to him who is its object.

In him is life, eternal life. In him we become partakers of that life, sharers in his life! In him we grow up, maturing in the various aspects of life. It is here the apostolic epistles fulfill their role. They were written to saints who were ignorant of how they should walk, and often to those who knew but who had become cold and careless. One does not write to his children to produce life but to show them how to have a good life. One must never confuse a recipe for happiness with the sperm from which he is begotten.

The purpose of the apostolic writings is to bring us together, to aid us in being united. “Complete my joy being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2). “Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ Jesus forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). “Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

When we take the scriptures and use them as a club to batter brethren into unwilling conformity, or when we quote them to justify our separations and divisions, we misuse and abuse them. The scriptures are for all, not for a clerical power structure. Every man must be allowed to approach the word of God for himself. The Christian armor is to be worn by every soldier in the ranks and not by an elite corps of self-appointed gladiators.

One exhibits no loyalty for the word of God when he twists and wrests the scriptures to make them do what they were never intended to do. To make them into a legalistic code to stifle thought and enforce rigidity is to do despite to the grace of God. Let the revelation of heaven be what God intended it to be, the means of teaching us to glory in the cross of Christ Jesus.

Brother Thomas on Unity

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

All of us are aware of the fact that in the interest of truth and integrity there must come occasions when confrontation with opposing views is essential and unavoidable. One cannot go blithely sailing over the journalistic main without recognizing that there are other beats skimming the surface. We need to hear what other brethren are saying. If we disagree with it and are motivated to reply we should do so. When we do we should seek to be fair and honest in our evaluation and treatment of such views.

In the *Gospel Advocate* for August 6, appears an article by our esteemed brother in the Lord, J. D. Thomas, a respected member of the faculty at Abilene Christian College. We reproduce it in full so that you can peruse it in proper perspective. Our own comments and strictures will follow the article.

OBSERVATIONS ON UNITY

J. D. Thomas

Having just returned from a “Unity” meeting, and while my mind is fresh on the topic, I would like to make a few observations, and also some suggestions as to how unity may be achieved among the penitent, baptized believers in Christ.

I would define “unity” as involving “the spirit of interrelation of Christians” to the point where there would be no hesitancy in inviting a person to hold a gospel meeting for you, provided he was sufficiently capable as a preacher. To call a man “brother” in public is, of course, a certain unity, but it is too shallow a view of unity to actually be that for which we should seek whenever we have “unity meetings.” This is not the full-fellowship that is desired for God’s people. So far as I know, most of us who are now, or have ever been, true children of God admit that the penitent baptized believer is a “brother,” although we might hold back on the degree of fellowship activities we would be willing to engage in with him.

Full-fellowship to the extent that we will be willing for a person to hold a meeting for us, is impossible, as we have all recognized and practiced, without our doctrinal differences first being faced head on and cleared up point by point. This is true because the real doctrines that cause our present differences involve the actual practice of sin, as understood by those who withhold the full fellowship in each case. It is a logical impossibility for someone to decide that a given practice is no longer sinful without his having a new understanding of the matter, and having clear-cut reasons that change his understanding of the Lord’s teaching on the point.

Moving from right to left across the spectrum, we begin with the “One-Cuppers,” who believe that it is a sin for the congregation to take the fruit of the vine out of more than one container and they, therefore, practice fellowship only with those who see like they do. Only in this way can they avoid the practice of something counted to be sinful. 1 Corinthians 14:23 makes a violation of conscience to be sin, whether the thing practiced is actually sinful in God’s sight or not. So long as a man thinks that more than one container is sinful, he can do nothing else but refuse to take it in situations where many containers are used.

By the same token our “Non-Class” brethren, who have been withdrawn from by the One-Cuppers, feel that it is sinful to teach the Bible in classes in the arrangement that we ordinarily call Sunday School. As long as they feel this way, they have to withdraw themselves from those of us who have classes, or else they would be guilty of practicing that which they conscientiously believe to be sinful. It would be a sin for them to practice this while believing it to be wrong.

Again, those of us who use multiple-containers and classes, but do not use the instrument in our music, believe that it is sinful and wrong, and we have to separate ourselves from those who do use the instrument, to keep from sinning ourselves.

In all these cases everybody recognizes that each other is a child of God and therefore “brother.” But as these illustrations indicate, the more conservative brethren in each case are forced by conscience to establish their own worship and fellowship programs. They have no choice, on pain of sin.

The Independent Christian Church brethren who use the instrument, but deny the scripturalness of the Missionary Society, are also logically bound to fellowship only with people of like convictions, else they constantly will be having to fight a battle of compromise with something that they definitely count sinful. Again, the brethren who accept the instrument and the Missionary Society, but who believe the Bible to be the infallible and inerrant word of God and their only rule of faith and practice, have to withdraw themselves from the extreme liberal Disciples who have been affected by modernism to the extent that they no longer get their authority for their faith and practice only from the written word.

To get all of these brethren into a single, real fellowship is going to require the working out of all these differences of understanding, and for each man who has an erroneous belief there must come a change of

conviction before we could have real unity.

We already have a fellowship in the sense of “calling one another brother,” but this is not fellowship in the Bible sense. It is not really being one in the sense for which Jesus prayed. Unity meetings ought to seek, therefore, to go “to the teaching and to the testimony” (Isa. 8:20) and to work out in a careful and prayerful way a clear understanding of the real will of God upon the point at issue. There is in all this no place for an ugly spirit or anything other than deep “love of the brethren” to motivate us in our relations with one another. “Let love be without hypocrisy.”

Too often brethren are disposed to sow seeds of discord, to judge the motives of others, and to believe half-truths and innuendoes. Possibly we get anxious to tear down a fellow preacher and his influence because of our own inferiority complex, thinking that if we can tear him down we ourselves will look better by comparison. This is another one of Satan’s fallacies, but it has probably caused many preachers to act in a way that will bring condemnation in the judgment. Above all we need to learn to truly love one another, and to realize that we are all on the same team— fighting Satan. It is nothing less than stupid for us to fight one another, as well as being sinful.

In a following article we hope to give the benefit of a lesson from J. W. McGarvey which we feel will be relevant as we meditate upon the right and the wrong of these points of doctrine.

REPLY TO THE ABOVE

Although Brother Thomas, at the outset, proposes to make “some suggestions as to how unity may be achieved,” he utterly fails to do so. Instead, his article is an apologetic for division. It is a clear-cut statement of that legalistic attitude which may best be designated as Church of Christism. It was this very attitude which created our divisions in the first place and has

perpetuated them ever since. So long as it is maintained unity will be an empty dream, a vision of sheer vanity.

Our brother begins with his definition of unity. It is wholly without scriptural basis. He concocts it out of thin air, and having offered such an evanescent presentation he proceeds as if everyone will acknowledge its validity. He is doomed to disappointment. To him, unity is “the spirit of interrelation of Christians to the point where there would be no hesitancy in inviting a person to hold a meeting for you, provided he was sufficiently capable as a preacher.”

Where did the Holy Spirit ever define unity in such terms? Which one of the apostles ever described it in such fashion? Can the prayer of God’s Son be paraphrased to read, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one to the point where there would be no hesitancy in inviting one to hold meetings for them”? Even the most casual and uncritical student of the scriptures should realize that “inviting a person to hold a gospel meeting for you,” has absolutely no relation to the prayer which our Savior offered. Unity in Christ involves Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. So Paul said, and so I believe. Is our brother not going to share “the spirit of interrelation of Christians” with our good sisters in Christ? He’d better pray that the Women’s Liberation Movement stays out of Texas.

If unity begins at the point of no hesitancy, then there is no unity of the Spirit while brethren are making up their minds whether they should invite a brother to hold a gospel meeting. What designation is bestowed upon “the spirit of interrelation of Christians” up to this point? Suppose that half of the congregation were willing to call a man for a meeting, and the other half hesitated. Would there be unity between the preacher and the half who wanted to invite him? If so, would there be unity between this half and the hesitants? Brother Thomas now has us in a real mess. In making “some suggestions as to how

unity may be achieved,” he has laid a foundation for splitting congregations over inviting preachers to hold gospel meetings. He will not be able to get a “patent” on this invention of his. A lot of congregations have been dividing over that very thing for years.

Why did our brother take this tangent? He had to do so. We must not forget that he is a leader in a party or faction within the restoration movement which is very reactionary against the fellowship of all God’s precious children. I know just how he feels. I was once in the same boat, or rather in a different boat on the same pond. It is imperative that he define unity in such a manner as to make it impossible to have it. The barriers must be kept up to prevent the walls of exclusiveness from eroding away. If he would define unity in scriptural terms he would be forced to admit that it was not something we achieved at all. It is the result of the indwelling Spirit. Every person in whom the Spirit dwells is united to Christ, and through him to every other person who is in Christ. Our job is not to achieve unity but to enjoy it, and endeavor to keep it in the bond of peace. If he wrote that way the Gospel Advocate would not publish it!

Our brother is eminently correct in saying that merely calling a man “brother” in public, is too shallow. But really loving and treating all of God’s children as brothers, both publicly and privately, is not so shallow. It can run deep! And since Brother Thomas admits that every penitent baptized believer is a brother, we commend this course to him. Brotherhood results from a common fatherhood. When I disdain or “set at nought a brother” for whom Christ died— any brother— I reflect against the Father. Paternity makes fraternity possible. If one is good enough for the Father to adopt as a child, he ought not to be too bad for me to accept as a brother, whether he holds meetings or doesn’t.

Our brother repeatedly talks about “full fellowship.” This

is clear proof that he is not dealing with fellowship on a scriptural basis. Like so many others, he probably has it confused with endorsement. They are not the same at all. Fellowship is a state or relationship into which we are called by God (1 Cor. 1:9). It is the sharing of the common life of the Spirit. Endorsement is an act of one's own mind in sanctioning a practice or thing. There is no "half-fellowship" because there are no half-brothers or stepchildren in the family. To use the term "full fellowship" is to employ an expression without scriptural warrant.

In true legalistic fashion it is said, "Full-fellowship to the extent that we will be willing for a person to hold a meeting for us, is impossible, as we have all recognized and practiced, without our doctrinal differences first being faced head on and cleared up point by point." Please do not think that I am rude and uncivil when I say this is sheer poppycock. Our good brother is farther "back in the woods" than I thought. He is still living in the nineteenth century with its factional fights, fusses and feuds. I have been invited to hold meetings for Disciples of Christ who believe that the word of God is our rule of faith and practice, for Independent Christian Churches, pre-millennial congregations, one-cup congregations, anti-Sunday School congregations, and even congregations where they would invite Brother Thomas. In all of these places we knew that we disagreed upon many things. We found our oneness in Christ Jesus. We were resolved that we would permit none of our differences to mean more to us than the relationship purchased by his wonderful blood. We allowed grace to cover our divergent views and met at the cross. It is a little ridiculous to postulate that we can never work together in our blessed Lord until we resolve every trivial action of every faction and settle every schism of every sect.

Brother Thomas engages in a dangerous practice when he starts calling the roll of our little segments and analyzing their position. One always reveals his own inconsistency when he

plays this game. Our brother places those who use one container in distributing the fruit of the vine on the far right. He calls them “One-Cuppers.” But whether they are on the right or left has nothing to do with where they are standing. It is determined by the direction Brother Thomas is facing. If he turns around the Disciples of Christ will be on his right. Obviously, he thinks he is in the center. So does everyone else. We are all “centrists” when we are doing the talking. But that means there are some on the right of Brother Thomas and some on the left of him. He is like the Light Brigade in the poem. You will recall that they got wiped out!

His point is that those who use only one container believe he is sinning because he uses individual cups. But Brother Thomas does not believe he is sinning. If he did he would ditch the cups. The same thing holds true with reference to Sunday School classes. He is not going to allow himself to be judged by those on the right as to what is sin for him. But Brother Thomas is to the right of the brethren who use instrumental music and he is going to judge it is a sin for them. The fact is that the whole burden of his essay is that there will be no unity until everyone sees everything just as he does.

There will be a lot of protesting about this but that is exactly what it amounts to. Brother Thomas is not about to give up cups and classes so those who use them can be united with his party. The only way they can have unity is to admit they were wrong in making a test of fellowship out of such things and come and join Brother Thomas. By the same token, and on the other side of the spectrum, as he puts it, those who use instruments must admit they are sinful, and come and join Brother Thomas. This means our unity is not in Christ’s redemptive act but in Brother Thomas’ expository ability.

Our brethren who are riding in his partisan vehicle are going to be the sole judges of what is opinion for everyone else and of what is faith for themselves. It is this very spirit of

dogmatism which shattered a noble unity movement and smashed and splintered it into smithereens. So our brother is actually continuing a plea for division. He is not really pleading for unity at all!

His reference to 1 Corinthians 14:23 is unfortunate for his thesis. That chapter was inserted to show that we must receive and welcome one another in spite of our differences. If our brother believes the teaching of the chapter why does he not keep his “faith” about the instrument to himself? Why does he judge his brethren who use it? Why does he set at nought these brethren? Why does he seek to have dominion over their faith? Why does he try to destroy those for whom Christ died? Why does he not let them stand or fall to their own master? Is he endeavoring to judge another man’s servant?

I emphatically deny that it is going to require the working out of all of these differences of understanding to get all of our brethren into a single, real fellowship. The apostolic letter to Corinth is stark proof of the utter fallacy of such a position. Were the brethren at Corinth not in a single real fellowship? In spite of their schisms, their mistaken views, their doctrinal errors, and their messed up lives, the apostle said, “Surely you know that you are God’s temple, where the Spirit of God dwells” (1 Cor. 3:16). He wrote, “Now you are Christ’s body, and each of you a limb or organ of it” (12:27). Can you think of a better example of “a single, real fellowship” than a body?

If Brother Thomas had been at Corinth he would only have aggravated their state. They had some brethren who had “been so accustomed to idolatry that even now they eat food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience is polluted by the eating.” They had others in the congregation who said there was “no resurrection of the dead.” Paul did not tell them that it was “going to require a working out of all those differences of understanding” to get them all into a single, real fellowship. Instead, he said, “God is faithful, by whom ye were

called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” That is a single fellowship, since there is one Lord. It is real! Praise God!

Our brother asserts that for each man who has an erroneous belief “there must come a change of conviction before we can have real unity.” The catch in this is that Brother Thomas does not think he has any erroneous beliefs. He thinks everyone else has. The brethren who make a test of fellowship out of cups, classes, and such things, all have erroneous beliefs. The brethren who use instrumental music also have an erroneous belief. All of these must have a change of conviction, that is, they must see things like Brother Thomas does in order to have real unity. But no one has a more erroneous belief than does our good brother himself. He needs to change his conviction about what constitutes real unity. There is where the real problem lies.

What he is advocating is that the body of Christ has to be fractured, split and shivered, over *sin by definition*. Let me explain. God does not say that employing multiple containers in the Lord’s Supper is a sin. Those who think that Brother Thomas is sinning in this regard, postulate sin by human definition— their definition. God does not say that teaching the word in classes is a sin. Those who think that Brother Thomas is sinning in this regard, postulate sin by human definition— their definition. God does not say that using an instrument is a sin. Brother Thomas thinks those who do so are sinning by definition — *his definition*. It is not that they violate God’s directive. They just do not respect Brother Thomas’ deduction.

These brethren propose to read and interpret God’s word for themselves on musical praise, as Brother Thomas does on cups and classes. They respect God’s revelation but deplore Brother Thomas’ explanation. They feel that the word of God can be read as well in Abilene, Kansas, as in Abilene, Texas. If Brother Thomas in his observations on unity represents the

thinking of the administration and faculty at Abilene Christian College, that school is set to encourage strife and schism, and promote division instead of dialogue. The brightest spot in the whole mess is that a lot of students no longer fall for the kind of thinking our brother projects. I happen to know a number of them who are sick and tired of the artificial walls which have perpetuated senseless strife in the majestic family of our God. They are full up with the narrow and intolerant attitude upon which we have thrived in the “desert.”

I have a deep compassion for men like Brother Thomas. They are on the spot. “The eyes of Texas are upon them!” It is hard to play the game when the signals are being called by the spectators. I commend very highly the spirit exhibited in the last two paragraphs of our brother’s article. He is right when he says, “It is nothing less than stupid for us to fight one another, as well as its being sinful.” It is also stupid for us to perpetuate division and schism.

I am in the fellowship with Brother Thomas. I am also in the fellowship with brethren who oppose cups and classes, and with those who condone the use of instrumental music. I will help any of them, share with them, and labor with them when they will allow. The relationship which we have in Christ is worth more to me than the peculiarities of any of those who are in him.

Irrelevant Antagonism

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

“For he reconciled both to God by the sacrifice of one body on the cross, and by this act made utterly irrelevant the antagonism between them” (Ephesians 2:16).

The *both* mentioned here includes Jew and Gentile. Between them there had existed deep hostility. The nature of it was such that no purely human power could overcome it. It was augmented by national pride, prompting each to regard the other with ill-concealed contempt. The passage of time had only served to imbed it more deeply in each succeeding generation. By the time of Jesus it was a festering sore, an open ulcer in the social tissue.

Jesus did not heal it by insisting that one move over and become like the other. The Jew did not have to give up being a Jew and become a Gentile. The Gentile did not have to become a Jew. The circumcised remained in his circumcision; the uncircumcised in his uncircumcision. The real problem was not their relationship to one another, but their relationship to God. The way they regarded each other was simply a reflection of the way they stood with reference to God. Their hostility to one another was a symptom of a deeper malignancy.

Jesus did not try to unite them to one another for to bring together hostile forces is simply to precipitate conflict. What he

did was to reconcile them both to God. The Jew was reconciled to God and so was the Gentile. Such reconciliation freed them both from a guilt complex. It lifted the burden of sin and made possible a sense of security which could not be threatened by any external force. In God there is no national or sectarian rivalry, no conflict of interests. God is love. Thus there is no need for ambitious strife, no clamoring for advantage.

This state was achieved by the sacrifice of one body on the cross. One body was sacrificed for both Jew and Gentile. There was not one body for the Jew and another for the Gentile. The same body made reconciliation for both. If the Jew claimed reconciliation at all it had to be by the same body as the Gentile recognized. Since both were reconciled by one body, as reconciled ones they had to be in one body.

So the cross was the instrument of reconciliation. And the cross is a monument to man's weakness and futility. It is the "final solution" to the problem of disunity and disharmony. Thus the cross is superior to any system or method of man. It is the only creed available to those who labor in conjunction with heaven's purpose to bring about unity in the universe. If anything else could produce harmony the cross would not be needed. To acknowledge the cross is to acknowledge its transcendence, and to derogate everything else.

The cross is the place where one act made irrelevant the antagonism between bitter rivals. It is stupid for two men in death row awaiting execution to engage in fisticuffs over the relative merits of their political parties. Of what avail is it to two famished souls struggling across a trackless desert to come to blows over their understanding of a problem in mathematics. Measured by the circumstance of Calvary all else is rendered insignificant. It is meaningless.

The cross is the answer to all partisan hostility. And the fact that it could unite such divergent elements as Jew and

Gentile provides hope for removing all other barriers. None of our partisan problems can even begin to approximate in severity that which separated Jew and Gentile. If that schism could be healed all lesser breaches can be bridged. Our “circumcision” today takes many forms. Circumcision, in principle, is anything external which is less than the cross but is the ground of such pride as to make the cross seem inferior. It is anything in which man trusts as a symbol of his covenant relationship with God.

Such “circumcision” automatically renders everyone who does not trust in such a condition of rightness as uncircumcised. It places him outside the pale. It makes him a member of a rival tribe, an object of hostility. So long as men glory in externals, in that which they perform in Christ as a criterion of faithfulness, the cross is made of none effect. The circumcision will create alienation and nullify the purpose of the cross. It will cause men to forget grace and attempt to be justified by law.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Once the meaning of the cross breaks into the human heart and enlightens the mind, it is seen that neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision. One becomes part of a new humanity. He does not turn over a new leaf but is turned over to a new life. He no longer walks in legal justification. So long as man trusts in law as the basis of his hope others will be regarded as “lesser breeds without the law.” It makes no difference whether the law is humanly contrived or divinely revealed. It is the very nature of law to divide. It will create a wall whether written by the finger of God or by the hands of men.

At the cross every man is seen for what he is. Here he is stripped of all externals. He is made naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He is revealed as helpless and hopeless, unable to keep law perfectly and abjectly in need of coming within “the circle of God’s love.” Here his little mental

meanderings, his rationalizations, his cute little complex schemes of doctrinal orthodoxy are shown to be cobweb ladders which he has built to try and achieve reconciliation, always too short, always ineffective. He cannot even attain to his own ideals.

The cross changes all of this. The blood of Jesus nullifies it. But it is accomplished, not by altering circumcision or uncircumcision, but by elevating our relationship to a wholly different plane. Those who continue to argue about the relative merits of their “circumcision” demonstrate that they have not grasped grace nor seen the salvation which is in him.

The cross does not make us alike. It does not alter externals. We continue in circumcision, or uncircumcision. We are simply reconciled to God and our being right or wrong about every point of doctrine has nothing to do with it. This does not produce the shared life. “But even though we were dead in our sins God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, gave us life together with Christ— it is, remember, by grace and not by achievement you are saved— and has lifted us right out of the old life to take our place with him in Christ Jesus in the Heavens.”

Think of this. It is not by our achievement, intellectually, mentally, or morally. We are given life together with Christ. *Given it!* We did not earn it. We did not deserve it. It did not come through our intelligence or power. Man can no more lift himself by his own bookstraps than by his own bootstraps. It is at once apparent that this puts a different face on the whole matter of our relationship to each other.

We no longer receive one another because of attainment or achievement. The question is no longer how one stands on this or that, or what his views are on one point or another. The question now is whether one has been lifted right out of the old life to take his place in Christ Jesus. If one is in Christ, if he has been given life together with Christ, this is the ultimate criterion. If he has

not he can be right about everything else and still be lost. All of his attainments about which he boasts are symptoms of vain pride.

Obviously it is good to be right on as many things as possible. To be correct is infinitely better than to be mistaken. Facts at the fingertip are manifestly superior to guesses at the mental gate. No one desires to be voluntarily ignorant but knowledge may puff up rather than build up, and man is expected to be a babe in Christ, not a balloon. But this has nothing to do with our reconciliation. The apostle says, "No one can pride himself upon earning the love of God."

What this does, then, is to make "utterly irrelevant the antagonism between us." Antagonism is not necessarily irrelevant under a legalistic system. It is the nature of law to create such. Legal arguments belong to law, gracious acceptance belongs to grace. It is unthinkable that Jesus would make antagonism irrelevant between Jew and Gentile to bring them together and then make relevant antagonism between them to divide and fragment them.

The party spirit operates to produce conformity, the Holy Spirit to encourage community. The party spirit begins with recrimination, the Holy Spirit with reconciliation. The party spirit makes antagonism inevitable, the Holy Spirit makes it irrelevant. If we are to be workers together with God we must help men see the cross purpose of God and cease to be at cross purposes with one another.

We are reconciled by one act. The parable of the prodigal is a good illustration. He was not welcomed by the father because of his knowledge. He was ignorant of many things with relation to the father's house. In that respect he was far behind his older brother. But he was reconciled by a single act. He came to the father. He may have become a problem at home after his return because of his ignorance of what had transpired while he

was away. But he had been lost and now he was found. He had been dead but now he was alive. It would be tragic if, like the older brother, we should continue our antagonism which has been rendered irrelevant by the one great fact of our reconciliation to the Father.

No Human Invention

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[Abstract]

“The gospel I preach to you is no human invention. No man gave it to me, no man taught it to me; it came as a direct revelation from Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12).

The credibility attached to this statement of the apostle Paul, insofar as the origin of the gospel is concerned, is dependent upon the degree of veracity we assign to him. We cannot prove that no man gave him the gospel. We only have his word for it. If we believe that he told the truth we will believe that the gospel came to him by direct revelation. If we regard Paul as a mystic or visionary, and a lot of modern critics do, we will probably doubt the divine source of his message.

It is observable that Paul left no room for compromise. The gospel is either a human invention or a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Men will react toward the gospel exactly as they regard one or the other of these as its source. If they accept it as a divine and direct revelation from Jesus Christ it will have authority over their lives which will change them according to its terms. If it is regarded as a mere human philosophy it will provide the subject for endless debate but not for endless life.

While we cannot prove that Paul was correct in his statement, we can certainly prove that he believed what he said was true. He endured beatings and floggings, was stoned and

shipwrecked, imprisoned and jailed, all for the sake of the gospel. He said, "I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing." One does not undergo such agony willingly for a mere concoction of human rationalization. But my confidence that the gospel did not originate with men is not dependent upon the testimony of a man, not even that of the great apostle Paul. I respect his word and believe what he said about the source of his message. But I do not hinge my whole faith, as to the authorship of the gospel, upon his word. Instead, I hold that the real proof is inherent in the message. It is not human testimony as to the source, but *the nature* of the gospel which proves that it is no human invention.

It runs counter to all that men would devise if they were arrogant enough to attempt a plan for universal redemption. Men begin with those of humble parentage and create heroes of them who may be elevated as gods. But the gospel begins with one who was God, emptying himself, and adopting the nature of a slave. It is distinctly said that "he made himself of no reputation." It seems that he deliberately chose a course which placed obstacles in the path of belief, and of course the reason is that he wanted to attract followers by no superficial appeal or secondary attraction. Think of but a few of the ways by which he made himself of no reputation.

1. The circumstance of his birth. By being born of a virgin, an unmarried Jewish peasant girl, he became a stumblingblock in all ages to the coldly intellectual world.

2. The place of birth. He entered the world in the stable of an inn in an obscure village in a remote province of the Roman Empire. He was wrapped in swaddling-cloths and placed in a manger where homage was paid to him only by "certain poor shepherds."

3. The boyhood home. He grew up in Nazareth which was

in Galilee, a province inhabited by warlike zealots whom George Adam Smith described as “volcanic.” W. E. Vine writes, “To say the least, the Galileans were the object of contempt owing to their lack of culture, their rude dialect and their association with Gentiles.” Nathaniel, who became a devoted follower, was hesitant at first to approach Jesus because he asked, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

4. The choice of disciples. For ambassadors to an alien world Jesus selected what might have been termed a motley crew. There were fishermen from Galilee, a socially outcast publican, a member of the Zealot political party, and one who was a thief from the beginning.

5. The daily companions. Jesus associated with those “on the wrong side of the tracks.” He was stigmatized as a friend of publicans and sinners, and was branded as a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. He suggested as one mark of his identity that “the poor have the gospel preached unto them.”

6. The manner of death. This was the crucial test. The Jews regarded as under a curse those who died upon a tree, while others regarded crucifixion as reserved for the lowest and vilest of criminals. The offense of the cross has not ceased even yet.

I believe that the whole scheme of redemption is of divine origin and that it bears the imprint of the divine mind upon its very face. The gospel is not merely words announced to us, but a life shared with us. Jesus is the Good News of God to a dying world, because it is in him that life resides, and that life is the light of the world. This is my story, this is my song!

Miracle at the Pool

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[Abstract]

It is a refreshing experience to retrace the steps of Jesus, and especially to seek from the narratives of his earth visit the motives which prompted him to do what he did. I am quite convinced that he was always conscious that he was doing the work of the Father, so I know what God wants his sons to do by observing what his Son did.

I do not imply that we are expected to perform dynamic works which cut across the whole realm of nature. The “greater works” which are laid upon us are not in the domain of the material, for in this area no one can exceed his feat of raising the dead. So magnificent was it that his own resurrection was given as proof of his divinity. Our greater works lie in the area of human nature and its transformation, and we are to walk among men as those who were dead but are alive again. If you have no consciousness of walking in newness of life it is because you never really died.

At the same time I have no intellectual problems with the miracles of Jesus. I would have problems with Jesus if it were not for his miracles. What he did to attest his deity is exactly what I would expect of one who claimed to face a skeptical world as the Son of God. Those poor souls who are always talking about the problems raised by miracles put their mental finger on the wrong sore spot. Their problem is with God, not with his

alleged acts. When they get their directional finders tuned in the right direction they will cease to be troubled by distorted images of infinity.

It will help us to remember that it was as natural for Jesus to do mighty works as it would appear supernatural to us. But the reason for doing certain acts may make them all the more appealing. For instance, there was the case of healing which took place in one of the colonnades at the Sheep-Pool in Jerusalem. I am intrigued by it because here there came together all of the forces of life— religious ritualism, human misery, superstition, compassion and legalism. The fascinating account of it will be found in John 5.

Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. We do not know which one, and it is not important. Certainly he was at the temple where rigid ceremonial formulae were carried out in meticulous detail by the professional priesthood. There would be the robed choir, the burning of incense, the formal priestly prayers and all of the liturgical elements which made the occasion impressive with external pomp and glory.

From all of this Jesus turned away, escaping to go to the Sheep-Pool. It is most likely that the pool was near the Sheep-Gate in the northern suburb, part of the tangle of shops, bazaars, and workmen's stalls, where the mob pushed and shoved, and polyglot voices were heard lifted in raucous shout. The pool was enclosed with five porches. It was known as Bethesda, place of mercy or healing.

When Jesus visited it he was in the midst of squalid misery. A great crowd of sick people, blind, lame and paralyzed, filled the porches. A superstitious tradition held that at intervals an angel came down unseen and caused the water to bubble up, and whoever was fortunate enough to first fling himself into the pool when the agitation began would be healed. There is, in the hearts

of the grievously smitten, an inclination to try anything that even remotely holds forth hope. So the multitude remained there in their tragic condition.

While the agitation of the water was obviously from physical causes, we need not question that psychosomatics were healed, and every such case of relief for an overwrought imagination brought hope to the others. It is significant that Jesus left the glitter and unreality which characterized the temple a few blocks south and turned toward the suffering and ignorant multitude, where groans and wails rent the air in piteous appeals for help. He came to share the lot of the helpless.

It was the sabbath day. At the temple, visitors and rabbis from all over the world of the Mediterranean would be talking about how the sabbath must be kept to please God. It had already been decided that one could not wipe away the blood or pus exuding from a wound, for that would be work. Nor could he stop the flow of liquid from a cask by picking up a little piece of wax to plug up the hole. He might not gargle a liquid for the sore throat unless he swallowed it. And on and on, multiplying the technicalities, while a short distance away people were contorted in pain and suffering untold agony of the flesh.

Jesus saw a man who had been a cripple for thirty-eight years, and watching him as he lay on his pallet, he asked him, "Do you want to recover?" This was not a silly question. Not at all! Many who have suffered from a lengthy illness really glory in it. Unable to secure attention in any other way, and suffering from an inferiority complex, sickness becomes the means of gratifying ego. People come to see you, to sympathize with you, to make over you! And you can always escape some of the responsibilities of life.

I am thinking of two women as I write. A number of years ago, one of these discovered that through fancied illness she could bind her family to her as slaves. She began to project the

most frightening diseases in her troubled mental state and warped convictions. Not only has she withdrawn a life from service that could have been useful but she has made life miserable for others about her. Sickness is her weapon, her shield and buckler!

The other thrills at being asked how she is feeling. It provides a glorious opportunity to run down the catalogue of aches and pains, reciting them off to each enquirer like items on a grocery list. When I saw what her trouble was I decided upon a different approach. I walk up to her smilingly, and say, "My, I hope you are feeling half as well as you look!" I am not sure she really likes me any longer. Professional invalids are like other professionals. They resent it when they are not given an opportunity to exhibit in the field in which they excel through long practice. I ought to be ashamed, I know, but nothing is funnier than two hypochondriacs meeting in the aisle of a supermarket and starting to play cards, using their ailments in an attempt to trump each other. Come right down to it, there are a lot of people who do not want to recover. They would have to "complain of feeling better."

The cripple answered Jesus like many cripples react. He ignored the question and began an explanation of why he remained in his present condition. He was very polite and almost coldly formal with this enquiring stranger. "Sir," he replied, "I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is disturbed, but while I am moving, someone else is in the pool before me." I can almost hear the half-apologetic tone used in the explanation.

Jesus said, "Rise to your feet, take up your bed, and walk!" The man looked at Jesus and Jesus was looking at him and through him. Without the least bit of hesitancy the man got to his feet, rolled up his pallet, put it on his shoulder and started for home. But he had hardly gotten started when he ran into some folk "coming home from church," as we so quaintly say. They were incensed at such brazen disrespect for a holy day.

“Hey there, you! Who do you think you are? This is the Sabbath. You are not allowed to lug a bed on the Sabbath.” The former cripple, now walking sprightly along, and anxious to get home and surprise the folks, stopped. He said, “The man who cured me told me to take up my bed and walk, so I took it up and I am walking.” A crowd began to gather. And a number of them asked at once, “Who told you to take up your bed and walk?” They did not ask who had healed him after thirty-eight years of crippling patalysis. That was secondary. The big interest was the identity of any person with the audacity to tell a man to carry his bed home on the Sabbath. What would the world come to if former cripples did such things?

The man did not know who cured him. Later on Jesus saw him in the temple and slipped up to his side and spoke to him. The man then went and informed the Jews who had healed him. John tells us that, “it was works of this kind done on the Sabbath that stirred the Jews to persecute Jesus.” They resolved to kill him because he not only broke the sabbath, “but, by calling God his own Father, he claimed equality with God.”

Did Jesus break the law of God? Did he teach men to do so? It will probably help us to understand why he did not if we remember the very basis upon which God provided law for man. The Pharisees forgot this and were led to the worship of law rather than to the worship of God. Law had two purposes. First, it was to serve the needs of mankind and provide for human wellbeing. Second, it was to bring men to Christ. It was to act as a guardian until faith arrived and a custodian was no longer required.

Jesus said, “Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man.” God was not interested in days but in men. Man was not intended to be a slave of the sabbath regulation but the sabbath was intended to provide rest and relaxation for man. When Jesus faced the conflict between a crippled man and a code of laws, the human need took precedence. It was the

superior value. In healing the lame man Jesus provided for him rest, comfort and freedom from suffering which had been denied him for thirty-eight years. And this is what the sabbath was all about.

But those who were specialists in lawkeeping as a way of life obscured the human need. Relief of suffering was not nearly so important as obeying a command. The chief aim of men should be to discuss, debate, argue and reason about how the law could be made more binding. The details must be supplied. There must be rules and regulations to protect the law which is to fence in the people. There is no end to this kind of authoritarianism, once it is started. The powers that be (rabbis, popes, elders and ministers) rule upon each new item and factor, and the rule of man must be acknowledged as the rule of God. Soon the web is so great that man becomes helpless in its strands and meshes. Then he either drops out, or drops in and tunes out, in order to survive and keep a little of his sanity.

The contrast between Jesus and the temple priests was amazing. Jesus sought how to help a man recover and live. They sought how they might kill Jesus and stop him from living. Never let us forget that legalism and casuistry are members of the same family. The last is the offspring of the first. The legalist can always interpret the law so as to get away with murder. Life is cheap to a legalist. Human values are far down the scale. Men exist only to keep the law alive, even if they themselves die in the attempt. They must live by the law if it kills them! And it is true that the letter killeth!

Religion is life! It is not a code unloaded from above, but a life shared from above. It is a life of service. There is no other way to serve God than by serving men made in God's image. If you overlook this fact, you will end up degrading yourself and those who are helpless, by helping them for religion's sake. Your alms will become "sucker bait." Your charity will be a part of your sectarian propaganda. Your good deeds will become

commodities for swapping and trading for names on the church record. This makes needy men mere things, pawns in a power struggle, persons who are helped on a commercial basis and not out of sheer compassion.

The tragedy of this is that it makes hypocrites out of us. We claim a concern for suffering humanity, but after helping them awhile, if they do not respond and attend our meetings and become “identified” with our roster, we cut them off, and consider that the help extended did not pay off. The problem is that we are still in the temple and not in the market-place or the gates.

We do not help people simply so they can live, but so we can live. By giving a poor unfortunate despondent cripple a happy sabbath, Jesus gave himself one. He proved that he was the Son of God by working like the Father worked. And that is the only way we can show that we are the sons of God. Let men gather to argue, fight and debate over the trivia, but let us look for the Sheep-Pools of the inner city. Let us do it, for God’s sake! As James puts it, “The religion that is unstained and untarnished in God’s sight is to go and relieve the needs of widows and fatherless children and to keep from becoming contaminated in daily contact with the world.”

These Tremendous Issues

Mission Messenger (December 1970)

Volume 32

[Abstract]

It has been said that you can judge the caliber of a man by the things at which he laughs. I suspect that it is equally true that character is revealed by what it takes to make us weep. And by the same token, the greatness or littleness of a religious movement may be determined by the things with which its membership is preoccupied in a time of distress and in a world at crisis.

Despite the unfavorable light in which the Earth is placed as man becomes ever more familiar with the other planets, it still remains that, insofar as human knowledge goes, it was central in the divine purpose. It was to this fly-speck rotating in the galaxies of infinity that the Word came, clothed in flesh, to share the common lot. This was the terminus of the light beam of Love, the transforming dynamic of the universe. This is the visited planet. Here redeeming Grace found shelter and reconciliation reversed the tide of what, in our human predicament, we call history.

The human mind, beset by the limitations of time and space, is staggered when it seeks to grasp the majesty with which God invests the eternal plan for our return to the divine-human relationship which was broken and shattered by sin. In our finitude we can never fully embrace it. Our words are too meager, our syllables too simple for such a tremendous task.

Yet, the apostle Paul, that remarkable symbol of God's transcending concern, leads us close enough that we may touch the hem of the garment. In no place do I come closer than in the first thirteen verses of chapter three of the letter to the Ephesians.

Of course, when we talk about chapters and verses, we speak of something of which the apostle knew nothing. Chapters are the slices we have made to enhance our serving of the bread of life, and verses are the bites into which we have carved them. Sometimes they make our mastication difficult, having been cut across the grain. Perhaps that is why, at this particular juncture, I like best the translation by J. B. Phillips, that inimitable purveyor of inestimable treasure wrapped up in the commonplace folds of the daily newspaper. The particular volume which lies before me as I write is divided into paragraphs with no stakes driven down at intervals to create a numerical obstacle course.

I should like to share with you some of the magnetic truths which seem to leap from the page and burn their way into my consciousness. Paul begins with mention of the great cause which resulted in his imprisonment, and defines it as being related to the Gentiles. He regards his call to serve them as a distinct manifestation of grace, and is thrilled by the fact that God has inducted him into the divine mystery, the superlative secret of the ages, opening the door to it with the key of revelation.

This secret was maintained inviolate in the vaults of heaven, hidden from the prying eyes and longing hearts of every generation of the past. Now it has been made known through the agency of the Holy Spirit. God's chosen envoys and prophets are the recipients of a plain declaration. For them the veil has been lifted, the enshrouding darkness has turned to light.

And what is the noble secret? Are you ready for it? Then,

hear the apostle: "It is simply this: that the Gentiles who were previously excluded from God's agreements, are to be equal heirs with his chosen people, equal members and equal partners in God's promises given by Christ through the gospel." Does that leave you untouched? Does it provide a "let-down?" Then you have not begun to grasp the eternal plan for the unity of all things in the universe in Christ Jesus.

The mystery unfolded is the end of ethnic, racial, social and national barriers. It is an announcement that the war is over. Hate has been dethroned. Selfishness is revealed as a blatant usurper. There is no other side of the tracks. The tracks have been removed. There is no wall of separation and segregation. The wall has been broken down. Former outcasts are now in camp, former outlaws are caught up in love and life, equal heirs and equal partners.

What is mysterious about it? The answer is simple. The way it was achieved. It was not by conformity. The circumcised did not become uncircumcised. The uncircumcised did not become circumcised. The wall was between them and the wall was broken down. And there they were, no longer apart, but seeing each other face to face. Blood washed away the barrier. It brought together those who were alienated. Paul says that the incalculable riches of Christ were opened up for all (not just one race) to share. That is the mystery!

THE ROLE OF ANGELS

He declares. "The purpose is that all the angelic powers should now see the complex wisdom of God's plan being worked out through the Church, in conformity to that timeless purpose which he centered in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Angels were not in on the secret. They were interested in it and sought to peer into these things. But they had no revelation just as the angels that sinned had no Saviour. Revelation was for men and so was the Savior.

The only way that the angels could grasp God's "complex plan" is to see it worked out in the community of saints. The community of the reconciled ones is God's university for angels. It is their only opportunity to fathom the purpose which was hidden from ages and generations. The angels have their eyes upon us to see how diverse elements can be united in one body by the cross in spite of their diversity.

So the apostle continues: "In view of these tremendous issues, I beg you not to lose heart because I am now suffering for my part in bringing you the gospel." I like that! I am attracted to it again and again! Great issues demand great sacrifices. The freeing of the mystery may require the imprisonment of the minister. We must never lose heart if the messenger forfeits his liberty that the message may go forth unfettered. The bodies of men can be cast into prison but the body of Christ cannot be. The Word of God is not bound! It is as free as the Spirit.

These tremendous issues. How they shame us for the trivia which we exalt above the cross. How they make our little debates and arguments and wrangles so unimportant and inconsequential. The mystery of the ages is the gathering into one body of variegated elements and welding them into an indissoluble unity of the Spirit. God have mercy upon those who fly in the face of heaven's eternal purpose and who think they are called to fracture and fragment the saints in order to please God while frustrating the Great Design. It is enough to make the eagerly watching angels weep!

That Inner Illumination

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

“And this is my prayer . . . that you may receive that inner illumination of the spirit which will make you realize how great is the hope to which he is calling you” (Ephesians 1:18).

All of our readers recognize by this time that translators of the sacred scriptures sometimes find themselves in difficulty when facing the original word for spirit. The Greek *pneuma* can refer to the Spirit of God, or it can refer to that divinely given attribute within man which makes of him a rational being, able to hold converse with Deity. Even the term *hagios pneuma* is fraught with problems. It may refer to the Spirit who is holy by nature, or to the spirit in man when purged of the taint and guilt of sin and consecrated unto the service of God.

The passage with which we are here concerned is a good case in point. Some translators capitalize the word and make it Spirit, concluding that the Spirit is the agency of illumination, God’s flashlight to conduct the way into deeper recesses of the Word. Others render it spirit, referring to the heart, the intellectual faculty, which is flooded with greater light and thus made more capable of functioning effectively in fulfilling the divine purpose.

Those who are aware of my personal convictions about the work of the Spirit also recognize that I am not perturbed by

which position is taken. I hold that the spirit of man is capable of being floodlighted and given insight, and I believe that this is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit. There is a difference between revelation and illumination. The first relates to impartation of truth undiscoverable by other means. It has to do with an action of the divine mind in conveying truth. The second has to do with perceptiveness of that truth and is an action related to the human understanding.

I do not think the Spirit is revealing additional truth to men in our day. I am content to believe that the revelation of divine truth as contained in the sacred scriptures was completed by the special envoys of Christ during their lifetime. But all of the truths in that revelation have not been apprehended. It is one thing to uncover the body of saving truth and a wholly different thing to discover the truths contained in it. I do not feel that the bodies of men today are one whit different than that of Adam, but scientists are discovering new truths about us all of the time. The Spirit does not operate in illumination by imposing the Word upon our minds, else all of us would have an equal knowledge of God's truth. The Spirit dwells in the heart and infuses the mind into the truth to the extent of its willingness and capability. No two persons in the world have the same capacity for understanding. In all of us, the powers of perception, retention, and rationalization differ. We can no more understand alike than we can all look alike. It is for this reason that knowledge can never be made a ground of fellowship any more than can physical stature or appearance.

Our willingness to adopt new truths may be affected by prejudice, loyalty to the party, indifference, or fear of loss of prestige, power or pelf. The Spirit cannot drive us farther than we are willing to go. In order to grasp the greatness of truth one must cast off all shackles and make the leap of faith. The overwhelming desire for truth must become the magnificent obsession, the search for the holy grail, the quest of the golden fleece.

When one arrives at the point where all else is counted as refuse and he surrenders himself unreservedly to the Spirit who dwells within, when he commits himself without restraint to the leading of the Spirit to follow without hesitancy, his heart is prepared for illumination. The word of God will take on new depths of meaning, passages which once were like a blank wall become open gates attracting to the broad fields beyond, those which were interpreted with that inconsistency which is the bane of every faction will suddenly come into focus and proper correlation, and an unbounded joy will fill the heart. This is the promise of God!

The Spirit did not come as a truck driver to dump the truth on an empty lot and then retire to the shade of a tree to watch our fumbling efforts to cement the blocks together into a tabernacle for our God. God is as much concerned that we grasp the truth as that we get it. So the Spirit dwells within each of us, helping us to overcome our weakness, and empowering us to understand. So long as we drowsily confuse the Message of heaven with the call of men, even those who are priests of God, we will be frantic. But when we quietly compose ourselves and say, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth," the truth will break through. And when this happens it will "make you realize how great is the hope to which he is calling you." This I earnestly crave for all of you because of the love I have for you!

The Satisfying Bread

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

“He who gives seed to the sower and turns that seed into bread to eat, will give you the seed of generosity to sow and, for the harvest, the satisfying bread of good deeds done” (2 Corinthians 9:10).

This intriguing statement appears as a part of a letter devoted to raising money. It was intended to encourage those who received it to give freely of their means to help people whom they had not seen and would probably never see. Those to whom the money was to be sent were prejudiced against those who were asked to contribute. They were racially segregated, even though they were brothers in the Lord.

The apostle Paul felt that a generous gift from communities of the saints among the Gentiles to help the poor among the Jewish disciples in Palestine might go far toward lessening tensions. He was a little dubious as to how the gesture might be received, and even wrote to the Romans, “Now, my brothers, I am going to ask you, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the love we bear each other in the Spirit, to stand behind me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf— that I may not fall into the hands of the unbelievers in Judea, and that the Jerusalem Christians may receive the gift I am taking to them in the spirit in which it was made.”

So much for the background which evoked the statement. I am interested in its implications in my own life. Because the apostle was writing to a people familiar with rural life, he uses language drawn from their existence to illustrate his message. After urging them to make theirs a spontaneous gift rather than one squeezed out of them by the pressure of his words, he says, "All I will say is that a poor sowing means a poor harvest, and generous sowing means a generous harvest."

This may have been a popular proverb which he was merely quoting. In any event, in those days when farmers walked through their fields scattering the seed in broadcast fashion, they had to decide whether they would sow sparsely or freely. If they sought to save and hoard their seed there would be a poor harvest, but if they dipped in the bag and cast the seed abroad in lavish fashion a generous harvest could be gathered in.

It would seem that since it was all so simple there could be no question about how to sow, but there were variable factors. Nature had to be taken into account. There might be too much rain, or a drouth, or an insect invasion. Under such circumstances it would appear that it would have been best to save the seed rather than to cast it out with such abandon. Thus, one had to have faith to really sow generously, whereas to sow miserly indicated a lack of trust or hope.

In the sharing of life's bounty we must remember that all will not always turn out as we planned. Those whom we help may be resentful and unappreciative. They may take that for which we labored and waste it or "throw it down a rathole." They may even become our enemies. So we must decide whether we are giving to try and purchase goodwill and commendation, or whether we are motivated solely by a spirit of altruism and compassion.

The peculiar thing about it is that if we sit down and try to

coldly calculate in advance, we will get only a very minimal return, but if we dip down into the bag of seed spontaneously and enthusiastically and sow it with a spirit of trust, the harvest will be amazing. One cannot tell another how to give or what to give. I cannot bind a percentage upon you, nor can I reap for you. "Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly nor under compulsion, for God loves the man who gives cheerfully."

The harvest starts in your own heart before the planting begins. And the seed is fertilized and watered by your attitude. If you turn loose of it with grumbling reluctance or because of pressures put upon you, you have degerminated it before it leaves your hand, in so far as your own harvest is concerned. God will open up heaven to bless you only when your heart is open to receive the blessing. He sends none away empty except those who are full of themselves. When the strings of the heart are drawn taut by the hand of stinginess God cannot deposit the riches of His grace in that heart.

God gives seed to the sower. Man can plant seed but he cannot make it. God can turn that seed into bread to eat. But man cannot hoard the seed and have the bread. It is only as we are willing to turn loose of the seed which God places in our hand that we can expect a harvest. If we save the seed we lose the bread.

As it is in the realm of nature, so it is in the domain of the spirit. God will give you the seed of generosity to sow and, for the harvest, the satisfying bread of good deeds done. Many in our day are starved and emaciated within. They suffer from frustration and discontent. They grumble because they have no satisfying bread, but the reason they have none is because they have not sowed the seed of unselfish giving. There is no use waiting for your ship to come in, if you have never sent it out! Someone has said, "The man who waits for things to turn up has his eyes fixed on his toes." The risk of faith pays off!

The Butting Brethren

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Volume 32

[Abstract]

It is generally recognized, I think, that I am a controversial figure. This is no novelty for me. I seem always to have been cast in such a role. I entered the restoration movement through a rather small but combative and vociferous segment. This required a constant attack upon others as traitors and apostates. It also demanded a considerable amount of debating over issues which seemed of such gravity that unless properly settled the earth would cease her stated rounds and the stars fall like untimely figs when a rude wind blows.

I never lost a debate. Neither did any of my opponents. This fact can easily be verified by reading our respective accounts of our skirmishes. In a more mature age I wonder if such discussions revealed a sense of insecurity in the party, and if we gained reassurance by jumping on representatives of bigger and older factions. That may also account for the aggressive stance of the whole restoration movement toward those who have grown up in various sectarian moulds.

I am no longer a factional front man. I am no longer a sectarian at heart. Such vestiges of this work of the flesh which still cling to me are there because of ignorance and not because of my wish. I have renounced all sectarianism, *ours* as well as *theirs*, whoever they are! And now I find myself more of a problem to many of my brethren than ever before. They knew

how to handle me when I was a party proponent because they have all of the arguments collected, catalogued and correlated for each party. I do not fit into any of their little compartments now. Praise God!

The accepted course of procedures when you learn you are in a faction is to change factions. This means that you search for one which is a little narrower or a little broader than the one in which you have labored, depending upon which way you are going. Then you affiliate yourself with the new faction and the party journal publishes your picture together with a notification to the “faithful brethren” that after so many years of preaching in error you have seen the light and will now accept meetings with the loyal church.

But I did not go anywhere! I had already shown that I could be as narrow as anyone where I was, so I decided to show you can be as loving as need be wherever you are. We do not need to leave some brethren to love all brethren. If you can’t love them where you are, you’ll not love them anywhere else. This game of musical chairs may be all right for a children’s party, but our parties are composed of grown men, at least physically. It is a genuine thrill to know that the only brethren you have are brethren in error. That eliminates the need of mentioning the fact. You’ve heard the old spiritual, “All of God’s chillun got shoes.” Well, all of God’s chillun also have hangups, problems and unanswered questions. Some of them not only have problems, they are problems. But I receive them all just like God does. If he doesn’t drive out his problem children I will not drive out my problem brethren. If they are in him, we are in him together. And I am not going to leave him or them. They don’t have to love me for me to love them. Love is not a “horse trading” proposition.

This troubles a lot of folks. They wanted me to change my attitude, but they wanted me to reach only to them. When you start loving people in other parties you are “going too far.” So I

get written up pretty regularly in all kinds of papers. Sometimes I'm called a traitor, a liberal, or a Judas Iscariot, and other things like that. One editor solemnly warned his readers that I was a "Pied Piper" but when I wrote him that the Pied Piper influenced only children and rats, he didn't mention it any more.

None of this moves me. Really, I get a kind of kick out of it. I do not worry whether what is said is untrue. One of these days everything is going to be straightened out and squared up at the White Throne. I am willing to wait. It really isn't too important what men say or think about me. It wasn't to Jesus and it isn't to me. I've learned that by following him as closely as possible I can love even those who think they are my enemies. It isn't always easy but it is always satisfying.

It is interesting to read these little attacks in which brethren seek to limit my influence and create prejudice against what I am saying. Most of them follow a stereotyped pattern. Before me as I write are three of these articles. One says, "Brother Ketcherside's writings for many months have presented some profound truths, in a writing style which is the finest in this generation, but . . ." Another says, "Brother Ketcherside is dangerous because he manifests the love he talks so much about. He is genial in disposition and disarming in manner, but . . ." The third says, "Do not misunderstand me. Carl is a powerful speaker and if he were sound on the fellowship issue he could be a tremendous force for good, but . . ."

If I just paid attention to what was before the "buts" I would think more highly of myself than I ought to think. If I concentrated on what followed the "buts" I might develop a mental depression or go into a blue funk. If you will pardon me for saying so, I am not going to be either cast down or built up by such aspersion and acclaim. I am just no longer working for the approval of men. What they say will neither set me up nor upset me! Someone has to cut across our silly lines. Someone has

to ignore our trivial barriers. Someone has to batter down our fanatical walls. I intend to do it out of love for God. It is no sacrifice for me to do his will. I am thrilled to be set free by the grace of God. I shall never return to the narrow, bigoted, sectarian outlook which shackles the heart and quenches the Spirit. I shall not let well-meaning, but factional-minded brethren “but” me out of the eternal kingdom.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1971)

Volume 33

One Great Chapter

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The Ascent of Faith

Mission Messenger (January 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” has always intrigued me, was an interesting character. In spite of the fact that he became hopelessly addicted to drugs, being a good friend of Thomas de Quincey who wrote “Confessions of an English Opium Eater,” he could never forget the impression made upon his mind by the study of the Bible in his early days at Cambridge. And he repeatedly said that Paul’s letter to the Romans was “the most profound work in existence.”

Then there was F. Godet, the eminent French professor of theology in the University of Neuchatel, whose commentary on Luke opened up so many new vistas of thought for me. He referred to Romans as “the cathedral of the Christian faith.” Martin Luther, whose name was always spoken in reverence in my childhood home, declared that Romans was “the chief part of the New Testament.”

If the Roman letter is the Alps of the new covenant scriptures, certainly chapter eight is the Matterhorn, looming high above and towering into the clouds. It will be my privilege (I do not count it a task) this year, to lead an expedition in scaling this peak, and to this exciting adventure we invite both you and your friends.

As one in scaling a mountain must first work his way up

gentler slopes, it becomes necessary for us to mention the reasoning of the apostle leading up to this one great chapter. We shall try to avoid the temptation to peer into every nook and crevice on the way, and shall keep in view the snowy peak which is our objective. The background will be painted in bold strokes and not in fine detail.

However, there are certain words in the Roman letter which cannot be casually brushed aside. Unless we understand their true connotation all other effort will be in vain. If we seem to stop too long in some places, please remember that we are digging in toe-holds for our cleats, and thus preparing for the ascent which beckons us onward and upward. He travels at his own risk who thinks he can understand the word of God while ignoring the words of God.

Even the casual student of the sacred scriptures realizes that the letter to the Romans is different than any other letter which Paul wrote. Certainly it more nearly approaches a systematic treatise on our relationship with the divine than any other. It does not contain the references to local problems which are found in most of the rest. The reason for this appears to be quite simple.

Paul did not plant the congregation of saints in Rome, the capital city of the world. He had not visited the city and was dependent upon the report of others for any knowledge of the state of the believers. But he had long wanted to see them for two reasons. First, as an envoy of the King, he wanted to bestow upon them an enabling gift, and second, he desired to behold souls from among the Gentiles gathered into God's granary. Paul had a passion for Gentiles. He was their very own ambassador.

Something had just occurred which encouraged Paul to hope that his dream might be realized. For a long time he had been planning how he might visit Spain, a great frontier of the

Empire. He had been deterred from going into the regions beyond by the need to take up a contribution from congregations of Greeks to relieve the destitution and abject poverty which persisted in Jerusalem and Palestine. The money had been gathered and he was ready to travel with it to Jerusalem and turn it over to the brethren.

While casting about for something to do after accomplishment of this mission, the thought came to him that it would be an opportune time to visit Spain, and to make a stopover in Rome enroute. There was really no place left in Asia Minor or on the Greek peninsula, which had not heard the Message. He had proclaimed it from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum. He would not consider going where others had labored lest he build upon another man's foundation.

So he sat down and wrote to those who were "loved of God and called to be Christ's men and women" in Rome. He said, "Since for many years I have had a great desire to see you, I hope to visit you on my way to Spain. I hope also that you will speed me on my journey, after I have had the satisfaction of seeing you all." While he was dictating the letter to Tertius, who took it all down, he decided to set forth for those whom he had never met what the life of faith was all about. And that is how we came to have this remarkable and thrilling personal letter.

THE CENTRAL THEME

At the very outset I must tell you that the theme of the letter is justification by faith. Unfortunately, in our day, we have put God's revelation through theological wringers and dyed the fabric with sectarian tints. Thus, when we hear an expression such as "justification by faith," our minds immediately refer it to some kind of partisan philosophy. We never really find out what Paul meant because of our intense anxiety to show what he did not mean. We cannot eat the bread of life because we are so

busily engaged in showing what ingredients it does not contain.

It is important that we grasp what is meant in the expression “righteousness of faith.” Our hope for life is involved in it. And do not be disturbed that in one sentence I write justification and in the next righteousness. They are from the same word. Only in our English translation have we made a distinction. In doing so we have created mental confusion. Since it is so important that we lay a proper groundwork let me make a few general statements about these terms, and then, by God’s grace and mercy, we can enlarge upon them in subsequent articles.

Now it is true that faith is the belief of testimony but it is not mere mental assent to the veracity of that testimony. It goes far beyond this. It involves the surrender of self without reservation to him who is the object of faith. Faith in Christ is a pledge of allegiance to Christ. Inherent in it is the idea of trust which leads to commitment, the utter abandonment of one’s self to another in the full confidence that what he has promised he will do.

In recent years certain men within our communion have been critical of the term “commitment to Christ.” It is their contention that the words are not found in the Bible. Of course, they refer to the English Version as commissioned by King James. But theirs is a shallow objection, for the very word for believe is rendered commit, or committed, no less than seven times in that version. The faith which justifies in Christ is the faith which declares its utter bankruptcy of any other hope. It throws out no other anchor regardless of how strong the tempest or how rough the sea. It never panics or looks for another refuge. It recognizes there is no other Savior in heaven and none on earth besides him. It is not Jesus or someone else; it is Jesus or no one else!

So when I write about faith in this series I am not dealing

with a mere mental concept related to Jesus of Nazareth. Neither am I referring to a verbal statement or confession of belief. I am talking about the reaching out of the inner man to embrace the Son of God so fully and completely as to lose one's own personality in identification with him. As Paul said to the Colossians, "You who were spiritually dead because of your sins and your uncircumcision, God has made to share in the very life of Christ." Surely faith must reside in the heart, and certainly it must be confessed, but it is more than a rational idea among other ideas, and far greater than the stumbling expression of it in words.

Let us now consider the meaning of justification. Justification is made necessary because of our guilt. To stand justified before God is to be guiltless. It is to be righteous, to sustain a right relationship with God. How can sinful man enter into such a relationship with a sinless God who hates iniquity, and whose very nature impels him to judgment upon every sinful act? Unless we can find a solution to this we will be driven to despair and wallow in the blackness of recurring doubt.

Man cannot obtain justification by recalling or undoing a single act that he has committed. If one engages in the sin of adultery in an act of blinding passion, he cannot undo it. He may agonize in the burning hell of an accusing conscience and shed rivers of tears. He may rationalize within his disturbed heart and seek for mental comfort in the prevalence of such a deed in the social culture. But the act, once committed, cannot be burnt up, washed out or explained away. The doer is guilty before God. If he lives an exemplary sexual life the remainder of his days upon the earth he still cannot blot out the former act.

Nor can one be justified by law-keeping. Ideally, if a man could completely fulfill the law and perfectly obey its every jot and tittle, he would be justified (Rom. 2:13). But no earthly being has ever done this. No one ever will. The least infraction of the law, the very first deviation, places one under condemnation.

Then he is helpless. Then, too, as Paul writes, “The commandment, which was meant to be a direction to life, I found was a sentence of death.” That is why he also says, “No man can justify himself before God by a perfect performance of the Law’s demands— indeed it is the straight-edge of the Law that shows how crooked we are” (Romans 3:20).

It is in the face of our helplessness to undo the tangled skein of life, and our hopelessness of perfect performance of a written code, that God offers us justification as a free gift. This is the fruit of abundant mercy and amazing grace. Justification is a judicial act of offended Majesty. Every sin, like the very first one, is an offense against God. Our only hope is to receive acquittal. We cannot win, merit or deserve it. Nor can God bestow it in such a way as to make it appear that he condones transgression or treats it lightly and as of little consequence. He cannot make himself unrighteous to make us righteous!

The problem of sin has to be met without equivocation. And it required propitiation which man could not provide. It resolved itself in the death for sin of a sinless person. “God has appointed him as the means of propitiation, a propitiation accomplished by the shedding of his blood, to be received and made effective in ourselves by faith.” By this means God preserved his righteousness. He made it possible for justice and mercy to meet and merge without clashing. “Under this divine system a man who has faith is now freely acquitted in the eyes of God by his generous dealing in the redemptive act of Christ” (Romans 3:24).

Really, it is quite simple. Jesus gave up his estate in heaven to become identified with man in his sin. What he did for all men each man must now do for him. Each must give up his life on earth, the life of sin, to become identified with Jesus in his sinlessness. When a person does this God declares him justified. This does not mean that one has not sinned, or is not a sinner. It does not mean that he is worthy or pure. It does mean that he is

forgiven because in Christ God counts him righteous, not reckoning sin to him. “If a man, irrespective of his work, has faith in him who justifies the sinful, then that man’s faith is counted as righteousness, and that is the gift of God. This is the happy state of the man God accounts righteous apart from his achievements” (Romans 4:5).

Remember that it is not the sinless man whom God justifies. There is no such man on earth. God justifies sinful men. This is my only hope. It is the ground of my confidence. I am justified by the sinless life of Jesus which I appropriate by faith. When I cut loose all of the ropes in which I have trusted for security and launch out into the deep with nothing but Jesus to bear me up, when I stake all I am or ever hope to be on him, then God bestows his righteousness upon me as a gift. So long as I keep a balancing pole of my own, or have a net below just in case, I can never be justified. I am still trusting in my own wit and achievement. In such a situation my sin must be reckoned unto me because I have not laid it all on him.

The good news that man can be justified by “the fact of his faith in God’s appointed Savior and not by what he has managed to achieve under the Law,” is the theme of the Roman letter. This is the gospel, the glad tidings. So Paul writes, “I am not ashamed of the good news about Christ, for it is God’s dynamic to restore to a state of wholeness all who believe it, the Jew first, but also the Gentile. For in the good news is announced God’s program of justification by faith, in order to produce faith, for it was long since recorded that the just will live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17).

This last statement does not mean that the just will walk, exercise or continue in faith, although that is certainly true. Nothing is clearer than the fact that “we walk by faith and not by sight.” However, the thought of the apostle here is that faith is the source of being, the principle of existence. Without this faith man is dead. I have no life of my own. I am under

condemnation. I must either have his life or I am doomed. “But where sin was thus multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it, in order that, as sin established its reign by way of death, so God’s grace might establish its reign in righteousness, and issue in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21). I am under the umbrella of God’s love. I am living under the reign of grace.

THE FUTILITY OF WISDOM

When Paul wrote all humanity was divided into two classes — Jew and Gentile. Both had to be convinced of the vanity of the means by which they sought for the meaning of life. The Gentile relied upon man’s wisdom, upon his rational powers. The Jew trusted in his conformity to the law which he possessed. The first sought to lift himself from misty mediocrity by his own bookstraps, the second by his own bootstraps, that is, by his own achievement.

The apostle deals with the Gentile first, in Romans 1:21-32. This is one of the most revealing sections of sacred scripture. It belies the whole theory that man began with polytheism, or a multiplicity of tribal gods, and that Israel elevated a Palestinian baal to the place of a supreme deity and gradually shook off superstitious fear of other deities and came to proclaim that there was no other besides their own.

Instead, mankind began with a concept of one God, and gradually sunk into idolatry as a gross perversion. Man is not so much a creature of evolution as of “devolution.” The steps toward degradation are clearly identified. (1) A universal knowledge of God obtained. (2) A refusal to honor or respect him as divine. (3) Lack of thankfulness for the blessings bestowed by nature. (4) Futile thinking resulting from lack of a spiritual foundation. (5) A darkening of intellectual powers. (6) Boasting of wisdom while making fools of themselves. (7)

Exchanging the splendor of the immortal God for an image made like mortal man, and even for images of creatures that run, fly or crawl.

It is axiomatic that man becomes like the object that he worships. The more he worships the more he adopts the traits and characteristics of the revered object. When a man worships animals he becomes bestial. When such worship becomes general the environment which he creates is that of the jungle with “the law of fang and claw.” When a society completely eliminates God from its thinking God gives them up. God spreads before us the proofs of his existence and provides the instinctive motivations for our recognition of the divine will in the universe, but he will not intrude himself upon the sovereignty of the human will.

Three times Paul declares that God gave man up, and tells why. (1) “They gave up God: and therefore God gave them up—to be playthings of their own foul desires in dishonoring their own bodies” (1:24). This is the origin of “the playboy philosophy,” and it is not new. Poor deluded Hugh Hefner cannot hold a candle for the ancient Greeks in his attempted revival of the religion of hedonism. (2) “These men deliberately forsook the truth of God and accepted a lie, paying homage and rendering service to the creature instead of the Creator . . . so God gave them up to shameful passions” (1:25, 26).

(3) “Thus, because they have not seen fit to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved passion” (1:28). With this we are supplied a catalogue of depravity, characteristic of paganism when it was shaped by those who “became fatuous in their argumentations and plunged their silly minds still further into the dark” (1:21). Noteworthy are the strictures against homosexuality, effeminacy and lesbianism. Instead of these being regarded as exhibitions of liberty of personality they are branded as disgraceful passions, abnormal, unnatural, shameful horrors and sexual perversity.

The crackpot advocates of unisex, the fanatical shatterpated defenders of homosexuality between consenting adults, are all representatives of Satan's revival of the philosophic delusions of Grecian philosophy. Not a single new element has been added. The pornography in print is a commentary on that which was distributed in the Athenian agora as poetry; the exploitation of sex and nudity on the screen is rivalled by that which was portrayed on the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Men still suffer from "bats in the belfry." Only the belfry has been modernized. The bats are the same! "They know well enough the just decree of God, that those who behave like this deserve to die, and yet they do it; not only so, they actually applaud such practices" (1:32).

Man can never save himself by his own wisdom. He cannot think himself out of the dilemma of sin. It is sinful man who does the thinking and, regardless of his brilliance he will not free himself from the mire. "Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater, limited all of them to this passing age? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish" (1 Cor. 1:20).

THE LEGALISTIC APPROACH

Now we must turn to the Jew who trusted in legal rectitude. Like all legalists in every age, the Jew condemned himself by his judgment of others. It is the nature of prohibitory law to kindle desire and incite to sin. I have in mind a brother who never missed an opportunity to publicly condemn attendance at movie theaters, but who broke down and tearfully confessed that the whole time he had been frequenting a burlesque house with its striptease performances and suggestive jokes. I remember another who constantly belabored gambling in a congregation of humble saints, not a one of whom would purchase a ticket on a raffle. It was later learned that the vociferous teacher had long been betting on horse races and

playing the ponies. Paul wrote, “The commandment which should have led to life proved in my experience to lead to death, because sin found its opportunity in the commandment, seduced me, and through the commandment killed me.”

This was literally true in the case of a much older friend of mine. He earnestly tried to live up to the idea of Christianity projected by our little congregation and the itinerant preachers who held our meetings. He heard all of the sermons about the hell that awaited the man who kept the whole law and yet offended in one point. He knew that he fell short in more ways than one, a fact of which his good nagging Christian wife continually reminded him. When he could take what he thought was his own hypocrisy no longer, he took his revolver and walked to the orchard and blew his brains out against the bark of an apple tree. I wish I knew what he was thinking before he pulled the fatal trigger. I wonder if he thought the rest of us were murdering him.

Law always starts with one who is helpless and leaves him hopeless. I know from experience. I tried for years to be justified by law and the whole time I was living behind a facade. I learned that there is no law in existence that one cannot mentally evade if he wants to do a thing enough to take the risk. The real power of law is fear. Its lash is a threat. But no fear of future judgment will deter from a present act, for every sinner thinks he can “beat the rap.” He will do it just this once and then live so good the rest of his life that God will be forced to let down the bars and let him into heaven. He fools only himself!

Did you ever study carefully the kind of pride bred in the Jews by their boast that they were God’s elect? One of the most blistering indictments ever made was pronounced against them. Listen! “You take your stand upon the Law, and are, so to speak, proud of your God. You know his plan, and are able through your knowledge of the Law truly to appreciate moral values. You can, therefore, confidently look upon yourself as a

guide to those who do not know the way, and as a light to those who are groping in the dark. You can instruct those who have no spiritual wisdom: you can teach those who, spiritually speaking, are only just out of the cradle. You have a certain grasp of the basis of true knowledge.” Does this sound like a description of anyone you know? Then read on in Romans 2:18-24.

But cheer up! All is not lost! “What happens now to human pride of achievement? There is no room for it. Why, because failure to keep the Law killed it? Not at all, but because the whole matter is now on a different plane— believing instead of achieving. We see now that a man is justified before God by the fact of his faith in God’s appointed Savior and not by what he has managed to achieve under the Law.”

Never forget this. Justification is on a different plane than that of legalistic conformity to a written code. If you revert to hope based on your own correctness, your own legal rectitude, you have not restored the life of the primitive Christians. You have simply revived the original Pharisees!

The apostle uses Abraham as an example. He was declared to be justified before he was circumcised and a long time prior to the advent of the Law. And he provides for us a genuine definition of the faith which justifies. Discounting the weakness of his own vital powers and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, he “remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise. This was the ‘faith’ which was counted unto him for righteousness” (4:21, 22).

Let that seep into the pores of your consciousness. The faith which is counted for righteousness, that is, which establishes a proper relationship with the eternal life of God is “the unshakable conviction that what God has promised he has power to fulfill.” This is important because I am constantly running into young people on the college campus who are shaken up and claim to have trouble with their faith.

A lot of them do not have trouble with *their* faith at all. They are trying to operate on a set of values inherited from their grandparents, borrowed from their parents, or saddled on them by the congregation in which they grew up. Like David, when confronted with a giant, they find they cannot fight in another man's armor. But instead of getting a good fit they throw one! One might as well try to eat with a set a dentures borrowed from his father as to tackle the philosophical fare dished up today while trying to operate on a "slightly used faith" brought with him from home.

Most people do not know what faith is and they use it as one ingredient in a tossed salad of varied concepts flavored with a dressing of intellectual doubt. And some think it is a horrible sin to have such salad dressing in their mental refrigerators. They try to hide it from sight behind the effervescent mental soda pop. There was, for instance, the coed who tearfully confided in me that there had been questions raised in her biology class which she could not answer. When I asked her why she felt obligated to furnish an answer for every problem that arose, she replied, "But can a person have faith and doubts at the same time?" Obviously one can have faith in the power of God and doubts related to the biological realm at the same time. Indeed, if he is normal this will almost certainly be the case.

I can never forget the dictum of Sir Francis Bacon, "If we begin with certainties, we shall end in doubts; but if we begin with doubts, and are patient in them, we shall end in certainties." It was the philosopher Colton who said, "Doubt is the vestibule through which all must pass before they can enter into the temple of wisdom." My own faith in God is much stronger because of the period of testing through which I struggled. Wrestling with one's self is real exercise. I know that my Redeemer lives. I know he will fulfill his promises. But it is one thing to believe this and to trust in it, and a wholly different thing to know how it will be done. Most of our doubts are related to the *how* and that is outside our sphere. Abraham did

not know how Sarah could conceive, seeing that she had long since passed through the menopause, yet he “remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promises.”

My faith is that of Abraham. The promise is different but the nature of the faith is not. I do not intend to be shaken in it nor shaken loose from it, by the wisdom of this passing age. There are not enough pseudo-scientists, pettifogging professors or perverted philosophers in this world to make me lose faith in my God. I am sold out to him, lock, stock and barrel. I have crossed the Great Divide and I am not turning back. I have bound myself to the mast of faith so that the siren voices of infidelity cannot lure me to set foot on the shifting sands of the island of unbelief. I have invested all I am and have in the life trust bank. There is nothing left with which to speculate. “I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.”

PEACE WITH GOD

This brings us to a great resting place in our ascent—Romans 5. It begins with a breathtaking conclusion introduced with the appropriate word “therefore.” And it defines for us the remarkable results growing out of it. Drink in the first two verses. “Therefore, being declared free of guilt by faith, we have attained unto peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have been inducted into this new relationship of grace, and here we stand, in happy anticipation of the glorious things he has for us in the future.”

Here is life in three dimensions— past, present and future. In the past, the pall of guilt with fear of what was to come. Faith reaches back to the remedy for guilt, for faith is based upon fact and fact is grounded in the act of God. God did something about sin! He drew the fangs. He milked death of its venom. “It is sin which gives death its sting, and it is the Law which gives sin its

strength. All thanks to God then, who gives us the victory over these things through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

Through faith in our Lord I am acquitted, made free, and given a new life. I am reconciled to God. I have peace with God. What does this mean? In the old covenant scriptures which provide the vocabulary for the new, peace and salvation are the same. To save is to make whole, to restore the proper functioning and relationship of the thing under consideration. To save from sin is to restore one to the state of being with God which man enjoyed before sin came. When the psalmist said, “He restoreth my soul,” the Hebrew is literally, “he taketh me back to the place of my beginnings.”

Only grace can build the bridge across what man is, back to what he was, and forward to what he can become. And grace is a gift. It is not a toll bridge. It provides free access to the one who casts himself upon Jesus. It is false pride which causes man to go until he gives out, when he can only really start when he gives in. I am thrilled that love pried open my clenched fingers so I could reach out the hand of faith and grasp the gift of God’s grace. What confidence is bred by the peace of God, a peace which is not negative, not merely a cessation of hostilities, but an active, vital, triumphant force!

And the future is more glorious to contemplate. Peace produces assurances of promises on the morrow. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now that I am justified through surrender to Jesus the future has lost its fear. I am steering into the sunrise and not the sunset. Doubt is gone! Despair has vanished! Listen! “But when the kindness of God our savior and his love towards man appeared, he saved us in his mercy— not by virtue of any moral achievement of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace, and can look forward to inheriting eternal life. This is solid truth. I want you

to speak about these matters with absolute certainty” (Titus 3:4-8).

Absolute certainty about such matters as the kindness of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the new birth, renewal through the Holy Spirit, acquittal through grace, and eternal life! Unless we can be certain about these we can never be sure of anything. I am certain! This is what peace with God has brought my once trembling soul. I shall meet him over there because I have met him over here.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not postponing my joy until I wade out into the breakers and cross the tide. I do not take the position that the present is a time to fret, complain and look glum. My motto is not “Be morose today and merry tomorrow.” I am thrilled to the depths with life as it is. I would not have it one bit different. Whatever happens to me since I am in Jesus is a part of the trip! I am on a package tour to heaven. I am not riding along with an arm or leg sticking out of the window to get knocked off by one of the devil’s telephone poles. I am in him with everything that I have. Whatever happens to me will happen in him. Let it happen! It can only work good! Listen:

This doesn’t mean, of course, that we have only a hope of future joys— we can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. Taken in the right spirit these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope that will never disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us (5:2-5).

Taken in the right spirit. A steady hope! I know some people whose level of hope goes up and down like the mercury in a thermometer. One day they are topping tall timber and the next day they are crawling through the thicket in a swamp. I am thinking of one man in particular. When things are going along smoothly on his job, he is the life of the party. But if by-and-by

“hard times come knocking at the door,” it is “Old Kentucky home, goodnight!” He gets so little he could sit on the curb and not be able to hit the street with his feet. He exudes gloom so thick that you could slice it and serve it in gloom sandwiches. What’s the trouble? That’s easy. He has not developed the patience that develops a mature character. He is still selfish. His heart is shriveled up like a prune. He is waiting for others to serve him. The love of God cannot get in through the closed heart.

If you keep a puckering string on your heart you hurt yourself. It is true that what you have won’t get out, but what you need won’t get in. Suspicious, tight-fisted, bitterly critical people pollute the atmosphere with their unhappiness, but they also have to breathe it and while they may stifle others they are committing suicide. The love of God can change that. I happen to know.

I am acquainted with a man and wife who had no children but were blessed with an abundance of this world’s goods. Their daily conversation at the table had to do with interest rates, and clipping dividend coupons. They lived for it. They were as tight as the bark on a hickory tree. They complained about having to pay school taxes, griped about the rising cost of food, and grumbled about government welfare programs. They chose as their friends the kind of people who were pessimistic and with whom they could share their prediction of impending disaster. And they looked like an accident going somewhere to happen.

Then a transformation occurred. The Holy Spirit entered their lives and you never saw such a change as took place. I know when it happened. Against their will they were persuaded to attend a small group session in a home. They consented to go only because they thought that those who were present would sit around and criticize the “institutional church” and its begging for money, and they knew that they could relate to such a sharing of dismals, dumps and doldrums. They craved the

fellowship of the funereal and the love of the lugubrious. But it did not turn out that way!

The brother in whose home the meeting was held opened with the remark that God had been speaking to him through the written word in a remarkable way as he lately read it. He then turned to 2 Corinthians 13, and read these lines: "Then you will have the proof you seek of the Christ who speaks through me, the Christ who, far from being weak with you, makes his power felt among you. True, he died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God; and we who share his weakness shall by the power of God live in your service. Examine yourselves: are you living the life of faith? Put yourself to the test. Surely you recognize that Jesus Christ is among you?— unless of course you prove unequal to the test."

Closing the book, the brother said that he had a confession to make. He had been baptized when he was about thirteen years old, having "gone forward" with a group of others his age during a protracted meeting. In his teen years he had been guilty of every kind of indiscretion, and while going regularly to the gatherings of the church, he had lied to his parents, taken things which did not belong to him, and been guilty of immoral escapades with some of the girls in class. Later, he had been drafted, and in a foreign country had laid his religious convictions aside until he returned to his native land.

He continued his recital by telling how he married the wonderful wife whom he now had, and how their home had been blessed with three children. They never missed attendance at Sunday school but they went as part of a routine of life. He became successful in business, erected and paid for the luxurious home in which all were now sitting, but all of this time was haunted with an inner emptiness, a feeling that somehow there was something just beyond his grasp which was the real secret of happiness.

A few months before, driven by a gnawing sense of his own need, he arose one morning while it was still dark and going into the den, poured out unto God all of the pent-up feelings in his inner being. He wept freely, and then of a sudden, he felt strangely relieved of anxiety and a peace came stealing into his soul which he had never known before. He declared that he accepted this as peace with God brought about by the lifting of the sense of guilt which had lurked inside and poisoned his whole being for years. He asked all who were present to pray for him that he would always experience that peace which passed human understanding.

This confession sparked a good deal of serious talk. There were no stale jokes told, and there was not one note of criticism. Mostly it resolved itself into testimonies of heart-searching upon the part of others. The couple I mentioned drove home lost in thought. They hardly exchanged a word. But that night the man could not sleep. After several hours his wife asked him if he was awake and confessed that she had not been able to sleep either. They got up and talked most of the rest of the night. As the streaks of dawn began to break across the eastern sky they had come to the place where they could pray together, something they had never done before in their lives.

And God took advantage of the open door to come in. The love of God was poured out into their hearts by the Spirit. The selfishness was washed away. The dark corners of suspicion were flushed out by the waters of life. Their whole beings have changed. They are closer to one another than they have ever been before. They like to have young people around them and, for the first time, young people like to be around them. They are hospitable, they visit the sick, they help the needy, and they spend money like it was going out of style. The grace of God is reflected in their very persons. He no longer suffers from an “upset stomach;” she no longer has frightful headaches.

Really, the years have fallen off their shoulders. They have

begun to walk with a sprightlier step. Some who knew them before think they may be getting a little “balmy.” They are not! Most members of the church think that real Christians are off in “the upper story” because they are still living on the basement level. The average person isn’t hooked on to the power source. He is like a freight train that has come unhooked from the engine. He is all loaded up but is not going anywhere!

HOPE AND LOVE

Now, one who is in Christ has a hope which will be realized. It will never disappoint because it cannot. Why not? For the simple reason that one who has peace with God opens up his heart. He isn’t afraid to leave the door unbarred. When he opens the door the love of God pours in like the waters of a swollen river when the dam bursts. The King James Version says it is shed abroad. The original is the word for “poured out.” Hope always goes hand-in-hand with faith and love. They are the three abiding principles!

But the love of God is like an ocean tide which flows two ways. It is incoming, drawing us closer to the heart of God. It is outgoing, enabling us to touch the hearts of others. This is the principle of relationship with Jesus. This is the responsibility of discipleship. Think about two verses in Matthew 10. One says, “Then he called his twelve disciples to him.” The other says, “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions.” All of us are called and then sent. Discipleship is not “hanging around” with Jesus, but penetrating the world. It is going out with the instructions.

I have no doubt the twelve would have preferred to stay around where Jesus was, but they were needed where Jesus was not. The love of God is not an escape hatch from responsibility. It does not provide a hiding place. It does not say, “There he is Lord, send him!” It never proposes “Let’s you and Satan fight.”

One who is full of the love of God has no need to hide from anything or anyone, not even from himself. And that is where most of our trouble lies.

God's undeniable, unquestionable proof of his love for us is that "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners" (5:8). We were powerless and we were God's enemies. Paul told Titus that at the time when this took place we were silly, stubborn, and slaves of sensuality. We could not stand ourselves and hated one another. If God had waited to get us out of where we were to love us we would all have been damned. Instead, he loved us to get us out of what we were. And that's the only way any of us will ever get out of our predicament. We have to be pulled out. We cannot extract ourselves. The more frantic our effort the deeper we sink. One does not fight his way out of quicksand!

But here is a true source of comfort and reassurance. God does not start something and leave it unfinished. He does not abandon the task when it is half done. It is reasonable to assume that if he loved us when we were enemies, he will not forsake us after we have become his friends. And this very thing is affirmed for us by the apostle. "Since we have now been justified by Christ's sacrificial death, we shall all the more certainly be saved through him from final retribution. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, much more, in that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

I am not unaware that in the realm of faith, as in every other, there are grandstand quarterbacks. They are always eager to tell how God should have done it and point out where he made his mistakes. As they feed it to us, God should not have required sacrifices of blood under the Mosaic economy. This makes him appear inept and crude to modern men. It breathes of a slaughterhouse religion and God can be mistaken for a bloody butcher.

Too, the idea of offering his Son as a ransom for others was wholly unnecessary and useless. It puts the whole scheme of things in a bad light. God seems to be contradictory. He refused to allow Abraham to offer his son, and then turns around and does it himself. I cannot truthfully say that I dismiss all of this with but a passing glance for I do not even entertain it long enough to dismiss it.

You see, it is not a question of how men think God ought to act, but of how God acted. One who is subject to the judgment of fallible beings and who must allow them to “call the shots” would not be God. Finite men cannot project their ideas upon an infinite God. One quotation puts that thought to sleep! “For who knows the mind of the Lord? who can advise him?” (1 Cor. 2:16).

I am confidently expecting to be saved from the final retribution through Christ. That God made this possible by the death of his Son provides no mental stumblingblock for me. That he chose to teach mankind the value of substitutionary death of an innocent victim for the guilty through ages past in no sense minimizes my respect for his revelation in the word or through The Word.

It was through one man that sin entered the world, and death through sin. Death became universal, the penalty becoming as broad as the involvement. If the act of one man who obeyed the urging of sin affected all men, it would not be surprising that the act of one who did not sin would affect all. “For if by the wrongdoing of that one death established its reign, through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God’s grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

Please observe that the first order is sin and the reign of death. The next is grace and the gift of justification with the reign of life. It is not that Adam sinned and died while we do not

sin and live. We sin as Adam did. But we live, not because of our sinlessness, but because of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Grace, which immeasurably exceeds sin and death, established a reign of righteousness, and under it, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are declared righteous. Our sins are not counted unto us! His righteousness is!

Having said this much we shall establish camp at this level and dig in for another month. If God wills, we shall move out again in four weeks, and work our way upward to the summit. We will begin with what happens when we are “baptized into union with Christ Jesus” (6:3) and work our way forward to an understanding of the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

In closing, let me urge upon you to cast yourself upon Jesus. Most of us try too hard. We become frantic and tension-filled. We are frightened and fretful. We are afraid to lean back upon the everlasting arms although we sing about it quite lustily. If there seems to you to be an uncrossable gulf between our faith and that exhibited by the early saints, please read this from the pen of J. B. Phillips:

The word of God which stimulates and sustains faith is eternal truth breaking through into this temporary world, so that the certainty of the early Christians which we may regard with a certain wistfulness means, not that they were men of exceptional spiritual calibre, but simply that they recognized the word of God as being quite literally the message, plan and command of God himself. It was a faith more rock-like than any human certainty which gave their lives astonishing quality.

Taking a Stand

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

A group of us out in California were talking about old times not long ago, and I mentioned that a watchword in our particular faction was, “We’ll force them to take a stand!” Nothing much that was really new ever toppled into our barricaded rut, but when something a little out of the ordinary lifted its strange countenance above the parapet, the party “some-whats” swung into action, blasting away and challenging for debate.

I recall that congregations which preferred the aroma of peace to the acrid smell of the smoke of battle, sometimes refused to be caught up into shouting with the lips and shooting from the hips, and decided to “sit this one out.” It never worked. Neither party of belligerents could permit such a show of apathy toward the world-shaking issues to which they were giving their all. So those who quietly desisted from the fray were tagged as compromisers. The party guns went to work to smoke them out and force them to take a stand.

A lot of folk have outgrown their tendency to act as busybodies in other men’s matters, and this is wonderful. But there are still enough of them riding the range to make it uncomfortable for groups of humble saints who prefer to be left alone to love all of the brethren. The latest “shoot-out” is about the work of the Holy Spirit. In some areas the sectarian, gorge is

rising as preachers sound off and demand that all and sundry let it be known which side you are on. Those who are not interested in taking sides are being pressured to tell how they “stand on Pat Boone,” since he claims to have spoken in tongues.

If you will suffer a word of exhortation from a veteran of a half century of combat, I’d like to point out that all of the hullabaloo is unnecessary. The question is simply not worth exalting to the status of a prime target. Whatever you think of Pat and the phenomenon to which he testifies has not one thing to do with your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not let preachers of either side hook you on the outworn cliché that it is “a matter of the authority of Christ,” so you will conclude that to line up with Jesus you will have to line up with them. Do not be maneuvered by the skilled salesman of either position into an *anti* or *pro* party.

This is one time you can show that your allegiance is to Jesus Christ, and what you think about him is what really counts. It is the only thing that counts! Pats may come and Pats may go, but he goes on forever. If you really love Jesus you can love Pat Boone and all the rest of the brethren. You can even be mistaken about a lot of things concerning the Spirit and still go to heaven. If you can’t, heaven is going to be a mighty lonesome place! The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace, and a pretty good way to demonstrate that you do not know the Spirit is to kick up a fuss and disturb the peace about how you think he works.

Flesh and Spirit

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

A month has gone by since we camped on the slopes of Romans 5. It is now time to shoulder our packs and start anew up the steep slopes of grace, gaining our initial toe-hold at Romans 6:1. Sin is flint-hearted and treacherous. And one of its potent weapons is rationalization. It uses this for self-preservation, seeking to hold captive those who are in its malign grasp and upon whom it feeds as a vicious parasite. Sometimes it approaches delusion from the negative side, sometimes from the positive, but always it has the black hood at hand to drop over the eyes of the victim, while the gallows starkly waits in the background.

Smiley Blanton, the psychiatrist, affirms that rationalizing “is the great narcotic that people use to anesthetize their consciences and justify yielding to temptation; an embezzler telling himself he is just ‘borrowing’ the money and will surely put it back. An unfaithful husband assures himself that what his wife does not know will not hurt her. In a thousand daily temptations from padding the expense account to exceeding the speed limit, the rationalizer’s attitude is ‘Everybody’s doing it, why shouldn’t I’?”

Paul anticipated just such an attitude toward grace. He had said some mind-staggering things about it. “God’s act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam’s wrongdoing. For if the

wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the gift that came to so many by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ” (5:15). “For by the wrong-doing of that one man, death established its reign through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God’s grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ” (5:17).

Then he dealt with the problem of law in respect to grace. “Now we find that the Law keeps slipping into the picture to point out the vast extent of sin. But where sin was multiplied grace exceeded it on an immeasurable scale . . . so grace could issue in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21). One can almost anticipate the reaction of the carnal mind to this. As sin multiplies, grace increases to exceed it, and since grace is essential to eternal life, the more it increases the better off are its recipients.

“What are we to say, then? Shall we persist in sin, so that there may be all the more grace?” From this, the apostle recoils and shows the absurdity of such a presumption. “No! No! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?” A dead building contractor does not draw plans for constructing a new housing project. A dead grocer does not propose to increase his income by expanding his business outreach. If the occupant of a casket suddenly sat up in his satin-lined box to discuss a blueprint with the mortician, it would be taken for granted he was not dead when they loaded him in the hearse. It would also have a visible effect on the funeral director.

Is it possible that a lot of people just play dead spiritually? When you see one who professes to be in Christ, but who is busily engaged in making plans to widen the scope of his sin, and extend his franchise for evil into new territories, can you not assume that he is employed by sin? The apostle uses his clincher argument. “Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death? By

baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendor of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life.”

This is beautiful in its simplicity. It is regrettable that it ever got caught in the gears of the theological meat-grinder and was reduced to shreds. Certainly the apostle never dreamed that his statement would be put to the uses to which it has been subjected, to prove some things on one side and to disprove more things on the other. I do not propose to be lured from my theme to beat the bushes and thump the thickets in argument. I shall indicate a few things which seem to me to appear obvious and move on up, leaving the professional pugilists to pummel each other into a loving pulp over peripheral matters.

GRACE AND BAPTISM

The apostle saw no conflict between grace and baptism. As the greatest exponent of grace the world has ever known he had no concept of an unbaptized person in union with Christ Jesus. The very thought of death to sin caused his mind immediately to revert to the burial with Christ in which they lay dead, as a prerequisite to being raised with him. No man can be a faithful expositor of the Roman letter who belittles or negates either grace or baptism.

Either all who died to sin were baptized or the entire argument is rendered ridiculous. That no explanation of justification by faith which excludes being baptized into union with Christ Jesus, is fair to the apostolic letter, is apparent to the concerned student. Paul accepts the postulate that his argument based upon baptism will be immediately understood by all who have died to sin. He makes no explanation of baptism for no one questioned it. It would be a little silly to say, “Have you forgotten that when we were baptized . . . ?” if a bunch of them had never been and did not even think it was essential.

This is another good example of Paul's mastery of what I call the "as and so" reasoning. He employed it frequently. It is a balanced argument. On one hand you list under "as" all of the necessary elements. Then under "so" the same items must be catalogued. If one does not fit under "so" it must be removed from under "as," for these words signify a relationship of the identical.

What Jesus did to save all men, all men must do to be saved. The saving features of the Good News are three in number— that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Christ identified with us in a body to die, be buried and rise again. So we must die, be buried and rise again, to be identified with him in a body. He did so according to the old covenant scriptures. We must do so according to the new covenant scriptures. As he died for sin we must die to sin. As he was buried we must be buried. As he arose from the dead in glory we must "rise to life on a new plane altogether."

I suspect there may be one little item in Paul's reasoning which a lot of my readers overlook. Because of the post-apostolic introduction of sprinkling and pouring as a ritual (they do not constitute baptism), a lot of us have been on the firing line and have sought for every argument to enforce our contention for immersion, which I accept as eminently correct. We have insisted that baptism is a burial, and it is, of course. But when Paul, who was not writing to supply our arsenal, speaks of being *buried in baptism* he uses two separate and distinct words.

It has been our contention that the original for baptism should have been translated immersion. To this, W. E. Vine takes pointed exception. He says that there is no word in the English language to translate *baptizo*, for it signifies more than dipping or plunging and includes coming out or being withdrawn. "The word *baptizo* was necessarily transliterated into English, as there was no equivalent in our language. 'To

immerse' would be simply 'to plunge into.' To baptize is to put into water and take out again. It involves immersion, submersion, and emergence— death, burial and resurrection. The word was used among the heathen Greeks of articles which underwent submersion and emergence, as in the case of dyeing a garment” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, page 87).

If you have not read William Barclay’s comments on how the Jews and the Greeks would understand Paul’s reference to baptism and death, you have missed a great deal. We urge you to share in his insights by referring to his book in the Daily Study Bible Series, entitled *The Letter to the Romans*, pages 82-86. It will provide background material I have found in no other place.

To Paul, baptism was limited to believers, who were responsible adults. His very argument makes this essential. One would not ask a person who was sprinkled as an infant, “Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death?” One cannot forget something of which he was never conscious at the time.

But we must get back to Paul’s purpose in mentioning baptism. The man who has been baptized has died to sin. He cannot engage in it to promote an increase of grace. He is not his former self. That self was crucified so the tyranny of sin could be broken. “For a dead man can safely be said to be immune to the power of sin” (6:6). “In the same way look upon yourselves as dead to the appeal and power of sin but alive and sensitive to the call of God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:11).

The appeal of sin! The power of sin! These affect us only when we are alive to sin. Dead men are immune to that power. Law increases sin by making us conscious of it. It serves the same purpose as the nerves of the body. These do not create pain but they make us aware of all the places in which it is present. The nerve of law has been deadened and removed. “Sin is not

meant to be your master— you are no longer living under law but under grace.”

This makes legalists uncomfortable. A legalist must have a law or he cannot survive. He breathes law like the human body breathes oxygen. If God provides no law, he will take what God has provided and convert it into law. All of my life I have been around men who spin out their interpretations of God’s word designed to show that the Holy Spirit lied when he said we were not under law but under grace. Grace itself is a written code revealed, they argue.

The problem is that legalists always exercise selectivity. They choose some features of the law to which they willingly submit, while ignoring others. But those which they choose then become the criteria of righteousness. To these men must conform even though they utterly neglect other valid and vital provisions of God’s will. Men who live and walk by law have no idea of the restraint of perfect love. There must be a whip to crack. There must be threats issued and intimidation involved. Frequently those who bluster and abuse are insecure, walking after the flesh, hiding their emptiness with their fulminations, and in constant fear that they will be found out!

How can we keep men under control without law? How can we exercise supervision over them, and guarantee that they will cower and kowtow to the will of their spiritual superiors? Paul apparently anticipated the questions that would be engendered by the agitated souls who suddenly find out that law has abdicated and grace occupies the throne. “Now, what shall we do? Shall we go on sinning because we have no law to condemn us any more, but are living under grace? Never! Just think what it would mean” (6:15).

We shall allow you to read for yourself what it would mean in the ensuing context.

THE FREEDOM LEVEL

I am standing firm on the promises! I am not taking orders from the tempter any longer. I owe no debt to the old man. My former self is dead, buried and done for. I've moved on up to "a new plane altogether." On this level law cannot touch you. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires." I'd as soon take orders from a corpse in a crypt as to be subject to the demands of my former life. Listen to this! "But now, freed from the commands of sin, and bound to the service of God, your gains are such as make for holiness, and the end is eternal life" (6:22). I believe that!

I do not intend to be ordered around by sin any longer. I shall not bow in meek subservience to the tyrant who once occupied the throne in my heart and drove me like a slinking slave. The blood of God's Son paid my price. He ransomed me. The old man has been dethroned, driven out, shot down by the shaft of grace. I am committed to the service of God. Where he leads me I will follow! It makes no difference what others do or say. I shall walk through detractors like Israel crossed the Red Sea. Every gain I make will be in the direction of holiness. And the end is eternal life.

I would not exchange the freedom I have for all the world has to offer. What a thrill to be in Christ! What a feeling of heady enjoyment comes from imbibing the Spirit. What an adventure to be able to go anywhere, to speak to anyone, to listen to anyone. My compassion reaches out to those who murmur and mumble, carp and criticize, whine and whimper. They never really died to the lower nature and are condemned to walk in a perpetual shadow, dragging along the heavy weight of their own foreboding. They are prophets of doom and presagers of evil. The sun is shining but they do not know it.

This kind of talk upsets a lot of folk. As they see it, those in

Christ ought to be gloomy, alert for the worst, and alienated from sinners— other sinners that is! They mistake being somber for being serious. Instead of having happy feet on a joyous mission, they would prefer that everyone walk like a pall-bearer. But I want you to know that I have found that joy is a person. I am in that person. Don't try to sell me a bill of goods about Christianity being on the wane. Jesus Christ is not about to shut up shop and board up the windows. He is here to stay and I am going to stay with him. I am going to walk in the Spirit and not shuffle along with my head down. I have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is my gift and it is from Him.

Now, let's move on to Romans 7, where the first six verses are powerful medicine. Paul begins this account with a universally acknowledged fact. A man is subject to law— any law— only during his life span. “You cannot be unaware, my friends— I am speaking to those who have some knowledge of law— that a person is subject to the law so long as he is alive, and no longer.” To enforce his point he gives an illustration. “A married woman, for example, is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive. But if he dies, then his legal claim over her disappears. This means that if she should give herself to another man while her husband is alive, she incurs the stigma of adultery. But, if, after her husband's death, she does exactly the same thing, no one would call her an adulteress, for the legal hold over her has been dissolved by her husband's death.”

This seems plain enough, but, in making the application a good many brethren get the illustration and miss the point. They conclude that God killed the law so we could be married to Christ. But this is not the case here. It was ourselves who died, and not the law. “So you, my friends, have died to the law by becoming identified with the body of Christ, and accordingly you have found another husband in him who rose from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God” (7:4).

The body of Christ is the body that died on the cross. We

became “incorporate with him in a death like his” (6:5). Jesus was crucified and those who were under the law, and accepted him, were crucified with him. They thus severed any relationship which they sustained before death. This included relationship with the law which was binding only until death. Jesus was raised from the dead. The crucified believers were raised from the dead. It was the resurrected ones who married, and the purpose of that union, as of marriage from creation, was to bring forth fruit unto God.

The prior marriage to law also produced fruit. But the union was on an inferior level. The parties lived in a basement apartment. The marriage was marred by sinful passions encouraged and stimulated by the party of the first part. “While we lived on the level of our lower nature, the sinful passions evoked by the law worked in our bodies, to bear fruit for death.” The law could not change the unspiritual nature of those wedded to it. Law is external. Its goal is conformation. What we needed was transformation.

Despite the good intentions of law, it only incited to sin. Its very prohibitions encouraged experimentation. Its denunciation created determination to taste the forbidden fruit. It was not the law that was weak, but the flesh. It perverted what it came to protect. Obviously a whole new plane of life had to be created with a level of life to which law could never aspire. It would not do to die to one law and then marry another one. Law has nothing to offer one who is raised from the dead. To be joined to another law would be to leap from the frying-pan into the fire! And the flames of legalism are hot.

The Christian who claims to be under law is really in bondage. He is carrying on an affair with another beneath his station. Law is only adapted to the lower nature. As Paul puts it, “We also know that the Law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles nor self-control” (1 Timothy 1:9). When a good person gets yoked up

with one who was not meant for a good person, there's going to be serious trouble. Brethren who insist that they are going to be under law regardless of what anyone says, are like a good girl who gets taken in by a lecherous man. She isn't going to have an easy time of it.

That is why Romans 7:6 is a real fountain in the desert for me. "But now we are freed from the Law; we are dead to that which once held us fast! and so we are free to serve God in a new way, the way of the Spirit, not in the old way, the way of a written code." I confess that when I first became aware of the implications of this, I could not accept them. I didn't want it to read that way. If it did, I did not want it to mean what it appeared to be saying. I doubt that you can realize the inner turmoil churned up inside a heart which had been trained in the arrogant assumption that a certain faction contained all of the righteous people on earth, and their righteousness must be judged by their subscription to our partisan interpretation of a written code.

Such a party is always subservient to a clerical clique. The men who compose that clique are the real power behind the paper curtains. They determine for all what items belong to faith, to opinion, or to the realm of the indifferent. In their hands the word of God becomes a cudgel, a club with which to crush the skulls of brethren. By insinuation and innuendo they can ruin one who does not take his signals from their dugout. They hurl the thunderbolts of wrath through the pages of the printed media. They control the lectureships and manipulate the meetings under guise of loyalty to Christ. "They lean on the law and make their boast of God, and know his will, and understand the difference between right and wrong" (Romans 2:17, 18).

Thank God for deliverance from "The System." Thank God for grace! I do not care by what name "The System" is called. I do not care who the "some-whats" are who exercise dominion, be they popes, prelates or just plain preachers. I

simply say that every sectarian attempt to enforce coercion by threat or compulsion is alien to the spirit of freedom which the blood of Jesus makes available. Infallible elders are more dangerous than an infallible pope, for they are closer at hand.

Every factional editor and leader on this earth, without exception, is erratic, inconsistent and capricious. Legalism produces that kind of character. It enslaves and degrades. It places a premium on ignorance and forbids one to learn beyond the limits of the organizational brain. The best member is not the one who thinks but the one who does not. I was in that kind of bondage. I served under it, promoted it, defended it and proclaimed it. And I am ashamed of it!

Now I am freed from law! I am dead to that which once held me fast in its talons. I am free to serve God in a new way, not under a new law, but in a new way! It was this I was afraid to acknowledge at first. I felt secure in the old way. There were no decisions to make because they were made for me. I was safe with the safety behind prison walls and bars. And then I found that God had built no walls. He had forged no bars. He had set no bounds except those of love for Him in his infinite mercy, and for my fellowmen in their infinite need.

I cannot get enough of His wonderful book. I turn to it with eagerness as a student who lays aside his textbook on jurisprudence to read again the love letters from his only beloved. I no longer search for "sermon material," but for means to share the heart-swelling, soul-stirring, blood-tingling message of a love so great human spit and iron nails and acanthus thorns and a wooden cross could not stop it until it reached down and touched me and left its brand of crimson stain.

I no longer engage in "acts of worship," which become stereotyped and conventional, prosaic and professional. Now I praise him in song and prayer and sharing. I want to give. I

want to know the fellowship that enters into human sorrow and suffers with those who have not found the still waters, and whose restless souls cannot lie down because they have not discovered the green pastures.

The new way is exciting, fascinating, animating, and infectious. It is personal and persuasive. After trying for so long to find him in the pages of a book, in the letters and words and punctuation marks, I came to him fully, completely, and learned that he had found me first. I know how the disciples must have felt when they realized they had been walking with him, talking with him, questioning him, and listening to him. "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." Paul's precious prayer has been answered for me. "I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him."

The great thing about the new way of serving God is that once you strip off the tattered garb of law and put on the new garment of grace, nothing else matters. You can be lied about, attacked, assailed, misrepresented, and cast out of the synagogue, but none of these move you. You can love your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use you. And you can do so honestly. That is something. Nothing that men can do will hurt you. You are not trusting in your own righteousness. "For now my place is in him, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-achieved righteousness of the Law. God has given me that genuine righteousness which comes from faith in Christ. How changed are my ambitions" (Phil. 3:9, 10). *How changed are my ambitions!* You can say that again, Paul.

The new way is the way of the Spirit. It is not the way of a written code. And that is a good point of contact with chapter 8. This is the magnificent chapter of the spiritual outlook which is life and peace (verse 6). It is the chapter of divine-human

sharing of suffering here and of splendor hereafter (verse 17). It is the chapter of a universe on tiptoe waiting for the glorious hope (verse 19). It is the chapter of overwhelming victory, the march of the “more than conquerors” (verse 37). It is the chapter of the indwelling Spirit, directing, empowering, giving life, assuring of sonship, helping in weakness, and culminating the divine purpose in victory through Jesus!

THE POWER OF SIN

One who takes up the Roman letter and turns to chapter 8, and allows his eyes to wander over the words, is immediately confronted with the thought that he has a power-packed message of exciting encouragement in his hands. God has not simply “thrown the Book at us” and retired from the scene to watch from afar and see what kind of mess we make out of life. He invests us with a legacy of might and strength in the inner man which is incalculably greater than any force without.

And this is the most important fact on earth right now. Sin is not simply an intellectual concept with which to reason and wrestle. It is not just a skulking force without which we can overcome by flailing about us in the dark. Instead, it is a power which has seized the throne room of our hearts and through years of domineering in which we have been reduced to abject slavery, has weakened the will to resist. In fact, the inclination to give in and go along has made all of us victims of our own feebleness in the conflict.

Even though sin is driven out, and the heart washed and cleansed, it still lurks expectantly in the shadows. For sin is the weapon of a master-strategist who knows every weak spot in our character. He can exploit every fear, every emotion, every desire, with such a surge of strength that we feel resistance is useless. He can take human loneliness and use it as a wrecking-bar to tear down the strongest determination. He plants a seed

and waits until it is matured and pushed out through the chinks of despair and despondency.

All of the good resolutions on earth will not offset this power. Each man is like a lost traveler in the snowy waste of the Yukon Territory, surrounded by a pack of fiery-eyed wolves. The pack awaits the inevitable moment when the fire goes out. Sleep will overcome the will of the man, or his meager fuel supply will become exhausted. The slavering jaws will move in for the bloody kill.

What is needed is for Someone to move into the inner compartment vacated by sin, someone who can man “the hot line” to heaven, who can buttress the sagging places in the dike and repair the faults and cracks with the cement of love. The relationship created must be one so personal that there is never a sense of being alone, forsaken or deserted. It must be Someone who neither slumbers nor sleeps, but who watches the battlements with unflagging zeal.

Moreover, the consciousness of this power within must be reflected to others. They must be able to tell that the house is occupied. The light must gleam through the windows. The flag which betokens that a royal guest is being entertained must be flying from the mast. There must be a change, a tremendous and startling change. Old things must pass away. All things must become new.

All things! Habits, disposition, tendencies, character! “You’ve changed,” must become the greeting of past acquaintances and accomplices. “You’re not the same man,” must be on the lips of those who still cling to sin and envy the swine the husks that they eat. It is my contention that precisely what I have described is what the Father has provided for those who become the willing captives of the Son. Anything less than this is life on the carnal level, and the person who indulges it is holding a gun against his own temple and robbing his own

pockets.

It is my conviction that when Jesus left this earth to return to heaven, he requested that another helper be sent who would abide with us through the ages of his absence. That helper came! He is the Holy Spirit. He is here now and he dwells in me, empowering me to withstand the cosmic forces of evil. The Father, according to the wealth of his glory, makes me strong with power through his Spirit in the inner self (Eph. 3:16). This is the glorious promise. I accept it, acknowledge it and rejoice in it. Even though our struggle is against “unseen rulers and powers, against the lords of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly world.” I am not even trembling. “I will fear *no evil*, for thou art with me.” No evil!

But what about those who say the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them, that God has furnished them a guidebook and written map and started them out on their own? I never argue with any person who says he does not have the Holy Spirit. I agree with him. I suspect he is right. Of course I feel sorry for him as he slogs along, lashing out in his own frustration at every brother who overtakes him while he is staggering along under the huge pack he is trying to carry by himself. But there is too much to do without stopping to flail away at folks who are happy in their misery and miserable because I am happy.

Romans 8 is one great chapter. It was originally written to men and women in a great metropolis sprawled along the banks of the Tiber River. Some of these were slaves, mere human chattels in a teeming, crawling, creeping mass of vice and corruption. One noted historian, after several paragraphs swimming in a depiction of unbridled degradation, writes: “But to dwell upon the crimes and the retributive misery of that period is happily not my duty. I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of

insecurity and terror; its apathy, debauchery, and cruelty; its hopeless fatalism; its unspeakable sadness and weariness; its strange extravagances alike of infidelity and superstition” (*The Early Days of Christianity*, by Frederic W. Farrar, page 2).

Here, in the capital of this pagan world came this word of light and hope to brighten the hearts of the humble and to make out of them a fighting force which would capture the world while shedding no blood but their own. I claim for myself that inner might which cannot be defeated by death. On the basis of this blessed chapter I expect to become more than a conqueror. And I invite you to explore it with me and savor that potential so great that it toppled the Caesars from their throne and made the name of Jesus known “from sea to shining sea.”

NO CONDEMNATION

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Condemnation is the exact opposite of justification. Since the latter means to declare one guiltless, the other means that one has heard the sentence, “Guilty!” He is amenable to punishment and subject to death. One cannot be esteemed as guilty and guiltless at the same time, so those who are justified by faith and have gained access to grace are not under condemnation. There is no guilt assessed against them. They are free!

To be in Christ Jesus is to sustain an intimate relationship with him. It is not so much a matter of place or position, but of participation in a life, eternal life. In him no condemnation resides, for through faith one appropriates unto himself that righteousness which is Christ’s.

What is the flesh? What is it to walk after the flesh? We must be very careful here. There is ever the danger that we will

equate flesh with the material body, and like modern gnostics, assume that matter is evil. That “the flesh” cannot refer to the physical body, its natural cravings and desires, is evident from verse 9, which says, “You are not in the flesh.” All of us are in the physical body even when we walk in the Spirit.

Nor must we associate the flesh with sex, which is a provision of God, and in no sense unclean of itself. Certainly, in its gratification it may be abused, and such abuse is a symptom of subservience to the flesh, but many other things not directly related to sexual passion are also a part of the flesh, as one may learn by reading the works of the flesh as listed in Galatians 5:19-21.

W. E. Vine says, “The flesh here stands for corrupt human nature, the dominating element in unregenerate man.”

William Barclay, in the concluding sentences of one of the most analytical treatises I have ever read, entitled, *The Enemy in the Soul*, has this to say: “The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin. Man’s sin, his own sin and the sin of mankind, has, as it were, made him vulnerable to sin. It has made him fall even when he knew he was falling and even when he did not want to fall. It has made him such that he can neither avoid the fascination of sin nor resist the power of sin. The flesh stands for the human nature weakened, vitiated, tainted by sin. The flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and his Spirit.”

C. H. Dodd says, “The flesh is the common stuff of human nature which we inherit.” He says it is in itself powerless for moral ends. He also affirms that “We are given a bias from the first by heredity and environment tainted with these things. Paul is right in seeking at a level deeper than individual choices for the roots of our moral malady.”

Ragnar Bring, who is an excellent example of the Scandinavian school of theological thought, and who produced

the most provocative commentary on Galatians that I have ever read, says, “The flesh is therefore not conceived of as sexual desire, *libido carnis*, but could be described instead as a power in control of this existence which has taken possession of man’s soul and body and has perverted their activity.”

C. Norman Bartlett affirms that the flesh is unsanctified human nature, and represents all that we are apart from God.

Albert Barnes regards the flesh as human nature, corrupted by sin and selfishly concerned only with its own gratification.

My own “working definition” of the flesh is the nature of man, invaded and captured by the power of evil, which exercises the thoughts, desires and passions to produce destruction of the personality and decay of all those relationships in which man can become involved. It is man without God in the relationships of life.

Marriage is one of those relationships. Designed by a beneficent Creator for the propagation, perpetuity, protection, and happiness of a race made in his own image, under the dominance of the flesh it is often made into a living hell, ripping sensitive personality to shreds, and leaving the participants empty and wrung dry of the motivation or will to even go on living.

The social culture is another of those relationships. In a trenchant statement on this very matter, C. H. Dodd says, “But when all discount has been allowed, is it not true that the world into which we are born is under the dominion of false gods? Is it not true at this moment that, although the experts know the kind of thing which could and should be done to deal with the present world-wide depression, yet envy, hatred, greed, and fear so rule the peoples that little can be done?”

The word for walk is *peripateo* and it signifies “the whole

round of the activities of the individual life,” as W. E. Vine so aptly phrases it. To walk after the flesh is to exist under the constant domination of the power of evil, that is, “to live on the level of our lower nature.” It is to surrender oneself to the force of evil, to simply drift with the tide, to go along with the unsanctified crowd.

It is my thesis that we do not reason ourselves out of this frightful state. We are captives and prisoners, part of the chain-gang of sin. We can no more free ourselves by thinking good thoughts, than a man can think himself out of the penitentiary dungeon. We have to be rescued. We must be saved. And that requires a savior. There must be a superior power which can invade the inner depths of the heart and throw the usurper out.

And there must be a power which takes up his abode in us, remains with us, and strengthens us with might in the inner man. Modern man is all hung up on outer space, which is merely a matter of adjusting computers and launching machines. But his real trouble is inner space, for here no machine can enter. It is the realm of the spiritual and is reserved for the Spirit.

It is all well and good to tell prisoners to do their best and try to improve their lives from day to day. What they need is to be set free and given a new life. Turning over a new leaf only gives you one more blank surface on which to scrawl your abject failures. It is here that any well-designed plan fails. After you try to dig yourself out and then come to the surface you find you are still inside the walls. We were made to be men and not moles!

FUTILITY AND FRUSTRATION

This has been the experience of countless souls of my acquaintance. They were “reared in the church” as they put it, and when they arrived at puberty, that traumatic period triggered off by the master switch of the glands, filled with vague fears and searching for stability, they went through “the steps

leading to salvation.” Often this occurred in an emotional setting designed to bring them to a “response,” and occasionally there was an atmosphere bordering on mass hysteria. But they were now “in the church,” and for awhile there was a glow of inner satisfaction as they grew under the watchful care of the family circle at home.

Then it happened! Perhaps it occurred in college, perhaps not! How tragically simplistic we are when we lament, “College ruined my boy!” How easy it is to blame things, institutions and organizations, rather than to get to the real seat of the difficulty. Many of you will not like what I am now going to say. But I am weighing my words carefully and in full cognizance of facing them at the judgment.

There is no plan on this earth involving human obedience and acts of compliance which can of itself provide the power to live on the spiritual level.

There is no *organization* composed of human beings, membership in which can act as a force to free from the lower nature. And I mean *no organization!*

It is true that such membership may act as a deterrent to overt acts which are frowned on by the membership, or which run counter to “what is expected of one.” But very frequently such membership only encourages hypocrisy of the deepest dye, and develops a form of cowardice which restrains one from ever saying what he really thinks until he dies of bleeding ulcers or becomes a first-rate religious schizophrenic. And because of our neatly-contrived little plans created by playing tic-tac-toe with the scriptures, a lot of people at baptism change nothing but their clothing.

Certainly they are sorry for their past sins. Certainly they want to do better. They have resolutions firmly mixed up with their mental reservations and doubts. They are going to try and

live more decent lives with their wives, their children, their neighbors, and even with “the Negroes who have pushed themselves into the factory and taken the jobs of white men.” They are going to watch television less and read the Bible more. They are going to go to baseball games only half as often and give the money to the church. They are going to get involved in “church work” and go out on “calling night” and see if they cannot talk others into being baptized. I hear about scores of them!

“Jack has started hitting the bottle and swearing again. He has quit going on Sunday and Wednesday nights, and is grumpy most of the time.”

“Bill has started staying late at the office again with his secretary. He had lipstick on his shirt collar the other night. He says the church is full of hypocrites and has quit attending with the children and me.”

“Jane gave me to understand that she wasn’t going to miss out on all of the fun since Jeff walked out on her. She has slept with three different men the last three months, and when I called her to invite her to the women’s meeting she said it was composed of a bunch of old biddies who don’t even know the game, much less the score. She still keeps the Bible on her living-room table and sometimes sets a can of cold beer on it.”

“Carl, what can I do? You remember that I wrote you three years ago how glad I was that we talked Jim into being baptized before the draft called him. Well, my heart is broken! He was placed in the stockade for defending himself when a bunch of no-good trash who are soldiers, attacked him. When he was home I found a letter from a girl when I searched his pockets. It was absolutely filthy. It seems she had made over my boy and talked him into doing something he shouldn’t. When I mentioned it to him, he flew into a rage and called me names. I am afraid the preacher and elders will find it out and want to

drag him before the church, although God knows two of the elders have sons that are a lot worse than Jim!"

Empty lives will find something to occupy them. And you cannot pack in enough Bible verses to fill a human heart. Men can commit adultery who can quote every passage where the word occurs like a living concordance. They can give you the Greek so you can tell whether their acts should be classified as fornication or adultery. Packing a Bible in with your son's shirts or socks when he drives his Volkswagen off to the university will not guarantee his moral purity.

I am sorry to disillusion you, but membership in the religious clan, cult or community cannot provide the power to keep one holy when the chips are down and the fires are up and the demons are at the door. Some of the most unhappy, frustrated, bitter people on earth never miss a meeting of the church. Some of them have to go. They are the preachers! Others drag themselves in on Wednesday night even if they have had a "knock-down and drag-out" fight with the kids until they are so churned up inside they cannot even remember a thing as important as how many Philistines Samson clobbered with the jawbone of an ass, when the preacher directs the question to them!

What we must have in order to overcome is an inner dynamic which stems from relationship with the power source of the universe. And that is exactly what the Father has provided. The very Greek word for that power is *dynamis*. From it we derive such words as dynamite, dynamic, and dynamo. This power is the direct result of the indwelling Spirit. It is not self-generated. It is a gift. So Paul prays, "I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through the Spirit to be strong in your inner selves" (Eph. 3:16).

To walk after the flesh is the fate of once-born men; to walk after the Spirit is the feat of twice-born men. This last is

simply living the whole existence on the spiritual plane. The feet have been planted on higher ground. And on this level the power available to the individual is the “same mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly world.”

POWER AND PERSONALITY

This is a good time for me to say that I do not regard the Spirit as a nebulous mass or a gray cloud of protoplasm hanging over the world of mankind. Neither is the Spirit an attitude, temperament or inclination. Instead, the Spirit is a personality, a divine helper who understands, sympathizes with and encourages the child of God. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in his life-giving force in the only temple he ever made—man himself! God is not an “oblong blur,” and the Spirit is not merely the corporate *esprit de corps* or morale of the community of saints.

Although by rational process as applied to the new covenant revelation, one can make a rather intricate and elaborate presentation in favor of the personality of the Spirit, I prefer to assign four simple grounds upon which I base my conclusion.

1. Attributes and Abilities.

The Spirit possesses a mind (Romans 8:27). The Spirit has the power of knowledge and comprehension of divine thoughts (1 Cor. 2:11). The Spirit is able to convey thoughts by speaking (1 Timothy 4:1), and to do so in words by which spiritual truths can be understood and interpreted (1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit is capable of bearing witness to facts relating to another, on exactly the same basis as human witnesses may do so (John 15:26, 27).

Regardless of the position one may take as to the continuation of charismatic bestowals by the Spirit, no one who accepts the new covenant scriptures as authentic will deny that in Paul's day there were "varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit," and that "all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). One cannot give another what he does not possess, so the Holy Spirit shared with individuals what he personally possessed. It is obvious that these gifts were to be utilized by persons, and it seems just as obvious that since their possession was personal, they were bestowed by a person. The attributes of the Spirit are such as can only belong to an intelligent and communicative being.

2. Ascriptive Terms.

The personal pronouns relating to the Spirit indicate personality. Jesus told the sorrowing apostles, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you throughout the age" (John 14:16). There are two Greek words for another— *heteros* and *allos*. *Heteros* means another of a different kind. *Allos* means another of the same nature. Jesus requested the Father to send another (*allos*) Helper like himself, who could encourage, strengthen and support the saints during the age when he was absent. A great many of my friends are tripped up by the fact that this promise was made directly to the apostles. The apostles were the only ones with Jesus at the time when he spoke. But we must never forget that the apostles were also disciples, and the promise was made to them in both capacities. Whatever the Spirit was to do for them in the apostolic office was limited to them as ambassadors and envoys. But whatever was done for them as followers of Jesus, as his disciples, belongs to all of us until he returns at the end of the age. We all need help, comfort and strength! Turn to John 16:7-15, and notice the term of address used with reference to

the Spirit.

“When he comes, he will convict the world of sin . . . he will guide you into all truth . . . he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak . . . he will glorify me . . . he will take what is mine and declare it unto you.” Suppose you just read these words to someone, and asked him if he thought the reference was to a person. He would be forced to answer in the affirmative. Jesus was not speaking of something, but of Someone. Certainly a person would be grinding a theological axe to reach any other conclusion.

3. Actions.

The word for Comforter is *Paraclete*, which means “one called to the side of another.” It expresses the purpose for which the Spirit comes. He takes our part and stays with us to help. We must not be led astray by the word Comforter. In our day it may mean one who dries our tears in time of grief, or one who speaks reassuringly when the going gets tough. But it means much more than that. The word “fort” is used of a stronghold, a place where one can defend himself against attack. So a comforter is one who comes with strength or power to enable us to hold out and to resist.

Jesus says that the world cannot receive the Comforter. The world does not know him and will not admit him. But he also says, “You know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you” (John 14:17). I know that this is true. I have no empty apartment in my heart. There’s an “occupied” sign on the door. W. E. Vine writes: “*With and in!* What a power for every experience in life.”

The Spirit teaches and recalls to memory (John 14:26). The Spirit reproves (John 16:8). The Spirit guides, hears, speaks and reveals (John 16:13). The Spirit transfers things from one

person to another (John 16:15). The Spirit can be grieved, and grief is an emotion which can only be experienced by rational persons (Eph. 4:30). The Spirit makes intercession, as does Jesus, thus proving that he is truly a helper like the Son (Romans 8:26). These are all the actions of a living person, not of a fuzzy mental concept. The Spirit is not a state of mind. He is a being with a mind.

4. Associations.

The Spirit is always associated with other persons and these constitute the *Godhood*, a much better word than godhead, embracing all that we regard as Deity. There is a great difference between *recognition* and *definition* of Deity. The first is possible for human beings, the second is not. The limitations of the finite mind make it impossible to gather the infinite up into any kind of container or enclosure, verbal or otherwise.

We are to baptize into (not in) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). With reference to spiritual gifts, the three divine persons are associated. There are varieties of gifts, but bestowed by the same Spirit; varieties of service, but rendered to one Lord; varieties of working, but all motivated and inspired by one God (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The apostle includes in his benediction the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). God is love, this is his essence. Grace is bestowed through and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship is that state of sharing in eternal life which results from the indwelling Spirit. Man can no more create fellowship than he can create the love of God or the grace of the Lord Jesus. He can only share in them. He has no power to turn them off and on. If the love of God or the grace of Christ were subject to whims and eccentricities of men, they would not be worth having. The same thing can be said of what men call "fellowship," but which

results from a coalition of the party spirit and not from the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

If you wonder why I omit 1 John 5:7 at this juncture, let me state that I think it is an interpolation. I do not wish to try and bolster or shore up a contention by employing such a shaky timber. But I have already presented enough proof to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and the Son, and upon the basis of sound interpretative rules we have no right to assume that two of these are personalities while the third is not.

It will be my position, as we study further our relationship to the divine through the Spirit, that the Spirit is a personality, and that our bodies are temples created for a sanctuary in which the Spirit may dwell. God has no holy places, holy days or holy things, in the kingdom of heaven. He has only holy persons. He is not worshiped in temples made with hands. Buildings of brick and stone may be “dedicated” to the service of God, and be empty of the power of the Spirit. Man has no power to consecrate or sanctify. That is the domain of the Spirit, and we are usurpers when we seek to capture the right.

We must now lay away the pen for another month. What a thrill to know that we are guiltless by divine declaration because of the relationship with Jesus. “There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The past holds no remorse. The future holds no fears. The present has no sense of guilt, no shadow hanging over the soul to obscure the sunlight of His blessed love. Praise God for that righteousness which is by faith, and not by legal rectitude! Praise God for the opportunity to serve Him by loving and helping all who were made in His image!

In our next issue we will explore what is meant by the law of the Spirit of life as opposed to the law of sin and death. We shall determine what the law could not do because it was robbed

of its strength and power by our own lower nature. Most important of all we shall study the difference between life in the basement and life in the penthouse, life on the lower level of nature and life on the spiritual level. William Barclay writes:

The Spirit-controlled life, the Christ-centred life, the God-focused life is on the way to life. Daily it is coming nearer heaven even while it is still on earth. Daily it is becoming more Christlike, more one with Christ. It is a life which is such a steady progress to God that the final transition of death is only a natural and inevitable stage on the way. It is like Enoch who walked with God and God took him. As the child said, 'Enoch was a man who walked with God— and one day he didn't come back.'"

And let me add in closing that when a Christian dies he does not leave home, he goes home!

The Spirit of Life

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[Abstract]

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

What is “the law of the Spirit of life?” A law is a rule of action, a governing principle. In Christ Jesus the animating principle is the Holy Spirit and the life we share is the life of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who quickens. In this passage, W. E. Vine says, “The phrase ‘the Spirit of life’ is not subjective, ‘the Spirit who has life;’ but objective, ‘the Spirit who gives life.’”

In the physical body, the spirit is the vitalizing or animating principle. All that I am able to accomplish in physical existence is dependent upon that spirit. Without it the body is dead. By the same token, it is the Holy Spirit which makes possible my functioning as a spiritual being. Without the Spirit I am merely an automaton, a mechanical doll, a puppet, going through religious motions, but with no real life or power. It is possible to have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5). This is the state of millions. They are dolls, not children. They toy with life but have never really lived!

What is “the law of sin and death?” It is the principle which is described in the previous chapter, by which evil exercises dominion over the desires and prompts one to sin even against his own wish. It is described as “sin that dwelleth in me”

(7:17), overpowering the will and rendering personal resolve as helpless. “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (7:21). Paul declares, “This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God’s willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death.”

Barclay says that Paul is here describing “an experience which is the very essence of the human situation.” He declares, “He felt himself to be a split personality. It was as if two men were inside the one skin. He felt himself pulled in two directions. He knew himself to be a walking civil war. He was haunted by this feeling of frustration, the ability to see what was good, and the inability to do it; this ability to recognize what was wrong, and the inability to refrain from doing it.”

I know, both from personal experience and from observation, the frustration which comes from trying to find your way out of the labyrinth which sin has constructed. I know how, when one is bounded and harassed by his own inner compulsions, he resorts to false bravado and arrogantly seeks to throw his weight around to project an image which is really a shadow. No one is a bigger hypocrite than the preacher who leaves the impression that he has thought out all of the answers to the problems of life, while on the inside he is a seething mass of his own unfulfilled desires, some of which would hardly bear exposure to the light.

Paul said, “It is an agonizing situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature?” Human nature can take a lot of beating and we keep trying. Preachers, counsellors, doctors, psychologists, astrologers, soothsayers— we frantically run here and there every time an acquaintance mentions a new guru. In reality, none of these can help. They bring temporary relief because we have to talk and anyone who will listen provides respite from the ghastly

emptiness within. But inevitably we have to go back home, and we are not fit for ourselves to live with.

There's no use getting a new moral prescription. Morality is simply trying to live up to a code, whether devised by one's own thinking or dreamed up by someone else. But we cannot free ourselves. And no one on earth can free us. Not until we come to realize the staggering implications of this fact will we ever be free. We can listen to sermons every Sunday morning from now on and be no better off. Sermons can be preached to prisoners. They can also be preached by slaves. We need to be free from ourselves. The old man of sin is a rotting, decaying putrefying corpse to which we are chained.

THE WAY OUT

Paul says there is a way out! "I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). This is the greatest news ever brought to a man lost in a cave, a man behind bars, a soldier held captive by the enemy. There is a way out! And that way is provided by the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit does not simply cut one strand of the rope which binds me to my lower nature. He cuts the rope. He frees me from the unending cycle of sin and death! I am infused with new life, not confused by the old one. Love supplants carelessness, joy supplants despair, peace supplants inner turmoil. It is not a new way of life, it is the new life of the Way! The way out is the way in— to Christ!

"The law never succeeded in producing righteousness—the failure was always the weakness of human nature. But God has met this by sending his own Son Jesus Christ to live in that human nature which causes the trouble. And, while Christ was actually taking upon himself the sins of men, God condemned that sinful nature" (8:3).

This is a fascinating statement of two things— the utter

incompetency of law and the magnificent provision of grace which stops at nothing in the rescue mission of the ages. The law could only succeed in condemning man even while seeking to condemn sin. It could never produce a right relationship with God, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Law demands absolute obedience in every particular if it is to justify. There can be no deviation, not even in the slightest issue. Perfection in conformity is demanded and the very moment one falls short he is under condemnation. Thus, before one can keep law he must be perfect, but in such a state he would need no law. The giving of law is postulated upon man's weakness, and he is thus condemned by the very thing which was to save.

The lower nature makes it impossible for man to achieve righteousness by law-keeping. Regardless of how powerful law may be, man is powerless to obey it in perfection. He continually suffers from remorse, guilt and fear, as he lives in the three dimensions of time— past, present and future. There was no need for God to repeal one law and then impose another. What was needed was a transformation of nature. God did not send a new law. He sent his Son. The first covenant was one of law. The second was a person.

Jesus adopted our human nature. He emptied himself and took upon him the form of a slave. He was made in the likeness of man. He was tempted in all points as we are. He tested the strength of law and triumphed over it. He fulfilled the law and in doing so earned the right to adopt men unto himself rather than adapt them to the demands of law. Because he was sinless he could take our sins and he did so. By his own blood he purchased our freedom from the guilt of sin.

It is sin which is now under condemnation, not persons who are in Christ. They are free from condemnation, being declared guiltless in Him. What does this mean to me? It means

the difference between slavery and liberty. I am no longer under the dominance of sin. Sin is now the prisoner in the dock. I am free! The culprit who sought to destroy me has been apprehended and found guilty. I have been declared guiltless. Praise God that sin no longer has dominion. Its reign has been broken. It has been dethroned, disgraced and degraded.

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:4).

The righteousness of the law is the state or condition at which the law aimed. Law was intended to provide justification by creating a code of conduct to which a man must subscribe and by unremitting obedience earn the right to be guiltless. But there was “a fly in the ointment,” and a flaw in the system. It was human nature, the lower nature, in which dwelt no good thing. The will was there “but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

It was for this reason that the law which was intended to work good actually became an instrument of death. As we learned before, the very prohibitions of the law became suggestions and invitations to sin. What God did was to send Jesus to redeem us from the power, as well as from the guilt and consequences of sin. In order to accomplish this our old man of sin was crucified and we were made partakers of the divine nature, a nature which rises above the need of law.

Through this means, the righteousness which the law attempted to produce was made possible. The law was a failure because the lower nature was a failure. We were elevated to another and superior plane in which we were no longer under the dominion of the flesh and sin could not exercise dominion over us. On this spiritual plane, and through the power of the Spirit, man was able to attain unto justification.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the

flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (8:5).

There are two kinds of persons who will read what I am writing. One is described as “after the flesh;” the other “after the Spirit.” They may both have their names on the same church roster. Indeed they may be husband and wife. Those who are after the flesh live in the domain of the corrupt human nature. They are directed and controlled by it in every phase of existence. It determines what their reaction will be to any facet of life. They respond on the animal level.

The word for mind is *phroneo*. It means to think, to set the mind in a certain direction. It is not mere acting upon impulse or casually. Instead, it involves reflection and determination. Those who are governed by the flesh have surrendered themselves to the lower nature. They are guided by the things of the flesh.

In Galatians 5 there is a catalog of the things of the flesh. Included in the works of the flesh are sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, bad temper, rivalry, factions, party-spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like that. Satan has cleverly disguised some of these and deadened our sensibilities to them.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

I know a man who lives in a moral sewer. The fingers of his mind grope in the muck and he feeds his soul on slop and garbage. Every sentence he utters is sprinkled with profanity. There is nothing sacred to him. He will twist any statement in his warped mind and give it a suggestive slant. His throat is an open sepulcher. The poison of asps is under his lips. His mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

One day a friend said to me, “What will happen to a man like that when he dies?” I replied, “He is already dead.” We

make a mistake when we always equate death with the cessation of the intake and expulsion of air through the nostrils, or the failure of a muscular organ to palpitate. There can be an insensitivity of the heart to the purer things of life. Rigor mortis of the soul can occur while fleshy tissue walks about. God speaks of those who have “hardening of the heart” even when there may be no hardening of the arteries.

There is a lower level of the human nature in which one exists as in a state of living death. It is a penal colony in the dark jungles of corruption. Here the understanding is darkened and the dwellers are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Being past feeling they give themselves over to lasciviousness and work all uncleanness with greediness.

Death is a separation, a disintegration, an alienation from life, and one who is alienated from the life of God is dead in trespasses and sins. He walks according to the evil ways of this present age. He obeys the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit now at work among God’s rebel subjects. This is the realm of sensuality where men obey the promptings of their own instincts and notions. It is a fearsome valley of the dead, and over it hangs the dark cloud of God’s impending dreadful judgment. One who is given over to self-indulgence is dead while he lives (1 Timothy 5:6).

I am not so irrational as to think that this is a dominion without a ruler or a kingdom without a monarch. The “kingdom of darkness” has its sovereign as does “the kingdom of light.” There are evil ones, but there is also “an evil one.” “We know that we are God’s family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). “Everything the world affords, all that panders to the appetite, or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life, springs not from the Father but from the godless world. And that world is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does God’s will stands for ever more.”

This I believe!

The evil one has no greater weapon at his command than confusion of terms and values. The faithful prophets have always known this and cried out against it. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20). It is noteworthy that in this context there are five specific woes pronounced.

One is against syndicates, combines and monopolies, organized to build houses and apartments so close together that there is no room for privacy and meditation (verse 8). Another is against those who turn day and night into feasting coupled with hard drinking and blaring music (11, 12). Another is against those who are so tied to sin that they openly flaunt it while challenging God to do anything about it (18, 19).

The fourth is against intellectual snobbery which causes its victims to parade their learning as the ultimate in wisdom and prudence (21). The last is against those who brag about their ability to hold liquor, and who concoct new recipes for mixing their whiskey, wine and vodka (verse 22), and defend the wicked for political prestige. Human nature has not changed, and for this reason the need and nature of the prophetic message has not changed.

But I hold that in our day the most deceptive trick employed by “the dark ruler” is to confuse the minds of men as to what constitutes freedom. By this they are led to feel that they are free to sin, while sin is the greatest enslaving force of the universe. The flattering of the ego by a false use of the word “free” is the very technique employed by the spider to entice the fly into his death lair. Men who heed the siren call to this freedom are free only to die. To be carnally minded is death—death by one’s own choice, suicide!

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. To be “spiritually minded” is not simply to think nice things, but to live on the upper level where the Spirit controls. It is to be in the dominion of the Spirit. It is to be made new in mind and spirit, to put on the new nature of God’s creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth. It is important to see that it is not merely cleaning up the old life, but the reception of a new nature, a complete transformation. Man can no more create himself again than he could create himself originally. Creation is a work of God, not of creatures.

To live on this new level is to be constantly renewed in the image of the Creator and to come to know God. It is to be incorporate with him, and thus to pass beyond the reach of the elemental spirits of this world, to be no longer subservient to the flesh and its demands. Having been raised to life with Christ, we are enabled to aspire to the realm above, that is still higher, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

In this present thought-realm one is able to project his thoughts still higher, being freed from the quicksand which formerly sucked at his feet. One who is being pulled into the mire can only concentrate on the mire. The apostle writes, “Let your thoughts dwell on the higher realm, not on the earthly life. I repeat, you died; and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory” (Col. 3:3, 4). The reason the spiritually minded have life is because in the Spirit they have Christ, and Christ is our life!

They also have peace, peace with God. This is also through Christ. It is his peace, and we share in it. “Let Christ’s peace be arbiter in your hearts: to this peace you were called as members of a single body. And be filled with gratitude.” An arbiter is an umpire, one who rules and regulates the game. Those who are not in Christ are playing without a referee. They are also playing without a ball, and merely kicking each other.

The field of action is the heart. When decisions must be made the peace of Christ makes them. When peace blows the whistle it is always right and just. Peace settles things and inner serenity is the result. There is no taking a chance, no losing the game, no failure to score. There is no remorse, no weeping in the dressing-room, no second-guessing, no wishful thinking. In Christ one cannot lose. “If God is on our side, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). “It is God who pronounces acquittal: then who can condemn?” (verses 33, 34).

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” So reads Romans 8:7.

We have already learned that “the flesh,” as Paul uses it, does not refer to the physical body composed of tissues and cells, and carrying out its various organic functions designed to exhibit life. Now we must learn that “the carnal mind” does not refer to the brain with its cells and convolutions. The flesh and the carnal mind are the same. They are terms used to designate the lower nature, which is under captivity to sin. It describes man as a sometime unwilling slave condemned to do the bidding and bow to the whims of a harsh and cruel master.

On the plane of this servitude one cannot rescue himself. That which is righteous is always beyond his grasp. Man is like Tantalus, condemned to stand in a stream whose waters always receded when he stooped to drink, while the fruit on the branches dangling above always remained just out of reach. There was ever the growing intensity of agony created by the sense of helplessness and futility. “I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do right, only the wrong is within my reach” (Romans 7:21).

It is at once apparent that on this level of hatred, recrimination and growing bitterness, a mind incapable of thinking its way out of the predicament, stymied in every move,

will be at enmity with God. Driven by passion, motivated by lust, and with only wrong within reach, there will be only depraved reason. In such a state there is no recognition of or subjection to God.

Here is a description of what the carnal mind, alienated from God and shrouded in a dark curtain of blackness, produces. “Thus, because they have not seen fit to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved reason. This leads them to break all rules of conduct. They are filled with every kind of injustice, mischief, rapacity and malice; they are a mass of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery and malevolence; whisperers and scandalmongers, hateful to God, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent new kinds of mischief, they show no loyalty to parents, no conscience, no fidelity to their plighted word; they are without natural affection and without pity.”

It is specifically declared that those in this condition are not stupid or unlearned fools. Quite the contrary, they are informed in the lore of this passing age. But “their thinking has ended in futility, and their misguided minds are plunged in darkness. They boast of their wisdom but they have made fools of themselves.” The carnal mind is a misguided mind, that has sought to eliminate God from his universe, a mind that postulates existence and order without a Creator, and ends up creating disorder which threatens its own existence!

Spirit and Word

Mission Messenger (March 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

It is my intention, if God wills, to share with all of you the answers to certain questions raised by readers and related to the Holy Spirit. I concur with the feeling of the ancient Athenaeus, who said, "We feed on questions." I also recognize the truth of the statement of Publius Syrus, "Not every question deserves an answer." I am not at all interested in binding my views upon anyone. You are under no compulsion to agree with me. I shall love you just as much if you do not as if you did.

The subject of the power and working of the Holy Spirit is a live issue in our day. This is as it should be. However, the human mind is so constructed that it often clamps down upon a conclusion and after that no fact is strong enough to pry the jaws open. A recognition of our fallibility should cause us to be a little less dogmatic. One need not have an empty head because he has an open mind.

We have already had one question a dozen times. The wording is not always the same, but boiled down and simmered away it is this. "Do you think that the Spirit operates independent of the word of God?" Most of you will at once recognize this as a "Church of Christ question." Every religious party has its own peculiar questions. This is true of Adventists, Baptists and Catholics. I just chose those three because their special titles begin with A, B, and C. I could have substituted

“Church of Christ” for the latter, but our brethren do not like to be placed that close to Baptists.

Peculiar questions grow out of particular views and interpretations, and it is these which separate and herd us into various corrals. You can generally tell which sect one is identified with by his questions. If you meet a Baptist in Timbuctoo he will ask you the same leading questions as one in Topeka or Toledo. Members of the Church of Christ ask the same things in California as in Connecticut. It requires no great amount of wisdom to determine why this is so.

All sectarians must be able to categorize and pigeon-hole those with whom they speak. They at once begin sorting persons and filing them in various slots. The easiest way to do this is by asking certain “basic questions.” The Jehovah’s Witness cult is almost as adept at this as personal workers for the Church of Christ. I get a real kick out of the fact that I do not give the answer the “Witnesses” expect. They become fumblingly frantic because I keep my feet on the ground and smile when they expect me to run up a tree and growl.

What do my brethren mean by “not operating independent of the word of God?” Do they think that the Holy Spirit is now captured in and contained by the book we call the Bible? Did the Holy Spirit write himself out of existence and render himself into the “cracklings” of words, so that he is now bound in morocco, nylon-stitched and stamped in gold? Do they imply that the only help I can derive from the Spirit in time of severe temptation and deep distress is to stumble on to a verse which, if properly understood and applied, will serve as a crutch on which to hobble out of the problem area and clamber out of the danger zone? If that is what they mean (and in a lot of cases it is), I do not need prayer as much as I need an exhaustive concordance and time to search it before the Devil closes in and breathes his sulphuric breath down the collar of my Arrow shirt.

We need to face up realistically to the fact that many people in the Church of Christ do not really believe in the Holy Spirit at all. This will be protested to high heaven. There will be agonized denials, but when you sort out all of the factional verbiage and burrow through the pile of cliches and traditional explanations you will see that this is true. The Spirit is equated with the word. He is a book. It isn't a question of how he works because he doesn't really work at all. You do the work. You search the scriptures. You try to live up to them. You sink or swim. And Jesus and the angels look down to see whether you can beat the sharks off with the right quotations, or whether they will cut you to ribbons because you are "a brother in error."

I believe the holy scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit. I recognize in them the revelation of the divine mind. They constitute a weapon in the use of which I must become proficient because I enlisted to fight an enemy and not just fuss with the brethren. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but there is as much difference between the Spirit and his sword as there is between a man and his pocketknife. That sword was supplied for me to use and not for the Spirit to use. The Holy Spirit existed before one word of revelation was given. He was active in creation of this universe before man ever came into being.

The Spirit did not retire when sixty-six documents were gathered up after a considerable debate and bound in a single cover. And the Spirit possesses unlimited power. He did not reveal himself out of existence. He ante-dated the revelation of the first word beamed to a human mind and there is no indication that he later "passed a law" to handcuff himself to the fence he built around men. Certainly he functions in harmony with the word. He will not contradict what he revealed. The word is God's word. The Spirit is the divine agent of its transmission.

I believe that the revelation of God's purpose in word was completed with the apostles and prophets whom he prepared as qualified human vehicles. I do not believe the Spirit is revealing additional material today. We have in the scriptures all the revelation we need and all God wants us to have. It will do until the Lord shouts and we rise to meet him in the air. And what I know about what the Spirit does I learn from the word. However, I believe it all, every bit of it. This is a little embarrassing to some of the brethren who are specialists and who jump over what they don't like.

There are two kinds of people on earth as respects the kingdom of heaven— aliens and citizens. And there are two messages, one for each, and addressed to their particular needs. The gospel is for aliens. When they have obeyed it they are no longer aliens. The gospel is the good news about Jesus. The Spirit operates on the heart of an alien only through this. No one was ever led to receive Jesus as Christ and Lord by the Spirit where the gospel was not proclaimed. Men must be born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God. That word is the gospel which is proclaimed. It consists of facts about Jesus.

But the function of the Holy Spirit in the saints of God is different. The world cannot receive the Spirit because the world does not see him or know him. But the disciples of Christ know him because he dwells with them and in them. And he was in them before the first apostolic letter was written. They were filled with the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit from the day the good news was first announced as a fact. It was twenty years before Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. The Spirit did not suddenly switch over and start operating in Christians "solely through the word," because the new covenant scriptures were not collated and compiled for a hundred years.

Do you want to know what the Spirit personally does for me? Let me tell you. He sheds abroad and pours forth the love of God in my heart (Romans 5:5). That love is a fruit of the Spirit,

and it enables God to love through me. It creates within me a divine nature, a sharing in the very life and essence of God, for God is love.

The Spirit puts to death all of the base pursuits of the body (Rom. 8:13). He makes it possible for me to cry “Abba! Father!” and this is one of the splendid blessings of our relationship (Rom. 8:15). This does not mean that he makes it possible for me to pronounce these words. Any one in the third grade could say them. A vile sinner could utter them. But the Spirit brings me into a genuine relationship with the Father, so that these words become meaningful as a cry of praise and gladness, and as a call in time of need.

The Spirit comes to my aid in times of weakness in prayer and when I do not know how to ask. He pleads for me when I am not articulate. He translates my very groanings into words which reach the ear of heaven as the unburdening of deep yearnings (Rom. 8:26). He conveys to me strength and power in my inner being (Eph. 3:16). I have often experienced this, making me utterly unafraid in conditions under which I would be frightened if I had to rely upon my own strength. He provides that eternal life which I share, since he is the very source of life to God’s children (Gal. 5:25).

All of this the Holy Spirit does in conformity with the word of God and not in contravention of it. But he does it personally, and not simply through my feeble human mind, grasping and groping for the significance of words and sentences. The theory advanced and adopted by a lot of brethren actually argues the Spirit out of existence. He becomes a mere anomaly. Instead of being a powerful helper he is powerfully helpless. I do not buy that kind of thinking. It negates and makes void a great part of the new covenant scriptures.

I am thrilled that I have been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit. I have experienced the goodness of God’s word and the

spiritual energies of the age to come. I know the power which dwells within my physical frame, this tent which I must some day discard. I know the surging strength which comes to help me be more than a conqueror when the enemy comes in like a flood.

I am resolved that no one will revere the scriptures more than I do. They mean more to me every day that I live. I love to wander through the mental vistas which they open to my wondering eyes. I love to gaze at the far-off horizons of intellectual comprehension to which they beckon. I revel in the ideas which the words kindle within my rational powers. But my covenant relationship is a personal one, living, throbbing, pulsating with hope and joy. It is not written with pen and ink but with the Spirit on the fleshy tablet of my heart. I am joined to the Father through the indwelling Spirit.

The glorious faith did not begin with a book but a baby. The Lord was not a body reduced to words. He was the Word received in a body. And the Spirit cannot be trapped and shut up in a library, not even a divine one. Yet he dwells in me as a royal guest visiting a rude tenement of crumbling clay. He invests me with a divine nature so I can love as God loves and respond as Jesus would to the stark agonies and screaming heartaches of this life.

And my reaction must be spontaneous and natural, not plotted, planned, or perpetrated for personal gain or political prestige. If I have to run home and get my lawbook and look up what I should do every time I am confronted with an emergency I am a legal puppet and not a living person in Christ Jesus. The Spirit helps my weaknesses. The Spirit furnishes the power that I need. And he does this because he is the helper and the comforter which my precious Lord promised.

Let men quibble and dispute about whether the Spirit operates only by citing a passage, or quoting a scripture. I have

no time for such debate any longer. I have given up the thought that my human comprehension will ever enable me to be strong enough to even overcome myself. I am surrendered absolutely and unreservedly to Christ Jesus. I am trusting in His righteousness and not in my own. I am looking to him for life and light. As the Spirit within opens up new insights when I hold the sacred book in my hand and read it, I am drawn ever closer to him who left heaven to become closer to me.

Let me answer the question boldly and unashamedly. Yes, the Spirit operates in my heart and in the inner man directly, personally and powerfully. This makes it possible for me to experience how great is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know, though it is beyond all knowledge, the love of God. That is why I can truly say without reservation, “To him who is able by the power at work in us to do more than all, far beyond all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus, through all ages, for ever and ever.”

Re-Baptism

Mission Messenger (March 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

All that we can rationally and scripturally say of those who believe in Jesus on the testimony of the apostles, and who understand not the doctrine of Christian immersion (of which there are very many persons, I presume, immersed and nonimmersed), is that they cannot here have that confident enjoyment of the remission of sins, that “peace of God which passes all understanding,” enjoyed by the primitive Christians and by those who now understand and obey the apostolic gospel; but we cannot say that they never can be pardoned here nor hereafter. This can be said of those only who despise the salvation of God, and who know, but will not do, the will of our heavenly Father.

Let me once more say, that the only thing which can justify re-immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is a confession on the part of the candidate that he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God— that he died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, at the time of his first immersion— that he now *believes* the testimony of the apostles concerning him, and desires to be buried and rise with Christ in faith of a resurrection to eternal life.

The instant that re-baptism is preached and practiced on any other ground than that now stated— such as deficient knowledge, weak faith, a change of views

— then have we contradicted in some way and made void the word of the Lord, “He who will believe and be immersed shall be saved,” then have we abandoned the principles of the present reformation, instituted experience meetings, committees for examining candidates, changed the bond of union, and made something else than the belief of the gospel facts the faith of the gospel.

A scene of confusion, such as was never excelled in any community, will obtain in our churches: persons with whom we have communed at the Lord’s table for seven or ten years will occasionally take it into their heads that they did not understand *baptism* at the time of their immersion — that they were hypocrites all the while, and must now get up from the Lord’s table and go to the water, confess the Lord, and be immersed. Thus all confidence will be destroyed; and these twice and thrice immersed persons, fond of making converts to their practice, will be agitating the minds of other brethren, urging the weak and credulous to be baptized as a substitute (in fact) for walking more closely with God: for every member of a church who thinks of improving his experience, or increasing his enjoyments by going to the water of baptism, has been living in disobedience or wilful neglect of his duty, not coming daily and constantly to the throne of grace, not walking with God, not keeping his commandments. Reformation, and not immersion, is wanting in all such cases.

Editor’s Note:

The above quotation from the pen of Alexander Campbell appears on page 63 of Volume 7 [1836] of the *Millennial Harbinger*. The entire article will bear reading by those who, in our generation, un-christianize all who have not been baptized by “one of our preachers” as it is sometimes stated. This reminds me of a statement made by David Lipscomb, as follows:

To single one motive or blessing and make the understanding of this the one necessary condition of remission, to the neglect of others, is on a par with selecting faith as the one condition of salvation, ignoring all others. Indeed, it is worse, because faith is the great leading principle of all obedience, and more fully embraces all the duties man owes to God, and obligates to all acts of obedience, than any other requirement of man. So if any one act alone justified, it would be faith. But to take one promise that involves what God obligates himself to do and make the understanding of it the sole condition of acceptable baptism, ignoring other ends and promises embodying man's duty to God, is to do violence to the word of God and become a factionist. I repeat that a baptism submitted to because some preacher or church thinks you ought to be baptized is not a whit better than infant baptism performed because the parents think it right. To get every one to have a faith of his own, and to act upon it, is the end to be sought.

The Indwelling Spirit

Mission Messenger (April 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9).

Once more we must remind you that to be “in the flesh” has no direct reference to being in the physical body. It is contrasted with being “in the Spirit.” One of these is antithetical to the other. But the Spirit dwells in or abides in the body as in a living organism. “Do you not know that your body is the sanctuary of the indwelling Spirit, and the Spirit is God’s gift to you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). We must abide in the body to provide a temple for the Holy Spirit, but we dare not be “in the flesh,” that is, on the lower level of the human nature. That is the plane in which sin rules as a tyrant and moral anarchy is the order of life.

This passage is important because it uses the terms Spirit, Spirit of God, and Spirit of Christ in one verse. All apply to the same personality. Peter declares that the prophets were motivated and instructed by the Spirit of Christ, even before Jesus came (1 Peter 1:11). He informs us that this was the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to prompt the apostles. The term Spirit refers to the nature, Spirit of God to identification with Deity, and Spirit of Christ to his affinity to the Word who became the Messiah. The Anglo-Saxons employed the word “ghost” for the inner man, while the Latins used spiritus. Thus,

the Authorized Version uses these interchangeably. But because of the way the word “ghost” is used in our generation it should no longer be applied to the Holy Spirit, although it was legitimately so used by King James, who commissioned the translation which often bears his name. The Spirit is a holy guest, but not a holy ghost.

Thus, the Spirit is said to dwell or abide in us. This is not a brief stay by a passing friend, but tenantry for life, or so long as we permit. The proof that we are living on the higher plane of spiritual existence is the indwelling Spirit. God moves into a meaningful personal relationship with us on the upper level and rules over our life. The dominance of sin is broken. It has no more claim upon our members. We are set free by the grace of God.

Regardless of what claim may be made or what acts are performed, one simply does not belong to Christ if he does not have the Spirit of Christ. Man is an earthen vessel, a pot of clay, and the indwelling Spirit gives him value. Without the Spirit man is an empty jar occupying space on life’s shelf, but providing no real contribution to the world. The value of a jar is determined by its content.

We have been tricked into thinking that if we go through certain motions on particular days of the week, reciting rituals, fiddling with forms, and piddling with platitudes, this proves that we are alive and in tune with God. But Walt Disney Studios produced a mechanical Abraham Lincoln who duplicates in every lineament and feature the Great Emancipator. You purchase a ticket and take a seat before him and when the clock reaches the proper minute the robot gets up, steps forward and recites the Gettysburg Address.

A lot of awe-struck tourists think this is wonderful. But I’ve been accustomed for years to seeing men and women arising mechanically on Sunday when the clock struck a certain hour

and moving to a meetinghouse where they woodenly recite “The Lord’s Prayer.” Then they retreat to their original position as if it were all over until the clock strikes again a week later. They are no more real than Disney’s Lincoln. The spirit is absent from the latter and the Spirit is absent from the former. Regardless of what else one may have, if he does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Every person who is Christ’s has the Spirit of Christ, every person who has the Spirit of Christ is Christ’s. It is just that simple.

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:10).

Christ dwells in us in and through the Spirit. This union is spoken of from two aspects. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. This means that the attributes which belong to the divine nature are ours in which to share. They are available unto us. Paul wrote to Corinth, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s: and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

It is difficult for most of us to accept this. We are so conditioned to thinking about what we “give up” to follow Jesus, that we never think of the gains which accrue. There is deposited for us in the bank of heaven tremendous resources upon which we can draw, but often we do not know the account has been opened, or we are reluctant to draw upon it. We want to keep it for “a rainy day.” We forget that things to come are ours as well as things present. In Jesus there is no rainy day.

God has provided us a book of prayer checks. The supply is as inexhaustible as was the oil in the widow’s cruse (2 Kings 4:1-5). There is sufficient to meet every need. Unfortunately, we think of Christ as a mere historical figure in the past, or as a far-off ruler who is coming again. Both of these describe him, but they ignore the “things present” facet. Christ is in us. He is the

same Christ he always was. His power has not eroded away or become depleted.

He is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Whatever is implied in these glorious terms we have in Christ. He is our peace (Eph. 2:14). Our peace is not based upon a creed, concordat or conciliar agreement. It is not a pact, proposal or prepared document. If Christ dwells in me I am at peace with God. And I am at peace with every other person in this universe in whom Jesus dwells. That is why it is a universe and not a multi-verse. Versus means to turn, and universe means to “to turn or bring together in one.” The Spirit of God which originally brought order out of chaos in creation, brings the new creation together in one body. This is the action of the Spirit and not the result of human arrangement.

That is why the only unity of which God speaks is “the unity of the Spirit.” It is a gift. It can neither be achieved nor attained. It must be accepted. Our responsibility then is to guard and keep it with the bond of peace. It is silly for men to hold conferences and arrange conventions to promote unity. Unity does not need to be promoted. It has already graduated. Our task is not to promote it but to appropriate it. If Christ is in you, peace is in you, because He is our peace.

This does not mean that you will not die a physical death. It is appointed unto men once to die. We must either all die or all be changed. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom that is everlasting. Sin has taken its toll. Death has passed upon all men. So we must either be resurrected or reconstructed. The trumpet will sound and the sound will not be uncertain. The fact that Christ is in me is no guarantee that my body will not die. It simply removes the venomous sting of death. If Jesus is in me while I am awake and alive, I will sleep in Jesus when I die.

Jesus did not remove physical death. He simply conquered

the one who wielded the power over it, and delivered those who were all of their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. Death is not a monster any more than sleep is a monster. It is not a tragedy but a transfer. “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” To die in the Lord means that the Lord lives in you!

If Christ be in you, the Spirit is life. It is eternal life. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:12). “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” If the Spirit dwells in you, eternal life is yours now. You do not have to die to collect it. The life of God is the gift of God to His children. It is our present possession.

The Spirit is life because of righteousness, just as the body is dead because of sin. My body is not dead because of my sin, but because of sin, the sin of one man. So the Spirit is life, not because of my righteousness but because of the righteousness of another which is imputed unto me. “As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” It is not my righteousness which makes life, but his righteousness. I could never be righteous enough to merit eternal life, but thank God, it is not on the natural plane that I receive it. This is the promise of God. I do not stagger at this promise through unbelief. I accept it, thrill to it, and rejoice in it, as one who is strong in faith, giving glory to God. The Spirit is life! Praise God for that!

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11).

The most momentous fact of history was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. On this fact all else in our relationship to God depends. If Christ was not raised the

Christian message is empty and there is no content to faith (1 Cor. 15:14). If Christ was not raised the apostles are liars (15:15). If Christ was not raised those who died in him are gone. They have perished (15:18). If Christ was not raised all hope is limited to this life and we are miserable above all men (15:19).

Jesus did not prove he was the Son of God by dying on the cross. That proved he was the Son of man. He proved divine Sonship by his resurrection (Romans 1:4). It is true that Jesus said no man could take his life from him. He had power to lay it down and he had power to take it again. But he also said that he had received this commandment from the Father (John 10:18). God raised him from the dead as the first fruits of the great harvest of those who are asleep.

The same power that was exercised in raising Jesus from the dead dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. “How vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 1:19, 20).

God will quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit. To quicken means to make alive, to empower with life. The word “mortal” means subject to death. Its root form occurs in such words as mortician, mortuary and post-mortem, all of which relate to death. Of course God will raise us from the dead, but he will give us life and power now. The “resources of power” which were employed to raise Jesus are now available to all those who live in him.

It is a great source of comfort and reassurance to realize that whatever God demands of us he furnishes the power to accomplish. We need not be hesitant about moving into any situation to which God calls us. He is able to bring us safely through. We need not fear what men shall do unto us. The shield of faith is capable of deflecting all of the fiery arrows of the evil

one. Most of us are defeated by our own doubts.

A great watchword of the faith is found in these words, “The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7). The encouragement to allow God to deal directly with every problem of life by making our requests known to him in everything is a powerful incentive. All that we need he will supply, richly and fully. Life itself is the gift of his Spirit.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Romans 8:12).

The lower nature, the old life of sin, has no further claim upon us. We have been ransomed from its grasp. We have been redeemed from the slavery and bondage in which it held us. I owe nothing to my unregenerate nature. I have been born again. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. My previous concerns “I count so much garbage for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him” (Phil. 3:9). “Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is a new creation! Whoever they are who take this principle for their guide, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the whole Israel of God.” If the only thing that counts is new creation it is obvious that what belongs to the old life is no longer to be valued at all.

Paul said he wrote off all supposed assets of his past because of Christ. He did not merely discount them. He counted them sheer loss. He took out bankruptcy on his past and placed all of his hopes in Christ Jesus. There was nothing left but Jesus. This is not just a good way to live, it is the only way to live!

Fully understood this means, for instance, that the former

alcoholic needs alcohol no longer as an inward booster. Alcoholism results from fear of inability to cope with problems. The alcoholic feels a sense of rejection and compensates for it by leaning upon liquor as an escape. This settles nothing because he must return to reality or drink himself into oblivion. Good resolutions will not solve the problem. When the going gets rough there is an overpowering temptation to take a drink to fill up the emptiness. Preaching and counseling will not overcome it. There must be a real vital sense of relationship to God including a recognition of an indwelling Helper who is the power source for conquest of self.

Paul knew the reason for alcoholism, so he wrote, “Do not make yourselves drunk with wine; that leads to loose, wild living; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18, 19). One who is not filled with the Spirit is empty and vacuous. But filling with the Spirit is the alternative to drinking for the man who is insecure. I do not share the view of those who talk about “intoxication of the Spirit,” for the very word means to poison. There is no toxicity of the Spirit. One cannot drink of the Spirit too deeply. The more he drinks the better off he is. We are stimulated by the Spirit in the inner man but not drugged by him.

Indeed, I am quite thoroughly convinced that an acceptance of the Spirit as a result of genuine faith in Jesus Christ can recover one from the clutches of drug addiction. There is a physical aspect to the problem which means that Satan must be conquered and thrown out of his stronghold. This means that the frightful symptoms of withdrawal must be undergone and the living hell involved must be faced. One can be helped through the awful ordeal by those who once had the clawing monkey on their backs but who won through to victory. (Here I must mention that at least two college people who were addicts and who came to know Jesus testified that they escaped the withdrawal symptoms through prayer. I am sure that it will not always be this way).

The devil does not turn any of us loose easily. He fights for his territory where he staked his claim. But “the Son of God appeared for the very purpose of undoing the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). It is affirmed that Jesus has overcome the world. This includes the power structures of the world. The fact is that we need no longer be under the dominance of any sin. Even drugs, which distort brain images and disorient life can be thrown out by the Holy Spirit. Best of all, the indwelling Spirit can give meaning to life so that the factors which led to drug addiction can be alleviated and corrected.

Many of our social problems are related to the sense of loneliness which accompanies our computerized culture. It is true that man is in a crowded world, pushed and shoved about by the teeming mass. But it is also true that there is a lonely crowd. It is evident in the gigantic mass of tranquilizers and soothing drugs, plus pain relievers, consumed every year. Our society is dependent upon foreign substances introduced into the body to enable men to eat, to refrain from eating, to sleep and to stay awake.

A realization of the closeness of God, a sense of the power provided from on high, a positive acceptance of the Spirit to dwell within, can change all of this. The Holy Spirit is not provided as an esoteric or mystic influence, but as a positive helper, enabling us to love ourselves and to love others, including our enemies. Thus we can share in the creative force of the universe which can re-create our personalities. Much of what we call recreation only fatigues us more and wears us out. It saps our strength and vibrancy.

It is not enough “to feel like a new man.” We must become new men. And that is exactly the function of the Spirit of God. It is unfortunate that a lot of pseudo-sophisticates in our day dismiss what we have been saying as a species of wishful or fanciful thinking. They are content to believe that they are big enough to bear all of the problems of life without help from God.

They think that “all of this talk about the Spirit” has been concocted and dreamed up by mental weaklings.

But life has a way of catching up with us. When we played marbles as boys we spoke about “taking roundings,” which meant that we moved around the ring and got into a position from which we could shoot a rival out of the ring. And life does not remain static. It “takes roundings” on us. The cumulative tensions stretch us taut on the inside and break us. The rug is jerked out from under us when we think we are standing firm. We are kicked out of the plane without the parachute of faith. We wanted to be free and now we take a free fall!

The wisecracks about religion fail us when we crack up ourselves. In his book *Modern Man in Search of A Soul*, Dr. Carl Jung writes, “I should like to call attention to the following facts. During the past thirty years, people from all civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients . . . Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty-five— there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life.” But the great psychoanalyst was unable to help a lot of his patients because of his own denial of the factuality of the testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth. When you hand people a rope with which to pull themselves up it will do little good if it is not fastened to something above.

As I write I cannot forget a girl in a midwestern college. When I first met her on a speaking trip she was a gay drop-out from Christianity. She came up to taunt me and tell me that she thought I was a quaint throwback to medieval times, and she didn’t think there was anyone else like me on earth. She couldn’t understand why I was so positive and unrelentingly certain about God and why I insisted upon an ethical soul slant and mental bent which was based upon an absolute.

She went the route and had her fling, laughing at old

fuddy-duddies who still talked about such things as faith and hope, as if they were real. Drinking, gambling, toying with sex and using her body like a passport to the dream world of popularity, she came to the end of life's alley. And it was bricked up and she was walled in. Jilted by the man who had impregnated her, disillusioned, bitter, helpless and hopeless, sick and vomiting, she decided to end it all.

But she decided while her eyes were red with weeping and the sobs were catching in her throat, that she would call and confess she had been wrong and now it was too late. She then expected to gulp down a handful of "goodnight" capsules and go the way of all flesh. But I convinced her that man's extremity was God's opportunity, and prayed for her over the telephone, talking to God for her while she listened. She is now back in the fold. She came in out of the cold. Here's a brief quote from one of her letters:

I'm home again, home with God and the angels, with the Spirit in my soul and heaven in my heart. I'm home with my parents, with Dad and Mother, and it is wonderful to have peace and a clear conscience from God's forgiveness."

She is right, so right, and I am glad that she found the way home through the Spirit! Home is where the heart is!

The Spirit of Adoption

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[Abstract]

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

I know a man who is on “Skid Row.” He is unkempt, unshaven and filthy. The cast-off clothes which he wears hang loosely upon his gaunt frame. His sockless feet can be seen through the holes in his worn shoes. He is a “wino,” a human derelict cast up like a piece of driftwood on the littered beach which is a city street. Each evening at dusk he shuffles into Lighthouse Mission and sits stolidly through a religious service so that he will be entitled to the bowl of steaming stew and the mug of hot coffee. If he has the thirty-five cents, panhandled from passersby earlier in the day, he pays it for a place to “flop” and sleeps in a stupor, oblivious to the groans and snores and sodden curses of the roomful of men who often snarl at one another like so many caged beasts.

The man was not always thus. I knew him in better times. In fact I baptized him many years ago. He was one of a number of people whom I led out into a clear Ozark stream one Sunday afternoon for the purpose of immersing them into Christ. It was at a spot of such natural beauty that the angels must have smiled upon it. I heard of him again when I got a letter from his anguished parents telling me he had run away from home in a

violent rage when they had tried to thwart some of his wild tendencies. They wanted me to find him and talk with him. I did so. He seemed to respect me— in a detached sort of way, but he told me he was going to have his fling and he did not want anyone standing in his path.

I went to see him later when he was in jail. He was ashamed and he could not understand why I would come. He told me he was not in my class and that I should not waste my time on people like himself. I pointed out that we were two sinners talking together and that both of us were in need of God's mercy, and neither of us had anything to brag about. I asked him if I could pray with him, and although it embarrassed him, he replied, "I guess so." But before I prayed he said, "It won't do any good. I've tried and I haven't got what it takes. I'm too weak. You might as well forget me and let me go to hell!"

It was by sheer accident I saw him again. I parked close to a liquor store downtown and I saw him coming out. I hardly recognized him. He was bleary-eyed and had a raw inflamed cut on his face where he had fallen and struck his cheekbone on a rock. He had a bottle of the cheapest wine and he was fumbling with it trying to open it. I stepped in front of him and he shuffled to a halt. I said, "Do you remember me?" He shook his head in negation. I said softly, "Do you recall when I baptized you in the creek down home one Sunday afternoon?" For a moment it appeared that he would strike me or shove me out of his way. Then he turned and walked away. He did not look back and he said no word.

I have often wondered if it could have been different. When I baptized him I knew little about the Holy Spirit. I was concerned about getting people into "the right church" and having them go where the correct slant of doctrine was taught. I wanted them to be sheltered under an umbrella where the issues which seemed of such tremendous importance to us were emphasized always. I think now, although the thought is

abhorrent to me, that baptism may have been an end, instead of a means. I am persuaded that all too often converts were so many “scalps” to dangle from the poles of our factional tepees. We were interested in getting people into the water. We may have thought that mere performance of an act automatically brought them into a vital relationship with Christ Jesus.

I am not sure that we talked a great deal about mercy, lovingkindness and grace. To us grace had but one office to perform, the writing and imposition of another legal code, the least infraction of which would damn us. Certainly, as I look back on the meetings which I conducted, I have little recollection of delivering messages about the empowering of the Holy Spirit from within. So those who “came forward during the invitation hymn” were left to go it alone in an unfriendly world, still beset by the same desires, drives, urgings and fleshly compulsions as before.

We gave them a sense of forgiveness for their past transgressions and they often wept in the knowledge that the old things had passed away. But it was not true that all things had become new. Some things became new. They had a new set of duties. They had to “attend church” three times per week. They had to give money into the treasury on Sunday so the church could “get the glory.” They had new people to whom they had to be hostile, friends and neighbors who went where they had instrumental music or opposed Sunday Schools. Before they became identified with “the loyal church” they could attend meetings with any of these, but now that they had been made free by the blood of Christ they must show their “loyalty to the church” by spurning invitations which others mailed to them.

We created conformists but they were void of life. They were puppets who acted when we pulled the strings. They responded automatically, like a congregational machine. If one objected to our procedure, or questioned our right to prescribe life like a factory schedule, we circulated word around that he

would have to be watched. He was a potential troublemaker. If he insisted on thinking for himself we charged him with “rebellious against the elders,” some of whom never had an original thought in their lives. Then we withdrew from him. This made it scriptural to ignore him and insult him, to treat him like “a heathen man and a publican.”

We left people empty. There was an inner void, a vacuum, a secret chamber created for the Spirit of God to occupy, to fill with divine love, to flood with power. Unoccupied, it became a dark dungeon of futility and despair. The black bats of doubt flew in and out. Dusty cobwebs of moral weakness, woven by poisonous spiders of suggestion, hung from the rafters of the soul, filtering out the gentle sunlight of divine concern. And a spirit of languor and lassitude made the muscles of the inner man flabby. He became unable to resist the whispering of the demons, the burning desires, the flaming darts of the wicked one. The shield of faith lay rusting on the floor of life's closet, buried beneath the soiled clothing flung off in moments of remorse created by times of indulgence in gray yesterdays which were all alike, times of battles halfheartedly fought and always lost.

“I’ve tried and I haven’t got what it takes. I’m too weak. You might as well forget me and let me go to hell!” He was staring at me through bars when he said this. His face was puffed and bloated. He was not at all the same fresh-faced country lad who took his turn and waded out to where I was braced in the swirling waters of a stream so clear that I could see the darting minnows as I gently laid him back and buried him in the liquid sepulcher. That day he was not thinking of going to hell. He was starting on the road to heaven. He was strong in determination and resolute in his promise to God.

But I knew little to tell him about the Spirit who would come in and help in time of need when the adversary was pressing hard and the going was rough. Even when I visited him

in jail I was still trying to encourage him to reform on his own, to lead a better life, and to behave differently. So I wonder what might have happened if I would have told him at the beginning how we can become more than conquerors through that inner power which is a blessed gift from above. It might not have made any difference, but I wish I had known.

If you live a certain life you will die. If you die a certain death you will live. That is what Paul is saying. If you live on the lower plane of your natural life, down on the ground level, the end is death. Sometimes it is a living death, agonizing and drawn out like that of the one whom I have described. It is possible to walk around dead. The world is a living charnel house, a place of ghosts and corpses, masquerading as men. But they are dead — dead in trespasses and sins.

The road to life lies in the mortification of the deeds of the body, that is, the flesh. We sometimes use the word mortify as a symbol of embarrassment or shame. We say that a person was mortified by his mistakes. But Paul is not talking about that. The word means to kill, to visit death upon. To mortify is to put to death, and one can kill the deeds of the flesh only through the assistance of the indwelling Spirit. The *New English Version* has “base pursuits” for “deeds of the body.” That seems like a good translation. In any event, we cannot maintain the works of the flesh. The spirit of carnality must die if Christ rules!

SONS OF GOD

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”
(Romans 8:14).

The original for led is *ago*, and there are two things that may be said of its usage in the new covenant scriptures. First, it generally applies to persons, and has to do with their motivation to go in a certain direction or to accomplish a certain thing. Second, it implies willingness and cooperation on the part of

those who are led. The leading is not by force. It is not against the will.

To be led by the Spirit is to surrender to the influence and guidance of the Spirit, that is, to walk after the Spirit, as previously indicated. This is a proof of divine sonship. Only sons of God will be led by the Spirit, and thus, when one is so led it is indicative of his personal relationship with God. This is quite different than the measuring-rods employed by men.

Jesus placed the term “son of God” on a higher moral plane than a mere tie of relationship with the Father. There are certain characteristics stated as conditions. For example, only peacemakers can be truly regarded as children of God (Matthew 5:9). If one belongs to a religious organization and has a good knowledge of scripture, yet is guilty of sowing discord among brethren, or of refusing to labor for peace, he cannot be called a child of God. True children of God wage peace as actively as others wage war.

Again, Jesus postulates love, even for those who spitefully use you and are enemies, as the criterion of sonship. He says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father which is in heaven.” It is our contention that this love is a fruit of the Spirit. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. It is at once obvious that sons of God must be led, directed, motivated by, and filled with the Spirit of God.

SLAVES AND CHILDREN

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to relapse into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ And the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may be also glorified with him” (Romans

8:15-17).

It is difficult to understand the spiritual implications of a term if one is not familiar with its natural relationships. In our culture, “the spirit of slavery” may be passed over lightly by a modern reader. We have never experienced the agony of physical slavery and cannot fully appreciate “the spirit of slavery” as applied to sin. On the contrary, we may regard the life of sin as a pleasant time of indulgence which we are called upon to give up or “sacrifice” for Jesus Christ. Thus, the life in Christ is actually regarded as a bondage to which we surrender ourselves, more or less reluctantly, in order to secure a reward.

This was not the case with the citizens of Rome. One writer of note says, “The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and degradation have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind.” Of the state of things in Rome at this time. Canon Farrar writes, “At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognized rights, and towards whom none had any recognized duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied neglect.”

The French historian Du Page declares that it can be fairly well authenticated that there were sixty-million slaves in the Roman Empire when the gospel was first proclaimed. We are indebted to Cornelius Tacitus, the Roman historian who was born the year Paul began his third preaching tour, for the information that the slaves were so numerous that they were divided and registered according to their nationalities. And Seneca, the philosopher, who was the brother of Gallio before whom Paul was brought (Acts 18:12), writes that every slave was under a constant cloud of suspicion as a potential enemy.

To illustrate the fear which was associated with slavery I

need mention only one incident recorded by Tacitus. The Roman Senate was debating the murder of Pedanius Secundus by one of his slaves. C. Cassius Longinus arose and gravely argued for enforcement of the Silanian law, which made it mandatory to kill all of the slaves owned by a master who was murdered. One after another of the senators came to the rostrum and cast their votes for this sanguinary law. When it is remembered that such masters often owned hundreds of slaves and that these were in constant jeopardy by the act of one hot-head or brutal criminal, it can be seen how cheaply life was regarded by the patricians or ruling classes.

The citizens of Rome could make an immediate application of Paul's statement to the fear of slavery and degradation of sin. The fact is that his letter to the Romans was written just the year before the meeting of the Senate described by Tacitus. There was nothing glamorous about slavery. Slaves were sustained only by the faint hope of some day being free, or by the certain hope of death. And while we are a long way from the conditions which then obtained we can still offer a few suggestions about "the spirit of slavery" to sin from which we have been set free by the grace of God. Praise His holy name!

1. Slavery to sin destroys human dignity, reducing one to the animal level and making him a victim of passion and inordinate desire. Peter writes, "But these men, with no more sense than the unreasoning brute beasts which are born to be caught and killed, scoff at things outside their own experience, and will most certainly be destroyed in their own corruption."

2. Slavery to sin demands all of our powers and resources and places every faculty under tribute. When sin reigns in our mortal bodies it exacts obedience to the body's desires. It forces us to put all of our parts at its disposal as instruments for wrong doing (Romans 6:12, 13).

3. Slavery to sin reduces us to abject servitude and then

pays off with death. “When you were slaves of sin you were free from the control of righteousness; and what was the gain? Nothing but what now makes you ashamed, for the end of that is death” (Romans 6:20, 21).

4. Slavery to sin brings only misery and despair. “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am not; I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin . . . Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death?” (Romans 7:14, 24).

5. Slavery to sin forces its captives to breathe the polluted and poisonous atmosphere of fear. They are all of their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death (Hebrews 2:15), and fear brings with it the fear of judgment (1 John 4:18).

Against the frightful state conjured up in the mind at mention of “the spirit of slavery” is brought to bear another term “the spirit of adoption.” No more significant expression could be used to indicate a complete transformation in the Roman mind. From slavery to adoption would be like a Horatio Alger book “From Rags to Riches.” Only if we understand the legal adoptive process can we ever grasp what the apostle is really saying.

Fortunately, there has been preserved in Roman annals and laws a great mass of material related to the adoption process which was a very serious business in Rome. I trust that you will forgive me if I present to you the fruit of my own research and study for which I am indebted to many sources.

Notice my use of the expression “very serious business” with reference to Roman adoptive procedures. It was made especially serious because of the law called *patria potestas*. This was the law which gave a father absolute authority over his offspring so long as they lived. It conferred upon the father the right to punish a son regardless of the age of that son. He could

kill his son and no one could lift a finger against him. Gains, a respected interpreter of Roman jurisprudence said, "The right of dominion which we have over our children is peculiar to the citizens of Rome, nor is there any race of men who have a dominion over their children similar to ours."

In 450 B.C., there was a revolt of the *plebs*, or common people, against the patricians. It was alleged that the latter abused the unwritten law and took advantage of the former, denying them their civil rights. The magistrates, in order to avoid a revolution, were commissioned to draw up a code, which they did, inscribing it upon ten tablets which were accepted by the popular assembly. Later two more tablets were added to make the great body of laws known as *Lex Duodecim Tabularium*, the law of the twelve tablets. The laws were enshrined in the forum and became the supreme law of the land.

The *patria potestas* stemmed from the second stipulation of the fourth tablet which provided for "the control of the father over his children, the right existing during their whole life to imprison, scourge, keep to rustic labor in chains, to sell or slay, even though they may be in enjoyment of high state offices." A son could not own a foot of land in his own name while his father lived.

I do not want to bore you with details, but we must try and catch the atmosphere in Rome when Paul wrote to the Romans of slavery and adoption. In order to do this I want to insert a quotation from Dionysius of Halicarnassus. His testimony is especially valuable because he was a Greek historian living in Rome at the very time when Augustus issued his decree for the whole Roman Empire to enroll in the census for taxation purposes. Dionysius wrote *Roman Antiquities*, a history of his adopted city from its inception to the year 264 B.C., in twenty volumes. Nine of these have been preserved in their entirety, and in one of them is this description of the *patria potestas*.

“The law-giver of the Romans gave virtually full power to the father over his son, whether he thought proper to imprison him, to scourge him, to put him in chains, and keep him at work in the fields, or to put him to death; and this even though the son were already engaged in public affairs, though he were numbered among the highest magistrates, and though he were celebrated for his zeal for the commonwealth. Indeed in virtue of this law men of distinction while delivering speeches from the rostra, hostile to the senate and pleasing to the people, and enjoying great popularity on that account, have been dragged down from thence, and carried away by their fathers, to undergo such punishment as these thought fit; and while they were being led away through the forum, none present, neither consul, tribune, nor the very populace which was flattering them, and thought all power inferior to its own, could rescue them.”

Adoption involved the transfer of a person from the absolute control of his whole life by one man to the absolute control of his life by another. There had to be a complete surrender of the power of life and death by one and a complete assumption of that power by another. So drastic was this change that the one who was transferred to another *patria potestas*, was looked upon as a wholly new creature. He was said to be born again, or born anew. A whole new existence for him began on the day that the transfer of allegiance was ratified. Never again would he be subject in any sense to his former relationship. It was as if he had literally died to his past.

THE ADOPTIVE CEREMONY

The ceremony of adoption was very exacting. It was always public and required at least five witnesses. There were two parts to it. The first was called *mancipatio*. From this we get our word emancipate, which means to transfer ownership. It derives from *manus*, hand; and *capere*, to take. In a sale, an article was taken in hand by a new owner. In *mancipatio*, the father, the child, and

the prospective father, took their places upon the dais in the forum, with five witnesses. One of these, called the *libripens* (scales bearer) held a pair of balances in one hand and a short brass rod in the other.

The prospective father said, “This day I purchase your son for my own.” He then placed a coin in one pan of the balance. The father placed the son’s hand in the other pan, but before the sale could be completed he removed the boy’s hand, and the other removed his coin. This identical procedure was again enacted. But the third time the father did not remove the hand of the son. The scales were struck with the brass rod as a sign that the sale was completed. The coin was given to the boy as a sign that he would inherit from the new father. It was a seal of his relationship. Even to this day we say, “The third time is the charm.”

There remained one more step called *vindicatio*. In Roman law this meant to affirm and assert one’s legal right to a thing. The new father took the adopted son to a magistrate and had his new name properly inscribed in the census tables and the right of *patria potestas*, of life and death, passed into his hands. All of this is most interesting to me, but it is secondary to the purpose of the apostle. His primary desire is to impress upon the Romans the great blessings which accrue to us in Christ.

Let us point out then the privileges that were bestowed by adoption in Rome. (1) The one adopted was ushered into a whole new family relationship, with a new father and new brothers and sisters, and this was the direct result of the father’s choice. He was a chosen one, an elected person. The very word “adoption” means to choose, as our word *option* indicates. (2) The one adopted was given a new name clearly indicative of a new relationship. (3) He was permitted to eat at the father’s table, a privilege never accorded slaves. In the Greek world such eating together was an expression of *koinonia*, fellowship, the sharing of the common life of the father and family. (4) He became heir of

the estate of the father. If there was an elder brother, he became a joint-heir with him. He shared in both the vicissitudes and rewards which were the lot of the family, for this was part of “the common life,” the fellowship.

(5) When one was adopted by Roman law his past life was literally blotted out. It was removed from the roster of citizenship. All debts were cancelled, all obligations deleted. The adopted person began a new life with the slate wiped clean. Even his education began anew, and Cicero said its aim was to produce “self-control, combined with dutiful affection to parents, and kindness to kindred.”

Paul speaks of the Spirit in connection with the cry “Abba, Father.” There are two passages in which this expression occurs. In Romans 8:15 the Spirit enables us to say these words. In Galatians 4:6 it is the Spirit which does the crying out. In both cases our divine sonship is under consideration. We are adopted, that is given the place of a son. Adoption is from *huiiothesis*, to place as a son. Because we are inducted into the glorious family we are able to cry “Abba, Father.” That is, we are able, through the Spirit, to recognize our real relationship to Christ.

There is more to it than this. The word *abba* could not have been translated “father.” It is an Aramaic word, and was the first expression of a little child in the East. In our country little children say “Da-da” or “Pa-pa” and we must transliterate with “Daddy” and “Papa” to indicate that these are the simple, unaffected, and spontaneous expressions of love in early life. It would not capture this meaning to translate by supplying the word “father.”

Paul well knew that the Jews had a strict law forbidding a slave to use the word “abba” in addressing a master or the head of a household. So when he wants to show that we are sons, not slaves, he makes it clear that the indwelling Spirit identifies us as children of God and makes it possible for us to speak to the

Father in a fashion that slaves were not allowed to use. And so close is the union between the Holy Spirit and my own spirit that it cannot be distinguished from the cry which one is calling out to the Father.

THE CONFIRMING WITNESS

But the Spirit not only makes it possible for me to cry “Abba,” but also “Father.” The first is the cry of emotion and feeling, the second that of a maturing person. W. E. Vine says about the latter, “It is another mode of address. It is a relationship intelligently realized by the one who utters it, a word of filial confidence, communion, and obedience, answering to, and expressing the enjoyment of the complacent love of God the Father. The two expressions together indicate the love and intelligent trust of the child.”

We are told that “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” What does this tremendous statement mean? Remember that Paul is contrasting the servile state of slavery with the superb experience of sonship. We described for you the public ceremony of adoption. The sale of a slave had many of the same aspects. It also was in the presence of witnesses and involved a pair of balances and a deposit of money in one of the pans of the balance.

Suppose that the father of an adopted child died and the natural sons hated the one who was adopted and wanted to debar him from his inheritance. They could claim that he was never adopted at all but simply purchased as a slave. The adopted son would have to bring a witness to corroborate his own testimony. If he could find the *librepens*, the scales-bearer, that one could say, “I know he is a son because I was the one who struck the brass ingot and sealed the transaction.”

The Holy Spirit is in me for that very purpose. He is a seal of my redemption. “And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God’s doing; it is God also who hath set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:22).

The indwelling Spirit is God’s guarantee that I am going to inherit every provision of grace. I am not a slave. I am a son. My spirit testifies of this. The Holy Spirit testifies the same. I am even a joint heir with Christ. This establishes the quality of our sonship. Whatever is the lot of Jesus is to be my lot. We are “sharers together” with all that sonship involves. This is the thing to which the Spirit witnesses. I hope that you will forgive me for a lengthy quote which I am going to insert here. I want to share it with all of you. It is found in *The Local Colour of the Bible*, by Charles W. Budden and Edward Hastings (Vol. 3, pages 275-277).

St. Paul is the only one of the New Testament writers to use the term ‘adoption.’ This is not surprising, because adoption was not a custom among the Jews, and, in a legal sense, was absolutely unknown. On the other hand, the custom was a common one among the Greeks and Romans, and as a Roman citizen Paul was familiar with it and with the legal ceremonies which belonged to it.

Under Roman law an entire stranger by blood might be adopted into a family and become a member of that family, holding the same position in it as a son born in marriage. According to Dr. Ball, he even became a member of the family in a higher sense than some who had the family blood in their veins, than emancipated sons or descendants through females. He assumed the family name, and took part in its mystic sacrificial rites. He could not any more marry in the family of his adoption within the prohibited degrees than those related by blood. He severed his connections completely with his former family, and in the eyes of the law he became so entirely a new personality that even his debts were cancelled.

Let us look at the process. In the presence of five witnesses and the *libripens* (one who held the balances, as if to weight out money, at nominal sales), the son about to be adopted was sold three times by his father. According to the law of the Twelve Tables, if a father sold his son thrice he lost his paternal rights over him (*patria potestas*). A fictitious law-suit then followed, by which the person to be adopted was surrendered to the adopter, and the act was ratified in a set form of words.

As the form of adoption and that of sale into slavery were very similar, the presence of witnesses was essential to testify to the real nature of the ceremony. That is why the Apostle says, 'Ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.' Suppose that the adopter has died and that the adopted son lays claim to the inheritance. His claim is refused; his status as a son is denied; it is declared that he was sold as a slave and that he has no legal right to the inheritance. So the son seeks the aid of the law-court. 'No,' he pleads, 'the ceremony was that of adoption, the deceased claimed me by the name of son. He took me to his home. I called him father and he allowed it . . . I sat at his table where the slaves never sat. He told me the inheritance was mine.' But the law requires corroborative evidence. One of the witnesses is called. 'I was present,' he says, 'at the ceremony. It was I who held the scales and struck them with the ingot of brass. The transaction was not a sale into slavery. It was an adoption. I heard the words of vindication, and I say this person was claimed by the deceased not as a slave, but as a son.'

And who is the witness to that spiritual adoption which makes us sons of God? It is the Third Person of the Trinity. 'The Spirit himself beareth witness (along) with our spirit, that we are children of God.'

CONDITION OF GLORIFICATION

I have just finished reading again the story of the persecution and death of Rawlins White, as described in detail by his friend, John Dane, who was almost constantly with him until he died at the stake, at Cardiff, Wales, in March of 1555. Dane actually held the hand of the dying martyr “till the flame of the fire rose and forced them to sunder” as he puts it.

Rawlins White was a fisherman at Cardiff for twenty years. During the reign of Henry the Eighth he was an ardent partaker of the superstition and idolatry of Catholicism, but when the accession of Edward the Sixth made possible the proclamation of the gospel again, he “began partly to dislike that which before he had embraced, and to have good opinion of that which before, by the iniquity of the time, had been concealed from him.” Dane writes, “He began to be a diligent hearer, and a great searcher-out of the truth.”

However, White was ignorant and unlearned. He had to have help, so he took his little son and started him to school to learn to read English. “Now after the little boy could read indifferently well, his father every night after supper, summer and winter, would have the boy read a piece of the holy Scripture, and now and then, of some other good book; in which kind of virtuous exercise the old man had such a delight and pleasure.” Dane further says, “Within a few years, through the help of his little son, and through much conference besides, he profited and went forward in such sort, that he was able not only to resolve himself touching his own former blindness and ignorance, but was also able to admonish and instruct others, and therefore, when occasion served, he would go from one place to another, visiting such as he had best hope in.”

I like this statement which follows. “And to this his great industry and endeavor in the Holy Scripture, God did also add to him a singular gift of memory, so that by the benefit thereof he would and could do that, in vouching and rehearsing of the text, which men of riper and more profound knowledge, by their

notes and other helps of memory, could very hardly accomplish; insomuch that he, upon alleging of Scripture very often would cite the book, the leaf, yea and the very sentence; such was the working of God in this simple and unlearned man.”

After traveling five years with his son, White learned that King Edward had died. Mary succeeded to the throne, motivated by a passion to ruthlessly stamp out all opposition to Catholicism. White testified even more diligently of the grace of God and converted many. His friends sought to have him desist, but he refused saying, “I will, by his favourable grace, confess and bear witness of him before men, that I may find in him everlasting life. I must suffer with him here if I would be in his glory.”

Finally he was arrested and charged with heresy before the bishop of Llandaff. He was committed to the castle of Cardiff for a year, during which John Dane often visited him, taking him money and food prepared by his (Dane’s) mother. At the end of the year he was summoned for trial before the bishop, who accused him in a diatribe about his “obstinate and wilful opinions” for several hours. After listening quietly to the end. White replied, “My lord, I thank God I am a Christian man, and I hold no opinions contrary to the word of God: and if I do, I desire to be reformed out of the word of God, as a Christian man ought to be.”

Dane quotes, “From thence he was, by the bishop’s commandment, carried again to Cardiff, there to be put into the prison of the town, called Cockmarel; a very dark, loathsome and most vile prison. Rawlins in the meantime passed away his time in prayer, and chiefly in singing of psalms, which kind of godly exercise he always used, both at Cardiff castle and in all other places.” While in prison, his writ of execution on the charge of heresy, was read to him. It was to be “speedily carried out.”

On the day before he was to die he sent a messenger to his wife requesting her to send him a long white shirt which he called his “wedding garment.” Attired in it, he was taken from prison the next morning. Dane records, “So he came to a place in his way, where his poor wife and children stood weeping and making great lamentation; the sudden sight of whom so pierced his heart that the very tears trickled down his face.” When he saw the stake and the wood piled near, he fell down upon his knees, and kissed the ground, saying, “Earth unto earth, and dust unto dust: thou art my mother, and unto thee I shall return.”

Arising, he went boldly to the stake, and a blacksmith fastened a huge chain of iron about his body. As the officers began to lay the wood mixed with straw and reeds about him, he reached out as far as he could and gathered the straw and reeds and tucked them in closer about his body. He was forced to listen to a harangue on the authority of Rome given by a priest. He gave such good attention that all were astonished at his composure. When the fire was kindled he held his hands in the intense flame and watched the sinews shrink and the fat drop away. He continued to cry out, “O Lord, receive my spirit!” until his mouth would no longer open.

The recorder ends his account with these words, “Thus died this godly man for the testimony of God’s truth, being now rewarded, no doubt, with the crown of everlasting life.” Fifty-six years later the version of the scriptures authorized by King James was first printed and given to the world. Really, this is not quite all. I want to add that I expect to meet Rawlins White. I would like to tell this simple man what an influence his life and death have had on me.

The apostle writes that we are joint-heirs with Christ “if so be that we suffer with him that we may be glorified together.” He personally rejoiced in his sufferings for the saints and longed to fill up that which was behind in the afflictions of Christ in his

own flesh. I do not expect ever to be called upon to suffer as did Rawlins White, who was just my age when he met Jesus in the burning bush of his own body. But whatever it is my lot to share with Jesus, I want to be strong enough to “go forth unto him without the gate, bearing his reproach.”

I want that power of the Spirit which will flood my soul with such unquenchable love for my enemies that I can pray for them in spite of taunts and false accusations. When reviled I want to bless and not revile again. I want that fierce courage which can make me smile and thank God when I am accused and branded as a heretic or an apostate by those who cannot read my heart but would play God with my life.

May the blessed Spirit grant to me that same patience which sustained others in dark dungeons and vile prisons and made it possible for their tongues to form the words and sounds of hymns of praise. God help me to overcome the temptation to feel self-pity when it seems that I am deserted and must stumble along lonely in the darkness.

May I have that greater love for Christ which will impel me on to my destiny with him, though I see my wife, my children and my grandchildren, weeping and lamenting at the crossroads. And although I taste the brine of my own tears, and see dimly through the misty curtain of my own sorrow, let me not turn back from following the Galilean carpenter, to cling even to those who are the very substance of my earthly dreams.

May I be able to walk boldly to whatever my stake may be. There are many kinds of stakes. There are many kinds of fires. Sometimes the literal stake is easier to embrace than the mental. There are chains which cannot be formed on an anvil by a blacksmith with clang of hammer— fetters of hate and hostility which bind you while others burn you. I want to be bold enough not to shrink from either heated metal or white-hot words of wrath which sear the soul.

I want to be forgiven for the time wasted in trivialities, debating those senseless and foolish issues which cannot matter in eternity. I want to purge my very consciousness of those molehills elevated into mountains by the partisan and factional spirit. I want to scale the far-off peaks and not wallow forever on the low ground where men wade through the miasmatic swamps of their own stagnant minds and fever-ridden hearts. How weak I am! How unworthy to be an heir of God! How unworthy to be a joint-heir with Christ, my redeemer! But what triumphant reassurance I find in the blessed words, “My grace is all you need; power comes to its full strength in weakness.” I want to be able to say, “I shall therefore prefer to find my joy and pride in the very things that are my weakness; and then the power of Christ will come and rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen” (Galatians 6:18).

A Universe on Tiptoe

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

“For I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the splendor, as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us” (Romans 8:18).

One can never explain the tremendous impact made upon the Roman world by the good news concerning Jesus unless he takes into account the condition then existing in the hearts of those who composed the Empire. And no word better describes that condition than *hopelessness*. The historian Freeman writes, “From Mummius to Augustus the Roman city stands as the living mistress of a dead world, and from Augustus to Theodosius the mistress becomes as lifeless as her subjects.”

A black pall of fatalism hung like a lowering cloud over the hearts of slaves, freemen and patricians. As Canon Farrar puts it, “Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.”

It is difficult for the student to determine whether prevailing vice struck a death blow to religion, or whether loss of faith in the gods produced the heathen cruelty and unfathomable corruption. Sometimes cause and effect are closely interwoven. Of one thing we can be certain, and that is that

when the restraints of religion were most needed they were not apparent and undisciplined hearts were left to grope unhindered in the stinking muck of unbridled licentiousness and degradation.

The historian writes, “The upper classes were destitute of faith, yet terrified at skepticism. They had long learnt to treat the current mythology as a mass of worthless fables, scarcely amusing enough for even a schoolboy’s laughter, but they were the ready dupes of every wandering quack . . . The mass of the populace either accorded to the old beliefs a nominal adherence which saved them of giving any thought to the matter, and reduced their creed and their morals to a survival of national habits, or else they plunged with eager curiosity into the crowd of foreign cults.”

Many of the intellectuals espoused the Stoic philosophy which was derived from that of the Cynics, and was established at Athens by Zeno about 300 B.C. His most famous pupil was Cleanthes of Assos, from whose *Hymn to Zeus*, Paul quotes in Acts 17:28. Among the famous Romans who later adopted this philosophy, our readers will probably recognize the names of Cato the Younger, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Now read this historical quotation.

“But the Stoicism on which they leaned for support amid the terrors and temptations of that awful epoch utterly failed to provide a remedy against the universal degradation. It aimed at cherishing an insensibility which gave no real comfort, and for which it offered no adequate motive. It aimed at repressing the passions by a violence so unnatural that with them it also crushed some of the gentlest and most elevating emotions . . . It made a vice of compassion which Christianity inculcated as a virtue; it cherished a haughtiness which Christianity discouraged as a sin . . . Its marked characteristic was a despairing sadness, which became specially prominent in its most sincere adherents. Its favorite theme was the glorification

of suicide, which wiser moralists had severely reprobated, but which many Stoics belauded as the one sure refuge against oppression and outrage. It was a philosophy which was indeed able to lacerate the heart with a righteous indignation against the crimes and follies of mankind, but which vainly strove to resist, and which scarcely even hoped to stem, the ever-swelling tide of vice and misery. For wretchedness it had no pity; on vice it looked with impotent disdain.”

Both Zeno and Cleanthes committed suicide, and one historian informs us that by the time of Trajan, who became emperor shortly after the death of John, the apostle, suicide had become a “national usage.” One of the remarkable things noted in the Roman writings of that day is the great variety of Latin phrases for suicide, indicative of the frequency of the crime. The way of life had become the way of death in Rome. Men mused by day and night on how to “end it all.”

It was to those living in such an atmosphere of crushing sorrow and complete despair that Paul wrote this one great chapter. In doing so he met the problem of human suffering and gave the answer to it. God had invaded the earth in the person of a Son to share our lot. He suffered in all areas of life as we suffer. By his identification with us he made it possible for us to also be partaker of his “all things,” as he partook of our “all things.” And this includes his eternal splendor. All that goes with the life of God is mine. I am an heir of glory!

In the flesh I cannot grasp all that is involved in everlasting splendor. I am caught up in the human predicament. I am inhibited while in the body by a time-space sequence. In such a state the glory cannot be revealed. But I can be sure of one thing. Temporal suffering (sharing with the Son on earth), is not to be compared with the splendor (sharing with the Son in the glorified body). There is something else, something outside, something beyond. The drawn curtains will not open on oblivion, but upon splendor. I shall come into my own.

No wonder this concept swept the tired, weary, jaded and despairing hearts of the Roman Empire. It will also revive the “unlaughing generation” of our own time. Never in recent centuries have the eyes of the young been so listless and staring, never have their countenances been so blank, as of late. This is the effect of a neo-pagan culture, of a meaningless treadmill existence, of a worship of false gods which have again proven to be vanities. Once again it is either the Spirit or suicide. Either the Light must come in or men will go out like lights. Ancient Rome has been re-incarnated in our western world. Once more the Letter to the Romans is as fresh as the morning newspaper. It is God’s Life and Time issued in one cover.

“For the created universe waits with eager expectations for God’s sons to be revealed” (Romans 8:19).

This is a concept so vast and profound that it completely overshadows the sufferings of this present life. Not only will the sons of God march in the great triumphal procession of the redeemed but the entire universe is involved and is eagerly awaiting this tremendous event. It will signal the culmination of God’s magnificent plan of the ages.

The original term for “eager expectation” is one which literally means to stretch out the neck in an attempt to see. J. B. Phillips translates it to read that creation is “standing on tiptoe,” looking down the road and waiting for the appearance of the glorified host.

I never read this without remembering the coming to town of the circus when I was a little lad. In those days the performers always staged a parade to the big top. Everyone for miles around gathered along the route. The air was vibrant with expectancy. I would stand on tiptoe, craning my neck and looking for the appearance of the first unit, the resplendent bandwagon. Finally, in the distance could be heard the strains of marching music. A great cry went up, “Here they come,” and we stood in awe as one

colorful contingent after another went by.

The Romans knew what was meant by a triumphal procession. They had witnessed the return of famous generals, heading great armies which took hours to pass a given point. They had listened to the accolades accorded in the forum, and seen the honors heaped upon the victors who had overcome the hardships of the battle.

Now the apostle portrays Jesus coming as a conquering hero, the super-star of all time, leading the long line of saints. He rides a white horse. His eyes flame like fire. On his head are many diadems. On his robe and on his leg are written the name, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Stretching far off to mingle with the blue haze crowning the mountains of infinity are the armies of heaven, following on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and shining. They come from every nation, language, tongue and people.

Suddenly every created thing in the universe— in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, all that is in them— bursts into a great cry, “Praise and honor, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelations 5:13). I am going to be there. I am going to join in the shout. And when the sons of God come into their own, the entire universe will share in their ultimate and glorious destiny. What a scene! What a triumph!

“It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so; yet always there was hope, because the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendor of the children of God” (Romans 8:20, 21).

Every phrase in this quotation is a thrill to my heart. The created universe is the victim of frustration. The root word is the Latin *frustra*, in vain. That is why the King James version

renders it “subject to vanity.” Man was made to be the ruler of the material universe. When he sinned, the dominion over which he held sway became the victim of his dereliction. Its original purpose was thwarted and defeated.

Man fell by his own choice. As a rational being he made a decision, and his guilt demanded just punishment. But the realm of nature had no choice. The ground was cursed *for man’s sake*. Thorns and thistles were borne profusely in contravention to the original design of producing useful herbs and fruits.

The creator found it necessary to deflect the universe from its pristine purity out of love for man. Instead of a relationship of joy in a synchronized system, it was said that man should eat the produce of the earth in sorrow all the days of his life. No longer would the earth sustain man upon it. Now it would open up its jaws to swallow him from sight. The decomposition of his frame would feed the crawling skin worms. His dust would mingle with the elements of the earth. Far from being a realm of beauty the earth would become a vast charnel house, polluted with the vapors and stench from decaying matter.

The decision to thus subject the earth to a perverted purpose so that sinful man might live upon it until the ravages of death claimed him was made by God. But it was for a limited time. When man was redeemed from corruption the earth would be also. When man was given a new body there would be a new earth. And there would be no more curse. Neither could sin or anything that defiles ever enter.

Always there has been hope. The curse of the created world was co-extensive with the curse upon man. The hope of the universe is identified with the hope of man. Man will be freed from the shackles of mortality by the resurrection from the dead, the great revival; or by the Magnificent Change, the Triumphant Transfiguration. But just as sinful man could not live in a sinless state, so sinless man cannot reside in a sinful and

accursed domain. Creation will share in the liberty and splendor of the children of God. We will be raised in glory although sown in humiliation, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which to dwell in righteousness.

“Up to the present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth” (Romans 8:22).

The created universe is not a conglomeration of unrelated units or circumstances. It is so closely integrated that it can be personified and considered as a body. The sin of man could affect the whole structure and frustrate it “in all its parts.” The interrelationship of all the parts so that the universe is said to groan as one body is an argument for origin by intelligent design rather than by sheer chance.

So long as the physical body of man suffers and is tormented by pain, so long will the universe be subjected to corruption, crying out, moaning and groaning because of its ignominious state. But the pains are like those of childbirth. They betoken the advent of new life. There is a spirit of hope despite the agony. God’s purpose will be realized. Suffering is not the normal way of existence for the universe. Some day the purpose of it will be seen, exactly as in the case of childbirth.

“And not only so, but even we, who have received the Spirit as the first-fruits of God’s promised inheritance, are inwardly groaning while awaiting the culmination of our adoption through the redemption of our bodies” (8:23).

Suffering is the lot of all who are in the flesh. All of creation is forced to agonize because of sin. Not only is this true of the universe as a whole, but even the children of God, while in the flesh, are not exempt. It is true that these have received the Spirit as a pledge from God that glory awaits, but the indwelling Spirit is no guarantee that they will not suffer from maladies in

the flesh. The outward man of the Christian will perish the same as that of the skeptic or unbeliever.

For this reason we cannot assume that because one suffers, he is out of harmony with God. Saints endure pain the same as other sinners. The difference lies in the fact that the latter suffer hopelessly. Their hope resides in death and not in what lies beyond. The Spirit does not prevent aging nor offset its natural twinges and discomforts, although a knowledge of the Spirit will strengthen one to endure and provide him a happier outlook on life here and hereafter.

The indwelling Spirit is a divine deposit given to us as a constant reminder that God does not forget. He will not “scrub out the mission” upon which we are dispatched from the day of our birth from above until we enter into slumber and the spirit returns to its source. There will be frustrations and distresses along the way. These link us to the created universe. But there will be an undying hope that none of this is useless. It acts to produce for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Our adoption is not yet completed. It involves the whole man, and the physical part has not yet been redeemed. By his death on the cross Jesus ransomed the spirit, the inner man. He purchased the body, but did not redeem it because it is mortal and therefore still subject to degeneration, decay and death. We were bought with a price. We belong to God in body and spirit. But so long as we are in the flesh we cannot inherit or possess the kingdom of God. The perishable cannot possess immortality.

Our bodies will be redeemed by the resurrection. Then we will not be in flesh and blood. God will give us a body according to his own design or choice. It will be adapted to life in an immortal and incorruptible state. Our present bodies, in which we groan, are designed for functioning in a material realm, an elemental environment. We are now awaiting our transformation. It will be a glorious release from pain and

irksome toil.

The faithful child of God is destined to dwell in three states, or kingdoms. These are the kingdoms of nature, grace and eternity. Each is entered by birth, but the birth can only adapt one for the state into which it inducts him. To enter the first he is born of his mother's womb. To enter the second he must be born of the water and of the Spirit. To enter the third he must be born of the grave. All three, being a birth, involve a coming forth, but the coming forth is limited to the realm into which one is deposited.

The first birth results from generation, the second from regeneration, and the third from resurrection. In each case there is a freeing of one from the previous condition which held him captive, a victory over that which enshrouded him. The first results in victory over the womb, the second in victory over sin, and the third in victory over mortality. When one gains the victory over sin through the blood of Christ, his adoption papers are filed. When he gains the victory over mortality they are completed. Then the saying of scripture will come true. "Death is swallowed up, victory is won." And "as we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man" (1 Corinthians 15:49). Praise the Lord for such a glorious hope!

The Power of Hope

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[Abstract]

One of the great differences between being in Christ Jesus and being on the outside is hope. It isn't that those on the outside do not have hope for all men do. The difference lies in the varying degree of intensity. Those who know the Lord find their hope increasing as they grow older, those who do not know him find their hope waning, and frequently being supplanted by those two malign evils to personality—dread and despair.

Every rational person realizes that he is not going to get out of the human predicament alive. All of his plans for postponing the inevitable are doomed. His string is going to run out. The thread is going to be snapped. The Christian, "sustained by an unfaltering trust," is able to "wrap the drapery of his couch about him and lie down to pleasant dreams." Not so the one who sins away his day of grace and suddenly faces the blackness of darkness. Without hope we are of all men most miserable.

Then, what is hope? The simplest definition is that it is "a joyous anticipation of the future." Although it is related to expectation they are not the same. One may expect bad as well as good, storm as well as sunshine. It is only when expectation is accompanied by desire that it is an ingredient of hope. We desire some things we do not expect, and expect some things we do not desire, but when we have desire and expectation in equal

proportion we possess hope.

Hope is not a retreat for the cowardly or inadequate. Instead, it is a resilient and powerful quality of the soul, lingering on even when the rationalization argues that it is futile. Long after others have given up the search for one who is lost, a mother keeps the light burning in her heart, reacting inwardly to every step on the porch, and every knock on the door. Like Abraham we hope “when hope seems hopeless” (Romans 4:18).

My faith and my hope are grounded on the same foundation as the faith and hope of Abraham. It is a firm conviction of the validity of every promise of God, because “God makes the dead to live and summons things that are not yet in existence as if they already were.” The first is the ultimate in power, the second the ultimate in knowledge. God raised Jesus from the dead. So God can raise men from the dead. And he has promised me I will share in eternal life on a more magnificent scale than I can ever imagine now.

The fact is that Jesus made sense out of death by making sense out of life. By showing me how to live he taught me how to die. And the last gasp of oxygen into my collapsing lungs is of no real consequence. It is not lifting the latch that is important but what lies beyond the door. I am convinced that ineffable joy awaits in the other room. Jesus has begotten me to a living hope. “And the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ, will himself, after your brief suffering, restore, establish, and strengthen you on a firm foundation. He holds dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10).

Beginning with Romans 8:18, the apostle places suffering and splendor in proper perspective. Suffering is for awhile, splendor is after awhile. It is the splendor which really counts. The whole created universe, now writhing in agony, is standing on tiptoe, looking down the long road, waiting for the spectacle of triumph when the sons of God come into their own. It is the

people of God who give meaning to the whole creation. Man was at the peak of God's creation. His fall subjected his whole domain to despair. His final victory will bring rejoicing to all. Hope is written in shining letters across the face of the whole order.

“For we have been saved; though only in hope. Now to see is no longer to hope: why should a man endure and wait for what he already sees?” (Romans 8:24).

This does not mean that hope is an agent or cause of our salvation. We are not saved by hope as an operating principle. The point at issue here is that we have been saved, but there is more to come. In our flesh and blood we are not adapted for existence in a celestial realm. We have not yet shared in all to which our salvation makes us heirs. There is something for which the universe is expectant— joyfully and triumphantly expectant.

When hope becomes reality it ceases to function as hope. The sight of the goal renders hope unnecessary. The endurance test is over. The waiting period is ended. Expectancy gives way to experience, anticipation becomes enjoyment. This is the essence of the Christian life. Tears and trials today, smiles and splendor tomorrow.

“But if we hope for something we do not yet see, then, in waiting for it, we show our endurance” (Romans 8:25).

This is a confirmation of the statement in Romans 5:3-5, which says, “Let us even exult in our present sufferings, because we know that suffering trains us to endure, and endurance brings proof that we have stood the test, and this proof is the ground of hope. Such a hope is no mockery, because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us.”

Hope is validated by God's love. The heart flooded with

love is the heart that can be filled with hope. It is useless to expect hope to provide its bounty when there is no love, for love is the soil in which hope grows and blossoms. The heart is merely a vase and hope is a cut flower where there is no love in which the roots may be put down.

“In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God’s own people in God’s own way” (Romans 8:26, 27).

Hope comes to our aid in counteracting despair and makes it possible for us to endure and hold on in spite of suffering. But we have another helper, for the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. He does so in many departments of life, one of which is mentioned, that of prayer.

We are all ignorant of many things with regard to prayer. It is far easier to theorize about prayer than it is to practice it. Often we develop stereotyped words and phrases which we repeat monotonously and with little consciousness or real concern. Sometimes we cannot express the real concern. Sometimes we cannot express the real burdens nor find words in which to couch our deepest longings. All of us have found occasions when we wanted to pray and could not really do so.

For just such emergencies God has given us the indwelling Spirit as an intercessor. We have only one mediator, one bridge-builder, the man Christ Jesus. But we can have many intercessors. Indeed we are all to make intercession for one another (1 Timothy 2:1). And we have two divine intercessors, one dwelling in us and the other in heaven. The Holy Spirit intercedes from within (Romans 8:26), and Jesus intercedes at God’s right hand (Romans 8:34).

The Spirit translates our inward inexpressible desires into prayer, taking the intangible and inarticulate groanings of the inner man and putting them in the words of heavenly language. Thus we can be sure that we are on a direct line to the throne room in glory if we are in Christ Jesus. Let me illustrate what I mean.

I know a precious mother who could neither read nor write. She was placed at field work by her immigrant father when she was a mere girl. She was denied any formal education. Later she married and bore six children whom she dearly loved. She and her husband were found by the Shepherd and entered the fold. They sought eagerly to rear their children to God's glory. With her little brood by her side she never missed a meeting of the saints, listening intently to words she could not read.

One day a message was received that her husband had been killed in an accident at work. Stunned by the tragic news she locked the door of her room and kneeled down by the bedside. Later she told me that with breaking heart and gushing tears she had tried to pray but no words would come. For a long period she kneeled in the glowing dusk, dumb in her anguish. Then it seemed to her that she could feel strong arms about her shaking shoulders. There stole over her an indescribable sense of inner peace. She arose from her knees ready to face life with new courage. Although she had been unable to utter a sound except her choking sobs she had the distinct feeling that she had prayed and that God had heard. Of course she was correct!

Then there was an elderly brother, confined to a nursing home where he had but little privacy. Once an elder in a rural congregation, he had faithfully served God's heritage entrusted to his care. He had prayed by the beds of the gravely ill and by the gravesides of the dead. His life had been a veritable life of prayer, daily offered to the God whom he loved. Now his mind often wandered and he lost the thread of thought completely.

When I visited him he confided to me how at night when the patients were tucked into bed, he talked to God for comfort. But he said that frequently he had a lapse of memory and could not recall what he had said. He would even fall asleep not knowing if his prayer was finished. He felt relieved when I told him that the Spirit carried his inmost secrets to the ear of God, and God understood.

I have often found relief in prayer, especially when I was in deep need of forgiveness and divine understanding. And the greatest consolation comes when I realize that all does not depend upon human vocabulary. The Spirit decodes my impulses and desires and transmits them in rational language. And God hears and grace takes over. I do not so much need to learn how to pray as I need to learn how to trust.

God searches and penetrates the recesses of my being. He knows my every thought and intent. He also knows the mind of the Spirit. The communion between God and the Spirit is absolute. It is perfect. And the Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He pleads for God's own people in God's own way. If nothing else prompted me to be one of the people of God this alone would be sufficient motivation. I must be one of the saints because I desperately need the Spirit as an intercessor.

Let others fill their journals with argument and debate about how the Spirit works, or if he works. I prefer to fill this little paper with the grace of God and my own gratitude that my Lord did not leave us as orphans. I am happy that he came to us in the Spirit and the Spirit moved in to live with me in my frail tent. I am overjoyed because of the warmth, the understanding, and the power which he furnishes day by day. In short, I am thrilled beyond my poor ability to express that God has adopted me and that I am a member of His majestic family.

Quenching the Spirit

Mission Messenger (July 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

I have before me a letter from a reader who wants to know what it means to quench the Spirit, and how this may be done. The term is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, and I strongly suspect from the context that it relates directly to the exercise of spiritual gifts, and especially to that of prophecy, which means to speak under divine impulse, or by inspiration. The New English Version reads, “Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind.”

The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet (1 Cor. 14:32). He did not have to speak and it was within his power to withhold a message and thus stifle the Spirit who sought to use him as a channel for revelation. But the prophet also spoke to men to build, stimulate and encourage them (1 Cor. 14:3). They might thwart the Spirit’s purpose by refusing to receive the message or to heed it. So the Spirit could be stifled by the prophet or the recipient to whom the message was addressed.

While this seems to be the direct import of the expression, we should be reluctant to limit it solely to this, for any sublimation of the Spirit’s work and influence would certainly come under this admonition. The word “quench” is used with reference to fire or flame, and means to cause a flame to lose its

intensity or to die out.

This is a particularly apt metaphor because the Spirit is alluded to in conjunction with fire or flame, as well as with water. When the bubbling up and flowing forth of the influence of the Spirit is alluded to, water is used to describe it (John 7:38, 39). But when the motivating intensity which threatens to consume one unless he gives vent to it is under consideration, the experience is described in terms of fire or flame. Thus Jeremiah regarded the prophetic influence as fire in his bones, and Timothy was told to “Stir into flame the gift of God which is within you” (2 Timothy 1:6).

A fire can be quenched in three ways. One of the simplest and most effective is by pouring cold water upon it. The licking tongues of flame recede and die down and soon only cold gray ashes remain. It has been the fate of many congregations to thus suffer. Bitterness, complaining, bickering and backbiting have driven out the Spirit and left only a vacant burned-out shell where once a group of saints acted as a lighthouse to the community.

All men have not the faith. Some in despotic arrogance must have their own way, and brutally tyrannize others, using the community of saints as a tool for their own ego-gratification. They will “rule or ruin, boss or bust!” Any suggestion by others is vetoed, and a sterile conformity in which there is neither peace nor passion for souls results. The congregation settles into a rut of meaningless tradition and composes itself to await death.

A second way to quench a fire is to smother it with non-combustibles, to heap up in the heart a pile of extraneous matters which are like asbestos to the soul. How often men have started out in the livid glow of the Spirit, only to become involved in the affairs of this passing age until the fervor died down and the ardor cooled.

Perhaps it was secular employment with its mad scramble for power, position or pelf. Perhaps it was pleasure, innocent in itself, but becoming an obsession. Boating, golfing, pro-football, television— innocent relaxation until the winding coils of inordinate concern drive the Spirit into the background. “That which fell among thistles represents those who hear, but their further growth is choked by cares and wealth, and the pleasures of life, and they bring nothing to maturity” (Luke 8:14).

“Nobody lights a lamp and then covers it with a basin or puts it under a bed.” These are the words of Jesus. He spoke them to show how incongruous it is for men to conceal or snuff out a light under something that defeats its very purpose. All of us have known men of great spiritual potential who have washed out under an avalanche of worldly philosophy and increasing knowledge of this world. They have quenched the Spirit *by degrees*— scholastic degrees!

A third way to quench a fire is by neglect. One can smother it with noncombustible materials which make a great show of smoke but never burst into flame, or he can simply refuse to refuel it and it will go out. While dealing with a slightly different theme, Solomon wrote, “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.” Flames are like people. They must be fed to live. I have found in my own life that I must nourish the inner man. Shakespeare wrote, “Self-love is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting.”

I require regular communion with God in fervent prayer. “Fervent” is another word allied with fire or heat. The root word means to glow. I am like Moses on the mount, when my hands begin to droop and are not lifted up toward heaven, the tide of battle goes against me. I must stoke my spiritual flame with study of the word. Nothing else stimulates and fires my imagination like gaining new insights into the revealed truth.

Another factor which kindles enthusiasm is the fellowship

of the saints. Enthusiasm means “God indwelt.” It is from *en* and *theos*. Madame de Stael correctly writes, “The sense of this word among the Greeks affords the noblest definition of it; enthusiasm means, ‘God in us.’” To create enthusiasm by kindling the Spirit is to allow God to work in and through us, and we thus edify and comfort one another. A coal of fire which becomes separated from the mass is soon extinguished and dies out. I need all of my brothers and sisters.

It is my fond and fervent hope that all of our readers who have been stifling the Spirit will open the draft and let the wind of God blow upon the coals of fire and become aflame for God. May we all be filled with the Spirit and speak the word in boldness. And may His glory be our aim!

Answering the Buzzer

Mission Messenger (July 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

George G. Beazley, Jr., is the ecumenical officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He is also my brother in Christ. It is as a brother, not as an enemy, that I write this. In *The Christian* for February 14 of this year, appears a news item entitled, “Beazley ‘Lashes Out’ at Attacks on Ecumenical Groups.” It provides quotes from a regular report to the churches called “The Beazley Buzz.”

In the January issue of his report our brother reveals that for the first time in his life he believes ecumenical institutions “are in real danger of being destroyed.” His newly-developed fears match my long-held convictions. Not being an ecumenical officer and having no organization to defend or protect, I am not perturbed. Our brother has a right to be frightened. He is president of the Disciples Council on Christian Unity, and chairman of the nine-denomination Consultation on Church Union.

A great many brethren who are antagonistic to the Disciples’ wing of “the restoration brotherhood” have accepted it as a foregone conclusion that COCU would be pushed through like a pro-football team on a quarterback sneak through a bunch of high school freshmen. They have found it hard to swallow in question forums when I have suggested that they not get heart failure in happy anticipation of being able to say, “I

told you so!” There are some fairly sectarian attitudes toward “the sectarian attitude” of the Disciples of Christ.

At the same time, the latter have thought of me as a kind of Neanderthal throwback, a sort of reactionary fuddy-duddy, out of tune with the Now generation. They have spoken positively of the “ongoing Spirit,” and have sought to make it appear that the Holy Spirit planted the idea of ecumenical institutions in their minds and they are just carrying out the will of God in promoting them. This doesn’t really bug me. I’ve spent a lifetime with good folk who sincerely think that anything they dream or drum up is the will of the Spirit. And the Spirit is given credit for some pretty “hairy experiences.”

Brother Beazley is a little wild in his thinking— I think! He asserted that the destruction of ecumenical institutions would kill the Christian unity movement and leave the church “not the church our Lord brought into being.” It is talk like that which turns off those who love Jesus and the One Body. Our brother is a victim of that institutional virus which always creates a feverish state and influences one to speak incoherently and irrationally. I know! I was afflicted with the malady for years.

The fact is that the real Christian unity will not be affected one whit if every ecumenical institution on earth curls up and dies. In some cases, it could be a help. Christian unity has enough problems without being swaddled in institutional red tape and conventional gobbledygook! Christian unity is not a federation of sects, a confederation of parties, or a pantheon of congregations, each worshiping its own image. It is individual, and a creation of the Holy Spirit. “You are one body, and all of you are individually members of it.” That is what the Holy Spirit once said, and I doubt he has changed his mind since he became “ongoing.”

Brother Beazley needs to re-study the apostolic letters to see what kind of church “our Lord brought into being.” I am

interested in his concern to restore that church. I had been led to believe from some rather intensive reading that a goodly number of brethren couldn't care less about really perpetuating it. Our brother is in a strategic position to bring a real witness to the Consultation for Church Union if he is sincere in wanting to preserve the church "our Lord brought into being."

Our brother "lashed out" at attacks from both right and left. He called upon every Disciple "to become a soldier in the battle to overcome polarization, to attain balance and comprehensiveness and to preserve the ecumenical movement and the institutions which carry it." I do not want to appear hyper-critical but it seems to me that the admonition to overcome polarization may be slightly tinged with poor grace. I do not intend to be sarcastic, but I attended several of the convention sessions when restructure was on the agenda, and it appeared to me as an "outside observer" that some of the brethren from Indianapolis were not worried about polarization if they could ride the program through.

Really, I think the great problem is that the ecumenical movement arrived on the scene too late. This is one reason I doubt that the Spirit originated it. He is not generally that far off on his timing. There is a great spirit of lassitude toward movements which have to create institutions to sustain and carry them. Men are sick of institutions. They are "fed up to here" with them. At the same time the Spirit of God is cutting through artificial and sectarian barriers like a buttered knife through hot fudge. After letting the brethren demonstrate the futility of human wisdom and planning, God may do a little restructuring of his own and frustrate all of our movements. Since I no longer belong to any sect, segment, fraction or fragment, I can say "Praise the Lord!" There are tremendous values in being a Christian only, after having pretended to be one for so long.

Brother Beazley says, "This battle, as you well know, will take place, or is already taking place, in every congregation. As

you also realize, no one can engage in it without risk. Unless he is willing to take the risk, no local pastor or lay leader is really giving leadership.”

This is an admission that the brethren are not going to surrender their birthright of autonomy lightly. Our brother says the attempt to infiltrate the congregations with the ecumenical structures is a battle. Apparently there are resistance fighters in every locality. This ought to come as a surprise to a bunch of folk I know who have dismissed the Disciples as a group of apathetic, lackadaisical, devil-may-care compromisers. I am not sure that ecumenical institutions are really worth taking such a “frightful risk” as our brother projects. About all that could happen would be the loss of a job. And sometimes that is a blessing rather than a disaster.

In any event, I hope the freedom fighters will encourage all of the saints to examine the Word of God, to look to heaven rather than to Indianapolis for salvation, and to make up their own minds about their congregational future. We need more than anything else in this age to get back to a real, genuine, vital, and personal relationship with God through the blood of his Son and the power of the indwelling Spirit.

There may be nothing particularly wrong about institutions but when men begin to think of them as indispensable to the purpose of God, Ephraim may have to be separated from his idols. There was nothing wrong with trees but when men began to carve them into stocks and confuse them with God they became dangerous. Some of the prophets took the risk of pointing this out and were stoned to death for “really giving leadership.”

Brother Beazley says, “The ecumenical bodies are not without mistakes, some of them serious, but cutting off funds is not the way to deal with mistakes, because local congregations make mistakes too.” I disagree with my good brother. He knows

as we all do that ecumenical bodies have thrown money down a lot of rat-holes, and when the rats did not dig enough holes, the ecumenical thinkers helped them out of the shortage by digging some of their own. Obviously, a great deal of good was done in some places, but it is also true that every fuzzy-brained cause imaginable has been supported under guise of serving Christ in our world.

Cutting off funds is exactly the way to deal with repeated mistakes in spending money! Why should I be called upon to invest repeatedly in that in which I have no faith? Why should I turn my hard-earned cash over to an institution to sow to the winds when I am not in favor of the winds? I am going to have to answer to Jesus in the Great Confrontation for the way I use my time, talent and treasure. I will not be able to wiggle out of responsibility by pointing the finger at an ecumenical institution when I knew ahead of time what use would be made of my contributions. The best way to solve the problem of institutional chickens multiplying is not to wring their necks one by one, but to close down the hatchery.

Our brother equates ecumenical bodies with local congregations and points out that they both make mistakes. He is right on his last observation and wrong on his original equation. There is a great difference. If the local deacons repeatedly use funds for projects that are detrimental they can be removed from office by the very ones who supply the money. But an “ecumenical body” is a long way off from little Pleasant Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) down in the hills. And the folks who supply the oil never get to see the complex machinery and wouldn’t know how to turn it off if they did. About their only recourse is to stop sending oil and keep it for their lamps in case the Lord comes sooner than the ecumenical institutions expect him to arrive.

Perhaps the brethren will think that I should keep my nose out of “their business,” but I no longer think in terms of “us and

them.” I do not beam my love to brethren because they are in the Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches or Churches of Christ. I am interested in brethren and not in their structures or corrals. My association with the brethren in Indianapolis and Saint Louis has been fraternal and amicable. They have always been kind and considerate, helpful and understanding toward me. When we have appeared together on forums there has always been a proper respect and dignity manifested.

But I am persuaded, after much study and personal soul-searching, that I must speak my honest sentiments about the Consultation on Church Union. I think it is a tragic error. I am convinced that it would forfeit every principle for which our fathers fought. I believe in Christian unity but “church union” as our brethren envision it is not in God’s program.

In closing, permit me to say that this little review is not in any sense a personal reflection upon my brother in Christ, George Beazley, Jr. He is a personable, erudite and qualified man. His address to the saints simply provided an opportunity for me to set forth my own personal convictions. When Brother Beazley “buzzed” I felt that I should respond to the buzzer. I pray for him as eagerly as I pray for all of the rest of us!

The Spirit at Work

Mission Messenger (July 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

An Oklahoma brother, who is an excellent writer and a researchist of no mean ability, expresses his commendation for the current series of articles on the influence of the Spirit of God in our lives. He poses two questions. “Is there any scriptural teaching that the Holy Spirit will not or cannot lead a child of God into contact with an open-minded soul in need of salvation? Or, bring to memory a scripture appropriate for the occasion?”

Although most of us in the Churches of Christ tend to avoid and evade such pointed questions, it is probably a little bit dishonest to do so. We cannot always talk in the realm of theory and never get down to the practical aspects of the Spirit’s work. Even an eagle must stop soaring occasionally to find rest upon a tree branch or rocky crag. And such questions as our brother poses tend to bring us down to earth.

One reason for my reluctance to write in regard to these matters is due to the fact that one must relate personal experiences to justify his position and I do not believe the Spirit of God is limited to working through any two of us in the same fashion. For this reason, too, no man can ever use his personal experience as a criterion by which to measure another. To do so would be like Paul insisting that no one could find Jesus anywhere except five miles south of the Damascus city limits, and then only at high noon.

The God who made us all unique personalities can also do some unique things in our lives. I believe, as you know, that the Spirit is active in the children of God. I am conscious of his abiding presence in my own life constantly. Really, I hold that God is interested in every phase of my existence. When I am completely surrendered to his purpose he can providentially shape my destiny and “mould me and make me after his will!” For that reason, regardless of what transpires, I look around to see what divine purpose is to be served.

God took some pretty frustrating experiences in the life of Joseph and turned them into ultimate good. He used pagan kings, murderous conspirators, and other shady characters to put Esther into a place where she could serve his people. I serve the same God who saved Daniel in a den of lions, and three young Hebrews in a fiery furnace. If he could make a path through the Red Sea to get his host out of Egypt, he can clear a path through campus atheists and ecumenical doubters and I can march through and never get my feet wet. The Holy Spirit has always been interested in keeping the saints out of where they are not needed and getting them into places where they are. “They made their way through Phrygia and Galatia, but the Holy Spirit prevented them from speaking God’s message in Asia. When they came to Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them.” The result is they went into Europe and opened up a new continent for the Lord. If they had stayed in Asia they might have become bogged down with people who were not ready for the message. Many a man has stubbornly sawed away at some “Bithynia” and made no dent in it, while a “Philippi” was waiting for someone who did not come.

Paul had always wanted to go to Rome. He planned a trip there after he took assistance to the poor in Jerusalem. He ran afoul of some street demonstrators who beat him up and would have killed him if the national guard had not come out and rescued him. Then he was made the pawn of scheming

politicians who tried for two years to get a bribe from his friends. Finally he contested the case on the ground that his civil rights were being violated so he was sent to the supreme court on appeal. On the way he was shipwrecked and suffered a snakebite.

But while he was in prison he wrote, “Now, concerning myself, I want you to know, my brothers, that what has happened to me, in effect, turned out to the advantage of the gospel. For, first of all, my imprisonment means a personal witness for Christ before the palace guards, not to mention others who come and go.” A lot of things have happened unto me that also turned out to the advantage of the gospel.

I well remember when I first began to pray that the Lord would open up “a great door and effectual, though the adversaries be many.” Up to that time I had been planning everything on my own, and didn’t feel any real need for God’s help. Actually, of course, I wasn’t really fishing but merely seining minnows. My life was not very exciting or adventuresome. Dabbling around in the shallows with stereotyped sermon outlines will not really create waves. It is a fairly safe way to kill yourself.

But when I could no longer endure my own emptiness, I resolved to cut the chains which provided both slavery and security. Immediately things began to happen! Since that day I have been in all kinds of thrilling, breathtaking encounters—scores of them! And I have just begun. I love every minute of it! There is never a dull moment, not one. There is no time for remorse over the past. God leads to where the action is!

Let me cite examples of how the Spirit brings one into contact with hungry souls who are unaware of where the bread supply is located. I fly a great deal, crisscrossing the continent many times per year. I began to pray months ago that the Lord would make it possible for me to be seated next to persons who

needed my witness. Since that very time I have talked by the hour about Jesus to all kinds of people— an Oriental professor of history, a young Russian and Japanese-speaking linguist who is a United Nations interpreter, a black militant, a stockbroker from the West Coast who was contemplating suicide when he reached his destination. I have witnessed to college athletes, soldiers, sailors and a professional dancer. God's grace knows no favorites!

Not long ago there was only one vacant space on the plane, the center seat next to my aisle seat. A handsome businessman took the seat, and before we were off the ground I asked him what he thought about Jesus. He turned out to be a prominent officer in the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City. It was an animated two hours we spent together and we parted in the terminal as close friends despite our theological differences.

Let me tell you how God used a sleet storm to make it possible for me to reach some people I would never have otherwise touched. I was on a speaking program at a college. A youthful black inner city worker appeared on the same program.

He wanted to talk with me about how I felt that Jesus related to minority groups who were culturally deprived. I was booked solid for interviews and could not see him. He was leaving immediately after my final night speech to drive back to Kansas City, which was 150 miles away.

That night the air terminal notified me that a storm was moving in and all flights were cancelled the next day. The next morning I found the young man with a white schoolteacher in the lobby of the motel. Some inner urge had prompted the young black man to remain overnight. I rode to Kansas City with the two of them and we did not miss a minute in talking about the Lord. I emphasized that social work without Jesus was like a cut

flower in a vase as opposed to a growing one. We must sink our roots down deep in the soil of faith if we are to continue to bloom. It had a profound effect upon the three of us to be drawn thus close in the bundle of life, because of Jesus Christ.

The men took me to the Kansas City terminal where I tried in succession Trans World Airlines, Frontier and Braniff, in regular order. I secured a reservation on each, only to have the flight cancelled before boarding procedures began. Finally Braniff secured a Greyhound Bus to transport us to Saint Louis, a four-hour journey. Again there was just one vacant seat. It was next to mine and the bus was backing out of the terminal stall when someone banged on the side, and was admitted to sit down beside me.

The man was using profanity about our plight but I told him it could be much worse and that I knew a friend who could turn it all to our good. I then gave him the story of how Jesus had moved into my life and changed my attitude until I could love even my enemies. We talked the whole way. He had been a Roman Catholic in his earlier days and had lost all faith. He told me that his visit with me was the most interesting and profitable four hours he had ever known. He thanked me profusely. I learned then that he was a Vice-President of Humble Refining Company, wealthy and empty inside.

The same Spirit who prompted Philip to meet the Ethiopian Secretary of the Treasury from one of the richest nations on earth, can make it possible for me to contact someone who is ready for a new dimension of life. I have no doubt at all that he has done so and will continue to do it. Through his instrumentality during the last year I have shared the good news with dropouts from society in hippie communes and with associations of ecumenical ministers from religious establishments. I have spoken on college and university campuses, and to thousands of high school students. It has been my privilege to address ethnic groups of all kinds and speak at

sectarian gatherings of many varieties.

I simply turn my life over to God and offer to go into any situation where he calls me. If he gets me in he will get me out. One who has only a sword as a weapon cannot choose his ground. If he fights at all he must engage in eyeball-to-eyeball encounter on the grounds chosen by his opponent. Truth asks no favor. It craves no advantage. The Spirit is my strength and my helper. I want to go everywhere as Paul went to Thessalonica. “We came on to you only because God gave us courage. We came to tell you the gospel, whatever the opposition might be.” Right on! Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go! Anywhere he leads me in this world below. That isn’t just a song with me. It is a motto!

God Works for Good

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

I hold that Jesus is Lord over life. I mean the whole life—all of it. I do not go for the kind of fragmented personality which “saves Sunday out” to serve God. One does not turn the grace of God on and off like a faucet in the kitchen sink. God is interested in everything that I do. He wants me to mow the lawn, trim the shrubs, and roast wieners in his name and to his glory. Certainly he wants me to sit down with the saints at the Lord’s table, but when Nell and I bow our heads and thank him for our food, the kitchen table also becomes the Lord’s table.

God does not just smile when everything is going along happily for me, and turn his head when it isn’t. He sees me when I bruise my arm falling off the bicycle I’m learning to ride. He also knows when I carelessly take my eyes off the road and hit the bridge railing. He even knows to what hospital I am taken, and the number of my room. He knows my temperature before the nurse reads the thermometer. It is destructive of his role as a father to think that he is only interested in the “big things” that I do. Often character is revealed more by some of the little things which are done thoughtlessly than by those which demand a good deal of study and rationalization.

And the greatest thing about his being Lord of all is that the Spirit can so order and arrange everything that it will work out for ultimate good. Even my foolish mistakes and asinine

blunders can be fitted into a pattern of life. Sorrow and suffering can be woven into the warp and woof until they actually enhance instead of wrecking the design. This does not mean we ought to deliberately do a lot of silly things so there will be more depth and shadow in the picture called life. As humans caught up in the earthly predicament we will furnish enough hazy background without daubing more in on purpose.

My God is Lord of suffering! He knows how to place my physical agony and mental travail into proper perspective. Since I believe this with all of my heart I do not have to worry or fret about the future. I do not have to be anxious about tomorrow. He is the God of tomorrow as well as of today. I can glorify him by the way I endure hardship as well as by clapping my hands and singing when I feel exuberant over what we call “good fortune.” There is no such thing! It is not fortune, but faith!

Everything is going to work out to his praise. Everything! If you are one of the sad skeptics who want to go around pricking balloons of faith, don’t bother with me. I am not flying a balloon filled with hot air. I’m not blowing bubbles. My faith is substantial. That word means “to stand under.” It is as firm as concrete. You can no more puncture it than a bumblebee can drill a hole in the sidewalk. I brush doubts aside like flies. I am seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. When you do this all else will be added. God will take care of the addition. Just keep on seeking and let heaven operate the computer.

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

I consider this rendering superior to that of the Authorized Version. The apostle asserts it as a certainty that God works with us for good, and does so in everything. “We know” is positive. It lifts the matter out of the realm of wishful thinking and speculation. And it excludes no area of life from God’s

direction or cognizance. I am personally convinced that God is concerned with every thought and action of my life.

Shakespeare wrote, “There’s a divinity that shapes our lives, rough hew them how we will.” Henry Ward Beecher said, “Everything that happens in the world is part of a great plan of God running through all time.” Thomas Carlyle said, “In the huge mass of evil as it rolls and swells, there is ever some good working toward deliverance and triumph.”

Jesus buoys up my spirit by drawing lessons from the whole panoply of nature. He does it so casually that one might think that God had in mind my own reassurance when he made things as they are. “Look at the birds . . . your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” “If God clothes the grass of the field . . . will he not much more clothe you?” “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

My part is to love him. This is the way I show that I am “called according to his purpose.” Love is my response to the divine call. It is God’s purpose in calling us to arouse and engender within us that love which will provide harmony between ourselves and him.

There is a purpose behind this universe, and purpose implies design, intent and determination. Actually it is quite close to the word propose, and what God purposes in mind he proposes to accomplish in fact. He has called me. I heard that call and I have answered it. And I know that in Him all things will fall into place for my good. That is why I intend to honor him by life or by death. I have no time to stand around and argue about how and when God works in my life or accomplishes his purpose. I shall just do my part and trust Him. He will not fail! My little universe is not as great as the one He made.

It makes a great deal of difference to me when I realize that I do not go it alone. Life is not lived in a spiritual vacuum, devoid of real meaning or purpose. If God is working in everything to produce order and good for those who love him, I can look for his hand in anything that happens. Thus, life takes on new dimensions as I work to achieve his purpose and he works to the same end. And sometimes what appear at first to be perplexing detours turn out to be highways to success and happiness.

“For whom he foreknew, he also predetermined to be of a form like the form of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

It seems a little incredible that this verse and the following one have been made the ground for the most bitter theological conflict in the Christian realm. Little did the apostle realize when he wrote this brief section what would occur as the result of it. Moses E. Lard wrote, “It has been the theme of the most voluminous and conflicting criticism. It forms the creed of the Calvinist and the puzzle of the Arminian; and hot and long has been the battle they have waged over it. It would not be true to say that no good has come of this strife; but I must think that the good has been fearfully disproportionate to the evil.”

Obviously the passage is inserted merely to demonstrate the truth that God’s concern is to “bring many sons unto glory.” The divine design will not be frustrated. God foreknew and predetermined the destiny of the called ones, those who respond to his summons in love.

To foreknow is to know beforehand, and it must relate to some period of time, either real or assumed. Whatever date or time is accepted, foreknowledge precedes it. The Bible locates the time as the beginning of the world as we know it, the inception of the universe of mankind. Before the foundation of the world the infinite mind conceived the idea that men would

respond to a divine call, and by their own choice be motivated to share in a fellowship with him, a *koinonia* of eternal life, the life of God.

Accordingly, God not only foreknew this, but destined in advance that such persons would become like the image of his Son. This did not obligate any individual to obey God. In the matter of obedience all were left free. It is not that I share in God's grace because it was destined that I obey, but because I obey it was destined that I share in His grace. And sharing in his grace makes it possible for me to be made after the likeness of his Son!

The reference is to the resurrection. God ordained that Jesus be made in the image of man to share our suffering before his resurrection, and he determined that we be made in the image of Christ, to share his glory after our resurrection. The resurrection completes our adoption. The redemption of the body removes the last obstacle to becoming like Jesus. "He will transform the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself" (Phil. 3:21).

I do not know what I shall be like, because I am not sure what form he now has. "Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know when it is discovered we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). I am convinced that it will be a glorious experience, a tremendous spiritual adventure. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead to die no more. He must have the pre-eminence in all things. But he does not share his glorified state in isolation. He is the firstborn among many brethren. We shall be like him. We will receive the form of his glorious body. As Moses E. Lard wrote, "His body is the type, and all the bodies of the redeemed will take shape after it."

“And whom he predetermined, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

William Barclay writes, “This is a passage which has been very seriously misused. If we are ever to understand this passage we must grasp the basic fact that Paul never meant it to be an expression of theology or philosophy; he meant it to be the almost lyrical expression of Christian experience. If we take this as a philosophy and theology and if we apply standards of cold logic to it, it must mean that God chose some and did not choose others, that there is a strange and terrible selectiveness in the love of God. But that is not what the passage means.”

When Dr. Barclay penned those words he did so as a Presbyterian scholar and a professor in the aged and respected Glasgow University. His words show how remarkably the creed of Calvinism is being rejected in our times. They also demonstrate how the concept of a loving God permeates our consciousness and gives us a thrilling hope.

As an “expression of Christian experience” the foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification of the saints is a wonderful thing. It meets the needs of my soul-hunger and confirms my own inner feeling. I am ever conscious of my own inability to devise a means of my own salvation, and of the futility of trying to attain to glory by my own power. I must be lifted out of myself by one from outside. I cannot lift myself because I have nothing upon which to stand while I pull and tug to free myself. Indeed, my real struggle is to be free of *myself*, for “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.”

What Paul writes, therefore, is not a cold exposition of theology, but a warm reassurance of a divine purpose which includes me. And it is not something devised or dreamed up as an emergency measure to rescue me at the last moment. It has always been a part of God’s plan, from before the foundation of

the universe, and it is now available to me through the Spirit. All I need to do is to plug in. The power is there. It has always been there since the Spirit came.

1. This fact provides me with strength when I realize that God knows no failures. He launches no ships which are lost at sea, no capsules which disappear into untrackable space. Even before we were made he saw us safely in the eternal harbor, floodlighted by the beams of eternal love. I can trust the purpose of God. I need no life-preserver of my own construction, no boat drill to abandon ship in mid-ocean.

2. This fact provides me with a sense of confidence, because I know I am involved in a purpose which has unvaryingly kept its course despite all the vagaries of human history and the plots of demonic invention. "In him is no variableness, not even a shadow cast as by turning or veering." As the song puts it, "In Jesus I'm safe evermore!"

3. This fact provides me with incentive to meet the trials and temptations of each day. I can ride out the storm because I know that tomorrow the winds will have subsided. Although tempests rage and roar "there will be peace in the valley for me."

I have been called of God. All of the divine mercy, kindness and grace which makes up God has been involved in that call. And I have heard it, responded to it and embraced it. Now all I am and all I have is in his hands. As Frances E. Gardner says in *God is Fabulous*, "And it's a peculiar thing, it doesn't really make any difference what he shows me now that I'm waiting on him, because since I asked Christ to live his life through me, what I do is inconsequential, but I am really eager to see what he is going to do."

I have been justified by God. It would be the height of arrogance and boasting to claim that one was justified if it was

assumed to be an attainment of his own. But one cannot achieve justification. He must be declared guiltless. This is the work of God whose majesty is offended by every sin. All sin is rooted in the displacement of the will of God by the will of man. Only God can forgive the thoughtless attitudes which cause men to seek to usurp divine prerogatives.

I will be glorified. When glory is used to describe our future, beyond this period of existence in time, it refers to that state of blessedness in which we will share all of the majestic life of God. Of course it is unknowable and indescribable here and now. It is the eternal heritage which awaits at the end of the road, the splendor for which the King has destined his children. So precious is the thought of participating in that dazzling brightness that it overshadows all of the suffering and pain which our present state entails.

I eagerly urge you not to give up or grow weary. Do not faint under criticism. Do not allow any root of bitterness to spring up and defile you. Do not be beguiled by devious doctrines nor stumble because of the shortcomings of others. Wait for the dawn. The sun will rise when the Son descends!

The Backlash

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

Every amateur fisherman who has fooled around with a casting rod knows what a backlash is. When one sends the line flying through the guides, he must use his thumb to apply pressure to the reel, or the spool will continue to revolve after the line has reached its maximum thrust. If it does, the line remaining on the spool spills off to create an ingloriously tangled mess. One of our Canadian guides always referred to a backlash as “a bird’s nest.” Another called it “spaghetti,” while still another referred to it as “a can of worms.” You do not need to be experienced to realize that all three of these have in common the intertwining of their chief ingredient in a snarl or tangle.

But there is another usage of the word not related to the mechanical. The dictionary defines it as “a sudden, violent recoil or reaction, as of a wave of popular opinion.” It is in that sense I use it in this article and I refer to the current unrest and resentment which characterizes “the Church of Christ.” Of course it is manifest in other religious establishments as well, even the Roman Catholic, but I want to discuss it in the particular frame of reference which I know best.

One would have to be completely insensitive to reality if he did not recognize that “the Church of Christ” is in difficulty. Of course this will be denied by the partisan publicity purveyors whose task it is to defend the institutional image, but they are

not especially noted for objectivity, and will probably go down with the ship, still waving the flag and insisting that all is well, even to their final gurgle.

We have gloried so long in the cleverly-contrived fiction that we are “the fastest growing religious movement” in this age, that it will be difficult for most brethren to admit that we are not as big as we boasted of being. How would you determine the membership of the Churches of Christ? Dr. DeGroot said it was done by the editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, who multiplied his subscription list by the size of his hat. Who is counted in the “rough estimate” supplied as being “reasonably authentic”? Does the figure include all two dozen antagonistic parties which do not recognize one another as “loyal,” and will not even call upon rival adherents to pray to the one God and Father of us all?

Regardless of who is included, the whole factional mess is seething with unrest and discontent. Young people in college are abandoning it in droves. Others of their number are waiting for the chance to “go over the hill” in a way that will not “upset the folks.” What a lot of them do not realize is that “the folks” are holding on by the skin of their spiritual teeth rather than to “upset the children.” A lot of this has to do with the tenor of the times which are times of general revolution, but a great deal of it stems from the fact that institutional arrogance and insolence have had their day, and the members have had their fill of it. They are sick and tired of the fighting, squabbling. Jealousy and hostility which passes for loyalty to the Christ who died for our sins.

This kind of frank appraisal brings deep resentment from some quarters. It subjects us to a barrage of verbal attacks. Nothing is said if one points out the shortcomings of our Baptist and Methodist friends. There is an open season on them. They are always fair game. But to reveal our own sectarian attitudes is to “speak against the Lord’s church.” And right there is one of

the problems! We have confused the religious scene which developed from an early nineteenth century restoration attempt, sparked primarily by good Presbyterians, with the one body. And we have cultivated a spirit of hostility and exclusivism which is worse than that of many groups under our fire.

I should like to go on record as saying that I do not equate any of our two dozen factions with “the Lord’s church.” For that matter, I do not consider that all of them jammed together constitute the bride of Christ. There are members of the one body, known to God, who have never heard of us. Every saved person on the face of this earth is in the one body. Not all are in “the Church of Christ” by any means. Some of them have never heard of Alexander Campbell or Barton W. Stone. One can reveal the sordid facts about the division and strife in “the Church of Christ” and never say a word in derogation of the church of Christ. Satan never pulled a more thorough “con job” in history than when he befuddled the minds of some otherwise wonderful people until they cannot tell the difference between what the Lord created and what they have invented.

To brand a particular movement, with its multiplied squabbles and schisms as “the Lord’s church,” in opposition to all of the other children of God upon earth, caught up in the same kind of problem, smacks of a kind of bigotry which will effectually isolate us and force us to retreat deeper within our monastic walls. “The Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one.” So wrote Thomas Campbell, while still a Presbyterian. He was correct then as he faced up to sectarianism, and his pronouncement is just as true now as we face up to our own sectarianism. I should like to analyze our present state and tell you why I think that a lot of sincere brothers and sisters are gritting their teeth because of what has happened unto us.

OUR UNWRITTEN CREEDS

We set out to convince the world that all who believe in Christ Jesus on the basis of apostolic testimony could be united on a foundation consisting of one provable fact, transcending all others in the universe. That fact is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Alexander Campbell said,

The grandeur, sublimity and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this— that the belief of one fact, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this one fact, and submission to one institution as expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.

Note that Campbell said that belief of this one fact is the foundation of “ecclesiastical or social union.”

Walter Scott wrote, “Christianity, therefore, has a fixed, fundamental, constitutional truth for its creed— forever the same.” He also said, “It is no doctrine that Christ taught, nor any action that he performed, that forms the article of faith in the gospel. It is himself— as God’s Son.” Again, he wrote, “Every party creed is exclusive, and, therefore, has no proof, as such, for its truth and authority but the party formed and raised upon it. But the true creed— the divinity of the Messiah— has the vote of God, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, and of all the holy apostles and Christians of the first ages.”

Regardless of what opinions, deductions, rationalizations and speculations a man may hold, these in no sense nullify his relationship to God if he firmly believes in the testimony afforded to the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth. It is none of our concern, and we have no right to engage in an inquisition to determine his orthodoxy. Alexander Campbell aptly stated it thus, “Whether he believes the five points condemned, or the five points approved, by the Synod of Dort is not so much as to be asked of him; whether he holds any

of the views of the Calvinists or Arminians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, or Quakers, is never once to be asked of such persons, in order to admission into the Christian community called the church.”

This simply means that men of divergent views, ideas and opinions may come together in Jesus and on Jesus, as the one foundation and there be built into one holy temple in the Lord. To elevate any opinion or deduction to a test of union or communion is to formulate another creed and create another sect. No point of view and no view of a point can ever be elevated to a test of fellowship for those in Christ. The penalty of creed-making is schism and its logical train of consequences. And that is our problem now!

The non-instrument Churches of Christ were betrayed into becoming a sectarian party when they elevated an opinion or interpretation related to music to a condition or test of fellowship. Regardless of whether such mechanical accompaniment to praise may eventually be proscribed, endorsed or ignored by heaven, is not the question. It was made an article of faith and elevated to a creedal status. And it caused a schism, a party, as such things always do.

Once a movement suffers such a cleavage it ceases to be a force for unity among the sects and only aggravates the condition by contributing to the existing hostility and partisan wrangling. It is silly to think of those who cannot stay together as having any appeal to others to come together.

In our case a veritable Pandora's box of evils was unleashed and we now have at least two dozen unwritten creeds. Every party among us is built upon a foundation, and that foundation is a creed. It is something to which one must subscribe in order to be accepted and recognized as in good standing in the party. The only authority for such a creed is the party erected upon it. It comes by rationalization, not revelation.

It is human in origin and without eternal or universal merit. The creed is validated only by the party “somewhats.” They constitute the sole authority for it. It must be accepted upon their interpretation. Every party, segment and faction in “the Church of Christ” today rests its partisan existence upon the wisdom of men, and not upon the wisdom from above.

This does not say that every person in this historical framework rests his faith on men’s wisdom. Many are like myself, they no longer support a partisan position, nor pay lipservice to a narrow and exclusive creed. They belong only to Christ Jesus. They have extricated themselves from the toils of inferior creeds. Obviously they are under suspicion and attack by those who are still in the bonds of creedal slavery, but this is always the price of freedom, and it is always worth the price.

There is a great wave of growing dissatisfaction among the brethren. Many of them have long been better than their narrow creeds. They are becoming better educated. Authoritarian structures always depend to a great extent upon ignorance and apathy. When the constituency begins to think and act the establishment is in danger. That is the problem with the Roman Catholic Church in our day, a monolithic system with which we have had much more in common than we have been willing to admit.

A lot of folk are going A.W.O.L., being filled with frustration and baffled by the power politics of the powers-that-be. Since the word “discouragement” isn’t really a part of my spiritual vocabulary I am “staying put.” There isn’t so much use of swapping parties and exchanging one set of problems for another. If I do not live for Jesus where I am I’d probably not set the world on fire for him in a strange environment. Fly-by-nights reveal much more about themselves than about those from whom they flee. A dog does not really better himself by changing the fleas to which he has become accustomed for a new batch with which he will have to become acquainted and which

may not understand his temperament.

Is there any hope for “the Church of Christ”? Will it ever get back on the track again and out of the blackberry bushes along the right-of-way? I am a little reluctant to make any prediction since I do not have the gift of prophecy. I know what we need to do, but to get brethren to do it is not going to be at all easy. After you have debated a position for years, drummed up a lot of arguments, and misapplied a number of scriptures to sustain them, it is hard on your pride to haul down your flag and admit that you have been so nearsighted you could not tell the difference between your enemies and your brethren. It is sometimes a little complicated by the fact that they are the same!

But we need to be brave and daring enough to go back to the fork in the road where we became schismatics and candidly admit that we were wrong in setting up a “non-instrument creed” as the basis of our hope of eternal life. We can argue, fuss, debate and quarrel about all of the trivia which has occupied our time since, but we will never again be a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects until we can unite the Christians in the restoration movement. We must declare all of our own sects null and void, and cease to even think that we will ever convert the believing world to our little parties, and also cease to think that God wants us to do it!

Even if we were to settle “the Sunday School question,” the support of Herald of Truth, the problem of individuals cups, and all the rest of our factional hangups, we would still be a divided people, and a laughing-stock to the thinking world. Unless we cultivate vision as opposed to division, and foresight as opposed to hindsight, we will have no real influence. We cannot truly lay the foundation of God because we are so busy defending our own partisan foundations.

Let me emphasize again that the question is not the right or wrong of using instrumental music. Important as that may

seem to you, it is purely secondary and inferior. The question is whether any opinion or view should be elevated to creedal status and be allowed to displace the noble confession which God himself made and upon which Jesus said he would plant the community of the called and chosen ones.

Just as the adoption of our first partisan creed paved the way for succeeding schisms, so each new division lays the groundwork for another. We will continue to divide until we renounce the whole insane tendency which causes the body to tear at its own flesh and rend its own tissue. It is useless to continue the fabric of false argument contrived under the duress of debate. It offers nothing to a tired and jaded world except more of the same sterility, stupidity and insecurity. It is time to go back, all the way back, and recapture the foundational principle of unity and offer it to the whole sectarian world as the one hope for oneness in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord!

Let us forget the silly and asinine pride which causes us to bicker like immature children over who was to blame originally. The question is not about who split the log, but who is going to glue it back together again. While we are pointing accusing fingers at one another about what our fathers did, the world is dying and going to hell. How much longer will we stand hurling verbal insults at brethren while Satan takes a holiday and the angel of death thrusts his sickle in and cuts down the grain of the earth?

I do not propose that we “patch up our difficulties.” The time is too far spent for that. I propose that we strip off the whole ragged garment, splashed with the fratricidal blood of God’s other children and put on the new robe of righteousness. I propose that we abandon our pillboxes to the moles and the bats, and cease to man our artificial bastions, and all of us move back into the true fortress of God, where we can sing together, “We have a strong city whose walls and ramparts are our deliverance. Open the gates to let a righteous nation in, a nation

that keeps the faith.”

Banish every creed but Christ Jesus! Chop down every party standard! Eradicate every test of fellowship except the one God enunciated. Use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet! Rise up out of the dust of ignominy and shame. Cease to fight over opinions. Ignore them and love the brethren — all of them, those who disagree with you as much as those who agree. Stop trying to be of one opinion. Such oneness cannot save. Its absence cannot damn. Alexander Campbell wrote thus:

“Reason and experience unite their testimony in assuring us that, in the same proportion as individuals labor to be of one opinion, they disagree. The greater the emphasis laid upon opinions, the more rapidly they generate. The nearest approaches to a unity of opinion which I have ever witnessed, have appeared in those societies in which no effort was made to be of one opinion; in which they allowed the greatest liberty of opinion, and in which they talked more and boasted more of the glory and majesty of the great facts, the wonderful works of God’s lovingkindness to the children of men, than of themselves, their views and attainments.”

In the exercise of a wisdom that has long since been lost by those who are historical heirs of the movement with which Campbell was identified, he went on to make these sage observations:

If I were to attempt to produce the greatest uniformity of opinion, I would set about it by paying no respect to opinions, laying no emphasis upon them, admiring and contemning no opinion as such. But if I wished to produce the greatest discrepancies in opinion, I would call some damnably dangerous, others of vital importance; I would always eulogize the sound, and censure the erroneous in opinions. We all know that strife is like the bursting forth of water, it always widens the channels; and many a broil in churches, neighborhoods

and families, would have been prevented if the first indication had been sympathetically attributed to the infirmity of human nature.

I think it can be said, without exaggeration, that many brethren are far ahead of the leadership in knowledge and in desire for peace. They are sick of being treated like little children playing in the marketplace, tired of being the pawns in religious political maneuverings. They are ready to divest themselves of factional garb and don the garment of reconciling love. Our sympathies are with those who rebel at the idea of being kept in the dark by those whom they pay huge sums to enlighten them.

The day of the whip-cracking hierarchy is drawing to a close. If brethren cannot meet without being subjected to party propaganda and hostility they will meet in their homes, and welcome all of their brethren, without catechizing them as to their opinions. They will receive one another in Christ Jesus as God has received us all. The Church of Christ has a dismal future unless it renounces its sectarian stance and seeks to be what it has always professed to be.

More Than Conquerors

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[Abstract]

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

What is included in “these things?” Of one thing we can be certain, and that is it is of such a nature as to provide complete assurance for the believer that God will not fail him in time of need, and no foe will be powerful enough to overcome him who is shielded by divine love. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (54:17).

Paul wrote, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14), or as another rendering expresses it, “Wherever I go, thank God he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ” (Moffatt). “These things” which contribute to our strength and hope are those which have just been enunciated by the apostle in the three preceding verses. They begin with the tremendous declaration, “We know that to those who love God, everything fits into a pattern for good” (Phillips).

If everything fits into a pattern for good, then nothing that happens can work our ultimate defeat. Victory is a foregone

conclusion for those who march to the clear sound of the glorious trumpet. So the conclusion based upon these things must be that if God is for us no one can really stand against us. Adam Clarke makes an appropriate comment at this juncture. “He who is infinitely wise has undertaken to direct us; he who is infinitely powerful has undertaken to protect us; he who is infinitely good has undertaken to save us. What cunning, strength or malice, can prevail against his wisdom, power and goodness?”

Isaiah records the challenge of God to those who would seek to thwart his purpose. “Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together” (27:4). In ancient times a hedge of thorns was considered to be an effective wall, and an impenetrable barrier. But God will not be hindered or frustrated by barriers thrown up by his enemies. All I need to do to overcome is to stay behind God and go through with him!

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

The problem of doubt about future victory is settled for the believer from the moment in which he accepts intellectually, emotionally and unreservedly that God actually and purposely delivered up his own Son for us all. The force of the apostolic argument will be lost upon those who deny the pre-existence of the Word who was made flesh, or who have been snared by the subtleties of theological liberalism and whose mental meanderings lead them to explain away the divine Sonship of Jesus. It makes all the difference in the world whether God simply watched “another man” die on a Roman cross, or saw his own Son agonize and know that he was “smitten for transgressions which were not his own.”

I reject as wholly unworthy of my time or thought the

misled and misleading mouthings which seek to explain away the sacrifice of God's own Son, or to water down the fact that it was the working of the divine will. *Agape* is the love which knows no bounds. It is affirmed that "there is nothing love cannot face" (1 Cor. 13:7). It is that active and beneficent goodwill which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object.

And it was this love which caused God to give his only begotten Son. It is a dynamic so great, a motivation so powerful, that it holds back nothing in the pursuit of its goal. It "endures without limit" (1 Cor. 13:7), and will certainly "bring forth judgment unto victory." Those who do not grasp the intensity of *agape* can never understand how God could "spare not his own Son." Those who do grasp it can realize that what happened was inevitable, a corollary to the nature of such love.

He was "delivered up for us all." The expression "delivered up" involves more than the crucifixion. It conveys the thought that he was handed over to men who would mock and abuse him, and then kill him. Peter said, "Him being delivered in accordance with God's definite plan and with his previous knowledge, you with the help of heathen men, nailed him to a cross and put him to death" (Acts 2:23).

This was done for all, regardless of ethnic origin, national identification, social standing or previous condition of servitude. Jesus was the free gift of God to rescue men from the bondage of sin. He is thus a veritable exemplification of divine grace, that undeserved kindness which assumes that all else which is essential to our wellbeing and ultimate glory will be forthcoming from God. The whole thing is very simple. If God did not forbear to give his own Son, surely he will not hesitate to bestow all else that is required to fulfill the divine purpose as relates to all of us.

"Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? It is God who acquits us?" (Romans 8:33).

This is legal language, the terminology of the courtroom. With such language the apostle was, by training, thoroughly familiar. If the judge of all the earth has acquitted us and pronounced us guiltless, if the Supreme Justice has actually chosen or adopted us, then who would have the audacity to appear and file an accusation against us?

I need not be at all concerned about what men may say or do. If I am in Christ, wholly trusting in his righteousness, I am impervious to their attack. Even if my motives are assailed, and my name maligned, I will be vindicated. God will have the last word. The divine purpose in my life will be victorious. What a thrill it is to know that only God can justify. For this reason only he can condemn. But he cannot condemn one whom he has justified, for justification is the antithesis of condemnation.

Justification is a judicial act. It takes place in heaven. It is a pronouncement of the divine mind. It cannot be earned, purchased, or procured by works. It is solely the gift of grace, and having been accorded, it is not subject to reversal by virtue of additional testimony from an outside party. Justification takes into account all of the factors, and the case will not be re-opened. In Christ I am free. I am safe. I am made to be guiltless by divine fiat.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

The only one who could possibly pass the sentence of condemnation upon God’s chosen ones is Christ. The Father committed all judgment to the Son, and gave him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of man (John 5:27). Because he is the Son of God he is entitled to judge the universe, and because he is the Son of man he is eminently qualified to judge all men. If Christ will not condemn the chosen ones of God, no one else is in position to do so. And there are four

reasons why Christ will not condemn us:

(1) He died for us in order that we might believe in and accept him as the atonement for our sins. Thus he has said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

(2) He is risen again, and the apostle declares in this very letter that the justification granted Abraham on the ground of his trust in God, is “for us also, unto whom it will be reckoned, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised to life for our acquittal” (Romans 4:24, 25). The very purpose of the resurrection was for the justification of those who trust in the righteousness of Jesus.

(3) Jesus is at the right hand of God, a position of eminent majesty, power and authority. And he is there as the sovereign head of the whole *ekklesia*, the very body of the called out, the chosen ones. That body of the elect is “the completeness of Him who everywhere fills the universe with himself.” Certainly Jesus will not condemn the very body of which he is the head, and if he does not there is no power in the universe which can do so. He is above all rule, authority, power and lordship (Eph. 1:21.-23).

(4) He also makes intercession for us. In verse 26, we learn that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, and in the passage we are considering it is affirmed that Jesus does also. The Spirit makes intercession from within us, while Jesus does so in heaven. Instead of condemning us, Jesus pleads our case, and assists us, presenting our interests and interceding in our behalf. “He is able to save absolutely all who approach unto God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them always” (Hebrews 7:25).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (8:35).

The first question can be taken in either of two ways. It may relate to our love for Christ, or to his love for us. I gather from the context that the former is the correct interpretation, and that the question deals with the power of the love we have for Jesus who has cleansed and justified us. My reason for believing this is that the things which are enumerated are those which might cause us to grow weary of serving the Lord, but I do not see how tribulation or persecution would cause Jesus to cease from loving us.

Albert Barnes says, “The argument, therefore, is drawn from the strong love of a Christian to his Saviour; and from the assurance that nothing would be able to separate him from that love.” Adam Clarke writes, “The question is not, Who shall separate the love of Christ from us? or prevent Christ from loving us? but, Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ? Who or what shall be able to remove our affection from him?”

We must never forget that this letter was written to followers of Christ in Rome and that Rome, driven to desperation by the spread of the faith, used every kind of persecution and duress to separate Christians from Christ. Indeed, there was a real test between the pagan love for power and the Christian power of love. Rome was struggling to survive while the saints were surviving to struggle, and it was a real question as to who would win the battle.

Tribulation is from *thlipsis*, the root of which means to compress or oppress. The English word is from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. Suffering and trials tend to separate the grain from the chaff. The argument of the apostle is that such tribulation cannot break the bond we sustain with Jesus.

Distress is from *stenochoria*, which signifies a strait or narrow confine. It is from *stenos*, strait, and *choros*, a place. It was sometimes used for a mountain passage so restricted that one had to literally worm his way between the rocks. Both tribulation and distress indicate pressure, but the first has to do with pressure from without, the second from pressure within. The import of the original for distress is to be hemmed in on every side. We use the expression, "Everywhere I turned I ran into a wall!" This is the mental state of distress.

Persecution is from *diogmos*, to pursue or chase, with a view of destroying the object of hostility. Famine is from *limos*, to fail. It refers to the failure of crops or food supply and the consequent hunger which results. Nakedness is from *gumnotes*, the word whose root gives us our own modern terms gymnasium and gymnastics. The Greek athletes engaged in physical exercises wholly in the nude. In Paul's use of the term he refers to one who has no clothing, having been divested of every stitch of clothing, stripped by his persecutors.

Peril is derived from *kindunos*, the danger which continually surrounds or hovers over one, affecting the mental state with alarm and constant fear of calamity. There is about it the idea of impending disaster, so that one is left in a constant condition of foreboding and genuine unrest. Sword is from *machaira*, and stands for the taking of life, especially by beheading, at the order of the civil magistrate.

As one reads the gloomy catalog of suffering, degradation and jeopardy, he becomes aware of what a tremendous force is found in that love which these things cannot crack or shake loose. No wonder Paul says of that love, "It gives us power to endure anything" (1 Cor. 13:7). Armed with such love the Christian is impervious to all attack by the world, the flesh and the devil.

"As it is written. For thy sake we are killed all the day long;

we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36).

This quotation from Psalm 44:22 is introduced to show that faithful followers of the Messiah would be harassed and persecuted by a wicked and unbelieving world. The forces of a dissolute and pagan society will make those who are loyal to the true and living God their daily sacrifices. It is worth asking if the lack of persecution today results from the improvement of the men of the world or from the spirit of compromise on the part of the church which has become the very symbol of the *status quo*, the image of respectability and the guardian of the caste system. It is questionable whether the institutional church is a garrison of troops eager for the encounter and fervent for the fray, or if it is an expensive stable for sheltering the sacred cows which must be fed, curried, pampered and protected.

Lewis Mumford in *Faith for Living*, says, “The divine discontent has been replaced by a complacent pedestrianism.” Pierre Berton in *The Comfortable Pew* writes, “The church to its opponents has become a straw man, scarcely worth a bullet.” Nothing should frighten us quite so much as being accepted by the pagan culture. When those in the church are bored to death and those outside are wholly indifferent, we are no longer an effective movement, but an attractive monument. And monuments are made to visit and cause momentary reflection upon past accomplishments and glory. Soldiers under fire have little time to reflect upon history. They are too busy making it!

We are not in a great deal of danger now for we are no longer plowing the seas with banners flying and guns trained on the enemy. We have sailed into harbor and tied up at the wharf as if the war was over. Our activities are mostly on shipboard and consist of entertainment for the apathetic and indolent troops who have never smelled the smoke of battle and have only engaged in games with wooden guns. We are no longer killed all the day long. We are not accounted as sheep for the slaughter. We are sheep, but we will die in the pasture, from fat which

makes it difficult for us to waddle to the feeding trough.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

This is a powerful statement in which Paul once again draws from an arsenal of terms in a military vocabulary to write to persons in a city which had developed the mightiest military machine in the world. Tribulation, persecution, distress, peril, the sword— these are the shock-troops thrown at the forces of faith. And those forces are not only able to overcome the onslaught, but actually to use the opposition to help produce a glorious victory.

The story is told of the captain of an invading force who was asked what he would do if a superior army of defenders came out to block his attempt to storm a city wall. “Climb over them,” was his reply. It is a very homely saying that, “It is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog which counts.” Men are not overcome by externals who do not first surrender inside themselves.

To be a conqueror is honor enough, to be more than a conqueror is to be invincible, or unconquerable. This is our lot and destiny through him who loved us! “Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14). “Our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). The man who trusts in his own strength and power is a fool. He is like a bushman with a crude homemade bow and arrow attempting to overpower an enemy equipped with sophisticated long-range rifles. There is a difference between humanistic bravado and the humble bravery which results from complete trust in Jesus.

The apostle now enumerates a list of things of powerful

and frightening aspect which acted as real enemies in the minds of the superstitious Romans and Greeks of his day. These were things which were commonly regarded as in conspiracy to thwart the will of the gods, or which forced the pantheon of deities to engage in devious methods to circumvent them. Thomas Bulfinch referred to them as “gorgons, hydras and chimeras dire.”

But Paul confidently affirms that none of these can overthrow the purpose of the living God. The love of God is not dependent upon the Three Fates— Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, whose task was to spin the thread of human destiny, and to cut it off with their shears when they pleased. The filament of each man’s life is not spun on the wheel of chance. The more I study the last two verses in Romans 8, the more absorbed in their message do I become. I think they constitute at once the most beautiful and comforting sentence in human language which I have ever read.

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

1. We generally speak of life and death, in that order, but Paul mentions death first. I cannot be sure of his reason, but I suspect that he gives priority to the inevitable and inescapable, for the simple reason that many of the Roman philosophic cults in his day regarded death as the gateway to oblivion. It wrote “finis” to the dreams and hopes of all human beings as they thought of it.

A good example is found in the writings of the Latin poet Catullus. He died about fifty years before Jesus was born, but his death only served to increase the interest in his works. At the time when Paul wrote to the Romans, Catullus was making the

best-seller list in the Imperial City, with his posthumously copied works. Like most of the Roman writers of the time, Catullus produced some fairly pornographic material, specializing in sexual intrigue and purple passion.

One of the famous poems of all ages is that which Catullus addressed to Lesbia, the beautiful wife of one of his friends. In it he says, "Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and let us value at a single denarius the advice of stern old men who would inhibit us. Suns can set and then come up again, but for us, when once our brief light goes out, there is but one perpetual night through which we must sleep."

The Greeks knew no relationship which death could not sever. They had no way to penetrate the black pall or look behind the curtain. They preferred the worst kind of life to death. Euripides expressed this in these words, "Yet mortals, burdened with countless ills, still love life. They long for each coming day, glad to bear the thing they know, rather than face death the unknown." It must have come with dynamic power when Paul affirmed that death cannot sever us from the love of God. This struck a blow at the futility of life and the finality of death.

2. *Life* cannot separate us from God's love either. Sometimes it is easier to die for a cause than to live for it. It is not the sudden risk or danger of death which is the true test of the soldier. Rather, it is the daily slogging through mud and slush, the living in mildewed trenches, the eating of monotonous canned rations, which proves the mettle. We must fight the erosion of faith by the sheer fact of endurance. But the matter is settled for the one who knows the adventure of being in Christ, and sharing in the power-packed life.

3. *Angels, Principalities, Powers.* The casual reader may wonder why angels should be included in a list of things which attempt to create separation from God, but this results from a

lack of knowledge about the matter as understood in the day when Paul wrote. The Jews had developed a complex “angelology,” and had engaged in a great deal of acrimonious controversy about it. As is usual, such debate caused two extreme positions to develop, and these were defended by rival schools.

The followers of Sadoc denied the existence of angels. They were Materialists. It was the Pharisees who had worked out an elaborate set of traditions about angels, and Paul was a Pharisee. The Pharisees believed that every living thing, including trees and flowers, had a special angel. They held that the angels were created before this material universe was made and that they were opposed to bringing man into existence. They thought that the angels resented someone made in the image of God and were jealous for fear that God would give more attention unto man than unto themselves.

They also became hostile because, being created before mankind, they did not want to be servants of God to those who possessed an elemental body and were limited by time and space. The Jews believed there was a recognized hierarchy of angels, divided into principalities, powers, mights, dominions, archangels and angels. Each of these orders occupied a liaison position between God and some realm in the universe.

They taught that there had been a revolt against the authority of God, before the creation of the earth, and after a celestial struggle the rebels had been thrown out, and that their leader thereupon pre-empted the sphere called Atmos, thus becoming the prince of the power of the air. The dispossessed angels retained their lines of distinction in their fallen state and plotted to recapture the universe. The death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus effectively foiled their expectations, as Paul points out in Colossians 2:15, but we must still battle their infamous designs with reference to ourselves (Ephesians 6:12).

It was not the purpose of Paul to carefully distinguish between tradition and truth when they conflicted. Neither is it my purpose to do so. His thesis was that whatever was factual about angels, they were powerless to tear us loose from the love of God. I accept this without quibble. I trust in it implicitly.

4. *Things present and things to come.* Once again, the fertile Jewish mind divided time into the world that now is, and the world to come. But the word which we translate by world is often *aion*, age. So the Jewish mind contemplated this present age, and the age to come. This present age was temporary, transient and characterized by evil. God would eventually break through and end it. Then a new age would commence. It would be the Golden Age. In it, only righteousness and peace would exist. It would be directly under the rule of God. He would be supreme in every heart.

Now Paul is saying that regardless of the nature of things presently existing and regardless of the nature of what lies in the future, one thing is certain. No power will be able to break the bond of love which welds and links us to our Creator. We are sheltered in God's affection regardless of what transpires!

5. *Height and depth.* This does not mean that things of measurable elevation will not affect our relationship to God, although that is true. But these were technical terms dealing with the ascendancy of the stars or planets. Ignorant pagans, taking a leaf from the Persian astrologers, thought that human destiny was determined by astral calculations, or by a horoscope. If the stars were favorable they would conduct their affairs on the presumption that the gods would prosper them. If the horoscope was unfavorable they would postpone any planned activity.

Height is from *hupsoma*, the word used to designate the meridian of the sun, or the zenith of a star or planet. This was the time when the maximum of one's "lucky star" would be

exerted, or when his chances for success were said to be the “brightest.” Depth is from *bathos*, the time when the star was lowest and the influence was least likely to affect one for good. But there is only one star which can produce our relationship to God— the Bright and Morning Star. And there is only one sun which can affect us spiritually— the Sun of Righteousness who has risen with healing in his wings.

6. *Any other creation.* There is nothing in all creation, now existing, which can separate us from the love of God. When this present order passes away there will be nothing brought into existence which will change things. The love of God is certain. It is constant and consistent. It is safe and sure. This is the hope of the weary, the strength of the weak, and the refreshment for the way-worn. I rest my faith fully, completely and unreservedly in the love of God and in the God of love.

There's part of the sun in an apple,

There's part of the moon in a rose;

There's part of the flaming Pleiades

In every leaf that grows.

Out of the vast comes nearness;

For the God whose love we sing

Lends a little of his heaven

To every living thing.

My Only Creed

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[Abstract]

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Perhaps nothing is more repugnant to civilized man than the thought of cannibalism. The dictionary defines a cannibal as “a human who eats human flesh,” and cannibalism as “the eating of one’s own kind.”

In the month of May, 1845, when Great Britain was all agog with interest for exploring the Arctic Region and discovering the Northwest Passage, Sir John Franklin sailed away in command of two vessels, the *Erebus* and the *Terror*. They disappeared, and sparked a search which lasted into the twentieth century.

In 1848, Dr. John Rae, of the Hudson’s Bay Company, relayed information which he had gained from Eskimos, that a band of white men had died from starvation on King Edward’s Island. They had sold him what appeared to be relics of the Franklin expedition. Dr. Rae conscientiously reported that the Eskimos had informed him that members of the party had been reduced to cannibalism.

This aroused a furor in London. Distinguished writers such as Charles Dickens and Willkie Collins blasted the report

as a slur upon the honor of the Royal Navy. Lady Franklin opposed payment of the ten thousand pounds which had been offered by the government for information as to the fate of the explorers. She launched a privately financed expedition to probe the Arctic wastes to prove that the slander was not true.

Scores of brilliant men and women backed her endeavor. It was unthinkable to them that men, reared in the graces of civility and polished by the sheen of society could ever stoop to the consumption of human flesh. It was as late as 1922 that Knud Rasmussen “conclusively proved the truth of Rae’s revelation of cannibalism, by discovering at Starvation Cove the skeletons of Europeans with the bones cut by saws and the skulls broken to extract the brains.”

Now if physical cannibalism is repulsive, consider what a terrifying thing it is for brethren to engage in such a practice spiritually. It is this which prompts Paul to condemn the use of liberty as an occasion for the flesh, and to add, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” *The New Testament in Plain English* translates the passage, “But if you bite and eat up one another, take care that you are not destroyed by one another.” It is unthinkable that those whose banner is inscribed with the words, “Brotherly Love,” should engage in destroying one another. Yet the sin of cannibalism lies at the door of many who profess to be children of God.

What is even worse is that we are treated to the sight of a body of believers insanely attacking its own members and tearing with bloody talons at its own tissue. One cannot help but recall the Greek fable of Erisichthon, the profane person and hater of the gods. As the poets related the story, Erisichthon defied the gods by attacking with his axe a venerable oak in a grove sacred to Ceres. When a bystander remonstrated, Erisichthon hacked him to pieces and cut off his head.

When news of this impiety reached Ceres, she decided upon a punishment so dire as to make all shudder who heard it. She dispatched an Oread into the farthest reaches of ice-clad Scythia to summon the dread Famine to take possession of the bowels of Erisichthon. Finding him asleep, she enfolded him with her wings and breathed herself into him, infusing her poison into his veins. He awoke with a raging hunger, and loudly cried for food which he consumed as soon as it was brought. All that he owned he sold to purchase food, but his dreadful appetite was not abated.

At length, with nothing left to barter, he sold his daughter, but this did not provide enough food, and finally hunger forced him to devour his own limbs, and he strove to sustain his body by devouring it, until death relieved him from the sentence pronounced by the vengeful Ceres. This myth is older than our gospel records, but it serves to depict the state of the body of believers which I have known since childhood. That body has sought to protect, perpetuate and propagate itself through self-destruction. It has severed its own members, gouged out its own eyes, cut out its own tongue and fragmented itself in many communities. And it has done this under the guise of upholding the truth.

What has happened is very clear to the astute student. We were “a search and rescue mission” intended to locate the Christians in all of the sects and to guide them back to the base of unity and peace. But we became entangled in the jungle, and motivated by fear of our own shadows and unable to distinguish between friend and foe. Now we need to be rescued from our plight. We are more schismatic, more divided, and less at peace than those whom we set out to unite.

What is the remedy for our state? Unless we have abandoned the ideal of restoration it is very simple. When our nineteenth century predecessors saw the frightful divisions existing in the Protestant establishment, they knew that “the

correction and improvement of no creed, or partisan establishment in Christendom could ever become the basis of such a union, communion and cooperation, as would restore peace to a church militant against itself, or triumph to the common salvation.” Accordingly, they recommended that men cease to emphasize their creeds, ignore their partisan establishments and return to the original order.

If this advice was the answer for the sectarianism of others, why is it not the solution for our own? I contend that it is not only the answer but it is the only answer. We must go back, back, back— beyond every unwritten creed, every test of union and communion which we have devised— back to a creed of such transcendent importance that the very issue of eternal life is suspended upon its acceptance, a creed of such universal dynamic as to arouse again the gleam of hope in the faded eyes of despairing men floundering in the garbage polluted waters of a sectarian sea.

So long as we continue to toy with the forlorn daydream that we can elevate our puny parties to the status of the kingdom of heaven, or smuggle into the throne room an illegitimate child of our own begetting, which we have cleverly christened “the Lord’s church,” we are merely constructing a fool’s paradise and building castles in the air. If we are unwilling to divest ourselves of our own sectarian creeds and formulae, we should never again raise a voice of criticism against our religious neighbors who tenaciously cling to their human dogmas.

Those who are willing to begin at a certain point in our divided state and freeze all division which occurred before, and go on from there, are simply deceiving themselves. They are not opposed to division in the body of our Lord. They only deplore separation from themselves. No one who accepts a certain amount of schism as normal can ever truly labor for the union of all believers in Christ Jesus.

Those who want to start in at the point of division falsely attributed to instrumental music, and strive to unite all of the warring factions in the non-instrument ranks, are not seeking for the unity of the body of Christ, but for the pacific continuance of a non-instrument party or sect. And if every warring tribe which went forth to battle under a standard bearing the caption, "Vocal Music," agreed to bury the hatchet and smoke the calumet, this would not mean that the *ekklesia* of God was united. Indeed, if peace were restored to all of the heirs of the restoration movement it would not mean that the one body was now united, for the body of Christ is greater than any movement within it, and greater even than the restoration movement.

What is the foundation upon which we can unite our scattered forces, and then offer it to the religious world as the basis upon which we can build to answer the prayer of our precious Lord? What was proposed at the very outset of the Way, antedating all forms and ceremonies, and preceding all speculative and partisan debates? What can we present to the ecumenical world in our day which will contribute anything valuable to the search for oneness in the Lord of glory?

Many men who have grown weary with the attempt to unravel the tangled skeins of our own sectarian involvements have given up. They have argued and debated, fought and struggled, only to find conditions growing steadily worse. They despair of ever bringing order out of the complicated snarl, and have resigned themselves to continuing to stolidly slog along in the partisan path. They are bone-tired of the effort to argue out every angle of every wrangle, and adjust every action of every faction. What they forget is that this is not now, and never was the way to attain oneness.

In an ancient city of Phrygia, an oracle decreed to the populace that their next king would arrive in a wagon. At this very time, a poor country man, Gordius, with his wife and son,

was driving his wagon toward the marketplace. He was wildly acclaimed and made king. Gordius sacrificed his oxen, dedicated his wagon to the deity of the oracle, and tied it in place with a large fast knot. A tradition developed that whoever untied the knot would be lord of all Asia. Many tried agonizingly to undo it, working their fingers to the bone. When Alexander the Great came to Phrygia he also tried, but becoming impatient, he drew his sword and cut the knot with one swift stroke. We must take the sword of the Spirit and cut through the intricate involvements of our own sectarianism. This I have done in my own heart and for my own life. I have no time for nit-picking and playing tiddly-winks inside of our partisan pillboxes. There is nothing noble about storming molehills which warped vision and defective eyesight have elevated to mountainous status.

Our Lord did not agonize on Calvary to purchase with his precious blood a mere party to defend to the death a position on cups or classes. The prophets of old did not endure stoning and torture, looking forward to a Golden Age when men, quoting their words for authority, would spill fratricidal blood upon forensic battlefronts, striving over an opinion as to the meaning of the millennium, or the place of music in the presentation of praise to the Prince of peace.

There is only one creed endorsed by heaven as the basis of union and communion for the saints of God. There has never been another, and there never will be another! It is not related to human opinion, doctrinal deduction, or mental apprehension of an apostolic epistle. That creed is not a precept, but a person. Reduced to a proposition as a statement of faith, it is simply that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

When one believes this proposition with all of his heart, he believes all that God has ever required of any man, insofar as personal faith is related to salvation from sin. This is the divinely enunciated creed, and when one presents himself to me, professing his confidence in this as a fact, I am obligated to

immerse him into that glorious new relationship signified by the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

I dare not create myself a one-man papal inquisitor, and probe his thinking as related to any theological speculation or philosophical opinion. Whether he deduces that Jesus will return before the millennium, or following it, or whether he has ever heard of the millennium, is none of my concern. He may know nothing about the thousand year reign.

Whatever opinion he may hold with regard to the means for propagandizing the world with the gospel is none of my business. There is a world of difference between receiving and accepting the Good News as saving truth, and speculating as to the best method for disseminating it to a world lying in wickedness.

God has not authorized me to set up an immigration bureau and a customs office at the border of the kingdom of heaven, and demand that all of the weary pilgrims open up their mental baggage and expose their thoughts and concepts for my haughty and arrogant inspection. No one will be debarred from divine acceptance simply because of my obstinate refusal to stamp the approval of a self-important faction upon some article of rationalization. Everyone who has the passport of faith will be admitted exactly as I was allowed to enter, bringing along a motley assortment of mental notions and fancies, with which all of us must toy as we strive toward maturity. God does not demand that we divest ourselves of all our souvenirs and playthings in order to be his children, even though others of his children may see no significance in them.

Many of our brethren have rejected the compassion of Jesus for the conformity of Procrustes. This legendary tyrant, whose name means "The Stretcher," set up his iron bedstead near Eleusis, in Attica. Every person who passed by was forced to become a victim for his torture. They were made to lie down

upon the bed and, if they were too short for it, they were hammered or stretched to fit. If they were too long they were cut down to proper length. But Procrustes was captured and slain by Theseus, who inflicted upon him the same torture that Procrustes had imposed upon his victims, cutting him down to fit the bed. The most frightening utterance of Jesus for many of our brethren, should be, "For as you judge others, so you will yourselves be judged, and whatever measure you deal out to others will be dealt back to you."

I want to make my own position clear. I want to do so now! I want my generation to know exactly where I stand. My creed is Jesus Christ! My basis of union is Jesus Christ! My test of fellowship is Jesus Christ! My criterion for communion is Jesus Christ! I have no other creed, and I want no other. I reject here and now, once and for all, any plea for unity based upon conformity to any metaphysical or philosophic deductions, or predicated upon the universal acceptance of any speculation or opinion elevated to doctrinal dogma. I care not one whit more for the unwritten creeds which have produced our particular parties than I do for the more formal ones which have spawned the sects.

I would as soon try to enter heaven with the Nicene Creed clutched in my hand as a possible passport to glory, as to try to pry open the gates of pearl with one of the unwritten "Church of Christ" creeds as a tool. But every man should have a justifiable reason for adoption of the creed upon which he bases his hope of relationship with the Father and the Son, and I am no exception.

My reason is very simple. I respect the Bible as God's word. I receive it without quirk or quibble. It is my only rule of faith and practice. I simply accept it as of divine origin, and seek to implement its disclosures in my own life and conduct. And I hold that the very core of revealed saving truth is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that this fact, substantiated by the best testimony available unto man, is the

foundation upon which the community of the reconciled ones is built, and that there is no other foundation which man can lay!

1. This was the countersign of the rule of heaven among men, announced personally by the Father of mercies. It was the only pronouncement which came as a specific communication from God to mankind in direct conjunction with the mission of Jesus, and the voice came from heaven when Jesus was baptized in the waters of the Jordan. If God did not at this time reveal the foundation of our restored relationship unto Him, then He never did so, and the law of Moses which was inaugurated by his voice from heaven was more auspicious in its origin than the regime of His Son.

2. This was the abiding principle upon which Jesus declared he would constitute the community of “the called-out,” and it stands in contrast to whatever other associations and identifications may be attached unto him by men. He is not to be confused with harbinger or prophet, for though their missions may be divine, they are not. The kingdom of heaven is erected upon the divinity of Jesus. This is the most sublime truth of all ages. When one stands upon it he is grounded in that against which the very gates of Hades are helpless and impotent.

3. This is the one foundation which has been laid for the unity of the saints. When Paul wrote to the fragmented and splintered believers in Corinth, his first great question was “Is Christ divided?” The second was a corollary to it. “Was Paul crucified for you?” Jesus is undivided and indivisible. No other man, not even a father in the gospel, can supplant Jesus as the basis of hope. When the apostle wrote, “There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ himself,” he was still talking about the cure for disunity among the brethren.

The foundation of the temple of God is a person, the Son of God. He is not only the Alpha, but he is the Omega. There is no

one before him. There is no one after him. There is no other foundation beyond. “What think you of Christ? whose Son is he?” This is the universal question for mankind. It is the criterion of spiritual involvement with the Eternal One. If one is right about Jesus, he can be wrong about many other things and still be saved. If he is wrong about Jesus, he can be right about everything else and still be lost.

4. This was the burden of the Good News proclaimed by the chosen envoys of the King, when they were sent forth into an alien world. One of them wrote, “As for me, brothers, when I came to you, I declared the attested truth of God without display of fine words or wisdom. I resolved that while I was with you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ— Christ nailed to the cross.” *Nothing but Jesus Christ!* He wrote again, “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to proclaim the Gospel; and to do it without relying on the language of worldly wisdom, so that the fact of Christ on his cross might have its full weight.”

What does this mean? It means that God has proposed to unite all who believe in Jesus, upon the basis of one great universal fact, a fact demonstrated and proven in the context of human history, a fact substantiated by credible human witnesses and by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. It means that the one foundation of union and communion for the saints is Jesus, the Son of God, the personal embodiment of truth, and not some truths, or certain truths, not even those uttered by Jesus.

The kingdom of light is a kingdom of faith, and faith has to do with facts, not with abstract truths. All facts are true, but not all truths are facts. One who accepts him who is *the truth*, thereby commits himself to the acceptance of all truths as they become known to him, but such truths can never become the basis of union, else our faith must stand in the developing wisdom of men and not in the eternal power of God.

The basis of our unity in Christ Jesus is not a compilation

of propositions deduced from the scriptures by speculative theologians. It is not a formal code of morals or ethics drawn up in a conclave or convention. It is not even the sacred scriptures of the new covenant themselves. The saints were united before one apostolic epistle was ever written, and even now one may be relatively ignorant of the content of these letters and still be in Christ Jesus.

No personal experience of one in Christ, whether such experience is real or fancied, can ever become the criterion of fellowship in the Lord of glory. No one can impose such a personal experience upon another as a test of faith or worthiness, and no one can be deposed for testifying to such a personal experience. Those who seek to bind in all such cases show that they have another creed than Christ, and all who build their hopes alone upon personal experiences and phenomena are doomed to eventual disillusionment. It is only when an experience draws us closer to the heart of Jesus that it possesses any validity. It is Jesus who makes our relationship to any concept, happening, or experience valid, and not an experience which makes the relationship to Jesus a valid one.

Our relationship to Jesus stems from faith and not from knowledge or personal experience. Faith has to do with testimony, and testimony has to do with fact. The beloved apostle wrote that Jesus did a multitude of signs in the presence of his disciples. They saw them and knew that they were real. Out of this treasure of signs, the Spirit selected a number, and the very type, which would produce faith in any honest heart. These have been recorded, and they were written down that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and by believing this, we might have life in him. This is the life-giving fact. It is the only one. Other truths may strengthen us and stimulate us, but they cannot produce life. It is unfortunate that many of our brethren cannot distinguish between life and a stimulant.

Our problem in this age is that we have lost Christ in the Bible, we have lost the Bible in the church, and we have lost the church in the world. We must now rescue Jesus from the Bible or become like the scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus said, “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, but their purpose is to testify of me. And you will not come unto me that you might have life.”

Life does not come from searching the scriptures. The scriptures do not produce eternal life. The scriptures are a gift from God just as life is a gift from God. We have confused the love letters with the Lover; the Captain of our salvation with his orders; the fodder with the Shepherd; and the prescription with the Physician. We have eclipsed the Son of God with the wisdom of the sons of men. And by worshiping the scriptures instead of the Savior we often end up with a head full of quotations and a heart empty of Jesus. Christianity is not Jesus pointing us to a book, but a book pointing us to Jesus. The prodigal could have been preoccupied with a road map and remained in the pig pen!

We must recover the Bible from the church. The people of God have carried the word of God captive. Once more the book of God has been lost in the temple of God. It has been buried beneath a pile of partisan practices, cultural customs, institutional inventions, doctrinal deductions and sectarian sham. And we must reclaim the church from the world, not by taking it out of the world, but by taking the world out of it. These last two objectives will never be achieved until we accomplish the first. Jesus must again be crowned in our hearts as he has been coronated in heaven. Jesus the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, and Lord of life. This is my creed, and upon it I propose to meet every other soul upon this earth who is willing to commit himself to it. In closing I ask you to hear this from the pen of Alexander Campbell:

When the Messiah appeared as the founder of a new religion, systems of religion consisting of opinions and

speculation upon matter and mind, upon God and nature, upon virtue and vice, had been adopted, improved, reformed, and exploded, time after time. That there was always something superfluous, something defective; something wrong, something that could be improved, in every system of religion and morality, was generally felt, and at last was universally acknowledged. But the grandeur, sublimity, and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this, — that the belief of one fact, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes, to salvation. The belief of this one fact, and submission to one institution expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church . . . The one fact is expressed in a single proposition— that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah . . . The one institution is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Reasonable Worship

Mission Messenger (October 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

In January of this year we began an ascent of the highest peak in the Roman letter, chapter eight. We worked our way slowly up the steep slope and explored for several months the view at the summit. Now we must return from the mountain-top and resume life on the practical plane. Here we will test the reality of our transcendent experience and see how the life of the Spirit fits into our day-by-day existence.

The great argument of Paul ends at Romans 11:36 with a magnificent tribute to God. “For from him everything comes, through him everything exists, and in him everything ends.” That is Goodspeed’s translation. Knox has it, “All things find in him their origin, their impulse, the center of their being.” It is conditioned upon this tremendous truth that the apostle predicates his conclusion concerning our obligation to the Father of lights. We will consider that obligation as portrayed in chapter 12.

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1).

It is noteworthy that the apostle who has probed the very heavens, does not make an authoritarian demand or a dogmatic request. He places his approach to life in a framework of

pleading, appeal, or entreaty. He wrote to the Corinthians, "I do not mean that we are to dictate to you with regard to your faith; on the contrary, we work with you for your true happiness." Even his appeal is based upon the compassion which God has shown. Our obligation stems from the overflowing mercy in which we have shared so freely.

We are to *present* our bodies. The word "present" is employed in Luke 2:22 where Joseph and Mary took the child Jesus to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord." It is used in 2 Corinthians 11:2, where Paul says of the community of believers, "I feel a divine jealousy on your behalf, because I betrothed you to one only husband, even to Christ, that I might present you unto him in virgin purity." It is used in Ephesians 5:27 where Jesus is desirous of presenting the church to himself as a glorious church, unspotted and unwrinkled.

In all of these cases that which is being presented or dedicated to God and Christ, already belongs to them. The firstborn male belonged to God under the Mosaic covenant, so Jesus, who opened the womb, was presented unto God. The bride belongs to the husband so Paul wanted to present to Jesus the congregation in virgin purity which was betrothed unto him. And our bodies belong to God. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. We can only give to God that which is his. We are to offer our bodies as *living* sacrifices. This is in contrast to the holocausts required of the Jews, and the offerings of the Gentiles to their false gods. One statement occurs over and over in the law of offerings as transmitted by Moses. "He shall lay his hand upon its head, and kill it." The law required the bodies of dead animals, flayed, cut into pieces and laid in order upon the wood that was upon the fire of the altar. Nothing impresses me more with the contrast between grace and law than the fact that one approaches God through living men and the other through animal corpses.

There is more than this involved in a living sacrifice. It is

continual and constant. An animal could only be offered once, but life is an unceasing and an unremitting offering. Just as Jesus offered himself for us once, but ever lives to make intercession for us, so we must freely give ourselves to him, but live to make intercession unto God.

Our sacrifice must be *holy*. This is a translation of *hagios*, which we also sometimes translate by the word “sanctified.” Literally, this means set apart to God, or consecrated to his service. When a man set aside a tenth of his grain, or olive oil, or vintage, to present it unto the Lord, it was separated from all of the rest. It looked exactly like the remainder, and you could not tell them apart, but there was a difference, and that difference lay in the fact that one was peculiarly God’s.

So there are certain things which must be said about the person who is holy. First, he is separated from the unregenerate world and does not share a common life (or fellowship) with the unbelieving mass of mankind. This does not mean that he does not work, or go to school, or ride on a plane with the immoral of this world, “since then you would need to go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:10). But he is separated because he has heard the call of God and responded to it. “Come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean, then I will welcome you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

Second, this separation makes a difference. But the difference lies in the fact that one belongs to God. To be holy is not to be equated with being an odd-ball, a screwball, or an eccentric. There is nothing anemic or washed-out about a follower of the Lamb. He is not a dud or a blank cartridge. This is borne out by 1 Peter 2:9, where the King James Version uses the term “a peculiar people.” In their ignorance of the original many have interpreted this to mean that we were to appear in unconventional garb or attract attention by quaint speech.

Actually, the expression means that which belongs to one

person by right of purchase or choice. The New English Version is correct in rendering it “a people claimed by God for his own.” It often happens that ownership gives value to a thing. I once visited Monticello, which was built by Thomas Jefferson. I saw his notebooks, spectacles and writing quills. I had seen a thousand others more prepossessing in appearance, but these fascinated me because of the one to whom they belonged.

Once Nell and I went to the home of James A. Garfield. Those of you who have been there know that his Bible still lies open on his desk, at the place where he was reading shortly before he was assassinated. I have a good many Bibles that are worth more money, and are more adapted to use, but the simple volume upon the desk drew my attention because of whose it was. So we can be quite ordinary people, with no outstanding ability, and yet, if we belong to the Lord, we are different. We have transcendent value. And that is what being holy is all about.

This seems important to me because I once had holiness confused with an attitude toward things, rather than with a relationship to God. One is not especially holy because he does not watch television, play croquet, or wear wide neckties. Indeed, some of the worst hoodlums that ever lived, dressed pretty conservatively. One who is holy is different because he marches to the sound of another trumpet. He is God’s man.

REASONABLE SERVICE

Now I have come to the phrase I am really interested in exploring. Paul says that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is our reasonable service. I’d like to make a little confession here and now. I once thought that this referred to that which was just, equitable and fair. I remember detailing all that God had done for us, and then pointing out that, in view of this what he demanded of us was not an unreasonable

requirement. I probably got that from my seventy-five cent book of sermon outlines upon which I relied pretty heavily in those days. But I was wrong about it, as I was about a lot of other things.

W. E. Vine says about the term, “The word *logikos* indicates that which appertains to the mind, the reasoning faculty. The sacrifice is therefore to be intelligent, and the idea suggested is by way of contrast to the sacrifices offered under the law by ritual and compulsion. The presentation is to be made in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creatures in Christ.”

C. H. Dodd says, “The ritual of sacrifice was in Judaism, as in all ancient religions, the central act of worship, by which the holiness of God was acknowledged, and in some sense conveyed to the worshipers. For Christians, Paul says, the real worship of God is their self-dedication to him for ethical ends. . . . Without that thought, taken with full ethical seriousness, any ritual of sacrifice in Christianity would be a relapse into superstition.” Please go back, read that again, and pause to meditate upon it for a little while!

The Revised Standard Version translates the words by “spiritual worship.” The New English Version has “the worship offered by mind and heart.” The Twentieth Century New Testament has “reasonable worship.” The word rendered worship is *latreia*, and it is an interesting one indeed. In its root form it referred to work done for wages, but voluntarily so. It was not applied to a slave, but to one who personally secured a position and filled it with a sense of responsibility.

Then the word advanced another step and was used to denote a dedication of life to a cause which engrossed one’s attention or appealed to him as being worthy, and finally it was the word used to describe service dedicated to the gods, the giving over of one’s life to serving in the temple of a deity. In its

usage in the new covenant scriptures it applies exclusively to the worship of God. That is why the lexicographers define *latreuo*, “to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship.”

This is of supreme importance because it points out that spiritual worship, that which Jesus calls “worship in spirit and in reality,” actually consists of the surrender of self to God. It is giving my eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, hands and feet to God, and doing so voluntarily as an act of commitment. It entails also the devoting of my bodily desires, feelings, passions and sensations to God, holding nothing back. Thus, everything I do in the body, with an eye singled to the glory of God, is worship. For the Christian there are no “acts of worship,” for the simple reason that there are no acts which are not worship.

A little later Paul will say that one who attaches special significance to a day “observes it in honor to the Lord.” He will also point out that one who eats meat eats in honor of the Lord. We honor the Lord by living, and we honor the Lord by dying. Everything that we do is worship, so “whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). So long as we think of worship as limited to certain “holy places,” and “holy days,” we are acting as if Jesus did not come and die. We are living B.C. lives in an A.D. world.

In Christ there are no holy places, no holy days, and no holy things. There are only holy people. We cannot dedicate buildings to God. We can only dedicate lives. We give our bodies, that is, ourselves. And we are the temple of God. We are God’s building. We are God’s garden. William Barclay says it far better than I can:

The true worship, the really spiritual worship, is the offering of one’s body, and all that one does every day with it, to God. Real worship is not the offering of elaborate prayers to God; it is not the offering to God of a liturgy, however noble, and ritual, however magnificent. Real

worship is the offering of everyday life to God. Real worship is not something which is transacted in a church; real worship is something which sees the whole world as the temple of the living God, and every common deed an act of worship.

“And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

It is apparent from this statement that “this world” is set in opposition to “the will of God.” One cannot conform to both at the same time. It is important, therefore, that we have a clear understanding of what is meant by “the world.” Certainly there is a lot of fuzzy thinking on this subject in the present age. Let me provide for you some helpful comments. C. H. Dodd says that “the world” is, “Human society insofar as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values and egoism.” William Barclay defines the world as, “Pagan society with its false values, its false standards and its false gods.” Please take note that both of these great expositors use the term “false values.” Value is the worth or importance you attach to a thing. It may have little to do with the actual worth of it. It may be almost wholly divorced from reality. But your sense of values will always affect everything else by comparison. If you elevate a thing in your heart to a place of prime importance, you will measure everything else by its relationship to that thing. It becomes your god. Barclay is very perceptive when he speaks of “false values, false standards and false gods.” The three are inevitably and inextricably linked together.

One of the greatest minds of which I have ever heard, in the field of scriptural research, was that of Richard Chenevix Trench. To him we are indebted for that very helpful volume called *Synonyms of the New Testament*. And in it he defines the world as “that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and

accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.”

The world is the realm in which we move by choice, breathing its atmosphere, thinking its thoughts, sharing its dreams, and bowing to its gods. It is the territory pre-empted by base desires and ruled over by Satan, who is designated “the god of this world.” His is the sphere of Atmos, that in which we live and breathe.

Paul uses two words which we have translated as “conformed” and “transformed.” The word “form” is at the heart of both. But they are not at all the same in the original. The word for “form” in conformed is *schema*. It has to do with the external. It literally means to fashion or shape in accordance with a model. It signifies that which is changeable, variable, and subject to alteration.

In 1 Corinthians 7:31, we read, “For the whole frame of this world is passing away.” Frame is the translation of *schema*. In Philippians 2:8 we learn that Christ came “Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape.” Shape is the translation of *schema*. There is one other place in the new covenant scriptures where the identical form of the original used in Romans 12:2, is to be found. It is in 1 Peter 1:14, “As obedient children do not let your characters be shaped any longer by the desires you cherished in the days of your ignorance.”

When the Greeks created a figure or model for display of specially woven cloth, they used a form of this word. When the sculptors took plastic clay and shaped it before the eyes of their students they employed a form of this word. But there is nothing truly permanent about fashions or fashion models. And clay can be re-shaped in many ways and to make many images. So J. B. Phillips has really caught the true gist of what Paul is saying when he translates the passage, “Don’t let the world around you

squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within.”

Most of my readers have never seen a butter mould, but when we were youngsters on the farm one of our tasks was to help churn the milk to produce butter. The churn dasher was plunged up and down in the liquid until the butter “came.” The butter was then rescued from the milk and placed in a large crock. After this it was formed into attractive pats by squeezing it into a mould. Our favorite mould was a round one which produced a pound of butter in a circular shape with the figure of a pineapple on top. Other families had different shaped moulds with other designs. But the butter always took on the form of the mould into which it was pressed.

We had a homely saying about a man who did not resist temptation and the pressures of sin. We said, “He is as soft as butter.” We meant that he took on the form of the world around him. Sometimes we said of a man, “He will trot under the wagon of anyone who will hunt with him.” A faithful dog would not follow everyone who came along. He was loyal to his master. One of the early “graphophone” companies used as its symbol a terrier cocking his head to listen to the sound coming from the horn shaped like a huge morning-glory. The symbol included the words, “His master’s voice.”

Paul is pleading with the Romans not to be formed or shaped by the impulses, aims, aspirations, or maxims of the world. These are changeable. They are inconstant and inconsistent. They produce no loyalty to God. They distort and obscure the Master’s voice.

We are to be transformed, and here the word for form is *morphe*. This word relates to the character or nature of a thing. It is not that which is affected by outward fashion. It is internal and relates to essence rather than to mere appearance. It is the word translated by “transfigured” in Matthew 17:2, and Peter

says of Jesus upon that occasion, “He was invested with glory and honor” (2 Peter 1:17).

It is the same word rendered “changed” in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where the *New English Version* has the reading, “And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendor of the Lord, thus we are transfigured into his likeness, from splendor to splendor, such is the influence of the Lord who is spirit.” The Greeks used the term for transfigured to describe the alteration which took place when a butterfly developed from a caterpillar, and the ugly looking worm became a gorgeous and beautiful insect.

In the case before us Paul is saying that to engage in true worship, which is the complete sacrifice of life, one must not make an outward change in conformity with the standards of fashions of this passing age. The entire person must be transformed. There must be a radical alteration of our very nature. As Peter states it, “Through this might and splendor he has given us his promises, great beyond all price, and through them you may escape the corruption with which lust has infected the world, and come to share in the very being of God.”

This tremendous change must be made by renewing the mind. This is very significant *The New English Version* reads, “Let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed.” We have already learned from the previous verse that the worship we are to render is rational, that is, it conforms to the highest function of reason. But in order to achieve this height of rational power our minds must be remade. They have reflected the color of the surrounding world. They have been polluted by the atmosphere which we breathe, which is corrupt and tainted.

The word for renewal is *anakainosis*. This is important because the Greeks had two words for new— *neos* and *kainos*. It is not my purpose to elaborate upon these. The intensive student

can investigate them in such works as “Synonyms of the New Testament,” by Archbishop Trench. It is enough for our purpose to know the basic difference between them.

Neos means new in time, or of recent origin. *Kainos* means new in quality, that is, different in character from the old with which it is contrasted. The renewal of the mind which results in transformation is not simply the old way of thinking updated. It is not merely the addition of late information, or recent concepts which bring about the renewal. Instead, Christ comes into one’s life, and the whole nature of existence changes. The mind is no longer set on earthly things. One has heaven in his mind and glory in his heart.

“Prove” is from *dokimazo*, and it conveys the idea of testing or trying a thing with a view to approving it. The Good Housekeeping Institute tries out products submitted to it with a view to bestowing the seal of approval when they are deemed worthy. The Consumer Research Laboratory puts various items to a rigid test with the intent of testifying for those that are approved.

The new mind is the proper arena in which to demonstrate the effectiveness of the will of God, that is, to show it is all that it claims to be. It is good, because of its effect upon those who follow it; it is acceptable because it meets all of the requirements of heaven; it is perfect, because it is thoroughly and completely capable and adapted to fulfill the role for which it was intended.

It is my intention, God being my helper, to allow his will to prevail in my life. I want his love to be my love, his purpose to be my purpose, and his word my word. I eagerly solicit the fervent prayers of all that I may overcome my weaknesses by his power, and live the transformed life.

Seeking Guidance

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

One of the more serious problems which arise for those who believe that the Spirit dwells in God's children as a divine helper, as I certainly do, is how one may seek the guidance of the Spirit, and ascertain the will of God for his own life. Any number of letters have come to me upon this subject. I feel obligated to face up to it, but what I say in response is in no sense authoritarian or dogmatic.

What I can do is simply to outline my personal approach, but this may not be at all valid for another individual. No two of us are of the same intellectual, temperamental or spiritual caliber, and the Holy Spirit must not be "boxed in" by my own experience. We cannot confine him to a specific methodology for he can be very versatile in meeting our several needs. I do not quarrel with brethren who take a different tack. I do not even resent those who deny that the Holy Spirit furnishes them any assistance at all. The more I am around them the more I suspect that they are correct.

For several years, after becoming aware of the real presence of the Spirit in the tent in which I dwell, I have been trying, although with some little difficulty caused by traditional training, to live a more surrendered life, to "hang loose" and recognize that I am cradled in divine love. "Around me and beneath me are the everlasting arms." This has preserved me

from frantic pushing and shoving, and has made for inner tranquillity which is a tremendous comfort.

Since I believe that nothing occurs in my life which is outside of God's province or purpose for me, I simply look for His will in whatever happens. It has been an interesting thing to see how he can turn some of my witless mistakes into occasions for good. This has served to reassure me that he rules in every avenue and facet of life and is never anymore "the One outside."

A number of brethren whom I love have developed a rather simplistic approach, or so it seems to me. When confronted with a decision they open up the Bible and the first passage they read is assumed to contain the answer to their problem. They say, "God gave me a scripture" for an answer. I am not judgmental in such cases. I simply say I cannot rest my own confidence in such a method.

To say the least, it appears to me there is an element of chance involved, a thing which they would vehemently deny. I would not think of satisfying a need by opening up a Sears Roebuck catalog and ordering the first item which struck my glance. And I do not feel that God revealed truth in such a way as he would have had to do in order to make such a method valid. My own life is too complex and multiform to reach a definite conclusion by this type of procedure.

1. I seek to immerse myself in the total revelation of God. I regard the Bible as containing that revelation in promise, prophecy, precept and perfection. I receive it "not as the word of men, but as what it truly is, the very word of God at work in you who hold the faith" (1 Thess. 2:13). I am persuaded that my life decisions should be made in the context of the whole revelation, rather than in an isolated passage of sacred scripture. So I read the word with a sincere love for the truths it contains.

2. I eagerly and fervently pray for guidance in specific and

immediate problems. I no longer shoot a scatter-load of prayer phrases or conventional clichés in the general direction of heaven. Instead I “zero in” on God. I get “on the beam” and aim for a landing on the proper runway. And I keep on praying, persisting and continuing until I feel I have the answer and the light within turns green and I have the right of way.

I not only ask, but I seek and knock. If I get desperate I kick on the door. It isn't that I doubt that God is inside or that I think he is deaf. Nor is it that I think that he doesn't know I'm outside. Rather my faith and sincerity are at stake. I take quite literally the question Jesus proposed, “Will not God vindicate his chosen, who cry out to him day and night, while he listens patiently to them?” As Paul put it, “Let hope keep you joyful; in trouble stand firm; persist in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

3. I also seek the advice of other saints. “In a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom,” says the wise monarch. If it is true that we are to advise and admonish one another, certainly we ought to hearken to one another. As a member of the community of the reconciled I do not want to go it alone. I need the advice of others. Like Paul, I do not always heed the advice of good and well-meaning disciples (Acts 21:4, 5), but it would surprise you how many “good” articles I have thrown in the wastebasket when others have warned me against printing them.

4. I seek to live in the shadow of God's umbrella of grace all of the time and abide in the tent of the Spirit. This makes it possible to breathe the spiritual atmosphere constantly and thus reach decisions in the proper frame of reference for my whole being. This obviates the need of making such decisions as isolated features of my life.

5. I relate my entire being to the dynamic of love, injecting it into every life situation. Even if a thing is right and proper, I discard it as a possibility if it requires a loveless attitude or will cause another to stumble or fall out of the way.

When I have related my problem to the word of God and sought the counsel of heaven, when I have consulted brethren of reputation and made sure that I am willing to pursue the more excellent way, and when I have prayed until my inner consciousness is directed to a certain activity, or in a certain direction. I take it that this is the will of God for me and I pursue that course.

I believe that God can move in and through the fully surrendered life and I want him to make me and mould me after his will, while I am waiting yielded and still. If we ask him he will assist us. If we trust him he will not turn us away. We are taught “not to place reliance on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9). That is why I propose to “pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18).

The Differing Gifts

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Volume 33

[Abstract]

I often think as I read the letters of Paul, what a difference it would make if one could go behind the scene in his mind and know the emotions and feelings which prompted certain words and sentences. It is all well and good to say that we have his statements before us and we can all know what he was saying if we want to do so. But it is true that nothing we write or say is in a vacuum. It is for that reason I do not care to be dogmatic about my conclusions. They represent my best approach at the time and they appear to be definitive, but I am never sure with my finite mind that there is not some point I have overlooked which may add a new dimension to my understanding.

Legalistic positivists speak disparagingly of one who so writes. Their tendency is to ridicule one who does not think that his explanations are infallible. They ask how any person can follow one who is not sure what he believes. In reality they are the ones who deserve pity. First of all, they have missed the very essence of the Way, and confuse belief in things with faith in Christ Jesus. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which makes for peace with God, and one can be strong in the faith which is in Christ Jesus and freely admit, "I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me." Indeed, there is some indication that the stronger one's faith is in Jesus, the less he trusts in himself.

Too, such critics are always inconsistent. Even while insisting that men can understand the sacred writings if they want to, they must admit that their own understanding may be faulty in some things. Is this because they do not wish to know? It is a little ludicrous to read after a couple of brethren with imperfect understanding assailing one another because each thinks the other is imperfect. Of course they are both right in their assessment. The very nature of their argument is a clear demonstration of ignorance combined with arrogance.

This little introduction will serve to tell you that, in submitting my comments on the subject at hand, I have no desire or intention to bind them upon our readers. They simply represent my current views, and I will share them, not impose them. You have the same right to read God's word as do I. You also have the same right to reach conclusions as to its meaning. Nothing else is quite so important as to restore among us that pillar of the Reformation, "the right of private interpretation of the sacred scriptures."

One who contends for this principle pleads for the God-given freedom of all the saints. One who denies it, and seeks to invest the right of interpretation in preachers, prelates, priests, or presbyters, takes the first step toward popery and the enslavement of men's minds. He negates the priesthood of all believers and establishes the cunning priestcraft of the few. There is no official interpretation of the scriptures, and there are no official interpreters. There is only a difference in degree between postulating that a group of elders can do the thinking for a congregation, and that a pope can do it for the church universal.

I am resolved that no man or group of men shall drink for me at the fountain of life, or digest for me the bread of life. If I must answer for my thinking in the world to come I propose to do it in the world at hand. If I make mistakes, and I will, they will be my own, and I will accept the responsibility for them. But

there are two sins for which I have resolved I will not have to account. One is that of abdication of my right to think for myself, and the other the imposition of my thinking upon others to the derogation of their own rights.

“For by the grace given to me I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him” (Romans 12:3).

Paul had the “grace of apostleship,” that is, he had been made an ambassador as an act of divine favor. In this capacity he could help regulate the lives of those who were citizens of the divine economy. In this instance he is concerned about the evaluation which brethren place upon themselves. This is important because he is introducing the subject of the body, and the functions of the members with the gifts which God has bestowed.

There seems to be always present a tendency for those who are specially gifted to exalt their importance. Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth: “Who made you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?”

Sober judgment is that which weighs all the facts and gives proper credit to each of them. It does not engage in pride or foolishness, neither does it bemean one’s ability or talent. It considers life in such a manner that one can act with wisdom and prudence. A humble and modest estimate of self is requisite to a proper relationship with God and one another.

The criterion for sober judgment as it affects our service in the body is the measure of faith. God has granted this. About this statement there has been much controversy. I do not propose to become involved in it, but I will simply express my honest opinion. It should be regarded as that, and nothing more.

In view of the subsequent context I consider faith in this instance as synonymous with the functions, gifts and abilities, which enable us to serve God with reverence and acceptability. Our life is a life of faith, our work is a work of faith, yet no two of us have the same responsibility, or the same aptitude to serve. God has proportioned or measured these out to us according to his will. “In fact, God appointed each limb or organ to its own place in the body, as he chose” (1 Cor. 12:18).

We are under divine assignment, or subject to divine appointment, and to a greater extent than most of us realize, we are what we are by grace. We may think that we arrived at our present ability by dint of discipline and work. These are important, but they are like a grindstone. They can put an edge on an axe or tool but cannot create one. Practice can sharpen our aptitudes, but they are a part of us.

MANY MEMBERS

“For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:4, 5).

It is important to bear in mind that the word “member” is never used except in conjunction with the word “body.” One never reads of a “member of the church,” or of anything else, except the body. The reason is quite simple. The Greeks had no word for belonging to an organization. The word “member” was used only to designate an integral part of an organism, and never employed to describe one who had joined some kind of institution, fraternity or combine.

In an organization the adherents are admitted by enlistment, enrollment, or under compulsion, as in the case of the military draft. In an organism the members are a component part of a vital or living entity. Thus, one does not join the body

of Christ, but he is embodied by an act of God. “God sets the members in the body, as it pleases him.” “By one Spirit you were all baptized into one body.” I am incorporate with Christ. This word is from corpus, body, and means that I am in the body with Christ. I am in the body by a divine act.

This is a favorite metaphor of the apostle Paul. The body of Christ in his personal mission on earth was the result of incarnation. The body of Christ through which he perpetuates his work upon earth results from incorporation. In his physical body Jesus had all of the organs essential to bodily functions in the flesh. In his spiritual body he invests us with all of the abilities necessary to continue his work. We take the place, as individuals, that was taken by his ears, eyes, mouth, arms and feet, and he now becomes the head of all, having been exalted to the right hand of God for this very purpose.

Paul is preparing to deal with our varied gifts and he is pointing out that in order for the body to fulfill its role, various functions must be carried out. This requires not only a variation of administrations, but a variety of gifts. The body is able to function, not because all of the members are alike, but precisely because they are not. Our physical bodies are examples of unity in diversity. So also is the body of Christ.

We are not only related to the body as a unit, but to each other as individual members. But the relationship to each other stems from the relationship to Jesus. In the physical body, some members are joined to the head only by being joined to other members, but in the body of Christ we are joined to other members only by being joined to the head. There is no other person between ourselves and Jesus. The wonderful unity we enjoy is the unity of the Spirit who indwells each member and the body as a whole.

Actually, I cannot hurt my brother without hurting myself. If I speak evil of him it reflects against the organism of which we

are integral parts. If I trample upon him I step on my own toes. In spite of our various functions we are all bound together in one body, and all of us have a responsibility in that body as well as to it and through it. The term “of one another” is a term of mutual sharing and what we share is the life of the body.

VARIOUS FUNCTIONS

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:6-8).

Here we have some of the functions of the body of Christ, and the adaptation of the various members to carry them out. Not all are qualified to fulfill the same task, and should not be expected to do so. Paul affirms that our special abilities to carry out various fields of endeavor in the body of Christ are gifts received by grace. They are not something that we acquired or achieved, but they have been given to us. We may improve upon them and encourage their development by use, but we do not originate them.

It is important for us to think through what Paul is saying because the word he uses for gifts is *charismata*, and this word is greatly abused and misused in our time. This is called “the charismatic age or period” because a lot of very sincere people believe that the Holy Spirit is moving into their lives in a new dimension, and granting them supernatural gifts. Now I am not concerned in this article with whether this is true, or whether they are honestly mistaken. I am in no position, and have no disposition, to question the personal experiences which others

affirm.

My concern here is their misunderstanding of scriptural language, and the false impression which is thereby created. The word *charisma* embodies the word *charis*, grace. A *charisma* is a gift of grace. It is not something for which one can claim credit, or of which he can boast and be proud. It does not result from his superiority or personal power. It is something to receive by the favor of another.

So one can never understand *charisma* until he understands *charis*, that is, he can never understand what is meant by a gift of grace until he understands grace. And the word for grace was not invented by the Holy Spirit for scriptural usage. It had long been used by the Greeks and had a lengthy history before Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross. The Spirit appropriated it and invested it with new meaning, and glorified it, but did not introduce it.

Certainly there had to be something about the term which could communicate to mankind the message which God wanted us to have. And the history of its usage shows its utilitarian value to the Spirit. At first, the word related to beauty and charm, but not simply to external beauty. Charm suggested an inner quality of graciousness which gave value to the whole personality. It was not put on, but it glowed from within and added sparkle to life.

Eventually the philosophers came to believe that this inner quality was not developed by the person, but was a divine gift, a bestowal of the gods. They thought of it as an infusion of the divine into the *pneuma*, or spirit, manifesting itself in creativity, and enabling one to call forth or summon an inner vision which could be manifested in a concrete way, but never for a selfish purpose. It must be always for the public good, always for the benefit of mankind.

A dramatist who could put together a play for the theater,

which would make men laugh or weep, was thought of as having a *charisma*. A sculptor who could see a glorious figure in marble, and deliver it from the bondage which encased it, through clever use of the hammer and chisel, was said to have a *charisma*. The poet who could touch the springs of the emotions was said to have a *charisma*. These were called “gifted people.” And there was one field in which certain men were thought to be especially gifted, that of oratory. The gods enabled them to communicate.

It will be seen that these gifts refer to abilities which we do not generally think of as “supernatural.” The playwright at his desk, the sculptor in his studio, the actor on the stage, the orator on the platform— these are merely carrying out regular functions in daily life. True, they may have a special *charisma* in their work but there are others less gifted who are actors, sculptors, writers, or speakers. The word *charismata*, then, may embrace both what we call “natural” and “supernatural” gifts. I say “we” because God makes no such distinction. Nothing is supernatural with God.

We are now in a position to understand why the Spirit appropriated from the Greek language a word which was in common use and dignified it with such transcendence. *Charisma* was a gift. It could not be earned or purchased. It was bestowed by Deity, and it was never given simply for selfish indulgence. It was to enable the one who received it to function in a fellowship, to make possible a combined effort in which all would work for the common good. That which previously had provided solidarity in the Greek commonwealth was now regarded as making possible the functioning of the community of saints.

In the passage under consideration the apostle designates prophesying, service of all kinds, teaching, exhorting, giving, presiding, and extension of mercy or pity, as done by charismatics. To designate any period in the history of the body of Christ as “a charismatic age,” is thus seen to be ridiculous. There is no charismatic period because there is no non-

charismatic period. Every era of our existence is one in which gifted men carry forward the cause of our Lord. And all of us can function in some manner.

There is no such thing as a “charismatic movement.” This is a term invented by men to describe a time in which they think one or more gifts are exhibited more profusely. However, no one can speak of a “charismatic movement” in the language of the Spirit. The Spirit makes no arbitrary distinction between the gifts we call natural and others, insofar as their utility and essentiality is concerned. The fact that certain endowments are called spiritual does not mean that the others are unspiritual. If they are *charismatic* they are gifts, and they are gifts of grace.

Paul even calls the gift of continence which enables one to control his sexual impulse and to live in an unmarried state a *charisma* (1 Cor. 7:7). He refers to his providential deliverance from persecution and death, as a result of the prayers of the saints, as a *charisma* (2 Cor. 1:11). The interesting thing about this is the fact that it is written to the Corinthian community, the only one to which the apostle says much about *pneumatics* or *charismatics*.

Correctly understood, this means that the exaltation of any *charisma* as a criterion of usefulness, faithfulness, or of standing with God, is wholly unwarranted. It was never intended that all members have the same function and it would be a little absurd to expect them all to receive the same gift. God places the members in the body as it pleases him, and it would be ridiculous for the ear to pray for a gift to enable it to function like the eye.

Nor does a member of the body require special and continual assurance that he is still in the body and remains attached to the head. His very ability to function and his desire to serve the interests of the believers unselfishly and freely is indicative of the spiritual life. The one who shares an inner sense

of peace and well-being in a life of steadfast daily service may have a more wholesome outlook than one who needs a regular shot in the *pneuma*. Only a hypochondriac has to call the physician every day to be sure that he is really alive.

THE BODY AT WORK

In one respect, there is no such thing as a body at work. What we mean by such an expression is that the various members function properly and in relation to one another, so that there is no friction, and thus the organism is enabled to fulfill its role. We come now to notice the work of the different members of the community as mentioned by Paul.

1. *Prophesying*. The prophet is the spokesman for God. He speaks for God to men. In the old covenant scriptures, the prophet was actually called a seer. He was one who could see through the curtain which obscured the future to others. And because he could see, he could also reveal the will of God for coming days.

Later the term prophet came to be drawn chiefly from another word which meant to bubble up as a fountain. The Spirit moved in the prophet with an effervescent nature, and created a pressure to speak, or erupt. The word of God was described as “a fire in the bones,” that is, a volcanic force in the spiritual depth, clamoring to be released. So the prophet could say, “I am weary from holding in.”

In the new covenant scriptures the Greek term means “to speak forth.” It is a mistake to think of a prophet merely as one who forecasts or predicts. The book of Revelation is called prophecy, although it is specifically said to contain an account of things past, present, and future.

Thus history, current events, and prognostication are all prophecy in God’s sight, because they are all by inspiration. A

prophet is a forth-teller. He is not always a foreteller.

The one who had the gift of prophecy was to exercise it, “according to the proportion of the faith.” Since the word “proportion” is *analogia*, a great many interpreters, in my very humble opinion, have been misled in their conclusions. The Greek word is one which expresses relationship of a right or proper nature. Cremer says it is “the coincidence or agreement existing or demanded according to the standard of the several relations.”

I do not hold that the prophets were human teletype machines automatically transcribing what was fed by a recording angel to the celestial “wire system” from beyond space. For this reason they were placed under the obligation to speak that which was in agreement with the revealed faith. They could not go beyond, add to, amend, or subtract from the revelation. The “proportion of faith” was the criterion for transmission to men, in order that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

2. *Ministering*. No word in sacred scripture has become more distorted in popular usage than this one, which is from *diakonia*, service. It has been transliterated to become our word deacon, yet in our lack of concern for the language of the Spirit, few in our day think of the deacons as the ministers of the congregation. I constantly receive communications upon letterheads which list three groups: Minister, Elders, Deacons. Occasionally there will be included an Associate Minister, that is an associate slave or servant, whatever that might be.

All such usage would have been so much mumbo-jumbo in the primitive community of the faith where every child of God was a priest, everyone was a minister, and they were all associates in serving God and one another. The only special congregational ministers were the deacons, who served to extend the arm of the body to relieve the needs of the suffering saints.

No one can determine the nature of the service to be rendered from the word for “minister.” It is applied to serving food by Martha, and caring for temporal needs by the mother-in-law of Peter. One was ministering when he served tables or filled waterpots. There are two ways by which men can obscure meanings and do despite to the language of the Spirit. One is to take a general term and limit it to a specific, the other is to take a specific term and make it general. The first error is committed in this case, and it is compounded by the fact that the specific term seldom even includes the transliterated one.

The gift of “ministry” embraces every form or act of service. It describes feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, or sharing with those who are in prison. Every deed performed to relieve any need or enter into any suffering is ministry. We are guilty of making sad mistakes when we refer to ministry as related only to proclaiming the word, and stewardship only as related to handling money, for we take two noble terms and squeeze them into a narrow and restricted compass.

TEACHING AND EXHORTING

3. *Teaching.* The term *didaskalia* is a scholastic one. It has to do with providing instruction. This last word is one which embodies the root *struct*, literally, to pile. To construct is to pile up material, generally according to design. To destruct is to tear down the pile. To obstruct is to pile in the way. So instruction is the piling in of facts, the furnishing of information not previously known.

That there are those who have a natural gift for teaching others is obvious to every school administrator. It involves more than merely having degrees in education. Many who have sophisticated degrees do not possess the power to communicate thought, while others with less formal attainments can inspire

students to greater heights. A true teacher, motivated by appreciation for the subject and love of the students is possessed of *charisma*.

4. *Exhortation*. It is important to remember that one may be a good instructor while not having the gift of exhortation. Teaching and exhorting are not the same at all. The first deals primarily with providing facts not previously known. The second consists of encouragement to do that which one already knows to be right. It is stimulation to act, to get on with the task. Instruction seeks to overcome ignorance, exhortation to overthrow apathy and indifference. One kindles the fire, the other stirs it up. The educator shares facts, the exhorter shares faith. One provides the road map, and the other starts the engine.

The original is *parakaleo*, to call to a person, from *kaleo*, to call. It was used for firefighters who called to a person to jump from a building which was aflame. It was used for a coach or trainer who called for a runner to exert an extra burst of speed. It was used for a captain who cried out to his men to follow him in storming a fort. It is quite obvious that it is a word which is intended to galvanize others into action and urge them on to the fulfillment of their duty.

5. *Giving*. That there are those with a *charisma* for giving no one can doubt. Some who give do it with such ill-will as to undo the good effect of their sharing. There are those who make the recipients feel inferior and unworthy. There are others who, like the Pharisees, sound the trumpet of publicity and use their giving as a means of enhancing their own image rather to extend actual help.

The Authorized Version says that the gift of giving is to be done with simplicity, and this is a great word. In the Greek it is *haplotes*, and it is one of those terms which seem to catch up some of the finest qualities and noblest characteristic to which

mankind can attain. The usage in literature sometimes indicates simplicity and sincerity, and at other times generosity. The reason for this is interesting.

Haplous is the word for single, as *diplous* is for double. That which is single is undivided in its attention or unwavering in affection. It represents a unity, a simplicity, as opposed to duplicity, or deception. You will recall that Jesus said, "Let your eye be single," that is, without hypocrisy or sham.

One who is truly generous concentrates his attention upon the need of another, acting with undivided concern to relieve the situation. He bestows what he has to correct it, regardless of cost. So the word means liberality, or generosity when used in this connection. To be able to do this without reticence or regret is a gift, a *charisma*. When one can come to the aid of another without making him feel unworthy, or in debt, it is truly a blessing.

The word occurs in 2 Corinthians 8:2, where Paul speaks of "the riches of your liberality." The *New English Version* renders it by "lavishly open-handed." It occurs again in 1 Corinthians 9:11, and the King James Version has "enriched in everything to all bountifulness," while the New English Version reads, "rich enough to be generous." So the term certainly excludes narrow, stingy and niggardly attitudes, but it includes more than just giving money freely. It takes into account that kind of sharing which never deprecates the person while ministering to him in his distress.

6. *Ruling*. It is probably unfortunate that *proistemi* was not translated by the word "leadeth" instead of "ruleth." When we use the word rule we immediately associate it with the idea of authority, or exercise of power or dominion over others. This has led to abuses in every generation, including our own. As an example, we have been taught that elders have been placed in office to rule the congregation, and in some places the word of

these men is law. Their opinion becomes the official interpretation of that congregation, and those affiliated with it must subscribe to it, or remain absolutely silent. To utter a contrary opinion, will invoke the wrath and discipline of “the powers that be,” and one may be cast out of the synagogue for exercise of free speech.

Of course, this is absurd and asinine. No such authority has been invested in any man or group of men. In the first place the word “office” is not used as it is in the political realm. In the scripture it does not refer to a position, but to a function. My arm does not hold an elected office in my body, but as an integral member, it has a function. That function is a special one but it is no more special than that of any other member. It stems from ability and qualification to fulfill a task. It would be a silly gesture to try and appoint my nose to do the work of my mouth. It is not qualified to so function.

In the second place, the system we have devised is diametrically opposed to the express teaching of Jesus who said it should not be thus. “You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority: but it shall not be so with you.” We have adopted the way of the world and forgotten the way of Jesus. There is no greater imposition than to try and force a man to conform to a thought pattern which contravenes his honest personal conviction. To attempt this under threat or coercion is tyranny over the mind and despotism over the heart.

In spite of the fact that Jesus said it should not be so, it is so in a great many places. Elders assume prerogatives bordering upon infallibility. Their judgment must not be questioned nor their authority abridged. Together with the preacher whom they hire, they rule with a tight rein and an iron hand. It is assumed that men who hold high positions in the scholastic or business world are imbecilic when it comes to the Bible, and wholly incapable of directing their spiritual destiny. All decisions must

be made for them. Their only responsibility is to acquiesce, remain dumb and give their money to support the system.

Such hierarchical domination has developed as a part of our sectarian stance. It is maintained through fear of what men may do unto us. The word for “ruleth” in our passage is *proistemi*, literally, to stand before, that is, to preside. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the *New English Version* has the interesting rendering, “Elders who do well as leaders should be reckoned worthy of a double stipend, in particular those who labor at preaching and teaching.” The word for diligence signifies zeal and earnestness. Those who have the ability to preside should set an example of diligent concern.

7. *Showing mercy.* The extension of compassion will be greatly enhanced by those who have the gift to demonstrate empathy. I know good brethren who probably ought to be barred from hospital visitation. They will undo in fifteen minutes what a corps of physicians and nurses have worked a week to accomplish. They are awkward in the presence of the patient, saying and doing all of the wrong things. They stay too long, talk too loud, and sit on the edge of the bed.

It is no particular comfort to a patient to tell him that he looks far worse than you expected to find him, nor does it help to point out that both your uncle and brother-in-law died within the last six months from exactly the same condition. It does not cheer one up to inform him that the surgeon who is going to operate on him the next day is as rough as the bark on a hickory tree and was probably responsible for killing your Aunt Gertrude.

Some well-meaning folks who love statistics on the dead and dying, give a patient a running account of the progress, or lack of it, of everyone in the congregation. With a countenance as cheerful as if they had just swallowed a tablespoon of vinegar, and a voice as doleful as a losing candidate saying farewell to his

campaign workers, they drone on and on, while the patient wishes they would drop dead and he would recover, but doubts that either will happen.

On the other hand, I know some folk whose very presence will brighten a hospital ward. Even the professional groaners, who carry on rhythmically, resolved that if they cannot feel well no one else who is in earshot will either, desist while such folks are there. Sometimes they even forget to start up again for quite awhile after they are gone. They spread happiness where there is heartbreak and sympathy where there is sadness. Their speech and touch are both soft and soothing. They are *charismatic*.

Mercy is from *eleos*. It refers to an open and outward manifestation of pity. W. E. Vine says, “It assumes a need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” It is a quality of which we need more manifestation and daily demonstration.

SUMMARY

It is time for me to summarize the things we have discovered in this dissertation, which has grown far too lengthy. I am grateful to those who have patiently read thus far. If you have done so, you will recall that we have learned that the will of God is expressed as follows.

1. Each one of us is to make a sober estimate of his ability, based not upon an exalted opinion of self, but upon an assessment of the gift of God as bestowed by grace.

2. We are not bound together as members of an organization, a concept for which there was no term in the Greek. Rather, we are functioning members of an organism, bound together not by a mere fraternal tie or pledge of allegiance. Our real relationship is to Jesus as the center of life and activity.

3. There are no useless members of the body of Christ, as there are no superfluous organs in the human body. Paul declares that “those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary” (1 Cor. 12:22).

4. The unity we enjoy is not an achievement of men, but a creation of the Spirit. We are not one simply because of an agreement to work together, but we work together because we are one. We function naturally and normally as organs in a body. Only abnormal, afflicted or diseased members do not function.

5. We are interrelated and made into a cohesive unit by the indwelling Spirit. We do not surrender our individuality or prerogatives to one another, and are not to be conformists to anyone but Jesus. He is great enough to accept us all as we are, and under the umbrella of his love we can find shelter for all of our diversities.

6. Any aptitude or endowment which enables us to perform any function in the body is a gift of grace. We distinguish between them as natural or super-natural, but this has to do with the method of their bestowal. There is really no indication that God makes such a differentiation. In any event, they are all *charismata*, so whether the body functions solely through gifts immediately bestowed, or through gifts naturally received, or through a combination of both, it is charismatic.

The body of Christ has always functioned and always will function through gifts of God. Since there is no such thing as a non-charismatic age or era, it follows that, to separate and designate a certain period as a charismatic age, is to make a distinction unwarranted by fact or revelation. Instead of glorifying God by such a procedure, it rather speaks derogatorily of divine concern. It makes it appear that God withdraws all aid from the members until they make a mess of things and then steps in to perform a direct rescue operation.

But if the church can exist and function for any length of time without *charismata*, it can do so interminably, or until Jesus comes. And since God has shown himself to be a divine economist, exerting only enough power to fill a need, and no more, there would be no need of occasional outbursts designated as charismatic.

My conclusion is that all of us as individuals must employ the gifts we possess for the good of the whole body, and the body must provide an opportunity for us to grow and develop within the framework of fellowship. No one can say to another that he has no need of him. Each must receive the others as God received him. If we can conduct ourselves in this manner the world will see that we are truly “members one of another.”

With Brotherly Love

Mission Messenger (December 1971)

Volume 33

[Abstract]

We have arrived at that place in our study of the Holy Spirit where we must close our remarks for the year. I am thankful that we may do so by talking about our feelings toward one another. Unless the indwelling Spirit transforms our hearts until we can truly love one another, all else is in vain. Strange as it may seem after all of the fighting and tending, the debating and division, we will not be judged by our orthodoxy, but by how we treated the least of the brethren.

One may be quite ignorant of the finer points of those doctrinal issues which we have thrust up as walls to separate God's precious children, but if he loves his brethren he can be saved. On the other hand, though he may be enlightened in all of the arguments and contentions of the warring parties, he abides in darkness and there is no light in him, if he hates the brethren.

It is not knowledge, but love, which covers a multitude of sins. It is not legalistic conformity but love which keeps no account of wrongs, which bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things. It is love which validates all things, and if one had such strong convictions that he would go to the martyr's stake rather than relinquish them, without love it would be an empty and profitless gesture.

One is not true to the faith which is in Christ Jesus because

he defends party shibboleths, but because he ignores them all. It is not strengthening factional barriers, or piling arguments upon them to make them higher, which will gain the approval of heaven, but simply going through them as if they were not there. And for the one who does this, they will not be there. The time has come to burst through our paper curtains and to lose all fear of the “paper tigers” who are the party “somewhats.”

Of all that has transpired through the agency of the Spirit in my unprofitable life, I am happiest for the fact that he has poured out the love of God in my heart. I can now love all of God’s children, and even my enemies. Since I started loving, there are a lot more of the former and a lot fewer of the latter. This makes it infinitely easier. I feel a deep sense of compassion for those who must repeat falsehoods to justify their animosity. But I shall never again be trapped by Satan into hatred for any of them.

I can now go anywhere and share with anyone who loves my God. Our differences are never as great as the welding power of his blood. I will not thwart the work of the cross to have my way. No opinion, no method of work, no interpretation of some subtle point of doctrine is as precious to me as my brother. I will hold my opinions in my mind and my brethren in my heart. I cannot give up my opinions as long as they are mine, but I will not give up my brothers as long as they are his. It is no longer a question with me of withstanding my conscience or withdrawing from my brethren. I just retain them both and cherish them. This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in my eyes.

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil: cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9).

Dissimulation refers to pretence or sham. It is hypocrisy, which is a transliteration of *hupokrites*, to speak under, or from behind a mask. The Greek dramatists did not portray emotions

with their own features. They had masks which exhibited all of the various sentiments from hilarity to deep grief. The performers selected a mask which corresponded with their lines, and held it over their faces while they spoke. Thus, the word hypocrite in the new covenant scriptures means a stage-player, one who puts on an act.

The opposite of hypocrisy is sincerity, a word which, in its Greek origin means “to examine in the sunlight.” Ancient bazaars in the marketplace were dark crannies, and the clever purchaser of a fabric would insist upon taking it out in the open sun for closer inspection. That which passed the test was branded “sincere.” Sometimes love is feigned. It will not stand up when subjected to the full glare of close inspection.

Evil is any destructive force, whether affecting the physical, moral, or spiritual realm. Since anything which disrupted or destroyed the natural course of things was labeled as evil, there was a difference between evil and sin. All sin was evil, but not all evil was sin. A hurricane was an evil, but not a sin. Perhaps the word here refers to that which rends the fabric of fellowship, and if so, it is especially appropriate to the theme under discussion.

Evil is not to be simply discounted or regarded as an aggravating problem. It is to be hated with such intensity that we neither embrace nor condone it. We must turn away from it with such abhorrence that we make no apology for it. To cleave to the good is to cling to it with unrelaxing grasp, never losing our hold and never allowing it to slip from our fingers.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another” (Romans 10:10).

The influence of William Penn and the Friends, or Quakers, is preserved in the United States by the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a word which means “Penn’s Woods,” and

which was bestowed upon this area when it was covered with forest. Philadelphia is the Greek term for brotherly love, as used in our text, and indicates the dream of peace-loving people who sought to found a place where all men could be received as brothers, and dwell together in mutual respect and harmony.

It is my contention that the only true city of brotherly love is the “city of the living God” (Hebrews 12:23). Its citizenry is composed of those who “esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt,” and who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved. One of the supreme tragedies of the ages is that the hated have become haters, and the persecuted have become the persecutors.

Just as there is no dynamic to compare with brotherly love, so there is no hatred so bitter and intense as that which is shown when brethren turn against one another. I have personally observed those who met around the same table for years, singing and praying together, helping each other in time of need, and shedding the sympathizing tear, but experiencing a complete change when a root of bitterness sprang up among them.

Sometimes an issue has been introduced by a visiting preacher, who, under the guise of preaching the gospel, creates a faction around his pet opinion, making it appear that the fate of the whole kingdom of heaven throughout all ages, world without end, depends upon “taking a stand” with his partisan cohorts and himself. Preachers who labored faithfully in the past, and have built up the community of saints, are branded and stigmatized as compromisers and liberals because they refuse to shiver the body to splinters over the newest mental aberration. Families are riven apart, brethren no longer speak to one another, the body is split into rival tribes, suits are entered in the civil courts for possession of the property, a new outpost is started on the rock of opinion, and a bombardment is begun over the air and through the partisan journals. Challenges for debate are flung out before the world, and all of this is justified

by making it appear that this is what our Lord meant when he said that he came not to send peace on the earth but a sword. Nothing is more absurd and asinine!

And no one is more dangerous to the peace and purity of the kingdom of grace than the self-appointed, egotistic, would-be champions whose goal is to line up a personal following, even if it means the ruthless carving of the body into bloody bits. The one who is manifestly approved when sects and parties arise is the one who ignores the whole mixed-up mess and refuses to give his allegiance to any segment or group. Such a person sees all of the deluded and partisan victims as his brethren, and refuses to become a factional stooge or party hack.

It is ridiculous to confine the term “brotherhood” to a little group of believers whose test of loyalty is some issue ballooned into prominence by the editor of a “faithful” journal. We now have as many “brotherhoods” as we have parties. I belong to none of these. I am a part of the brotherhood of all the saints. Every saved person on this earth is a member of it. Anywhere my Father has a child I have a brother. I am sick of the polarization of men and women around clannish totems. I renounce the whole sordid bit for my life. I have been set free by the grace of God, and I intend to allow no religious politician or “con man” to ever again make me a cat’s paw to pull factional chestnuts out of sectarian flames which he has fanned.

I want to visit all of my brothers. I want to learn from them, to gain their insights, to share in their thinking. I want to show kindly affection to them, regardless of their past allegiance or present predicament. I have no desire or intent to proselyte them to my thinking. One cannot evangelize saved persons and he ought not proselyte them. You evangelize for the sake of the person, you proselytize for the sake of your party. Evangelizing is the work of the Holy Spirit, proselytizing is the fruit of the party spirit.

Perhaps one of the most difficult things to do is to prefer one another in honor. Most of us like to receive acclaim and recognition. A man who seldom reads a newspaper will purchase a dozen copies if his name appears in the fourth paragraph of column three on page eleven. To step back and allow another to take the applause which is due ourselves requires more generosity than a lot of us possess. But this verse clearly indicates that we should be willing to “play second fiddle” if the cause will be enhanced. Someone has pointed out that it is amazing how much can be accomplished if one does not care who gets the credit.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1972)

Volume 34

The Divine Purpose

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The Pleasure of God

Mission Messenger (January 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

“That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event.”— Bishop Hall in *Zeal Without Innovation* (ca. 1625).

Millions of people living on this rotating flyspeck, first called earth by the Creator himself, believe that Jesus is the anointed one and the Son of God. They have never seen him with their eyes. They have never heard his voice. They have never touched him with their hands. But they are convinced, on the best evidence available to them as finite beings, that one originally called the Word, one who was with God and was God, became the first space traveler, spanning the distance between the third heaven and this whirling sphere, to make this “the visited planet,” in a sense no other planet in the almost infinite galaxies can ever know.

The believers come from all nations, languages, tribes, and tongues. Some are black, some are yellow, some are red, some are brown, and some are white. They live in mansions and

castles surrounded by vast expanses of well-trimmed greensward, and they live in bamboo huts in dank, fever-ridden jungles, amidst a tangle of vines and foliage. Some of them speed in jet planes far above the clouds. Some of them pole crude canoes through hidden streams. Some of them plod behind dog teams in the frozen Arctic.

All of these are caught up in the human predicament. It is difficult for them to match their longings with their lives. Earth has its pull upon their hearts as well as heaven. The teacher of philosophy in an erudite institution of learning and the simple native, clad only in a loin cloth, who slips along the jungle trail, both sense a feeling of inadequacy when confronted with the claims of Jesus. It is not easy for them to appreciate the invisible cord of divine love which makes them brothers, and binds them together in a common family circle.

Yet nothing is more evident to one who accepts as valid the testimony of those envoys to the pagan world, who were directly summoned, trained and qualified by Jesus himself, than the truth that he came to transcend all racial, social and national barriers. His mission was to span the chasm between God and man caused by sin, and made wider by the erosion of centuries, and by reconciling us unto God to reconcile us unto one another. He is the bridge over troubled waters, enabling us to rise up and cross over the churning and tumult in the straits of human nature. Truly Jesus came to put it all together.

In a particularly beautiful passage, which never fails to make my heart palpitate a little faster, Paul, who came on the scene a little late, but quickly made up for lost time, tells us what it is all about. Listen to this, and let it trickle down into the crannies of your soul and water your parched inner being with its life-giving hope.

“For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the

richness of God's free grace lavished upon us, imparting full wisdom and insight. He has made known to us his hidden purpose— such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ— to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ" (Ephesians 1:7-10).

Statements and sentences are like food. Some can be taken at a gulp, hastily swallowed so that the mental digestive system can get on with the task, and start breaking them down to extract the nutriment from them. But others need to be taken more deliberately with each morsel rolled about and savored over and over as it comes in contact with the intellectual taste buds and palate. It is thus I regard this glorious combination of words and thoughts expressing what is our magnificent heritage in Christ.

THE REVEALED MYSTERY

The hidden purpose of God, concealed through the ages is now disclosed. And that purpose is also both his will and pleasure. It is not just something God has to do in order to be God, but also something he wanted to do because he is God. It is not a will, calculating and contrived, to prove that, in the final analysis, God must have his way. It is his pleasure, cheerfully and eagerly entered into, a divine secret kept under the blanket of love until the right moment, and then uncovered with a burst of heavenly joy as a demonstration of the richness of free grace lavished upon us.

All of this was not a sudden whim, for it borders upon blasphemy to think of God as acting by caprice or upon momentary impulse. Instead, it was determined beforehand in Christ. That is why it will be translated into reality. God is able to see the end from the beginning. He calls things that be not as though they were. Whatever he determines he delineates. The

ultimate is perfect fulfillment of a perfect will. It will be put into effect when the time is ripe, and only God can test the times for ripeness.

What was the greatest secret, the mystery which was to fulfill the divine purpose, plan and pleasure? It was that the universe might be brought into a unity. The creation of God is a universe. It is not a multiverse. There is not a single unrelated atom. The chain of relationship extends in an unfathomable and incomprehensible network which links all creation together. There is more to creation than the material. “In him, everything in heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders of thrones, sovereignties, authorities and powers: the whole universe has been created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16).

Sin distorted the glorious artistry of creation. It defiled and alienated, divided and destroyed. But the will of the Creator is to see that unity is restored, not merely as relates to things on earth but things in heaven as well. This means that in Christ will be realized the purpose which gathers up every thread of history and weaves it into a pattern where there will be no crude design or frayed edges. The divine pleasure is to promote unity—universal unity—unity in Christ!

Now, the divine approach to this ideal is to call individuals from a life of sin, reconciling them to God so they may share in the life of God and breathe the fragrance upon others. “Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with the sinfulness of men, so that in him we might be made one with the goodness of God himself” (2 Corinthians 5:21). When this happens the new order has started. Each person who comes into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ is one more unit in the eternal purpose. “When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world, the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Since this strategy has been in operation for nineteen centuries, why has it not been successful in bringing our part of the universe at least, into a greater sense of unity? That it has not is evident from the fact that alien ideologies have enslaved the minds of hundreds of millions, while there are uncounted millions more of our fellowmen who are unaware that God broke through the flesh curtain to share our misery in the form of a Son.

Certainly no simple answer to this question can be given. It is not a problem to be solved in twenty-five words or less. But basic to an understanding of it is a recognition that there is involved another master strategist, identified as “the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit that is now at work among God’s rebel subjects” (Eph. 2:2). Since the ultimate purpose of God is to unite things in heaven and things on earth, the demonic forces in the universe, under the direction of the Adversary, are united to thwart the accomplishment.

We will be guilty of a frightful misjudgment if we assume that we are at war only with human foes, that is, with flesh and blood. Our fight is “against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens.” It was not an idle caution that we should “put on all the armor which God has provided, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Nor must we ever forget to “take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (verse 16).

It would not require a great deal of acumen in military matters to determine the devices which the devil would employ to delay and hinder the forces of righteousness and stop their onward progress. As an army dedicated to uniting all things in the universe, if their ranks were divided, and they were led to engage in civil war, it is obvious that their goal would be forgotten and their own survival become the matter of greatest

importance. If the vanguard could be deflected and thrown into confusion the eternal purpose would be stymied while the enemy picked off the soldiers at will.

No thoughtful student can deny that those who acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God, have been fragmented into warring sects, whose hostility toward other believers has actually been more intense than it has been toward evil. In this age when secularism and humanism have been drawn like shades over the windows of the mind, there will be those who refuse to credit the condition to Satan, forgetting that in their attempt to make man his own god, they must always end up making him his own devil. But whatever its origin or source, strife and division have characterized the believers in him who came and “preached peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh.”

More millions have been spent to enhance the sectarian image and to promote sectarian rivalry than have ever been devoted to securing the purpose of God. So-called “religious wars” have drawn more blood and been prolonged through more decades than any other. Fields of the earth have been fertilized with the crimson gore of millions. Cities have been ravaged and burned, nations have been decimated and families destroyed, all under the fanatical zeal fired by the thought that “of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

In addition to the carnal strife where men have shot each other down with all kinds of weapons from crossbows to cannon, there have been the creedal encounters in which partisan champions have pummeled each other with theological arguments and left scars which never healed and turned away thousands in disgust and disillusionment. The result is a current despair that anything can ever be done to remedy conditions, and a feeling that we can only go on to the bitter end, maintaining our sectarian establishments and defending our monastic walls.

RAYS OF HOPE

I do not share this pessimistic attitude. I am convinced that the purpose of God will triumph. I am also convinced that I must actively participate in helping to bring the divine pleasure to fruition. It is true that what I can do will be little, and, in the long run may appear insignificant, but he who blessed the few loaves and fishes can multiply our meager efforts and even feed a multitude. And we are obligated to plant and water and leave the increase to him.

What can we do that will make even a minor contribution for good? I should like to suggest two things. First, we can rediscover and point out the magnetic center to which all must be attracted, and around which we must all revolve if we are to be drawn together. We must re-examine the new covenant scriptures and the history of the primitive saints and recover the true emphasis which had such impact upon the cruel world of the Caesars, and which motivated men with such a powerful dynamic that they freely gave themselves up to mockings, scourging and death.

This means that we must grasp afresh the basis of *koinonia*, or fellowship, which welded together men of every “tribe and language and people and nation.” It was this sense of *koinonia* which bound them by indissoluble ties which persecution could not weaken and the thrust of death could not sever. In short we must find out how the early disciples “raised their voices as one man and called upon God.” We must find out how “the whole body of believers was united in heart and soul.”

Second, we must come to understand the real nature of the *ekklesia*, the called of God, that which, in some of our English versions is called “the church.” We have done despite to the language of the Spirit, by talking about “churches,” and making it appear that there is more than one, or that “a church” is an organization of men and women polarized around a creed, a

peculiar doctrinal emphasis, or a specialized set of tenets. The Spirit of God never used *ekklesia* in any such manner, and to apply a term which ostensibly translates the word in such an arbitrary fashion is to confuse and confound.

There are not “three hundred churches” in the United States, or anywhere else. If we adopt the word “church” as a translation of *ekklesia*, there is only one church. There never has been but one. There never will be another. That church is not a human organization at all, nor can it ever become such. It is a divine organism. It is not a concoction of man but a creation of the Spirit. There is no such thing as The Methodist Church, The Baptist Church, The Presbyterian Church, The Roman Church, The Christian Church, or The Church of Christ. The word of God knows absolutely nothing of any of these. So long as we think in such terms we will contribute nothing to the unity of the believers, although we will no doubt add greatly to their confusion.

I say that we can help by clarification of these points, for it is from here that much of our trouble springs. So long as men have varied points of emphasis around which they polarize we will have schism and strife, and the sectarian spirit will be kindled anew every time someone feels that he has discovered a neglected point which needs affirmation and exaltation as a rallying point or standard. Each time a new tribe will withdraw and encamp around the banner and firmly resolve to battle to the death their former associates who do not dance together around the new totem. We must find the center to which all can and must come, and upon which the acceptance of God into his fellowship is conditioned. What is the divinely revealed and fundamental ground upon which God proposes to gather all those who trust in Jesus?

Of course, since God has already begun his work of bringing the universe into a unity in Christ by calling unto himself a people, reconciled and reconciling we must understand

the nature of this *ekklesia*, or community of the redeemed. Is it intended to be an organization, an institution, or an “extension of the Incarnation,” as some of my good friends in the “Church of Rome” say? If we mistake its nature we may be betrayed into creating or formulating something foreign to the plan and purpose of God, and seeking to pass it off as the one body. Just as there have been false Christs, so there have been false “bodies of Christ,” and none who love the Lord should be interested in such spurious institutions.

It will help, at the outset, if we realize that the body of Christ is not a “Christian sect,” according to the vocabulary of the age. It cannot be for the simple reason that it contains all of the saved upon earth. God not only calls us out of our state of sin and alienation, but he calls us together, because the purpose of calling us unto himself is to further the eternal purpose of uniting the universe in Christ. And he calls us into one body, for if he called us from our separation and segregation, our hostility and animosity, only to divide us again in Christ, little would be accomplished. God never added a person to anything except the one body. So far as heaven is concerned there is only one body, and we are either in it or not, regardless of what else we may be in.

But if the body of Christ is not a sect, it is also true that no sect is the body of Christ. It cannot be because that which constitutes it a sect precludes it from being the one body. No sect contains all of the saved upon earth. If it did it would not be a sect. It would be the *ekklesia*. Any organization or institution which recognizes or admits that there may be some outside of its prescribed limits who are saved, by that very judgment admits its own sectarian identity. A sect may contain some of the saved who are a part of the *ekklesia*, and it may contain some who are not saved, and are not a part of the *ekklesia*.

It seems obvious that sects keep those apart whom God has called to be together. They hinder the manifestation of

communion. They act as obstacles to sharing, Since this is the case, the spirit which gives rise to sects, the party spirit, is wrong. It is contrary to the will of the Father. It is a work of the flesh. Now this may be generally admitted and still we remain apart. The reason we do so is because each mistakes the sect with which he is affiliated with the body of Christ. To him it is "the Lord's church." He feels that if he does not defend the sect he is denying his commitment to Christ Jesus. Every sectarian holds the hope that some day divine providence will so arrange it that all sincere and honest persons on earth will see the superlative value of his system, equate it with the divine revelation, and will be drawn to it by a magnetic power, irresistible to those who love the truth.

However, there is no promise held forth that God will transmute any sect into the one body. All sects originated after the creation of the one body, and although they have existed co-extensively with that body, and have sheltered many who were in it, the nature of the body is one thing and the nature of the sect is a wholly different thing. There is no way by which an existing sect with its power structures societies, agencies, institutions and organizations, can be transformed to become exclusively the one body.

A FORLORN HOPE

Any attempt to promote the *ekklesia* of God by uniting sects or parties is doomed to failure. This is not to deride such efforts. It is not even to say there may be no pragmatic value derived from them. In a fragmented world it would seem better for people to work together, than in opposition to one another, if there is no overwhelming conviction to keep them apart. Certainly they would save money and machinery, as they attempt to cooperate in relieving human misery.

It is not even necessary that the devil be credited with

fomenting such attempts at cooperation. It is possible that Satan gets credit for more things than he deserves, and while I would not want to cheat him out of any glory coming to him, a lot of times he is credited with creating things that we do not favor, or did not think of first. What I am saying is that the idea that such cooperation or amalgamation of forces constitutes the body of Christ is far from being correct. No confederacy of sects can ever be the body of our Lord. Such a federation may create a larger sect, and in doing so, may quell a great deal of the pettiness which seems to accompany the sectarian stance, and it may develop a more impressive, sophisticated and functional sect, but it will not be the one body of Christ.

The body of Christ is not even constituted of congregations, all of which subscribe to a recognized format of procedure by which to test their loyalty. Sects can publish directories of those groups which the editor deems to be “loyal” and therefore, worthy of inclusion, and most of them do publish such. But these catalogues are simply lists of those places which outwardly, but not always inwardly, conform to a pre-determined and prescribed philosophy or rule. Such lists are convenient for those who wish to locate, associate or correspond with others who recognize certain positions as canonical, but they have no real relationship to the one body. No arbitrary listing, not even one compiled by an editor, has any relevance to the body of saints. Their names are enrolled in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and that book is not currently open or accessible to earthly reporters.

Nothing is clearer than the fact that the one body is composed of individuals. The apostle Paul said this in so many words. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). The members of the body are not sects, parties, factions or segments. To try and compose the body by uniting these is a useless pursuit. None of these have been, or can be baptized, and the body is composed of those who have been baptized. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into

one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” The body is made up of Jews and Greeks. It is composed of slaves and free men. It is not a coalition of sects but a community of saints.

When regarded as a flock, it is individuals who are the sheep. When regarded as a temple, it is individuals who are living stones. When regarded as a vine, it is individuals who are the branches. When regarded as a family, it is individuals who are the children. Some of these, of course, may belong to parties because of immaturity or carnality. Not all of the children and heirs of God are full-grown intellectually or emotionally. God has some mental dwarfs among his offspring. Not all of them have been able to conquer the fleshly tendency left over from childhood, to form tribes, clans and brotherhoods with their passwords and shibboleths. The tendency to huddle together in little groups of the initiated did not disappear with the original Gnostics.

This was true of the saints in Corinth to whom the apostle wrote more about the one body than to any other congregation. They were fragmented and schismatic. They were raucous with their party cries But the Spirit did not confuse their sectarian alliance with their relationship in Christ. They were in the body by the call of God who is faithful. They were in a party by their own choice. They were baptized into the one body, but they were badgered into schism. However, it must never be forgotten that it was these who came together “not for the better but for the worse,” who composed the one body at Corinth.

Paul did not once imply that their relationship in the sect cancelled their relationship to the head of the body. I do not intended to forget that as I write this year. I shall remember that no man on earth can add another to the body of Christ. We are to receive one another as God has received us. But whether we receive one another or not, has not one thing to do with God receiving us.

I shall also remember that no man on earth can remove another from the body of Christ. Neither the power of grafting or amputating has been conferred upon puny and finite man. Men can excommunicate others from their sects, because the sects originated with men. But excommunication from a sect does not mean amputation from the one body. Frequently, it is those who are beloved and respected in the one body, who are cast out of sects. One who seeks to live in conformity with the Lord may incur the wrath of those who seek conformity with the party.

I will remember that only the Holy Spirit can add one to the body of my precious Lord, and only the Spirit can subtract one from the body. I trust that this will help me to overcome any tendencies toward bigotry and infallibility which may linger from the days when I walked after the flesh. And as I write, I shall seek to write in love for all who trust in Jesus. Despite the wide divergencies in our understanding and approach, if you love him as I love him, we have a common ground from God upon which to stand as we reason together about the problems which we face as we seek to contribute to the eternal plan and purpose of the ages. May God bless you all is my fervent prayer! It is our sincere prayer that you will read our sequel to this article next month.

The Death of a Dream

Mission Messenger (January 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

A speech delivered at the Green Valley Church of Christ in San Jose, California, as one of the Roy B. Shaw Memorial Lectures (October 20-22, 1971).

In the art gallery at Bergano, in Italy, hangs a picture by Raphael, with an aura of romance about it. It is a painting of the *Virgin and the Child*. When Napoleon invaded Italy, and Milan and Bergano fell into his hands, he gave orders to collect the priceless art treasures to be sent away as spoils to the Louvre in Paris. An unknown painter in Bergano swiftly painted a rough, crude landscape over the canvas of Raphael. The captors, regarding it as worthless, left it behind.

In the years of turmoil which followed the picture became lost. No one recognized its true value. It was in the year 1868 that the hastily-daubed paint began to peel and flake off. Men who were adept at restoring ancient paintings were given the task of removing the accretions until finally the original could again be seen in all of the glory conveyed to it by the master artist.

In the summer of 1809, in the simple frontier home of a Dr. Welch, near the village of Washington, Pennsylvania, a humble Irish immigrant sat down at a small table in an upstairs room. He had recently been unfrocked as a Presbyterian minister

because of his charitable heart which refused to confine the grace of God within the pale of a small segment of his sect. Now, at the age of forty-six, he was free in Christ to explore those means by which peace might be restored to a church militant against herself. Dipping a quill into the inkpot he began to inscribe upon foolscap the words which flowed from a heart burdened with grief over the schisms which had rent the family of God into warring tribes.

When he had finished writing, and dried his feathered quill, he called the document he held in his hand, "A Declaration and Address." When he read it to friends and neighbors gathered to hear it on September 7, they gave it their unanimous approval, and ordered it to be printed and distributed. One-hundred-and-sixty-two years have now come and gone and have faded into the blue haze which we call history, since Mr. Campbell stood up to read his production to backwoods neighbors, yet I have no hesitancy in saying to you that I regard it as one of the greatest uninspired documents written by human hand.

Like the famous charter signed by King John on the field of Runnymede, June 15, 1215, and which became the basis of English constitutional liberties, the declaration of Thomas Campbell became the Magna Charta of all those who respect the lordship of Jesus, leading the way to freedom from clericalism, creedism and ecclesiastical tyranny. Its purpose was probably best stated by Alexander Campbell, a son of the author, some twenty-six years after its inception.

"A deep and abiding impression that the power, the consolation and joys—the holiness and happiness—of Christ's religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union,—upon having a 'thus saith the Lord,'

either in express terms or in approved precedent, ‘for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.’ This was offered in the year 1809, in the ‘Declaration and Address’ of the Washington Association, Pennsylvania.”

Mr. Campbell further called it “the first effort known to us to abandon the whole controversy about creeds and reformation, and to *restore* primitive Christianity, or to build alone upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner.”

Some facts are immediately obvious. This was to be a work of *recovery*. It was dedicated to recovering the power, consolations, joys, holiness and happiness of the religion of Christ. It was to be a work of *renewal*. It sought to renew the faith and sentiments which made the Way so invincible in its primal era. It was to be a work of *restoration*. It was devoted to restoring the ancient order in practice and ordinances. It was to be a work of *reformation*. It was directed toward correcting the diction, purifying the language, and thus recapturing the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. And this meant not just speaking where the Bible speaks, but speaking *as* the Bible speaks.

The goal was the union, peace and harmonious co-operation of all of the children of God. This was the glorious dream, the majestic vision, and the magnificent obsession. How was it to be accomplished? How was it to differ from the enfeebled sectarian thrusts of the past. What thoughts pulsed through the mind of Thomas Campbell as he wrote? Listen, as I detail for you a few of the noble concepts penned by this humble Irish Presbyterian.

1. At the outset it was to be recognized that the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one, consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their

tempers and conduct. It begins with a recognition and affirmation of unity, not as something to be achieved *by* Christians, but as something accruing *to* Christians. Unity in Christ is not a goal, but a gift. It is a state in which to share, not a status for which to strive.

Every believer who is in Jesus is in Jesus with every other believer who is in him. Every person who is joined to Jesus as head is joined to every other member who is joined to Jesus. And it makes no difference what else he may be in through ignorance, tradition or early conditioning. We become one body in him by the action of God and not through a faction of men. The church on earth is essentially one! It is intentionally one! It is constitutionally one! And this unity is beyond the power of man to affect.

2. The articles of faith and the terms of communion are divinely stated and must never be abridged, augmented or amended by men. Nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as an article of faith, nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God.

3. With respect to commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time, manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church, nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe the commandments and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious ends of their institution.

4. That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so, for their faith

must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but properly do belong to the after and progressive education of the church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession.

5. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths and defensive testimonies, in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for these purposes the better; yet as these must be, in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion, unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the Church from the beginning did, and ever will consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

What we have cited is sufficient to demonstrate that it was radical and revolutionary in the very best sense of those terms. It begins with a predication of the inherent oneness of the church, and defines the constituency thereof upon the basis of personal profession, validated by conduct and character. It proposes to maintain this oneness inviolate by excluding from articles of faith and terms of fellowship that which the word of God does not positively specify. It forbids legislation and binding of laws in areas of silence by any human authority, denying to any person or persons the prerogative of filling in the blanks for God.

But of especial importance is the safeguard erected around that hallowed watchword of the Reformation led by Martin Luther, "the right of private interpretation of the sacred scriptures." No inference or deduction from Scriptural premises,

even if it may truly be called the doctrine of God's holy Word, is formally binding upon the conscience of any Christian further than he can personally see the connection or plainly perceive that it is so. Therefore, no such deductions can ever be made terms or conditions of fellowship, but belong rather to the gradual growth and maturity of the saints.

It was further provided that doctrinal exhibitions, explanations and interpretations of the great system of divine truths, even in opposition to prevailing errors, were not to be made tests of fellowship. In such reasonings it is obvious that inferential truths will be found, and not everyone has the degree of doctrinal information, or the clear and decisive judgment essential to determining for himself the truth and validity of such matters. If these things are made terms of communion, many will be admitted to the fellowship upon a second-hand or borrowed faith which they can neither understand nor explain. Their confidence will not rest in the Christ but be imposed in a preacher or presbyter.

This completely removed fellowship in Christ Jesus from the sphere of the extent of knowledge or the degree of comprehension of apostolic doctrine, and centered it in the gospel, the good news of Jesus. It made fellowship contingent upon acceptance of him who is our hope and salvation. By making our creed a person instead of a code, and our sharing in life dependent upon faith rather than upon knowledge of a system of doctrines, all of the controversies over creeds and formulae were forever rendered obsolete and irrelevant.

Was this grand design effective? Would it work? History shows that it kindled fresh hope in the humble hearts of hardened frontiersmen. They carried the torch and spread the glowing flame across the land. The citadels of sectarianism shook and trembled as if in a mighty wind. Party walls were breached and crumbled. Those who had been shackled by sectarian chains threw off their cruel fetters. Factional loyalties

were forgotten. Prejudices were laid aside and banished from the heart. Wherever opposition reared its ugly head, the victory was hastened and augmented.

Early in the history of the noble experiment a severe test was made to determine whether men could be united by faith in Christ Jesus, while at the same time holding divergent opinions in regard to speculative matters, and whether fellowship could be sustained on such a basis. Aylett Raines was a prominent preacher in a religious sect which promoted the tenet that no one would be eternally and irretrievably lost, but that ultimate salvation would be the lot of every man. The sect was built around this as its cardinal dogma.

Mr. Raines went to hear Walter Scott and became convinced that he had never obeyed the gospel. He engaged in discussion with a Mr. Williams, another preacher in the sect of which he was a member, and he also agreed that Mr. Scott was correct. The two went down into the waters of the river, and in turn baptized one another for the remission of sins.

When Mr. Raines presented himself for reception into the Mahoning Association, objections were made by some to receiving him while he clung to his views about ultimate universal salvation. But Thomas Campbell arose and deplored the fact that such a question would even be introduced in a congregation of brethren. He said, "Brother Raines has been with me during the last several months and we have fully unbosomed ourselves to each other. He is philosophically a Restorationist and I am a Calvinist, but notwithstanding this difference of opinion between us, I would put my right hand into the fire and have it burned off, before I would hold up my hands against him. And from all I know of Brother Raines, if I were Paul, I would have him in preference to any young man of my acquaintance, to be my Timothy."

After Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott spoke and

showed the difference between preaching the everlasting gospel and holding an opinion about some point of doctrine, Mr. Raines was received by an overwhelming majority. A historian who personally knew and worked with Aylett Raines wrote: "A practical demonstration was thus given that the disciples of Christ could unite on the plain and express teaching of the New Testament, in spite of conflicting opinions in regard to questions of doubtful and speculative nature. It was clearly shown by this transaction and its results, that the divisions of the Christian world over matters of a purely philosophical nature, are useless, as the Scriptures show them to be sinful. The two extremes of Calvinism and Universalism met and shook hands in fraternal fellowship upon the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ— a fellowship that human opinions could not break."

It was in the early part of 1832, however, that the genius and nature of the restoration ideal to effect the unity of believers, was most forcefully demonstrated. At Lexington, Kentucky, some of the followers of Barton W. Stone, known as Christians, and some of those who shared the views of Alexander Campbell, known as Disciples, met to pray and labor for possible union. Hitherto, the movements had gone their separate ways, with only individual fraternization in certain communities. Now they seemed to be drawn toward one another by one Spirit.

John Smith closed an impassioned address with these words: "Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites, or Stonites, or New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light that we need."

When he had finished his message, Barton W. Stone arose, spoke a few words, and publicly extended his hand to Smith as a token of fellowship. As the two men stood with clasped hands, the audience arose, weeping and singing and praising God. For the first time in the history of the Christian era, two separate

bodies were joined into one through love of truth, and despite their differences. Those differences were many and to lesser men would have seemed insuperable. They embraced the nature of the Godhood, the nature of atonement, the name to be worn, the polity of the church, the work of the Spirit, and the design of baptism.

But all of them believed there was one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father who is over *all*, through *all*, and in *all*. This constituted the unity of the Spirit, and this they held and resolved to maintain in the bond of peace. From now on they would discuss all of their differences, but they would do so as brethren and not as members of warring tribes. They had demonstrated to a watching world that unity in diversity could be real, vibrant and powerful.

Men could be one in Christ who were of varied opinions, interpretations and understanding. The dream in the hearts of fervent pioneers had climbed to a soul in answer to the prayer of God's precious Son. And it was into the movement born of that dream that I came from the toils of sectarianism as a simple country lad.

Then, what of that vision in our generation? How have the heirs dealt with this servant sent unto them in the vineyard? It is with a deep sense of regret and shame that I confess that the magnificent project inaugurated to unite the Christians in all of the sects has fallen from its high estate. Even as I speak to you it is one of the most splintered and fragmented movements on the American scene. With the sharp darts of partisan prejudice its members have attacked one another publicly through the press and over the air waves. Rival segments have jostled and jockeyed one another for prestige and position while the sword of the Spirit has been driven into the quivering hearts of brethren and fratricidal gore has marked the sands of the arena of debate and dissension.

We have divided and formed antagonistic cliques over everything from how to take the Good News to the world, to how to pass the Lord's Supper to the congregation. Our only approach to differences has been division, and our only approach to division has been sectarian debate. In spite of the fact that every time the Spirit mentions division in the family of God it is condemned, we could not be more divided if the word of God commanded and enjoined it.

We are divided over missionary societies, instrumental music, centralized control, colleges, orphan homes, national radio and television programs, the right to own television sets, leavened bread, unleavened bread, the manner of breaking the bread, fermented wine, individual cups, Bible classes, uninspired literature, evangelists, the hiring of ministers, the pastor system, marriage of divorced persons, speaking in tongues, divine healing, foot-washing, the hour of meeting to eat the Lord's Supper, and a host of other things. And every division has been brought about by someone esteeming an opinion of greater value than the blood of Christ. Those who stand together one week and sing "Blest Be the Tie that Binds," sever it the following week over some trivial concept.

It is with a sense of sadness and remorse that I acknowledge that, in my earlier days, motivated by a false sense of loyalty, and impelled by ignorance, I felt that one faction constituted the kingdom of God upon earth. I refused to call upon God's children in other parties to even petition our common Father in my meetings. In my bigotry I felt that all others on earth were brethren in error, and to be held in contempt, while our group alone basked in the sunlight of divine favor. The blatant inconsistency of the sectarian attitude never entered my mind, until the grace of God reached out one day and touched me as never before, and the love of God was poured out abundantly in my poor shriveled heart.

Now, having been set free by the grace of God, I am

irrevocably opposed to all sectarianism, even our own. And I am unconditionally opposed to that spirit of narrow exclusivism which separates and segregates brethren in Christ Jesus, and erects artificial walls— paper curtains— to keep them apart from and constantly suspicious of one another. I shall never again become the champion of any clan, the front man for any faction, or the proponent for any party. I shall belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ, body, soul and spirit. I will carry no factional banner and wave no factional flag. I shall flaunt no factional badge and no factional tag.

I will cross over every barrier, break through every wall, and ignore every fence which men have erected in Christ Jesus my Lord. I will labor with all of my brethren who permit me to do so, and love those who will not. My only creed is Christ, and while I respect every rock of truth scattered over God's revelational landscape, I will build upon none of them. My hope of heaven depends not so much upon propagating a party to defend a truth as it does in personally casting myself in absolute dependence upon him who is the truth. And while every truth is precious to me, and will be included as discovered in my rock garden for meditation and enjoyment, I will plant my trust only upon him whom God planted his community, the Rock of Ages! For other foundation can no man lay!

This means that every child of God is my brother. And I have no half-brothers or step-brothers in the Lord. I accept you where you are and as you are. I accept you as God accepted me, in my weakness, frailty and failures. If you are good enough to be his son or daughter you are not too bad to be my brother or sister. And I receive you, and receive you now. We can stop this silly march into oblivion. We can halt the cancerous growth of division which is slowly consuming the body. We do not need to wait until we have debated every action of every faction. We can be one in Christ Jesus now! All we need to do is to extend the hand of fellowship in spite of differences, as did the brethren in Lexington, almost a century-and-a-half ago, and we can walk

out of this hall tonight blessed as peacemakers and deserving to be called the children of God.

I have brethren who, in good conscience, can accompany their praise service to God with instruments of music; I have brethren whose consciences will not allow them to do so. I have brethren who give money to support Herald of Truth and never look at it; I have brethren who refuse to support it and never miss seeing it. I have brethren who teach in Sunday Schools with classes for all ages, and others who gather in undivided assemblies to study the sacred pages. I have brethren who remember the shedding of the blood while drinking from individual cups; I have brethren who pass one container to the body of saints. They are all my brethren. I love them all.

I refuse any longer to play God with any of their lives and thoughts. To their own master they must stand or fall. I will not set at nought my brother. I will not destroy him for whom Jesus died because of my personal conviction about things. The blood of Jesus which makes us one is more important to me than the things about which we dispute inside the family. Our differences are occasions for discussion, but not for division.

If one of my brethren testifies to an experience with the Spirit of God which I have neither had nor sought, I shall not call him a liar, nor shall I drive him forth from the family circle. I shall spread about him the warmth and compassion which all of us need so much, and will cherish him although I may not condone his experience. We are not one because we have had the same experience in the flesh but because we are in One who experienced the same thing in the flesh for all of us. To him be all our praise!

For decades the dream that we might be one has been sleeping in the hidden sepulcher of forgotten hopes. Betrayed in the house of its friends, stabbed to death by the hands of those it had cradled at birth, laid to rest in a grave above which its own

offspring has continued to wage intestine war, its memory has all but faded from the field of theological encounter.

But now another fulness of the times has come! The spiritual womb of hope cries out to be delivered. We must roll away the stone of contention with which our fathers sealed the mouth of the tomb. We must see the glorious ideal which they laid away, resurrected, to come forth clad not in the garb of the nineteenth century, but in the shining armor essential to meet the challenge of a twentieth century secular age, and an ecumenical era.

It is high time to arouse out of sleep. Our salvation is now nearer than when we believed. Let us direct the dynamic of the love of God against the walls which have been opaque, and see them become transparent so that we can envision our brethren on both sides of them. Let us forget the fear of what men may do unto us, and reach out our hands to those we once spurned. Let us learn to love those who differ with us, and find that peace that passes understanding. Let us not wait. Let us do it now!

I have steadfastly set my face in the direction of the unity of all believers in Christ Jesus my Lord. I shall pray for it, plead for it, and proclaim it. I shall never be deterred. I shall never become discouraged. I will never be satisfied until all of us regard one another as God regards all of us. And when the time comes that the pen drops from my nerveless fingers, and my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, I shall rest content, if on the gray marble above my head can be chiseled the words, "He preached peace to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh!"

The Sectarian Game

Mission Messenger (February 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

None of those who read this little journal would deliberately oppose the will of God. None would knowingly be parties to a plot to hinder the divine purpose. In spite of that, we may have allowed ourselves to be maneuvered into a corner where we actually think that to be faithful to Christ we must perpetuate a condition which is diametrically opposed to the divine pleasure. The possibility of this cannot be denied in view of the statement of Jesus to his apostles that the time would come when those who murdered them would do so under the impression that they were performing a service for God. So great is the binding, blinding power of tradition that it may provoke men to make void the law of God, even while thinking that they are fulfilling it.

It is clear that the desire of heaven is for all who trust in Jesus upon the testimony of his ambassadors, to be one. This is the first step in the program of God to bring the universe into a unity in Christ. It is essential to the conviction of the world that he sent his Son, and that the earth was invaded by the personal Word in time and space. Our divisions delay and postpone the acceptance of this great fact by the masses of mankind. Under the guise of loyalty to truth we are helping to defeat the impact of the Eternal Verity.

It is because of this that I am emboldened to address this

appeal to all who love my Lord, and theirs. Feeble though the plea may be and meager though this insignificant little journal may appear, I am casting it like bread upon the waters, consigning it into the hands of him who rules the world, hoping and praying that he will see fit to use it in a way pleasing unto himself. My plea is addressed to all who reverence a common Father, the one God, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Independent.

However, it is important that you remember that it is not addressed to any man because he is Catholic or Protestant. I am not writing to men as Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists or Congregationalists. These terms represent our human divisions, and do not express the longing characteristic of all who seek to find a oneness in Christ Jesus. They are indicative of circumstances of birth, family alliances or community influences, as often as they are deliberate and thought-out theological choices. I speak to men as men, made in the image of God, and alike caught up in the human predicament.

This does not mean that I ignore our sectarian affiliations, but that I regard them as secondary and unrelated to the goal which is before me as I write. They may complicate our problem but they do not constitute it. They are symptoms to be seen externally, but they only betoken an underlying condition which is the real problem. We must cut through them if we are to deal with one another purely on the basis of our love for Jesus. They are like the clothing which the surgeon in the emergency room must cut in order to get to the wound. The disease is sectarianism, the party spirit, and it may take various overt forms.

Obviously we will not be motivated to overcome it until we see it as it really is, a heinous crime against the Spirit of God. It is one of the works of the flesh which lusts against the Spirit and is contrary to it. It is specifically named in a catalogue of vices including immorality, impurity, licentiousness, sorcery, idolatry,

drunkenness, and such like. We are plainly informed that one who deliberately condones and defends the party spirit will not inherit the kingdom of God. It is identified as one of the desires which those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified as a part of the flesh (see Galatians 5:17-24).

One might as well try to justify adultery or idolatry as to sanction partisan strife and schism. To continue in it as part of a traditional heritage would be like indulging in drunkenness because one's father or grandfather were alcoholics. To speak lightly of schism in the body is to be guilty of mockery, and to walk after our ungodly desires. "These are the people who set up divisions, because they are fleshly, and do not possess the Spirit" (Jude 17, 18). Separationism and exclusivism are grievous offences against God.

The Holy Spirit never prompted the origin of any sect. No one was ever baptized into a sect or party under the influence of the Holy Spirit. No one has ever promoted a party to separate or segregate the members of God's family under the leading of the Spirit. The formation of a brotherhood or spiritual fraternity upon the basis of national, social, cultural or racial grounds is not of the Spirit. All such is a work of the flesh. On this the word of God is eminently plain. "For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be slaves or free men" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

So long as we think of sectarianism as a kind of harmless game which we can play without any particularly evil consequences or results we will not be led to abandon it. We will regard it as the drunkard regards his alcoholism, and seek to defend it or explain it away. We must see it as God looks at it. We must recognize it as a hacking to bits of the body of our Lord, an attempt to cure a malady by dismemberment and wilful chopping off of the organs which the Spirit made into one sacred organism.

THE CHANGING CENTERS

What happened to believers in our Lord to cause them to be so frightfully divided as to virtually nullify any effective witness for the one body? It seems rather trite to say that they moved the center of their faith from its original object and position to various points on the spiritual map, and as groups were formed around these diverse centers sects resulted. If we are to again enjoy that unity which at first prevailed we must once more locate the center around which all may revolve, and prove with such clarity that it is the divinely-given rallying-point that all will be persuaded to join hands about it and restore the unity of all the disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Of course this is easier said than done! What makes it difficult is the fact that each sect thinks that its present center is the divinely-given one and that the emphasis it makes is indispensable to a closer walk with God. More and more, however, the absolute essentiality to faith of the sectarian centers of polarization is being questioned by both Protestant and Catholic alike. Eminent Catholics are now debating the dogma of papal infallibility, and many Protestants are no longer concerned with the sectarian tenets which gave birth to their parties. When this is a reflection of a greater concern for God's Word it is good, but when it is due to mere unconcern for spiritual values it is sad. It is one thing to give up a traditional view because it represents an invalid emphasis, it is wholly different to do so because one is no longer interested in anything spiritual. One who leaves the shallows is to be commended if he does so by wading deeper into the stream of spiritual life, but such commendation hardly belongs to one who does so by climbing out on the bank to sit and throw rocks at those who are involved.

The anomaly of all this is that the most bitter partisans of the past may turn out to be the most unitive in thought, because of their determined stand for what they thought to be right all

along. At the same time, those who are apathetic and indifferent about their present alliances may care very little about accomplishing a greater purpose of God. Some who wish for truth while washed in error may become greater leaders than those who have always been wishy-washy with the truth. Those who do not stand for anything often tend to fall for everything!

But it must be made clear that sectarianism does not necessarily result from the espousal of error. The point of emphasis around which a sect crystallizes may be a truth. Being wrong about a doctrinal matter and being sectarian are two different things. In any attempt to promote unity we must always recognize that it must be done on such a basis that no one is called upon to give up any truth which he ever held. It is not required that one surrender any truth, or any concept which he sincerely believes to be a truth. It is required that he “distinguish between things that differ,” and no longer make a creed out of a truth which is secondary in importance to the cardinal truth upon which Jesus constructed the community of the reconciled ones.

It is not always error held in opposition to truth which makes a sect. Sometimes it is a truth held to the exclusion of other truths, or a truth elevated above the truth. All truths are equally true but they are not equally important. It is always better to be right than to be wrong about anything, but our hope of eternal life is not dependent upon being right about everything. It is dependent upon being in the right One. When he is our everything, nothing else can be! And righteousness is a relationship, not an intellectual attainment.

Certainly one should never relinquish a truth, but neither should he make a truth which is secondary a condition of acceptance or fellowship. The body of truth is like the human body and consists of many members. In the human body some members are essential to being while others are essential to wellbeing. If you cut off my head I will die but if you cut off my

little finger I will merely be handicapped. No member of my body is non-essential, but some members are essential to life itself, while others are essential to efficient functioning while I have life. And we must never confuse the two.

Whatever one is required to believe in order to have life is more important than what one must learn in order to grow and develop. What one is able to digest and assimilate at a given time can hardly be as important as his existence. This does not affirm that either is unimportant. It does place their relative importance in a proper perspective. The doctrine which gives life has more importance than the doctrine upon which we feed and grow spiritually. To postulate reception upon the basis of doctrinal knowledge rather than upon belief of the gospel is the equivalent of arguing that no one is a child in a physical family because he has been begotten, but because of his digestive ability and food intake.

Our relationship to the kingdom of heaven is that of naturalized citizens as opposed to that of aliens. When aliens are inducted as citizens of the United States there are certain elemental things to which they must pledge allegiance. When they do this they are received as citizens and are as much citizens as they will ever be. There are thousands of facts about our history and the responsibilities of their citizenship which they do not know at the time. These are not unimportant but simply unessential to their induction. They are not conditions of acceptance but factors of growth and development.

If someone advocates that one cannot be recognized as a citizen until he understands and subscribes to one or more of these subsidiary and developmental matters, he does injury to our nation, regardless of his sincerity. In the same fashion, when one postulates citizenship in the kingdom of heaven upon knowledge and acknowledgment of secondary or subservient truths, he hurts the cause of our Redeemer. Even though he poses as a loyalist or super-patriot he is disloyal to our King, and

if he splinters the subjects into factions and sects where they are taught to hate their fellow-citizens he is a traitor to the very cause he professes to promote.

To devise another ground of allegiance to which one must pledge himself in order to be regarded as a citizen, does not enhance a nation, but weakens it. Every sect, composed of believers in the Lord of glory, only serves to weaken the kingdom of heaven to the extent that it cultivates its own image and seeks to supplant the divine arrangement with the human. To form another nation on some principle borrowed or lifted from the Bill of Rights is rebellion, even though the principle itself is valid and right.

One can be a citizen and entitled to all of the rights and privileges of citizenship, even though quite ignorant of many of the responsibilities devolving upon a citizen. So one can be received as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven while he is unlearned as to many duties necessary to become a better citizen. Such things are matters of growth and development. Citizenship is not predicated upon these matters but upon a relationship of allegiance to the King.

It will not be easy for us to give up our centers of polarization, because we are emotionally attached to them. We have been led to believe that because our fathers fought and died to establish them we will prove untrue to our heritage if we no longer regard them as the crux of partisan faith. All of us can be very critical and intolerant of all other believers who cling to their points of special emphasis. We cannot see how they can be so wilfully ignorant and blind as to maintain and perpetuate their partisan establishments. But stubbornness in others is faithfulness in ourselves.

The problem is intensified because we are conditioned by our written history to think of ourselves as the guardians of orthodoxy. We glamorize our past and glorify our present

Partisan histories are often written by those within to explain a particular stance to those without. It is difficult to be objective while on the defensive. A history of the Roman Catholic party does not read at all like a history of the Lutheran party even while covering the same territory and century. A history of pioneer Methodism does not sound at all like a history of the Baptists on the frontier.

In the particular movement in which my lot has been cast, it is indeed interesting to read the various historical accounts in circulation. It was a movement to unite the Christians in all of the sects by a return to and a restoration of “the primitive order.” But like the fifteen or more other restoration movements with the same goal it became fragmented as first one thing and then another was deemed essential to the ancient order and a partisan group rallied around that indispensable thing in an attempt to make it vital to the original goal.

As each segment produces a history, they all start with the same heroes of the faith and identify with the original crusaders. As they proceed in time each party steadfastly maintains that it is keeping the faith while all others have left it. Each feels that it has arrived while the others have all departed. The leaders of the flock for one group become the “black sheep” to another. The interesting thing is that each historian thinks of his own group as central to the plea. So we have any number of “centrists,” each with corresponding leftists and rightists. It is again borne home to us that history is not so much made by those who live it as by those who write it.

A little careful thought will convince us that one is not a rightist or leftist to us because of where he stands, but by virtue of where we stand as we look at him. It is worth remembering that the direction we face determines who is to the right or left of us. If we turn around, or reverse our field, our rightists will become leftists, and vice versa. All of us are rightists, leftists, and centrists to someone, and we are all of these without moving out

of our tracks or taking a step. For this reason it is a little childish to use these terms for the purpose of locating either ourselves or others unless our goal is that of partisan gratification.

This brings me to the place where I may observe that all sectarianism originates in human egotism and is perpetuated by human pride. This is as true of our own sectarianism as that of the sectarianism of others about us. We may feel that we alone possess the key to open the door to understanding of some divine secret which remains a mystery to all others. Or, we may convince ourselves that we have been chosen and qualified as a heavenly “Brink’s Guard Company,” to protect the riches of the heavenly treasure on its way to the great vault in the skies. Our points of emphasis thus become identification badges for admission to the sacred precincts, and can be used as coded passwords or shibboleths for identification as “loyal.”

Every sect seeks to maintain and polish its own image regardless of cost. And in a culture which is built around a success syndrome, it may be a very expensive thing indeed, in time, money and effort. Obviously, the sectarian “somewhats” dare not use sectarian pride as the basis of appeal since it is diametrically opposed to all that Jesus taught. Promotional campaigns, therefore, are always geared to other concerns, and financial drives are assumed to be legitimate because of the need of taking the gospel to ignorant natives in a foreign country or in an affluent suburb. Thus, milking the pocketbooks of a million dollars to erect a temple of pride is justified by the need for salvation of those who will not come to a more antiquated structure. When an apparent harvest is in the offing men tend to tear down their barns and build greater.

But in spite of the cleverness of the religious “Fifth Avenue Crew,” the spiritual “men in gray flannel suits” always let the cat out of the bag sooner or later. And when they do their sectarianism shows through. When talking about the poverty and deprivation of natives they seek to stimulate the flow of

shekels by reference to the number of missionaries sent out by other sects. They prepare charts showing the per capita giving of affiliates of other religious institutional cliques. The question is asked, "Shall we allow 'the Lord's church' to be surpassed by Seventh Day Adventists and Mormons?" Meanwhile the headquarters of the Seventh Day Adventists and Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints are also sending out comparative charts, for each one of them thinks it is "the Lord's church." There's nothing else that can equal the sectarian spirit of rivalry for "bringing in the sheaves" of greenbacks.

In the race for "the pole position" in the Christian Missions Derby, the smaller and newer sects must try harder. Like Avis, they are not recognized as first, and if you will pardon a miserable and hardly excusable pun— it *Hertz*! Although often drawing from a relatively lower-income group, the people must be exploited to secure ornate and elaborate structures so they can hold their heads up in the religious community and prove that they are as good as the older sects which finance their "heresy" by the gifts of the professional and business men who are rewarded with positions on the official board.

Actually, men wear themselves out and give to the point of exhaustion to maintain the structure of which they are a part. They kill their bodies to save their souls. This might not be so frightening if they did not confuse the latter with polishing and greasing sectarian machinery. It is an interesting observation that the sectarian spirit is intensified when rivalry develops within a given group and division occurs. If the group has been apathetic toward sects of other historical backgrounds, as soon as it fragments, each segment enters into frantic and fanatical effort to outdo the other, on the ground that its righteousness will be manifested by contrast rather than by confession of faith. It is always interesting to see how worldly men must become in order to prove they are not!

Everyone is familiar with the childish and adolescent trend

to show off by exhibition of the latest criteria of the “in group.” When I was a country lad, the thing to do was to meet on Sunday afternoons and race saddle-horses up and down the dirt road which ran in front of the schoolhouse. When automobiles became plentiful the highways were turned into drag strips for “hot-rods.” The latest fad is to head for the lake or river, sit far back in a boat, so the front end is pointed toward heaven as indicative of your destination if you hit a submerged tree trunk, and gun a souped-up outboard motor to cut in and out of river traffic like a bumblebee flying through a cane-brake.

But the same tendency can be seen in “religious circles,” where the inclination to “make waves” seems irresistible to the showmen. I recall attending a great convention once where a number of small mechanized tractors were used to haul grown men around the hall on rubber-tired transports. Each man was holding aloft a placard indicating the number of schools, homes, or missionaries supported by the party in various parts of the earth. As each little truck stopped in front of the stage the men came up the stairs to the platform while an announcer intoned the number of new congregations started, or the number of new institutions begun, as contrasted with those begun by a rival party in the religious field. The rival party never won a single round. They came in a poor second on every count. It reminded me of the man who returned from the Roman Colosseum to announce that the final score was Lions 5, Christians 0. I have seldom seen a more sectarian demonstration or a more childish spectacle.

Sectarianism is a sign of carnality and immaturity. The first makes us act like mere men, the second makes us react like spoiled children. The carnal nature is selfish and envious. It is egotistic and jealous. Those who are dominated by it always crave to be in the lead. They react with bitterness against those who stand in their way or circumvent them. They spend their time trying to get even for fancied faults. They cannot give credit for any accomplishment, regardless of how magnificent, unless

achieved by one of the party henchmen.

John Harris, a British theologian, writing about 1860, said: “Each side may be conscious of certain defects in its own system, and may perceive certain excellences in the system of the other; but it fears to confess the former, or to admit and adopt the latter, lest it should look like a concession to the superiority of its opponents. It is an ancient maxim of wisdom, that it is right to learn even from an enemy; accordingly, an army no sooner finds that the foe is employing a new and an effectual weapon, than it immediately copies and adopts the deadly invention; but an ecclesiastical faction, heedless of the maxim, and more saturated with hostility than the ranks of war, would regard the adoption of a useful principle or measure by its supposed opponents, as an adequate reason for never adopting it into its own service.”

Immaturity creates a false sense of values. Mere trifles are exalted into major issues. Important things are casually passed over or brushed aside. There is always the tendency to think of men more highly than they deserve. Coalitions are formed which have as their rallying-points various items of thought, and these are argued, discussed and debated as if the entire universe pivoted upon them as an axis.

This whole attitude must be renounced by those who would please God. It is not enough to discount it, but we must count it as utter dross, to be banished and rejected as having no relevance to the walk of faith, or to the life of the Spirit. No man can please God while maintaining a schismatic stance, regardless of the excuses by which he seeks to justify it. We must overcome the sectarian spirit or we will perish in this sin.

I eagerly entreat from the heart, that all of us, without exception, look within the depths of our own beings, and examine carefully our motivations. Let us resolve with the help of God to eliminate from our lives that littleness and bigotry which can only create unhappiness among those whom we love,

and bring disaster to the social fabric of the body of Christ where we are. Let every person who reads these words make a solemn covenant with God that he will cease trying to be some kind or brand of Christian, and belong only to the Father of mercies.

Those of us who respect the lordship of Jesus can change this sinful and untoward world if we will unite under the banner of righteousness. We must haul down our party standards and our tribal insignia, and determine that never again will we encamp around them. If we will belong to Jesus above everything else and take orders from him rather than from men, then we can bring peace to a troubled and distressed world. And we can be truly called the children of God. In our subsequent issues we shall explore how this may be done and what results we may expect from it. This is the time, here is the place! Let us here and now make a firm commitment to march only to the sound of the divine trumpet! Let us be one!

The Recovery of Reason

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

A speech delivered at the Green Valley Church of Christ in San Jose, California, as one of the Roy B. Shaw Memorial Lectures (October 20-22, 1971).

Recently the movie-makers of Russia and Italy collaborated in producing “The Red Tent,” a saga of the suffering sustained through the ill-fated attempt of the Italian explorer, Umberto Nobile, to reach the North Pole in the Norge, a blimp constructed for the purpose. Nobile was rescued, to live out his career under a shadow of accusation, because of the death of his own men, and that of the searching parties. Among those who perished in the rescue attempt was Roald Amundsen, whose own feats of Polar exploration have become legendary.

The movie begins with General Nobile in his apartment, unable to sleep. His conscience will not allow him to rest, so he arises and through force of memory summons back those who perished. As they return from forty years of entombment in Arctic wastes, they hold court, to sit in judgment upon the motives and actions of all involved. The prosecutor is the brash young aviator who flew Nobile back to safety, abandoning his starving companions upon the ice. The judge is Roald Amundsen.

It is only in fantasy that such scenes can be recalled.

Thomas Wolfe in his posthumously published novel “You Can’t Go Home Again,” makes it clear that we can never recapture the scenes of yesteryear. Five hundred years before Jesus was born into this world, Heraclitus wrote, “You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing in.” It is, therefore, impossible to summon our fathers for questioning concerning their actions and motives which passed on to us a splintered and fragmented restoration movement, rendered imbecilic by its own quarrels, and incapable of securing unity because of its own divisions.

We are now beset by tradition and frightened to face up to the only eventuality which can rescue us from our sordid and tragic mess. The route back to sanity is simple. It means merely taking the medicine in our own illness which we prescribed for and dispensed to the sectarian world when we posed as the physician instead of the patient. We recommended the ignoring of creeds and divisions which had occurred to split and shiver the religious world, and leaping over them all, to return to things as they were before these transpired. If there is any validity in the ideal of restoration, now that we are riven into a mass of bickering parties our only hope is to ignore our unwritten creeds, and return to the principles upon which we began.

This is precisely what our brethren fear to do. Each party wants to freeze unity at its own level and entertain the silly and senseless hope that eventually it will argue some and verbally browbeat the remainder into accepting the faction as the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth. But to do this would mean to declare a moratorium on thought and reason, for you cannot maintain the status quo except by creating puppets and making robots of those who support it. As Everett Dirksen pointed out in a Washington news conference, “Life is not a static thing. The only people who do not change their minds are incompetents in asylums, who can’t, and those in cemeteries.”

If our brethren do gain a wider vision of God's grace, they still want to confine it according to the denominational categories of the United States Census Bureau. And while they concede that we may in some distant day bring about a workable union of those who do not use instrumental music in their public praise service, they are horror-stricken at the thought of including those whose consciences are not defiled by its use. Thus, the organ becomes more than an instrument of music. It becomes an instrument to batter into subjection individuals and congregations desirous of exhibiting the love of God and promoting the peace of heaven.

Our brethren have learned as much from the corrupt political world as they have from the incorruptible word of God. And they have borrowed the tactics of the former rather than appropriated the spirit of the latter. By innuendo, threat and boycott, they have thrown a chill mantle of fear over every honest attempt to bridge our chasms. Taking words which have been given a specialized meaning in the theological world, they have applied them to every person who dares to have an original thought, and by such a nefarious method they have been successful in burying any effort to strike the partisan shackles from our wrists.

A good example is the word "liberal." In recent weeks I have seen this word stamped like a stigma upon men who regard the new translations of the scriptures as useful, upon men who think that individual cups are justifiable, upon those who refuse to attack and castigate Pat and Shirley Boone, and upon those who support Herald of Truth. Of course this works its own rebuke, for when a word comes to mean everything, it comes to mean nothing. When it is then used it reveals nothing about the position of the accused, but merely demonstrates the consummate ignorance of the user.

In our present state we must not forget that there are many who confuse "walking in the old paths," with "wallowing

in the old ruts,” and these will be more attracted by emotion than by reason. When they hear one called a liberal it creates a fright psychosis. They must either drive him from them or they must flee from him. We are subject to all sorts of group pressures, and to organized and unorganized tensions. Papers, preachers and presbyters feel called upon to keep us in line, and whatever whip-cracking is necessary will be indulged. Our black brothers are worried about “Uncle Toms,” but the white saints are worried and bothered by “Simon Legrees.”

I have said all of this because I am quite convinced that we will never throw off our sectarian chains until someone arises who will boldly deny the scripturality and validity of our whole exclusivistic religio-politico institutional stance. And whoever does so must be prepared to pay the price. If our history presages our future, he will be maligned, misrepresented and verbally mauled by those who never met him, heard him speak, or read a word that he wrote. Now I have no desire to become a candidate for banishment or martyrdom, but, like Jeremiah, I am weary from holding in.

By God’s grace, I want to make a statement of my personal conviction. I seek to bind it upon no one else. I will love those who cannot concur as well as those who agree. But I am fed up with “ping-pong diplomacy” in the kingdom of heaven, and with playing tiddleywinks with the unity of the believers. The time is past when we can look out through the chinks in our ivy-covered monastic walls and take an occasional potshot at others with our theological pea-shooters and call it fighting the battle for Jesus. The day is too far spent to have little select groups of the party elite to meet in fancy motels and play “See-Saw” with the agonizing prayer of God’s beloved Son.

A few days ago I read a prediction from the pen of an editor in the restoration movement. He filed accusations against brethren whom he designated as “liberals,” castigating them for defending what he calls “centralized control” projects such as

Herald of Truth. He declared that they had undermined the faith and spawned a group of educated young radicals who would undo all of the notable spiritual gains for the cause of Christ. He warned that they would begin to advocate that the division over instrumental music was a mistake, and that we should fully recognize those in the Christian Churches as our brethren.

I trust that you will carefully follow what I am going to say. I have never been more serious. I have never been more deadly in earnest. I am no longer young. I am not a youthful radical. I am staid and conservative in life-style and dress. I have not been influenced or brain-washed by “liberals” at Abilene Christian College. Those brethren have repeatedly given me the brush-off when I pleaded with them to allow me to come and present my thinking to the student body and be questioned by any members of the faculty designated by the administration.

I am identified with a congregation which does not use instrumental music and never will. I am by conviction opposed to its introduction into the public praise service of the saints. But I state to you, out of a heart filled with reverence for the word of God and respect for all of his children, that the formal division which was made over this issue was the gravest mistake into which Satan seduced our fathers, and if we continue to stubbornly perpetuate the error we will answer for our obduracy at the throne of God.

Hear me further! It is regrettable that we must deal with instrumental music, for what I am saying applies completely across the board to every one of the motley group of things which we designate as controversial issues. But the instrument was credited with our first cleavage, and it receives the brunt of the attack because of its primacy. Moreover, both sides rushed into the civil courts to protect their physical properties and real estate, and the witnesses who testified in the presence of a gawking public, rubbed salt into the raw wounds inflicted by

words with a cutting edge. We eventually crystallized into two denominations as recognized by the census bureau, and now partisan pride, the bane of every religious movement, has kept us apart.

Our division has become hardened by reason of the debates that have been conducted. These have not explored the path to unity but have been used as a platform for justification for positions already held. Once I was the recognized champion of a school of thought among us. I was summoned to the defense when our position was deprecated or attacked. I have appeared upon the forensic stage and engaged in verbal combat with many of the warhorses of contention, pawing, snorting and breathing fire. But I have renounced debate with my brethren as wholly irrelevant and ineffective in our time, to accomplish that great and majestic purpose for which Jesus died.

We must face up to instrumental music because it is the cultural and historical problem which confronts us. We cannot ignore it. We dare not cease to work for a solution to our division. The hope is that if we can realistically solve this thorny problem we will have discovered the principle upon which every other issue will be placed in a proper perspective. But if we do not solve this we will be a divided movement regardless of how many other matters we dispose of. And no man truly works for the unity of all believers who regards any amount of sectarian division as normal for any of the believers. But the very daring of what I propose raises a number of questions. And I must face them or fail in any attempt to meet the responsibility of a peacemaker.

1. Does this mean that we repudiate all that for which our fathers fought, and the gains they made in restoring the ancient order?

I reject no truth for which these noble men struggled. I accept every gain they made in the restoration of the ancient

order. But the thinking of our fathers was not always flawless upon this or any other subject. They were often men with limited means of education, suffering deprivation and with few resources for intellectual improvement. They were hardy and vigorous as they had to be to survive on the frontier, but they frequently fought grizzly bears in the daytime, Indians at night, and brethren on Sunday. I came from a mountain area where feuds were passed on from one generation to another, and men killed one another over some fancied insult to the family, long since forgotten. But to kill was the thing to do, because the fathers had killed one another.

I shall preserve no senseless feud either in my own family or in the family of God. Jesus did not die to form rival clans of the Hatfields and the McCoys. I shall allow no skeletal fingers to reach out from the tomb and snap the fetters of hate around the strings of my heart. On what ground can I demand that Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians cease to walk in the trails which their fathers have blazed while I stumble stolidly along making the same archaic arguments and wresting the same scriptures, through ancestral pride? I accept every truth which my fathers wrung from the fabric of God's revelation, but I reject division in God's family as contrary to that revelation in every respect.

2. Is it not a fact that instrumental music is condemned by the scriptures?

Of course not! If it were it would not even be a matter of discussion between sincere and conscientious followers of the Lamb who recognize his Lordship over their lives. The new covenant scriptures do not say it is a sin. They do not teach that it is wrong. They do not once mention it in the context in which we discuss it. Those who consider it to be wrong do so on the basis of deduction from what they think is the tenor of God's word.

They formulate a presupposition which constitutes their philosophy of interpretation. This constitutes the spectacles through which they read all of God's word. That presupposition is that whatever is not specifically commanded is forbidden. But the Bible does not say that. No one can give "book, chapter and verse" for that statement. Brethren arrive at this presupposition on the basis of isolated texts which they bring into juxtaposition and from which they then reach a conclusion. But our spectacles are not a part of what we read. We don them before we open the Book, and must never confuse our lens with God's light, else we may mistake reflection for revelation.

We would have but little difficulty if all brethren wore the same spectacles. But others insist upon grinding their own lens as we do ours. They love Jesus as much as we do. They respect his word as authority for their lives. But they do not regard me as the divinely-commissioned optometrist for the whole world. They do not believe that God has appointed an official interpreter for the brotherhood, so they do not accept my interpretation as infallibly official. And if I try to bind it upon them they may consider me as infernally officious. Our brethren who use instrumental music do not flout the authority of God's word. They respect Jesus as the Lord of the church, but they do not regard anyone else as Lord of it. And that's where the problem lies!

3. Does not the authority of silence forbid the use of instrumental music?

There is no such thing as the authority of silence as a law or code for the body of Christ. The only authority silence has is for the conscience of the individual. It can never be bound upon another, for to do this one would have to speak, and when you do this it is what you speak that is bound and not the silence.

Silence may be respected but cannot be made authoritative for the simple reason that no one knows why God refrains from

speaking in a given instance. To assume that by not mentioning a thing he always intends to forbid it is sheer conjecture. God has no authoritative spokesman to fill in the blanks or to supply the missing information. Those who speak about the authority of silence are always inconsistent and must employ casuistry, since they all have some things God has not specifically mentioned or authorized. No one who makes the argument can ever really live by it, for he makes what God has not said as important as what he did say.

4. How can unity come about while some use the instrument and others cannot?

The answer is simple. It involves two things. First, we must cease making the use of the instrument a test of fellowship, and secondly, we must start practicing the local autonomy which we have always proclaimed. We have no right to make anything a condition of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. If brethren are good enough to be accepted by God they are good enough for me to receive. No one is saved because he has the proper understanding of instrumental music at the time he is immersed, and no one will be lost because he is mistaken about it.

We must resolve not to allow the peculiarities of those in the family to destroy the family relationship. That which produces and sustains life is more important than the things which distinguish between those who have life. We must not destroy him for whom Christ died because of his view about things on which we may disagree. I dare not judge my brother on the one hand, nor despise him upon the other. I am not his master, and he is not my servant. We cannot force or coerce either individuals or congregations into a pattern of our own thought.

No congregation of saints which opposes instrumental music is ever obligated to adopt it; no congregation which

desires to use it can ever be forced by another to relinquish it. Each congregation must be self-governing and self-determining under God. Our task is not to get brethren to unite in their opinion about the instrument, but to be united in Christ Jesus. Such unity is not produced by fondness for things but by affection for the brethren.

All that we seek is that we all be free to visit and assist one another where we conscientiously can do so, to call upon and recognize one another, to exchange speaking engagements so that we may cultivate closeness and share insights, to pray together, study together, and labor together in areas of mutual concern. Our hope is that the instrument will cease to be an issue among us because all of us will make Jesus Christ central in our life and thought.

Unity in Christ is not a matter for bargaining and haggling. It is not a matter of all of us meeting under the same roof. My own family does not live in the same house, or even in the same city, and yet we are closely knit together in the bond of love. Unity of the Spirit is not a matter of geographical proximity, but of gracious affinity. I am one in the Spirit with every child of God who is here present. I receive all of you, not because I agree with any of you upon every point of doctrine, but because we are all in the same Lord. We are joined to the same head. Fellowship stems from mutual sonship, brotherhood results from a common fatherhood.

The fellowship of the Spirit is not something that we extend or withdraw. It is something we share. Our task is not to grant it but to guard it in the bond of peace. Fellowship is a state entered by responding to the call of God. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:9). Everyone who hears the call of God and answers it is in the fellowship, not by the grace of men, but by the grace of God. Fellowship is the atmosphere breathed by all of the children in the family of God. It is the invisible

principle which joins every member in a working relationship. It is a gift to the church, and not a gift of it.

Fellowship in Christ is not contingent upon being right on every point of doctrine, for then there would be no fellowship to be shared by finite beings. It is not the result of each one being perfect, but of each being in the perfect One. One can be in Jesus and be mistaken about many things. God makes allowance for our frailties and shortcomings, which is what longsuffering means. One's views about instrumental music, Herald of Truth, Sunday School classes, individual cups, orphan homes, or Christian colleges, have no relation to fellowship unless he builds a sect around the pro and con of his position and demands that everyone see it as he does. To do this is to play God with other men's lives and thinking, and to become a factionalist, self-condemned and unworthy.

The things that have troubled us in our day are like the circumcision question which disturbed the saints in the yesterday of the church. The answer of the apostle was "God forbid that I should boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world. Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is a new creation! Whoever they are who take this principle for their guide, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the whole Israel of God" (Gal. 6:14-16).

I have taken this principle for my guide. I have accepted it without quibble! With me the only thing that counts is a new creation. I would no more fracture the body of the Son of God over cups, classes or colleges, than I would over circumcision. I will not separate myself from one of God's new creation because he holds an opinion or claims an experience different from my own. I will not drive from me one who testifies to having spoken in another tongue, whose life bears testimony that he is a new creation of God. So that you will not misunderstand what I am saying, let me be specific. Pat Boone is as much my brother as he

ever was. Shirley Boone is as much my sister as she ever was. So far as I am concerned, when it comes to our relationship in Christ, tongues are nothing, and absence of tongues are nothing. The only thing that counts is a new creation. That is the principle I have accepted for my guide!

Since I have been crucified to the world, and the world to me, the cross of my Lord is everything. It is the sole ground of my glorying. The question with me is not “What do you think of tongues?” It is not, “What do you think of the Herald of Truth program?” It is not, “What do you think of dividing the assembly into classes?” The question with me is, “What do you think of Christ? Whose Son is he?” And I can receive all who receive Christ, regardless of what else they claim to receive, if it does not lead them to deny him.

I take very seriously the apostolic statement, “You, my friends, were called to be free men; only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you go on fighting one another, tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction.”

I cannot forget that the same writer also said, “Let us then keep to this way of thinking, those of us who are mature. If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you. Only let our conduct be consistent with the level we have already reached” (Philippians 3:15, 16).

Again he wrote, “And may God, the source of all fortitude and all encouragement, grant that you may agree with one another after the manner of Christ Jesus, so that with one mind and one voice you may praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a word, accept one another, as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God” (Romans 15:5-7).

I implore you to begin this very night to repair the breaches that have been made in the walls of Zion. If there is a brother present from whom you have stood aloof, and toward whom you have turned the cold shoulder, because he could not honestly concur with your views, go to him in humility and ask him to forgive you. Do not wait to see what the preachers will do. Do not wait to get the reaction of the church. Go to your brother! This means no change of conviction toward your position but simply a change of attitude toward a brother for whom Christ died.

If there is a family present, the members of which once sat at the table of the Lord with you, but who were driven forth because of misunderstanding or for conscience' sake, and you have been cold and indifferent, apathetic and unconcerned about them, let the precious Spirit of God drive you to them. Build a bridge of good-will and genuine love to span the chasm between your hearts.

We need no fanfare, no national unity conferences, no delegate conventions, to bring about the oneness for which Jesus prayed on that fateful night when tragedy stalked his steps like a grim shadow. All we need is to ignore the barriers we have created, batter down the party walls we have erected, humble the hearts that we have hardened, and God will send his blessing upon this city, and from you could go forth a tidal wave of brotherly love that can transform this universe and usher in a time of revival such as has never before been seen.

Let us recapture that spirit of fellowship by reaffirming the fellowship of the Spirit. Let us exalt Christ and make him the One, so that we can all be one in Christ. The price that we are paying for our division is a lost world. It is too great a price. The cost is too heavy! Jesus has said that the world will not be won to believe in Christ, until those who believe in Christ in the world are one. The greatest missionary power ever unleashed upon an unbelieving and perishing world will be the unity of the

believers. If unity is to begin, then let it begin here. Let it begin now!

About Theology

Mission Messenger (March 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

I must confess that I am not too “sold” on what is commonly called theology, and I am not sure that you could run fast enough to enroll me in a course on “systematic theology.” I really doubt there is such a thing. But men in the seminaries all seem to have an acute case of the “ologies.” This probably stems from an attempt to ape the professional jargon of scholastics who learnedly discourse on such themes as embryology, biology, zoology, anthropology, and cosmology. It is assumed that, if the physical creation can be so segmented that the new creation should be subjected to the same kind of dissection. So we are treated to dissertations on Christology, ecclesiology, pneumatology, soteriology, eschatology, and a score of other categories, which are intended to exhaust the content of revelation and the vitality and strength of the unfortunate student. By the time he learns to spell them he has already flunked.

If you will pardon me for inserting another “ology,” I would like to suggest that, from the standpoint of etymology, I seriously question the use of such phraseology (oops! there it goes again!) as “a theology of atonement,” “a theology of preaching,” or “a theology of the Spirit.” I shall never forget an occasion when I was much younger, and much more gullible, than I am now. I had been invited to a small seminary to address the student body in a chapel service, and, as usual, a number of

instructors “button-holed” me to come and speak to their classes.

A history professor informed me that his next class had a project going in which they were studying the origin and meaning of names and their possible relationship to behavioral patterns. He wanted me to address the group and I consented to do so. When the students were seated, he said, “I would like for you to get your notebooks and prepare to use them as I have asked Dr. Ketcherside to share with us some of his deep insights in the field of onomasiology.”

For just a minute I thought I had suffered a heart attack, and almost did a back-flip off the chair. To begin with, it was the first time anyone had ever mistaken me for a doctor in broad daylight, and in the second place, if “onomasiology” had sat up on his hind legs and barked in my face, I wouldn’t have known whether to pat him on the head or climb a tree. But it taught me one very valuable lesson. Before I agree to speak to any group when requested to do so by a professor, I always ask him to repeat the subject slowly, like a woman getting a prescription from the doctor for her husband. Professors are a lot like preachers. When they get a new word, they are like a kid with a new Shetland pony. They ride it to death the first Sunday.

Having digressed so far afield, let me return to my initial statement and tell you that my “theology” is a person, and not “a group of concepts and phenomena regarded as constituting a natural whole for purposes of philosophic or scientific investigation and construction.” In case you do not know it, that last is a definition for system. Theology, as a word, is a combination of *theos*, God; and *logos*, Word. And the Word of God is a person who was with God, and was God, a long time before this material universe was spoken into existence, and things you can see were made of things you cannot see.

You can describe a person, but you cannot systematize

him. You cannot even systematize a son of God, of whom I have the honor to be one; much less “the only begotten Son of God.” And I think that one of the most thrilling descriptions of the Theos-Logos, the divine Theology, is furnished by the aged John, who was at the time an exile upon the lonely and deserted island called Patmos. The way we divide up the incomparable account of the Seer, we make the part to which I refer occur in what we designate Revelation 19:11-16.

“Then I saw heaven wide open, and there before me was a white horse; and its rider’s name was Faithful and True, for he is just in judgment and just in war. His eyes flamed like fire and on his head were many diadems. Written upon him was a name known to none but himself, and he was robed in a garment drenched in blood. He was called the Word of God, and the armies of heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and shining. From his mouth there went a sharp sword with which to smite the nations; for it is he who shall rule them with an iron rod, and tread the winepress of the wrath and retribution of God the sovereign Lord. And on his robe and on his leg there was written the name: ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’”

John saw my theology riding a white horse! If theology is what gives meaning to life, he is the one who gives it. If theology is the basis of spiritual faith, he is that basis. I have a whole shelf of books containing lectures on systematic theology. I have read them with interest, and have been grateful for the fact that they have forced me to think. But now the fruit of my thinking is that Jesus is the whole of life and service to God. He is the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. He has been made unto me wisdom, and redemption and sanctification. He is rightfully called “the Word of God.” He is the Theos-Logos and he is my life, my hope, my peace! He is everything to me!

That brings me to the place I have been wanting to reach ever since I started this article. I’ve been doing a great deal of

reading lately about the book of Revelation, and a lot of it has been in the writing of contemporary “theologians.” Some of these are pretty foggy about what happened in the case of John. As usual, there are a few of them who think John may not have written the book at all. They speculate that it might have been penned by an obscure author who wanted to secure greater readership by attaching John’s name to the treatise. This is a dodge of those who also want to gain recognition for their speculations.

Among those who credit the book to the apostle there is a great divergency of opinion as to whether John saw an unfolding panorama featuring the dramatic characters that he introduces, or whether he just dreamed up the whole thing and wrote it down in allegorical language. Some think the apocalyptic style represents a form of communication intelligible to the Christian underground, but concealed from the Romans, so that the writer could portray the eventual overthrow of the Empire and the triumph of the kingdom of light without the Romans’ knowing what he was talking about. On this supposition, a lot of the commentators must be Romans.

Perhaps I am a little too traditional, but my own views are quite prosaic. I think that the apostle, who had been living in Ephesus since the destruction of Jerusalem by the forces of Titus, had been sentenced to banishment by the emperor Domitian, and while he was on Patmos, God chose to reveal to him what was to be the outcome of the great struggle of the ages. There has always been a real conflict produced by the selfish ambition of men. Two philosophies have jostled one another for control ever since Satan began to pull the strings and to use the developing social and political institutions as his “flying wedge.” I suspect there may have been some reason for doubt in the mind of John as to which would outlast the other. It was a good time for God to reveal the outcome since he alone knows the end from the beginning.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

John wrote that the revelation originated with God who gave it to Jesus Christ for the specific purpose of showing his servants things which would begin to transpire in the not too distant future. He also said that an angel was sent to convey the revelation in the form of signs or symbols to himself, and that he faithfully recorded what he saw and heard. And he pronounced a blessing upon those who publicly read the account, upon those who stayed awake and paid close attention to the reading, and upon those who kept the things that were revealed.

In the first chapter he details for us what happened while he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and then he conveys a special message to the messengers sent over to minister unto him by each of the seven congregations singled out in Asia Minor. But it is the fourth chapter where he starts to unfold the great drama of the universe. And he begins, as did Isaiah and Ezekiel, with a view of the majestic throne room of heaven.

“After this I looked, and there before my eyes was a door opened in heaven; and the voice that I had at first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must happen hereafter!’ At once I was caught up by the Spirit.”

A door in prophecy symbolizes opportunity. When it is open it is an opportunity present, or at hand; when it is closed it is an opportunity past or forfeited. Heaven contains the secret of the future of our world. Ordinarily it is not divulged to mankind. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever.” Even to the apostles it was said, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has placed under his own control.”

But when a door is opened in heaven, a prophet is

permitted to glance into the future so that he can reveal to us what will happen hereafter. Prophecy is a record of events before they occur; history is an account of those events after they occur. Such distinctions are made for our benefit. With God there is no difference. He calls the things that be not as though they were.

John saw a throne in heaven. A throne symbolizes authority or rule, but this throne was different. Being in heaven, it was the source of all power, for “All power is of God. The powers that be are ordained of God.” Here was universal dominion, authority in the absolute, grounded in the nature and character of the personal Creator of the entire universe. It was not raw power, but power clothed in the goodness, mercy and justice of the Eternal One, who was, and is, and is to be!

The description of the One who sat upon the throne was borrowed from the precious gems of nature. His appearance was like the scintillating gleam of jasper and the light flashes of cornelian. This is a verbal attempt to paint the glory of Deity in a language which finite creatures can understand. Arched above and around the throne was a rainbow, bright as an emerald, a symbol of God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises from the day when he set his bow in the sky, after the catastrophe of the deluge.

In a circle about the throne were twenty-four other thrones, on which sat as many ancients robed in white, and wearing crowns of gold. Inside of this circle and immediately around the throne were the four living creatures. Isaiah identified them as the seraphim. Ezekiel called them cherubim. They were covered with eyes, in front and behind. This is but another way of saying that they were omniscient, or all-seeing. The first was like a lion (strength), the second like an ox (humility), the third like a man (intelligence), the fourth like an eagle in flight (swiftness and exaltation). These are the qualities befitting the celestial messengers of God.

The living creatures sang before the throne day and night without a pause. Their song was an unvarying ascription of praise. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." John said they gave glory, honor and thanks to the One who sat upon the throne. As often as they did so the twenty-four ancients left their thrones, fell prostrate before the great throne and laid their crowns before it, and cried out, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because thou didst create all things; by thy will they were created and have their being!"

Another thing caught the attention of John. He saw in the right hand of the One who sat upon the throne a scroll. It was written within and without, and it was sealed with seven seals. Subsequent study will reveal that this scroll contained the history or destiny of the world as well as that of the kingdom on earth. It was written on both sides, and thus was complete. There was no room for new material to be added. God held the whole world in his hand. The history was so written that, as each seal was broken, another era would be ushered in. The future is sealed until the providence of God releases it. The number seven represents completeness. When applied to time it signifies its fulness.

As John looked, he heard a mighty angel asking in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?" The prophet was anxious for he could not know the ultimate destiny of God's people so long as the seals were intact. But no one could be found in heaven or on earth or in the nether regions who was able to open the scroll and peer inside it and reveal its contents. In his disappointment and frustration, John burst into tears. He was the last survivor of the little group whom Jesus had called about Him, and he desperately wanted to know what the future held for the kingdom.

One of the ancients interrupted his crying, with the words, "Do not weep; for the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of

David, has won the right to open the scroll and break its seven seals.” The aged apostle looked up through the shimmer of his tears to see the Lion. He was treated to an awe-inspiring sight, but there was no Lion visible. Inside the circle of the four seraphim and the circle of the worshipful ancients, there stood a Lamb. The marks of slaughter were still upon him. It was evident that the Lamb had been killed and now was alive again.

The Lamb went forward and took the scroll from the hand of the One who sat upon the throne. When he had done this, all of the celestial beings threw themselves down before him. They burst into a new song, a hymn of adoration never before sung in the history of the universe. “Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God men of every tribe and language, people and nation; thou hast made them a royal house, to serve our God as priests; and they shall reign upon earth.”

Then John heard the voices of countless angels. They completely surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the ancients. There were myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands, and all of them were singing praise to the Lamb. Suddenly the song was joined by every created thing in heaven and on earth and in the subterranean regions and even in the sea. All that was in them cried out joyously, “Praise and honor, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever!” The seraphim said “Amen.” And the ancients fell down and worshiped. And the Lamb prepared to break the seals.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

If you don't mind I would like to tell you how this whole bit affects me right here in what we call 1972. I do not think of it as related merely to a far-away place in a far-off time. I am involved in it. As a matter-of-fact, although he did not recognize

me, John saw me a time or two. I was in the vast throng, which no one could count, from every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. You can read about me and the rest of them in Revelation 7:9, the way we have it divided up. Perhaps you were in the crowd also. If not, it isn't too late to make your reservation even now, because the "time machine" was running in reverse, the day John tuned it in to catch the universal victory celebration. I hope that you "get with it," because if you miss it, you will have missed everything! And I do mean everything!

Here is the way I view the matter. It is always a thrilling occasion when a transfer of authority takes place. That is true even in a republic such as the United States of America. I have watched the pageantry which celebrates the accession to office of several of our presidents. Some features about it almost make "goose-pimples" come out on your flesh. Even more splendor is manifested in the pomp and ceremony which accompanies investiture in a monarchy. I can only faintly imagine the feelings in the heart of the aged Galilean ex-fisherman, who was allowed to look into heaven and view the single, most important event ever to transpire in the celestial courts as related to the earthly creatures made in the image of the Creator.

1. There was only one person in the entire universe to whom the Creator could surrender the destiny of the cosmos. There are three spheres inhabited by intelligent beings—heaven, earth, and the nether regions. No being from beyond the skies, no being from the teeming millions inhabiting this globe, no being from the subterranean vaults, could qualify to receive the scroll and remove the seals one by one. If it had been left up to the intellectual prowess of created beings, celestial or terrestrial, our future would have been shrouded in darkness and oblivion would have been our fate.

2. The Lamb of God "won the right to open the scroll and break its seven seals." This is the testimony of one of the ancients

of heaven. The destiny of mankind and the fate of the earth depended upon his willingness to empty himself of the glory of the divine and take upon himself the form of a slave. He identified with men in the life struggle and in the death struggle. In the first he overcame temptation, and in the second he overcame the bondage which was the result of the venomous sting of sin. He burst the gates of the unseen wide open!

That is why the ancients, each holding a harp and a golden bowl filled with incense, the prayers of the people of God, sang a grand new song, composed for the occasion. "Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God men of every tribe and language and people and nation." The Lamb willingly laid down his life and won the right to rule by a blood-bought purchase of such transcendent significance that the world can hardly comprehend it even yet.

3. The Lamb is identified with the Lion of Judah and the Root of David. This is a tremendously important fact. Even though he came from heaven and was with God and was God, when he came to earth he came into the historical stream of human existence, a stream which began to flow with Adam, the created son of God. That stream was often polluted. It was corrupted even by Judah and David, but he who plunged into it was never a partaker of the corruption. He just paid the price for the corruption of men.

The Lamb was the subject of the prophets who had gone before. He did not come to earth as a kind of after-thought of God. His coming had been foretold and the earthly lineage selected. As the Lion of Judah he was destined to prevail, as the Root of David he was the assurance that the promises of God would not fail, but even out of the dry ground could be resurrected a branch or shoot that would live and bear fruit.

4. The Lamb is also identified with the man on the white

horse about whom we wrote earlier in this little treatise. But there is one great difference. The Lamb with the marks of slaughter was beginning the period which would result in the triumph of righteousness, while the One on the horse, followed by the armies of heaven, was preparing to close it, having established the rule of heaven. The final great conflict was in the immediate offing and there was no question about the result. Victory was assured. The beast and the false prophet, the leaders of the opposition through the ages, were to be taken prisoner and cast into the lake of fire with its sulphurous flames.

5. Never was there a more solemn moment in time than when the Lamb stepped forward and received the scroll of destiny from the right hand of the One who sat upon the throne. When he did this he held the future of the universe in his grasp. From the hand of the Creator into the hand of his Anointed was given over the right to rule and govern the destiny of the creation. The Lamb of God has not relinquished it until this day. He must retain it until he has abolished every kind of power.

I have surrendered to him fully, completely and unconditionally. I belong to him without reservation. It is my firm conviction that he alone can bring order out of that chaos into which men have plunged the world by reason of sin and transgression. I intend to give my allegiance to no other. I will not be the spiritual or moral subject of any other ruler. I will not be the vassal of any other lord. Because I belong to him I shall seek to love all men as he loved them. I will not be regulated, limited or controlled in my exercise of affection by any group, party or sect. I will not bargain with love as a commodity that can be bought or sold, and I will never compromise with any group which demands that I cease to love others in order to be loved by them.

I expect to see him who purchased me with his blood. I will look upon his face. My deliverer will come from heaven, and transform this body belonging to my present humble state. He

will give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, and he will do it by the very power which enables him to make all things subject unto himself. I know that I am a child of God here and now. What I shall be has not yet been disclosed, but I know that when it is disclosed I shall be like him, for I shall see him as he is!

None of this has happened to me because I deserved it, or was worthy of it. I was not so good that God simply had to adopt me. It was quite the reverse. There wasn't really anything that would commend me to him as holding forth any real promise. That is why the whole thing is a matter of grace, and not just a matter of my own works or accomplishment. I just came to trust in Jesus because there wasn't anything in my own life in which I could trust at all. I am glad that it was so, because that precludes any pride or boasting. I do not have to match my life to that of anyone else. I do not need to compare notes on relative attainments.

And this makes it much easier for me to accept others as they are when they come to rely on Jesus as their only hope. I can do it because that is the way God accepted me. All I had going for me was just my faith that somehow Jesus would straighten things out if I allowed him to take command. It was apparent that my compass was askew and my rudder was bent. I was not steering a very straight course, for all my bragging about my knowledge, which I now know was very feeble indeed. What a thrill it is to know that it is not what one knows but who one knows that makes the difference.

Jesus is the center and circumference of the whole realm of saving grace. He is the center and to him all must be attracted and drawn by the magnetic force of the dynamic of love. He is the center and from him all truth radiates forth. And what does not come from him has no validity with reference to my salvation. But he is also the circumference, holding us close to God and shielding us from a world of sin and strife.

We make a mistake when we try to gather Jesus in and box him up and build a fence around him. In our vain struggle to keep him only for self we lose him. We need to belong only to Jesus, but we err when we think this means that Jesus must belong only to us. There is room in Jesus! He is not narrow, sectional or partisan. There is room for those who are black and those who are white. There is room for Jew and Greek. There is room for employer and employee. There is room for those who are rich and for those who are poor.

But there is no room for pride! I dare not be proud that I am white, nor another proud that he is black. In Christ one cannot be proud that he is a Jew, nor can another be proud that he is not. Whatever we were by natural birth must be buried in the grave of baptism. He who comes forth from it comes forth in newness of life. That which he once trusted he no longer trusts. That which he formerly bragged about is now to be flung in the garbage can of life. To build solely upon Jesus is to admit that all else is worthless as a basis of hope.

I am a follower of the Lamb! He rules the universe! He took the scroll of destiny and when the final seal is opened, he will be King of kings and Lord of lords, and the whole creation will know it. I know it now! And I am thankful that my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. He is Peace! He is Joy! He is Truth! He is Life! He is where it all is, and when I am with him I am where it all is! It is just that simple and there's nothing about it hard to understand! "For we know that he who raised the Lord Jesus to life, will with Jesus raise us too, and bring us to his presence, and you with us."

A Faith for the Future

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[Abstract]

A speech delivered at the Green Valley Church of Christ in San Jose, California, as one of the Roy B. Shaw Memorial Lectures (October 20-22, 1971).

From time to time I am called various names, and accused of various things, by some of my good brethren. In recent years, and especially in recent months, the chorus has dwindled, and both the words and the tune have changed. I have outlived some of my detractors, and outloved the rest of them, and the remaining few who would like to give the impression that they are hard-boiled often give the impression that they are merely half-baked. I have weathered the storm and I am in calmer waters. It is apparent that the hurricane is over and the “big blow” has subsided.

This does not mean that no one ever lobs a shot across my bow. There are always those whose alarm did not go off, and who come in late, and want to reverse the projector and run the battle scenes past again, but by and large, the brethren who want to snipe at me from the safety of the scrub-oaks in these days, fire only rubber bullets. These frequently bounce back and cripple them while doing no particular injury to me.

Unlike the past, the two principal charges filed against me now are that I am an enthusiast and an optimist. I cheerfully

plead guilty to both allegations and feel sorry for the “allegators.” In spite of the fact that my life is quite complex, and that I am constantly speaking to a variety of audiences on a variety of things, I am accused of harping on one string. One editor recently informed his readers, “Carl has been on this unity binge for years, and he goes at it with such gusto, that he almost makes you believe that his campaign is going to succeed even when you know that it is impossible. The man is an energetic and uncontrollable enthusiast.”

That is about the first time in my life that one of my opponents has bombarded me with cream puffs, and I sort of like their flavor. The word enthusiast means “indwelt by God,” and that is why the plea for unity is going to succeed. It is the will of God that his children be one. It is the work of the Spirit, and the unity for which we plead is the unity of the Spirit. One who labors for unity among the saints is working with God. One who opposes unity among the saints is working against God. The unity we seek will come to pass, and is even now coming to pass, because of the divine infusion which can bring order from the chaos of human confusion. Indeed I am as enthusiastic about it as was my Savior when he prayed for it, and as his apostles who proclaimed it.

There is no sin involved in being an optimist. The word optimism describes the philosophy or belief that good ultimately triumphs over evil. In a more practical sense an optimist is one who sees a doughnut, while a pessimist is one who sees only the hole in it. One smells the fragrance of the rose while the other laments the sharpness of the thorns. Of course one can be an optimist without rational grounds, in which case he becomes a mere visionary, following signs which are not there, and filling up his cup with imagination to make up for the lack of reality.

I feel confident that we are standing at the threshold of one of the greatest breakthroughs in our history as a people. It seems to me that another “fulness of the times” is upon us. The day is

here when the people of God should enlarge the place of their tent, and stretch forth the curtains of their habitations. "Spare not, lengthen the cords, and strengthen the stakes, for you shall break forth on the right hand, and on the left." We are going to see fellowship exhibited and brotherhood uninhibited by dogmatism and unwritten creeds. Upon what grounds do we dare base such a prediction?

1. All of us are coming to realize that unity in Christ is not something to be achieved, but simply something to be received. It is not just a goal of men, but a gift of God. It is not something for which we agonize, but something that we recognize. It is to be claimed rather than attained. It is a creation of the Holy Spirit, and it has really been here all of the time.

By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. We all drink of the same Spirit. We walk in the same Spirit. We live by the same Spirit. We are sealed by the same Spirit. We are actually and evidently one in the Spirit. It is not that we ought to be one, or should be one, or we hope to be one. We are one! If we are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in us, we are one. We are one right now! We are one right here!

The word of God regards the oneness of the body as a fact. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body: so also is Christ" Not "so also is the church," but so also is Christ. It is Christ who is a single body. It is in Christ we are one, regardless of national, social or sexual distinctives. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Ye *are*, not ought to be; ye are *all*, not just part of you; ye are all *one*, not fragmented. Ye are all one in Christ Jesus! Praise His name!

We do not have a problem with this in the human body. But the record says, "For just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of

us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another.” Notice that “as” and “so.” “As in a single human body . . . so all of us, united with Christ.” My eyes do not have any trouble remaining in fellowship with one another. My arms do not fall out with my feet, because my toes are not as long as my fingers. My body is a perfect example of unity in diversity. No one comes up to me and says, “I understand that one of your ears is having trouble with the other organs and is thinking of dropping off and starting another body.”

If that is the way the “as” is, that is the way the “so” should be. Let us quit thinking about how we can get together in the United States, and start to remember that we are together in Christ. If the Spirit has brought us together in one body, let us start right now to enjoy it. We are coming to realize that oneness is a fact and that encourages me to say that our problems will be put in proper perspective. They will not be problems of fellowship, but problems in the fellowship. We can then attack our problems rather than one another. We have no more right to fight in Jesus as clans of “Antis” and “Pros,” than we would as tribes of the Crees and the Crows.

2. I am optimistic because there is a growing recognition that harmony is not a pre-requisite to fellowship, but fellowship creates the atmosphere in which to labor toward harmony. Not one command to live in harmony, or to be of one mind, was ever given to bring men into the fellowship, but every such command was given to those who were already in the fellowship, and because they were in it.

In Philippians 2:2, 3, Paul writes, “Fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity. Rivalry and personal vanity should have no place among you, but you should humbly reckon others better than yourselves.” On what grounds did Paul urge this? The preceding

verse shows that it was predicated upon the consolation in Christ, the comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

We do not come to agreement in order to be in fellowship. Growing agreement is a fruit of fellowship, and not the seed from which it germinates. We start with fellowship and work toward agreement. One of the best known exhortations with reference to schism is found in Paul's treatment of the situation at Corinth, as reported to him by Chloe. He wrote, "I appeal to you, my brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: agree among yourselves and avoid divisions; be firmly joined in unity of mind and thought."

But note that the preceding verse declares that "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." Even in their schismatic state and in spite of their party cries, Paul calls them all his brothers, and says they were in the fellowship. There is no congregation represented here that has as many serious things wrong with it as did the one at Corinth. Even with all of our tragic divisions we do not approach the state of ills which characterized that congregation.

In the matter of divisiveness, they were fractured and fragmented. In regard to practice they could not even eat the Lord's Supper. In reference to doctrine they had some who clung to the idea that idols might be real and still ate food "with a sense of its heathen consecration." Others in the congregation said there was no resurrection of the dead. Some were entering civil suits against their brethren in pagan courts. Others were confused about their marital status, and they were intolerant and dogmatic toward one another. Their public gatherings were turned into disorder by those who possessed the gift of tongues, and Paul wrote, "I fear that when I come I may perhaps find you different from what I wish you to be, and that you may find me also different from what you wish. I fear I may find quarrelling and jealousy, angry tempers and personal rivalries, backbiting and gossip, arrogance and general disorder."

If ever there was an occasion to give an apostolic example or pattern for declaring fellowship to be ended, the situation at Corinth was unparalleled. Did Paul “withdraw fellowship” from them as our trigger-happy brethren so naively designate their action? Did he recommend that the “loyal brethren” come out and start a “faithful church” in town? Did he propose that the ones who spoke in tongues start a “house church” of their own, or that the anti-tongue speaking segment go to themselves? Will our brethren today who are so “high” on an apostolic example follow that of Paul? Do they dare take his attitude? Do they dare accept his leading in their lives?

He repeatedly referred to the congregation as “the church of God which is at Corinth.” He said the members were sanctified in the Lord Jesus and were called saints. He referred to all of the partisans as his brothers. There is only one chapter in the sixteen which compose the First Corinthian letter where the words “brother” or “brethren” do not occur, and that is the thirteenth, the wonderful chapter on love. In those chapters dealing with special problems, Paul uses the word “brethren” over and over again. And he never applies it to the members of any faction as such, but always to the whole body of believers.

He calls the congregation at Corinth God’s garden, God’s building, and God’s temple. He declared that the Spirit of God dwelt in them, and said “You belong to Christ and Christ to God.” He acknowledged that they were in the fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and said that he had begotten them in Christ Jesus through the gospel. In some things he could commend them, and in others he could not, but not once did he threaten to wipe them off the slate. His very last words to this sadly mixed-up group of saints were these: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”

Instead of telling younger preachers to stay away from Corinth for fear they would be branded, Paul sent Timothy and

Titus to visit them, and tried to persuade Apollos to do so, although without success. Instead of hiding in the closet when brethren from Corinth were in town, Paul wrote, "It is a great pleasure to me that Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus have arrived, because they have done what you had no chance to do; they have relieved my mind—and no doubt yours too." Instead of by-passing them and boycotting them because of their condition, Paul said, "I shall come to Corinth after passing through Macedonia . . . and I may stay with you, perhaps even for the whole winter . . . I do not want this to be a flying visit; I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits."

Instead of warning other brethren at a distance to have no involvement with Corinth until they lined out and straightened up, he wrote, "Many greetings in the Lord from Acquila and Priscilla and the congregation in their house. Greetings from all the brothers." Instead of writing a form letter to all of the churches in Asia warning them to have nothing to do with Corinth, he wrote a letter to Corinth in which he said, "Greetings from all of the congregations in Asia."

In view of all this, our absurd, asinine, crazy-quilt pattern of schism and division stands as a glaring indictment against us at the bar of God's justice today. Imagine the blatant inconsistency involved in arguing that we have come to our present state by following apostolic authority or precedent. When we consider the love and forbearance manifested toward Corinth, our own course of procedure should cause us to be ashamed to live and afraid to die. To fragment the body of God's Son over such trivia as instrumental music, cups, classes and colleges, is a sin against God, a reflection upon the revelation, and a tragedy of the deepest dye, when considered in the light of sacred scripture.

At last the utter folly of a course which sacrifices brotherhood upon the blood-drenched altar of partisan fanaticism is being seen and felt. If Paul could love and labor at

Corinth, we can receive and welcome any congregation represented here tonight. We need not stab and hack the body to death in a senseless attempt to cure its ills. Regardless of mistaken views and fallacious opinions, division only adds to the sin. It settles nothing, but compounds the confusion, intensifies the hostility, crystallizes the sectarian spirit, and postpones indefinitely the answer to the prayer of Jesus.

3. I am optimistic because we have reared a new generation, better educated, spiritually-oriented, and dedicated to the Lord of life as opposed to the cult of conformity. Our young men and women have been taught to think for themselves and they are going to do it. Our partisan attitudes and factional alliances cannot survive the glare of the searchlight of truth when directed against them. The party spirit is perpetuated by ignorance and arrogance, and these thrive in the dark, propagated by political maneuvering and watered by human ambition.

The day of the simplistic, ready-made, home-cooked answer is fading away. Men no longer accept without swallowing the pompous pronouncements of popes, preachers or presbyters, as authoritative. Not even editors will be able in the future to regiment thought, and keep men goose-stepping to commands issued through paper trumpets. A new age has dawned, and we will no longer be throttled by skeletal hands reaching forth from the grave to hold us in slavery to tradition. We will put our hand in the hand of him who stilled the storm and quieted the waters. All sectarianism is in trouble from the very minute that Jesus becomes the center of the spiritual universe and the church ceases to be.

We must face up to the fact that real revolutions often begin outside the existing structures, although led by those who are within them. This was true of the reformation led by Martin Luther. It was also true of the restoration attempt sparked by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Neither of these had any idea

of creating another institutional structure. But the institutions known as the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, were rigid and inflexible. They could not absorb and contain a reformation. Instead, they branded the reformers as heretics and drove them forth.

Now we are faced with a new attempt at reform. If we prove adamant in the maintenance of our status quo, assuming that “we are the people, and wisdom will die with us,” if we hate those who are our critics and regard as heretics those who would share new insights, we will hasten our doom. Based on history, this is what many assume will happen. But it need not be so. If we maintain an open-end approach to cultural changes, rather than a closed-end creedal approach, we will not only survive, but will become stronger for it.

There are some things that are unchangeable. Upon these there can be no hint of compromise and no surrender. They are foundational and elemental. They give us our very basis of existence. To retract any of these is to begin the process of slow suicide. There is not one fact of the divine breakthrough of God in history upon which I will weaken. I will defend any of these with my life. But to confuse these with modes and methods of their dissemination, or with structures and organizations devised for their implementation in a given era or culture, is as absurd as to assume that I must keep my appointments by riding on a donkey because this was the mode of transportation employed by the primitive saints.

On the state university campus, in religious seminars with perceptive students, the question I am most often asked is, “Do you think that the institutional church will survive the twentieth century?” This is a welcome change because less than a decade ago, the question was, “Do you think the Christian concept will survive?” An analysis of the difference in these questions is indicative of the profound change occurring in youthful lives all over the world.

I know the family of God, the community of heaven, will survive. I feel sure that it will survive in a tangible, visible and definable form. The church as we know it will make many changes. Some of these will be good. Others will not. As always, the church will affect the culture, but the culture will also affect the church, for the simple reason that the church is people, and it is always people in the current culture. The church today is not like the church of my childhood, and it is not like the church in the days of Thomas Campbell, Martin Luther, Gregory the Great, or Tertullian. It is the same church, just as I am the same person, but neither of us is like what we were in an earlier and younger age.

This does not disturb me because I do not think of the divine-human relationship as a lake formed by damming God's grace up in a particular time or place. Rather, I conceive of it as a stream flowing through history. Sometimes it becomes a rushing torrent, sometimes a series of wildly-tossing rapids, but at other times it enters a calm, serene and placid stretch. What it becomes at a given time depends, not upon the nature of the stream, but upon the nature of the culture through which it flows.

A stream moving relentlessly toward its distant destiny with the sea, alters the terrain through which it flows, but in doing so it is also tinged and colored by that terrain. And just as a stream flowing through the prairies and plains may be different than one flowing down a mountain flume, so the divine-human relationship as manifested in the fourth century lives may be different than it is in twentieth century lives. It is also true that it may be different in an emerging African nation than it is in California in the same century.

The object of faith is fixed, immovable and unchangeable. The goal of faith is unswerving and unalterable. It is bounded on each side by resurrection. It begins with His resurrection and culminates with ours. It begins with Jesus returning to share the

glory of the Father and ends with ourselves being caught up to share in the glory of both. But faith is not static. It is dynamic. It is shared by each of us where we are and as we are. It is the heritage of free men. And they must be left free— free to serve one another in love!

We hear a great deal about “the system of faith,” and there is nothing wrong with the expression unless we mean something wrong by it. But we live in a day of systematized existence where everything is programmed and computerized, and there is a danger that we will think that faith makes of us a row of grinning Kewpie dolls on a souvenir counter, a congregation of plaster saints, or a collection of holy puppets, waiting for someone to jerk the string so we can put on our prepared performance.

If we are to fulfill God’s purpose and answer the prayer of Jesus for oneness, we must examine anew and in depth Romans 15:5-7. Listen to it carefully! “And may God, the source of all fortitude and encouragement, grant that you may agree with one another after the manner of Christ Jesus, so that with one mind and one voice you may praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.”

To agree with one another after the manner of Christ Jesus is not to arrive at a state of bland conformity or blind surrender to circumstances. It is defined as “accepting one another as Christ accepted us.” How did Jesus accept us? He took us in with our imperfections, deficiencies and flaws. He knew that we had faults and weaknesses, but his love covered our trembling hearts like the folds of a warm blanket.

That is the way we must accept one another. I dare not stand upon some fancied height and demand that you reach the same level. Jesus stooped down so that we could be one with him. I cannot wait until you have arrived at a plane of excellence

arbitrarily subscribed by a self-righteous sect, for to do this will be to write my own death warrant and seal my own doom. If I measure your attainments by my own as a condition of fellowship, Jesus will measure my life by his as a condition of his receiving me. I will be judged with the same standard by which I judge others. I am, in fact, writing my own ticket.

Can I, like the haughty Pharisee of yesterday, draw the robes of my own goodness tightly around my form, lest I soil them by contact with another? Shall I stand in a prominent place and recount my goodness and thank God that I am not like other men? Do I dare enshrine my behavior as the criterion by which all others are to be measured in their daily walks? I confess that I can only be saved by grace. I have no merits of my own to claim. Nothing in my hand I bring.

It is for this reason that I accept all who have come to trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If I could wish that they were stronger and better I could wish the same thing about myself. If I would have them grow in grace and knowledge of the truth, I would have myself do the same. I am thankful that God did not remain aloof from me until I was worthy. I am glad that Jesus came to find shelter under my unworthy roof as he did that of the centurion in the days of yore. And I propose to sit down with all of my brethren wherever I find them.

I shall not stand outside and make demands. I shall enter in with them and sup with them, as he entered into my heart to sup with me when I opened the door for him. When I accepted Jesus I accepted all whom he had accepted, and I accepted them on the same basis that he accepted them. I have no other formula, no special creed of my own. I praise Him for taking the first step to bring me into the fellowship of the Father. I thank Him for leaving heaven to look for me. And I shall take the first step to enter into the fellowship with all of the precious saints. I will leave my own little heaven to look for my brothers!

Great days lie ahead! A golden tomorrow awaits us. The family ties will again bind our hearts. Love will triumph over hatred. Sweetness will reign where bitterness brought tears of remorse and regret. The righteousness of God will flow through the tunnels of our hearts like a cleansing stream, washing away the hostility and blackness of despair. Lift up your heads! Lift up your hearts! Lift up your hands! Praise Him from whom all blessings flow! The redeemed are returning from the slavery of sectarianism. Hope gleams like the sunrise of a new day. God reigns, and all is well!

What Is Christendom?

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[Abstract]

“We should have a great many fewer disputes in the world if words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only, and not for things themselves.” Ever since I first read this statement by John Locke in “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,” written in 1690, it has affected my consciousness of the relationship of words to the ideas which they were invented to express or convey. I am not sure that I am even yet fully aware of how many disputes have arisen through confusion of our symbols with reality, for their name is surely Legion. But I do know that I have become a student of words as well as of thought, and that is good.

And this reminds me of a rather philosophic observation by Tryon Edwards, who said, “Words are both better and worse than thoughts; they express them and add to them; they give them power for good or evil; they start them on an endless flight, for instruction and comfort and blessing, or for injury and sorrow and ruin.” Lord Bacon wrote, “Men suppose their reason has command over their words; still it happens that words in turn exercise authority on reason.”

I have been pondering over a certain word in recent months. In those moments of deep reflection when I am driving along the highway by myself it keeps slipping back into my mental slot clamoring for attention. When I awaken at night and

begin to meditate it sneaks out of the dark and demands my notice. It is evident that I will not be satisfied until I write about it, and I may not be too happy after I do so. Some of my readers, as usual, will protest that they cannot understand what I am saying, some will not be able to grasp the reason for the compulsion or motivation that drives me to write, and a good many more will simply shrug it off, or say, "Well, so what?"

Brainstorms are like other storms. Some are frightened by them and take cover, others admire the thunder and lightning which accompany them, and still others sleep through them, wholly unaware that anything has happened until another draws it to their attention. Thoughts are children of the mind. They are conceived first and then delivered. Like fleshly offspring those of others never impress us like our own, unless they are sufficiently like them that we cannot disparage one without reflecting against the other. Then we give them grudging commendation while emphasizing minor points of difference in our favor.

With this rambling introduction out of the way, I can now tell you that the word to which I want to attend is Christendom. I think there has never been a word invented to describe a more nebulous or confusing state of affairs, if we grant that it is a state. I am not certain that anyone knows what it embraces, although I am quite sure that those who toss it off their tongues most glibly, do not. Obviously it is not a creation of God, although it seeks to hide under the cloak of divine grace and tries to pass itself off as being in her favor. But eternal life, the great gift, was proffered when God became man, while the existence of Christendom resulted from man seeking to become God.

As is always the case when a prince and a pauper exchange places, and one gets in the room of the other, the prince suffers most, while the pauper demonstrates his unworthiness for palace life. And in this instance the prince who has been crowded out is the true offspring of the king, while the parentage or origin of

the usurper is not easily determinable. Unfortunately, those who never knew the prince pay homage to the pauper and perpetuate his reign under the mistaken notion and delusion that they thereby perpetuate the purpose of the kingdom.

There is a distinction between the faith once delivered and what is called Christendom. The first was the creation of God's revelation. The second is the result of evolution in human thought and action. Christendom was fashioned by the wisdom of this passing age, by the philosophy of men. This is not at all to say that it was deliberately planned or plotted. Rather, it is the natural result accruing from the strivings of men who often sought positions of prominence or prestige, and just as often regarded themselves as defenders of the truth of heaven.

Christendom is the counterfeit medium of exchange in the spiritual marketplace, which came to be current when men ceased to demand the gold tried in the fire. It is a forgery imposed upon the gullible when their eyes were blinded and they could not see afar off. In the dim and distant past it first received its impetus when men ceased to try and imitate the life of Jesus on earth and began to speculate about the nature of deity in heaven.

GNOSTICISM AND PAGANISM

The apostles had not yet all met death when the Gnostics infiltrated the community of the reconciled ones and divided the saints into two groups, "the common herd," who would never be able to grasp the deep things of God, and "the knowing ones," who could understand all mysteries and all knowledge. They were the intellectual offspring resulting from the forced marriage of the Faith to the metaphysics of Greece, and they could not accept the idea that "salvation is of the Jews." They first divided men in the fellowship into those doomed to remain in the kindergarten and always walk by faith, and the more

fortunate who need not abide within the doctrine but could go beyond and live on the plane of knowledge, superior and unassailable. And this split them off and separated them from one another, and open cleavage resulted.

Fortunately, however, the pagan empire still existed, and in its jealousy for gods which were no longer worshipped, it lashed out in insensate fury at all who revered but one God. The followers of Jesus were thus branded as atheists, a term as opprobrious to polytheists as it is objectionable to monotheists. It is possible that if the emperors had not been exalted to the status of gods, persecution might not have arisen at all. But, since they were elevated to a place in the pantheon, to affirm that there was but one Lord, was to deny that Caesar was a lord. And to question this was probably a graver offense than to suggest that the summit of Olympus was uninhabited.

In any event, persecution came and spread over the empire, which was the world of that age. Polycarp died in Asia. Justin Martyr died in Rome. Irenaeus died in Gaul. And, without knowing it, paganism saved that which it was determined to destroy. Persecution did what it always does. It separated the grain from the chaff and made faith real. In time of dire distress, philosophic speculations hold no comfort and men find refuge in the Rock of Ages, and glory in the cross. As Justin pointed out, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the kingdom, and Tertullian in his *Book of Apology Against the Heathen*, could say that Christians were everywhere. "Men say that the State is beset by them, that Christians are in their fields, their fortresses, their islands. They murmur that each sex, each age, every consideration and every rank is going over to the sect."

No doubt it would come as a surprise to Domitian, Trajan, or Marcus Aurelius to learn that they were instruments used to purify and thus to perpetuate the faith which they despised, but a great many surprises always await those who fancy that they

are gods. It would be a thrill to report that the fervor which was warmed and watered by the blood of the martyrs continued unabated, and that the followers of the Lamb found the way to keep their lives unsullied and their ranks unbroken. But it did not work out that way!

Motivated by a desire to meet philosophy upon its own ground, and frightened by what might happen if they could not, the believers decided to found a seminary in which young and brilliant minds could be grounded in the faith. I think it was inevitable that, with such a motive, Alexandria would be selected as the site of the first “Christian college” in the world. The city itself had long been called “the great university,” since it was the center for learning for the earth, and possessed all of those traits and characteristics which distinguish a university from a mere college or school. It was a center of urbanity and of intellectual processing.

It was here that Philo, born about the time that Jesus entered the world, had sought to prove that philosophy was a vehicle in which the Greeks rode toward heaven as revelation was a vehicle in which the Spirit came down from heaven, and that where they met on the way, they stood on the same level and were together. His chosen approach was to reconcile Plato and Zeno with Moses and Solomon, thus equating the wisest and the most practical advocates from both the realm of Judaism and paganism. Too, it was this city where the most notable forms of Gnosticism had their origin, and it was deemed appropriate to assault the bastions of culture from close at hand.

It was about 180 A.D. when the Catechetical School was started by Pantaenus, a former Stoic philosopher who had been converted to the Way by a scholar of the apostles. The chief accomplishment of Pantaenus was to produce a famous student, Clement, called Alexandrinus, to distinguish him from the other Clement, who was called Romanus. Clement was born of Christian parents, but grew up in an atmosphere of philosophy

which bred within him an undying urge to research for truth. When he became a believer he traveled far and wide to sit at the feet of any older disciple who could teach him the Way more perfectly. The result was that he succeeded Pantaenus to the presidency of the school, and, in turn, greatly influenced Origen, who came to be known as “the father of the sermon.”

His love of rhetoric, coupled with his development of discourse upon isolated texts, laid the groundwork for mystical interpretation, and the school which was begun to preserve the faith became the “grave of primitive Christianity,” to quote the phrase of John Lawrence Mosheim, the eminent church historian and Chancellor of the University of Gottingen. Origen developed the allegorical method of Biblical criticism, insisting that behind the literal meaning of the scriptures, was hidden a moral or mystical meaning. In doing so he laid the groundwork for speculation which could only survive on the basis of dogmatism and the authoritarian structure. Christendom was now really on its way!

Less than fifty years after the death of Origen, Africa became the birthplace of two men destined to be opponents—Arius and Athanasius. The theological dispute for which they became famous, or infamous, caused the infidel Gibbon to say, “The divisions of Christianity suspended the ruin of paganism.” The groundwork of the controversy about the nature of God had already been laid. Tertullian invented and gave the world the word “Trinity,” but there were many who disagreed with its implications. And the Alexandrian school with its speculative “theology,” furnished fuel for the flames of heated debate.

I have not time, nor do I have the inclination to enter into the intricacies of the arguments upon either side, being concerned more with the effect and result. The question revolved around the nature of Deity and the relationship sustained by Jesus to the Father. The Greek terms expressive of the varied views were spelled exactly alike except for one letter of the

alphabet. Interwoven into the dispute were subtleties of rationalization borrowed, or stolen, from Aristotle, the Stoics and the Gnostics.

Whether the Son of God was of one and the *same* substance as the Father, or whether he was of *like* substance, was the question. On one hand it was contended that the Son of God was “co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father.” On the other, this was called inconsistent and impossible, since the Father who begat must be before the Son who was begotten, and the latter, therefore, could not be absolutely eternal. As time went on each side used a thousand contrived arguments. Factions sprang up everywhere, rallying around phrases, and novel interpretations. The accusations of heresy and apostasy, words jerked rudely from the context furnished by the Spirit, became the clubs by which zealots sought to batter others into subjection or drive them bodily out into the cold.

At this juncture, I want to submit one of the most perceptive and poignant statements that I have ever read by a historian. It is found in *Essays on the Rise and Progress of the Christian Religion in the West of Europe* (pages 65, 66), by Earl Russel, and reads as follows:

It will readily be perceived how tempting was the prospect of leaving the beaten roads of the early Christians to wander through the pathless forests of controversy, and ascend the heights of a new heaven. The early Christian, seeking to imitate the benevolent Samaritan who ministered to the wounded traveller, or to follow the example of the merciful Lord, who forgave his debtor, or like the loving father, to receive with joy a penitent son, followed plain precepts and practised unobtrusive virtues. But the doctor of theology, who displayed acuteness in pointing out inferences which Christ had never revealed to His disciples, came victor out of conflicts with his learned rivals. He defined what Jesus had left obscure, and explained relations to the Godhead which Christ had left

to the conclusions of private judgment. Thus Athanasius, followed by crowds of admiring pupils, radiant with flashes of rhetoric, and exulting over the opponents whom he had crushed, stood at last on the narrow summit of orthodoxy . . . and waved his triumphant banner over Europe, Asia and Africa. It is to be lamented, however, that in this difficult struggle, the spirit of Christianity was lost— that man was taught to hate his neighbor and to exalt himself.

THE ROAD TO CONFORMITY

The creed of the apostles and of the primitive saints was Jesus Christ. That creed identified him but did not seek to define him. It consisted of a fact, a historical fact, established by testimony, as all historical facts must be, and confirmed by supernatural demonstration, as all but natural facts must be confirmed. It was stated in the simple proposition that Jesus was the Anointed One, the Son of God. There was no room and no necessity for dispute over the nature or essence of Deity. But when metaphysical and philosophical debate began and waxed hot, men were branded as heretics and it was deemed essential to define orthodoxy as a criterion for measuring the acceptability and doctrinal soundness and worthiness of the believers.

It was Eusebius who convinced Constantine, the emperor, that he should use his power to summon a council of bishops and hammer out a formal guideline for the institutional church in order to preserve a pure doctrine upon the earth. The fact that there had never been such a convocation before June 14, 325, is indicative of the freedom of opinion and the tolerance which had always existed prior to this time. Now an emperor, not yet converted to Christ, used temporal power to bring together those spiritual leaders who would set the stage for bitter persecution and make honest dissent a horrible crime. From now on such dissent would be heresy, and communication would be contingent upon conformity. Prior to this the saints had been

persecuted by the pagans who sought to blot out the name of Christ. Now they would be persecuted by their fellows in the name of Christ.

To say the least, the council was an interesting assemblage. More than 320 recognized bishops were present, but this number was augmented by a great number of lesser dignitaries who came for study, or out of curiosity, or to see the emperor near at hand. To add to the excitement a goodly sprinkling of pagan philosophers showed up, hoping to openly challenge the Christian teachers to public debate, or to sow dissension among them by well-placed questions.

Many of the delegates bore marks of persecution by the heathen. One from Asia Minor was without hands, both of them having been burned off with an iron bar of white heat. Pophnutius, of Upper Egypt, had a patch over the empty socket where his right eye had recently been gouged out. Many were without a right arm, having suffered amputation by the sword of the enemy. Theodoret called it “an assembly of martyrs.”

The preliminary discussions were long and loud. The historian, Socrates, was present and preserves for us the account of an interesting incident. Upon one occasion when the voices were raised in an angry clamor over some point of doctrine, a simple “layman” stepped out in front of the assembly. His body bore the marks of recent persecution. He raised his hand and all eyes were turned upon him. He merely said, “Brethren, Christ left us not a system of logic, but a naked truth, to be guarded by faith and good works.” He then quietly returned to his place.

Arius was given a chance to elucidate and defend his doctrine, and Athanasius arose to reply to it with oratorical ability which entranced the crowd. Then, on a given day, Constantine moved the scene of debate to the Great Hall in the royal palace where he could preside over it. His attitude was calm and conciliatory. He constantly urged the need for

agreement. That agreement never came, but the majority, the so-called forces of orthodoxy, determined upon a statement of faith which would eventually shatter the religious world to fragments. The creed read as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things, both in heaven and earth were made. Who for us men and for our salvation, came down, and was incarnate, and was made man, suffered, and the third day rose again, and ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. And those who say, There was a time when He was not, and that He did not exist before He was made, and that He was made out of nothing, or out of another substance or essence, or that the Son of God is created or mutable, or alterable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

I have always been impressed with one statement made in *Early Church History to the Death of Constantine* by Edward Backhouse and Charles Tylor. "It may be urged that although the council was not conducted with the decorum which was to be desired, yet in stemming the torrent of Arianism, in establishing the orthodox faith, and setting up a clear, enduring symbol of belief around which all might rally, it performed a work worthy of its character and fame, and of the gratitude of posterity. Let the council receive its full meed of praise. What might have happened if the Nicene Creed had not been adopted no one can say. But let us not ignore the incalculable mischief of enforced conformity, nor overlook the fact that the conclusion arrived at by the council was very far from settling the question at issue."

Another evaluation, by the German historian Neander, in his monumental historical work, needs our consideration. "The

manner in which the controversy was left could only contain the seeds for new disputes. Here was no cordial union, springing freely by a natural course of development out of inward conviction, but a forced and artificial conjunction of men, still widely separated by their different modes of thinking, in relation to a creed which had been imposed upon them, and which was variously expounded according to the doctrinal proclivities of the various parties.”

THE NATURE OF CHRISTENDOM

I am now ready to define Christendom in my own way. That definition will not please many. My conclusions will be less favorably received than my definition. Christendom is the huge umbrella of many patches and colors, providing shelter and shade for every form of political and religious delusion and chicanery. It is the sprawling tent under which millions huddle to watch the antics of religious clowns and buffoons, and to see the three-ring circus of professional entertainers, putting on a constant show for the shekels thrown them by the fear-motivated spectators. It is the labyrinthine maze which entraps and ensnares the unwary, and dooms them to the perpetual and hopeless search for happiness, promising them everything and delivering nothing.

Christendom is not the creation of God. It is the machinery of the clergy, a special class of which God’s word knows nothing, but which sprung out of human pride and then captured the holy city and placed its citizens under tribute for its maintenance. It is the new mediator between God and man, christening, consecrating, shriving, burying, and intoning prayers for a fee. Christendom is the kingdom presided over by popes, cardinals, primates, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, prelates, deans, arch deacons, canons, rectors, vicars and curates. In the suburban areas it is sometimes under the direction of priests, pastors and parsons, and these frequently

try to hide their relationship. It is the realm of ecclesiastical jargon, that language of the Scholastics, which has become a dialect or patois, unintelligible to the masses and serving only to confuse the uninitiated and confound the humble student. Most of us have been snared by it and pay homage to it by our own usage, a fact I stand ready to prove if anyone challenges my affirmation.

Christendom is not the Way! The Way is the habitat of free men, of men free to think for themselves and, what may be just as important, free to allow others to think for themselves. The Way is the path of communion and not always of conformation. Christendom is the mother of doubt and skepticism, and her daughters are human institutions brought in to act as handmaidens and nurses who know only how to supply the bottle but have never learned how to carve and serve meat. It is the imposer of creeds and forms, binding the intellect as the ancient Chinese bound the feet of their females, and producing a society of cripples out of reverence for tradition. It is the way of the prescript, the mandate and the bull.

It is for these reasons that I unhesitatingly affirm that what men call Christendom will never be united. No good purpose would be served if it were. We must go back beyond the written creeds of others and the unwritten creeds of our own, if we are ever to recapture the spirit of vital relationship with God which the Incarnation was intended to make possible and available unto us. This means a scrapping of all traditions except the apostolic tradition of Jesus Christ as having any validity for our walk in the Spirit. It means the discarding of papal bulls and decretals, the disregarding of synodical canons and articles, and the refusal to accept as authoritarian and prejudicial rulings and dogmatic definitions of elders and preachers.

The apostles must again be elevated to that place from which they were dragged, both by those who denied their authority originally, and those who affirmed equal authority as

their successors. The right of the individual to go humbly to the divine revelation for himself must be recovered. Each must be allowed to drink of the water of life out of his own cup, and not be forced to drink from an official cup bearing the insignia of the sect. There must be no supreme court except the individual conscience, and no compulsion except that of the eager heart yearning to be like Jesus.

You may label this what you will. You may call it reformation, restoration, or recovery. You may give it the more modern designation of renewal. I am not at all concerned about the semantical twists over which men fight and strive. What I am saying is that a return to Jerusalem is not a return to a period of time or a place on the map. It is rather a return to the recognition that God has raised up that same Jesus whom we have crucified and made him both Lord and Christ. It is a return to that state of contrition and heart-pricking over our guilt that we cry out once more, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Let others debate in forums and synods about the finer points of self-imposed law. Let them argue their creeds and assess the values of their decrees. But, as for me, I shall not stop at 325 A.D., but I will go to that moment when the glad news of the resurrection was heralded to a sinful race, and I will lift up my voice to proclaim it anew. Then unity will come to those who believe in Him!

Two Sons of God

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

Augustus occupied the throne in Rome the night the Baby was born and wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in the manger. There is no indication he ever knew about the visit of the angelic choir, but even if he did, he probably gave no thought to the idea that the visitation signalled the birth of the greatest revolutionary in the long turbulent history of mankind. To Augustus, every male child born to Galilean peasants was a potential revolutionary, but he knew how to extinguish these smoking firebrands.

Without realizing it, though, Augustus had been readying the world for the great clash which would eventually topple the imperial throne. And it all came about because of the feeling that Rome was decreed by the hand of Fate to become the kingdom of the heavens, the administration of the gods through whom peace and goodwill would be brought to men. And the Caesars would be the scepter in the hands of the gods for the accomplishment which would usher in the long-sought for “Golden Age.”

Originally called Gaius Octavius, Augustus was the grand-nephew of the great soldier and statesman, Julius Caesar. He was only nineteen when his uncle was murdered by the republican forces at the instigation of Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius, causing fear and turmoil to settle like a pall over

Rome. He was present when the Senate formally deified his uncle after death, exalting him to the court of the gods, and he recalled how even during his life his uncle had often been saluted as “Jupiter Julius.”

Octavius must have listened intently to the arguments which equated the empire with the rule of the heavens, and he was prepared to receive seriously the Latin title *Augustus*, the majestic one, when he became the emperor in 27 B.C. He petitioned to be called *Divi Filius*, that is, “Son of God,” and the request was granted by the Senate. Acceptance of divine status became a part of the strategy by which the Empire would become united and the loyalty of the provinces secured. To rebel against the emperor would be to rebel against God. Rome was to be “the Eternal City,” the abode of the gods.

The things which had happened in the immediate past gave impetus to the Caesar cult. When the will of Julius Caesar was read, it was learned that Octavian was named as heir and a legacy was left to each citizen. Mark Antony had taken advantage of his political position to seize the property and refused to surrender it. Octavian paid the people the sum of the bequest out of his own resources, and raised an army which defeated the forces of Antony, who fled across the Alps.

In 43 B.C. Octavian invited Antony to return and gave him equal status in the government. The two of them defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi the following year. Both of the beaten generals committed suicide. Later, Antony became fascinated with Cleopatra, the famous sexpot of the Nile and queen of Egypt, and Octavian was forced to fight a naval battle against the combined fleets of Antony and Cleopatra. He soundly defeated them at Actium in 31 B.C., and at the age of thirty-four became sole master of the Roman world.

In 29 B.C. he returned in triumph, hailed by the frantic populace as Jupiter come down in the flesh to dwell among

them. He closed the temple of Janus for the first time in two hundred years, and a great calm settled over the whole earth. Two years later he was accorded the title “Son of God,” and began his personal friendship with the Roman writers Ovid, Horace, Vergil and Livy. A great beautification project began in Rome to make it worthy to be the seat of the gods, and Augustus could boast that he “found Rome brick and left it marble.”

Finally, the supreme triumph was accorded him. It was deemed by Rome a mark of divinity to change the calendar. The gods presided over time and for time to be regulated by one’s birth or life was a proof of deity. January was the month of Janus, March the month of Mars, and June the month of Juno. The Senate met in solemn session and changed the month *Sextilis* to August. Then an unseen hand began to move among men!

Centuries before, a Hebrew prophet had almost casually spoken about the little city of David, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephratah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2). The future ruler was to enter the world like those whom he would rule. The vehicle in which he would ride was the womb of a peasant girl, a virgin. There was one problem. The pregnant woman was in Nazareth, a long way from Bethlehem, and there was no sensible reason for going to the latter village.

But the universal launching headquarters for the planetary visitation had command of the situation. At precisely the right minute in far-away Rome, Octavian, who considered himself as master of the universe, pulled a switch that set the whole world in motion. “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled . . . And all went to be enrolled each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee . . . to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered.”

Now there were two “Sons of God” on earth and their goals were identical. One was created by the Roman Senate and one by the Holy Spirit. Each was dedicated to the task of bringing about universal peace, and each believed that it could come only through acknowledgment of his sovereignty. Behind one was the mightiest military machine the world has ever seen. It was augmented by another army of statesmen, ambassadors and envoys, who were superb in diplomacy. Treaties and compromises welded together a great political complex which had no rival. It was a kingdom of the gods, woven of raw power and intrigue, and it was obsessed with the thought of its own invincibility. It was eternal and undying.

The Nazarene quietly and unobtrusively began to build his force of freedom fighters. By its very nature his had to be an underground movement. Hardy fishermen were summoned from their nets, a customs agent was called from his desk at a port of entry. Another was a daggerman of the Zealot party, a group of raiders pledged to undying hostility to the occupation forces of Rome. It was a strange and motley crew. But for three years they were constantly by his side, and they came to share his sense of mission and destiny.

To them he disclosed strange facts. He said, “The time has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I tell you truly that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain of wheat; but if it dies, it brings a good harvest.” Again we can read, “From that time onwards Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he would have to go to Jerusalem, and endure much suffering from the elders, chief priests and scribes, and finally be killed; and be raised to life again on the third day.” When one of them remonstrated with him he told him that he looked at things “from man’s point of view and not from God’s.”

The rest of the story is too well known to require repetition. He did die, and was buried and rose again. He met

the last enemy, went down into his lair, conquered him and wrestled the keys of death and hades from his frantic grasp. For forty days he appeared to the men whom he had trained. They heard him, saw him, scrutinized him and touched him. There was no question in their minds that he had overcome death, and by doing so had transformed into a grand strategy of "Mission Possible" what had before seemed an impossible mission.

Before he left to return to his glory, he revealed that theirs was a task of world conquest, and he instructed them to wait until the power to accomplish the work was provided them. Immediately upon receipt of this power they were to launch an attack which must be prosecuted by them and their successors until his return for the Grand Triumph, the climax of all the ages. They were to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But they were to unleash upon a world of evil and malignancy the greatest dynamic force in heaven and upon earth.

The war to capture men's minds began at Jerusalem, and was an attack against the world citadel of legalism. For a very little while the invading forces were popular. Each day they met by common consent in a temple rendezvous, and then repaired to private homes to break bread together. Numbers of people enlisted cheerfully under the banner of the world liberation front. Suddenly it began to dawn upon the defenders of the status quo that they were not dealing with a bunch of harmless eccentrics. They arrested the recruiting officers and jailed them but it was to no avail. "During the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out, saying, 'Go and stand and speak in the Temple. Tell the people all about this new life.' After receiving these instructions they entered the Temple about daybreak, and began to teach."

The enemy next summoned a meeting of the council to discuss how to kill them. Fortunately, a very prominent leader, Gamaliel, who was respected by all of the people arose and said, "My advice to you now therefore is to let these men alone; leave

them to themselves.” Later it was claimed that he was secretly allied with the Messianic movement, one of whom wrote, “Gamaliel, a chief of the people . . . who was secretly our brother in the faith, but by our advice remained among them” (Clement, *Recognitions*, Book 1).

Already there was developing a strategy of penetration with intelligence agents planted in key spots, but the program of world conquest was proceeding slowly and was all too limited. If the world was to be set on fire the burning brands must be scattered. The upper control room awaited the proper moment and then made use of a Cicilian hot-head who harassed the freedom fighters, violating their civil rights, battering down the doors to their houses, and dragging men and women out to commit them to detention cells.

But “those who were dispersed by his actions went throughout the country proclaiming the good news of the Message as they went.” Then a tremendous thing happened. After he had been used to scatter the fire the Tarsian leader of the Jewish storm-troopers, “still breathing murderous threats” came into direct confrontation with the Risen One, was captured and changed sides. Immediately he turned his enthusiasm and fanatical zeal toward advancement of the new cause.

Up to that time Rome had taken no particular notice of the movement. It had been confined to a remote province and appeared to be nothing more than another sect in an already hopelessly fragmented Judaism. But the Caesar cult was creating widespread opposition and revolt in Palestine. The Roman cohorts were having great difficulty in maintaining order. Feeling began to run high even in the “Eternal City.” And then the Messianic movement began to spread. It crossed seas, climbed mountains, traversed plains and spanned continents.

There is every reason to believe that the Romans often misunderstood its nature and misinterpreted its purpose. They

were aware that Jewish political agents were active everywhere, fomenting revolt, and had a cell even in the ghetto in Rome itself. In desperation their personal property was confiscated. It was easy to mistakenly identify the Nazarenes as allied with the political revolutionaries. In Thessalonica Paul and Silas were dragged before the civic authorities by a shouting mob, yelling, "These are the men who have turned the world upside down and have now come here, and Jason has taken them into his house. What is more, all these men act against the decrees of Caesar saying there is another king called Jesus."

It is not to be wondered at that the Caesar cult mistook the teaching of the resurrection of Jesus for something else, and interpreted *Anastasis Christou* as "the Messianic insurrection." We must not forget that there is not one thing in the word "resurrection" which has to do with death. It simply means a raising up, or an uprising. When word reached Rome that all over the Empire men of Jewish background were enlisting slaves and others by proclaiming the rising up of the Messiah, and that groups were being formed which met secretly after dark, or before daybreak, where participants pledged anew their allegiance to another king, it was decided that drastic measures would have to be taken. The political sovereignty of the Caesars was being threatened and this new cult must be ruthlessly obliterated.

At last the two great powers must face up to the fray. Now it was Christ or Caesar! One was a usurper in the universe because there could only be one Lord, and one universal King. The Caesars readied for the strange conflict. Unseen by them the angels in heaven also prepared. So did the demons. The cosmic struggle was now centered on earth. The purpose of the ages was now "zeroed in" on one of the smallest spinning planets. But this was the headquarters for the "prince of the power of the air." Here lived the sons of men, and here for a little while had lived the Son of Man. His coming had made the war inevitable.

Rome had gained dominion over the soldiers loyal to the Emperor, but the many thousands, even millions, of slaves who were captured proved the eventual undoing of the state. The slave was regarded not as a person, but as a thing. He was a labor-saving device, a gadget to respond immediately to the call of the master. The result was that Roman society grew more decadent as its constituency grew more affluent. The people were tired— of life, of the gods, and of religious performances. Suddenly they were introduced to a new and virile Message and the Way was alive, and powerful and enthusiastic. That last word means “inspired of God.” The Way was revolutionary.

A genuine revolutionary movement must possess certain well-defined characteristics in order to achieve its objective. Without these it will founder and fade out without transforming the entrenched status, or overthrowing the existing order. Fuzzy thinking still stifles more reform movements than any other factor. Let us think about the necessary and indispensable requirements.

1. There must be a sense of destiny which imbues the revolutionary with a dream of tremendous scope out of all proportion to present strength and power. That vision must be so majestic that the one who holds it will be called a fanatic, and his peers will say, “Behold, the dreamer cometh.”

2. There must be a recognition that the forces of revolution are always the aggressors, relentless and unswerving, and that any temporary setback must be overcome at once and turned into occasion for victory.

3. There must be an acceptance of the idea that the cause is more valuable than any person engaged in its prosecution and that to die for it is heroic and constitutes actual gain.

4. There must be a full support of the headquarters with unquestioning trust in the Intelligence Department to direct the

forces in the field.

5. There must be a flexibility in the strategy which will make for adaptability of weaponry to changing conditions and circumstances. By their very nature, revolutions can never be tied to the methods of the past.

6. The ultimate goal must be transformed from an ideal into a positive idea, and this must be seen and envisioned in its completed state by the projected imagination.

Every one of these principles is accepted and adopted by every school for revolutionaries on the face of the earth. An examination of every political, social, economic, and religious revolution of the past, will show that those who launched it, were all fully cognizant of and committed to these principles.

We thus have the proper criteria to measure what we refer to as “Christianity” and determine whether it is a revolutionary force in our day. And the apt students are immediately aware that whether Christianity faces up to these or fails, there is a force extant in our day which meets everyone of them. It is world communism. And it is the fastest growing religious ideology on our earth. It has captured the minds of multiplied millions during my own lifetime!

It is also dramatically evident how dynamically the early Christians met every requirement and thus composed a tremendous fighting force. Their vision was universal. They were commissioned to go into all the world and contact every creature. They were convinced that every knee would bow, whether in heaven, on earth, or under the earth.

They followed a trumpet which would never sound retreat. Their watchword was “Go!” “Go ye into the village; go ye into the highways, go stand and speak in the temple, go toward the south, go into Damascus, go into Jerusalem, go into all the world, go teach all nations, go in peace.” Go! Go! Go! And every

go is matched with an “arose and went.” When their way was barred in one direction they circumvented it and pressed on. When Paul and Silas came to Mysia, they attempted to enter Bithynia, but encountered a divine roadblock. So they passed by Mysia and came down to Troas which they used as a launching-pad to open up a new continent to the revolution— Europe.

They did not have a false estimate of the value of this life. The cause was everything. This is shown by some of the statements which they jotted down. “It all accords with my own earnest wishes and hopes, which are that I shall never be in any way ashamed, but that now, as always, I should honor Christ with the utmost boldness by the way I live, whether that means I am to face death or go on living.” “What do you mean by unnerving me with all your tears? I am perfectly prepared not only to be bound but to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus.”

There was an unquestioning obedience. “I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “The life of a man of divided loyalty will reveal instability at every turn.” “But they cannot chain the Word of God, and I can endure all things for the sake of those whom God is calling.” “I am not in the least ashamed. For I know the one in whom I have placed my confidence, and I am perfectly certain that the work he has committed to me is safe in his hands unto that day.”

To understand the conquest of the Way one must see it in the context of conflict and against the background of battle. It cannot be explained when divorced from the terminology of war in which it is described. To try and refine it and clean it up for sensitive ears and squeamish hearts is to reduce it to a sham and a show. It is to look at a diorama in an auditorium instead of being involved in a real life situation. One of God’s commandos described his ministry by talking about “danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen, and from pagans.” He said, “I have faced danger in city streets, danger in

the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing.”

Let me make no bones about it. Let me be clearly understood. I want to serve as a revolutionary. I want to be an active member of the world liberation front. I am sold out to “the man from outside.” I want to join hands with every other person on the face of this whole wide earth who is committed to following “the leader on the white horse.” I do not care whether you are black, white, red or yellow. I do not care whether you are Jew or Greek, male or female, bond or free. I do not care if you wear faded jeans or a Botany 500 suit. I do not care if you wear curls over your coat collar or if you are as bald as a billiard ball. What I am concerned about is whether you are willing to suffer hardship for his name, whether you are carrying the cross daily and if you are willing to die cheerfully and smilingly for his sake. He said, “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

If you are in Him I am in Him with you. We are in the One! We are listening to the clear tones of the same trumpet. I have no time to indulge in the luxury of cultivating vegetables in a sectarian garden, fenced off from life. I have no time to play religious chess inside the walls of a partisan monastery. There is a war on. The winds of battle are blowing in my face. I have no desire to lean on the fence and argue with you about your trivial deductions or to engage in nit-picking. A soldier who is under fire and pinned down by whining bullets cannot waste mental energy in a heated argument whether to part his hair on the right or left side. When the house is on fire it is no time to get up and nail a stray shingle on the roof of the garage.

Let the religious gold-bricks behind the lines debate, argue and fuss about all of the nitty-gritty which appeals to those who go blithely on without knowing that the fight is on, but *for God's sake*, let us get on with the battle. Let us not get hung up on what kind of rug to put on the floor of the mess-hall or commissary, or

strung out on whether Jesus is going to return before the thousand years or after it. While we are fighting among ourselves the demons are laughing up their diabolical sleeves and the devil is picking his teeth with a flame-proof splinter in happy anticipation of a ghoulish feast.

The time has come to live dangerously! It is no time to sit around mumbling and talking out of the corner of your mouth about the “institutional church.” This is a cop-out, and those who do most of the grumbling and belly-aching would not do anything for Jesus under any circumstances. I have watched the spiritual dropouts through the years, and without exception they are people of divided allegiance, and they are unstable in all of their ways. It takes men in times of battle and they are a little less than men. One does not have to be very brilliant to sit around and find fault and to inform his longsuffering wife of the mistakes of everyone else on earth. If you know what ought to be done, get with the action and stop the reaction.

If you are a preacher of the word, revolutionize your message so you can revolutionize your hearers. There is not too much to be gained when a group is spoon-fed the same pap or pabulum week after week, and know before they arrive that they are going to be “filled up with regular.” Risk your financial life and live up to your commitment. Trust in the Lord to see you through. If you are driven out of one city flee to the next. If the Message is absolutely rejected sound off your exhaust against the city. Few preachers walk enough any more that they can shake off any dust from their feet!

I eagerly urge you to read again the absolute essentials to the revolutionary stance. Study the tactics of world communism. See why the proponents of it are so successful. Let us learn from the enemy! How can they sweep the world and never hold a revival? How have they been so successful in the cities of the globe without a crusade? What is the difference in the approach of “The Daily Worker” and the papers that we publish?

My heart is thoroughly convinced that we have the power of heaven on our side in the struggle. We are following a leader that even death could not hold. The sayings of Chairman Jesus in the little black book are so much more revolutionary than the sayings of Chairman Mao in the little red book, that there is no comparison. Then the difference must be in the attitude of the followers. Are we willing to admit that the brainwashed millions are more powerful than the heart-washed hosts who follow in the train of the Son of God?

Arouse from your apathy! Comrades, let us unite! We should be the militants! We should be the workers throwing off their chains. We should be the world liberators! We should be the vanguard of the forces storming the heights, freeing the captives, rescuing the weary and despondent. Banish the thought of defeat. We cannot be overcome! We cannot be destroyed! I summon every person in the world who loves Jesus to throw off the sectarian bonds and free men from the stranglehold of party shackles. For freedom Christ hath set us free! Our necks were not made to bend beneath the cruel chafing of sectarian yokes. Hear the call of him who said, "Take my yoke upon you, for truly my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Hear the call. Heed the invitation. There's a place in the ranks for you. Right on, brethren!

The Secular Influence

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

Although the readers of this little journal represent many schools of thought and are identified with many of the religious sects current in our day, they generally agree that God has communicated his will to mankind, and the revelation is contained in what we call the sacred scriptures. I use the modifying term “generally” because an occasional reader takes me to task for my reliance upon the scriptures as of divine origin. We have some brethren who sit in the left field bleachers, just as we have others who are still looking for the ball park. But such objectors are so few that I need not take time out to establish either the genuineness or authenticity of the scriptures. I can deal with them on a “coffee break,” but I will proceed upon the basis that proper reverence and respect will be accorded to the scriptures when I refer to them, or quote from them.

In spite of the fact that all those who love God seek to understand and do his will, even the most casual reader and observer will recognize that the Christian profession as we see it exemplified in our day is not at all as it was portrayed by the inspired penmen in the earliest days of the proclamation of the Joyful News. Two things have happened to create the condition we face. On one hand our profession has been secularized, and on the other it has been sectarianized. These did not move in from the same direction at all. The first represents the

encroachment of a culture which has been developing under the impact of the Machine Age and the Scientific Era. The other stems from the selfishness and immaturity of those whom God has called. It would be nice if we could stick our heads in the ecclesiastical sand and act as if they did not exist. But if we are honest we will face up to both of them. Neither will go away of itself.

In this little treatise, which will no doubt turn out to be too long, I am going to deal with the influence of secularization. At the very outset it is important that we distinguish between the secularization of the community of faith, and the propagation or promulgation of “secularism” as a way of life. The latter is actually a “system of belief” which is arrogantly offered as an “honest alternative” to faith in God. It is touted as the only approach to human existence and the universe open to men who are possessed of both intellectuality and integrity. In effect it denies the reality or significance of anything that cannot be ascertained or measured by the methods of modern science.

Secularism begins without God, continues without God, and ends without God. It is the same yesterday, today and forever. It is an interpretation of life which does not find either a necessity or place for God. In its postulate God is not needed to explain the origin of things, the maintenance of the universe, or the culmination of it. It repudiates the concepts of creation, providence and final judgment. One need not be too astute to recognize that it makes man answerable to no higher being than Self, and thus abdicates moral responsibility and leaves man dangling in space by a rope which is not fastened to anything above. A crash is simply inevitable because life is more than an Oriental rope-trick.

It is also apparent that if the nature of God is such that it is not subject to measurement by the methods of natural science, the fact that he is not discovered or turned up by the experimental or laboratory process reveals nothing about the

reality of Deity. All it proves is the inadequacy of the scientific process to measure the Infinite. If God is, as I believe he is, the uncreated, eternal First Cause, he cannot be confined and judged by natural science which can only deal with that which is at hand, and can never go back and discover the Hand which being unformed itself, gave form to all else.

Mind you, secularism when boiled down and simmered away, is not a *substitute* for faith. It is in itself a “system of faith.” It is predicated upon faith and conducts its research in faith. Although it pretends to scoff at faith it has never taken a step without it, nor can it exist without faith. Newman Smyth, in *Reality of Faith* wrote, “How many things hard to credit must one believe, in order not to be a Christian.” So secularism has Man as its god, hedonism as its philosophy, and scientism as its religion. We must never forget that doubts are creeds. “Every denial is one facet of a proposition of which the other facet is an affirmation.”

But it is not of this we speak when we say that the Christian profession has become secularized. Instead, we refer to the fact that God’s people exist in the ongoing flow of history, and that its attitudes and approaches to life penetrate and affect the saints in the world. Secularization means the gradual withdrawal of more and more areas of life from the control of the religious community, but it also means the exclusion of more and more areas of thought from the control of the revealed will of God.

This presents some tensions, and secularization is not all evil. There is no stopping of history, except by the fiat of God. We cannot halt the world and hop off. Sometimes men mature within the historical process and because of it, and this always means a change with growing independence. This is true in the physical family. As the infant develops it changes, and each change fits it for the making of decisions which will culminate in its independence from the imposition of the will of others for its

personal wellbeing. The relationship to the family remains and the affectional bond may actually grow stronger when it is no longer the result of helpless dependence. There is a difference between the leash which a mother uses to restrain a child from running off in a supermarket and the heart strings which bind a grown man to his aging parent. One purpose of Christ in visiting this planet was to make men free by encouraging them to mature. Prior to his coming the people of God were regarded as adolescents or minors, and were placed under a guardian or trustee. They were no better off than slaves, and were "close prisoners in the custody of the law, pending the revelation of Faith," as Paul wrote to the Galatians. The coming of Jesus changed all of this. He came "to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law in order that we might attain the status of sons."

A slave is not independent. He can make no decisions. They are all made for him. But we are no longer under a written code. We are under grace. We are sons of God, and heirs by God's own act. Oftentimes a family will not allow a child to really grow up. Stronger members of the circle try to dominate him. And this also happens in the family of God. Now, however, we are seeing grave changes take place with reference to authoritarian institutions. Some of these are wrought in the life of the community of saints and many are worried sick and frightened. They think that the purpose of God is being thwarted in a decadent age. They are concerned because what is called "the church" can no longer keep its adherents under control. No one is asking how such control originated in the first place.

Certainly there are grave dangers in the secularization process, but if divine providence uses it to make God's children grow up and accept the responsibilities of freedom, it will not be the first time that what appeared to be evil has been turned into good. God has a way of using historical phenomena to accomplish his purpose. And there is a shaking of the

foundations in our day. Such upheaval will be most observable in rigid and authoritarian structures. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has always been somewhat loose in regard to some aspects of individual moral behavior, having hitched its wagon rather to the sacramental star. So it is in the area of dogma and ritual that it is now being shaken. Even some of its “infallible” dogmata are being called in question by prominent leaders.

What is taking place in the Mother of Sects is taking place among her daughters, as well as among some parties which vehemently deny that they have ever been related. The fact is that every group which acknowledges that Jesus has come in the flesh is in trouble, and the woes are compounded when priests, prelates or preachers mistake all demands for and assertions of freedom as rebellion against God. The sectarianism is evident in that each party rejoices that all of the others are in difficulty. Those who demand an end to tyranny over thought in other sects are hailed as heroes, those who do so in our own are branded as traitors. In an earlier age we would have cheerfully burned them as heretics. Now we brand them as “liberals.”

Once the community by group pressure and by threats, innuendo and boycott, regulated every avenue of life and conduct. There was no real individual maturity required. Decisions were made by the power structure and imposed from an editorial sanctum. Recreational preferences, social relationships, and even personal habits were as much regulated as were the rituals, times of assembly and other areas of community endeavor. At various times imported front-men inveighed against such evils as playing checkers or golfing. Preachers who lambasted movies in the country sneaked out and went to them in the city. Each faction or sect had its own taboos and embargoes. In some it was a sin to play croquet or watch a ballgame on Sunday. In others, men who had never been drunk in their lives were driven out because they drank a glass of Mogen David wine as a beverage at the dinner table. Mind you, I

am not here discussing the right or wrong of any of these for individuals with a troubled conscience. I am simply pointing out the legalism of the religious institutions which invaded the private lives of individuals and assumed jurisdiction over them. If any brother violated a proscription it was “Katy-bar-the-door!”

Now secularization is removing these areas from organizational control and men are exercising their personal freedom to make decisions for themselves and their families. And a lot of them are making mistakes! The power structure is fighting to retain control. Hatchet-men are hacking away, seeking to hammer into subjection all who are trying to assert a right to stand or fall to their own Master. Preachers are brought in who have a reputation for being “sound,” and in some groups college lectureships are devoted to “tomahawking” liberals, in party parlance a term applied to anyone who thinks for himself out loud.

The tragedy is not that we are all in trouble. That was inevitable. My real concern is that we would not allow men to be free in Christ until the secular age moved in and began penetrating our ghettos and forcing upon us a condition which we had to meet or die. It is one thing for a man to free his slaves out of love for them as persons, and a wholly different thing to reluctantly allow them to go because an invading force has a gun pointed at his heart. In either case the former slaves will be free, but in the latter case the master will not be.

In the Christian framework the problem was created by the fact that good men forgot that Jesus came to put an end to the distinction between the secular and sacred. This is one of the chief differences between God’s dealings with his people before the cross and after it. The passing away of law as a restraining force and the introduction of love as the motivating principle for every action, changed the whole approach to God. Every word and deed was sanctified when proceeding from the inner man

which was the dwelling-place of God. Worship ceased to be related to holy places, holy days and holy things, and became the daily life of the sanctified and reconciled ones.

But human wisdom and lust for power moved in to alter this, and in order to do so the religious schemers created an institution which arrogated to itself the right to dispense grace or deny it, to control the lives of men here and determine their destiny hereafter. Lip-service was paid to the cross, but it was ignored as the watershed of history, and law was reinstated as the basis of securing the approval of God. Law demands a supreme court to interpret it and a power structure to enforce it, and the institutions— Catholic, Protestant, Independent— set up an infallible interpreter, or, what is even worse, an infallible interpretation, and those who dissented were harassed and heckled, harrowed and hated, and sometimes killed by cruel torture.

Generally, men think of the Roman Church when they meditate upon things such as these. There is good reason to do so, for my good friends who have grown up in that background have been victimized by an arrogant institution which claims absolute control of their lives on earth and their fate after death. Modern Romanism is an unholy synthesis of Judaism, paganism and Christianity, devised by Thomas of Aquino, the “Prince of Scholastics” in the thirteenth century, and Thomism makes men slaves of the philosophic state as certainly as Marxism makes them slaves of the political state.

Yet, Romanism differs only in degree from some of its vociferous critics. The same reasoning which takes an Italian farmer and elevates him to the papal throne where his words, spoken *ex cathedra*, become dogma, binding upon the consciences of all the faithful, under threat of the fires of hell, is the same reasoning which promotes John Doe and Richard Roe to the eldership where, with benefit of the clergy, they can make decisions and issue official interpretations which all must accept

without a murmur or be “cut off from among the people.”

The institutional religious establishments created to secure conformity and stifle dissent are alike in purpose, nature and intent. They differ in method and power as well as in points of emphasis. But all of them have been created to maintain the status quo by defence of opinions and traditions equated with the will of God and they operate to deprive men of freedom and the right to truly love all others. The Roman Catholic who trembles at the thought of crossing a Protestant threshold and later facing the parish priest for his action is no different than the patron of another establishment who would not dare go hear Billy Graham for fear of being verbally attacked from the “holy platform” the following Sunday by a preacher who watched the program on television.

The spirit of this age is one of secularization, and it is affecting the religious establishment as it is every other. I hold no brief for it. I recognize clearly its potential for harm. But I am thoroughly convinced that it will not destroy or prevail against the community planted on the Rock. Our God can use alien forces to free his people. He has done so in the past and he can still do so. When Babylon ruthlessly enslaved God’s people he raised up “the spirit of the kings of the Medes for his device was against Babylon.” The Medes were pagans but God said, “You are my battle axe and weapons of war.” By the same token he can use the tendencies of our neo-pagan culture as his instruments for achieving good.

The principle of legalism with its written and unwritten creeds must be abrogated. The ideal of grace must be recaptured. This means a renunciation of the human establishment which has usurped the place of the temple of God which is not constructed of dogmas or codes, but of living stones bonded together by that which the Spirit supplies. It means the recapture of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power, and the renewal that can only come from the indwelling Helper

supplied by the Father during the absence of Jesus from the earth.

A mere reformation of the ecclesiastical power structures will neither meet the divine appointment nor merit the divine approval. History is full of such attempts at reformation. All have been abortive. Luther sought to reform the Roman Church and ended up with a Protestant hierarchy. Every exclusivistic party now in existence is a living testimony to the futility of reforming sects. Such endeavors only multiply the sects and make the task of future reformers more difficult and complex. Every reformation has ended up in deformation.

A group of reformed sects will still be sects, and although they may shift their areas of emphasis under the influence of reformatory moves, they will still separate and segregate those who should be one in Christ. There must come, not only a renunciation of sects, but of *sectism*, the spirit which spawns them. Otherwise, if we rid ourselves of existing sects it would not be long until we would again plague the world with a bevy of new ones, which might conceivably be worse than the first. Cutting down sectarian sprouts will avail little unless we also dig up the roots. The sectarian spirit is a work of the flesh. We must repent of it, crucify it, and eradicate it from our hearts.

It is at this point where secularization may play an important, and even a decisive role. It makes for de-emphasis upon partisan forms, and the power structures and machinery created to keep them operating. Religious rivalry and competition are seen in their true light, as struggles to maintain the pride of the party, and not as attempts to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered for all. And we need to recapture the sense of brotherhood created by the blood of the Lamb. We are blood-brothers in the Lord. Ours is a shared relationship and a sharing relationship, made possible by reconciliation unto God.

The disregard for arrogant dogmatism which makes serfs

out of saints, and the assertion of the freedom and dignity of all God's children to be priests and ministers is good. It will help to place the Way in proper perspective. But the other influence of secularization is destructive. The removal of more and more areas of thought from the control and discipline of the revealed word of God is frightening because of the consequences which will result.

It is not necessary, in order to relieve ourselves of the despotism of men, that we also renounce the Lordship of Jesus. Obviously, modern man concludes that "the institutional church" uses Jesus as a means of enforcing its wishes upon weak men, or vice versa. But man tends to corrupt all that he touches and the fact that the lust for power has created abuses, in no wise argues that there is no room or need for authority over life by its Creator. The community of saints is not intended to be a tool of oppression but a means of spiritual edification for all who are concerned.

If Jesus is Lord, and if his will has been communicated in word, we are not free to disregard it. "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken." We cannot choose those areas in which we will be obedient and neglect those in which we do not propose to be. The will of God is not subject to the whims of men. We are free in Christ, not free from Christ. And this is a good place for me to summarize my own convictions and approach in this article which has already outgrown my original intentions.

I propose to exercise the freedom to study God's revelation for myself and to be guided by my own understanding of its demands upon my life. I will not abdicate the right to think for myself to any institution, or to any man or group of men. Since I insist upon this freedom for myself I will accord it to all others. I will not impose my deductions, opinions or interpretations of doctrine upon any other person whose conscience will not allow him to accept them.

I will regard the methods and means which sincere men devise to enable themselves, in their views, to better implement the will of God, as human expedients. I am not bound to support them or to work in or through them. They are not a part of God's arrangement by revelation, and I will not confuse them with it. At the same time, I will not confound the means which men use with the men who use them, and I will exercise care that in rejecting the means I do not reject the men. Jesus died for men, not means! I will receive all whom God has received and allow God to determine the validity of those things which earnest men have used in their attempt to carry out the divine will. If they can explain them to the satisfaction of God it is not necessary for them to satisfy me!

Although I am in the world and cannot avoid or evade living out my earthly existence in a special time-space sequence, I am resolved that I will not allow the secularization process to separate me from Jesus. Insofar as the process cuts the institutional apron strings and forces me to stand upon my own feet and make my own decisions in Christ, as I had to make the decision for Christ, I shall accept the independency as a gift of God's grace. But I will be sure that my independency is expressed within the framework of God's precious revelation and not in rebellion against it.

Just as the physical sun is the center of the solar system, and all that is upon earth revolves around it, receiving light and power from it, whether conscious of the fact or not, so Jesus is the center of the moral universe. He is the source of spiritual light and power whether men recognize it or not. I am not a satellite of any institution or organization, but as a member of the one body and motivated by the one Spirit, my life revolves around the Sun of righteousness who has risen with healing in his wings. He is the center of my universe, the bright and morning star, my help in ages past, my hope for years to come, my shelter from the stormy blast, and my eternal home! Praise His name!

Our Real Task

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[Abstract]

Marcia Hollis wrote in *Down to Earth* these words: “Except for the call to love God and our neighbor, there is no universal vocation, and unlike the plants in the vegetable garden, we are not all neatly lined up in a row with a paper at the end to say what we are.”

As I look back at my own past I think that the real conquest of the party spirit occurred when the realization dawned upon my consciousness that we do not all have to be carbon copies of one another in order to please God and be welcomed into the divine family. We had often remarked that our own children were unique and dissimilar, and we thought nothing of it. In fact, we rejoiced that they were different and we could tell them apart. I cannot figure out how or why I came to believe that all who were born again had to be “the spitting image” of one another, as the old-timers used to express it.

We have not been cut out with a holy cookie-cutter to be like so many gingerbread men exhibited in a divine showcase. Instead, we are vital and living beings, translated into a new relationship by being born again. Our natural abilities and aptitudes are not destroyed in the process. They are sanctified and enhanced by the Holy Spirit until we have been recreated and made into vessels fit for the Master’s use. It is no credit to the various factions, mistakenly self-identified as the body of

Christ, that they have engaged in a constant effort to pound and pummel God's children into their own moulds in order to manipulate and control them for gain or glory! They have engaged in rearing parrots and mockingbirds rather than children!

It seems difficult for most of us to do more than pay casual lipservice to the idea and the ideal of the ministry of all the saints. We are hooked on the idea of a professional clergy and cannot seriously and sincerely grasp the thought that God employs butchers and bakers and candlestick makers as his witnesses in this neo-pagan world. For a long time we kept up the pretence that we had to have a polished front man to attract the populace with smooth-flowing oratory, but now a lot of folk are "flaking off" from the "organized church" to meet in homes where they can talk to one another on an everyday plane and not be subjected to canned sermons served up from outlines in *Ministers Monthly*.

Of course the big problem is that we ceased to be the family of God and made the church "big business." That caused us to quit being brothers and sisters and we became "members" and stockholders. A well-oiled machine needs only cogs in the wheels to keep purring, and while a cog is as de-personalized and cold as a robot, it will keep functioning as long as you can make it believe that Jesus died for the machinery and paid his blood for the enterprise.

I think there are signs everywhere that men and women are recapturing the glorious thought that we are on earth, not simply to buy huge acreages, or pile up brick, stone and mortgages, but to share in the agony of mankind, and "helping to complete, in our poor human flesh, the full tale of Christ's afflictions still to be endured, for the sake of his body the church" (Col. 1:24). And you cannot hire someone else to suffer for you, either in the hospital or in the house of God! Heaven touches earth when you minister to the least of these!

The Majestic Experience

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[Abstract]

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free— **John Wolfgang von Goeth.**

There are many experiences in this world which are downright difficult. Some of them make you feel as if you were already in eternity. For example, paying off a thirty-year mortgage in monthly installments, and wondering if you can settle up before the house settles down— in the basement. Others make you want to climb the walls and walk across the ceiling upside down like a human fly. Like taking the family on a three day vacation in a wilderness area, only to have it rain relentlessly every minute for the whole time so that you are cooped up in a two-room cabin with six kids who brought along all the gear to play outside.

But, as traumatic as such an experience turns out to be, it cannot be compared with that of trying to be non-sectarian in a sectarian world. It is not even easy to be a Christian of some standard and shelf-worn brand, but to be a Christian only is almost as big a feat as swimming the Atlantic Ocean while your friends are sailing along beside you and trying to drown you by throwing rocks at you. As proof of how hard it is, look at most of those who think that is what they are— when what they are is certainly not that!

I have been trying to make an honest stab at it for several years, but it is like cancer surgery. You are never real sure they got all of the roots and you are always consciously aware that it could break out again in a different spot. I started out to please God in a sect, a dyed-in-the-wool one which admitted it. I did not really choose it. I inherited it from my maternal grandparents who were emigrants from the old country and who brought it with them to be sure they did not leave God in Scandinavia. It was their firm opinion that God belonged to the sect also, just like a lot of other folk think that if God was on earth, he would live in the United States and vote the straight Democratic ticket. Most of us think the angels in heaven are overjoyed with what we do and the way we do it, although we have had no direct word from them to that effect.

When I got old enough to begin to question my family traditions, our little brood came under the spell of certain honest and intense folk who rightly condemned sectarianism as of the devil, and wrongly felt called of God to beat the devil out of it, or die trying! The thought of being a Christian and nothing else had a tremendous appeal to my simple mind. To be free of all human domination of pope or synod, and to belong only to Christ Jesus, struck a responsive chord that vibrated as only a heart-string can twang when plucked by the fingers of such a noble concept.

Nothing else has greater fascination for the soul of a man than the liberty for which Christ set us free. That is why it eventually came as a crushing surprise to find that I was actually part of a non-sectarian sect, and if exclusivism is the hallmark of all sectarianism (and it is the very essence of it), the non-sectarian sects are actually the worst offenders of the lot. Their adherents are always forced to put bitter for sweet and darkness for light, and end up confusing loyalty to the sect as the real test of being non-sectarian.

I have to plead guilty of propagating the partisan spirit. I

am ashamed of that now, of course, but I not only preached it, I also practiced it all over the land, and a lot of good folk thought I was adept at it. They rejoiced in it! I suppose that I did make progress in it “above many my equals.” But I made two mistakes. I continued to study and think, and I got too close to Jesus. I wasn’t “zapped by the Spirit” as a lot of folk testify to being in our day. It was a little more agonizing than that. I had to go through the painful experience of extricating myself scripture by scripture, and sometimes while pulling one boot out the other was again sinking in the party ooze.

Actually, though, you do not have to jump up and throw the door of your heart wide open in one glad burst of enthusiasm and happy babbling, for the Spirit to get to you. His light is like that of the natural sun. If a little piece of the sectarian chinking or daubing falls out between the stones of your ecclesiastical rock-pile, he will beam a ray of light through, and you’ll see things in the corners you did not know were there, and which you wish you had never seen at all. Sometimes you can live more comfortably in a house when you do not know what inhabits the woodwork.

One reason I have a great deal of compassion for sectarian folk is because I know exactly how they feel. I liked being a sectarian. It is an easy and comfortable existence. You do not need to really think. That has all been done for you, and gathered up in a neat bundle and delivered to you like laundry. In fact, the most dangerous exercise in which a sectarian can indulge is thinking. If he keeps on in it he will be out because of it. And a lot of us are happier when we are sectarian. You can be certain that you will never hear any preacher who is not faithful. The Holy Spirit is in the box with us, and best of all, is concerned only with us. We are in the “ark of safety” although it perturbs us that those who are bobbing up and down outside are not trying to knock the door down and get in with us. A lot of them act as if they would rather die without us than to have to live with us. And it makes us miserable because they are so

happy!

The greatest consolation to me in my sectarian heyday was the thought of God's marvelous provision in compiling the Bible so that it justified everything we did. Only divine prescience could anticipate that nineteen hundred years after the Word became flesh that our flesh could be made Word. When I contemplated all of the lost centuries and lost millions, and realized that then we came along and contrived such a wonderful pattern, only to learn that God had exactly reproduced it and validated it in his word long before, it removed all doubt about the wonders of the divine mind. It is still a matter of astonishment that the Bible spoke as our party spoke and remained silent where the party was silent.

No one ever tears into the Bible with greater glee than a sectarian. And no one tears it apart with greater ability. To the true sectarian the Bible is the exclusive possession of the sect. It may be translated, and generally is, by other and more erudite sectarians and outsiders, but these are ignorant of the fact that God is using them to forge and sharpen brighter weapons with which to have their heads cut off by the faithful. In our particular sect we owed a dual debt of gratitude to the Holy Spirit who gave us the word, and to King James who ordered it put into shape so that we could read it. But we adored the Spirit and ignored the king. The Holy Spirit belonged to our party but the king of England did not, and the first and greatest commandment of the sectarian realm is, "Thou shalt not commend one of another party, nor shalt thou honor him in anywise!"

All that was needed to defend everything we practiced was the Bible and a Cruden's Concordance so we could find the place. We always knew it would be there but we did not always know where to look for it. It is no wonder the church went into the Dark Ages before poor Alexander Cruden lost his mind and literally became "balmy" while compiling his concordance. The

truth was always in the Book but it is difficult to debate if you cannot find the exact passage required to offset and counteract the one quoted by your opponent. And, although we did not realize it at the time, we were also in great debt to Cardinal Hugo de Sancto-Caro of France, who divided the Latin Vulgate into chapters and verses about 1226. Before that time no one could give “book, chapter and verse.” They just gave “book” and folks accepted it because they couldn’t read or write their own names most of the time.

Probably one of the greatest things that has happened since I turned my life over to Jesus and no longer allow brethren to “call the shots” is the way the Bible has come alive to me. It is beautiful! I am delivered from the tyranny of having to wade through it with a fine tooth comb trying to uncover something with which to clobber those who differ. And I am also free from that subtle hypocrisy of pretending to love men openly while secretly chuckling to yourself because of having found a remote scripture which can be applied in such a manner as to make them look like simpletons. It is a big relief not to have to gloat over flattening out someone whom God raised up.

There’s a great deal of difference between a loaf of bread and a sack of sawdust when you are hungry. And there is the same difference between the bread of life and a bag of debater’s texts. I am hungry all of the time now. And I am no longer occupied with preparing to meet anyone except Jesus. I do not have enough time to learn all I want to about him before death turns the key and opens the door so I can meet him. I am perfectly content to let my opponents meet him as I do. If they can explain their positions to him over there, they need not get uptight about clearing them with me over here. I intend to hang loose and let Jesus put it all together!

There are a lot of reasons why I have adjusted my course and set my compass to steer by that eternal planet of the universe— the Bright and Morning Star! I’ve covered a lot of

them in my writings before and you are probably bored to tears every time you have to read them again. But, if you'll pardon me, I want to discuss with you the one factor about the non-sectarian attitude which gives me the greatest personal satisfaction. Perhaps it is not the most profound reason one could cite, but it is the one which thrills me most.

THE NON-SECTARIAN LIFE

First, let me explain what I mean by being non-sectarian. This is very important I do not mean leaving your brethren and wandering about like a stray comet out of orbit. Actually, it is a matter of attitude, resulting from utter crucifixion and banishment from the heart of the party spirit. It is a firm conviction that while you belong to Christ he is not a captive of yours or of any group. It provides for recognition and reception of brethren across all of the silly walls which they have erected between themselves. These barriers are works of the flesh and have nothing to do with the fruit of the Spirit. They result from a lack of wholly putting the old man of sin to death. They are indications of the lingering poison of the old life still caught up in the tissues of the new. To be non-sectarian is to be able to "discern the body," in spite of the factions and sects which tend to obscure it. It is looking at the things which are not seen through the fog and mist of those that are.

The non-sectarian child of the Father has only one creed. That creed is Christ. He never allows himself to become upset and never loses his cool when those in Jesus Christ differ with him about the childish issues which men elevate from molehill to mountain status around which they encamp in partisan exclusiveness. He refuses to allow Satan to betray him into hostility against the Father's other children. The family relationship created by the blood of Jesus is esteemed of greater value than personal opinions and hangups. To be non-sectarian does not mean one does not have strong convictions. It does

mean that he does not try to impose his personal faith upon others, and force them to knuckle down as the price for being received. He respects the freedom of all to think for themselves, to be loyal to their own convictions, and to stand and fall to their own master. He makes nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation!

And now for my most refreshing personal reason for endeavoring to be a Christian only, free from all factional fealty and partisan allegiance. I can embrace every truth and share in every blessing that accrues within any sect, and yet be free from endorsement of any error which is a part of the sectarian economy. Truth is not the gift of a sect but the gift of God. Any truth at which members of a sect have arrived (and all sects hold some truths), is the result of correctly apprehending that portion of God's revelation. But the acceptance of that truth does not thereby make it the possession of that sect.

I am a *baptist* in the truest sense of the term. The word literally means one who baptizes and this is the scriptural connotation as applied to the harbinger of the Messiah, the wilderness voice. John was not called a baptist because he belonged to a religious party which practiced immersion as opposed to sprinkling, but because he immersed those of the Jews who reformed their lives in preparation for the approaching rule of the heavens. I have demonstrated that I am a baptist upon thousands of occasions, but I am not a Baptist and have no intention of ever becoming such.

I am a *methodist* and with no apology for it. By proper discipline and rationalization I seek to be methodical in my whole approach to life and its demands. It is my hope that I may continue to employ methods which will be pleasing to God, and I ask your prayers in my behalf to that end. But I am not a Methodist. I am a great admirer of John and Charles Wesley and the more I read about their ardent toil and patience amidst fiery trials, the greater grows my appreciation for them. But any

truth essential to my life in Christ Jesus was revealed antecedent to their day, and I accept it as vital because of its original source.

As all of my regular readers are aware I am *presbyterian* as relates to what we have generally, and sometimes loosely, designated “church polity.” It is my conviction that the primitive saints in each city selected presbyters to guide their communal affairs as shepherds. Such presbyters were appointed by Paul, and were to be ordained in Crete by Titus. They set Timothy apart by the laying on of hands, that he might function as an evangelist. So while I am presbyterian I am in no sense a Presbyterian.

I am *episcopalian* also. The word is simply a translation of *episkopos*, a perfectly Biblical Greek usage which refers to overseers or superintendents. Those who in our day use it as a title sadly abuse it. In the congregations of the saints there was a plurality of bishops over one congregation. Today there is a plurality of congregations under one bishop. Our friends in the Anglican communion have the cart before the horse, so I could never be an Episcopalian.

I am quite thrilled that I am in a *society of friends*. Perhaps nothing more clearly indicates the intimacy our Lord desires with his disciples than his decision to call them friends instead of servants. Long before he came, Aristotle declared “Friendship is a single soul dwelling in two bodies.” The reconciled ones constitute a society in the truest sense, bound together by social ties of the greatest significance. I am always moved as I read the account of what George Fox endured for conscience’ sake and I have no doubt that he was a great benefactor of the lowly and oppressed, but I am not affiliated with The Society of Friends.

To shorten the process and to avoid calling the roll let me assure you that I am identified with all that is good (as I understand what is good) in every party composed of earnest and sincere men and women. One can espouse all truth without

joining anything to do so, and if he joins a party to promote a truth, he will always end up promoting the party under the guise or delusion of promoting the truth. He will be maneuvered into taking sides, not with truth against error, but with certain truths against certain errors, against other truths and other errors. This I can no longer countenance and meet my precious Lord with a pure conscience.

CONTEMPORARY ALIGNMENTS

Let me proceed a bit further and deal with current terminology, rather than with ancient sects and long-standing creedal wars. I am ecumenical in the Biblical sense. A great many folk do not realize that this is a scriptural term but the original from which it is transliterated occurs several times. It is never applied to “the church,” but always to the world. Thus, I am not particularly concerned with an ecumenical church in the one world, but I am deeply concerned with the one church in an ecumenical world.

Actually, there has never been but one “church” and there will never be another. It is a divine organism and not a human organization. Man can no more make another church than he can make another Holy Spirit. He can create sects and parties but these are not the church. All of them have appeared upon the scene too late to be the ekklesia of God. None of them is joined to the head, even Christ. The ekklesia purchased by blood includes every saved person on this whole wide earth. It is *catholic*, as I am catholic, but it is not Roman Catholic, and neither am I.

I am *conservative*, by both nature and conviction. A conservative is one who seeks to preserve the values and inherent good of the past, and no one is more interested in doing that than am I. I am also *liberal*, not with the scriptures which (so far as I am concerned, are fixed and complete), but with my

fellowmen who, like myself are caught up in the human predicament. I intend to be faithful to the word and merciful to men, because when that word is applied to me I will require mercy in order to be justified. But I am neither a Conservative nor a Liberal. Such parties may have their place in the realm of politics, but they have no place in the domain of the Spirit.

It is obvious that if I were a Baptist I could not be a Methodist, and if I were a Presbyterian I could not be an Episcopalian. If I wanted to share the truth emphasized in one party I could not share that emphasized in another. Indeed, if I sought to share distinctive truths in all of them, by joining them all, I would not be commended as a lover of truth at all, but would be branded as wishy-washy and labeled a compromiser. For that reason, my only hope of embracing all truth is to be free of all sectarian allegiance and be joined only to Jesus. In him I can love as he loves. And he is the truth— perfect truth!

Now all of this is well and good as many of my more tolerant and generous readers will agree. But it does not wholly settle the problem, and I am now back where I started. There remains the difficulty of practicing what I know and living up to it realistically. One thing that makes it hard is that those whom I know best are all dedicated to making me a sectarian after their own image. The one thing a sectarian cannot stand is for someone in the vicinity to be non-partisan. And the non-sectarian sectarians are worse than the plain “garden variety” of sects. They cannot eat or sleep well until they take you into camp with the party handcuffs securing you. Unless they can put the brand upon you, you are “lost.” And anyone who is “lost” to them is lost to God. They are God’s Royal Mounties, and they must get their man!

All of us have grown up in a particular party, or else came into one somewhere along the line. There just did not appear to be anywhere else to go, or anything else to do. So we worked and gave and reared our children in it, and if we did not breathe into

them the arrogant spirit of self-righteousness and exclusiveness, they picked it up in classes or camps, or from the imported evangelists who were brought in to convert us more firmly to the scripturalness of the status quo. All of the sermons to which we invited our neighbors, on the subject, "The Way That is Right and Cannot Be Wrong," were devoted to proving that we had it. And we kept it while losing our neighbors!

What shall we do now? Of course, the temptation always is to seek the easy way out. A lot of times this means looking around for a party that is friendlier, or that has a lot of hoopla and excitement. Most shallow thinkers conclude that we are going to have to be in some kind of a sect anyway, and we might as well choose one where they have a lot of picnics and ballgames, and where the preacher can make a third-grade reading seem profound and you don't have to think. But that is merely swapping sects.

The hardest thing, I think, is to come to terms with God where you are! Most everyone experiences a time in his life when he would like to shuck off present responsibilities, chuck his Sunday School quarterlies into the garbage can, take his Bible and "go over the hill" to settle down on a remote island, or in some teeming city where he can lose himself and get "a fresh start." But the truly courageous souls are generally those who stay put and, like General Grant, "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

I have a feeling that if I cannot be non-sectarian where I am I will not be so anywhere else. Being non-sectarian is like the kingdom of heaven. It is not "Lo here!" But neither is it "Lo there!" It is within you. It is not what you are in but what is in you. It is not where you are but what you are! Really, I suppose it is like much else in this world, a question of priorities. If I love the Lord with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength, then whatever else, or whoever else I love, it will always be in the proper framework and perspective. It will be in the "all" with

which I love God.

I intend to smilingly and cheerfully, but firmly, resist being lined up with any faction, fraction, sect or fragment. I belong to Jesus and I belong with all who belong to him. I love them all, even while they are caught up in their childish sectarian war-games. But my allegiance is to Him, and not to movements, methods or manipulations. He is my all, and I am all his! I will never knowingly deny anyone whom he acknowledges, nor drive out anyone whom he receives.

A great many of my friends, possessed of the fear and timidity which the party spirit always breeds as an antidote to the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, are perturbed by an article like this. They hesitate to have me go into situations which are utterly different than those in which we have waded and paddled around inside the safety of our own enclosures. Frequently letters come urging me not to allow my generosity to lead me into places where God is not.

I do not know of such a place in the universe. We are still hooked on places and palaces, synagogues and structures, temples and tabernacles. The only sanctuary God has on this earth is a consecrated person. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. I do not go to some place to meet God. In Christ he came to meet me. He lives in me and wherever I am there he is also. If he was not there before I arrived I am resolved that he will be after I get there. However, I am persuaded that God is in a lot of places manifesting his presence and power, and while I depend upon him dwelling in me to keep me going, he does not depend upon me dwelling in him to keep him going. He did a fair job before I arrived on the scene and will continue to do so after I am gone. A goodly number of my critics feel that my going will improve the situation.

In any event, I shall go where I am persuaded that eager men seek the truth revealed from heaven. I am not hung up

inside on signboards hung up outside of buildings. I shall not limit my witness to Pharisees and Sadducees, but will share the good news with customs officers and prostitutes. In fact, I doubt that I can take Jesus into any kind of situation which will seem strange to him even if it is a new experience for me. So I hope that my friends will stifle their inward trepidation, for somehow I have the feeling that so long as he is with me I am safe evermore. He is my everything! He is my all!

I do not intend to be a “Church of Christ sectarian,” and I do not intend to be a “Church of Christ non-sectarian,” for, in the end, there is not one whit of difference. These are only different ways of saying the same thing, although one may please your enemies and the other your friends. What I do intend, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is to “hold the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” I am dead with Christ I am also alive in Christ. I shall appear with him in glory. My affection is on things above, not on things on the earth. Whatever comes, I have cast my lot with Jesus. He is my hope and my stay. He is my redeemer and reconciler. In him, I shall not fear what men may do or say. He is the Lord of life!

The Awesome Patience

Mission Messenger (July 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

Elijah, the prophet, has always been one of my favorite Biblical characters. Ever since I was a mere lad I have gloried in the account of this rugged Tishbite who lived in a time of grave rebellion and gross sensuality in Israel, and who stalked through the land, striking fear into the hearts of the godless and wicked. His favorite way of beginning a pronouncement was with the words, “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand.” Elijah was God’s mouthpiece to a rebellious generation.

The king of Israel at the time was a profligate no-good whose name was Ahab. His father, Omri, who outdid his predecessors in wickedness, bargained with Shemer for a large hill, paying him two talents of silver for the site. On this eminence he constructed a city which he called Samaria, in honor of the former owner, and which was planned to be the capital of the ten tribe kingdom, and also a rival of Jerusalem which God had chosen and where he had written his name and allowed his temple to be constructed.

When Ahab succeeded his father, he inherited the new city as well as his father’s wilfulness and tendency to sin. He immediately began to enlarge upon both. “And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.” To compound his foolishness he fell for Jezebel, the daughter of a Phoenician king, and in order to ingratiate himself

with these foreigners, he took up the worship of Baal with the fertility cults of the heathen.

When he married this female epitome of evil, he brought her to the new capital where he set up an altar to Baal in a temple dedicated to this mock deity. And Jezebel resolved with a passion to banish the name of the God of Israel from the land and to inculcate Baal worship as the state religion. Being both clever and ruthless, she realized that she would be thwarted in her design so long as the prophets of God survived, so she began immediately a campaign of extermination, purging them by decapitation.

At the time, Obadiah was secretary of state in the kingdom. He was one of the Lord's men, planted in the palace, and through his efforts a hundred prophets were rescued and hidden in a cave. There was a severe famine caused by lack of rainfall as a result of Elijah's prayer, but Obadiah managed to cadge enough food from the royal kitchen and smuggle it out to the cave, so that the prophets could be sustained even while the country was on a starvation diet.

Under the circumstances it did not require a prophet to see that eventually a real showdown had to come, and it came when Elijah and Ahab met on the road. Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel and Elijah denied the charge. He asserted that it was Ahab's desertion of God and his espousal of Baal which was responsible. He dared Ahab to summon the prophets who ate at the queen's table to a public confrontation. Four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal showed up on Mount Carmel in a highly jovial mood, prepared to make Elijah look like a spiritual nitwit. You know the rest of the story. If you do not, you can read every thrilling word of it in the almost casual language of 1 Kings 18.

Ahab had the forlorn task of reporting to his wife that the dinner table would not be crowded that evening, and that she

had four hundred and fifty dead prophets lying stretched out all over the hillside by Kishon Brook. Jezebel lost no time. She sent a hastily scribbled note to Elijah, saying, "So may my gods do to me and more also, if I do not kill you the same way you killed my prophets, and I intend to do it by this time tomorrow." Elijah read the note, stuck it in the pocket of his hairy tunic and headed south.

When he came to Beer-sheba he left his servant at this frontier outpost and pushed on into the wilderness for another full day. Then he sat down under a juniper tree and asked to die. But God provided him food for another forty days of travel, and he arrived at Mount Sinai, where God had established his national covenant with Israel, beginning with the words, "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Elijah took refuge in a cave, and while sitting inside contemplating his fate, he heard the voice of God. "Elijah, what are you doing here?" The prophet justified his retirement from the scene of action by referring to the desertion of the people. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken the covenant they made upon this scared spot. They have even smashed your altars and beheaded your prophets. I am the only one left now, and they seek my life, to take it away." The implication was that Elijah had to stay in seclusion or the Lord would be out of business.

God ordered Elijah to go stand upon the summit of Sinai where Moses had been given the law on the tablets of stone. While standing on this lonely eminence the Lord passed by. First there was a tornadic wind whose force was so great that it dislodged huge boulders and fragmented them against each other. But the Lord was not in the gale. The wind was followed with a powerful earthquake which caused the mountains to rock and reel. But the Lord was not in the frightening tremor.

Then came a roaring fire sweeping across the landscape. But the Lord was not in the fire. And then came a still small voice. Somehow Elijah knew that God was in the voice. Once again he was asked to account for his presence in this deserted place, and again he repeated his doleful statement. The Lord ignored his lament and issued orders for him to leave his wilderness retreat and return to the very center of political action. In Damascus he was to anoint Hazael king over Syria, even though he would ravish the very land from which the prophet came. In Samaria he was to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel and to preside over the death of Jezebel, the Zidonian harridan.

Enroute he was to stop where Elisha was plowing and fling his mantle around his shoulders, thus designating him as his successor to head the school of the prophets, maintained since the days of Samuel. It was the still, small voice which sent him back into the arena. God can command the stormy winds of destiny to rip and tear. He can use mighty upheavals in the earth to accomplish his will. He can send a consuming fire to destroy and sear. But they are not his weapons. He is in the still, small voice.

THE TRANSCENDENT PURPOSE

Many of my brethren tend to forget this. They feel that God can better work in times of great upheaval, moving in upon the scene with noise and excitement, with shouting and gesticulation, with din and ear-splitting sound. It would be a little silly to affirm that God cannot so order any of these to fulfill an immediate end, but the ultimate purpose of God which will change the world will probably be wrought by those who wait and listen for the still, small voice.

The transcendent purpose of God is to restore unity to a world fragmented by sin. This is the mystery of his will, the good

pleasure upon which is staked the whole claim of divinity, and its attributes of omnipotence and omniscience. God is going to restore wholeness and oneness to, a distorted and disoriented creation. One who proposes to work for God and with God must have this as his own dream. Every other project is secondary, and, if it becomes an obsession, is superficial.

Our task is to contribute to the fulfillment of this eternal vision, and however minute or infinitesimal may be our contribution, we must regard it, not in the light of its own immediacy, but as a part of the program which is as certain of fulfillment as that God has revealed it. Regardless of what else I may do in life, the supreme test of my identification with God is whether or not I have surrendered myself to this overwhelming design for the fulness of times. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance."

I am not required to *know* how the purpose will be accomplished, but I am required to *believe* that it will be, and since faith is the mainspring of action, I must labor diligently to do what I can to serve my generation before I fall asleep. I am convinced beyond any suspicion of doubt that all of the current agony of division and disunity will some day pass away. Sectarian strife will be resolved in Christ. Racial prejudice, nationalistic pride and false patriotism, social barriers and intellectual snobbery— all of these will be melted away by the gentleness of the great dynamic of that love, which God is.

I have an abiding hope that this will come to pass, and therefore a firm conviction that it will happen. I no longer look at the things which are seen. These are transitory and temporal. My faith is fixed on things which are not seen and my confidence in their reality is unshaken. Not everyone who claims to follow Jesus is either as optimistic or as convinced as I am. Most of them want to see cataclysmic earthquakes or catastrophic

conflagrations. They rest their hopes in wind and flame.

They forget that this is not the divine approach to majestic revolution. We are all tempted to employ the means which seem so successful in the achievement of goals in the culture about us. We are inclined to want to promote through use of professional talent anything which we seek to accomplish. And we are prone to measure things as does the world by bulk, drive and power. J. B. Phillips is right in suggesting, "In these days when power and size and speed are almost universally admired it seems to me particularly important to study afresh the 'weakness,' the 'smallness of entry,' and the 'slowness' of God as he began his vast work of reconstructing his disordered world."

God's ways are certainly not the ways of man. He waited thousands of years before making a direct invasion of the world of sin. During these centuries of preparation he put up with the moral lapses and vacillations of those whom he had chosen, exhibiting what one noted writer has called "a frightening patience," always awaiting the fulness of the times, refusing to be stampeded and never "losing his cool" as the now generation would phrase it.

The inevitability of fulfillment justified working through individuals who were in the world, and too often of it, as well. But the divine plan was never deflected because God chose to use human agents. Indeed it was the very weakness and frailty of these instruments which made the glory of God shine through more fully. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are strong . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence . . . according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Even when the moment had come of which the prophets had spoken and toward which angelic eyes had looked, it was not done as man would have done it. Unquestionably, God's

great break-through of the flesh curtain was the most momentous event which had happened since he laid the foundations of the earth and the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. It is difficult for us to envision it as it really was, because we have glorified and glamorized it with tinsel and streamers. We tend to think of the event as artists have depicted it upon Christmas cards or in medieval paintings. But the advent of the Word into the earthly dimension is the picture of a small-town peasant girl who was pregnant, frantically searching for a secluded spot where she could deliver the baby who was even now pressing her body for deliverance.

God's way always seems to be painfully slow and deliberate to those of us who pace restlessly back and forth in a terminal when a plane is five minutes late in loading. We want to cut through the red-tape, banish the delay, wind the clock, and get the show on the road. We are geared to crash programs and are always battered by the urgent "do it now." Because the earthly life span is so short we are under pressure and tension to get things moving. And we sometimes snap under the strain and shorten the period of service.

OUR CONSTANT GOAL

Certainly if we love God and are attuned to his magnificent purpose for the universe we want to see indications that things are happening which tend to its realization. But the news media assault our consciousness continually with accounts of events which are happening and which seem to indicate that the universe is literally "coming unglued," and getting farther from the oneness which God wants to accomplish. There are riots, revolutions, racial and class struggles, and sinister portents of complete disintegration of the social structure.

One danger is that we will become so frightened by what

we see and hear that we will lose faith that God's will can be done on earth. Our negativism will then make it impossible for God to work through us effectively and we will cease to be channels of his divine creativity. It is very important that we never lose sight of the fact that no destructive force is greater than the dynamic of God. Our goal should be to serve the divine will by fastening our eyes upon the ultimate rather than the immediate.

I am not called upon to achieve God's purpose for the world, but I am called upon to achieve it in my life. Since his purpose is to unite all things in Christ, the sphere of my personal influence must be devoted to that end, feeble though my talents and abilities may be. Thus, I must begin to help in making the world whole, by being certain that I have been made whole. If I am ripped apart inside by emotional upheavals caused by sin or worry I must cast my care upon him because he cares for me. I must be reconciled to God so that the personality conflicts, the doubts and inner fears, may be resolved. One who is filled with anxiety and disquiet will not accomplish a great deal in bringing peace to mankind.

Then I must begin the unifying process where I am. This may be in the family circle. If I have lived a selfish, petulant life, I must allow the indwelling Spirit to transform me and create a real concern for my loved ones until I literally fulfill the scriptural injunction to "love one another warmly." This may be a very humbling experience.

For instance, one may be a dominating personality, aggressive in the business world, assertive and demanding. This tends to carry over into the home with the result that he never really listens to his wife or children. He leaves the impression that what they have to say is not very important to him. He never seriously asks their opinion about anything, even if it affects the family as a whole. He makes all of the decisions and hands them down. The others retire more and more into

themselves, as the lines of communication sag and eventually snap. Even sex relations become routine, cold and with no intimacy of sharing.

Obviously it is a human tragedy when homes fall apart, young lives are scarred and bitterness replaces affection. This poisons the social stream and weakens the fibers of national security and strength. But of even greater consequence is the fact that it also stands athwart the path of God's will for the universe, postponing the fulfillment of our responsibility to the Grand Design. For this reason, those who are reconciled to God should be engaged at once in a ministry of reconciliation to those whom they know best. Chasms between themselves and loved ones should be bridged regardless of cost to personal ego.

Next, there should be a sincere attempt to become a real force for peace in the company of local saints. This means an acceptance in love of those one cannot like. And this requires more than grudging tolerance. Entailed is a genuine concern for the welfare of the individuals and for the harmonious functioning of the body. The reconciled one must resolve never to become a stumblingblock to others in the future, and also to remove those blocks which others have piled in the road in the past.

Peace must be waged. It must be practiced, preached and proclaimed. The thought of unity must be installed in all until it becomes a real passion, a living hope. The help of the indwelling Spirit must be sought for and implored since it is the unity of the Spirit which alone can suffice. Only the fire of the Spirit can burn out of our hearts the selfishness which makes us want to have our way, the ignorance which makes us strive and quarrel, and the arrogance which prompts us to think that God approves of our bigotry.

All of this seems slow and methodical unto us. It is not involved with lightning flashes, mighty winds, earthquakes or

tongues of fire. We reason that surely God could step up the divine timetable and shorten the process. And yet nothing is clearer than the fact that God resists climbing the fence and taking a shortcut. The divine purpose insists upon plodding along the main road with awful patience, turning neither to the right nor to the left.

It is not because there has been no temptation to circumvent the agony of the long trek. Immediately after Jesus was baptized he was out into wilderness solitude where Satan appeared and offered him a real “marked down bargain.” Taking him up into a high mountain he showed Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He offered him world supremacy, the adulation of a fawning humanity, bypassing the cross and the crown of thorns, but Jesus chose the “long way home,” and the devil learned what some of us have not, that “the eternal years of God” are not too long to accomplish an eternal pleasure.

If I know my heart, and God grant that I do, I am committed to working with God in God’s own way. It is for this reason that I am content to send out this almost minuscule journal, testifying of my faith, encouraging my brothers, and confirming my love to all who have set to their seal that God is true, and have named the name of Christ. It is for this reason, too, that I am willing to go wherever the Spirit opens up a door, making myself vulnerable, and exposing myself to the questions of all, openly and unconcealed.

I do not need to become frantic. I do not need to panic. If the end comes for me it will not mark the end of his precious design. I shall do my little bit in the humble station in which he placed me and hopefully die with my armor buckled on and my face toward the walls of Jerusalem. But the march will continue and God’s will must be done. And his will is more important than my life, for I will consider that whatever happens to my life is his will.

THE COMING ONENESS

Some day the sheep of God will all be gathered from the sectarian hills. Those that were lost will be found, those that were driven away will be brought back, those that were broken will be bound up, those that were sick will be strengthened and made whole. The covenant of peace will be made with them, they shall lie down in green pastures, and there shall be showers of blessing. There shall also be one flock and one shepherd.

The sectarian spirit will be purged from the hearts of all who know the Lord. The factional attitude will disappear. Walls will melt under the rays of radiant love, parties will shrivel and die. Men will not want to be rivals, but brothers. They will not seek to become Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, or Church of Christ, but will be content to be followers of Jesus, constituting one body and led by one Spirit. The derogatory term “colored churches” will pass from the pages of journals and directories. Parenthetical identifications will fade from signboards and those who have been at cross purposes will come together as the purpose of the cross.

By what means will this be accomplished you ask? The answer is simple. It will be by the most powerful dynamic in the universe— love! Legalistic minds scoff at such a thought. Men of small vision and little faith deride it. So long have we attempted to bring about oneness by debate and discussion, by conference and concordat, that the very thought of its attainment through the pervasive and gentle influence of love makes a laughingstock of one who suggests it.

But love is the weapon of the Spirit and its awesome power is derived from that fact. It is the means God chose to capture and restore a creation which had gone berserk, and it is neither weak nor powerless. J. B. Phillips writes, “This method of making people whole by out-flowing love was and is extremely risky, but it was a risk that Jesus was prepared to take.” He also

says in another place, “It would be a profound mistake to suppose that all the Pharisees disappeared soon after the death of Christ, or that they have no heirs or successors today. Indeed, it is true that there is much of the Pharisee in each one of us, and by that I do not mean that we are hypocrites, but simply that we would rather reduce religion to a code, both inward and outward, than take the tremendous risk of being invaded by and becoming part of vulnerable but relentless love.”

For weal or woe, I have hitched my wagon to the star of “relentless love” as my only hope of entering into the divine strategy for putting the fragmented universe back together. I have not adopted this route because it is easy. Indeed, it is just the opposite. It led Jesus to be mocked, lied about, beaten and nailed to a cross. I do not doubt that it will tear the bleeding heart from any person who is committed to it without compromise, but it seems to me that it is the only way now available. It was the way chosen by God. If there had been a quicker and easier method of achieving success in the Magnificent Dream of the Ages, I think he would have selected it.

If it appears like an exhibition of pride for one to say that he has become convicted that the love of God is the only power which can unify a fear-filled and distorted universe, and that he has opened up the flood-gates of his inner being so that this love may be channeled through him, I hasten to add that there are two things which must never be forgotten.

First, I am an earthen vessel, and no glory attaches to me as an individual. It is not the clay pot which gives value or beauty to the flower, but the flower which gives value to the container. I am worthless except as the Master sees fit to employ me as a vessel which he has fitted for use.

Second, the love of which I speak is not a sickly, sticky sentimentality. It is not a gushy affection. It is the essence and

nature of God, unconquerable and imperishable. No man can develop it by sheer force of will nor capture it by the power of that evasive quality called personality. It can only come from the Holy Spirit, and is poured out into hearts which are stripped of all pride of human accomplishment, and which have been flung down before the throne in a final act of abject surrender, in a moment which leaves one naked and exposed for what he is, and even more humiliating, for what he is not.

Once the transforming love is poured out into the heart it must be brought into contact with the polluted world if it is to be a reconciling agent. It must be made vulnerable, assailable, liable to fierce and bitter attack. One who is motivated by it must “bail out” in full knowledge that he may be shot down, just as Jesus took a calculated risk when he adopted human flesh and plunged headlong into a world of sin. There must be a recklessness about the whole thing, a diving into the middle of the maelstrom of life, trusting only to an unseen hand to hold you against the tugging riptide of disaster.

Love never gives up. It is impervious to assault. It outlasts everything else. It validates every other gift. It confirms every righteous action. It is the only transforming, energizing power which can ever restore true order to a chaotic universe. Love is God moving into the human tragedy, divinity involving itself in a fragmented world, healing, restoring and making whole.

A few months ago I attended the annual convention of a college in Florida. Through the graciousness of the brethren I was permitted to share in a public dialogue session which lasted almost three hours. On the following Lord’s Day, a brother who has been my lifetime friend, attended a meeting in a Florida congregation. The preacher used me for his text. He sought to warn his audience of one whom they had never met. He said, “Brother Ketcherside tries to love everybody, regardless of who it is.” I have never heard an accusation to which I am happier to plead guilty. I commend my dissident brother for his

perceptiveness and for his succinct statement of the dream of my heart.

I want to love tax-collectors and prostitutes, Sadducees and sinners. I want to love Pharisees also. I want to love black militants and hippies, the activists and the alienated. I want to love Chinese communists and Chinese nationalists. I want to love Russian communists, Jews and Greeks, black people and white people, red people and yellow. I want to love all from A to Z— Arabs to Zulus.

In another category I shall continue to love those who brand themselves Adventists, Baptists and Catholics, and from A, B, C, right on through the whole alphabet of sects and schisms, parties and professions. Jesus did not die for us because we were righteous but while we were still sinners. Not one of us has anything of which to boast before God. And Jesus did not get us out of what we were in to love us, he loved us and we came out of what we were in if it was not compatible with his marvelous grace. I want to love people out and I want to love them in!

What debate and derogation, harangue and harassment cannot do, love can accomplish. It can soften stony hearts, melt iron wills, and dissolve differences into thin air. It can batter down barriers and make opaque walls become transparent. In short, there is nothing good that love cannot do. It will overcome anything and outlast everything else. I have bound my soul in the bundle of life, and tied the sheaf with the cord of love, dyed red with the crimson gore of Calvary.

I am staking all I am and hope to be upon love. I am risking my entire life and being, throwing everything upon the table in one glad gamble that when all else shall fade into oblivion love will shed its sublime rays upon the new heaven and the new earth, and bind all together in one great unified whole, a new creation!

Spiritual Argonauts

Mission Messenger (August 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

In the days of boyhood, when dreams gave substance to life, I used to while away the hours with books. They constituted then, as they do now, the lighter-than-air vessels enabling me to leave the poverty-stricken world of reality and soar into the delightful realm of fantasy, the magic kingdom of make-believe, where I met characters much more fascinating than those encountered on our village paths. We did not have streets.

It was thus I became acquainted with Jason, the legendary figure whose untiring devotion to a single mission held me enthralled and made me oblivious for the time to the merely mundane happenings of my puny, and often cruel, little world. When Phrixus was transported to Colchis on the back of a ram with golden fleece possessed of magical powers of transformation, the fleece was stripped from the back of the mythical animal and fell into the hands of Aeëtes, king of Colchis. Jason dedicated his life to its recovery, and sailed on the perilous journey with the Argonauts. Eventually his mission became successful through his marriage to Medea, a sorceress who was the daughter of the king.

I have long held to a view with which I suspect that a goodly number of my readers will disagree. Simply stated, it is that the philosophic Greeks with a degree of wisdom not yet possessed by their contemporaries, whom they designated as

barbarians because of linguistic shortcomings, sought to embalm in myths those beliefs, traits and characteristics, which they felt to be of such magnificent import that they should not be forgotten by subsequent generations.

All peoples have sought to preserve the wisdom in which they shared by incorporating it in literature. The Hebrews, who began as a nomadic race, were not noted for their originality, but being the chosen vessels of God to keep alive the concept of monotheism in the midst of a heathen culture, were vouchsafed the oracles of heaven, and these constituted their greatest literary contribution to humanity. The easiest method of preserving truths and memorializing events is by proverb and ballad, and thus, the *Hagiographa*, the wisdom literature of the Hebrews, contains both the proverbs of Solomon and other wise men, and the songs of David and other composers.

I am fully aware of the conclusions drawn by some of our modern gnostics, who try to make it appear that the records related to the life of Jesus, being cast in the Greek language, were mythologized by the writers. But I do not forget that most of these reject the supernatural and deny the divine breakthrough into the human arena. They deny the possibility of revelation and although they cannot blot Jesus out of human history they try to undermine the impact of his life and teaching with their conjecture that the apostles wove a cocoon of invention around fact.

There is a great deal of difference between the wisdom of this passing age seeking to perpetuate itself in myth, and the revelation of divine wisdom which is destined to outlast, and preside over the passing away of those ages which men have labeled by their discoveries. The Greeks embodied in Jason the thought that there are values of such superlative importance as to justify the dedication of one's whole being to the search for and pursuit of them with a fidelity which knows no compromise. It is my conviction that the whole human family must engage in

the quest for a golden fleece, or *the* golden fleece, which can transform the lives of all who touch it.

The medieval alchemist believed that since this was a universe in which there was no unrelated atom or factor, there must be a secret which would unlock all secrets and bring about the ultimate. In his dingy and pitifully deficient laboratory, he probed for the way of transmuting all of the baser elements into gold; of searching for the universal solvent; of seeking the panacea which would eliminate all sickness and cure all ills; and of discovering the elixir of life by which one could conquer the hold of death.

What he failed to find in the material realm is available in the spiritual. And it should be the goal of every rational being who bears in his inner being the stamp of God's eternal image although scarred and distorted by sin. The golden fleece for which the argonauts of the spirit must search so diligently is *truth*. It is this which will transform us and free us from enslavement. Even the very search for it will spare us in time of distress.

When Jeremiah was informed that he must cry against Jerusalem and predict the imminence of her destruction, God gave a ray of hope. "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, *that seeketh the truth*; and I will pardon it." Nothing is a greater safeguard for people than to seek the truth.

THE NATURE OF TRUTH

But what is truth? What is its nature? In its very essence truth is agreement with, or conformity to reality in whatever area it is being considered. When we speak of scientific truths we refer only to that which has been verified and indisputably established. When we speak of moral truths we refer to those

teachings which are in exact harmony with the ethical or moral values which have been established by proper authority for the wellbeing of humanity.

It is a common mistake to speak of facts and truths as if they were interchangeable. All facts are truths, but not all truths are facts. Fact is from the Latin *factum*, a thing done. There are abstract truths but not abstract facts. The deeds that are performed and the words that are spoken, constitute facts. They can be apprehended by the sense of sight and hearing, and testimony may be borne to them by one who was a witness of them. In turn, that testimony may be believed, if rendered credible, by one who had no knowledge of the acts or statements.

Our relationship to God through Christ is not based upon abstractions or rationalization, but upon belief of facts. The Good News, or gospel, does not consist of a written code, a system of deductions, or a compilation of doctrinal requirements. It is composed of facts related to a person whose entrance into and exit from the material universe brought reconciliation and hope to lost mankind. These facts are seven in number, embracing the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification of the only begotten Son of God. All of these facts are substantiated by the testimony of witnesses, the first by men chosen and sent into the world, and the last two by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

The gospel was proclaimed in its absolute fulness on the first Pentecost after his resurrection, and those who accepted its demands obeyed it fully that day. Not one word was ever added to the gospel. Nothing ever spoken or written after that date became a part of the gospel, although many letters were written to those who had accepted the good news. The gospel is the saving truth of God, and since it is an account of what God has done for us and is historical fact, it can and must be believed to come into the state of reconciliation or salvation from sin.

Never has God demonstrated in greater measure that wisdom which is divine than in his provision for the saving of the human race. If it had been made contingent upon arrival at a certain degree of knowledge related to abstract truth, only the intellectually elite could have attained unto it. The huge mass of mankind would have been doomed to destruction by an imbecility they could not help. As it is, the humblest aborigine in the outback can hear the story of how Jesus came to earth, lived, died and rose again, and can be saved through faith.

It is the tragedy of the ages that men have taken these simple truths and poured them into creedal moulds, defining and re-defining them, and creating a “structure of faith,” or “a system of faith” which can only serve to confuse, and which, instead of producing joyful acceptance, has contributed to endless debate and strife. In God’s plan there is but one fact which must be believed and one act which must be performed, to bring one into that glorious fellowship of the redeemed. That fact is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Anointed One, and that act is immersion into the relationship expressed by the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Every person on this whole wide earth who trusts in Jesus upon the basis of the testimony of those who were his chosen envoys, and who validates the acceptance of the lordship of Jesus over his life by this initial and initiating step of obedience is in the fellowship. He is a child of God, a member of the one body, a citizen of the kingdom, and a living stone in the temple. He may be quite ignorant of many things, including the how and when of God’s forgiveness, as well as the truths upon which he will grow and thrive, but if he trusts in the righteousness of Jesus to deliver him, and is baptized to fulfill God’s righteousness, he is God’s child. God wants to accept all who come to him. He does not throw up intellectual barbed-wire entanglements through which one must work his way into freedom, as would some of the more aggressive children who feel obligated to guard the glory

road and repel all who may be more ignorant (about some things) than themselves.

It was never the intention of God to reveal all truth to man. It was never his design to reveal any truth to man which man was capable of discovering and discerning by his own ability. It was only what eye could not see and ear could not hear, and what could not be deduced by rationalization that God has revealed through the Spirit. The sacred new covenant scriptures are not a textbook of scientific, mathematical, or even moral truths. They do not constitute a written code of ethics or a compendium of legal statutes. Their simple purpose is to reveal the truth concerning God's reconciling move into an alienated world, motivated by the dynamic of love, and culminating in a restoration to wholeness of every sinful being who comes to trust in this divine thrust as his only hope of extrication from the impending doom wrought by sin.

The word of God is true! It is unquestionably and undeniably so, being an expression of one who cannot lie, because of his nature, which is grounded in verity, without a shadow of change or variation. The word of God is truth, but not all truth is the word of God, from the standpoint of having been given by revelation. Truth is not contradictory, so those truths discovered in the laboratory or by exploration of the physical universe, are not in contravention to the truth which God has spoken.

Since the truth makes men free, men must be free to probe for truth in the whole universe. God has placed no limitations upon our acquisition of truth, except those we place upon ourselves through fear or inner trepidation. It is one of the pathetic and lamentable commentaries upon the human race that those who have claimed to know the truth of revelation have used it as an excuse to throw roadblocks across the pathway or those who are the real searchers for the golden fleece. We owe most enriching discoveries to "heretics" and not to defenders of

the status quo. The latter have been so occupied with devising new means to torture and destroy the former that they have had little time to discover anything else.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUTH

It is my intention to face up directly to some of the problems raised by my own generation as relates to truth. If my approach to these seems simplistic and unsophisticated you will have to recognize that one whose thought-processes fall within these categories could hardly do otherwise than I shall do.

Some very wise men in our age are quite convinced that all truth is relative, and that no proposition enunciated by men can ever be accepted as absolute. They have lived to see certain truths accepted as axiomatic by philosophers of other days, not only challenged, but actually shown to be relativistic. Of course, the conclusion is that, given enough time and enough money for research, and every truth will be knocked from the saddle and rendered *hors de combat*.

It is obvious, I think, that no one who believes that all truth is relative, can ever state it with any real hope that it be accepted. If he thinks it is true that all truth is relative, he cannot expect me to accept that as an absolute. He is either stating a falsehood or a truth when he lays down the proposition that "all truth is relative." If it is a falsehood I should not believe it at all; but if it is a truth I can only regard it as relative. If it is an absolute truth that all truth is relative, then he who states it stabs himself with his own sword and is "hoist on his own petard."

On the other hand if it is not an absolute truth that "all truth is relative" there is left a loophole for some truth that is not relative. Since I am not particularly intrigued by semantic maneuvers, not even when they are my own, I can shorten the process by climbing across the fence and cutting across the

pasture without going around the main philosophic turnpike. I am quite convinced that the real question is not one's concept of truth at all, but his concept of God which makes the difference.

In the final analysis, the question of whether there is absolute truth in a universe inhabited by fallible men, must be determined for each of us by whether or not we believe in an infallible God. This means that it is a question of faith and not merely one of rationalization. Do not be mistaken at this juncture. It is not a question of faith for just one party, he who believes in an infallible God. It is also a question of faith for the other who *believes* there is no such divine being.

If I start with an infallible God, based upon my interpretation of the evidence for such a being in the universe, I not only can believe there is absolute truth, but I am forced to believe it. On the other hand, if I start with fallible man as being the highest order of intellectual being, I must reach the conclusion that any proposition stated by such a being must be regarded as relativistic by all of his peers.

It is for this reason that I have argued, and still do when I can get anyone to listen, that truth in its origin and its ultimate is not propositional, but personal. That is, it is not embodied in propositions, either at its source or terminus, but in a person. Every proposition before it is expressed exists as a concept or mental image. Propositions are not conceived on paper but in minds. Before any truth was ever proposed it was first composed in an intellect. Thus, when traced to its source, infinite truth existed in an infinite mind, and was and is absolute, because of the nature of divine intelligence, which is not in degrees, but perfect. What makes truth absolute is that truth originated with God.

Jesus, the Word of God incarnated, declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He did not mean that he was the embodiment of propositions about him, although these conveyed

truths. But he was truth in its origin, truth so ineffable that we must await freedom from our flesh and blood in order to fully grasp it. The Word of God has not been exhausted by words of God. There is truth yet unrevealed. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." In its ultimate truth will again become personalized. Just as the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world will preclude the need of sun or moon and resolve itself into the glory of God (Rev. 21:23), so truth affirmed, proclaimed and believed, will again be personalized in its creator and our benefactor.

Now, if you will permit, I should like to think with you about the truth which makes men free. At the very outset, let me affirm that every truth produces freedom to the extent that it is apprehended by an honest mind. It is the nature of truth to strike the shackles from men's hearts. Ignorance is dispelled, superstition is erased, and darkness flees, when the door is thrown open and truth is allowed to penetrate the inner being. Men are enslaved to the extent of their ignorance and there is no one of us who is wholly free from mistaken views, nor will we ever be in the flesh. It is a part of the human predicament that we will not be able to know everything, and will always be ignorant about much. Just as light pushes darkness back only to the extent of its wattage or power, so knowledge of truth dispels ignorance only as far as it penetrates.

THE TRUTH THAT FREES

At this point I wish to examine the implications of the statement of Jesus to certain Jews, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). I once equated the word truth here with the words spoken by Jesus. Now I am not so certain of that position. I am inclined to think that *the truth* which frees is the Son of God, and it is not the accumulation of facts about him but the experience of an intimate sharing

relationship with him that brings freedom. Jesus is the truth who sets men free, and his word is intended to bring us to this experiential relationship.

Actually, the encounter which led to this statement began in the temple treasury when Jesus informed them that he was the light of life and that those who followed him would walk in light rather than in darkness. The Jews countered with the legalistic objection that his claims were valueless because they represented only his opinion about himself. Jesus responded that their judgment was on a purely human basis. He cited their law which validated testimony at the mouth of two or three witnesses and pointed out that the Father concurred in his testimony.

The exchange led him to say, “If you believe not that I Am (the I Am) you will die in your sins.” Because they could not grasp what he was saying about his relationship to the Father, Jesus declared, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, you will know that I Am (the I Am) and that I do nothing of myself, but I speak only the things which the Father hath taught me.” Upon hearing this, some of the Jews overcame their skepticism and believed in him.

It was to these that Jesus made the statement we are examining. Discipleship consists not of merely hearing a man once and mentally assenting to what he has said. It involves a consistent willingness to hear and to implement his teaching, conforming the life unto the message. Disciples indeed are the committed ones, those who continue in the word. But the purpose of the testimony is to lead one to Christ as the Truth and the Life. Life does not come from knowing scripture but from knowing Jesus.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). “This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath

not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11, 12). “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me, and you will not come unto me that you might have life” (John 5:39).

In the same way it is Jesus who makes us free. We are exhorted to “stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free” (Gal. 5:1). In the very context in which Jesus says we will know the truth and it will make us free, he explains his statement in these words, “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” The purpose of the written word is to guide us to the Living Word, and inform us how to walk in love as he loved us. Jesus is the great liberator. He sets the captive free. He is the truth who makes it possible for me to share in that liberty which belongs unto the sons of God.

It is very essential that we distinguish between the truth which saves and truths related to our salvation. All truths are equally true but all truths are not equally important. When one commits himself to Jesus as the truth, he thereupon pledges his allegiance to all truth as he learns or discovers it. If he loves Jesus he loves him who is the truth, and he will love truth for truth’s sake, because of the very nature of the one to whom he belongs.

But it is not necessary for one to know all of the truths contained in God’s revelation to be saved, else no one would ever be saved. When one is in Christ it is not so much how many truths he knows at a given time that counts, but rather his attitude toward truth all of the time. We are saved by the truth of the gospel, and the spirit of the gospel is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There will never come a time that we will not be learners or disciples, but if we knew all truth at a precise moment, we would cease to be seekers after truth. One is not a disciple because of what he knows but because of who he follows.

So long as we continue to hide behind the dishonest facade

that men are saved because of how much of the Bible they correctly understand we are going to be frustrated and divisive. An intellectual power structure will develop which will hand down to the uninformed and illiterate masses what they must subscribe to in order to be saved, and these written and unwritten creeds will be parroted by intolerant partisans who cannot explain them without calling in the clerical representatives of the local headquarters.

We will automatically damn millions of unfortunate souls who were born in areas of the globe where formal education was denied them, or where circumstances in life made it impossible for them to receive schooling. They will be forced to trust in the wisdom of men and not in the grace of God for salvation. God has made salvation contingent upon believing the report of a herald that he entered the world in the form of a Son and took the burden of my guilt to a cross where his blood atoned for my transgressions. I am saved by hearing, believing and responding to news. If my salvation hinges upon understanding, interpreting and assimilating a code of doctrinal and abstract truths, I can never know that I am saved.

Not only will I be doomed to go through my earthly life span always doubting whether I have learned enough to make a passing grade on my final examination, but I will develop a kind of Pharisaical arrogance which will make me draw back from all who have not reasoned out the same truths which I have discovered, or who have found truths I do not regard as such. Thus, I will make the faction composed of myself and my henchmen the dispenser of grace rather than the recipient of it, and conclude that no one can be in the good grace of God who is not in the good graces of the party.

I reject unequivocally this whole sectarian approach to the mercy of God. A knowledge of truths related to both nature and revelation is to be eagerly desired and fervently pursued. But neither in the natural or spiritual domain is life dependent upon

how much one knows about abstract truths, or the nature of the domain in which he lives, moves and has his being. Some very ignorant people may survive in the world which is not very gracious, and some very ignorant people may abide in the family of the Father who is very gracious.

Knowledge is better than ignorance, but lack of knowledge is not a sin unless it results from a deliberate closing of one's eyes. There is a great deal of difference between blindness which one cannot help and which he strives to overcome, and the deliberate blindfolding of the eyes by one who prefers not to see. There are two kinds of ignorance— voluntary and involuntary — but only the first is sin, and it is sin because man is a responsible being, and by deliberately remaining ignorant chooses to fall below his potential.

We must make a distinction between transgression, disobedience, and error in thought or judgment. Only an infinite mind is capable of perfect knowledge. For those who are fallible the only possibility is to eliminate areas of error by a maturing process which is slow and often even painful. If perfection in knowledge is a requisite of fellowship with God there is no room for compassion and divine mercy is a cruel hoax. The great question must always be, not what think ye of this, or that— the millennium, the perseverance of the saints, or pacifism— but what think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?

It is more than slightly dishonest to urge men and women to choose Jesus, if there are a lot of hidden mental inclinations of our own which they must also choose, or be cast out of our synagogues as an indication to God that we are faithfully separating the goats from the sheep and saving him the trouble later on. The very least we can do is to print a copy of our policy and list all of the requirements, exemptions and stipulations, and hand it to those who come forward and urge them to read it and study it and consult with their lawyer before signing up by baptism.

It is a little bit diabolic to baptize people into Christ on the basis of one great proposition and then throw them out because of the fine print in our human creeds. We should meet them at the water's edge and see if they can pronounce our shibboleth, and if they cannot we should slay them as aliens lest we be guilty of murdering God's children later on. Only God can lay the axe at the root because only God knows the secrets of the heart. Any other would-be executioners are self-appointed and generally a little careless in their sideswiping. Fortunately they usually cut off their own foot while aiming at another's head, and go limping through life as an object of pity to those who prefer shaking hands than swinging fists.

TRUTH IS UNIVERSAL

The truth of God is a body of revelation composed of many members as is the physical body. Not all of these are essential to being. Some are essential to wellbeing. The selection of any of these and its elevation out of proportion to the rest is not a sign of faithfulness to God or truth, but an indication of a diseased heart. All truths are important only as they relate to all other truths and undue emphasis of one does not represent clear rationalization but warped thinking.

When such a truth becomes a standard around which a tribal encampment is formed, or a totem around which a faction engages in a war dance, it is made the basis of sectarianism, which is a work of the flesh. No truth becomes less true because of factional emphasis and this creates two dangers. First, the party which selects a truth as a rallying-point always neglects other truths in an avid and fanatical defense of its *beau ideal*, while those in other parties frequently deny that truth in order to destroy the rival faction. God has raised up an ensign around which Jew and Greek must rally. It is not a truth or a proposition, but the truth embodied in a person. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign

of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10).

Our tribal encampments, with each tribe around its own standard, separated from the holy place by a royal guard of the priestly caste, belongs to the legalistic age which originated on Sinai. It has no relevance to the covenant made at Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its myriads of angels. It is indicative of the sad fact that God’s people have overlooked the significance of the unifying power of the blood of Jesus. They are living B.C. lives in an A.D. world. They are not really one loaf and one body!

It is ridiculous to give the name of a mere man to a truth uncovered by sincere study, and to build around the man and his discovery a system which results in a distinctive “ism.” Martin Luther, as a reformer, did a great service to humanity, when he dug beneath the rubbish of centuries and found and polished the lamp of “justification by faith” and lighted it again. But justification by faith and its concomitant peace with God, was not a truth of Martin Luther but of God.

When a party was built around the reformer and his voluminous writings, and it was mistakenly called “the Lutheran Church” that party was dedicated from that time forward to promulgating Lutheranism. As a humble disciple of Jesus I acknowledge every truth (and there are many) in Lutheranism. But I acknowledge none of these as Lutheran truths, for there is no such thing. Truth is the beneficent gift of a God who is love to all of his creatures, even as is the atmosphere we breathe.

Men may purify the air even as they may pollute it, but they cannot create it, and it is no more their atmosphere after they purify it than it was previously the atmosphere of those who polluted it. I hail with appreciation every scientist who purges the air of pollutants and takes us another step back toward its original purity, but I do not breathe it as his air, for it belongs to

all of God's creation, even to those who do not recognize its source.

I appreciate more than I can express the efforts of John and Charles Wesley, John Calvin, George Fox, Roger Williams, and Pope John XXIII. I cheerfully give my approbation to any truth which they enunciated. But I am not a Wesleyan or a Calvinist. I am catholic in faith but I do not identify with "the Catholic faith." I am literally a baptist, and have demonstrated it in thousands of instances but I am not a communicant of the Baptist Church. I could not take the truth about baptism and build a sect around it. I am a friend of Christ but I am not in the "Society of Friends." I would never take a relationship, even of an amiable nature, and build a sect around it.

By the same token, I am not identified with a "Christian Church" party. I am fully aware that the disciples of our Lord were first labelled as Christians at Antioch in Syria, and I am thoroughly familiar with all of the arguments pro or con, relating to whether this designation was divinely bestowed or used in derision by the pagan society. I have no real feelings about its origin, but like the apostate Agrippa or the apostle Peter, I accept it as an adequate term to identify the followers of the Messiah. However, I do not forget that many who followed him suffered and died for their allegiance before anyone knew they were Christians. I would never take a name indicating a relationship and build an exclusivistic party around it. It is a truth that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, but it is not true that one cannot be a disciple of Jesus unless he acknowledges and adopts the appellation of Christian.

I am not identified with an exclusive party designated in the census records as "Church of Christ." Once I was a "Church of Christ Christian," just as at an earlier date I was a Lutheran. I was as honest in one as in the other. I knew some truths in the first relationship and many more truths in the second. But I did not quit studying God's previous revelation, and the same Spirit

which helped me see the sectarian and exclusive spirit of Lutheranism helped me to see the sectarian and exclusive spirit of Church of Christism.

I am a Christian and I am in the community of saints created by the blood of my precious Savior. I acknowledge readily and freely every truth which my beloved brethren have discovered, insofar as it commends itself to me as truth. I cheerfully commend them in what I can conscientiously endorse or sanction, and in what I cannot approve I commend them not. But I am a free man in Christ Jesus. My allegiance is to the Lord and not to any institution. I am thus at liberty to accept all truth without at the same time endorsing a system which may include some error.

This leads to another very valid conclusion. I am also free to recognize and acknowledge every child of God as my brother and to treat him as such. Whether such a child of God is in the Church of Christ, the Christian Church, the Baptist Church, the Church of God, or any other party, he is my brother because he is God's child. I do not receive one *because* he is a Baptist but because he is a child of God. If I received him because he was a Baptist this would preclude the acceptance of all who were not Baptists and would make me a sectarian.

One becomes a child of God by the adoption of God. He becomes a Baptist by his adoption of the Baptist creed, just as another becomes a Methodist by his adoption of the Methodist creed. One is by the election of God, the other by the selection of man. So I do not receive Baptists, Methodists, or Presbyterians, for these terms are strangers to the revelation of heaven. I receive those who are the children of God, and if they happen to be among these, I still receive them.

I am fully aware of the fact that because I refuse to leave the brethren whom I love and with whom I have been more closely associated I will be accused of continuing as a sectarian.

But such an accusation overlooks one thing. One can be in a sect without being a sectarian, just as one can be in Russia without being a Russian, or in America without being an American.

Sectarianism is not a location but an attitude. It is not who you are with but who and what you are for. It is a spirit, a motivating principle, a dominating influence. The very word means a “party spirit.” It is one thing to be associated with a group of saints, but a wholly different thing to possess a party spirit. Through the Spirit of God I have been able to crucify the flesh and its works. I am able now, without qualm or fear, to move among all who love God and share with them my feeble insights. I praise His name for making it possible for me to serve others in love. What a thrill, what joy to know that I am his, and he is mine! And thousands of wonderful brethren are now being delivered from the sectarian spirit to joy and rejoice in Christ Jesus alone. This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in my eyes!

As I view it, there is only one community of saints, or church, on earth. All who are in Christ are in it. He is the head of the body, and we are individually members of it. I am not joined to him because I am joined to others, but I am joined to others because they are joined to him. Our unity is in Christ and through him. It is not upon a horizontal but upon a vertical plane. If a brother is joined to Christ I cannot separate from him without separating from Christ. If I remain in Christ, I must receive all whom he receives.

I do not establish the relationship with Jesus by identification with a party, but by personal faith and obedience. And everyone else upon earth who believes and obeys is added to the one body, and is indwelt by the one Spirit. To deny the fraternity with God’s children is not a reflection against them but against myself and God, who is their father. To refuse to recognize his children does not destroy fraternity but derides paternity!

It is not my intention to rally a following around myself or any of my concepts. To do so would be to form another party. A non-partisan party is an anomaly and would be as sinful as any other party. Let men accept truth where they are. Let them respond to it, obey its demands, share it and allow its power to be felt. Let it work from within every party to leaven it with the love of God, to erode away the party spirit, to destroy the factional attitude.

I hold myself ready to accept every truth that I learn. I will not fear what men will do unto me. I am free from all men even while I am the servant of all. I will stand or fall to but one master. I will allow all others to be free under God. If a brother sincerely feels that he can better serve our loving Father in another segment of believers, he will go with my feeble blessing. He will be no less my brother while he is there and no more so if he returns to labor by my side.

The *way* for me is Jesus! The *truth* for me is Jesus! The *life* for me is Jesus! I want to walk in that way. I want to share in that truth. I want to love and live in that life. I shall rejoice in whatever may be his lot for me. “If I must boast, I will boast of things that show how weak I am. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus— blessed be his name forever!— knows that I am not lying” (2 Cor. 11:30, 31).

I am grateful that my unprofitable life has been spared to this day. I am thrilled that the Spirit has overflowed my heart, flooding it with the love of God. I am joyful because I have come to know and experience the truth, and he has made me free. Praise the living God, I’m free at last. It is a genuine thrill to be here as an argonaut of the spirit, and to look forward to that transcendent freedom when this mortal will put on immortality and this corruption will put on incorruption, and death will be swallowed up in victory. “O glorious victory, that overcomes the world!”

The Hope That Cheers

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[Abstract]

A few days ago I received a letter from a young couple in a western state who were in the throes of a spiritual depression. They had been reared in the Church of Christ in Texas and had both attended since they were infants and had been carried in the arms of their parents. Now they were facing a traumatic decision. The situation in the local congregation was such that they felt miserable and unhappy and they saw no possibility of its changing for the better. Instead, they felt that it would grow worse.

They painted a rather grim picture of a congregation caught up in the enslaving bonds of legalism. The sermons on Lord's Day were sterile and dry, with the preacher grinding out the same old grist, and administering dosages of the same old pap, which had no relevance to life. The elders were good men except for their jealousy for their position and assumed authority. The congregation owned a nice physical structure, purchased chiefly with Texas money, but it had become a monastic setting from which the Spirit had fled. The young people had also departed the scene as they became old enough and about all that was left was the boast of loyalty, not to Jesus, but to tradition!

Recently a man and wife who were teachers in the local schools had been driven out as "liberals" because they had

proposed closing down on Wednesday nights to allow the handful of “faithful” to visit other religious organizations or to remain home and share with their own families. After the suggestion had been made and emphatically vetoed by the elders, the preacher began to insinuate that there were subversives among them. The scriptures were quoted to show that “men would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples.”

The teacher and his wife, tiring of being harangued under cover, began to visit other places on Sunday nights, cultivating the acquaintance of prominent Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. They began a prayer and study session for these in their home, only to be visited by the elders who informed them that they would not be allowed to continue unless an elder was present at each meeting. They had to be under the “oversight” in all public or private teaching of the Word. Without raising his voice, the teacher said that his first obligation was to God and he would not desist from teaching in his home or anywhere else that an opportunity was afforded. Charges were preferred against him of rebelling against the authority of the elders, and were signed by the preacher who wrote them out and by the elders who read them publicly. Notice of the “withdrawal” was sent to every congregation in the whole area.

The young couple who wrote me in their bitterness of soul wanted to know what had happened to the church. They were distraught and disillusioned. Their world had fallen in on them. I think they should not be so disturbed for what has happened was inevitable. And it is not limited to the Church of Christ but is quite characteristic of most religious denominations in our age, especially those which have known little of the grace of God, and whose members have regarded themselves as “keepers of orthodoxy” and members of the squad of “heavenly law officers.”

One of the first grave mistakes of our fathers, and they made a lot of them, was equating a movement inaugurated to restore unity, with the church of God referred to in the scriptures. After they had done so and had fastened on the designation “Church of Christ” to distinguish them from others, they began to think of themselves as the kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of all who did not at once join their number. One who searches the new covenant scriptures will realize that they describe the church but do not designate it with a title. When our immediate ancestors did so they denominated it and thereby launched it into the rivalry with other sects and denominations which continues until this very day.

In a sort of unwarranted arrogance they challenged all others to deny that the historical movement was scriptural in name, origin, faith, doctrine and practice, and convinced themselves by textual manipulation that what they had contrived was identical with what the apostles had planted and any deviation from the “traditional pattern” was heresy and apostasy. In the days when ignorance was widespread on the frontier, and few men could read, the scrap-doctors had a field day, but we now live in an age when men have been taught to think for themselves. With the current intellectual explosion every authoritarian structure is in danger and no religious party can escape the challenge.

Every dogmatic institution feels the threat of unprejudiced thought and seeks ways to inhibit and prohibit it. For decades it was dangerous to think originally in the Churches of Christ. All truth had been discovered. The plan of God had been perfectly restored. There was nothing left but to be faithful to our tradition, although we called it “the faith once delivered.” Any new thought was an innovation. Preachers became parrots rather than proclaimers. The church seemed to have borrowed a leaf from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*:

Let me have men about me that are fat,

Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights:

Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

Now we are passing through a period of soul-searching and re-examination, and this is good. It is also upsetting and those who like for things to move with unrippled calm are often disturbed. But the "sea of glass" is in heaven. So long as we are upon earth we will have troubles and there will be waves. Such a condition is necessary to test our faith and our steadfastness.

My hope is not founded upon parties and movements. These are the work of men, honest men who seek to recapture the divine purpose. But I am grounded on the Rock of Ages. My identification is with him. I shall not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Come what may, my life is hid with Christ in God. I intend to stay so close beside him that nothing will shake me.

I know a brother and sister in Christ who are no longer young. Realizing that one day they will come face to face with the Lord of glory they began sometime ago to use the largess with which God had blessed them to mail out copies of trenchant material showing the corrosive and spirit-shrinking influence of the legalistic spirit. For this they have come under the suspicion and criticism of the local "somewhats." Every Sunday morning without fail the preacher issues veiled warnings of "the subversive influence among us." Sermons are punctuated with the suggestion that "if you do not like the church you ought to get out of it."

But while this aging couple may not like much of what passes for religion, they love the church. They are willing to

spend and be spent for it. So they return each Sunday to their modest home to pray for those who think of them as dangerous traitors to the very cause for which they have sacrificed so much. The number of such people is growing. They are not all youthful revolutionaries, either. Many of them have whitened locks and walk with stooped and bent frame.

They have grown tired of bigotry and intolerance. They are fed up with negative preaching by the products of schools created to defend the sectarian status quo. They are doing their own thinking. They are studying afresh the revelation of heaven. They are casting off the partisan garb in a desire to don the robes of righteousness. And it is because of this that the spirit of factionalism has fallen upon hard times and the spirit of fellowship is growing in the land.

The secret of life is wrapped up in him who revealed the secret of the ages. The commandment of God which assures that what we ask will be granted is to pledge allegiance unto him and to love one another as he has loved us. Let not one who does this spend his time in nurturing remorse, or in nourishing hostility or fear. As Charles Sumner has expressed it:

The world, with ignorant or intolerant judgment, may condemn; the countenance of companion may be averted; the heart of friend may grow cold; but the consciousness of duty done will be sweeter than the applause of the world, than the continuance of companion or the heart of friend.

Argument from Silence

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[Abstract]

It has been my intention, God being my helper, to refrain as much as conscience will permit, from direct confrontation with other editors among the brethren. If they differ with my position I prefer to publish notice of their presentation and urge my readers to secure it and read for themselves. I want no rival except Satan and I do not intend to edit a partisan journal.

Occasionally, however, I feel it necessary to state my convictions in opposition to an editorial, and when I do, I seek to be as objective as possible without being objectionable. I now find myself at the place where I must again disagree with my brother, Reuel Lemmons, editor of *Firm Foundation*. I propose to say a little about his article “The Music Question,” as it appeared in the issue of June 20.

I would prefer, of course, to have my reply appear in the pages of *Firm Foundation*, but there is no hope of my “crashing the barrier.” The last two articles I submitted were returned with curt and polite notes to the effect that our brother does not intend to provide me an audience where I can exhibit my thinking about the fellowship of the Spirit. He wants to protect his readers from any views on the topic which he does not regard as orthodox, so he has pulled the paper shade over the window. I respect the right of the brethren to read what is said on all sides of an issue without clerical interference. I do not think my

readers are so ignorant they must be fed only pre-digested journalistic fare. For that reason, I will again print his editorial in full, so that you may have both positions before you for study.

Brother Lemmons regards himself as the golden mean between two extremes. Almost all editors feel this way about themselves, but he advertises himself as walking in the middle of the road. This is intended to conjure up an image of a faithful stalwart marching squarely down the white line in the center of the pavement while everyone else is slogging through the weeds and underbrush on the right hand or on the left. This is hardly a picture of reality. Our brother remains in the middle of the road by dashing frantically from one ditch to the other. Occasionally he slips and sticks one foot into the swamp up to his knee. His distracted supporters hardly know from week to week which flag to wave.

I mention this so that if my reply seems outdated by the time it appears, I urge you not to throw the paper away. Save it, and when the merry-go-round makes its circuit, it will be appropriate again. Brother Lemmons is not wholly to blame for this. He is caught in an editorial vise. He edits a paper for a many-hued party, which he acknowledges is quite inconsistent, so he is forced to develop chameleon-like traits, if he is to please all of what he refers to as the “heirs to the Restoration movement.” But here is his editorial. Read it carefully.

THE MUSIC QUESTION

One of the main roadblocks on the path to unity among heirs of the Restoration is, admittedly, the use of instrumental music in the worship of the church. Many feel that this is the main difference between two great wings of the movement. We have repeatedly maintained that the instrument is not the problem; it is a symptom of the problem. The reason why we have two bodies, almost totally out of fellowship with each other

is not the instrument; it is a difference of attitude toward the Scriptures.

Usually when we say this certain liberal writers ridicule the idea, but they are careful not to deal with it. We feel that it must be dealt with and settled before there can be any real hope for closer fellowship.

Rooted as far back at least as the Protestant Reformation are two attitudes toward the authority of the Scriptures. One holds that where God has not specifically legislated concerning any matter we are free to do as each chooses to do; the other holds that God's failure to allow is tantamount to prohibition. Both groups have the same respect for God's plain and specific commands; it is in the realm of God's authority in areas of silence that we differ.

There are some areas where all of us respect the authority of God in areas of silence. In the Lord's supper we have unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. Why? Because God's Word says so. Why do we not have ham and gravy on the Lord's table? Because the Lord's failure to allow is tantamount to prohibition. We have only two items because the two items are specified. The very failure to specify anything else we accept as prohibition against anything else. By what reasoning can we exclude ham on the Lord's table and include instrumental music?

Conrad Grebel, in his book *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writings* says, "Whatever we are not taught by clear passages or examples must be regarded as forbidden, just as if it were written: this do not . . ." Detrich Philip in his *Enchiridion or Hand Book* says, "Many ancient and modern teachers have examined into and concluded . . . that whatever God has not commanded, that he has prohibited. Hence all worship and service that is not ordained or instituted by an express command of God is wrong."

We believe this principle to be a righteous one. We do not see how anyone really serious about restoring the faith and practice of the first century church can afford to be presumptuous in any area where God has not authorized us to go.

The principle has its application in many areas other than the instrumental music area. Because God has not specifically prohibited a missionary society many assume that it is all right to have one. Others feel that since God is silent about a superstructure for the pyramidal organization of congregations into a super church machine it is all right to have one. Others feel that God's provision for congregational church government excludes by its very silence such organizations. To be consistent one would have to apply the authority of God in areas of silence to the instrument question as well as to the church government question. By what logic could one be free in one area not specifically prohibited and bound in another area just as free of specific prohibition?

And we find among non-instrumental people an inconsistent application of the principle also. Some who would not consider using the instrument because of God's prescription for vocal music and the absence of his command for anything else, will stoutly defend methods of regulating, governing, and controlling the work of the church about which the silence of God is profound. If the silence of God is enough to forbid the use of the instrument why is not the silence of God enough to forbid the creation of other institutions to do the work of the church? If the lack of any Divine directive is grounds for excluding something from our worship why is not the same lack of Divine directive grounds for excluding non-scriptural organizations from our work?

There are many things other than the music question that indicate this difference in attitude toward the Scriptures. Both sides should be extremely careful in dealing with them. If God's

failure to say, “Thou shalt not . . .” frees us to do as we see best, then there are vast fields of freedom that none of us have dared yet to explore. Practically anything would go, for God has said, “Thou shalt not . . .” in very, very few instances in the New Testament. On the other hand if we are bound to interpret the absence of a direct command as a prohibition, many of our own projects are suspect.

Because of the unwillingness of most heirs of the Restoration to apply with any degree of consistency either interpretation, a large segment of the Restoration movement has given up as wholly untenable the entire Restoration plea and hold it invalid. Before there can be any degree of unity between the elements that remain we must honestly deal with the question of the authority of God in areas of silence.

REPLY TO THE FOREGOING

The use of instrumental music is not really a roadblock to unity. It is only a mental block to the recognition of unity upon the part of certain men who love instruments of music, or love their opposition to them, more than they love brethren. Unity is the gift of the Spirit. We are to keep it in the bond of peace. Every person in whom the Spirit of God dwells is united with Christ and I am united through Christ with every such person. Those who think of themselves as united with a “great wing of a movement” are obviously going to remain aloof from those in the other wing. They are sectarian. What we must realize is that a “movement” cannot get off the ground on only one wing. No movement can really move while its wings are threshing each other. It will remain grounded!

Wings are for the birds. I am no longer the least bit interested in being a member of a wing. I am a member of the one body and it embraces every single one of God’s precious children. Jesus is head of the body not lord of a wing. Brother

Lemmons is not going to contribute one thing toward what he calls “closer fellowship” by merely being “Wing Commander” of an exclusive party which he mistakenly identifies as the called out community of the Prince of peace. We do not have two bodies, as he puts it. There are two wings, which are sects, both of which mistakenly think they are “it.”

Our brother is eminently correct in maintaining that “the instrument is not the problem.” He is seriously off base when he asserts that “it is the symptom of the problem.” The real symptom is an article such as our brother wrote. It betokens a grossly mistaken view of what constitutes worship of God, and a childish approach to the majestic fellowship into which we have been called of God. The problem is the same as it was at Corinth, the carnality and immaturity which allows men under the guise of faithfulness to the Father to kill off his other children and to set at nought their brethren as if the scriptures had been utterly “silent” on the matter.

I think that a lot of perceptive brethren on all sides are getting fed up with the constant drumming on the theme, “It is a difference of attitude toward the Scriptures.” Brother Lemmons has been trying to produce harmony by sawing away on this one fiddle-string, and he is out of tune even on it. This accusation is a red herring which has been dragged back and forth across the trail for almost a century, and every time brethren set out on the road to peace, someone brings it out again and they are led off baying into the wilderness until they become exhausted.

As usual, our brother makes it appear that only “liberals” will deny his thesis. The word “liberal” is a dirty word to readers of the *Firm Foundation* and it rouses the rabble. Our brother uses it to frighten off anyone from making a reply to his article, or to keep the gullible from reading a reply if one is made. But the tag “liberal” is another red herring, more fishy and smelly than the first.

I'm no longer frightened by the silly terms brethren use as brands and stigmata. Everyone is a hobbyist to some and a liberal to others. I can bring you a pile of religious magazines in which Brother Lemmons is assailed as a "liberal" and one of them says he "out-liberals the liberals," whatever that means. Any person who does not accept our brother's diagnosis or take his prescription is a liberal. I am not going to ridicule his idea about what is affecting the "wings," but I do say it is simply a rehash of a simplistic and unworkable approach which contains no answer to the problem and will only prolong the agony.

In the first place, he projects an image which is as counterfeit as a three dollar bill. He writes as if there were "two great wings," one of which has a correct approach to the scriptures, while the other has a fundamentally warped idea of interpretation. The idea is that if those who use instrumental music will approach the scriptures as do those in "the right wing" we will have "hope of closer fellowship." Then, pray tell us why those in the "right wing" are more divided than almost any other group on the face of the earth?

Brother Lemmons is the authority for stating recently that there are more than two dozen segments of the non-instrument wing. Some of these exhibit a greater degree of hostility and bitterness toward one another than do people in the world who are alienated from Christ Jesus. There are more than twenty-five little wings in this one great wing. Indeed, if brethren who use instrumental music all gave it up for "the sake of unity" they would then have to decide where to cast their lot. If they went with Brother Lemmons they would come under fire from one direction as liberals, and from the opposite as hobbyists. They would soon learn that "the authority of silence" is pretty flexible and can be bent around like a licorice rope to justify what you want while condemning what the other man has.

I deny that our current problem is rooted in "two attitudes toward the authority of the Scriptures." That is just not the case

and as long our brother keeps on thinking and writing that it is, he will aggravate and perpetuate the problem while offering no solution. I have, for several years, refused to make a test of union or communion out of a congregational decision to accompany praise with the sound of instrumental music, despite my own personal preference and conviction. I have moved freely among all segments of the restoration movement heirs, sharing with them my insights when permitted to do so, and listening to them when they refused to listen to me. I can speak from some measure of experience.

My brethren who use instrumental music respect the authority of the scriptures. They love the Bible. They teach respect for it and inculcate a deep and abiding reverence for its precepts. They do not intend to wilfully and maliciously oppose God's will in anything. It is a false accusation against these brethren to say that they do not regard the authority of the Scriptures. It is just not true!

Brother Lemmons admits that both groups have the same respect for God's plain and specific commands. This means that all equally and cheerfully accept what God has said. They all hear what the Spirit has spoken to the churches. This is interesting! Will obedience to the plain and specific commands make one a child of God? Is one saved if he keeps all of the commands? Does Brother Lemmons respect the plain and specific command not to set at nought a brother? What about his attitude toward the command, "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God"?

But he replies, "It is in the realm of God's authority in areas of silence that we differ." Can an honest difference about what God has not said destroy the relationship created by doing what God has said? Can a mistaken view about something not revealed damn one who properly respects all of God's plain and specific commands? Does not Brother Lemmons make God's silence more authoritative than his revelation? Who is to

interpret and enforce the authority of God in areas of silence? Who is to determine why God did not speak? Who will fill in the blanks? Who will determine for all men everywhere the purpose and motivation of the infinite Father in areas where he has not deigned to command?

Where does the Bible speak about “the authority of silence”? What book, chapter and verse plainly defines and delineates it? Our good brother affirms that as far back as the Protestant Reformation there have been two attitudes toward the authority of the Scriptures. “One holds that where God has not specifically legislated concerning any matter we are free to do as each chooses to do; the other holds that God’s failure to allow is tantamount to prohibition.” But these are not attitudes toward the authority of the Scriptures. They are personal attitudes of those who respect the Scriptures. These are presuppositions used as a frame of reference in which to approach and know the will of God.

These are mental spectacles through which to read, but there is a difference between the spectacles and that which is read by their use. Spectacles are donned before the reading begins. What Brother Lemmons needs to do is to quit accusing sincere brethren of lack of respect for the authority of the word of God and attack their spectacles. Why does he not do so? The answer is plain. He also has spectacles. The presupposition of those who oppose Brother Lemmons is secured from the same source as that from which Brother Lemmons secured his presupposition, that is from human deduction.

There is no scripture which says “God’s failure to allow is tantamount to prohibition.” That is a human deduction from what a certain school of thought thinks is taught in the scriptures. God did not say that. The Holy Spirit did not reveal it. Our brethren have rationalized about the implications of certain isolated statements and incidents recorded in the scriptures and have fashioned an intellectual approach or bias,

to interpretation of scripture, which they believe is fair and honest, but which they now mistakenly equate as equal to divine revelation. Brother Lemmons' entire thesis is that unless you agree with his presupposition you do not respect the authority of the Scriptures. Other brethren respect the authority of God's Word but they do not think that Brother Lemmons is the divinely-ordained optometrist for the whole family of God.

This places the matter in proper perspective. A great many brethren respect the authority of God who do not bow to the authority of Brother Lemmons. They love the Word which came from heaven but they do not put the word which proceeds from Texas in the same category. They know the difference between the firm foundation of God which standeth sure, and the *Firm Foundation* which our good brother edits and which sometimes wobbles. Many brethren do not think that Brother Lemmons can speak for them in areas where God has not spoken to them. It would thrill their souls if Brother Lemmons would be as silent as God is in "areas of silence."

HAM ON THE TABLE

The ham and gravy on the Lord's table is a little bit childish. A lot of thinking brethren are full up with it. They wish our brother would quit passing it. Read this once more: "Why do we not have ham and gravy on the Lord's table? Because the Lord's failure to allow is tantamount to prohibition." Is that the only reason Brother Lemmons does not place ham and gravy on the Lord's table? Is it the real reason? Has my brother never learned the principle of apposition as relates to the selection and interpretation of symbols? Does he not realize that even finite men in choosing symbols seek to find those which naturally or logically depict the thing to be symbolized or memorialized, and it would thus be charging God with folly to imply that ham and gravy might be apt substitutes for bread and the fruit of the vine in portraying and proclaiming the death of the Son?

Our brethren have too long indulged in such trifling in debates. We need to pray for them that they will mature beyond this state. I have no hesitancy in saying that it is not merely the “Lord’s failure to allow” which keeps me from having ham and gravy on the Lord’s table. A great many brethren believe they can furnish reasoning by which they can exclude ham on the Lord’s table and include instrumental music with their praise. They would like to ask Brother Lemmons some questions about how he can oppose instrumental music while freely including some things he already has, and I do not mean ham and gravy. Since I am not in any sense a defender of the use of instruments, even as an aid or an expedient, I will allow brethren who are to handle that phase of the problem.

Our brother refers to Conrad Grebel and cites a quotation from what he calls “his book on *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writings*.” Brother Lemmons is confused. The quote is from an anthology of texts printed in the Library of Christian Classics, XXV. It is entitled *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation and Evangelical Catholicism*. It was jointly edited by Angel M. Mergal and George Hunston Williams. I mention this because several of my readers I have encouraged to become researchists in The Radical Reformation as opposed to The Protestant Reformation and The Catholic Counter Reformation. Brother Lemmons also makes reference to “Detrich Philip,” who was really Dietrich (Dirk) Philips, whose book of 650 pages was issued in 1564 under the title of *Enchiridion or Handbook for the Christian Soldier*.

I happen to be a great admirer of Conrad Grebel, leader of the Swiss Brethren. I appreciate Felix Mantz of Zurich, in whose home Grebel launched the Anabaptist Movement by baptizing George Blaurock, January 21, 1525. But Brother Lemmons quotes from these men because he thinks they agree with his views. He would drop them like “hot potatoes” if he knew how they applied the principle which he says is righteous. I have previously dealt at length with our brother’s use of the word

“presumptuous” in this connection. You will find it in the chapter called “Facing the Issues,” starting on the first page of my book *Our Living Pattern* [title of the bound volume of *Mission Messenger* for 1970 —e-Editor]. That chapter explores fully another editorial in which our brother cites scriptures which, at the time he used them, he felt would justify his position.

INCONSISTENCIES

But now I am especially interested in the candid admission that “We find among non-instrumental people an inconsistent application of the principle also.” I want to enquire if our brother puts these inconsistent ones in another “wing of the movement” than the one he is in. Does he withdraw from them? Does he exclude them from his “fellowship”? If not, why not? Why condemn them for their inconsistency in application of a principle if he is flagrantly guilty of inconsistency in application of another?

He writes, “Some who would not consider using the instrument because of God’s prescription for vocal music and the absence of his command for anything else, will stoutly defend methods of regulating, governing and controlling the work of the church about which the silence of God is profound.” This can mean nothing else than that our brother is in the fellowship and working with men who, to use his term, violate “the realm of God’s authority in areas of silence where we differ.” Why does he continue to labor with these who ignore the authority of scripture in those areas in which “the silence of God is profound”? Our good brother should blush to mention inconsistency in application of principles.

I challenge him to name those “among non-instrumental people” who will “stoutly defend” their intrusions upon areas of silence. Let the truth be known.

He wrote a whole series of articles attacking what he was

pleased to designate the “hidden body and poison of error” of Brother Ketcherside. He mentioned my name fifteen times on one page of his journal. But he will never name those to whom he now alludes. They are members of his party. They are allied with the faction for which his journal speaks. They are in his “wing of the movement.”

Will our brother be specific about the “methods of regulating, governing and controlling the church” fostered by our non-instrument brethren where the silence of God is profound? What are these methods? Who is guilty of promoting them? What are the “other institutions to do the work of the church”? Is he referring to orphan homes, homes for the aged, or homes for unwed mothers? Is he talking about the Herald of Truth radio and television programs? Does he refer to the annual conventions (called lectureships) where churches make their displays, present their financial appeals and have a clearing-house for missionary involvements? Is he talking about “preacher training schools” where one congregation becomes a committee of the whole to train preachers for others? Is he referring to the one-man pastor system which we seek to conceal under such innocuous titles as “local evangelist”?

What are these “other institutions” created by non-instrument brethren? I challenge my good brother and fellow-editor, who has made this public accusation, to clear the air. He is quite open about instrumental music. In the interest of that consistency which he rightly espouses let him now level with us on these other matters.

Brother Lemmons asks a point-blank question. “If the lack of a Divine directive is grounds for excluding something from our worship, why is not the same lack of Divine directive grounds for excluding non-scriptural organizations from our work?” While he grows gray and becomes aged waiting for an answer to that one from Tennessee or Texas, I would like to ask him a question. “If the endorsement of instrumental music is

grounds for your excluding brethren from your fellowship, why is not the creation of other institutions to do the work of the church grounds for your exclusion of brethren from your fellowship?" Do you not argue that both are guilty of violating "areas of silence"?

Let me tell you the reason why our brother will continue as he does! He is a member of an anti-instrument party. *Firm Foundation* is a journalistic mouthpiece of an anti-instrument party. The partisan test of the faction is an attitude toward instrumental music. This is the "Jolly Roger" which flies over the party fortress. If you are opposed to instrumental music you are with the "in group." Regardless of your position on war, divorce and remarriage, legalized abortion, social drinking, betting on horse races, racial hatred, or even those three "C's"—cups, classes and colleges, you can stay in. These have nothing to do with loyalty to Jesus. They do not affect your membership in the Lord's church. You can smoke cigarettes until your fingers turn brown, your lungs are seared, you cough your guts out, and have to beg money to buy schoolbooks for your children, but you need not worry as long as you are "sound on the music question"!

Brother Lemmons will never exclude those who endorse the "many projects of our own which are suspect." Do you know why? Because they are *our own*. And the "our" refers to the anti-instrument faction. These are "non-instrumental" people who invent instruments to help them in the *work* of the church but deplore human instruments to help in the *worship* of the church. The fact is that it is only when you have instruments which you claim aid in worship that you are cast out of the synagogue; aids to the work only cause you to be sniped at from behind the bushes, but you can stay in and *worship* with us.

THE REAL ISSUE

All I have said thus far is introductory. It will indicate that I am nauseated with the whole maggot-infested bill of fare served up by our rival restaurants which claim to exist to feed the spiritually-starved multitude. In their partisan establishments the milk of the word has become clabbered, the strong meat has become putrid and the bread which came down from heaven has been allowed to grow mouldy. And what I say is not limited to only one of “the two great wings of the movement.” Neither of these has a copyright on ignorance, littleness or bigotry. I have found some of the most narrow, legalistic, nit-picking minds among brethren who use instrumental music I have ever found on earth. Identification with those who conscientiously oppose instrumental music does not mean you are devoid of graciousness; identification with those who endorse it does not make you a paragon of virtue. Instrumental music is not the litmus-paper test for spiritual acidity or the vinegary disposition.

Now let me get on with the real issue. In his final statement, Brother Lemmons says, “Before there can be any degree of unity between the elements that remain we must honestly deal with the question of the authority of God in the areas of silence.” This is precisely what Brother Lemmons cannot do. It is impossible for him to deal honestly with this question, and since he cannot do so, he will never promote unity. He is destined to make pieces of the body rather than to make peace within it. He has no formula for unity, no strategy for waging peace. He can only aggravate the sore. He can never provide balm for its healing.

Brother Lemmons cannot deal honestly with the question because he already has his mind made up. He equates his philosophic approach to scripture with scripture itself. His prescription is God’s will and it must be bound upon all. He is the doctor and all others who enter into dialogue with him are patients. Actually there are no areas of silence for our brother. He has filled in all of the blanks. God has spoken in plain and

specific commands through the apostles, and in areas of silence through Brother Lemmons. Areas of silence are no longer valid for others because our brother has spoken. The non-instrument brethren are the official interpreters, the supreme court, in areas of silence. If you disagree with them you have lost your case, and any attempt to appeal beyond their jurisdiction will result in banishment, forced exile and ostracism. The organizational Church of Christ has become the “god of the gaps.” These are serious charges but I do not think they can be successfully denied.

There is little real difference in principle between the authoritarian Roman Church and the Church of Christ. Both claim to be the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of God upon earth. The first has an infallible interpreter; the second an infallible interpretation. When the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, what he says becomes dogma, and when our brethren render the official version of what God meant when he did not speak, it also becomes dogma. One must subscribe to it upon the pain of excommunication. If he ventures near one of our seats of higher learning he is subjected to an Inquisition. Rome has its college of cardinals and we have our cardinal colleges. As a result of our “Great Schism” we even have our Western Church with a sort of holy see in Texas, and the Eastern Orthodox with international headquarters close to Disney World.

And we can no more produce peace with our present stance among the fragmented heirs of the restoration movement, than Rome can promote unity among what she refers to as the “separated brethren” in the Protestant Reformation. Our only appeal is “Come unto us all ye that are heavy laden, and swallow your consciences as you come!” Our proposal for unity is what is known as the snake and frog proposal. And we are not the frog! We only think in terms of complete surrender— not to Jesus, but to us. Regardless of how you stand with Jesus, if you do not stand with us, you are out. It is the party spirit, not the Holy Spirit, which counts.

The Church of Christ “wing” represented by Brother Lemmons is not a unifying element in the religious world. The other wing is not too much better off in that regard. As proof of the fact that Church of Christism cannot unite the religious world one needs only to remember that it has fragmented our segment of the heirs into a couple of dozen splinters. The question no longer is “Who split the log?” It is now, “Who shivered our timbers?” How can our brother talk of restoring unity between the wings when his own wing looks like a cyclone hit it, and all of the feathers are clobbering one another over the air waves? Can such polemical pinions ever produce peace?

Then, is there no hope? Indeed there is! In very truth, I have never been more optimistic in my whole life. We are facing the dawn of a whole new day. It will not come as the result of efforts of Brother Lemmons. Leaders of factions will never produce it. They will hinder it. But the winds of change are blowing. There is a new “great awakening” coming, praise God! And just as the previous one produced non-conformists such as Barton W. Stone and Thomas Campbell, so this one will introduce men of stature, men of God, who will transcend our sectarian barriers. In generations to come their names will be hallowed as peace makers even as now they are harassed as heretics.

But what about “the authority of silence”? It can never be woven into a creed to be used as a criterion for measuring the faithfulness of others. We dare never formulate a theological confessional yardstick enabling us to ask, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that the silence of the scriptures forbids the use of instrumental music in conjunction with praise?” Areas of silence can govern only individual consciences. I can never use my conviction in such areas as a means of judging or a ground for despising brethren. I must let them stand or fall to their own master. I must have my conviction to myself.

I am going to receive my brethren. I am going to welcome them— *all of them!* I am going to receive them in spite of their hangups over music, spiritual gifts, orphan homes, television programs, the clergy system, educational institutions, cups, classes, colleges, or *Firm Foundation* editorials. I doubt that I will ever fully endorse the thinking of any other man. I never did, and unless I lose my own mind, I doubt that I ever will. I don't even endorse what I thought ten years ago. Praise the Lord for that!

Reuel Lemmons is my brother. So is James DeForest Murch. I do not have to go to a unity meeting to learn how to be in fellowship with either one of them. Jesus settled that for me on the cross in a new covenant written on the hearts of men and signed in blood. Nothing that my brethren conclude in a motel session on unity will unsettle it for me. Jesus is Lord over my life and I intend to obey his plain and specific new command, the one about loving one another as he loved us all.

The way for Brother Lemmons to “honestly deal with the question of the authority of God in areas of silence” is to quit playing God with the lives of other brethren. It is not the authority of God which divides us, it is the authority Brother Lemmons and other preachers seek to exercise where God has not spoken. Let's receive our brethren in Christ, in spite of their presuppositions and mental spectacles, and then we can talk with them the rest of our lives about our differences, not as warring and hostile tribesmen, but as brethren beloved in the Father.

I do not believe God wants his children to become outcasts, driven off and theologically murdered because of their opinions about the things that we make such great issues. Let congregations of saints who respect the authority of the word determine how they will render their praise, and let the rest of us respect congregational autonomy enough to keep our “whickerbills” out of their business. If they are wrong God will

**straighten it all out. If I am mistaken in my human weakness as
I strive to please the Father, let it be in receiving His children!**

About Movements

Mission Messenger (September 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

The continuing tragedy of the ages is that good men, in an honest attempt to offset division, seem always to end up fragmenting further those whom they seek to unite. The problem is thus augmented by the very ones who seek to solve it. Every reformatory movement grows old and crotchety, suffering from hardening of the arteries and high blood pressure, with all of the symptoms of aggravated senility. Such noble attempts are like the dauntless pioneer who blazes new trails through an unbroken wilderness, only to eventually retire to the front porch of his cabin to puff on his corn cob pipe, and hold his trusty rifle at the ready, to gun down anyone who would dare explore beyond his clearing or staked-out claim.

The reason for this is obvious. Men equate the movements for which they live with the church for which Christ died. Any criticism of their creation is regarded as an attack upon the ramparts of heaven. But the search for truth and ultimate meaning is endless. Those who think they have arrived have actually departed. There is nothing wrong with writing a personal creed, for a creed is but a statement of what one believes. The sin is to cease writing creeds, and bind yourself today to defend the immature faith of yesterday.

One is truly safe only so long as his creed is Christ, for Christ is living, vital and active in the universe. He is the same

yesterday today and forever, but I am not. I must grow and develop and be transformed. To argue that I must not change my mind because Christ is unchanging in nature is, in its final analysis, to argue that I no longer need Christ. One who is flawlessly perfect in appearance requires no mirror, unless he seeks only to admire himself.

A movement which ceases to move soon becomes a monument. There is a great difference between the two. A movement heralds hope for the future while a monument portrays only the glories of the past. It is absurd for those who live in the twentieth century to be shackled to a movement of the nineteenth century. To do so means acceptance of men who were caught up in history on the same basis as the Savior who was caught up to heaven. The canonizing of heroes always involves the crystallizing of their views, and results in venerating traditions under the guise of fidelity to the faith. There is a great difference between walking in the old paths, and wallowing in the old ruts!

Only an open-ended movement holds forth any hope of uniting the saints. The moment we shut the gate to hold what we have gained, we forfeit our freedom and forsake our ideal. It is those confined within walls who are in prison and not those who are without. When a movement becomes “a church,” by whatever title it may be designated, it automatically casts itself in the role of a sect, and must be prepared to engage in all of the petty rivalry and paltry politics which are a part of the sectarian stance. To call a scriptural name over a party no more makes it the body of Christ, than a cow becomes a horse by so designating it. The body of Christ has no specific title and needs none.

It is a little silly and quite absurd for anyone to castigate “the denominations” while arguing for a special designation or denomination for the party of his affiliation. To denominate means to name, to give a title to, and any person who defends a particular name as the one authorized by heaven only accuses

the Holy Spirit of forming a denomination. Clever debaters who affirm that their exclusive faction is “scriptural in name” do not realize that in trying to establish their contention they only succeed in proving it is unscriptural.

Perhaps our greatest hope for the future lies in the fact that so many are becoming restless and tired of the institutional image with its trappings and tom-foolery. They are weary of tenting on the old playground, and they want to shoulder their packs again, not to march off into the sunset, but into the Risen Son. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. A stranger is one who sojourns in a land which is not his own; a pilgrim is one who seeks a better place. To be one of these without the other is not enough!

The trumpet is sounding again for ears which were not previously attuned to its stirring summons. There is little time left to mourn over the mistakes of the past, or to extinguish the gray ash of the campfires around which we huddled, by the gushing fountains of tears. Let the dead past bury its dead! Tomorrow will be brighter than today. The millions of the earth are stirring in expectation. The future belongs to him who dares to capture it as his own!

Let us not embalm truth in an attempt to preserve it. We are not here to save the truth, but the truth is here to save us. Let it be free, and let those who proclaim it be free. Let them be free to go where they can, let them be free to penetrate the fragmented worlds of our day. Let them be free of the grasp of skeletal hands from the sepulchers, and of the rusty fetters of tradition. The voice of heaven is heard again summoning us to new tasks and new responsibilities. Let us heed it!

The Body of Christ

Mission Messenger (October 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

One of the most thorough studies of the community of the reconciled as constituting the body of Christ is found in a remarkable section of that division of the First Corinthian letter which we designate as chapter twelve. It appears in a context of the regulation of spiritual gifts when used in the public gatherings of the saints to praise God and edify one another, but there are many incidental lessons to be learned from a study of what Paul wrote. We can refer to only a few of them.

1. The unity of the body is a unity in diversity. Indeed there could be no functioning organism upon any other basis. “If the whole were one single organ, there would not be a body at all; in fact, however, there are many different organs, but one body” (verses 19, 20). “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; varieties of service, but the same Lord; and many forms of work, but of the same God” (4, 5, 6). The members are no more alike than are the hands, feet, eyes and mouth of the physical body. Fortunately, in the human body the members are not dedicated to the formidable task of making one another over, for to do so would make it impossible for the body to exist.

2. There are no useless members or superfluous parts. Just as every fleshly organ has a function to perform, so there are no non-functioning organs in the body of Christ. No one is merely “going along for the ride.” God has made no provision for

spiritual hitch-hikers who get their transportation at the expense of others. There are no parasites. “But in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body, as he chose” (18). The task of each member is to determine the sphere in which he can function and then do whatever is commensurate with his ability. We are not all equally gifted.

3. The unity of the body is the natural result of adherence to Christ. So long as all are joined to him they need be no more concerned about being one than the various members of the physical body need to worry about their joint relationship. There is one great difference. In the human body some members are joined to the head only because they are joined to other members, but in the body of Christ all the members are joined to one another only because they are joined to the head. There are no remote or secondary members in the spiritual body. The oneness is produced by Jesus. “For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body” (12). Our unity is personal and is found in the person of Jesus.

4. Every member of the body comes into the relationship in identical fashion. Regardless of the variety of gifts and services, or the differing degrees of knowledge and understanding, and these are many and pronounced, the relationship to the body was established by the same process. Here there can be no difference for the simple reason that the conformity to any other procedure does not bring one into the body relationship. Regardless of how sincerely one may do something else, sincerity is not the key which unlocks the door, but compliance with God’s will. Such compliance transcends all national, ethnic, and social considerations. “For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men” (13).

5. In this new relationship we are all sustained by divine provision. Our hunger is appeased, our thirst is quenched, our

life is renewed, and our growth assured, by partaking of the Spirit. In baptism we are led into the element, but in our new relationship the divine nature is imbibed by each one. The Spirit leads us into baptism into the one body, that He may dwell in the body of each of us, for the body is the temple of the Spirit. "And that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink" (13).

6. The body of Christ is not a human organization, but a divine organism. A human organization depends upon legislation, regulation and manipulation by men. It cannot function without an official board, or without laws and bylaws, charters and covenants. In an organization the entity is created and receives its life from without, but an organism provides life from within. In an organism the body provides life for the members, in an organization the members provide life to the body. Human organizations are always affected by death, and when all of the members enter the grave, the organization ceases to be. The body of Christ is not affected by death, since death only transfers the members to a closer association with Him, uninhibited by the limitations of space and time. A body is never dead so long as the head is alive, and death has no dominion over our head. He met death and overcame it once for all!

7. Membership in the body is not contingent upon being able to perform the same function as any other member of the body. The foot can transport the physical body to the place of work, and may even help the hands earn a living. This is especially true in the operation of a machine equipped with a treadle or foot-operated lever. One does not ordinarily steer his car with his feet, nor apply the brakes with his hands, although he may do so if he is a stunt man or a serious cripple who has specially-built appliances. But the foot should not be envious of the hand or count itself out, because it cannot do the work of a hand. "Suppose the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it does still belong to the body." (15).

8. Membership in the body is not dependent upon

recognition of one's relationship or value by another member. Our relationship is not created by men on earth but by God. It is He who appointed each limb or organ to its own place in the body. No other person on this earth can affect your relationship to Jesus. No man can add me to the body, no man can eject me from it. The pronouncements of persons against me are powerless unless I allow them to affect me. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you.'" (21).

9. Division in the body is avoided through recognition that those who seem to be more frail and unseemly are actually indispensable, and by exertion of special effort to give honor to those who might be regarded as humbler parts. It should never be forgotten that parts are essential to the body, but parties are detrimental to it. Parts help it to function, but parties hinder its functioning. The quickest way to form parties is to create cliques. Those who are left out will soon be out. God needs us all and we need one another. "All of us are smarter than any of us"!

An Old Remedy

Mission Messenger (October 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

One of the biggest problems most of us face, I suspect, is dealing with the opposition of what Paul refers to as “wicked and unreasonable” men. It is still true that “all men have not the faith” and that one can be in “peril among false brethren.” Much as we would like to have our associations always run smoothly we must face up to the fact that they will not, and this requires the adoption of a philosophy, or the development of an attitude, which will keep us from coming unglued when the tensions are great.

I have found an old prescription upon the shelf of the divine pharmacy which seems to me to be a genuine guarantee of one’s mental and spiritual health when under attack, and it has worked wonders in my own case. The bottle bears the label “Elixir of Psalm 37,” and a proper dosage of it taken when stress arises will help you conquer the inner strain and come through to calmer and brighter days. I would like to analyze the entire content, but time and space will not permit of such a complete diagnosis, so I will content myself with a cursory examination of the first few verses.

Verse 1. Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

The Hebrew word translated fret is *charah*, to blaze up or

get hot. Verse 2 shows that evildoers are short-lived and if you can “keep your cool” you will outlast them. If you allow anger to inflame you, there is a danger that you will go down before they do, and that way you will leave the field to them. “Blowing your top” is a good indication that you are light-headed, and “flipping your lid” is an admission that there is a screw loose which should have been tightened before the pressure gauge popped off.

Envious is from *qana*, jealous, and it is possible that jealousy has killed more people than workers of iniquity. The “green-eyed demon” gnaws away at your insides and will literally eat holes in you. Your sleep will be ruined, your digestion upset and your disposition spoiled. A jealous person is one who is afflicted with poison envy. What I have said thus far relates to the negative aspect, and now I want to move to the four-fold positive recipe.

Verse 3. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Note that while those who jealously spend their time planning evil and revenge will be lopped off like weeds, those who simply plant their roots in the soil of faith will not only continue to live but are assured of being sustained. The process of trying to “get even” is the most costly in which one can engage. Vengeance belongs unto God and when we seek to exercise it we pay the price for playing God. We need to trust God. He will work things out in his own good time.

The word for fed is *raah*, shepherd. The thought is that God has his eye constantly upon us. He will guide us, lead us and feed us. A sheep does not have to turn aside to “bump off” a wolf while the shepherd is there. Verse 39 declares that God is the strength of the righteous in the time of trouble, and verse 40 says that he will help them, deliver them and save them, because they trust in him.

Verse 4. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart."

It is difficult for many of us to do this because we have been taught to be afraid of God. We think of him as stern, relentless, exacting and oppressive. It is only within the past few years that I have been really able to delight in him. I am no longer uptight or scared stiff like a motorist hauled before a police judge for an alleged infraction of the legal code.

God really wants to give us the things that will make us happy, but sometimes we are so miserable and depressed they would only make us sick. No mother is going to give a child ice cream if she knows it will upset his digestive apparatus. If we can really tune our hearts in on the divine wave length and be happy in the Lord we can receive the desires of our heart without reservation. I no longer fear what men do unto me and my joy knows no bounds except my own capacity for rejoicing.

Verse 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he will bring it to pass.

The word commit is a translation of *galal*, to roll over. The picture conveyed is that of one who has a load which is too heavy to carry, and which he is forced to push or roll along because he cannot shoulder it. The literal rendering would be "Roll thy way upon the Lord," that is, to let God shoulder your worry and care. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

Our accomplishments are in the hands of God. We dare not make our plans as if he did not exist. We cannot say that we will go into such a city. We cannot say that we will live there during the next year. We cannot prophesy how much we will make. All we can do is to submit to the divine will and allow him to bring it to pass.

Verse 7. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the

man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

The word rest is a term which means to be silent, to sit relaxed without engaging in debate or controversy. Only one who is truly convinced that his cause is right can sit quietly without recrimination and wait for God to vindicate his cause in the ongoing history of the world. Many become loud and clamorous because of their inner insecurity. They must defend and propagate their cause while they live, knowing that once they are gone it will collapse.

When one is unreservedly convinced of the righteousness of his position, and is firmly sold on the idea that he is working together with God, he can afford to quietly state his case and leave the outcome to heaven. There need be no frantic attempt to solve every problem or to gain recognition. One can “go with grace and leave the driving to God!”

The secret of the fulfilling life is found in the words “in the Lord,” or “unto the Lord.” Trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit your way unto the Lord, and rest in the Lord. This eliminates fretting and panic, and provides security even while others are laying plots against you. The life of trust is the happy life, the life of joyous freedom and holy abandon!

What Is Your Life?

Mission Messenger (November 1972)

Volume 34

[Abstract]

An Address Made to a Midwestern Youth Conference

All of us here today entered life the same way. All of us will leave it the same way. We gained access by the door of birth, we will exit through the gate of death. Our coming was not voluntary. It is likely, if we are rational at the time, our going will not be. But, between these two crises, spanning the entire distance is the greatest of all adventures, the one called life. Its success or failure is primarily a matter of volition, of personal choice. Life, at least in a relative sense, is what we make it.

What is life? What is *your* life? This startling question challenged the writers of the Bible. It still challenges the modern scientist. It invades the gleaming laboratory where a white-coated researchist seeks to reproduce life from the isolated tissue in a test tube. It constantly creeps into our own intellect, interrupting our meditations and stimulating our imaginations. In its final analysis, life and death may be more closely related than we like to think. Death has been defined as separation. What we call life is but a sequence of separations. Our maturity at any stage of existence may be gauged by our response or reaction to such separations. In some respects, we die often, and by the same token, we are born frequently.

1. Our first separation is at birth. It is appropriately called

delivery. It gives us individual status. It makes us a separate entity in a vast universe. After conception we exist as an embryo, then a fetus for the period of human gestation. During this time we are in the mother, but not, in reality, a part of the mother. No human being is ever truly a part of another, but always apart from every other. Birth separates us from our sheltered abode. By it we enter the world on our own and by our own struggle. We literally fight to gain our “place in the sun.”

2. Later, comes visual separation. The toddler wanders into another room. He realizes that he is separated from his mother. Unaware how he got where he is, and not knowing how to return, he sits down and gives vocal expression to his need for companionship.

3. Intellectual separation really begins in our democracy when the child starts to school. Often it is a distinct shock when thrown into strange surroundings, the mother leaves him and returns to the home which has been the foundation of his security. Because he is a social being, the child soon adjusts, if normal, to his new surroundings, and additional companions.

4. More complex in its problems is the personality separation which begins in adolescence. The child is still in the home, remains under parental discipline, but is growing apart from the parents. He feels in the home but not of the home. Nature has contributed to the effect by physical and mental changes. The boy finds his voice changing and becoming deeper. Hair begins to appear upon various parts of his body. The girl finds her figure becoming more rounded. The menstrual cycle begins.

Contemporary with these physical alterations occurs certain mental and intellectual processes. It is a period of overt revolt against discipline with a secret longing for its application; a period of doubting which intrudes into the religious and moral spheres. There is a recurring question as to whether the

indoctrination of the parents has been correct, a fear that the past has not provided a proper basis for the future.

Recognized for what they are, these symptoms can become a part of an enriching experience. Improperly evaluated, they provide a period of stress, strain and storm for both parent and child. Unfortunately, in too many cases, neither is qualified emotionally to render proper decisions, or to view the developing pattern objectively.

5. Marriage is both a separation and a union. This is evident from the edict of God, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." "Leave" and "cleave." That the term "leave" was not used in a purely geographic sense is evidenced by the patriarchal practice of establishing the married sons and their families in proximity to the rest of the clan. Actually, there can be no real mating of a husband and wife until both cut themselves loose from the mother or father image. "Mom-ism" as it is labeled by modern psychologists is clearly a sign of immaturity. It is also the basis of much marital discord.

6. The final separation is that of the spirit from the body, the immaterial and immortal from the material and mortal, with the consequent decay and decomposition of the latter as it returns to its primal elements. We call this death, using the term in a desperately final sense. But in some respects we die often, for we die each time there is a separation. By the same token, in some sense we are born anew each time. A chapter is finished, a new one begins. But the word "finis" can never be written at the close of a human existence, for the book is never finished. Even the eternal state is but a new adventure, a new experience of the spirit, unending as the spirit itself. "Dust thou art, to dust returnest; wast not written of the soul."

The careful observer will see a design in these separation experiences. They are not irrelevant or unrelated. Each is a

preparation for the succeeding one. The separation from the uterine abode prepares us to stand upon our own feet. This, in turn, prepares us to walk out of the range of parental vision, and this makes it possible to go to school without having the parent present in the room. Thus we are freed to formulate our own thoughts, develop our own concepts, and crystallize our own views apart from parental inspection, and so we are prepared to break away from another shelter, the home, as once we struggled out of the womb. So we are prepared to form a new union, and since our only means of perpetuation on earth is by procreation, we begin new lives to continue our ideals after our bodies crumble and merge again with the dust.

Since life is a sequence of separations, maturity at any given time is the proper reaction to such separation. None of us is ever completely mature, for the experiences in previous phases of our cycle have become imbedded or ingrained in our subconscious mind, and occasionally, under impulse, these float to the top and express themselves. This explains why the most brilliant executive has to be “babied” by his wife. Too, we cannot divorce ourselves from our ancestry who have provided our genes and chromosomes. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Our heredity is a bus in which all of our ancestors ride, and every now and then one puts his head out and embarrasses us.”

A NEW CREATION

These remarks will serve to introduce my theme for today. It will relate to the greatest separation of all, a majestic transformation so complete and powerful that God calls it “a new creation.” Like other separations it is referred to as death, and the change resulting from the experience is distinctly called “the new life.” We are not surprised then to read in one passage, “You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God,” and in another, “You must be born again,” and in still another, “The life I now live, I live unto God.” Death, birth, life— this is a part

of the pattern of our social existence. It is also a part of our pattern of spiritual existence.

We have already learned that normal separations always look to the future. They are separations for preparation! Thus, they are not meaningless or purposeless. No less is this true of the great transformation. To properly understand it, then, we must view it in a proper frame of reference. We are products of divine power. The spirit that abides in our tents of clay is a part of the Eternal One. It thirsts for God as the body does for water. Man was no more made to exist without God than to exist without water. He can never reach the apex of the purpose of his being outside of God. Nor can he ever know real soul satisfaction while God is outside of him. Man in God and God in man—working together in a harmonious symphony of finite and infinite— this is the ideal.

But man possesses a will. Without a will he could not be a man. So essential and sovereign is that will, that even God will not trespass upon it. Man must choose to accept God as a partner in his life. God will not intrude upon a heart which rejects him. The most frightening fact about the human personality is its power to will, its right to choose— to choose God or reject him. That which makes it so frightening is the fact that once a man makes a choice he must accept the responsibility which is attendant upon it, and the consequences which accrue from it. He cannot choose the consequences. They are part of the package. Eternal destiny depends upon your choice!

We are by nature curious beings. We want to probe into the known and the unknown. Curiosity and dissatisfaction with things as they are, these are the twins which have made possible our progress. When we were little, curiosity was primarily concerned with our origin? “Mother, where do little babies come from?” This was one of our chief queries. Now, if we are mature, we have become true philosophers, interested in the reason and purpose of our lives.

Have you ever questioned yourself at night in the seclusion and privacy of your own room, hidden by the darkness from every eye but that of God? Why were you conceived at the very moment you were? How did it happen that, of all the ova in your mother's body, the very one from which you sprung, came into contact with the one sperm from many millions of your father's cells, which gave you being?

Why were you born at this precise time in the history of the world? Why were you born white instead of red, yellow or black? Why were you born in an antiseptic delivery room in a hospital in the United States, instead of in a steaming shelter in the dank jungles of the Orinoco, or in a mud and wattle hut in Africa? Why do you have the privilege of going to school with capable instructors while millions of boys and girls, without even a schoolbook, sit or squat on a dirt floor, listening to a missionary as their only hope of learning anything? How does it happen that you were tucked into a warm bed with clean white sheets when millions of babies lie in their own filth and vomit, with flies crawling in and out of their ears and nostrils? Why does it happen that you can come home from school, sit down to a warm meal, and eat to repletion, when millions of earth's children are never free from the sharp, gnawing pangs of hunger, while with bloodshot eyes, blackened and cracked lips, and swollen bellies, they await death from starvation?

We feel that we can determine why Noah, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah and Daniel appeared upon the world scene just when they did. We can understand why, when God needed a man of world vision and indomitable courage, Saul of Tarsus would be there, lacking only conversion to Jesus to launch him upon his way— and upon God's way, for then their way was The Way. Some of us think that John Wycliffe in England, John Huss in Bohemia, and John Calvin in Switzerland, like that other John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, appeared in God's good time. Martin Luther, in Germany, freeing the people from papal domination; and Abraham Lincoln, in America, striking the

shackles from the hands and feet of helpless, cringing slaves—we can see why they were where they were when they were! But why are we here and now?

Well, there are still wrongs to be righted. There are still slaves to be freed. God's will is not yet done on earth as it is in heaven. Perhaps even now God is asking you a question. When Elijah sat in the gloom of his cave, the Lord came to him and said unto him, "What doest thou *here*, Elijah?" The husbandman seeking for vintage-gatherers, said to a group at the eleventh hour, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

Did you know that you are a tree, a fig tree, of God's own planting? Jesus gave a parable about a fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. The owner came repeatedly and looked for fruit, but found none. He said to his farm manager, "Behold, three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" The manager interceded. "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

This year also! How do you know this will not be your last year, your last chance? You have had sunshine, light and blessing from God, far greater blessing than millions on the earth's surface. Why? Was it just for your own benefit, ease, pleasure and luxury? Was it just for you that God gave you a shelter, ample food, a car to drive, access to educational institutions, and a land of democratic ideals? Were you planted in the vineyard just for you? Or does the Master expect some response, some fruit? Has he found fruit, real fruit, not merely attending "church services" or "going to church"— but real fruit? Or have you only been

Living for self, and self alone,

And nothing else beside

Just as if Jesus had never lived,

As if Jesus had never died?

This year also! How do you know but what the decree has gone forth, “Cut him down,” and you are spared only because grace has said, “Lord, let him alone this year also!”

What does it mean to have Christ in you? The apostle writes to the Colossians (1:27) that the mystery of God, hidden from all previous ages and generations, now revealed unto his saints is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” I take it that if this is your hope of glory, there is no means of attaining it except by Christ in you. Is Christ in you? Many of you were baptized years ago? You have long been in the church. You have been planted in the vineyard. Do you have an appreciation of Christ in you, the hope of glory?

Perhaps it is time for another death and burial— not re-baptism. Certainly not! That is not the problem, but a death to self and a resurrection to the unselfish life— a crucifixion of material ambition, and a resurrection of spiritual responsibility. Only a transformed life can make a transformed world. There is a sense of urgency, for we may have just *this year also!*

Has your life been fruitless, foolish and futile? Do you feel beaten, bruised and battered by the complexities and frustrations of life that pile up about you? Then let’s start today — now— to do something about it. We can change things if we become changed beings. We can change the schools we attend, the congregations where we belong, the communities in which we live, the clubs and associations with which we hold membership. You can do this, through Christ in you! You need not change your job, move to a new location, or enter another field!

What are the requirements of a life that is Christ-centered? How can we get the Savior of men to move in? He said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him." The first thing is to hear his voice. The second is to open the door! Many have pretended to do both who have never done either. The church is filled with people whose lives are empty. They've come in but kept Jesus out. They have a form of religion but deny the power. If you want to test whether you are willing to hear Jesus a good place to start is with his own test of discipleship. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

What have you ever really denied yourself? Money! It is no real denial if you still have a bank account! Sleep? Would you stay up all night to fish for men like you would to run a trot line? Food? Did you ever go hungry, and miss a meal, so you could send its cost to a starving person? But none of these things are really what Jesus is talking about. He is not talking about things to give up. He is talking about self. You can deny yourself sleep, money, food, and the whole bit, and never really deny self at all!

THE NEW REFORMATION

Dr. Elton Trueblood says there are four marks of the new reformation in our time. He lists them as follows:

1. *Commitment.* This is an emphasis on total dedication to the will of God insofar as this is revealed to us, in every avenue of common life.

2. *Ministry.* This is the realization that in true Christianity every member is a minister of Christ.

3. *Fellowship.* What is discovered is the redemptive quality of fellowship, especially in the small group. We have found again, as the early Christians knew, that a man cannot be a

Christian in his solitariness.

4. *Voluntary discipline.* This is the recognition that all power needs discipline. It must be harnessed to be effective.

These are all very vital. Each could well become the theme of an entire day's discussion. I must limit myself to the first—*commitment*. Dr. Trueblood correctly states that rightly understood this could effect a spiritual revolution. A half-hearted, inexpensive Christianity which does not demand our time, talent and treasure, is cheap and worthless. Commitment does not start with giving money. It does not begin with taking part in the program. Paul says of the Macedonians that they did not give their money first, but “first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God.”

If you try giving your money and talent before you give yourself, it will be a burden. You will groan, complain, moan and cry about the way the money is spent, although you never give your fair share of it. You'll resent having to study and appear on the program and murmur about hiring someone else to do it. All of these are signs and symptoms. Just as a man can be in the world and not of it, so he can be in the church and not really of it. And just as the truly converted man presents a problem to the world, so the uncommitted man presents a problem to the church. Lukewarm discipleship is really not discipleship at all. It wants to belong to Christ and keep what it has. It wants to eat its cake but still have it.

Suppose that today, sitting right here in this audience, you suddenly, seriously and soberly— you who have been baptized into Christ— decided that from now on you would be God's man or woman. Suppose that today was your Damascus Road, and you came face to face with Jesus who was knocking at your door. One can do that in the presence of others you know. Saul of Tarsus did. Those who were with him saw no man. Suppose you suddenly realized how drab, disconsolate and disturbing

your Christian experience had been, how humdrum and hopeless and helpless your life has been. Now, you mentally throw open the door and let Jesus come into your heart, so that you have “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” What differences would occur?

I do not know, of course, for each life is different, but I venture to suggest a few things. The first great alteration would be in the matter of important decisions which affect your whole life and character. You are a girl! You want to marry, to love and be loved, to have a home, to give birth to babies, to nourish, cherish and rear them “to women good, and men!” But now, in your choice of a husband you are not motivated so much by the fact that one is tall, dark and handsome, that he drives a beautiful and expensive car, that he has a number of stylish suits and is a good dresser. You are committed. Christ is in you! Perhaps you make your decision on your knees.

You do not ask if you will have a modern ranch house with wall-to-wall carpeting, or if you’ll be able to show off your new ensemble in fall and spring. Instead you say, “Dear Lord, is this the man I want to father my children? Will he sit beside me in meetings because he honors you, and not just out of respect for my wishes? Will he go with me to visit the sick and sit up with the dying? Will he open up his arms to take in a helpless little orphan to grow up with our own little ones? Will he read the Bible with me, share his confidences with me, and be a real daddy to our little ones? Or, will he be more concerned with golf and sports than with persons and souls? Will he turn to the sport pages and never to the sacred pages. Help me, dear God, to make the right choice, for your sake as well as for mine!”

You are a boy! You are in school and you must choose the course of study which will shape your future. There is money to be made in the field of electronics, aeroplane designing, or structural engineering. If you choose these fields you may become wealthy, famous, respected, and see your name in

headlines. But in the deep recesses of your heart there is a call to serve the helpless and underprivileged of the earth, to share our learning and discoveries, to share the Christ with the distressingly ignorant in remote parts of the globe. So you study agriculture that you may qualify to go to Laos, Burma, Africa, or somewhere else where farmers toil to wrest a living from eroded and enfeebled soil. And as you prepare to show them how to produce more bread you break unto them the bread of life.

Perhaps you decide to study the Russian language and still develop technical skills so you will be ready when God knocks down the iron curtain and says, "You who are ready, enter in!" And you choose for a wife, not a cry baby, or a mama's girl, but a brave, consecrated woman who is not afraid to spend and be spent for the Lord's sake. When the day comes that we are truly committed, out of such a filled auditorium as this there will go forth an apostolate of the fellowship of the concerned ones to the far-flung reaches of the earth, so that letters will filter back with strange stamps and peculiar addresses from "Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand."

Suppose that you are older, and now, this very morning, face to face with destiny, you truly commit yourself. You are already established in your vocation. What will happen to you? Great things!

Marvelous things! Unbelievable things! You are a schoolteacher. But next Monday morning your room will have a strange appearance. It will look like a field. The familiar faces of the pupils will look like waving grain. You will lift up your eyes and look on the fields. You will see they are ready for the harvest. You will inwardly pray that God will make you a reaper, not that he will send you a reaper, but that he will send you as a reaper. You will not wonder if you should resign as a teacher to go out into the field of God. You will recognize that you are already in that field. He who teaches history as the

footprints of God in human affairs; geography as the imprint of the Creator upon the material universe; or science as true knowledge seeking to know the great First Cause, is a “laborer together with God.”

A builder builded a temple,

He wrought it with grace and skill;

Pillars and groins and arches

All fashioned to work his will.

Men said, as they saw its beauty,

“It shall never know decay.

Great is thy skill, O builder:

Thy fame shall endure for aye.”

A teacher builded a temple

With loving and infinite care,

Planning each arch with patience,

Laying each stone with prayer.

None praised her unceasing efforts,

None knew of her wondrous plan;

For the temple the teacher builded

Was unseen by the eyes of man.

Gone is the builder’s temple,

Crumbled into the dust;

Low lies each stately pillar

Food for consuming rust.

But the temple the teacher builded

Will last while the ages roll,

For that beautiful unseen temple

Is a child's immortal soul.

The world needs committed men and women who are scientists and salesmen; carvers of marble and cutters of meat; dentists and dredge operators; fishermen and furnace repairmen. Such men and women recognize that their true vocation is their calling—their Christian calling. They do not do these other things merely to make money, to build bank accounts, to own houses, or drive cars, but to pay expenses while carrying on their real vocation in life. They are children of a King. They are foreign emissaries, sojourning in a land which is not their own. Thus they sanctify any occupation they touch. Because Christ is in them, and they are his real temples, they bring Christ into whatever environment they come while making a livelihood.

The truly committed soul is a witness for the Christ that is in Him. His transformed life is a constant testimony of what can happen to the surrendered life. He does not base his choice of location upon the fact that there is a “faithful church” there; he may actually feel called upon to go where there is none at all. It is a sign of our weak, diluted, watered-down twentieth century Christianity that we plaintively ask, “Is there a faithful church there?”

The early Christians went into all the world. They deliberately chose to go where no one believed. When we restore the fellowship of the concerned, and the apostolate of the

committed, men will again write to congregations they cannot find time to visit: “My constant ambition has been to preach the gospel where the name of Christ was previously unknown, and to avoid as far as possible building on another man’s foundation,” so that “they shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand.”

How can we make the committed life serve the practical purpose which God intended. Let us assume you are from a rural or small town area. The congregation is in the doldrums. No impact is being made on the community. Once or twice a year an evangelist is imported for a week or two. Advertisements are put in the paper. Handbills are passed out. After the flurry of excitement the congregation settles back into a routine which is little more than a rut. You are a junior in high school. What can you do?

Let us further assume that today— right now— here in this humble and unadorned auditorium in a big city, you suddenly come to yourself. Your spiritual eyes are opened. You throw open the door and let Jesus come into your life. You recognize for the first time that he is really there. What can you do? One thing you cannot do, and that is sit in a meeting like this all of the time. It would be easy to share in God’s grace but impossible to serve his purpose if you could. You have to return home. It will be different there. But you will be different also. The difference will be Jesus!

What can you do? You will be tempted by the unconcern and indifference of others. They will laugh off your intensity as a case of “puppy love” for Jesus. They will regard it as a passing fancy, a whim. This means that you will need to pray a lot. You will have to talk it over with God, for it is likely no one else will understand or care too much. You can pray at night before you go to sleep, or silently in study hall, or on the way to school. You can do this when doubts surge in and faith ebbs out. Replenish your supply of faith by prayer!

You will have to read your Bible a great deal. It is food for the soul. You are probably undernourished anyhow. You ought to make it a regular, unvarying routine to read the Bible every day. Do not try to read too much at a time. Read a brief portion. Read it several times. Think it over. Get its message. Digest its content. Think about it when you are not reading. The Holy Spirit will help you and strengthen you. Inside of the consecrated, committed soul is a real powerhouse.

Now let the inner light begin to shine forth. Let your life and works begin to leaven the community. Perhaps there is a weekly newspaper. Go to the editor and tell him that you would like to contribute a little column each week on moral and spiritual truths, that you will keep it very brief and non-sectarian, a matter of general interest which will elevate the community. This will mean that you will become an avid reader, and you'll have to cull good material from many sources for your columns.

Start a fellowship of concerned ones in the community. There are other high school youngsters who feel the way you do. Call a meeting of them in your home and tell them about the wonderful organization called New Eyes for the Blind. These people do not ask for money, but only for old spectacle frames, old gold or jewelry which has been discarded. You collect these and mail them in, and they are worked over, fitted up, and sent all over the world to hospitals in remote areas, and everything is furnished free. Residents of old folks' homes, senile and poverty-stricken patients in our own country are furnished glasses to enable them to read or to watch television and while away lonely hours.

If you can sing, gather together other young people who like to do so, and form a group to sing wherever there is a welcome or a need. Do not limit the personnel to one religious group in the community, but find those who are committed anywhere and ask them to share. You need not forfeit any

personal conviction you may have to sing out for Jesus. Perhaps you can assist in times of sadness at a funeral service and cause broken hearts to know the balm of Gilead.

There are aged and shut-in folk in every community. Most of them feel as if life is passing them by. A visit from young people filled with vitality and life changes the whole aspect of their existence. All you need do is to show a little interest in them, go on Sunday afternoons for 30 minutes to each home. Take some little item of food or some other small gift. You will lay up treasure in heaven.

Take an interest in boys and girls. Little ones will make you their heroes if you have time for them. Qualify to teach the Bible classes for little children. Be humble, but anxious to help. It will surprise you what you can do when Christ is in you, the hope of glory!

One transformed life could leaven a whole community. Think how much harm one boy in school can do when he is wild and undisciplined. But good is more powerful than evil. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." It is the affecting of lives through little things that makes a powerful impact. It is not holding a big meeting once per year, or having a high-powered evangelist in from a distance that will transform a community. As it is from the heart of an individual that his life is changed, it is from the heart of the community that it is transformed. External forces may help, but in the final analysis all change will be worked from within.

We read with a high sense of adventure the tremendous feats of men like Dr. Thomas Dooley, of Saint Louis. Here was a vibrant young man who felt called upon to stay in Laos after the war, to reach the poor suffering forgotten men and women who were without medical care. This young man, denied himself the blessings of marriage and the comforts of a stateside home to train young natives to minister to the needs of others. His is a

saga of real courage and bravery. We salute this young Roman Catholic physician who gave up pleasure, luxury and ease, for dedicated service to neglected humanity.

Or, take the case of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who until the hour of his death at an advanced age, was still active and concerned about others. In his earlier days he was president of a university, but imbued with a sense of the world's need, he reached a sudden decision one night, resigned and the next morning enrolled as a freshman in the medical school of the university he had headed. He never lost sight of his mission, and when he graduated he went far up an African river to establish a medical mission in the jungle at Lambarene. So, this man who was a world authority on the musical compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach, became even more widely known as a great humanitarian. He concluded that the best way to serve God was to serve your fellowmen.

Many of us feel that if we could imitate such feats of moral and spiritual daring, that life would be worthwhile. But we may be called of God to serve in another way and to minister to other needs. There are still opportunities for spiritual adventure all about us. Our own community is crying for leadership. There are many who would serve if only someone took the lead. We need to develop *followship* as well as fellowship. Our service may be in what appears to be a humble sphere, but if we are faithful to it what a difference it will make. Perhaps the midweek service is ill-attended and often dull. What a difference it would make if one young person enthusiastically urged all of his peers to come — not merely as spectators— but as participants. A little thing? True, but it might spark a revival of flagging zeal to the salvation of the whole congregation. We cannot all be Dooleys. We cannot all be Schweitzers. But we can all be what God wants us to be.

THE COMMON SERVICE

Again, let me emphasize that we need butchers and bakers, barbers and bus drivers, bankers and babysitters, who are Christ-filled and committed. J. B. Phillips, in his book *New Testament Christianity*, has this to say:

If the church is to make any worthwhile impact on the surrounding community, if it is even to speak with a voice worth hearing, it must have the active committed support of all true Christians. I repeat, I do not think that the many delightful casual Christians whom I know have the slightest idea how they sabotage the power and witness of the Christian fellowship by their haphazard attachment to the church. Now, we have already admitted that the early church was compelled to be a close-knit fellowship in order to survive against all the forces of paganism. The forces of paganism are no less powerful today, although they are not nearly so obviously dangerous. Modern materialism, secularism, abysmal ignorance about God and His plan for life, are very real enemies on the side of darkness, and the lone Christian does less than nothing for the army of light when he remarks: 'I find I can be just as good a Christian without ever joining the church.' This whole question of entering fully into the worship and work of the church must be faced by all those who genuinely desire to serve Christ in this modern age.

Dr. Trueblood puts it in these words: "The fourth minimum criterion of membership is the acceptance of vocation. This is a magnificent idea and requires some explanation. It means that all true members must be fountains, not cisterns. It means that each member must be willing to think of himself as engaged in the ministry, by a divine imperative. If 'member' is to regain positive significance in our vocabulary, we must think of all recruits as entering a new estate, beyond clergy and beyond laity. In the new order there are no clergymen and no laymen, but all are engaged in the same divine vocation, which means putting the claims of the Kingdom of God first, no matter what profession one may follow. The formula is that vocation has priority over profession."

**We often sing a song written by my good personal friend
and respected brother in the Lord, James DeForest Murch,
which goes like this:**

**The world all about me has now no allure,
Its pleasures bring pain; its wisdom is vain;
I seek a foundation, that's steadfast and sure,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.**

**The Lord Jesus died my salvation to win,
He went in my stead, to Calvary and bled;
Redemption impels me to give up all sin,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.**

**I know there's a home for the ransomed and blest
When death is no more, when struggle is o'er
For those who love Jesus and give him their best,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.**

**Though earth's tribulations continue each day,
Though pleasures may call, though evil enthrall,
His grace will protect me forever and aye,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.**

**In all that I say, in all that I do,
Throughout the world of toil and strife
By day and by night, through trust in His might,
I'll put Jesus first in my life.**

I challenge you today to mean the words of that song, to make them real to yourself.

I challenge you to no longer regard them as mere poetic expressions set to music, but as a living and vital goal of your personal life.

I challenge you now to seek a foundation that's steadfast and sure.

I challenge you to give up all sin under redemption's impelling power.

I challenge you to love Jesus and give him your best.

I challenge you in all that you say, in all that you do, by day or by night, to put Jesus first in your life.

First in your choice of a life companion, first in your choice of a life profession, first in your thinking, *first in everything!*

If you have not yet come into real relationship with Jesus, repent and be immersed into Him; if Jesus has not yet come into you, hear his voice and open the door. We come to Jesus by his invitation, he comes to us by ours. Let him come in, fill your soul with surging power, your heart with transcendent hope, and your life with rewarding service.

God give us men! A time like this demands

Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;

Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;

Men who possess opinions and a will;

Men who have honor; men who will not lie;

**Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking!
Tall men, sun crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty, and in private thinking;
For while the rabble, with their thumb worn creeds,
Their large professions, and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps,
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.**

The Way of Holiness

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

It seems always to be true that you cannot please everyone. In their preface to the 1662 edition of The Book of Common Prayer, the producers wrote: “Although we know it is impossible (in such variety of apprehensions, humours, and interests, as are in the world) to please all; nor can expect that men of factious, peevish and perverse spirits should be satisfied with anything that can be done in this kind by any other than themselves.”

This fact inhibits a lot of brethren from taking positions which cut across traditional interpretations. They seek security in silence. Not being frightened by what others may say about me or do to me, I have no hesitancy about speaking out on matters which may become controversial. For that reason I beg leave to disagree with a commonly accepted view of Isaiah 35:8, which the King James Version renders: “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein.”

The last statement is generally understood to teach that God’s entire revelation is so clear and lucid that even a traveling man who is not too bright, can grasp it perfectly. I have often had good brethren tell me, “The Bible says that its teaching is so plain that even a fool shall not err therein.” Apparently it is not as plain as such folk imply because the Bible does not say that at

all. In fact, Peter says there are some things in the scriptures which are so obscure that unlearned, as well as unstable men, are liable to warp and wrest them. It is just not true that God's word is always so plain that "any fool can understand it." I think a lot of brethren misunderstand even this passage.

The statement under consideration, contrary to my earlier and childish sermon outlines, which were borrowed from older brethren who ought to have known better, is not even considering the relative ease of grasping facts which compose divine revelation. It is not saying that the casual nomadic wanderer, even though he may be a nitwit or dullard can be free from error in his understanding.

Instead, the prophet is painting a beautiful word picture of Zion's future when the ransomed and redeemed shall return with joy and gladness, singing as they come. The wilderness and dry land will be glad, and the desert will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. This will be achieved by abundance of water, a symbol of the outpouring of God's grace and mercy. Waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams burst out in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water. The haunt of jackals will become a swamp. Grass will turn into reeds and rushes in the marsh which will result where once only burning sands prevailed.

In such surroundings returning pilgrims need an elevated roadway, and the prophet declares that one will be provided which will be designated the Holy Way. Since it is provided to accommodate those who have been freed from bondage and is not a public thoroughfare it will be properly guarded and adequate safety precautions will be taken.

Four kinds of persons and animals will not invade its precincts, or travel over its surface. The unclean shall not pass over it. Fools shall not practice their error upon it. No lion shall be there. No ravenous beast will come upon it. "They shall not

be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.” The unclean and fools are contrasted with the ransomed of the Lord.

The *New English Version* is probably correct in translating: “And there shall be a causeway there which shall be called the Way of Holiness, and the unclean shall not pass along it; it shall become a pilgrim’s way, no fool shall trespass on it.” I say “probably correct” because the Hebrew at this point is a little obscure, and in itself illustrates the point that we are making.

The term “causeway” is an excellent rendering in the light of the immediate context, and better expresses the thought than highway, which no longer means an elevated route as the word indicates. The causeway leading through the watered plain which once was desert will be designated the Way of Holiness and will be reserved for use by a holy people. Unclean ones will not be able to use it for their immoral practices, and fools will be barred from traversing it to propagate their error.

This example serves to bolster a principle of interpretation which I have followed through the years. Simply stated, it is that any interpretation which relies for its validity upon one version to the exclusion of all others, is probably a faulty one. I rather suspect that the King James Version is responsible for many more errors than most of us are willing to admit. This brings up the question as to what to do with sermon outlines which we have inherited. I never like to recommend the course others should take, but the one I have pursued is the easiest. I threw all of my outlines in the fire. This makes it essential that I take a fresh look at things every time I prepare to speak. And a fresh look frequently means a fresh outlook!

Faith and Baptism

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

I have made a promise which I must keep before this year expires. It was made a good many months ago to a sister in Christ whom I dearly love and revere. It has to do with an explanation of my position on baptism. The good sister honestly feels that I make too much of immersion in water when I insist that it is essential to entrance into the family circle created by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. She thinks that I weaken the scriptural concept of justification by faith and that I insist upon faith plus something else as a ground of justification before God. I agreed that I would set forth my views on the matter during this year and the time has come to redeem my pledge.

Before I address myself more directly to the theme at hand, I must define what I mean by baptism. Many of my present readers are drawn from segments of the religious realm which seriously disagree with me as to the action and subjects of baptism, and this requires an explanation of what I mean by the term. My definition is provided simply for clarification and not to arouse antagonism. I do not care to promote either hostility or debate, nor to impose my thinking upon any other person. But, as used in this article, baptism is the immersion in water of a believing penitent, as a response to the Good News proclaimed concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, Lord, and Son of God.

My personal position, based upon my understanding of the new covenant scriptures, is that such immersion is essential as a validation of one's faith and to entrance into the kingdom, that is, the rule of heaven, under the dominion of God's Son. One becomes identified with the elect or called-out company of saints when he trusts in Jesus, by reformation of life and immersion in water as an initiatory act. By baptism he is transferred from a state of alienation into a state of citizenship.

I shall endeavor to avoid some of the cheap dodges and warped theological approaches of debaters to whom baptism has become a mere factional rite, and face up to the matter as sincerely and openly as I can with my limitations and weaknesses. It is my fervent hope that all of us may thus be drawn closer to Him who is in us "the hope of glory."

In view of the clear and repeated teaching of the new covenant scriptures on the subject of baptism, I find it difficult to account for several things in our present age. Why should there be a question as to the importance of a subject upon which the Spirit has spoken so often through Jesus and his envoys? Must we assume that what the apostles wrote about it is so trivial that it can be calmly ignored or disregarded at will? Why should men now give a different answer to those who enquire of them what to do, than was given when the glad tidings were first announced? Was the answer then given by the Spirit wrong? If not, can any other answer be right now?

Again, it is generally agreed that, since the revelation of God as relates to the salvation of mankind, was not limited to the intellectually elite, but was for all, those interpretations which would naturally occur to the interested and unsophisticated reader may be assumed to have the greatest weight. How does it happen, then, that those passages which deal with baptism are subjected to such philosophic treatment and manhandling that they no longer find a way of explaining baptism, but actually explain baptism away? Is the spirit of the modern "expositors"

the same as the Spirit which inspired the writers? If so, why does it undermine and water down the apostolic teaching?

Was there ever an unimmersed person in the company of the primitive saints? Can one go to the book of Acts, which was a continuation of the narrative of “the things most surely believed” by the disciples of our Lord, and establish that any person was ever admitted to the community of the reconciled ones who was not baptized? How can a company of believers in our day identify with that established by the apostles when composed not only of those who have never been baptized, but who run the whole gamut of attitude from mildly discounting its value to openly scoffing at its importance?

I am committed to the task of trying to follow as closely as I can in the footsteps of Jesus. That is what it means to me to pledge allegiance to him, which is referred to in the apostolic scriptures as “believing in his name.” Since he emptied himself and took upon him the form of a slave, I consider it to be a part of my commitment to empty myself and take on the form of a servant. And that emptying process involves getting rid of false pride and of divesting my heart of any thought of equality with God.

In submitting to the will of the Father Jesus did everything the Father asks me to do with one exception. He believed in the Father and personally testified of that faith. He did not repent of sin because he was guilty of no sin. No guilt was ever found in him. It is true that he was made sin who knew no sin, but he could not repent of it for it was the sin of others. He atoned for that for which he could not plead guilty.

But he could be baptized and he was. Certainly he was not baptized to secure forgiveness of sins. That is not really the highest motive for being baptized, and can never be. It is probably not “the design of baptism” in the sense that a great many legalistic partisans employ the term to score a point on

Baptist seminarians. Actually, when Jesus made the long trek to be immersed, the preacher sought to dissuade him on the grounds of relative merit or worthiness. He suggested that Jesus ought to baptize him, rather than vice versa. But Jesus quickly lifted the whole thing out of the realm of comparison or contrast of administrator and subject, and put it in proper perspective.

His reply to the astounded John was, “Permit it to be so in this instance, we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires.” Thus Jesus chose to launch himself on his personal ministry of proclamation by visible demonstration of subjection to God’s will. “From that day Jesus began to proclaim the message, ‘Repent for the rule of heaven is approaching.’” And God honored his conformity with the divine requirement by sending his Spirit to abide upon him and by acknowledging his Sonship. If the Father took occasion at the baptism of Jesus to declare his good pleasure with him, it seems to me a little absurd to expect him to declare he is well pleased with me while resisting his requirement!

Or, to put it another way. If John was reluctant to immerse Jesus because of the superiority of Jesus, should I not be reluctant to oppose being immersed when I know that Jesus cheerfully insisted upon being personally baptized? The highest motive for doing anything is that God requires it. This is the basis upon which Jesus was immersed. He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). He also said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). I must conclude that baptism is the will of the Father and that it pleases him. Shall I not teach the will of God and urge upon all to please him in this particular?

It is my conviction that when God raised Jesus from the dead he put everything in subjection under his feet (Eph. 1:20-22). All authority is vested in him. He is absolute in power although the universe has not yet come to recognize this. Respect for authority is not demonstrated by mere verbal acquiescence

that one is lord. It can only be manifested by doing what the authority demands or requires. Jesus clearly endorsed this principle when he asked, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I tell you?"

One of his earliest acts of authority which involved both earth and heaven, was to commission his envoys to go into all the world and announce the Good News to every person. That Good News was the account of the divine breakthrough of God in the form of a Son and the hope of reconciliation by this startling act. It was the news of what God had done for man in dealing with the sin situation. And since sin is a universal malady, the remedy had to be made known universally. All of the world is accounted guilty before God and all need the Good News.

When man is confronted with such a Message he must respond to it in some fashion. One who is in prison and is offered pardon and freedom must respond to the offer. He cannot shrug it off or ignore it in the hope of avoiding a response, because shrugging it off or ignoring it is his response. An offer of amnesty from heaven has to be met by the captive of Satan when he becomes aware of it, and whatever action he takes deliberately, will guarantee that he will never be the same again. The prisoner who chooses to remain in confinement by spurning an offer of pardon, can never be the same. Regardless of how he rationalizes his original deed which brought about his incarceration, he can never forget that he continues to be imprisoned as a result of his own stubborn will.

I hold that any universal offer of freedom from sin with its guilt and effects, by its very nature must be simple and understandable, and any conditions of response must also be clearly stated and within the power of every man to perform. It is obvious to the most casual thinker that if the offer is couched in philosophical terms or requires a certain state of educational attainment to apprehend it, it will not be adapted to a universal need at all. Such an offer would be merely a tantalizing hoax to

the masses.

By the same token, if the response to be made transcends the power of man to perform, the offer is not good news at all. It only sinks one further into a state of hopelessness and helplessness. But such is not the offer of a beneficent Creator and Father. The Good News does not consist of what we must do for God, but of what God has done for us. And what he has done is within the context of time and place, and is, therefore, verifiable by the criteria to which man subjects all historical events. The laws of evidence must be applied to any historical situation to authenticate and render the testimony credible, that is, believable to rational minds.

I am a little hesitant about pursuing another angle of this because we have so many careless, slipshod and traditional reasoners posing as theologians, and functioning as interpreters in our day. But the response of man is not a part of the Good News at all. That man can make a response to the offer of heaven is *good* but it is not news. Heaven has never made an offer to man to which man cannot respond. The requirements of heaven in every age have been commensurate with man's ability to perform. The domain of mythology may have its Zeus and Tantalus, but not the realm of revelation.

When the Good News was first proclaimed, and the remarkable conclusion reached, the terms of human response were not announced until the conscience smitten auditors cried out asking what they must do. But if they had never asked, the Good News, consisting of the seven great facts would have been complete. Responding to or rejecting the Message does not affect the Good News, as one can determine by reading what happened in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:44-49).

It would have been incongruous for Jesus to have commissioned the envoys to take the Message to all men without informing them of the conditions of human response.

Accordingly he said, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to every person. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, he who believes not shall be condemned.” That which was to be believed was that which was to be proclaimed, and this consisted of the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification of Jesus. All of these are caught up in the one profound and magnificent proposition that “Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.” Accordingly, a belief or trust in this one divine declaration was all that was required, so far as faith is concerned, to enlist one under the banner of God’s Son.

But Jesus has been raised up and made “both Lord and Christ.” And while one can acknowledge belief in the proposition that he is the Son of God by verbal testimony, he cannot acknowledge lordship by this method. That Jesus is the Son of God is a matter of personal affirmation based upon acceptance of credible testimony, that he is Lord of one’s life is a matter of personal demonstration based upon the obedience of the will. Lordship creates a master-servant relationship, and it is not the servant who orally expresses his love for the master who is necessarily faithful, but the one who obeys what his lord commands.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). This does not condemn a verbal acknowledgment of lordship. “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (John 13:13). But it is not enough, for confession of lordship with the mouth proves nothing without the accompanying deeds which validate the acknowledgment. Thus Jesus asks, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 7:46). He immediately proceeds to show that one who hears his sayings and does not do them will not be able to stand against the elemental forces of life. “And the ruin of that house was great.” It is for this reason our Lord declared, “Blessed is that servant

whom, when his lord cometh, he shall find so doing.”

There is absolutely no way in which one can show that he is serious about the master-servant relationship than by doing what the master requires. Lip-service can never be a substitute for obedience. Untested faith is like an unstamped letter. What it says may be good but it is not going anywhere. Obedience is the validation of belief, and our acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus is tested at the very outset. “He that believeth and is baptized.” These are the words of Jesus and no amount of equivocation will alter or abrogate them. So long as the gospel is valid, this will constitute the heaven-ordained response to it. The message to be announced and the response required to it are both given by the same authority. To accept one and deliberately reject the other is a defiance at worst, and a denial at best, of that authority in heaven and on earth!

I could spend time writing about the philosophy of baptism and upon occasion I have done so, but that would serve no particular purpose just now. To explore the rationale for a specific requirement of God would make it no more binding than the simple statement of Jesus. One does not obey a command of God because it is proven to be intellectually acceptable and apropos, but because it is a command of God. If one truly believes in God he is going to do what God says, whether he ever understands the divine reasoning behind it. In fact, a refusal to obey a divine command until it is put through the mental human wringer and found to meet the demands of human appropriateness is to substitute the human thought process for the will of God. One becomes his own lord under the guise of accepting the Lordship of Jesus!

Again, it will be noticed that I have had no recourse to what the apostolic epistles have to say about baptism. My reasons for not referring to them are quite simple. These epistles are not a part of the gospel at all. Everyone of them was written to those who had already responded to the gospel and had been

delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The gospel was proclaimed as fully and completely on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus as it has ever been, and nothing written later was ever added to it. Those who obeyed it upon that day did so fully and were as much a part of the community of the reconciled ones as any person after the canon of new covenant scriptures was compiled.

Not one statement about baptism in the epistles was ever made to encourage the recipients and readers to be baptized. Indeed, it is apparent that the apostles assumed without question that every person who was the subject of a letter addressed to a congregation of saints had been baptized. It never entered their minds that anyone would be in the community of the reconciled ones who had not been baptized. They stood in doubt about the lives and behavior of many in the congregations, but not about how they came into fellowship. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27).

References to baptism in the epistles were not made to furnish arguments for the saints to use upon the heathen to convince them of the necessity of baptism. Instead they were given to urge the disciples to continue to live up to the commitment which they made in their initiation into Christ Jesus. "But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage?" Quotations from the epistles may bolster the arguments made for baptism, but the submission to baptism is upon the ground of the authority of our Lord.

It will be remembered that I defined baptism as immersion, and this always brings up the question related to those who have had water sprinkled or poured upon them as "a mode of baptism." I have a very deep and abiding compassion

for all of these, having been born into and reared in a traditional background which resulted in my being “christened” by the Reverend Mr. Peterson, of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, before I was a month old. I have no wish to be critical or judgmental, but it seems to me that if I am to be a disciple of Jesus I must mean the same things by the terms Jesus used as he meant when he used them.

Whatever Jesus meant by baptism I must mean. If I substitute another meaning then I am talking about something else. Fortunately the catholic position is that baptism, in the context of Jesus and the apostles, was immersion. Upon this matter there has never been any major scholarly difference of opinion, and the occasional divergent view has been expressed by someone who had a theological axe to grind, and such axes are proverbially dull. One flies in the face of all scriptural intimation and implication and of most scholarly dissertation when he seeks to justify anything except immersion. I am grateful that when I became old enough to obey my Lord I did not spend precious time and energy trying to justify my sprinkling at the hands of a sincere and August minister, but simply submitted to burial into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I confess that I am not at all enamored of theological systems, but I am desperately serious about pleasing my Lord.

I regret the further need of replying to the shallow thinking of some of my brethren who have not yet learned that we are not under law, but under grace. It is apparent from a study of the apostolic epistles that unity was based upon community and not conformity, and is possible only in diversity. Since maturity in thought and learning is a gradual process, unity can never be predicated upon simultaneous arrival at a given level of knowledge since all human knowledge is relative. When I assert this obvious fact I am asked why I insist upon baptism as the point at which one enters the fellowship of the body, and why there is not room for divergency of opinion on

this matter also.

The whole problem centers around the lack of ability to “distinguish between the things that differ,” a quality for which Paul prayed in behalf of the Philippians (1:10). Baptism is a response to the gospel, understanding of doctrine is a process of learning. Just as all of us entered our earthly families by the same door of birth, so all of us enter the divine family through the door of the new birth. But while all of us must come into the world by the same way, there is room for growth and development after birth.

No two people on earth have identical degrees of knowledge at the same time. By one Spirit we are all baptized into the one body, but in the body there is room for varying degrees of knowledge, even about that one Spirit. So long as our brethren are unable to distinguish between gospel and doctrine, between the birth process and growth, between the new covenant and the new covenant scriptures, they are doomed to create division and perpetuate spiritual ignorance upon the earth.

The time has come for summarization of my personal views. I regard belief of the Good News and baptism into Jesus Christ as essential to entrance into the fellowship of reconciliation. I would not attempt to claim relationship to my Lord in the one body except upon this basis and in compliance with these conditions. As I view it this in no sense weakens the concept of justification by faith. Much of what I know about baptism I learned from the same source from which I learned about justification by faith.

In Romans 5:1 Paul asserts we are justified by faith, and have peace with God. In Romans 6:2, he affirms that all were baptized into Jesus Christ, and thus into his death. Does he mean by the latter statement to weaken or nullify the first? Is it not more in keeping with the integrity of the Spirit to conclude

that the faith which justifies is activated and animated? Unless baptism is a demonstration of faith it is useless; unless faith is operative in obedience it is dead. I hold no brief for either a useless baptism or a dead faith. Trust in Jesus must be vital, not vitiated; apostolic and not apathetic. A living faith in a living Savior is manifested by living within his will.

Faith at work is not faith plus something else in justifying us. Rather, it is faith manifesting, demonstrating and validating itself in the only manner that is possible. There can be no example of faith until faith becomes exemplary. I can never forget when men quote Romans 5:1 to show that we are justified by faith, that Paul closed that epistle with these words: “Now to him that is of power to stablish according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was left secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.*”

Let the final words of my feeble epistle be those of the majestic letter of the apostle, “To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

Our Tragic Traditions

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

My heart goes out to a number of young preaching brethren in these days. Many of them are forced to work under conditions of servitude to censorship and criticism which tend to make life intolerable and destroy the desire to excel in love. I fervently pray for each one as I learn of his plight and entreat the Father in his behalf. To illustrate what I mean, here is a rather lengthy excerpt from a letter I have just received.

I am the youth minister here, or the assistant minister according to our letterhead. I took this position when I graduated from college and have been here now less than a year, but the hopes and plans I had when I came have already faded, and I am disappointed and disillusioned. The regular minister is a legalist whose sermons are a rehash of traditional arguments. He does not really study or think objectively, but gives a different title to his talks which he dutifully extracts from his little bag of tricks. The audience is starving to death, but never having had real food, they are unable to diagnose their condition and do not know they are hungry.

Recently in a circle of high school kids the question was asked if God had any children out of the Church of Christ. I expressed my feeling that the family of God was not limited by our activities and a God we could capture in our box was not big enough to be the God who loved the

whole world. One of the kids evidently blabbed it because for three straight Sundays we were assailed from the pulpit about the dangers of liberalism, which was spelled out to mean thinking that there were Christians outside our group.

There are four elders and one bishop. The latter owns the largest automobile agency in the area, and rules the congregation like he runs his business. The other elders are stooges and attend the officers meetings simply to get their orders. There have been two divisions of the group in the past over the dogmatic attitude of the leading elder, who is very arbitrary.

He asked me to have lunch with him this week and informed me that reports had filtered in that I was advocating 'Ketcherside doctrine.' I asked him what it was and he said he could not tell exactly as he did not always know what Ketcherside was talking about. I asked if I could borrow his books or material by Ketcherside, but he admitted that he had never actually read anything you had written, had never met or heard you, and had never corresponded with you. But he attended a noonday luncheon for elders and preachers last year at which the evangelist who was conducting a local meeting had warned that the greatest threat in the United States today was Carl Ketcherside.

This evangelist said you were sweeping the young people off their feet and there was now an underground cell of Ketcherside workers in every college, and the worst part of it all is that the students who were generally influenced by your teaching on fellowship were the most brilliant in school. He also said you had cleverly offered to appear at Abilene Christian College, David Lipscomb College, and Pepperdine College, and present publicly before the student body your views on fellowship and be questioned by a panel of faculty members and the whole audience. But he also said that to accept your proposal would be suicidal because there wasn't a man on either

faculty who could handle you.

The elder ended up by cautioning me to watch my step and said they were considering a raise in salary for me next year if the congregation considered I was sound in my teaching. But if the word got around that I was shaky on the fellowship question it would ruin me here and all over the brotherhood. Now, what shall I do? Shall I conceal my thinking and take the raise in salary, or tell the truth and ruin my future in the Churches of Christ?

Characteristic of young people in our day, our brother put it bluntly as you will agree. In my reply to him I pointed out that none of us can make decisions for others, nor impose our thinking upon them. It is important, I think, that we not act impulsively and that we do not allow our emotions to overpower our reason. Things are not always as black or white as we try to make them, and sometimes there are alternatives and options which we do not see when we are in the eye of the storm and all in a dither. While we are being battered back and forth like a sparrow inadvertently caught in a badminton game it is difficult to think clearly.

I commit my own life to the Father and surrender it completely and He sometimes opens up doors in what I thought were solid walls. He also closes some doors and later I am thankful that I did not barge through them just to have my way. I have a great deal of compassion for my younger brethren who are caught up in the politics of the institutional meat-grinder but I am optimistic about them. With that unquenchable courage of youth they will find the way out!

My real concern is for the brethren who have created a narrow and intolerant sect which forces men to sacrifice integrity and personal honesty to be retained within its fold. Nell and I are old-fashioned enough that we still like Harold Bell Wright's book *The Shepherd of the Hills* and the interesting sequel to it, *The Calling of Dan Matthews*. Wright was originally a

preacher in the restoration movement and his portrayal of the struggle of the young preacher, Dan Matthews, against the solidified and rigid institutional church in the fictitious town of Corinth was ahead of its day. I was reading it for about the third time recently and I was struck by some things said by the old Doctor, who, although not a member of the congregation, was a better friend to the young preacher than were the elders. Read this:

It is their religion to worship an institution, not a God; to serve a system, not the race. It is history, my boy. Every reformation begins with the persecution of the reformer and ends with the followers of that reformer persecuting those who would lead them another step toward freedom. Misguided religious people have always crucified their saviors and always will. . . . There is no hatred, lad, so bitter as that hatred born of a religious love; no falsehood so vile as the lie spoken in defense of truth; no wrong so harmful as the wrong committed in the name of righteousness; no injustice so terrible as the injustice of those who condemn in the name of the Savior of the world.

What has happened to us is that we took simple scriptural statements, ran them through our theological wringer, and fashioned them into a parody or burlesque for which we claimed scriptural sanction. Our traditions became the fuel to stoke the fires of human ambition and feed the insatiable maw of pride. We have thus made what we call “the eldership” into a dictatorship, exercising power in some cases by threat, insinuation and innuendo. While deploring papal authority we have borrowed the idea of the Spanish Inquisition, and a little group of men meeting behind closed doors can decide the fate and the future of a humble brother not even allowed to present his case before the saints.

The word of God does not teach the absolute power of any group of men over the family of the Father. There is no

government, in the divine plan, without the consent of the governed. The word of God does not teach that I must dump all of my money allotted to relieve human needs, into institutional coffers to be dispensed by those who will not deign to consult me. It does not teach that I must contribute financially every Sunday or suffer the pangs of eternal damnation. It does not teach that all of my alms must pass through that humanly-created device dubbed “the local treasury,” and that the only way I can do good is by proxy and single-handedly.

I think that we are rearing up a group of younger brothers and sisters who are fed up with the political maneuvering which passes for the will of God to the unthinking who mistake fellowship in Christ for conformity with the system. Things will change and that for the better, but, as it is in any period of transition, there are those who must suffer. But cheer up! The heretics of today will be the heroes of tomorrow. All that you need do to be a hero is to die and wait a hundred years. I think it is worth it, even though you’ll not hear the acclaim! Why not try it?

The Scale of Values

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[Abstract]

In 1970 Alexander Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He was not allowed to claim the award publicly because the Soviet Government refused him permission to travel to Stockholm. He had already prepared his acceptance speech, and although he was not able to present it, the speech was recently published in the Nobel Foundations yearbook. I have read it three times.

Perhaps I was motivated by a sense of obligation to thus pay tribute to an author who could not freely speak to the world on his own. Or, perhaps my interest was sparked by a spirit of protest against a despotic power and its arbitrary attempts to control and suppress thought. I rather think I was seeking to understand, to penetrate the mind and soul of one who, while denied the privilege of writing in the full glare of the sunlight of liberty could still act creatively under the gloomy clouds of suspicion and prohibition.

The theme of the undelivered thesis is that “during the past few decades imperceptibly, suddenly, mankind has become one— hopefully one and dangerously one— so that the concussions and inflammations of one of its parts are almost instantaneously passed on to others, sometimes lacking in any kind of necessary immunity.” This rather frightening oneness has not come from an internal desire for unity but has been

thrust upon the world by international broadcasting and printing.

Alexander S. declares that while one part of the world learns what happens to another and once remote part of the universe in a minute, it may have no yardstick, no sense of values, by which to measure the meaning or power of the happening. Such yardsticks can only be matured and assimilated over many generations of specific conditions in individual countries and societies. They cannot be exchanged in mid-air.

It is his conclusion that “one world, one mankind cannot exist in the face of six, four or even two scales of values. We shall be torn apart by this disparity of rhythms, this disparity of vibrations.” He asks some very penetrating questions about a co-ordinating force for all of the value scales and comes up with the idea that a means exists, and that means is art and literature. He says, “They can perform a miracle.”

By art and literature, experiences we have never lived through can be portrayed and described, and we can become aware of the weaknesses and strengths in the experiences of others. There will come recognition and awareness as if we had personally shared in the very life patterns of others. We will thus come eventually to share a universal sense of values which will provide a criterion for measurement enabling us to survive.

I do not want to be cast in the role of one who writes derogatorily or even deprecatingly of either art or literature. I recognize the power and influence of both, but I do not share the optimism of Solzhenitsyn that they can create for mankind one system of interpretation for good and evil deeds, showing us how to embrace the first and avoid the other. I cannot forget that both can be prostituted and become mere propaganda tools.

Long ago, a philosopher said, “Literature has her quacks no less than medicine, and they are divided into two classes;

those who have erudition without genius, and those who have volubility without depth; we get second-hand sense from the one, and original nonsense from the other.”

And it was a fellow-countryman of the Nobel Prize winner, Nikita Khrushchev who said, “The supreme social mission of literature and art is to raise the people to struggle for new victories in Communist construction.”

Art and literature can never become the yardstick for human behavior because they are expressions of sinful men. Granted that they represent the attempt of man to rise above himself, to transcend the human predicament, it still remains that these brainchildren are attached to their mental wombs by the umbilical cord of human imperfection. And they must always bear about them the inherited traits and characteristics of those who conceived them.

Calvin Coolidge caught this viewpoint when he said: “Not long ago I happened to visit an exhibition of modern pictures. It was held in Pittsburgh and almost every nation was represented. As I looked at those pictures I felt that I could see through them, into the minds of the nations which had created them. I could see the torment out of which they had been born. If that nation’s psychology was still diseased, so was its art. The traces of neuroses were unmistakable.”

I am committed to the proposition that the creativity of natural man is inadequate to take human behavior and weave it into a pattern upon the loom of experience which will unify the world. Instead, we must have a perfect being from outside, untainted and uncorrupted, who can move into the human spectrum, test it and try it, and be tested and tried by it, without succumbing to its evil. Only such a life can ever be the test of value judgments universally.

I know such a one. He is the only one in history. There will

never be another. He is unique. All of the attributes of deity were invested in Him. In Him dwelt all the fulness of Godhood bodily. His life gave new depth to art and lifted it to new heights in doing so. He created a whole new realm of literature. But it is not the art or the literature which provides the dynamic for life. It is His person. He alone can unite the world in life for without Him it can only be united in death. But he conquered death! He lives today!

Our Russian literary giant is mistaken. Art and literature will not work a miracle. Miracles must come through the supernatural, and art and literature only strive to attain the supernatural without ever doing so. The real miracles, validated as historical facts, are those which establish the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God. What a difference it would make if the Russians came to believe this and sought to unite humanity under the banner of the King of kings and Lord of lords. I eagerly pray that they will believe!

Facing the Future

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Volume 34

[Abstract]

As men grow older they seem often to postpone decisions which deal with the inevitable. I have sought to avoid that approach to life and death, and for several years I have had most of the arrangements made in case I should be called away quite suddenly, or not return home from a flight. The safe deposit box has been placed in Nell's name, the deed to the cemetery lot is at hand, and the will has been properly prepared.

Sometime ago I began to meditate upon what course I should pursue with regard to MISSION MESSENGER. Long ago it was decided and announced that it would not be perpetuated beyond my decease. I have always regarded our list of subscribers as a kind of sacred trust, and although the mere payment of a dollar per year does not nearly take care of the cost of a subscription, I have steadfastly refused to sell, rent, or loan our list to those who have sought to secure it to propagandize another cause. I would no more barter the names of our journalistic family than we would those of our natural family.

I have never regarded this paper as a business venture. It is a medium of sharing truth.

It was also made clear that there was no one else really involved in the production and mailing of the paper except Nell

and myself. The tremendous monthly task has been borne year after year by the two of us, with the bulk of the task falling upon Nell, due to my absences from home, sometimes for several weeks at a time. We have also been assisted in some of the wrapping by our son Jerry, his wife Emily, and their two boys, Gryfon and Erik. Upon occasion, the other grandchildren, Dawn and Andrea, have helped while visiting us.

So important, however, is the role of both Nell and myself, that we could not perpetuate the work if either of us crossed over to be with Jesus. Accordingly, we have understood that whoever survived would mail out one more notice announcing that the paper had expired with the death of the other.

It was almost thirty-five years ago that the paper was started as a free mail out piece, providing news of our party proceedings in the state of Missouri. The cost was borne by five brethren. When we began to receive subscriptions we kept the names and addresses in a loose-leaf notebook, and when mailing time came we sat down with our children around the kitchen table, each took a page containing names and we addressed the papers by hand. Now there is a large cabinet with address stencils for almost 7500 readers scattered all over the globe. The paper wings its way into many countries as well as to all fifty states of our union and every province in Canada. It is obvious that we cannot always continue to mail it out.

I began praying about the Father's will in the matter while in Colorado, and at 2:00 a.m., one night in Michigan, I finally reached a decision which I am here announcing subject to the divine purpose in my life. If Nell and I live and can have the health and strength to continue until that time I will deposit the mail sacks containing the final issue of the paper at the weigher's office on the dock of the main post office in Saint Louis, on December 1, 1975. Thus will end one exciting and thrill-filled era of my earthly sojourn. It is understood, of course, that the Father may stop my pen and typewriter ahead of schedule.

After having been a factional leader and debater for a number of years, the grace of God moved in to make my life much happier and more profitable and I began to write upon the marvelous fellowship in Christ in 1957. At the time I did not know where my prayer and study would take me. I only knew that I wanted to go where he led and follow his precious way. And if we survive to continue through the final year, the theme of my writing, and the title of my last bound copy will be simply "Fellowship."

The decision to cease publication will relieve many of our faithful financial supporters whom we love in the Lord, and without whose glorious fellowship we would long since have gone under. It costs many thousands of dollars per year now to produce and mail the paper. We have watched the frightening increases in cost which have sunk great printing enterprises, but every year, although we have had no backlog of resources of our own we have paid every bill and started the new year free from debt. We mailed the whole first year of papers for less than it costs us now to send out a monthly issue. It is interesting when large bills come in and you know how meager is your exchequer, to see those bills paid month after month, often by contributions from saints whose faces you have never looked upon.

We have sought to avoid sending out letters asking for help. This is obnoxious to both Nell and myself, and we could not bring ourselves to beg from our brothers and sisters. I always quietly laid the burden at the feet of Jesus and left it there while I went on to try and carry out my task. I have never had a salary contract, never stipulated a fee, and never made any demands of a congregation as a condition to my coming. I have never known in advance what I would receive and have never worried about it. And now, here we are, brought safely through thus far, and still trusting that our God will see us through to the end. Praise His wonderful name!

If our plans are carried out as here announced it is my

intention to destroy the files of my private exchanges of a controversial nature with brethren in the Lord. I have already burned most of them because I do not want to reflect against the memory of any person who differed with me. I do not care to perpetuate any arguments I have used except those which already appear in print. I shall do away with the address stencils, and keep only the card file of addresses so we can write to some of our former readers and friends. Such a list soon becomes obsolete in any event. I regard my earthly pilgrimage as quite insignificant and once it is completed that is enough.

December 1, 1975 marks no retirement for me. I have resolved not to retire. My life is wrapped up in the lives of others. Research and writing constitute my greatest joy. So I shall teach and write, and continue to share until the dusk becomes so heavy that I cannot see and I must prepare to listen for the call from across the river. I shall continue to remain open to the divine will and wish and I am confident that whatever he would have me do, or wherever he would have me go, "my Lord will make a way for me."

One thing that has given me some concern and that is how to handle subscriptions so that we will be honest and not take an unfair advantage of any person. I have come to the conclusion that we will keep all of our readers informed of the plan to end publication with the final issue of 1975, and all may subscribe with that in mind. Against the suggestion of many of our friends we will keep the subscription price at one dollar per year. Of course this does not begin to pay the cost of getting twelve issues to a subscriber, but we do not want to raise the price at this time. It would seem like an exhibition of a lack of trust. One way that you could help would be to renew now for three years, and that would guarantee your subscription for the life of the paper.

We shall not return any money after we cease, but instead will use any surplus as it comes in to mail out free books to college and university students. Thus, if you subscribe now for

three years and send a check for ten dollars, we will place seven dollars in the fund to send out books. We mailed out over five hundred copies of *Simple Trusting Faith* upon request and are now in the process of sending out copies of *The Royal Priesthood*. We want to keep helping young minds as long as we can.

In 1973 I will be answering scores of questions. I have been saving many of the queries that I have received in public forums and in private correspondence. I think you will like to read what I have spoken and written on the issues of the day. We humbly ask an interest in your prayers. We are deeply grateful for your help. Nell joins me in this expression of deep gratitude to those of you who have helped carry the financial burden and make this feeble effort possible!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1973)

Volume 35

The Question Box

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About the Word

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[Abstract]

“He who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool; and he who dares not is a slave.”— William Drummond.

The dawning of this new year brings me to a task which will cause many of you to think of me as presumptuous, despite the fact that I am motivated by a wholly different desire than to appear proud or arrogant. I am going to attempt to answer some of the questions which brethren have asked me for the past several years and to share my views in this fashion, hoping that I may thus be able to clarify my position for those who affirm that they have difficulty in understanding what I have sought to convey.

It will be understood, of course, that I am offering my own opinion as to what I conceive of God’s word as teaching, and it is given with no thought of being dogmatic or authoritarian. It is binding upon no one further than his own knowledge and conscience lead him to accept it as valid and true. I shall love those who cannot concur with it as much as I do those who agree.

I am constantly made to smile when I receive letters, generally from much younger brethren, who feel obligated to include the statement, “Of course, I do not agree with all that you write.” The fact that they must issue this little gem of

protective thought says much more about them than it does about my writings. And it says even more about the kind of sectarian framework in which we operate. Why should anyone ever feel obligated to say that he does not fully agree with all that another thinks? That should be taken for granted by all who do not think of the kingdom of heaven as a parrot jungle.

I have repeatedly said that we can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. The variety of mental capacities is as great as that of physical characteristics. We should share insights for mutual upbuilding and strength but we should never impose our thinking upon another, seeing that he has the same right to interpret the word of revelation as ourselves.

It is not expected that the answers I give will either please or satisfy all of my readers, and none of them will be offered with that goal in mind. Those who regularly peruse this little journal are upon all sides of every issue that is raised and we cannot stereotype them. I am thrilled that this is so. I would not want it otherwise at the cost of their personal integrity.

My approach will be one of honest and open declaration. I will not conceal my feeling about any issue that is raised. I have nothing to hide and nothing to gain by unfairness. I am happy to answer and will do so on the basis of scripture as I understand it. I am committed to seeking the will of God as revealed in the new covenant scriptures, and it is upon that foundation I rest my case, come what may. And I will begin by answering questions about my attitude toward the word of God. These questions have come from various sources at various times. For the sake of continuity of thought I will combine them here without identifying the ones who have asked them, except in rare cases.

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

1. Do you regard the entire Bible as being given by the revelation of God?

I do not. All scripture is given by inspiration, but it was not all given by revelation, as is clearly taught in the scriptures themselves. God is a divine economist and he never does for a man what that man can do for himself, or what another can do for him. Man was made a rational creature, capable of observation, study and research, and qualified to make deductions from his findings or thought processes. Whatever man can discover for himself God has never revealed, for to do so would be to obviate the function of reason and defeat the very purpose for which rational powers were bestowed.

Revelation is from *apokalupsis*, which means to uncover, to lay bare, or to make naked. It is always related to the disclosure of that which has been previously hidden or concealed. Revelation is the action of God in uncovering for man what man cannot discover for himself. Stated another way, it is the discovery afforded by God to man of himself or his will, over and above what he has made known by the light of nature or reason. Man has discovered many truths about the universe in which he has been placed, and will discover many more in the future. But the human mind is finite and limited. The divine mind is infinite and unlimited. There are truths known to God to which man cannot attain regardless of his aspiration. If these are made known to man it will be by the action of God in revealing them.

Isaiah records God as saying that his thoughts are not ours, and his ways are not ours. The gulf between human thought and divine is as great as the distance between heaven and earth (55:8, 9). Man cannot reach up to God “for who hath known the mind of God that he may instruct him?” If man comprehends the thoughts of God it will be because God has relayed them to him. And God will only reveal to man the thoughts which are beyond the ability of man to ascertain by his rational powers.

Man can best learn by what he sees with his eyes, the visual

method; or by what he hears, the audible method. He is not limited to these, however, because he can take the data that he assembles and by the faculty of judgment or perception, can run it through his mental computer and arrive at conclusions which, in turn, can be used as the foundation of extended and wider outreach. But whatever he needs to know for his wellbeing, above and beyond his ability to discover, God must reveal to him.

Thus, the apostle writes, “That which the eye hath not seen, and the ear has not heard, and which has not been determined by the mental processes concerning God’s provision for those who love him, God has revealed unto us by his own Spirit, which alone is capable of unlimited knowledge, including the deep thoughts of God” (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). What the apostles observed and heard, they simply recorded as they saw and heard it. No revelation was required for such matters.

Peter makes this all quite clear. He affirms that the apostles did not derive their testimony from artfully contrived myths when they testified that the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed in majestic power. Instead they were eyewitnesses of a demonstration in which they not only saw him in a glorified state, but personally heard a voice from heaven acknowledging him as a beloved Son, pleasing unto the Father.

But the apostles, or envoys, were not limited to what they saw or heard because, Peter said, “we have also a sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:16-19). Now prophecy is revelation. The prophet speaks under divine impulse and brings forth a divine message. Prophecy does not come by the will of men, but holy men of God speak as motivated or empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is clear that the scriptures contain the testimony of chosen witnesses, as well as the revelation of God.

This is aside from the point we are concerned with at the moment, but I cannot forego mentioning that one event which

has always come under attack by liberal theologians and rationalists is the transfiguration of Christ. All sorts of explanations have been drummed up to make it appear that this is a myth. It is interesting to note that Peter who was present for the occasion, uses it as a demonstration that the apostles did not follow cleverly designed myths, in making known their message.

But back to our question. Because the scriptures teach otherwise, I do not believe that all scripture was given by revelation. I do believe that all holy scripture was given by inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16). What is inspiration? “Inspiration of God” is from *theopneustos* and means “breathed into by God.” Inspire means to breathe in, expire means to breathe out. To inspire is to give life, to expire is to die. Inspiration does not have so much to do with origin as with survival. It provides power and vitality. God breathed into the body of scripture compiled from what his ambassadors saw, heard, reasoned out, and received by revelation, and that body became a living and perpetual testimony to all men.

I accept the sacred scriptures as the God-breathed communication to man, given under the direction, or by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and I expect to be guided, governed and directed by this word. I have no intention of trying to please God by dependence upon the wisdom of this passing age, for I know and am persuaded that “the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God.”

REVELATION AND INTERPRETATION

2. *Do I understand that you make a difference between revelation and interpretation, and if you do, what is it?*

I do not *make* a difference between them. I simply recognize the difference which inherently exists between the two. Revelation is the uncovering of the thoughts of the divine mind for the purpose of conveying divine concepts to man.

Interpretation is the application of the human mind to what is revealed for the purpose of apprehending the divine concepts. One is the act of God, the other the act of man. Revelation is perfect for the achievement of the divine purpose, but interpretation, being human, is imperfect in its approach to revelation.

Our ability to correctly interpret or understand the will of God, or anything else, is dependent upon many factors. All that which has previously been unknown can be understood only in the light of the known, and this is contingent upon background, culture, education, early training, and other circumstances. So God's revelation is infallible, but our interpretation is not. It is for this reason that God has finished his revelation, but man does not finish his attempt at interpretation, the striving for correct understanding.

Many preachers continually exhort the saints to study, which is but another way of saying that they should seek to explore more fully the divine revelation with a view to achieving the correct interpretation. Yet these same preachers think that they already have an inerrant and infallible interpretation, and any deviation from the traditional view is a denial of "the authority of God." Such men ought rather to warn the humble brethren against further study, lest they learn some truth for which they will be "cast out of the synagogue." Nothing is more dangerous to the status quo than further serious study.

On July 4, 1823, Alexander Campbell wrote the preface for *The Christian Baptist*, "a periodical paper pledged to no religious sect in Christendom, the express and avowed object of which is the eviction of truth and the exposure of error." Mr. Campbell well knew some of the trials which would beset him and he made this very poignant observation:

It is a rarity, seldom to be witnessed, to see a person boldly opposing either the doctrinal errors or the unscriptural measures of a people with whom he has

identified himself, and to whom he looks for approbation and support. If such a person appears in any party, he soon falls under the frowns of those who either think themselves wiser than the reprover, or would wish so to appear. Hence it usually happens that such a character must lay his hand upon his mouth, or embrace the privilege of walking out of doors . . . If this had not usually happened, we should have had no Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc. If the party from which these sects sprang had received the admonitions and attended to the remonstrances of those bold and zealous men who first began to reprove and testify against it for alleged errors and evils existing in it, no separation would have taken place. Had the well-meant remonstrances of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley been acknowledged and received by the sect to which they belonged, the mother would have been reformed, and the children would have lived under the same roof with her. But she would not.

In a word, I hold that God's revelation is finished, but my interpretation of the revelation is not. Each passing day finds me with new insights and a greater perception of the truth. I interpret many passages differently than I did five years ago, because my grasp of their significance is more profound. One who ceases the process of interpretation at a given point does not prove his faithfulness to the written word. He only freezes his ignorance at that level. It is true that dragon-flies can skim lightly over the surface of water which is so deep that an elephant can scarcely wade it, and we seem to have a lot more dragon-flies than elephants.

Interpretation, or understanding, is simply the intellectual cloak with which we clothe the inner man, and I can no more wear the same mental coat that I wore when I began preaching at the age of twelve years, than I can wear the same coat for my body. The understanding which seemed adequate in my immaturity is no longer adequate for my present state. And I refuse to be confined to the strait-jacket of yesteryear in order to

be consistent with my past. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote:

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today. ‘Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.’ Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

3. Why do we need to interpret God’s word at all? Why can we not just take it for what it says?

This would probably work if you were infallible, which you are not. You must interpret God’s word for the very same reason you must interpret any other interpersonal communication. The purpose of all such communication is to convey mental images from one intelligence to another. Unfortunately, the image reception depends not solely upon the transmitting intellect but upon the receiving one as well. If both intellects were infinite and infallible there would be no problem, but when one intellect is infinite and the other is finite, or when both are finite, there is room for distortion, and careful and prolonged study may be required to assure clarity. And some people seem to have been born without a “fine-tuning” button.

It is the nature of communication which makes interpretation imperative. No one who studies the word of God diligently can do so for long without changing his mind concerning the meaning of certain passages. If one is led to a different view of a scripture now than he had ten years before, at which time does he take the Bible for what it says? Did he take

the Bible for what it said ten years ago? If he did not, why not? If he did, does he cease to take the Bible for what it says when he changes his mind ten years later?

One who holds that the Bible does not require interpretation must never alter his views but must cling to what he concluded upon his very first reading of it. But the Bible itself teaches that we must grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth. How can you grow without changing, since all growth demands change? The fact is that those who offer this puerile objection are constantly trying to explain what the scripture means, and thus interpret it. They write articles, print papers, put out tracts and publish books setting forth their deductions from the scripture. They deliver lengthy discourses in the pulpit and over radio expounding and expostulating on the implications of God's Word.

We must never forget that those who want you to take the Bible for what it says, really want you to take it for what they say it says. If you explain a scripture you are interpreting it; if they explain one, it is what the Bible says. The final criterion is not what the Bible says at all, but it is their understanding and exposition, and unless you concur with them, you will be excluded. Theirs is the official, dyed-in-the-wool authoritative explanation, but it is not interpretation. Actually what they are really saying is that as they interpret God's word it does not require an interpretation. No scholarly person will make an assertion that the scripture requires no interpretation and when someone does you can be sure that he is both superficial in his thinking, and badly mixed up in his practice.

I have a great deal of compassion for those who seek to defend their indefensible orthodoxy by making it appear that the scriptures speak so plainly to them that they are always in the right and cannot be wrong. I went through that same period when I was much younger than I am now. When a question arose, I took my Cruden's Concordance and looked up all the

references which might have any bearing, near or remote, upon the problem at hand. Then I read all that had been said about it in the past issues of our official party journal, and examined all of the books that had been written by the loyal brethren. After that I examined everything else available, and when I made up my mind, it was always what the Bible taught, and required no interpretation.

One day it dawned upon me how silly it was to send missionaries across the ocean to explain to others something that required no interpretation. Apparently we thought that none of the brethren were “wayfaring men,” because we were always quoting that the way was so plain that the wayfaring man need not err therein. Once when I was in California a young brother handed me a tract he had written to explain why the scriptures need no interpretation.

BIBLE AND WORD

4. Do you take the position that the Bible is the word of God, or that the word of God is contained in the Bible?

This question undoubtedly stems from the strife which has grown out of the contention between modern theologians, some of whom, under the influence of form criticism, have been led to regard the Bible as a cultural outgrowth rather than a divinely-given book. But I am not a part of the “theological rat race” and I do not allow myself to become involved in what I regard as a silly semantic merry-go-round. When questions like this are proposed the questioner asks them from a particular stance which he has already assumed and obviously he expects you to answer them while standing on the same “circle of turf.”

I never try to put words in the mouth of another man to enable him to define his position, nor do I allow others to select the words for me with which to explain mine. I just like my own terminology better than a Saul’s armor furnished by others.

Certainly, not every word contained in the Bible is the word of God, as anyone can easily determine by reading the book of Job. Here, in one volume you also have the words of Satan, Job, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Naamathite, and a young man by the name of Elihu, a Buzite who stood it as long as he could and said he either had to speak or pop! All of these had their say before the Lord entered the discussion and wound it up. So when I am asked if the Bible is the word of God I am forced to say that some of it is.

And since the revelation of heaven does occur within the context of space, time and history, and it was gathered up (I happen to think under the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit), and incorporated in what we call the Holy Bible, it does not make me choke to say that I believe the word of God is contained in the Bible. All this will help you to understand why I am not at all concerned with the verbal pegs upon which men hang up their mental overcoats.

What I am interested in doing is making it clear that I receive the word of God without doubt or quibble, as a divine guideline for my feeble human existence. I trust it, respect it, revere it, and I intend to allow the sacred scriptures to take me by the hand and lead me into a closer walk with the Living Word, the Son of God, and my precious Lord. The written word provides for me teaching, reproof, correction and instruction in the just life, and I need everyone of these. I love the word, all of it, and praise God for giving it to us!

But deliver me from becoming embroiled in the theological Donnybrooks where men become so engaged in fighting over the place of the Bible in God's purpose that they have no time to give it a place in their own lives. I am sure that the devil has a hearty respect for the word of God as being of divine origin, but that will not keep him out of the lake of fire. And I prefer to allow my daily and routine behavior to testify of my reverence for the testimony of the Lord which is certain, "making wise the

simple.” It is this last which gives me hope.

It was J. B. Phillips who wrote: “I must, in common justice, confess here that for years I had viewed the Greek of the New Testament with a rather snobbish disdain. I had read the best of classical Greek both at school and Cambridge for over ten years. To come down to the *koine* of the first century A.D. seemed, as I have sometimes remarked rather uncharitably, was like reading Shakespeare for some years and then turning to the vicar’s letter in the parish magazine! But I think now that I was wrong: I can see that the expression of the Word of God in ordinary workaday language is all of a piece with God’s incredible humility in becoming a man in Jesus Christ.” I agree heartily with that!

THE SACRED CANON

[5.] *On more than one occasion you have written concerning the inspiration and consequent authority of the scriptures, and have said they are the only reliable and infallible source of authority, with which I concur. This is my question. How do we know that those men who were responsible for compiling the New Testament canon accepted and rejected the proper writings? If you had been a member of the council would you have accepted such books as The Didache, The Shepherd of Hermas, The Gospel of Peter, etc.?*

This question has been proposed by a perceptive brother in Christ who is a successful general agent for an insurance company in southern Florida. He has been a source of strength to me since I first came to know him and I am pleased to give expression to my views regarding the important issue he has raised.

On the college and university campus the same question is frequently posed and men and women are anxious to remove any lingering doubt about the constituency of the new covenant scriptures. This is altogether proper, because if we have works

included which God did not intend to include, we have a corrupted compilation, and if there are works left out which God intended to include we have an imperfect version. Certainly the authority of the scriptures would be affected if it could be shown that they suffer from either unwarranted addition or omission.

I find a very hazy view upon the part of many as to how we came to receive the new covenant scriptures in the form in which we now have them. A very common error is that a council was convened to vote upon which of the many extant writings were to be accepted and included, and which were to be left out of the sacred canon. One thing that encourages this fallacy is the propaganda of the communications department of the Knights of Columbus to the effect that we owe the compilation of the scriptures to the Roman Church. The impression is created that an ecumenical council selected for the purpose gathered up the epistles deemed worthy and bound them in a single volume. This is not the case at all!

It is true that The Third Council of Carthage, which met in 397, in one of its creedal statements stipulated that only “canonical” books were to be read in the churches. It then listed exactly the 27 books that we have today. But they were listed because they were already recognized as “canonical.” So the council did not establish the canon. It just exhibited it. In 419 The Council of Hippo repeated the identical list of books as specified by the Carthaginian Council.

The Greek word *kanon* means literally a straight rod used for a rule or measure. We still use the word “ruler” to designate a piece of wood or metal with which to measure length. The idea of straightness can still be discerned in such derivative words as cane and canal. The latter is a trench for carrying water which cuts *straight* through the land. The clerical term *canon* comes from a clergy house whose members entered into a covenant to follow a certain rule for their lives.

The word *kanon* occurs twice in the new covenant scriptures. In 2 Corinthians 10:16, it is translated “line,” and in Galatians 6:16 it is rendered “rule.” “As many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them.” The “sacred canon” consists of the books which measured up, that is, which passed the tests, or met the requirements. But what was the test? It is obvious that before a piece of wood can be used for a measure it has to be measured. The reason we can use a one foot ruler as a guide in school is because someone else has determined beforehand its proper length and marked it off in inches and fractions of an inch.

The same thing holds true with the sacred canon. Proper authority had to define the rule by which writings must be judged as worthy or unworthy of inclusion in a collection of materials esteemed to be from God, and this had to be done before the writings came into existence. It is recognizable by most people who believe in a revelation from God, and who accept that in these days God has spoken to us through his Son, that the Son should establish the criterion for measurement of the validity of that which is esteemed to be from God. In other words, the living Word is the measure of the written word, in order that the written word may correctly represent the Living Word.

While he was yet among men on earth Jesus chose, called and commissioned a college of apostles to be his envoys or ambassadors to an alien world. An ambassador is a minister plenipotentiary, that is, a diplomat possessed of full power in the representation of his government. So one of these apostles wrote, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). This is very clear. As ambassadors entrusted with the word of reconciliation, God spoke through the apostles and they acted in behalf of Christ in presenting their message and entreaty.

Jesus assured them while still present with them that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and recall to their memory whatsoever he had said unto them (John 14:26). He affirmed that the Spirit would guide them into all truth and show them things to come. To receive the apostles was the equivalent of receiving Jesus (Matt. 10:40). They were to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes.

The primitive saints of God recognized this and thus accepted apostolicity as their measuring rod. A writing, in order to be included in the sacred scriptures had to be written by an apostle, or by one close to an apostle, so close that apostolic endorsement or sanction could be given to it, thus establishing its veracity. At first the apostolic letters were scattered by their very nature, but as time passed congregations became aware of the need for preserving these vital documents and began to secure copies of them and to gather them as treasures to be passed on through the grace of God.

This required a listing of those regarded as authentic and by the fourth century there were ten distinct catalogues of the books of the new covenant scriptures. Six of these were identical with our present canon. They are the lists of Athanasius (A.D. 315), Epiphanius (370), Jerome (392), Rufinus (390), Augustine (394), and the list of the forty-four bishops assembled at the Third Council of Carthage (397) which I referred to previously. Augustine was present for that occasion.

Of the other four catalogues, three are identical with ours except for omission of the Revelation. These are the lists of Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem (340), the bishops assembled at The Council of Laodicea (364) and Gregory of Nazianzum, bishop of Constantinople (375). Philaster, bishop of Brescia (380) omits Hebrews and Revelation.

Eusebius has been called “the father of church history.” He was probably born in Palestine about A.D. 260, and became

one of the most learned men of his day. He quotes from practically every one of the books and assigns them to the authors as we know them. But he investigated what the Christians thought of the writings available to them, and as a result of meticulous inquiries he reduced the books to three classes: (1) Those universally received as the genuine works of the authors to whom they were accredited. He includes the four gospel records, Acts of Apostles, all the epistles of Paul, the first epistle of John, and the first epistle of Peter. (2) The writings on which there was not unanimity of opinion. Eusebius says that here the greater majority accepted the books, but because of a few voices raised in doubt he placed them among the contested ones. He mentions James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. He adds that some placed Revelation in this class. (3) Those universally regarded as spurious. He enumerates Acts of Paul, Revelation of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, The Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Gospel According to the Hebrews.

It does not bother me that some of the books were placed in doubt before they were placed in the canon. It only helps me to realize that such books had to prove their worthiness to be received. They were not accepted upon whim but according to a rigid standard. I am convinced that the canon as we have it is complete and unadulterated. I am perfectly willing to risk my hope of eternity upon the testimony of this wonderful volume containing the word of God.

My position is not based upon an emotional hangover from a glamorous childhood affection, but upon mature reflection stemming from my own research. I accept the canon because of the testimony of the "church fathers;" the heretics who sought to combat it; and the Jewish and heathen adversaries who sought to overthrow it. I accept it because I believe that the internal evidences sustain it. I have read all of the apocryphal books related to the new covenant scriptures. There is no comparison, believe me!

My own copy of *The Apocryphal New Testament* is the London edition of 1821, and as I read the contents, my wonder is not that they were not included in the canon, but rather that they were ever remotely considered for it. Such works as “The Acts of Paul and Thecla” and “The Epistle of Paul to Seneca” bear upon their faces an indictment of their forgery, or, at least of their inferiority.

I happen to hold that the compilers of the canon were not “inspired” in the accepted sense of that term. God never wastes either divine power or gifts, and what man can do by reasoning and through study and research, he is permitted to do. And surely man could discover the revelation of God which had been uncovered for him, without additional supernatural demonstration. I do believe that the Spirit exercised supervisory concern in the compilation of the canon, but this was done providentially, and providence never makes use of the supernatural but always orders and arranges that which is natural to achieve the goal of God.

It seems incongruous to me that the Spirit would provide a message essential to the eternal welfare of mankind and then allow it to be lost or adulterated until its power would be eroded away. I believe that the Spirit was the vehicle for the transmission of the word and now enlivens and enables the word. I am quite convinced that what we call the Bible as we have it is as God gave it. I intend to continue to allow it to guide my weak and unprofitable life.

The question as to what I would have done if I had been a member of the conciliar convocation at Carthage is purely academic. As Dr. Joseph Angus remarks in one chapter of his unique handbook, “It is very remarkable that no General Council from the earliest times undertook to define the Canon. The Scriptures of the New Testament were their own attestation.”

In my own book *Deep Roots* I have this to say on page 38: “The Bible was not written by the church. It was written to the church. The books were not accepted as canonical because the church had produced them but because it had received them. The authority stemmed not from their acceptance but from their origin. Canonicity did not create authority nor increase it, but simply recognized it. It was in the giving and not the gathering of the books that the authority resided.”

On the following page I say this: “The authority does not reside in a volume but in a revelation. The Bible is not an authorized collection of books, but a collection of authorized books. The books were accepted because they measured up to the rule of the canon, they contained a revelation from God. They were not holy scriptures because they were selected for the canon, but they were accepted into the canon because they were holy scriptures.” What I wrote so freely in 1966, I repeat just as freely seven years later.

The Bible is my map on the journey of life, my bread for daily sustenance of the spirit, the staff upon which I lean, and my counsellor in times of doubt. I have proven in the laboratory of my own heart its supreme worth and its power to transform. I rejoice in its every word and every line and I thank the Giver of Life for the hope conveyed to me in its pages. I am not at all bothered by the canon by which the scriptures were selected and compiled, but I am concerned with my life which will be measured by them.

6. *Were the documents which compose the canon sacred at the time of their writing or did they become sacred later on because they were gathered and compiled?*

Really, this question, proposed in a “rap session” in a university student union building by a very astute young doubter, is an old one. It is also a sort of trick query raised by those inclined to be skeptical or critical. There is nothing sinful

about either of these, for a skeptic is literally one who is thoughtful and reflective, and a critic is one who measures what he sees and hears.

But behind the question is the argument that the apostles merely wrote personal letters with no idea they would be gathered to constitute the Bible, and it was not until such compilation by the church several hundred years later that they were regarded as sacred. Thus the “sacred scriptures” did not originate as such but they were elevated to this by the church.

In recent years this has formed the basis of the fallacious propaganda of the Knights of Columbus that the Bible is the product of the Catholic Church. The contention is that we owe a debt to Rome for giving us the sacred volume.

Outside of the Roman Church one of the chief exponents of this idea in the preceding century was Henry Drummond, Scottish theologian and lecturer, who attempted to reconcile the principles of evolution to evangelical Christianity. He argued that “The Bible came out of religion, not religion out of the Bible. The Bible is a product of religion, not a cause of it.”

The question of the “sacredness” of the scriptures at the time of their origin can be very misleading. If the epistles written by the apostles were produced under the guidance of the Spirit, the question is not how the writers or recipients regarded them, but how God regarded them. The term sacred is from the Latin *sacrare*, holy or hallowed. Certainly if the new covenant writings were the special work of the Spirit they differed from all other writings of the same age or era, in that they originated in divine wisdom and not merely in human thinking. They were holy scriptures, as contrasted with profane, that is, unsanctified compositions.

Whether the apostles knew they were helping to write “the Bible” is of no consequence. The word “Bible” is one which we

have adopted to designate the gathered books which met the standard of authenticity and genuineness. God did not give us a Bible, but a revelation in various parts and in various times. We call the collection of the documents containing that revelation the Bible. Whether or not the writers knew that a collection of their writings would occur is of little concern. Their task was simply to write as motivated by the Spirit. The act of preserving their writings, or the method of doing so, was left in the hands of providence.

It is important, I think, to determine how the apostles regarded the content and purpose of their writings at the time. Were the letters which they wrote and the words which they spoke considered to be simply an expression of their own thoughts, or a revelation from the Spirit? Were they reputed to be of any special authority, and thus binding upon the hearers and readers? In determining this we must rely upon the testimony of the apostles themselves. They alone are capable of testifying directly as to their view of their words. Let me mention a few considerations drawn from letters written by one man to one congregation located in the very heart of a vicious and immoral pagan culture.

a. Paul declares that when he came to Corinth he “declared the attested truth of God without display of fine words or wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1).

b. He affirms that he spoke “God’s hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory” (1 Cor. 2:7).

c. He asserted that the Spirit had revealed to the envoys of Jesus things which could not be ascertained by visual or audible means, or by the rationalization process (1 Cor. 2:9).

d. He believed they had received the Spirit of God for the precise purpose of knowing “all that God of his own grace gives

us” (1 Cor. 2:12).

e. He said that the words in which the message was couched were those the Spirit of God selected, and not those which human wisdom dictated. “And because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom, but by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:13).

f. Those who claimed a prophetic insight were to validate it by acknowledging the apostolic letters as of divine origin. “If anyone claims to be a prophet or inspired, let him recognize that what I write has the Lord’s authority” (1 Cor. 14:37). Certainly, if the Spirit was operating in a man he would recognize His own words and revelation.

g. Paul contended that the tradition which he passed on, for a tradition is simply something handed over or handed down, originated with the Lord. He did not arrive at it by his own research and it was not given unto him by other apostles previously chosen. “I commend you for always keeping me in mind, and maintaining the tradition which I handed on to you . . . For the tradition which I handed on to you came from the Lord himself” (1 Cor. 11:2, 23).

It is not necessary that I multiply references or pile up quotations. I do not know if the apostles were apprised of the fact that there would be a compilation of their material into a single volume to be designated as the holy Bible. I rather doubt that such was the case. But I am convinced that they wrote with full recognition that they were chosen instruments of God to receive the divine revelation and hand it to succeeding generations as the tradition of heaven. That it was given a place with the scriptures is proven by Peter who wrote, “So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and

unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15, 16).

Let me make it clear that, so far as I am concerned, the new covenant scriptures contain the revelation of God’s will for my life. I shall not be upset by how they were gathered, collated and compiled. To me, they contain within themselves those internal proofs which establish their validity. I intend to read, study and shape my life according to them as best I can. I do not intend ever to twist them. If I err in my understanding and application of them it will be a mistake of the head and not the heart. I take my stand firmly and unequivocally upon these scriptures as God’s guideline for my life and destiny.

Next month, if the Father wills, I shall start addressing myself to questions related to the distinction between gospel and doctrine. It will undoubtedly be one of the most valuable studies in our present series.

Gospel and Doctrine

Mission Messenger (February 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

“He that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both, and does much the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope.”— John Locke.

I have resolved that, with the help of God this year, I will attempt an answer to some of the questions posed by various individuals and addressed to me either in public forums or by private mail. Some of the things which I have been saying appear to be new to many in our generation and require repetition in order that they may be more fully grasped. In undertaking this rather awesome task I hope to avoid any semblance of pretense to any degree of superior knowledge in reference to the matters discussed. My knowledge is limited and the scope of my understanding is restricted.

But I do have an eagerness to share from my meager store with all whom I love in the Lord. It was Lord Bacon who helped me to see the true purpose of acquiring knowledge. “Some men think that the gratification of curiosity is the end of knowledge; some the love of fame; some the pleasure of dispute; some the necessity of supporting themselves by their knowledge; but the real use of all knowledge is, that we should dedicate that reason which was given us by God to the use and advantage of man.” Nothing I write will be dogmatic in tenor. It does not become a

servant in the house of a master to try and impose his will upon the other servants. Certainly he should not tyrannize over them. I want never to create a personal following or promote a party parade. It sounds cold and even unloving to say it, but I am not at all disturbed by how men receive what I say. I am not seeking for glory from men nor acclaim from my contemporaries. Above all, I do not want to exploit any other person for glory or gain.

Although I do not always agree with Will Durant in *The Story of Philosophy* my dissent does not include this statement, “Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself; and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use him as a means for some external purpose.” I want to see no one become a religious stooge or pawn. It is sad enough to reduce men to the level of mechanical cogs, but even worse to make them cat’s-paws to pull sectarian chestnuts out of factional flames. But perhaps we should get along with the questions.

1. *I have heard here at school that you make a distinction between the gospel of Christ, and the apostolic doctrine. On what grounds do you do so?*

I wish that everything you heard about me at school was as correctly reported as this. Indeed I do make such a distinction because I am thoroughly convinced that it is scriptural, and failure to recognize this creates one of the greatest problems confronting us in our generation. It is the ignorance of this matter which is basic to much of our strife and division and I am quite convinced, as was Alexander Campbell, that we will never be able to recapture the real dynamic for unity until we recover this concept.

I shall never forget what a mind-changing event it was when I first became aware of the significant difference between the *kerygma* to be proclaimed to a lost world, and the *didache* to be addressed to a saved people. So long had I been steeped in our mistaken tradition that it was difficult for me to concede my

error. It involved too many of my sermon outlines and too much of my past writing.

But I plunged into research with fervor, half hoping that I could salvage at least a few of the antagonistic messages which I had ignorantly regarded as “gospel sermons.” Fortunately, reason and revelation gained the day and I was rescued even from that last refuge of little minds which always say when trapped against the ledge of truth, “Well, I’m not sure it makes that much difference.”

While it has no real bearing upon the right or wrong of my position, I should like to call attention to the fact that it is not an original insight of mine, nor is it in any sense unique. And just here I want to take the time and space to honor another eminent Presbyterian whose profound thinking influenced our own reformation far beyond our general recognition. I refer to Dr. George Campbell, who became Principal of Marischal College and University, in Aberdeen, in 1759, a position which he held for almost forty years.

When David Hume made his famous and clever attack upon miracles and the supernatural he literally shook the religious world to its foundation. In 1762 Dr. Campbell replied in his treatise *A Dissertation on Miracles*, and I have read it again and again with appreciation as did Alexander Campbell in his more youthful days. Perhaps Dr. Campbell did not become popular in our land because of his addresses criticizing our American colonies for their revolt. His position was that the colonials should be subject to the powers that be which were ordained of God and should pay their stamp tax. He affirmed that violence and unlawful seizure of goods and pillaging of stores was unbecoming for Christians, even when dressed like untutored savages. That did not go over too well with anyone except the Tories who were frequently tarred and feathered for their dissent, but by the time Alexander Campbell was old enough to study, the revolution was fading into history.

The last work of Dr. Campbell was a translation of the four gospel records with “preliminary dissertations.” It is this translation which Alexander Campbell largely adopted and incorporated in “Living Oracles.” In his Preliminary Dissertation Number VI, Dr. Campbell spends thirteen pages investigating the three Greek words rendered “to preach” and the one rendered “to teach.” He begins by saying, “My intention is, not only to point out exactly the differences of meaning in these words, but to evince that the words whereby the two former are rendered in some, perhaps most modern languages, do not entirely reach the meaning of the original terms, and in some measure, by consequence, mislead most readers.”

I must limit myself to a mere statement in which Dr. Campbell summarizes by saying, “And if teaching and preaching be found sometimes coupled together, the reason appears to be, because their teaching, in the beginning of this new dispensation, must have been frequently introduced by announcing the Messiah, which alone was preaching.”

Alexander Campbell, with his keen power of discrimination, recognized the scriptural difference between the gospel which was a message to be preached to the world, and the doctrine with which the body of Christ was to be instructed. In the April, 1862, edition of *Millennial Harbinger* he wrote: “There was teaching, there was singing, there was praying, there was exhortation in the Christian church, but preaching in the church, or to the church, is not once mentioned in the Christian scriptures! Paul once, in his first letter to the church in Corinth, said he would declare to the Corinthians that gospel which he had preached to them, which also they had received and wherein they stood. We preach, or report, or proclaim news. But who teaches news? Who exhorts news? We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or those who have received it.”

Dr. Carroll Kendrick, a scholar of both medicine and

scripture, wrote in the *Gospel Advocate*, on page 373, in 1890:

There is absolutely neither precept nor precedent for preaching to the church. Preaching the gospel is for the world. Teaching is for the church, and is to be done by a plurality of bishops in each congregation.

MY PERSONAL POSITION

The distinction between the gospel and apostolic doctrine grows out of the nature of the kingdom of heaven and its relationship to men. As is true with any other kingdom there are two classes of persons with relation to it— aliens and citizens. The purpose of revelation as addressed to aliens is to lead them to naturalization or citizenship, but the purpose of revelation to the citizens is to instruct and train them in how they may better grow and serve. Since there are two different objectives to be obtained there are two different messages, each of which is adapted to the goal in mind.

The message addressed to aliens is intended to call them out of the state of alienation, in which they are separated from God, and call them into a state in which they are in fellowship, that is, in which they share the divine life. It is called the gospel, the good news, and those who accept it and respond to it form the ekklesia, the called out ones.

The gospel is to be announced, proclaimed or heralded to the world. It is to be preached in all the world and to every creature. It is the *euaggelion*, the evangel, designed for the lost, and its purpose is to announce that divine love became effective and the Word which was with God and was God became incarnate, and through Him we have become reconciled to the Father. This message is not for the saved. You cannot evangelize saved persons. The new covenant scriptures know nothing of “preaching the gospel” to the saints of God. Such an expression would have seemed ridiculous and unintelligible to the apostles.

On the other hand, the message to the saved ones is a course of instruction, a didactic curriculum intended to help them grow, develop and mature in the family relationship. It was those who had gladly received the word and who were baptized, who then continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. Not a single apostolic letter was written to the world. All of them were addressed to congregations of disciples or to individuals who had "set to their seal that God is true." Characteristic is the Philippian letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

The gospel was fully proclaimed on Pentecost. It was accepted and fully obeyed by some three thousand persons on that day. Not a word was ever added to it. Those who came into the covenant relationship did not do so on the basis of a partial or incomplete evangel. Yet this was almost twenty years before the first letter was written which now appears in the sacred canon.

The gospel is the seed, the sperm, by which we are begotten. The doctrine is the bread upon which the children feed, and by which they grow. Peter declares that we are begotten "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever," and then identifies the message by saying, "And this is the word which by the gospel was proclaimed unto you."

Paul carefully distinguishes between the evangelist who begets, and the teacher who instructs God's children in Christ. "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15, 16).

It is easily demonstrated that not one apostolic letter is a part of the gospel of Christ. Every such letter was written to those who heard, believed and accepted the gospel. To the

Romans Paul wrote that he had fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, yet much of the apostolic writing was done after the letter was written to the Romans. Certainly the Roman letter was not part of the gospel for in it Paul declared of the world of his day, “they have not all obeyed the gospel.” If the Roman letter was part of the gospel none of them had obeyed it for they did not yet have it.

The letter to the Galatians was not part of the gospel because it was written to censure those who had accepted the gospel and then abandoned it for what they thought was another gospel, but which was not good news at all. The Galatians to whom Paul wrote had been baptized into Christ and had put on Christ. Unless we can distinguish between the evangel to be proclaimed to the world, and the doctrine to be taught to the saints we will serve only to confuse and confound the world and disrupt the peace and harmony of the saints.

IS IT IMPORTANT?

2. Do you not make too big a deal out of this? Is it really that important?

I doubt that one can emphasize the point I am making too much when he considers the ignorance on the subject of those who would be recognized as teachers. It should be one of our goals to place every thought in proper perspective, and to recognize proper distinctions. The apostle prayed for the Philippians that they might “distinguish between those things which differ” (1:10), and if we would lessen confusion in the realm of thought we should strive for the same thing.

Let me show you why I deem this subject of such grave concern. Our Lord has made our hope of salvation, that is, our being made whole, contingent upon believing the gospel. His chosen envoys were to go into all the world, and proclaim the gospel unto every person. It is distinctly said, “He that believeth

the gospel and is baptized shall be saved.” If the gospel includes the whole of the new covenant scriptures then one cannot be saved until he hears and obeys every requirement of every letter. If not, he will be saved by a partial gospel.

This will remove salvation from the realm of faith in the person and identity of God’s Son and transfer it to the domain of knowledge of didactical and abstract truths. But all human knowledge is relative and no one can ever be sure that his comprehension has embraced all that is essential to his salvation, and there must ever be the haunting fear that he may have overlooked one fact essential to his salvation.

The truth of the gospel is that we are justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). We are not accepted upon the basis of our intellectual attainment or upon the degree of knowledge which we possess about matters of doctrinal concern. The scriptures clearly teach that “if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him.”

As long as preachers mistakenly assume that the gospel embraces the entire new covenant scriptures they will brand as unbelievers those who truly believe in Jesus but may be mistaken about some point of interpretation in one of the epistles. Such a usage of the term unbeliever is nowhere sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. Unbelievers are those who do not accept the divine Sonship of Jesus. In Corinth there were certain brethren who were suing or impleading other brethren before pagan tribunals or in heathen courts. But Paul makes a clear distinction between mistaken and guilty brethren and unbelievers. “But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” (1 Cor. 6:6).

No man is an unbeliever who is in Christ Jesus, regardless of his mistaken views or limited knowledge. Even Paul declared that he only knew in part. He said that he had not attained and was not yet perfect. His recommendation was, that to the extent of their knowledge, imperfect as it was, the brethren should walk by the same rule and mind the same thing (Phil. 3:16). Nothing is more detrimental to the cause of Christ than regarding as unbelievers those who believe in him and earnestly seek to serve Him.

Unbelievers in the Corinthian context are the unjust, the world of the unregenerate, those who walk in darkness. In 2 Corinthians 6:15 Paul asks, “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” Never does he ask what part one believer has with another, even one who is mistaken. There were those of the saints who did not possess a clear knowledge that idols were nothing. Because of their past training, environment and culture, they thought there might be something to an idol. Paul said they did not have a clear knowledge that there was but one God and one Lord. They were “conscious of the idol unto this hour.” But they were brethren, although weak, and his concern was that those who had a greater area of knowledge should not cause a weak brother for whom Christ died to perish through their knowledge. There is as much danger of those who have a superior knowledge destroying a weaker brother as there is of a weaker brother destroying himself by his own ignorance.

When we judge our brethren as worthy or unworthy upon the basis of our own doctrinal knowledge level we deny that there can be any such thing as a weaker brother. Every person must know the same things at the same time, and conformity becomes our goal rather than allegiance to the Lord Jesus. And yet we can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. God has created us with as many divergent intellectual capacities as we have varied physical differences. As Montaigne wrote: “There never were in the world, two opinions alike, no more than two hairs, or two grains, the most universal quality is

diversity.”

Horace Mann said, “Do not think of knocking out another person’s brains because he differs in opinion from you. It would be as rational to knock yourself on the head because you differ from yourself ten years ago.” And Jonathan Swift said, “If a man should register all his opinions upon love, politics, religion, learning, etc., beginning from his youth, and so go on to old age, what a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions would appear at last.”

The very spirit of the good news is that it accepts man as it finds him. Men who are enfeebled in intellect are adopted into the divine family upon the same basis as the most erudite and scholarly. The everlasting arms embrace both the pin-headed pigmy in the jungle and the president of Princeton University. Henri Frederic Amel wrote, “Do not despise your situation; in it you must act, suffer and conquer. From every point on earth we are equally near to heaven and to the infinite.”

We do not come to God by degrees— college degrees, that is. One need not possess a master’s degree to realize that he is a sinner, and until he recognizes this he will never truly know the need of a Savior. The glory of the gospel is that it creates no criteria except an unreserved trust in the righteousness which is from God through faith in Christ Jesus.

It is incongruous that Almighty God whose purpose from the creation of the universe was to bring together in one, all things in heaven and on earth, would devise a plan for doing so which would effectively hinder and thwart the obtaining of the divine objective. And our postulate of unity by conformity to a certain degree of intellectual perception of instruction will defeat God’s goal for the universe.

Unity is possible only through faith. It is a product of the gospel. The gospel is designed to enlist soldiers in a single army

in which those who were formerly enemies become a unit in Christ. Its purpose is to enroll students in the school of Christ where each student must grow in grace and knowledge of the truth, and develop to the extent of his personal potential. The gospel is the unitive message, and obedience of its demands brings those who respond immediately into a fellowship of the reconciled.

One is no more reconciled or redeemed after he has studied scriptures for twenty years than when he arose from the washing of regeneration. He is no more a citizen of the kingdom of heaven when he has learned to read the apostolic letters in Greek, than when he first tremblingly acknowledged his belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. It is birth that introduces one into a family, not a knowledge of geometry or philosophy. It is as absurd and asinine to predicate fellowship upon a uniform doctrinal conformity as it would be to refuse to recognize your physical offspring as members of your family until they made a passing grade in first-year algebra. Lop-sided opinions no more disqualify one for membership in the spiritual family than a wart on the nose disqualifies one for relationship in a physical family. I am assuming that in the latter case the person with the wart will not begin insisting that everyone have a wart in the same location, and predicate family fellowship on a wart basis!

There is not now, nor was there ever, unity upon the basis of doctrinal conformity. Those who call for it the loudest are not agreed among themselves. They argue with the ones whom they receive and debate with the ones whom they recognize. Such a system does not produce Christians, but Pharisees and hypocrites. It proposes a standard for others which those who propose it cannot attain. It is schismatic, divisive, irrational and unscriptural.

God is not in the business of creating robots. He is not the president of a factory turning out grinning Kewpie-dolls. He has

always recognized the uniqueness of individuals, and until we do the same, we are doomed to continue the weary round of strife and cleavage, rending and tearing the one body to bits over our deductions and opinions. On the ridiculous basis of exclusivism there is not a thinking man alive who could have been in fellowship with his own self ten years ago, and who will not have to withdraw from his present self ten years hence.

Unity based upon a certain level of doctrinal attainment is simply the freezing of knowledge at the contemporary level. It does no honor to truth but sacrifices it to tradition. It makes study a crime and learning a disaster. It glorifies the dishonest as loyal and brands the honest heretics. A realization of this has led me to conclude that until man can distinguish between the gospel which unites and the doctrine which educates the united, we will only perpetuate our follies of the past.

C. S. Lewis in his Letters to Malcolm made this trenchant observation: "It takes all sorts to make a world, or a church. This may be even truer of a church. If grace perfects nature it must expand all our natures into the full richness of the diversity which God intended when he made them, and heaven will display far more variety than hell. 'One fold' doesn't mean 'one pool.' Cultivated roses and daffodils are not more alike than wild roses and daffodils."

In his series of sermons on "The Liberty of Prophesying," Jeremy Taylor deals in number thirteen, with the topic of the deportment to be used toward persons disagreeing. Here are his words: "Whoever persecutes a disagreeing person, arms all the world against himself, and all pious people of his own persuasion, when the scales of authority return to his adversary, and attest his contradictory; and then, what can he urge for mercy for himself, or his party that sheweth none to other?"

3. The objection has been made to your thinking that you believe one must be right about the gospel but after that you do not

care what he thinks about the rest of the Bible. Isn't that a dangerous position to take?

It certainly would be dangerous to advocate such a thing, but in this case, the real danger lies with those who make such a false accusation. I have observed that those who know the most about what I advocate are those who have never read a word I have ever written. Even preachers operate upon the basis of hearsay and take third-hand testimony without making the slightest personal enquiry or investigation before they join the ancient order of rumor-mongers and the guild of gossip-circulators. I say "even preachers," as if they were a breed apart. I sometimes think they may be the worst of the lot in this respect.

This really does not bother me one bit. Since Jesus entered into my life and took the "Vacancy sign" from the front door of my heart, threw up the shades so the sun could shine in, and moved into the inner apartment, I am no longer disturbed by what insecure, fear-ridden and guilt-haunted brethren report. It took me a long time to get to the place where I could share in the transcendent bliss which belongs to those against whom all manner of evil is spoken falsely for his sake.

I admit and confess that such things used to flatten me out and make me feel as low and sticky as an ant in a puddle of syrup, but not any more. Since he has taken over I can rejoice and be exceeding glad. Nothing makes me happier than to realize that those who attack my position have to lie to do it. If what they said was true I would have no inclination to throw my hat in the air and shout, but as it is I can vibrate with joy that is real!

I do not think one should ignore reports simply because they are baseless and have no foundation. Even one who is on a ladder painting a house, may have to take time from such a beautification project to swat an occasional yellow-jacket.

However, he must not make that his chief aim and forget his original avocation. The unfortunate thing about my explanations is that those who read them do not need them, and those who need them do not read them!

There's another thing that strikes me as being a little peculiar also, and that is that brethren are often more unfair than those who make no profession of faith in Jesus. A lot of brethren are not really concerned with what you say. They already know what you think, and no amount of protestation upon your part will make any difference. As La Fontaine put it: "Nothing is more dangerous than a friend without discretion; even a prudent enemy is preferable." No wonder Martin Luther prayed, "Lord, deliver me from my enemies, but especially from my friends."

In dealing with the proper perspective of the faith which saves, and the doctrine which feeds, it must be remembered that both are from God, and both are important for the purpose for which they were given. It is important for a baby to be born and delivered into the family relationship, but after birth it is also important that the baby continue to eat and be nourished. But birth is a single act, a one-time occurrence, while eating is a life process. One does not on the day of his birth eat all that he will require for the rest of his life. No one is born a mature person, although he possesses all of the organs essential to being.

Obedience to the gospel brings us into the family. There is no other way to enter the world than by birth, and no other way to enter into the new creation than by spiritual birth. The gospel is essential to being. And the gospel consists of facts, validated by testimony, which must be believed, in order to transfer one from a state of alienation into one of reconciliation with God. The gospel is a definitive message of historical fact related to the Word of God who was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The doctrine upon which those feed who have been born

into the divine family is essential to continued growth and development. But one need not be right about everything God has revealed in order to have life or to share in the family relationship. The reason for this is because the family relationship is not contingent upon being free from all error but upon being in Christ Jesus. It is Jesus Christ, and him crucified, that constituted the apostolic proclamation, and thus constitutes the basis of our acceptance in the beloved.

There is room in the family of God, as in every other family, for those who may be mistaken about many things. If there were not room for such there would be no family “for in many things we all offend,” as James wrote. It is always better to be right than to be wrong. No one should choose to be in error and I do not know of any brethren who do. We should constantly study and diligently investigate in order to arrive at the truth upon any matter of concern. But life does not depend upon a person being right, but upon being in the right person. It is very simple. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.” Life depends upon having the Son and not upon having perfect knowledge or an unfailing memory. And one who is not free to make mistakes is not free at all!

It is a wee bit silly for preachers to say in one article that I do not care what one thinks about the rest of the Bible, as a certain editor did, only to write in his very next issue, “Brother Ketcherside is one of the most perceptive Biblical scholars among us today.” The problem with that brother is not that I do not care about the rest of the Bible, but rather that I do not give the snap of my finger for our traditions which make void the scriptures, by emptying them of their true meaning and content.

I still insist that if one is right about Jesus he can be wrong about many other things and still be saved, but if he is wrong about Jesus he can be right about everything else and still be lost. Intellectual rightness will not save us apart from Christ, and intellectual error or imbecility will not damn us unless it

leads us to deny him and to trust in our own righteousness which we rescue from the garbage dump.

Jesus is greater than anything that has been written about him. The written word does not exhaust the Living Word. He dwells in the light unto which no man can approach. He only has immortality and no mortal can ever encompass him fully with a finite mind. But we can accept him as the way, the truth, and the life, and we can walk in the way a step at a time, we can be led into deeper truths each passing day, and we can share in the life each thrilling minute.

But we are as much in The Way when we take our first step as when we take our last, and we are as much in the truth when we accept him in childlike faith as when our expanding spiritual consciousness leads us into deepening realms of thought. One is as much in a river when he steps into the shallows as he will ever be, but he does not truly swim in the depths until he launches out into the deep.

My answer to my would-be detractors is my own life. It would be vain to profess a love for the doctrine of Christ if I never studied it, or if I ground out only the traditional grist of a party mill, feeding it back into the millstones from simplistic sermon outline books which are as puerile now as when I depended upon them in my ignorance and childhood immaturity. I challenge my beloved brethren who love the Book to read it with unveiled face. I challenge them to discard the lens prescribed and ground for them by our institutional complex, and let the word lead them into a genuine and profound relationship with the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

I want never to worship the Bible. Bibliolatry is like Mariolatry. Mary was God's vehicle to deliver Jesus to the world, and the Bible is God's vehicle to deliver the world to Jesus. But there is a great difference between the taxi which

takes you to the doctor and the physician to whom you are taken. And it is possible to get so hooked on talking about and discussing the taxicab you might not make it to the doctor's office before the door is shut. I do not want to become so involved with the mechanics of the Bible that I never meet the Great Physician. Some of my brethren end up with a head full of scriptural quotations and a heart empty of Jesus. Your ability to dangle keys on a mental chain will not keep you from perishing in the cold if you do not know how to use them to open the door and enter into the warmth of the house of love!

4. I was born and reared in Kentucky, where we were taught to have nothing to do with premillennial congregations. Are you implying that we were wrong in thus drawing a line?

I not only say it is wrong, but I say it is a sin to divide God's glorious family into warring tribes and hostile parties over such things as an opinion about the millennium. Kentucky is a wonderful state. It is the home of Cane Ridge and the locale of the Great Revival. It is the home of Lexington, site of the union of the Christians and Reformers. But the heirs of a noble concept have not measured up to the stature of their fathers, and have served only to split and rive the once fruitful tree of their paternal planting.

Just because one was fortunate enough to enter the world inside the border of the Bluegrass State provides no ground for ignoring the instructions given by the Holy Spirit to govern our relationship to our brethren in the kingdom of heaven. Brethren in Kentucky, like those of us in Missouri, are under orders not to pass judgment upon one another, and not to hold one another in contempt. We are to "pursue the things that make for peace and build up the common life." The scriptures teach us, "In a word, accept one another as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God."

There is no such thing as a premillennial congregation. There are no doubt congregations where a goodly number of the

brethren hold the opinion that Jesus will return before the millennium, and there might be an occasional one where all of the constituency hold that position. But even this does not make such a group a “premillennial congregation” unless the brethren demand as a condition of membership that you subscribe to this viewpoint as a condition of being accepted. I do not know of any congregation with that kind of creed!

I have labored with congregations in Kentucky and Tennessee which have been branded as premillennial by partisans around them, and I have been welcomed and received as a brother in the Lord Jesus. My common experience is that those congregations are more open and willing to recognize God’s other children than are some of their bitter critics. This may be because they have learned the meaning of grace and discovered a genuine sense of freedom in Christ. Those who become entangled in their exclusive brier patches which they have planted and cultivated are always inclined to attack and snap at others who are not trapped in their doctrinal thicket.

It is ridiculous to shatter the family of God upon earth over how and when our “elder brother” will return from the far country. If we continue to clobber one another we may all be ashamed when he arrives, and unworthy to greet him. It is not an understanding of the details of his second coming which makes our relationship possible but an acceptance of the fact of his first coming in the flesh. “This is how we may recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.”

I am convinced that if one believes with all of his heart that Jesus is the Christ and lives up to the commitment which this involves, he will not lose his reward even if he is mistaken about all that is involved in it. The fact is that I do not know all that God has prepared for me, but whatever it is, I want to be prepared for it.

Brethren who take the premillennial position accept Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah. Those who take the opposite position accept the same thing. Probably a majority of the brethren have no particular position and do not know what all the fuss is about. Regardless of what anyone thinks or says, God's will is going to be done. Certainly someone is mistaken. In some respects they may all be. But human mistakes will not deter the fulfillment of God's program and need not hinder our participation in his blessing.

I say "need not" for the simple reason that if I build a party or faction around either position and cause a cleavage in the body I will lose my reward. One might prove to be absolutely correct about the millennium and still come under condemnation if he "set at nought" his brethren. On the other hand, one might be wrong about the millennium and still be saved if he loved all of the brethren and did not try to impose his views upon their conscience.

It is not necessary to "take a stand" on the thousand year reign in order to get to heaven. The Pharisees among us are always trying to con the brethren into "taking a stand on the issues" under threat of excommunication here and hell hereafter. This is the very essence of factionalism. But all you need to do is to take an unwavering stand for Jesus Christ as Lord of life and "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." The Revelation letter was not written until near the close of the first century, and by that time thousands of disciples had suffered death and gone to their reward. There is no indication that they had even heard of the millennium, much less "taken a stand" on it!

No one can prove that a single one of the apostles except John ever heard that the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, would "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." Most of the brethren now, with the whole canon before them, take a position on Revelation

20:4 and then read it back into about everything the apostles wrote and Jesus said. They are equally certain that all of the holy prophets, the Son of God, and the chosen apostles were “millennialists” of their various kinds. It is astonishing how, when men get a certain stance or bias, they can find it on every page of the Bible, staring out at them in the most unlikely places. And all of them become quite upset that others cannot recognize their mental phantoms and wispy ghosts of ideas.

I am not arguing that there is not a correct interpretation of Revelation 20. I am quite convinced there is! I am not arguing that, since there is a right interpretation, that others are not wrong! I believe they are. Above all else, I do not contend that one view is as good as another. That would be absurd. But what I am saying is that no view or opinion, right or wrong, about the thousand-year reign, is as important as receiving Jesus and God’s other children.

“This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded” (1 John 3:23). I know a number of brethren who give their allegiance to Jesus Christ and differ with me about the millennium. And I am not about to deny their allegiance because of our doctrinal differences. I do not compromise my thinking nor sacrifice my position when I labor with brethren who differ with me. We talk about our divergent views in love but I never seek to bind my understanding of the millennial reign upon them. I can listen to their explanations without rancor and with the utmost love, and since I am no longer a factionalist I do not seek to “convert” them. If they cannot concur with me I do not quit loving them. I give no ultimatums and issue no commands or demands. I am no longer playing God with other saints.

I admit that some of the brethren get a little trigger-happy and want to take me into their particular millennial corral, but I am used to that procedure in every party and it never perturbs me. Since I started writing on fellowship and trying to be nice to

all of the brethren, every party has put out the word from time to time that I am weakening and will soon line up with them. But I am not that weak. I will never again line up with any group that demands as a price for their love that I hate other brethren. I am through with all of that silly and childish approach to the majestic kingdom.

It is a sin to fragment into exclusive parties over the question of the millennium, the scripturality of instrumental music, the support of television programs, and all of the rest of the nitty-gritty which we have elevated to such importance that it obscures the divine relationship made possible by the blood of Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink. Neither is it a view of the millennium, instrumental music or individual cups. It is righteousness, joy and peace. These other things when elevated to dogmatic status renounce righteousness, jeopardize joy and pervert peace. No opinion or interpretation of a doctrinal issue should ever separate those who have been called into the fellowship of the Son of God, and none ever will until men in their pride seek to force their fellows to conformity with human wisdom!

About the Church

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[Abstract]

The questions with which I am dealing in this issue resulted from an interview with a young brother who was doing a paper on the theme of my writings concerning the nature of the church. Space will not permit me to deal with all of the questions but the following will give you a good idea of my position.

1. *Do you regard the kingdom of God as identical with the church for which Jesus died?*

I think the expression “kingdom of God” is a more extensive one than the word church as used in the new covenant scriptures. Kingdom is uniformly from *basileia* and this does not refer to place, location or territory, but to rule, reign or sovereignty. The expression “kingdom of God” thus denotes the sovereign Lordship of God over his people or over the universe of his creation. There has never been a time when the kingdom of God did not exist.

David declared that the Lord “is king for ever and ever” (Psalm 10:16) and said he was “the great sovereign over all the earth” (Psalm 47:2). He wrote, “God is king of all the earth . . . God reigns over the nations, God is seated on his holy throne.” God did not abdicate his sovereignty because of sin. He has always occupied the throne and held sway over the universe.

When the Word became flesh and came to dwell among us, bringing grace and truth, a new order was introduced, and men were called upon to reform their lives because the rule of heaven was approaching.

It was the intention of the Father to bestow all authority in heaven and upon earth on the Son, and those who accepted the sovereignty of Jesus over their lives, and acknowledged his lordship, would become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Since these were *called out* of a state of alienation into a union with Jesus, they were regarded as the *ekklesia*, the elect of God, a term which has been unfortunately and mistakenly rendered “church” in the King James and a good many subsequent versions.

The apostle Paul wrote to God’s people at Colossae, “The Father has made you fit to share the heritage of God’s people in the realm of light. He rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us away into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom our release is secured and our sins, forgiven” (Col. 1:12, 13). All of those who have been born of the water and of the Spirit constitute the community of the new humanity, and are in the kingdom of heaven. Because the foundation principle is the fact of the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus, our Lord declared he would plant his community upon it, and spoke of it as the kingdom of heaven.

There is no difference between the scope of the expression “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven.” Matthew employed the latter term because his gospel was addressed to the Jews. It was conventional among them to substitute “heaven” for “God” because of their extreme reluctance to speak the word God, lest they unconsciously use it in vain and come under the condemnation of the third commandment in the Decalogue.

In a sense, the kingdom of heaven is more comprehensive now than is the church. Everyone who is in the church is in the

kingdom, but not everyone who is in the kingdom is in the church. There are infants and imbeciles in the kingdom but not in the church, since the latter is composed of those who are responsible believers. There are angels in the kingdom and when the Son of man comes on the throne of His glory the holy angels will accompany him. It is those who are responsible for their sins before God who must be born from above in order to gain identity in the kingdom.

While the kingdom as it is now exhibited on earth embraces those who are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, and who are still in the flesh, there remains another and a glorified phase. God always adapts his revelation and requirements to man as he is and the kingdom of heaven as now administered in the earth is adapted to men in the flesh. It is so ordered as to make possible forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and prepare us for sharing the life of God and the redeemed ones in a state free from the limitations and inhibitions of time and space.

There is an exalted and glorified habitude which flesh and blood cannot inherit (1 Cor. 15:50). Accordingly there must be a resurrection for those who are dead and a transformation of those who are alive when the Lord comes. There will be only two classes of persons— those who are on the earth and those who are in it. These will exchange the animal body for a spiritual body consonant with the full enjoyment of eternal life. Thus, Paul solemnly charges Timothy by the coming appearance and reign of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:1), and declares that “the Lord will rescue me from every attempt to do me harm, and keep me safe until his heavenly reign begins” (4:18).

My personal view, reached from my own study, is that there has always been a kingdom or rule of heaven, and that the *ekklesia*, the called-out ones constitute “the people of God” on earth at present and are the manifestation of the rule which began when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, having

been made both Lord and Christ. But there remains for the people of God a glorification in which they will share when this present life of suffering is over. “Our troubles are slight and short-lived; and their outcome an eternal glory which outweighs them all” (2 Cor. 4:17).

It can be seen from what I have written that I regard the word “kingdom” as applied to the rule of the heavens, as more expansive than “church” which refers to the called-out ones under his headship. The kingdom of God did not begin with the church. So I do not say that kingdom and church are synonymous terms in the new covenant scriptures, although they are sometimes used interchangeably. There is a difference as every astute linguistic student will at once recognize.

If your own reasoning and education has led you to a divergent view I will not fall out with you or argue with you about it. I shall simply rejoice that you have thought enough about it to form your own mental conviction regarding a subject of so much spiritual interest. My only concern is that all of us live up to the responsibility of citizens in such a magnificent realm of faith, hope and love. “The kingdom we are given is unshakable; let us therefore give thanks to God, and so worship him as he would be worshiped, with reverence and awe; for our God is a devouring fire.”

To be quite honest with you, I am not the least bit concerned with sectarian debates over the kingdom because I have learned that men argue and fight about various phases and aspects of the kingdom, each one viewing it from his own level of understanding and attainment. Often they are all partly right and partly wrong. It might do us all good to occasionally review the poem written by John Godfrey Saxe (c. 1850) entitled “The Blind Men and the Elephant.”

You’ll recall that “six men of Indostan to learning much inclined” went to examine an elephant, “though all of them were

blind.” The one who stumbled against the side of the beast declared an elephant was like a wall, the one who felt the tusk opted for a spear, while the one who seized the trunk contended it was like a snake. The fourth felt about the knee and thought “the elephant is very like a tree,” while the fifth chanced to touch the ear and concluded it was like a fan. The sixth grabbed hold of the tail and forthwith thought of the elephant as “very like a rope.”

And so these men of Indostan

Disputed loud and long,

Each in his own opinion

Exceeding stiff and strong,

Though each was partly in the right

And all were in the wrong.

So oft, in theologic wars,

The disputants, I ween,

Rail on in utter ignorance

Of what each other mean,

And prate about an Elephant

Not one of them has seen.

I cherish my personal views about the nature and extent of the kingdom of God, although I have only begun to understand some of the former mystery which has been revealed through Jesus Christ and the holy apostles. I share my observations, as I have here, when asked about them, but I will not dogmatize

about a matter so stupendous as the transcendent rule of the heavens.

I never forget the words of Thomas Jefferson, written in 1816: “On the dogmas of religion, as distinguished from the moral principles, all mankind from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarreling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind.” One can be a loyal citizen of the United States without understanding all of the ramifications of political science, and he can be a faithful subject of the Lord of life and still be quite ignorant of many things the prophets foretold and the apostle revealed. If he cannot, a lot of us are in serious trouble!

2. In your previous writings you have expressed the thought that the word “church” should not be in the Bible. I do not understand what you mean. Can you explain it to me?

I will try. Sometimes when a thing seems so obvious and decisive to me I have difficulty in making it clear to others. I overlook the fact that they have not done the countless hours of reading and research on the topic that preceded my own personal conclusion. I am sure you will forgive me if I tend to spend more time on this subject than you think it deserves. It is far more important than a mere hassling or haggling over a semantic whim. A real principle is involved.

The word rendered by “church” in some English versions is *ekklesia*, which is a combined form of *ek*, out, and *kaleo*, to call. It does not, however, mean simply to call a people out of a condition, but to call them together, or summon them into assembly. The corresponding word in Hebrew is *qahal*, which occurs 162 times in the old covenant scriptures. It is rendered by assembly 17 times, company 17, and congregation 86. In the Septuagint Version, which was the Greek version in use when

Jesus was upon the earth, the word used as the equivalent was *ekklesia*. We can be certain that Jesus used the word with the same connotation as did the rest of the Jewish community.

It is interesting that the translators appointed by King James, when dealing with the old covenant scriptures never once used the word church. They had the Septuagint before them and knew where it used *ekklesia* as a translation of *qahal*, but they unvaryingly used assembly or congregation, and never once used church. Why did they not follow the same formula in the new covenant scriptures?

They certainly had a precedent. In commissioning them, the king ordered that they were to revise and compare previous translations with The Bishops' Bible being followed and as little altered "as the truth of the original" would permit. Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible were to be used where they agreed better with the text than the Bishops' Bible. And the word "congregation" had appeared in these as a translation of *ekklesia*.

Moreover, before the text was printed, twelve delegates from the original fifty-four scholars met to review and revise the entire translation. In addition to the versions the king had mentioned in his directions, they had for comparison Luther's German translation, Zwingli's German translation, the Rheims and Douay versions, Olivetan's French translation, Latin translations by Pagninus, Munster, Castalio, and Erasmus, plus the Plantin Polyglot, and Spanish and Italian translations. But they also used the Aramaic Targum, the Syriac New Testament, and the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts available at that time.

Why did they ignore scholarship, previous translations, and their own consistent renderings in the old covenant scriptures, by insisting on the word "church" in the new covenant scriptures? "Church" is not a translation of *ekklesia*. It

is not even related to it. It occurs in various languages, such as the German *kirche*, the Dutch *kerk*, and the Scottish *kirk*. But it is derived from *kuriakon oikos*, the house of a lord. It probably stems from the days of feudalism when the lord lived in a manor atop the hill and his serfs eked out a wretched existence in the valley below. When it was adopted by the religious world it was applied to “a building for Christian worship,” a structure set apart from the homes, dedicated and consecrated to a worship of God.

This whole concept is utterly foreign to the revelation of God in Christ and is responsible for some of the most tragic deviations from the divine purpose. It is still perpetuated by well-meaning, but ignorant people, who have organized and institutionalized the redeemed ones into various types of sectarian polarization. So widespread is this misconception that one who calls attention to it now is regarded as a heretic or a nitwit.

The reason why the translators appointed by James started us on the rough and weary road of institutionalism is quite simple. James the First believed in the divine right of kings. He held that his right was hereditary, and that he was responsible to God alone and not to his subjects. As “Defender of the Faith” he regarded himself as head of the State Church, and in a position to authorize a version to be read publicly in it. The term “congregation” tended to weaken the establishment over which he regarded himself as head.

His Majesty recommended fourteen rules to regulate the translators and sent copies of them to Cambridge, Oxford and Westminster, where the work was to be done. The third rule reads: “The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word church, not to be translated congregation, etc.” Apparently the king knew that the translators would render *ekklesia* by congregation if they were not forbidden by his legal fiat. One can but wonder what would have happened if the unwarranted word

“church” had never been used in the scriptures? What would our signboards say? What would have happened to all of the sermons on the name of the church?

Alexander Campbell recognized the importance of this matter and in the appendix to *Living Oracles* inserted this note: “Wherever the word *church* is found in the common version, *congregation* will be found in this. We shall let Doctors Campbell and Doddridge defend this preference; for although they have not always so rendered it, they give the best of reasons why it should always be so translated.”

He then proceeds to give lengthy quotations from the two eminent scholars, and ends with this observation about the preference for *congregation*: “There is no good reason given, nor can there be any produced, for departing, in any instance, from the acknowledged meaning of a word of such frequent occurrence; and more especially when it is admitted that this term fitly represents the original one. The term *church*, or *kirk*, is an abbreviation of the words *kuriou oikos*, the house of the Lord, and does not translate the term *ekklesia*.”

In the book *Alexander Campbell and His New Version*, Cecil K. Thomas writes: “A translation which was probably as significant as ‘immerse’ was the substitution of ‘congregation’ for ‘church.’ Campbell frequently cited the older English versions, for this usage. His reason for giving the reading was that he felt ‘church’ to be an ecclesiastical word. It had taken on a theological connotation which had not attached itself to *ekklesia* in its New Testament usage. He felt that the word ‘congregation’ properly represented the Greek word without being cumbered with a variety of meanings such as that of church building or ecclesiastical organization.”

In 1955 there came from the press of Dobson Books, Ltd., in London, the first translation of the new covenant scriptures into English by a Jew, Hugh J. Schonfield. It was called *The*

Authentic New Testament, and the publishers said of the translator: "By placing the New Testament firmly in its own period, and relating the text to the contemporary literature, customs and ideas, he has been able to furnish a vivid and intelligible rendering and throw new light on many passages. It is on these grounds that the title arises, the term 'authentic' relating to the quality of the New Testament itself as it may be read in the Greek, its accurate reflection of the atmosphere of the period in which the documents were written."

In every instance the word "immerse" is used instead of baptize, envoy is used instead of apostle, supervisor instead of bishop, and community instead of church. Of such terms Schonfield says in his Introduction, "The translator has felt it to be important for his purpose not to employ in his rendering familiar ecclesiastical terms where they could be avoided, since the use of them would give the impression that they were peculiarly Christian in origin and association." We read in *The Authentic New Testament* such passages as these:

John the Immerser appeared in the wilderness, announcing a penitential immersion for forgiveness of sins.

'Travel the world over' he told them, 'and proclaim the News to all creation. Whoever believes and is immersed will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'

And so I tell you, since you are Peter, upon that rock I will found my Community, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

All the Christian communities send their regards
(Romans 16:16).

Now, all of this will help explain why I contend that the word "church" should not be in the scriptures. It is an ecclesiastical term injected by translators under orders of a profligate king. It is not a translation of the word it purports to

represent, and it serves only to confuse and confound the minds of the masses as to the meaning of the Spirit.

3. *What false impressions can result from use of the word “church”? Granted you are right about it, what difference will it make?*

It hardly seems to me that your question reflects a wholesome attitude for one who claims to “speak where the Bible speaks.” It is important to remember that this involves speaking as the Bible speaks, that is, reproducing and conveying the ideas which the Spirit put into the original words. If translators employ a term which does not represent the original, or which serves to obscure it, we should discard that word in favor of one which more nearly portrays the divine message.

In listing his “Synopsis of Reform” the first obligation stated by Alexander Campbell was to recapture the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. Men cannot think without the use of words, but it is likewise true that the words we use will determine what and how we think. If we would think clearly we must employ words which correctly delineate ideas and intents. To settle for a misleading term simply because it is hallowed by tradition is merely to prefer error to truth after it has become sanctified by repeated usage.

The word “church” in our day conveys an idea of a religious establishment or organization wholly foreign to the new covenant scriptures. Nowhere has one read of “members of the church” in God’s word, yet this is a frequent idiom in our speech. By it we mean an adherent of an organization, but the Greeks had no word for such. The word *melos* referred to a limb or organ of the body, a vital and integral part of an organism. Every time the word member occurs in the new covenant scriptures it is in connection with the word body. This is not the result of mere chance, but the correct usage of the word.

So far have we digressed along the organizational route that we use the word church to designate rival religious establishments. We speak of the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, or the Presbyterian Church. But the word *ekklesia* which we have rendered “church” is not an organization, society or federation created by receiving men into “membership.” Instead it is a brotherhood consisting of all the redeemed upon earth, a body created by God and composed of every saved person in the world.

It is the community of the born again ones, joined to one another and to Jesus by the indwelling Spirit. Every reform movement which expects to return men closer to God’s ideal must begin here. If we mistake the nature of the *ekklesia*, the people of God, we will wander without a goal and breast the waves without a compass. Even Martin Luther, the monk of Ehrfurt, realized this. Kent S. Knutson, associate professor of systematic theology at Luther Theological Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota said, “Community was the key word used in original Reformation thought to describe the nature of the church. The church to Luther is the *communio sanctorum*, the sanctified community.”

He writes further about the thinking of Luther in these words: “Even the word ‘church’ seemed to have lost its usefulness. He discovered that the popular mind thought of either the church building or the institutional and organizational aspects when the German *Kirche* was mentioned. *Kirche* in the German Bible is the translation of the Greek *ekklesia*, which strictly translated means assembly or gathering. Luther maintained that this meaning would be retained better in German if the word *ekklesia* were translated ‘congregation,’ or best of all, and most clearly, ‘holy Christendom.’ The Latin *communio* he preferred to be translated *Gemeinde*, congregation or community. To make it even more simple he would have liked to have the creed read: ‘I believe that there is a holy Christian people,’ and let it go at that.”

The German reformer was more nearly correct on this than a lot of his critics with whom I am well acquainted but will not identify.

If you will pardon me, I would like to pay my respects now to one who is known by the formidable title of “The Right Reverend Lesslie Newbigin, Associate General Secretary, and Director of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism, World Council of Churches.” Lesslie Newbigin, with whom I have personally corresponded, was born in England and it was his intention to go into his father’s coal and shipping business. But his plan was defected because, as he said, he had “an experience of the reality of God” while a student at Queen’s College, Cambridge. He began a study of theology and wound up being elected a bishop of the newly-formed Church of South India in 1947.

I have been reading after his pen for a number of years and I freely acknowledge my debt to him for many insights. One of the most cherished of his books in my library of contemporary material is *The Household of God*, published in Great Britain in 1953. In it he writes: “There is an actual visible, earthly company which is addressed as ‘the people of God,’ the ‘Body of Christ.’ It is surely a fact of inexhaustible significance that what our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, nor a rule of life, but a visible community. I think that we Protestants cannot too often reflect on that fact. He committed the entire work of salvation to that community. It was not that a community gathered around an idea, so that the idea was primary and the community secondary. It was that a community called together by the deliberate choice of the Lord Himself, and recreated in Him, gradually sought—and is seeking—to make explicit who He is and what He has done.”

While I am acknowledging obligations, many of my readers who have heard me speak, will recall that I have

frequently mentioned the book *One Body in Christ*, written by Kokichi Kurosaki. I want to give you one idea developed by this sincere Japanese believer:

Fellowship between God and man, interrupted by the sin of the first Adam, was reopened by redemption bought with the blood of the last Adam. Now anyone can have direct koinonia with God and share His very life—anyone can live a life of love and unity with Christ. This is really the center of Christianity and ‘faith’ is nothing other than having this life union with God. To be justified by faith means that God has *access* to repentant sinners through Christ and is thus able to enjoy this koinonia with them.

If we will practice this living union with Christ, loving each other without any concern about sects and denominations, doctrines or forms, then we shall have the Body of Christ with him as Head. This is the Ekklesia in its truest and purest sense. Therefore, The Ekklesia is not an institution, not a system, not theology, not the words of the Bible, and not any ritual or ceremony. The Ekklesia exists where there is life union with God through Christ.

4. *Are you saying, then, that you do not believe that Jesus founded a church?*

Well, that’s putting it quite bluntly, and I am a wee bit reluctant to state it just that way. I hardly feel that one should lay his head on the chopping-block for careless thinkers to lop off with a dull axe. A good many of my brethren prefer to wander around inside of traditional fences and if someone is attracted to the wider range of God’s grace they feel obligated to practice their quick-draw and gun him down, as a sign of their fidelity to the party.

But let us face up to reality. I have said that Jesus constituted an *ekklesia* by the shedding of his blood, and that the word “church” does not represent or translate that word. Boiled

down and simmered away, this means that I do not think of Jesus as building a structured organization upon the magnificent and profound truth that he is the Messiah and the Son of the Living God. Startling as it may seem when I enunciate it, a “church” was not in God’s plan at all.

All of the debates about the divine organization, including those in which I once engaged, are so much poppycock. What Jesus did leave us is a community, the people of God, ransomed and redeemed, and drawn unto him who shed his blood to make us one. A community is composed of people drawn together by a common tie, and that common tie in this instance is trust in God’s Son. It is not a trust based upon a subjective experience, but engendered by the compelling weight of testimony and fact. It is a communion, or fellowship, and this is what Jesus really planted, a *koinonia* of sharers in the common life, the life of God, that is, eternal life.

Think of it in these terms and much of the sectarian rivalry will disappear automatically, wafted away by our freedom from the tyranny of terminology. Phoebe will become a servant of the community at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). Luke and Titus will become messengers of the communities (2 Cor. 8:23). In Ephesians 1:21, 22, you will read, “He has indeed put everything under his feet, and over and above has given him headship of the Community, which is his Body, the full dimension of him who fills the entire universe.”

This would eliminate a lot of ridiculous queries. No one would ask another upon meeting him, “Of what church are you a member?” There would be no use for such statements as “This is the first time the Lord’s church has ever met in this area.” All of our journals are continually harping on “planting the Lord’s church in Wisconsin, New Zealand, or Timbuctoo,” but if we purified our language we would learn that we have been trying to plant something in some area which God did not even plant on earth.

A necessary corollary of all this is that the community of believers in one locality may not implement their approach to the world of unbelievers around them as do those in other localities. The Message will be the same because it is the very basis upon which the community is gathered. There could be no community of heaven upon any other basis. The Message preceded the community and the community came into existence out of response to the Message. The Message is unalterable and unchangeable. Its elements are fixed because they are facts, the facts of history.

The community, and all of those who are in it, must be free to adapt to circumstances in order to make the Message effective and achieve the divine purpose of summoning and gathering those of every culture, environment and background. So long as we think of one body as a legal corporation, an organizational entity, with every facet of procedure predetermined and fixed by divine fiat, we will continue to bind the body and lose the world. We need to think long and seriously about the apostolic example.

“I am a free man and own no master; but I have made myself every man’s servant, to win over as many as possible. To Jews, I became like a Jew, to win Jews; as they are subjects of the Law of Moses, I put myself under that law to win them, although I am not myself subject to it. To win Gentiles, who are outside the Law, I made myself like one of them, although I am not in truth outside God’s law, being under the law of Christ. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or another I may save some. All this I do for the sake of the Gospel, to bear my part in proclaiming it” (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

What this means is that the Community in a Jewish area will be different than one in a Gentile area. There will be a flexibility of approach rather than rigidity of structure. No imposition of cultural means will be imposed upon others as essential to sharing in the life of Jesus. The Community of love

will, like those who compose it, “become everything in turn to men of every sort,” never once forgetting that this is not the end of its purpose, but the means to the end, to save some. This must be done “for the sake of the Gospel,” and the gospel must never be sacrificed or compromised.

In a lesser degree, and in a more pragmatic sense, this means the cessation of our own struggle to impose upon various communities of saints, the means and methods which seem best adapted to our own work of faith and labor of love. For example, a community of believers which operates its teaching process without use of classes will not seek to bind this approach upon others as the divine will, even though it may regard it as more nearly like the functioning of the primitive saints.

This will be much easier to do if we cease to talk about the church as “God’s only organization!” We are wrong on two counts! God really has no “church” and what he does have is no organization, in the sense in which we mean it. If we will think of the body of Christ as God’s organism in the world, and ourselves as hands, feet, eyes and ears, we can function as the occasion requires. My physical body does not remove a flat tire, or mow the lawn, with the same motions or actions it exhibits in playing softball. I adjust myself to the immediate task at hand and have no guilt of conscience because I become everything in turn.

It is my opinion that so long as we are “hooked” on organization and “high” on institutionalism we will continue to develop sectarian rivalry, promote the party spirit, hate other brethren, and destroy those for whom Christ died. It will be a difficult task for most of us to change because of the fears and insecurity offered by our partisan walls and enclosures. After all, the traffic seems pretty dashing and dazzling to one who has spent most of his life in prison, and I can sympathize with a monk who scampers back inside the monastery door after trying to cross the street to the drug store!

But Jesus left the serenity of heaven and made himself vulnerable in a body plunged headlong into a sinful world. He is still doing that, only now I am a part, an organ, of that body, and I am vulnerable. If I seem a little daring in this answer to your question, that will explain why. I am really trying to travel with Jesus, and it is not made any easier with brethren hurling verbal brickbats at you and trying to “rock you to sleep.”

5. Do you have any real hope of brethren adopting the views you have enunciated, or do you think yours is a hopeless cause?

I am not so arrogant as to assume that I will have any great success in a field in which a giant like Alexander Campbell failed. He wrote copiously on this theme and even brought out a version of the new covenant scriptures in which the word “church” did not once appear. Many of our pioneer brethren hailed this with rejoicing, but their successors, having allowed the restoration movement to become sectarianized, were caught up in the race for pride and prestige, and they wanted the movement to become “a church.” They wanted an organization like the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians.

Most of the brethren do not really think very deeply in our generation. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, it has been dangerous to think for almost a century. When conformity became the ideal, original thinking was automatically stifled. In our entrenched sectarianism a thinker immediately became a heretic and was subjected to brutal verbal attack and eventual boycott. Since every sect always “skims the brains off the top” and retains the masses of conformity, eventually a group becomes inbred in thinking, sterile and stolid. One does not need to think about his destination while on a treadmill and it is best not to think if you already have a perfect knowledge.

Secondly, tradition always blinds men to truth. Instead of the search to discover truth, it is assumed that what we have is

truth, and the only searching that is done is to find additional arguments to be used as justification for it. Most men who have a series of sermon outlines on “The Lord’s Church” are not about to scrap them and tell the audiences from which they extract financial support to defend “the church” that all have been mistaken. Imagine the consternation which would occur in Nashville or Dallas if a prominent “Church of Christ preacher” announced that there was no “church” in God’s program at all, and that the word ought not to appear in the sacred scriptures.

But I do not think mine is a hopeless cause. I am responsible for stating what appears to me to be the truth. The response to it by others is their responsibility. I can only plant and water. It is God who must give the increase. I do not know what discouragement means because my trust is in God and not in men. If I can keep the fire kindled in my brief sojourn on earth, a worthier and better qualified person may light his torch from the flame long after I am gone and lead the saints of his day a little farther out of the sectarian wilderness and closer to the land of promise.

I certainly have no hesitancy in stating my optimism, even now. We are rearing a generation of consecrated and eager young men and women who are “fed up” with our sham and show. They are disgusted with our blatant sectarianism while trying to hide behind a non-sectarian facade. They are repulsed by the emptiness and vacuity manifested in borrowed sermon outlines and they are seriously questioning the whole organizational and structural approach into which we have channeled the glorious family of God.

The task is great because of the frightful amount of “bureaucracy” and the vested interests. Even inside the sectarian framework created by Church of Christism, each party has its exclusive journals, schools and mission programs. Some have homes, loan systems, and other things with millions of dollars invested. These spiritual handmaidens seek to share

the table and the purse of the bride of Christ and huddle beneath her umbrella until she can hardly be seen in our day. Fortunately, the primitive saints had no tax shelter investments and no financial projects. Since they had nothing invested but their lives that is all they could lose.

In company with all other sects we have built up self-perpetuating interests through wills, annuities, trusts and endowments, until we cannot now stop the machinery. We equate our tax-sheltered investment programs with “stewardship to God” and the giving of millions to human organizations as “faithfulness to the Lord’s church.” And we, like all others, have our scriptural turns and twists by which we equate this with God’s ultimate design. In many places, the Christian cannot use his wealth to relieve the needs of humanity. He must funnel his “giving” through the institution, surrendering it into the hands of men who make all of the decisions, and, after taking his money, throw him out if he protests the way it is used or abused.

Perhaps there is no other organization in our modern world which practices “taxation without representation” with the same degree of flagrant disregard for the rights of individuals as the Church of Christ. Huge corporations at least mail out proxy ballots to remote investors, but among our brethren, the women, our sisters in Christ, are threatened with hell if they do not contribute of their means, and are debarred from attending business meetings in which others decide on how their money is spent. And all of this on the basis that women are to keep silent in the churches— and in “business meetings”!

So, to a lot of people it seems like sheer folly for an insignificant voice like mine to be raised against the relentless crushing power of the Juggernaut of institutionalism which would prostitute the very bride of Christ and force her to sell herself for the favors and baubles of men. But I am not at all disconcerted. I am quite convinced that if men like myself kept

still out of fear that the “stones would cry out”!

God’s will is going to be done on this earth as it is in heaven! If the great institutional complex to which the minds of men have given birth will not do it, then in other ways and other times, God will providentially make it possible for His ultimate purpose to be accomplished. My task is to be true to God as I understand His will and purpose for my life. It is to resist selling out or being frightened off. I must stand, and having done all, continue to stand. What happens to me personally is really of little concern. A few years from now my name will be forgotten, as it ought to be. But if I can resist the further encroachment of the sectarian stance and give strength to someone who otherwise might weaken in the struggle I will lay down my armor at the end with joy!

I am not certain when my brethren will reverse the trend toward institutionalism and return to the ideal of the “family of God.” But, as I visualize it, we must quit trying to be “a church” for this is something that God did not purpose. We must seek to become, instead, the people of God. If we can become a family we will be brothers and sisters, and not merely “members of a church.” There is nothing warmer than the relationship of brothers and sisters, and there is nothing colder than being members of an organization. The “church” is filled with people who are lonely and forlorn. They are sad, distressed and feel forsaken. This is especially true of “churches” with a legalistic approach where the threat of damnation hovers over you every day and every little misstep brings deep inner remorse and a guilt feeling to dog your steps from that time on.

In a family circle the fortunate constituents have the same care for one another. It is real and genuine. It is not an attitude adopted only when you come to the table. Everyone wants to be with everyone else, because love is a magnetic force which draws them closer together. Many of our ills will pass away if we will just be “family” instead of “church.” And this is what I am

really pleading for in our generation. I think there is real hope for us! Please allow me to quote for you a little statement by Elton Trueblood as it appears in that outstanding little volume entitled *The Common Ventures of Life*:

“If we wish to have a really important religion we must make a complete break with the one-hour-a-week concept. We must see our religion, not primarily as what goes on in a peculiar building with pointed arches and stained-glass windows, but as the way in which all ordinary enterprises are conducted. It must be connected with the way we eat, the way we work, the way we make love, the way we think, the way we dream, the way we die. We must become aware of the devotional paradox to the effect that frequently the books which are most conducive to the spirit of devotion were not written for that purpose and are not usually classified as religious books at all. Religion, to be effective, must be envisaged, not as one enterprise among others, but as the frame in which all enterprises are set. *That religion will have most meaning which touches common life redemptively at the most points.*”

The Right Name

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[Abstract]

In this issue I want to share with you some of the queries which arose during an open forum session in which I was fielding questions from the audience one morning during a series of studies in Illinois, on the nature of God's will as exhibited in the community of the reconciled and sanctified. By some turn of events we became involved in a discussion of "the name of the church" and pursued it for almost two hours. I will give you only some of the highlights of the session and investigation.

Let me say, by way of prelude, that for some reason the subject with which we are dealing seems fraught with possibilities of misunderstanding. I know that when I first awakened to the truth of what I am now saying, I was inclined not only to resist it, but even to resent it. Long after I had given up on the matter intellectually, I clung to it emotionally. I had delivered too many discourses entitled "What Name Shall The Church Wear?" I had written too many articles and passed out too many tracts. My pride was at stake. But even more than this, fear entered in, fear that if I gave up on this I would have no way of identifying with the people of God. I suffered through the whole traumatic complex until integrity won the battle and honesty carried the day.

I eagerly trust that my readers will accept this paper each month as a sharing experience. I have neither the desire nor

inclination to make it a propaganda sheet or a dogmatic journal. As you read it you will find much with which you cannot concur but this will in no way militate against my love and concern for you. It is in this spirit I replied to the questions orally and in this spirit I print some of my answers now. If you do not see it as I do you are still my brother regardless of how you feel about it.

1. *I understand that you take the position that the church has no scriptural name. Is that correct?*

Like so many reports of what I am alleged to believe this is partly correct and partly in error. I am going to forget my personal feelings about the word “church” itself during this interview and simply go along with the conventional usage to avoid unnecessary complication or needless confusion. Most of my brethren are mixed up enough now without me adding to the mix-up. What I have said is that the church has no official title or exclusive designation. The word church is a noun, and is therefore the name of something.

My position is that the church is always designated only by common nouns and these only indicate relationship. They describe the church but they do not give it a title. The church properly has many names but it has no proper name. It depends upon what aspect you are discussing as to the term you should employ to signify it.

From the standpoint of divine ownership it is called the church of God (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Gal. 1:13, etc.). He purchased it. The *Authentic Version* renders Acts 20:28, “See to it that you tend God’s community, which he acquired with the blood of his own Son.”

As to constituency it is a church of saints (1 Cor. 14:33), being composed of the holy ones, those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. As to heirship, or inheritance, it is the church of the firstborn ones whose names are enrolled in heaven (Heb.

12:23). As to divine relationship it is the church of God which is in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 2:14).

From the standpoint of its head or authority, it is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Gal. 1:22). As to government it is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19), the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of man, or the kingdom of God's dear son. As to organization it is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), but it is also the temple of God, the garden (or husbandry) of God, and the people of God.

In their eagerness for sectarian exclusiveness, men have lifted first one and then another of these terms of relationship and have elevated it to a sectarian title. Thus we have The Church of God, The Church of the Firstborn, The Church of God in Christ, The Church of the Brethren and The Friends Church. We also have The Church of Christ, and for the very same reason. But if these others are sectarian titles because they are used to designate parties containing only a fragment or part of the saved, or of those who profess salvation, so is the term Church of Christ.

I do not say that the church has no scriptural name. I say that it has a number of them, and that all are valid and bestowed by the Spirit through revelation. But it is not scriptural to fasten upon one of these while ignoring the others and elevating it to titular dignity. To do that is to derogate the other names which were derived from the same source.

2. But did not Jesus say "Upon this rock I will build my church," and is it not his church?

Indeed he did say that and he did exactly what he said he would do, and the church is his. But this statement only shows possession. It does not provide the title or name of the church as a lot of sermon outlines mistakenly imply. If I say, "Upon this lot I will park my car," you know to whom the car belongs, but you

do not know the name of the car. You cannot tell from my statement if it is a Ford, Buick, or Chevrolet.

Automobile makers designate or name their creations because they have rivals in the automobile field. But God did not give a title to his new creation because it has no rivals. It does not need to be distinguished from another *ekklesia*, because there is no other. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.” The one body does not need to be distinguished from another body, because there is no other. Only sects have to have titles because there are many sects, and all are rivals.

Is it not noteworthy that the expression “the Church of Christ” does not even appear in the scriptures? How could the apostles avoid it if it was “the scriptural name”? And how can it be the scriptural name if it never appears in the scriptures? The term “church of God” appears repeatedly, and once the apostle wrote to tell the Romans “the churches of Christ salute you,” which the *Authentic Version* renders, “The communities of Christians send greetings.”

The term church of Christ is no more the official title than is the term body of Christ. The first signifies that the saints are called out, the second that they are bonded together. The fact is that God has bestowed no official or approved title upon the redeemed as a group. God is not sectarian and he does not want us to be.

3. *How do you propose that we be distinguished from the denominations?*

Certainly the most ineffective and inconsistent way is by denominating ourselves. Most people who talk so glibly about “the denominations” do not know what the word means. It is from the Latin *de* and *nominare*, and means to name, to give a name or apply a title to. My brethren do not realize that by

arguing for a certain name to distinguish themselves from denominations they make themselves into a denomination.

God created no denomination which is the reason he did not denominate His people. It is to be regretted that in our sectarian age we want to develop another narrow and exclusive sect and bestow upon it a denomination. There are too many sects and denominations on earth now, without us attempting to make another one in order to be distinguished from the rest.

Jesus said all men would know we were his disciples if we love one another. Since we have failed to make too good a showing on that basis, and men sometimes think we belong to the devil by the way we treat one another, we want to cover up our shortcomings and make sure the world knows who we are by erecting signboards and draping pulpit hangings with our official motto— The Churches of Christ Salute You (Romans 16:16). That sign has often appeared on structures in which hatred, hostility, and harassment marked every business meeting. But Jesus did not say that all men would know we are Christians by our advertisements!

We have no copyright on either the title or the slogan, any more than we do on “Church of God” or any other designation or denomination. As proof of the fact that you can’t trust what you read on signboards, I know of a number of places where groups meet behind signs reading “Church of Christ” and have nothing to do with each other. They blast each other as sectarian, liberal or some other derogatory term. Having a title over the door does not make you Christ-like and if you were Christ-like perhaps you would not need a title.

Watchman Nee wrote very perceptively when he penned these words: “Throughout the Word of God we find no name attached to a church save the name of a place, e.g., the church in Jerusalem, the church in Lystra, the church in Derbe, the church in Colosse, the church in Troas, the church in

Thessalonica, the church in Antioch. This fact cannot be overemphasized that in scripture no other name but the name of a locality is ever connected with a church, and division of the Church into churches is solely on the ground of difference in locality.” As I generally state it, the proper name of the church is not a proper name. It may be correct to use church of Christ as a name of the church, but it is never correct to use it as the name of a church!

4. If the church is the bride of Christ should she not wear the name of her husband?

I always cringe a little when someone asks this because I fear that my own statements of the past have been misleading. One of my favorite topics in my meetings used to be “Whose Name Shall The Bride Wear?” Once many years ago, when William Hensley and I were laboring at Red Cloud, Nebraska, I wrote a tract upon this very question. It became popular enough that 50,000 copies were distributed by brethren all over the United States.

I now realize that the reasoning I employed was childish and irrational. It was also unscriptural. I am sure it must have grown out of the sectarian attitude and exemplified the arrogance of my view that our faction was the kingdom of God on earth to the exclusion of all his other children. As I began to study the word without partisan spectacles I became amazed at the wide gulf between what God revealed and what I was trying to prove from it. I read into the Word of God a whole lot of things the apostles had not written into it. It made me ashamed of my rationalization and I wished that I could have recalled the tract I prepared with such glee.

Your question provides me an opportunity of explaining what changed my mind and opened up my thinking to new vistas and insights. It also serves to remind me how we take our own culture and read it back into the Bible to establish undeniably

something the sacred writers never even dreamed of implying. No woman in the Bible ever wore her husband's name. That is true both in the old and new covenant scriptures. Women bore their own names, and the identity was established by a simple statement of the relationship.

Thus we read about Sarah, Abraham's wife (Gen. 16:1); Milcah, the wife of Nahor (Gen. 24:15); Jael, the wife of Heber (Judges 4:17); and Bath-sheba, Uriah's wife (2 Sam. 11:3). Again we read of Ananias, and Sapphira, his wife (Acts 5:1); and Felix and his wife Drusilla (Acts 24:24). No one ever reads of Mrs. Noah, Mrs. Moses, or Mrs. Simon Peter. The reason for this is clear. It is only in our western culture that wives wear the names of their husbands, and even here the custom does not go very far back into history. Thus, the argument that the bride should wear the husband's name is not based upon scripture, and while not scriptural anywhere it would not be culturally relevant anywhere except in our western framework. Our brethren overlook the fact that the body of Christ does not just embrace the saved from Europe and America, but also includes those from Asia and Africa.

Even if the argument was valid, "Church of Christ" would not be the name of the bride. In the first place, Christ is not the name of the groom. That is his office. His name is Jesus. The angel said, "You shall call his name Jesus" (Matt. 1:21). When he was born, Joseph "called his name Jesus" (Matt. 1:25). Signs and wonders were done by the father in the name of his holy child Jesus (Acts 4:30). The apostles were commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40). It is at the name of Jesus that every knee shall bow (Phil. 2:10). So, if the church is to wear the groom's name we will have to call her "Mrs. Jesus" since the word "church" is only a common noun. How would you like to go down the highway and see a sign reading "Mrs. Jesus meets here for worship!"

I get a bang out of people who write in and give me fits for

using the expression Church of Christ. They say that using a capital “C” on church makes the title a denomination like Baptist Church, Church of God, or Christian Church. They want me to capitalize “Church” in all of these other titles, but use a lower case letter for “church of Christ.” The idea is that if you are a big “C” church you are a denomination, but if you are a little “c” church you are the one the Lord ordained. Of course, it is not the spelling that makes you sectarian. I once knew a Roman Catholic who did not know for a long time that there was a shift key on his typewriter, and he spelled everything in lower case letters.

But what makes me smile is that the same brethren who get on a “high horse” because I write “Church of Christ” will mail me a tract to show that the bride should wear the groom’s name. If that is so, then “Church of Christ” is a proper name and it would be silly to use a little “c.” Nobody writes about my wife and refers to her as nell ketcherside. They do not even write about mrs. carl ketcherside. You do not even refer to your dog as rover, if that is his name. When our brethren start out to conceal their denominational attitude they always end up with their inconsistency hanging out. I am sure that we need to re-think a lot of our cooked up arguments which seemed so invulnerable in debates.

I have said that Christ is not the name of Jesus, but his office. Because the term Lord Jesus Christ is used some people think that his first name is Lord and his last name is Christ. But “Lord” is his title and signifies rule or authority. Peter said, “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). We confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:11). We say that Jesus is the Lord, through the Holy Spirit (Cor. 12:3).

By the same token, Christ signifies his divine office. He is anointed of God. He is prophet, priest and king. All of these are official functions. Jesus is the Christ. Peter was blessed for

confessing “Thou art the Christ” (Matt. 16:16). Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:5), and publicly spoke, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28). Christ is no more his name than mediator, shepherd or bishop. He is Jesus the Christ exactly as he is Jesus the mediator, or Jesus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Jesus is the Christ as John was the Baptist, Simon was the tanner, and Zenas the lawyer. And a bride is not called after the occupation, office or function of the groom. The wife of Dr. Gray is not called “Mrs. Doctor,” nor is the wife of Mr. Brown, the Janitor, called Mrs. Janitor. If my brethren want to be consistent and make their signs match their argument, they will have to paint out the present title and paint in “Church of Jesus.” They will have to leave Romans 16:16 off, but that will be all to the good. They have misapplied it for years.

I predict that the brethren will continue to be inconsistent. They have reasoned themselves into a corner and sectarianized “Church of Christ.” It is the recognized, dyed-in-the-wool title of a party with its own unwritten creed, and if someone put up a sign “Church of Jesus— Matthew 16:16” vacationers from Texas and Tennessee would whiz by it like a freight train passing a hobo. They wouldn’t even halt if the sign read “Church of Jesus Christ.” The name “Jesus” doesn’t have much impact upon “Church of Christ Christians” and it will be hard for some of them to bow the knee to it when the time comes. It is possible that some of them from a state which I will not mention may try to convince the angels that they have this thing all wrong and will prowl up and down the golden streets looking for a sign “The churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16).

You may not believe it, but I have heard my brethren make an argument about Peter’s statement, when he healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, and said, “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” The argument is to the effect that since this is the only

name connected with our salvation, that the church should be designated “Church of Christ” and they end up with the implication, and sometimes the statement, that salvation is actually in that title. If you had buttonholed Peter in Jerusalem and asked him where the Church of Christ met, he would not have known what you were talking about. But Romans 16:16 had not yet been written, of course, and folks still thought of themselves as “the Way.”

To be absolutely fair I must admit that most of our preachers always say that either “church of Christ” or “church of God” is scriptural, but you’ll notice that none of them put the latter title on their temples made with hands. Over near Dayton, Ohio, the brethren sold their building to the “Church of God.” On the side of the building facing the highway the sign read “Church of Christ.” To save money the new owners just painted out the word “Christ” and painted in the word “God.” They didn’t bother “Church Of” at all, but there hasn’t been a “loyal brother” in the place since God replaced Christ.

Of course, the argument is that we cannot use “church of God” even though it is scriptural, because it is the denomination of a modern sect. Then all that is needed is for some enterprising sectarian to start up under the denomination “church of Christ” and we will have to surrender it along with Romans 16:16, to avoid confusing the Lord’s church with a denomination. I predict, though, that we will put up a much harder fight before we’ll surrender “Church of Christ” to the sectarians. They beat us to the draw on “Church of God” and took it away from us before we really got a good hold on it.

One thing that makes me feel that our brethren will hang on to the title “Church of Christ” is because there are as many as ten different groups in some cities which have the name over their doors, and yet will not recognize one another to even call on the one God. Some of them cannot even advertise in the same display or box in the Saturday paper. They have their own little

advertising corral, so that someone who objects to the way Herald of Truth is supported will not be hoodwinked into stumbling in to a “liberal” congregation and breaking bread with “apostates.” But to all outward appearances they are all “Churches of Christ” and they all salute you with Romans 16:16.

Since we cannot put up “Church of God” because the sectarians pre-empted it, and we have to put up “Church of Christ” because it is “scriptural” there is only one thing left to do and that is to tack an identifying parenthesis on, like “Church of Christ— Vocal Music” or “Church of Christ— One Container.” That way we will really be both denominational and sectarian. The title is a denomination and the attached rider is sectarian. We may get worse before we get better. When a congregation down in the hills got into a hassle over what kind of a cup to use in the Lord’s Supper, a group of them broke away because they contended that a glass is not a cup, and the record did not say that Jesus “took the glass.” That is why there is now a congregation designated as “The One Cup With A Handle On It Church of Christ.”

However, just because we let “the sectarians” appropriate “Church of God” which really is mentioned over and over in the scriptures, we will not give up “Church of Christ” which isn’t mentioned in the scriptures. It is sanctified by the United States Census Bureau and by sermon outlines passed out in “Schools of Preaching.” It is sacred to us and is our badge which will admit us to the heavenly realm when inspected by the celestial gatekeeper.

A few years ago a brother who came up from Arkansas, was driving along a highway in our state. He saw a sign for a Christian Service Camp with the notation, “Maintained by Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.” It hit our brother like a slap across the face with a sock full of wet sand. He turned off at the exit, drove down to the camp and jumped on the

astonished manager with such ferocity that the poor fellow thought he was going to strike him. The Arkansan demanded that he take the sign down and quit operating under false pretence to lure faithful and unsuspecting children of God into a den of thieves where they thumped on a piano while people were trying to praise God in spite of the noise. He asserted that those who were operating the camp were trying to steal “our name” and ought to be sued in the heathen courts, since they were not brethren anyhow. He finally drove off, red-faced and muttering to himself about the ignorance of some folks. The caretaker told me, “That was the maddest one Christian I ever saw in all my born days.” It is not likely that this approach will contribute measurably to the unity of the believers, but it served one purpose. It made the caretaker cautious. When he heard a car drive up, he always peeked out through a hole in the window blind to see if it was “a faithful brother” before he went out!

Before I leave this question about the bride wearing the name of the groom, there is another little matter I do not want to overlook. Even if the argument as applied to our present discussion was correct, and it isn’t, I would be reluctant to use it. I am a little skittish about women wearing the name of the groom before they are married. That is a little like wearing a wedding ring in advance of the ceremony. And I am not sure that the wedding between Christ and his bride has taken place yet. I expect to be a guest at the wedding supper when it comes, but I am not all that certain it has come!

John describes for us the great scene which takes place when Babylon the mighty city has fallen, and the great whore is judged, and the blood of the slain servants of God is avenged. Then he says, “Again I heard what sounded like a vast crowd, like the noise of rushing water and deep roars of thunder, and they cried: ‘Alleluia! The Lord our God, sovereign over all, has entered on his reign! Exult and shout for joy and do him homage, for the wedding-day of the Lamb has come! His bride has made herself ready, and for her dress she has been given fine

linen, clean and shining.”

Then John identifies the fine linen as the righteous deeds of the people of God. He continues, “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Happy are those who are invited to the wedding-supper of the Lamb!’” And he added “These are the very words of God.” So the marriage has not taken place yet. That is why Paul wrote to the congregation at Corinth, “I am jealous for you, with a divine jealousy; for I betrothed you to Christ, thinking to present you as a chaste virgin to her true and only husband” (2 Cor. 11:2). If we are going to make an argument based upon western cultural habits and practices, we ought to be consistent with the mores which form the basis for our contention, and not have the bride wearing the name of one to whom she is not yet married.

Actually, all of this whole thing stems from our desire to be sectarian while making a non-sectarian claim. We choose a “church name” to distinguish ourselves from other religious bodies and sects, and when we do so we give up our contention that there is only one body. The world will always regard us as another sect even though we contend that because we have designated our segment with a special name that we cannot be sectarian.

There is only one church on earth. The church is a divine organism and not a human organization. It is a creation of the Holy Spirit and not a concoction of the factional spirit. That one church contains all of the saved persons on this earth. The church of Christ in Saint Louis consists of every person in the city in whom the Spirit of God dwells. It is not a group of rival parties fighting over instrumental music and orphan homes. It is the whole body of the ransomed and the redeemed.

5. *What do you do about the statement of Paul in Ephesians 3:14, 15?*

The first thing I do is to point out the danger of trying to build a doctrinal case based upon the peculiarity of but one version, in this case the King James version. It reads: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”

Those who are anxious to prove that the scripturally accepted title is “Church of Christ” fasten on to this passage like a drowning sailor grasping at a floating straw. And a careful examination proves what a frail straw it is. In the first place, the phrase “of our Lord Jesus Christ” does not appear in the best manuscripts at all, and is omitted in the Revised Versions. In the second place, the word for “family” is plural in the original. That this cannot refer to the church is obvious because there is only one church, the body of Christ. Here are some of the other versions.

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Revised Standard Version).

“With this in mind, then, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name” (New English Bible).

“To this end I bend my knees to the Father, from whom every being both in heaven and earth takes its existence” (Authentic Version).

B. W. Johnson in *Peoples New Testament With Notes*, after pointing out that the Revised Version translates “every family” makes this explanation. “The idea is that the Father is the Father of all the families of his children, whether Jews or Gentiles on earth, or in heaven. He is “Our Father in heaven” to the believers of every race, in this world or the world to come. All, as far as creation is concerned, derive their being from him, like children from a parent, and all the good are his spiritual

children.”

I think there is a clue to what the apostle had in mind in the context of the epistle. He strikes the keynote when he writes that the will and pleasure of God determined beforehand in Christ was “that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ” (1:9, 10). So far as the earth was concerned its inhabitants were divided into Jews and Gentiles, those afar off and those near, those in covenant relationship and those outside.

Jesus Christ is our peace. He began the great work of universal unification by making Jews and Gentiles one. In his own body of flesh and blood he broke down the wall of enmity between them. He came and proclaimed the good news, peace to those afar off, and peace to those who were near by. Through the Gospel the Gentiles are joint-heirs with the Jews, part of the same body, sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus.

But all of this is because of a prior relationship involved in creation. Before God drew us together in a new creation he made us all in the original creation. He did not love us because Christ came, but Christ came because he loved us. Fatherhood stems from our bearing the imprint of the image of God, warped and defiled though it may be by sin. All family relationships begin with God. The reason that God wants to bring all in heaven and on earth into a unity in Christ is because “every family in heaven and on earth” takes its name after him. One of the more outstanding explanations of the terminology, I think, is that given by D. D. Whedon in his *Commentary on Ephesians*.

The word here rendered “family,” *patria*, is derived from the Greek and Latin *pater*, which with our word *father*, are but two different forms of the same word. A *patria* is a great kin, clan, or race, descended genetically from one primitive progenitor. So the three great *patriae*, or races of the earth,

traced their lineage to Shem, Ham, and Japheth as their progenitors. Of every *patria* the father-founder is called *patriarch*. Paul's thought then is, that God is the universal Patriarch. Translating *patria* by the English word *patriarchy*, we may render this clause, "Of whom all (or every) patriarchy in heaven and on earth is named." The words then include angels above and men below. Angels are not, indeed, born; yet, as originated from God they are called "the sons of God." The *patriae* in heaven are the angelic ranks and orders.

The apostle was not talking about the "name of the church" in this passage. It never entered his mind to give us a handle for the community of saints. His affirmation is simply that God is the source of origin of all fatherhood. The very concept of fraternity derives from him, and that is true whether we consider a family in heaven or on earth, the tribes of men or the orders of angels, the family of Jews or that of Gentiles. All originated with him, and all take their identity or name from him.

Surely brethren are hard put to find an official title for the called-out community if they must take a scripture like this and warp it around. If there is a clear-cut name or title for the body of the redeemed why not just go to it and read it? A case is proven to be weak in proportion to the amount of twisting necessary to make it appear scriptural, and the employment of an argument such as this makes it weak indeed.

6. *Are you familiar with the argument used to get the name "Church of Christ" into Acts 20:28?*

I am not only familiar with it, but I am ashamed of the fact that, in my ignorance I used to employ it. Of course I was as wrong then as my brethren are now who engage in the same fallacy. In those days I wanted to prove that we alone constituted the church for which Jesus died because we had the right name, and the right name was "Church of Christ." It took a little

tampering with the word to work it out but we had all of the answers for objectors.

The passage which you ask about refers to “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,” as the King James Version renders it. It was fairly easy to get “Church of Christ” in if the people to whom you were speaking did not know any more than yourself. The argument ran like this. There is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. If we can find which one shed his blood we can find which one purchased the church and now owns it. Property is always registered in the name of the owner. Certainly it was the Son who purchased it with his own blood, and the Son was Christ. Therefore, when Paul referred to the church of God he was really talking about the Church of Christ.

When I used this argument I was really talking about the Church of Christ which I represented— the loyal church— and not the two dozen others which were all composed of sectarians, liberals, compromisers, hobbyists or apostates. Jesus did not purchase them. They were counterfeits patterning after us as nearly as possible to hoodwink and deceive the unwary and unsuspecting. They may have thought they were what Jesus planted and wanted, but all of them had the wool pulled over their eyes through reading the wrong religious paper. Their grave mistakes came from not listening to the faithful brethren, that is to us!

Naturally when one gets his eyes open to his own littleness and bigotry he should be ashamed and repent and do better. That describes me. I am ashamed of my lack of knowledge and my insufferable attacks upon others who were as good as myself. So I have repented and I am trying to undo the mistakes. And one thing that helped me crawl out of the traditional thicket and get back on the road once more, was the realization that a correct rendering knocked my argument on Acts 20:28 into the proverbial cocked hat!

The Concordant Literal New Testament reads: “Take heed to yourselves and the entire flocklet, among which the holy spirit appointed you supervisors, to be shepherding the ecclesia of God, which he procures through the blood of his Own.”

The Authentic New Testament has it: “See to it that you tend God’s community which he has acquired through the blood of his own (Son).”

The Modern Speech New Testament (Weymouth); The New Testament in Plain English (Williams); The Revised Standard Version; and The New English Bible all have in a footnote “The blood of His Own.”

J. H. Moulton in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Volume I (Prolegomena) says about *ho idios* without a noun expressed, that the singular is used in the papyri as a term of endearment to near relations, and adds, “In *The Expositor* (VI, 3, 277) I ventured to cite this as a possible encouragement to those (including B. Weiss) who would translate Acts 20:28, ‘the blood of one who was his own.’”

Scholarship was against my sermon outline and I had to make a choice. It would have been easy to have retained the sermon outline since many of those who cheered the loudest when I spoke were not scholars. Come to think of it, I do not remember a single scholar who was overjoyed with my speaking. But integrity won, thank God, and I threw all of my outlines on the name of the church into the trash can. I shall never forget the day when I saw clearly for the first time that church of Christ could be a name for the church, but if it ever became the name of a church, we were as sectarian as we could be. From that day on I ceased to contend for “a name” as the name, and I worked out this simple little formula to express my conviction:

1. It is scriptural to designate the community of saints by any term employed by the Holy Spirit in the sacred writings.

2. It is unscriptural to designate the community of saints by any term not employed by the Holy Spirit in the sacred writings.

3. It is anti-scriptural to seize upon one term and make it the official designation of a community of saints, to the exclusion of all other terms used by the Holy Spirit in the sacred scriptures.

7. Are you saying that our usage of the name Church of Christ in our advertising is sectarian?

Let me commend you for your perceptiveness. That is exactly what I am saying. But do not misunderstand me. I am saying that the way we use it is sectarian. I do not say that all who meet behind a signboard bearing this title are sectarian. I doubt that all who meet behind a signboard bearing the title of Oak Hill Presbyterian Church or Saint Ferdinand Catholic Church are sectarian in the fair sense of the word. To be sectarian is to be possessed of the party spirit, the spirit of exclusiveness. It is to attribute to the group with which you affiliate all of the blessings of divine grace while assuming that no others share in it. One who is not sectarian is content to belong to God; one who is sectarian believes that God belongs to him.

When you find one obsessed with a sect among the brethren you will find a sectarian, but when you find one endeared to brethren among the sects you will find a non-sectarian. To the first the party spirit is above the Holy Spirit; and the party means more than brethren. To the second brethren are first. Sectarianism always results from a confusion of values. It is not necessary to deny Christ to be a sectarian, it is only necessary to disown brethren. One need not advocate a doctrinal error to be sectarian. He may form a party around a truth lifted out of context and elevated to a superior position. The word for sect in the scriptures is *hairesis*, which has come

into our Anglo-Saxon language as “heresy.”

I want to quote what William Barclay has to say about the word, but I must mention to you that Barclay is a Presbyterian. As such, he is much less sectarian than brethren with whom I break bread every Lord’s Day. I get a kick out of the fact that a lot of brethren who would not call upon Barclay to stand up and explain a passage if he were present in our gathering, will reel off whole paragraphs of what he wrote. Sectarians present a lot less problems to us if they are safely ensconced in Scotland. It would be a sin to ask one to tell us orally what he thinks, but we can steal what he has written, sometimes without even giving him credit for it. But here is his statement:

In Corinth, instead of sitting down as one, sharing united fellowship, the members of the group were divided into cliques and sections, *haireseis* (the plural form of the word), and, instead of sharing all they had in a common stock, each little group within the group kept to itself what it had brought, and the result was that some had far too little and some had far too much. What should have been one harmonious, sharing, loving unity was broken up into little self-contained, selfish, exclusive fragments. This is what Paul calls *hairesis*. It is the breaking up of the unity of the Church into cliques who shut their circle to all but their own number.

A fragmented Church is not a Church at all; a group whose circle is closed is certainly not a Christian group. If anyone regards his social status as something which shuts him off from others in a different social status, then he has not begun to see even the first meaning of Christianity. There is all the difference in the world between believing that we are right and believing that everyone else is wrong. Unshakable conviction is a Christian virtue; unyielding intolerance is a sin.

It is my intention to acknowledge every person as my brother in Christ who has responded to the good news about

Jesus in God's own way. I want to be like Paul with reference to Corinth. I shall refuse to be identified with a Pauline, Cephasite, Apollosite, or Christ party. Instead, I will see my brethren in all of these and I will recognize them as brethren. I will also treat them as such, and that is something else. I think that in most places I know the "Church of Christ" is really a Christ party like the one which was in Corinth. But I am through with all partisan and factional alliances.

I think Watchman Nee said it very well indeed in his book *The Normal Christian Church Life*, page 59: "Our receiving anyone is merely our recognition that God has already received him. If he is the Lord's he is in the church. If he is not the Lord's he is not in the church. If we demand anything beyond the reception of the Lord before admitting him to fellowship, then we are not a church at all but only a sect."

While we are on this matter, let me pass along to you another observation by the same author in the same book, page 69. "God has placed believers of different races in one locality so that by transcending all external differences they might in one church show forth the one life and the one Spirit of His Son. All that comes to us by nature is overcome by grace. All that was ours in Adam has been ruled out in Christ."

This does not mean that I am going to leave the brethren whom I have always known and loved. Indeed they are all very dear to me. If I wanted to be sectarian I could well be so in the Church of Christ. But if I could not be free from sectarianism there, it is not likely that I could be anywhere else. Sectarianism is a matter of attitude and spirit. It is not necessarily a matter of where you attend or with whom you meet. All of us are human and all of us have our hangups and problems. This is as true of preachers as of anyone else. Really there is not that much difference because all of us are preachers, or should be!

The proper solution is to name the place where we meet

and not give a title to those who meet there. The early saints were always designated by where they met and not by a particular title or denomination. I am sometimes asked how members of “The Church of Christ” who are traveling will find us. There are some of them that I do not want to find us. We have problems enough of our own without having more of them imported from Texas or somewhere else. I know congregations that were doing a great work until some of their brethren found them, and splintered them to smithereens.

I am content that the Lord has found me and I want to share him with everyone else I meet. I do not think that all whom he has found are in our corral and if I get to feeling that way he may have to find me over again. I am a little leery of those who think they have arrived and everyone else has departed!

Baptism and Brethren

Mission Messenger (May 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

In this issue I want to share with you a portion of a taped interview held with several young preaching brethren who asked me to meet with them so they could personally explore my position. I will not have space to provide the entire proceedings which lasted several hours, but will try to give you a fairly comprehensive idea of what transpired.

1. *Brother Ketcherside, you claim to be working for the unity of all of the brethren, but I would like to know who you regard as your brethren.*

Certainly that is an important question, and it is as important to me as it is to you. I do not just claim to be working for such unity as you suggest, but I am working for it. I am traveling, speaking, writing, and otherwise seeking to promote the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I regard every child of God as my brother or sister, since I am a child of the Father. Wherever God has a son I have a brother.

My recognition and acceptance of a person as a brother is based upon God's acceptance of him as a child. I want to receive and share with all whom God receives, and it is my conviction that God receives men on the basis of their response to the gospel, the good news about the person of His Son. The gospel is the message of God to enlist soldiers, or to enroll students, under

the leadership of the Son, to whom all authority has been transferred.

The response to the good news is clearly stated. He who believes the news announced and who is immersed upon the basis of that faith, is freed from the guilt and penalty of his past transgressions. He ceases to be an alien and becomes a citizen of the commonwealth, spoken of in the scriptures as the rule of heaven. I regard every sincere believer in the fact of the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus, who is immersed because of that faith, as God's child and my brother. I shall receive every such person as a brother, but what is even more important in our modern sectarian world, I will treat him as a brother.

FALSE REPORTS

2. You are aware, are you not, that a number of brethren are saying that you claim to be in fellowship with anyone who is a believer in Christ, regardless of whether such a person has been baptized or not?

I am probably more aware of it than you are, but it does not bother me, except as I feel compassion for those who prefer to engage in falsehood rather than reporting the truth. But I am older than yourselves and I have long since learned that a lot of preaching brethren are not too trustworthy in repeating the views of another, and especially if they tend to differ with him and would like to see him wiped out. I am glad that I will be judged by the Lord instead of by preachers, for if they get control of the judgment we are all sunk.

I am also happy that, in order to find anything against my position, my brethren have to lie to do it. I have really learned to rejoice and be exceeding glad when brethren say all manner of evil against me falsely for his sake. It wasn't easy to come to that but it has been a valuable kind of discipline. I take a lot of comfort from Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote in *Don Quixote*,

that, “Truth may be stretched, but cannot be broken, and always gets above falsehood, as oil does above water.”

You will note that not one of those to whom you refer has ever produced one quotation from my pen to validate his accusation. Most of them have never read what I have said about anything. Upon the basis of rumor, innuendo, and sheer gossip, they judge and sentence me *in absentia*, and I feel sorry for them and for all who have to resort to such unscrupulous tactics to demonstrate their own party loyalty. But God will straighten all of this out, and I am content to await his action.

My position now is, and always has been, that obedience to the gospel, that is, acquiescence in the truth and credibility of the seven great historical facts related to Jesus of Nazareth, and immersion in water as a recognition of his lordship over life, introduces one into that fellowship to which we are called by the wonderful grace of God. My position is identical with that of Alexander Campbell, that the belief of one fact, and the obedience of one act as a confirmation of that belief, is all that is required for entrance into the glorious family of the Father of spirits.

BROTHERS IN PROSPECT

3. *What about this “brothers in prospect” view that you are alleged to hold? Can you tell us what you mean by that expression?*

Certainly I can tell you and will be delighted to do so. I regard baptism as the culmination and not the beginning of the birth process. One is never born in order to have life in either the physical or spiritual realm, but because he is alive. Life results from begettal or conception, not from delivery. Birth simply changes the state of one who is alive, bringing him into a new relationship where he can enjoy the blessings and fulfill the responsibilities for which life is intended.

Before one is delivered into the new spiritual state he is begotten of the Spirit through the Word, which is the seed or sperm. He must pass through an embryonic stage in the spirit leading him to delivery. One is begotten of the gospel according to the apostle Peter, and his begetting takes place, not at the point of delivery, but at the point of faith. In the physical realm one is begotten when the seed from the body of the father unites with a receptive ovum in the body of the mother. In the spiritual family one is begotten of the incorruptible seed when the good news planted by the Spirit unites with a warm and receptive heart by faith.

John said that “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Messiah is begotten of God, and everyone who loves the one who begets, loves those who are begotten by him” (1 John 5:1). The very moment that one ceases to trust in his own righteousness, which is by deeds of law, and comes to trust in the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus, he is begotten. Faith does not become alive when one is delivered into the family, else he is born of a dead faith. One does not repent or reform his life in order to be begotten, but because he has been begotten. Repentance is a manifestation of faith, a living and vital faith, not a dead one.

Faith is the initial response of the good and honest heart to the gospel, and represents a change of will. It is an indication of the germination of the seed. The engrafted word begins to grow and to transform at the point of faith. One comes under the grace of God when he acknowledges grace as the only hope of his salvation, and it is grace which leads to a change of mind coupled with a change of life, just as it is grace which leads to a change of state by acknowledgment of the lordship of Jesus in obedience to the command to be immersed.

One is not baptized to share in the grace of God, but because he shares in the grace of God he is baptized. Grace operates on the heart of the alien sinner through the word of the

gospel, and when the alien acknowledges the power of that grace and believes in him who was grace personified, he is begotten of the heavenly Father. Baptism does not change the life of any person. There is nothing in the act of baptism to transform a life. Lives are changed by repentance, which is nothing more nor less than reformation, caused by a change of mind. It is repentance which alters the set of the sails and trims them to head for a different harbor. Baptism changes our state, but faith operates before baptism to change life.

So the penitent believer, begotten by the Spirit, is God's child in prospect and he is my brother in prospect. Every sincere conscientious believer in the Sonship of Jesus upon the earth, is in that category. I love all of them because I love the Father who begot them. Baptism does not bring them unto the faith, but it is the faith which brings them unto baptism.

Our relationship to God is covenantal, not legal. Ignorance of this fact has betrayed us into a sectarian spirit which will destroy us if not altered. From the moment one makes an agreement to belong to Jesus Christ, body, soul and spirit, he is prospectively in Christ. No earthly example can compare with this or adequately illustrate it. But in the purchase of insurance one is a prospect when he makes a verbal commitment. One becomes a prospective husband from the time when he is betrothed to his beloved. Joseph was told to take Mary, his wife, when they were only engaged. An alien is a prospective citizen, not from the day he takes the oath, but from the moment he files the original papers of intent.

I am astounded at the wounded "howl" raised by some of the guardians of orthodoxy and the keepers of the gate over the position that I occupy. When Paul was in Corinth, the center of lasciviousness, the Lord spoke to him at night in a vision and told him not to be afraid. He said, "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). McGarvey says, "He called them his merely

because he foresaw that under Paul's preaching they would yet believe." Evidently, then, they were children of God in prospect. They were also brothers and sisters of Paul in prospect.

Regardless of the time elapsed from the moment one believes until the time he is immersed, the intervening period is one of spiritual gestation, during which the Spirit operates upon the heart and strives with one through the power of the word of faith, the gospel of our salvation. But begettal is one thing and delivery is another, and begettal does not usually take place in the delivery room.

VALID DISTINCTIONS

4. *Does the word of God make the distinction you make, or does it not use the same term for the whole birth process that you use for begetting?*

Pardon me for saying so, but to me nothing indicates the paucity and superficiality of scholarship in our day as does this kind of reasoning. If one must resort to this type of rationalization in order to sustain his position on baptism then that position hangs by a thin cobweb strand. The fact is, regardless of the rendering of the King James Version, one cannot be born of God at all. The idea that he can is not even in the original Greek scriptures.

In 1 John 2:29, the King James Version reads, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." Dr. James McKnight renders the passage, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone who worketh righteousness hath been begotten of him." In explanation he says, "This is the literal significance of *gegennetai* from *gennao*, I beget. Accordingly our translators have so rendered the word, chapter 5:18. Besides, *born of God* is nowhere else found in scripture."

Consistent with this statement and proper Greek usage, he translates 1 John 5:1, “Everyone who believeth that Jesus is the Christ, hath been begotten of God; and every one who loveth the begetter, loveth also the begotten of him.” One is begotten by his father but not born of him and the begetting precedes the birth or else he is born dead. Birth does not confer life. It simply changes the state of one who is living.

The whole problem of exegesis stems from the fact that we have separate English words for begetting, conceiving and bearing, or delivering. The Greeks had only one word, *gennao*. But they did not use it indiscriminately nor did they confound or eliminate the distinctions as do a lot of casual readers and interpreters in our day. I am frequently treated to cavilling upon this term by those who have never taken the time to even study it, and who expose their ignorance in an attempt to set aside what I offer. Even faculty members in our schools reveal their ignorance of the implications of the usage when fighting for party principles.

The Holy Spirit used *gennao* 97 times and it is translated begat or begotten 49 times, and born 39 times. In the first sixteen verses of Matthew it is found 39 times and is translated begat in every instance. To substitute the word born in either of these would make the rendering absurd and ridiculous.

The first place in the new covenant scriptures where the word is rendered born is Matthew 1:16, and the change is obviously necessary and required to make sense. In this verse *gennao* appears twice. Once it is rendered begat and once it is rendered born, and neither can be substituted for the other. “And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”

It would be incongruous to read this, “And Jacob born Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was begat Jesus who is called Christ.” One is not born of the person who begets him,

nor is he begotten of the one who bears him. We should not make ourselves silly nor confuse language in our zeal to oppose someone who introduces a new thought which cuts across a traditional position.

Since you have asked the same question which we hear so often, especially where brethren labor ardently for a foothold from which to refute my position, perhaps I should take time to repeat a few things which I have offered in the past, but which many have not taken the time to examine for one reason or another. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matthew 2:1) but he was begotten in Nazareth a city of Galilee (Luke 1:26). It is possible for one to be begotten of the Spirit in Viet Nam and born into the family of God in Virginia.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, illustrate what I am talking about. Elisabeth conceived (Luke 1:24), six months later the babe leaped in her womb (Luke 1:41), and when Elisabeth's full time came she brought forth a son (1:57). The words "brought forth" are a rendering of *gennao* and it is evident that "begat" would no more apply than it would in Matthew 19:12, "For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb." There is a difference in the time as well as in the act of begetting and birth, and the former always precedes the latter. One who is begotten and not yet delivered is a prospective child of the one who begets him and a prospective brother of all others sired by the same father. Every person on this earth begotten by the Holy Spirit is my brother in prospect!

A careful study of the implications of *gennao* in every occurrence of the term will enable us to enunciate proper rules of interpretation. These will be three in number.

a. When the word refers to the action of the Father, or to the inception of life, it cannot be rendered *born* and must be uniformly rendered by begotten.

b. When the word refers to the induction into a state, condition or relationship, or when it has to do with bringing forth into a visible existence, it cannot be rendered *begat* or *begotten*, and must be uniformly translated born, delivered, or brought forth.

c. When the entire process, including both the phases of begetting and birth, is described by one word, the final or consummating act may be put for the whole, as in John 3:5.

The means employed in our salvation are defined in Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” I take it that the washing referred to here is baptism, but this does not change the nature of the gospel subject. This is effected by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit operates upon and quickens the heart of the alien through the good news and leads him to reformation by testimony of the goodness of God through the Word, he is begotten of God.

There is nothing in being immersed which will quicken the heart, any more than delivery of a child quickens it. The quickening took place in the act of begetting or conception. We are quickened by the Spirit, but for one so quickened to change his state he must be led to the washing of regeneration which completes the birth process and makes him a child of God. I think your question confuses the King James Version with “the word of God” of which it is a translation.

ABOUT ONE WHO DIES

5. *Suppose that one who has sincerely believed dies before he is baptized, what will happen to him?*

Of course the answer to that is that we do not know. When God has not revealed unto us what his judgment will be we

ought not to usurp the divine prerogative and take care of the judgment in advance in order to save him the trouble. There can be abortions or miscarriages in the spiritual as well as the physical realm, and we should be careful that they do not result from our action or attitude.

One thing we need to avoid is categorizing and stereotyping everyone. No two persons on earth are alike and no two have the same responsibility. God deals with all of us as individuals and we are not to be saved or damned in groups. I am under orders from the King whom I serve, to proclaim the Good News that he has been made unto us wisdom, sanctification and redemption. I am also under orders to tell those who enquire what to do to reform their lives and be immersed unto the forgiveness of their sins. When I have done that, I have done all that I can do.

I cannot force men to be baptized or to enter the new relationship to which baptism inducts us. Rome attempted this with the Jews in Madrid and Seville as well as other Spanish cities once, and brought them to the christening font at the point of the sword. But the gory “Mother on the Tiber” succeeded only in bringing their bodies in. Their hearts were far away and their thoughts were of reactionary revenge and hostility.

I have neither the right nor the inclination to promise salvation to any person for I am not in a position to fulfill such a promise. I am personally in need of salvation which I can only attain through his marvelous grace. So I shall simply enunciate the terms of the human response to the divine offer as I understand it and leave the results with God who is love.

But I would be less than fair if I did not comment a bit further. Receiving people into the fellowship of the one body on earth and receiving them into ultimate glory are two different things. Baptism is not a door to heaven. If it was there would be no one in heaven who had not been baptized. This would debar

infants, retarded persons, and those who were unfortunate enough to be born into an environment where there was no opportunity to know that Jesus lived among men and died for their sins.

It is one thing for me to say that we will accept into the fellowship of the local congregation only those who have been immersed, but it is a wholly different thing to say that God cannot receive into heaven one who has not been. Grace existed before the church and is greater than the church. The church is the recipient of grace and not the dispenser of it. Grace does not come by the church, but the church came by grace.

If God, in his sovereign power and wisdom, decides to receive unto himself some humble soul who believed implicitly that Jesus was the Messiah and the divine Son I will not attempt to thwart him on the ground that this is unfair to the rest of us who have been immersed, and makes some of our sermon outlines appear silly. I suspect that God loves people more than he loves a lot of our sermon outlines, and if this is true, I am becoming more like God every day that I live. The grace of God can do some wonderful things as it has already demonstrated and it is not subject either to the decrees or interpretations of men. Praise God for that!

God is obligated to save all whom he has promised to save, but he may save more than he has promised, and to do so will neither violate nor vitiate his promise. If I offer my grandson three dollars for mowing the lawn and I give him five dollars when he has finished, I did not contradict or contravene my promise.

We operate under the authority of Jesus but it is specifically said that God is not under that authority (1 Cor. 15:27). We dare not bind God with the rules which he gave to bind us. We cannot subject to authority one who is the source of, and superior to all authority (Romans 13:1). To say that one

who, for some reason, has not been able to render perfect obedience, must be damned in order to uphold the integrity of God, is to judge God rather than the person.

I am under specific instruction not to judge those who are without, and am informed that God will judge them. The apostle wrote, “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? . . . God judges those who are on the outside” (1 Cor. 5:12). Since judging has to do with rendering a decision or passing sentence I would usurp the prerogatives of God if I were to pronounce a sentence upon others. It is one thing to instruct men what to do to enter the fellowship of the saints, a wholly different thing to decide the eternal destiny of those who do not enter. It is one thing to be assured of my own salvation but a wholly different matter to be just as sure of the damnation of all others. When I am as eager that others be damned as I am that I be saved there is something wrong with my thinking!

Let me say once more that the source of all authority cannot be captured and bound by any authoritative statement which was issued as a guideline for human behavior. The fountain of authority cannot be measured with our little cups any more than you can measure the waters of the ocean with a gourd dipper. If it be argued by shallow thinkers that this kind of reasoning will weaken our zeal to take the Good news to others then I reply that this demonstrates a lack of personal faith in what God has laid upon me as a responsibility. I should labor as intensely to do His will if I accept the wideness of His mercy and the breadth of His grace as if I thought he was both merciless and graceless.

6. But are you not saying that God may possibly overlook rebellion against his will?

Certainly not! We have not been talking about rebels. Your problem is that you cannot distinguish between rebellion and honestly mistaken views or an uninformed attitude. If you

were sent out to quell a rebellion and shoot rebels, you would blast everyone who could not tell you how to get to town, or who was ignorant of the price of shells. I wonder a little about the citizenship qualifications of one who thinks that everyone who disagrees with him about the Bill of Rights or who cannot quote the Constitution is a rebel.

Certainly not every alien in the United States is a rebel. Some of them even act a little better than some citizens. And not every person who has not been baptized is a rebel against Christ. We are talking about sincere believers who have not seen clearly the relationship between baptism and God's forgiveness of their sins. They love Jesus and respect his present rule and Lordship, but because of some mental block or hangup they have not been led to be immersed. It could be that after seeing the lives and dispositions of some who have been immersed, they have concluded it is not very effective. But there is a great deal of difference in saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and in saying, "I am sorry, but I do not yet see the necessity of immersion in water as a validation of my faith in Jesus."

I dare not judge such a person. I cannot assume that he does know and understand the significance of baptism and is deliberately lying about it. I propose to love him, and patiently share my views with him, and leave the outcome with God. I can only plant and water. It is God who gives the increase. If a believer dies without being immersed he is in the hands of God exactly as I will be when I die. It is not necessary that I determine the fate of every person on earth or make a pronouncement of their eternal destiny. Regardless of what I say or think God will take care of the situation without consulting me as to the best means of handling it. He will not be influenced by my own pre-judgment in the matter.

We are not justified by baptism but by faith. I believe that justifying faith will lead one to be immersed when his knowledge of baptism is sufficient to show him its essentiality. I cannot

conceive of it doing otherwise. But the faith which justifies is the faith which possesses the quality which induces one to automatically accept every truth of God as he apprehends it or becomes aware of it. If one possesses this faith and dies before his obedience is perfected God can justify him because of his faith. All of us will die before our obedience is perfected, and all must be justified by faith and not by perfect obedience if justified at all. Any person who postulates that justification by faith is on the ground of perfect human obedience or compliance with law is knotting a noose for his own neck. It is with the judgment we mete out that we shall be judged. Since we are writing our own ticket we need to be a little merciful.

Abraham was chosen by the inspired apostle as an example of God's basis of justification. He was the first person of whom it was said that he believed God (Genesis 15:6). And God counted his faith for justification. He was the father of the faithful. From the time that Abraham became fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, and from the time that he trusted in God without question, he was under the grace of God. God knew that this kind of faith would lead Abraham to perform anything that was required of him when it was made known to him, and he counted such faith for justification.

It will come as no surprise to me if God does the same thing in the case of honest men and women who are earnestly disposed to do everything they learn to be God's will. This is my own real hope. It is not based upon my perfect knowledge or perfect obedience, for I am persuaded that I will be imperfect in both of these departments when I die. I must be justified by my faith if I am justified at all. And I have resolved to trust in God with all of my heart and to constantly search his will so that I may grow both in grace and knowledge of the truth.

It will be no violation of God's principle of judgment if he takes the intent for the deed when the performance of the deed is not possible for some reason. He certainly does this in the case of

sin. “Whoso looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” If a man’s desire and intention are used as a basis of judgment for guilt why will God not use the same criterion for righteousness?

This in no sense argues that God will save any person who has not been immersed. It does not argue that he ought to do so. I am not in a position to determine the sense of “oughtness” for the divine. I do not know whether God will save any person who is accountable and has not been immersed. My only contention is that, if he chooses to do so, it will not be a violation of his declared will and purpose, nor will it be contrary to the tenor of the sacred scriptures for him to do so. Certainly the ideal is for everyone to be immersed upon the basis of faith and thus have the assurance which accrues from compliance with the stated requirements.

I believe that there are rebels with relation to the divine sovereignty. There are those who wilfully and maliciously oppose the purpose of God in their lives. Regardless of the amount of testimony brought to bear upon their hearts they will summarily reject it and go their own way. Their motto is “Not thy will but mine be done”! But it is a grave error to place in such a category every honest and humble person who just does not understand or grasp the will of God while possessed of an eagerness to know and implement it. There is a great deal of difference between the armed robbers who assault a bank and the humble custodian who ignorantly admits them under the mistaken impression that they are customers.

7. If God does as you say, and takes the intent for the deed, why will not the man who is sprinkled be saved on his sprinkling?

I am sure that question simply had to be injected, because all of you, like myself have been reared in a “Church of Christ” background, and it is a typical “Church of Christ” question. I trust that you’ll forgive my terminology. I do not mean to be

offensive, but I think that we must recognize that our traditional approach to God's grace is upon the basis of legalistic compliance or conformity, and legalism, unlike grace, can never allow for God's mercy. In our view, grace is mediated unto us through compliance with the law, and mercy is earned and deserved only by perfect obedience. What we can never seem to understand is that this really negates both grace and mercy and rules them out while binding God's hands. The fact is that neither grace nor mercy can even exist within the system which we have constructed. For God to be merciful by our code would make him unjust, and for God to be just he must be unmerciful.

Although we will never admit it, our "theology" means that God in giving us "the new law" has forged a set of handcuffs with which we can bind him in all of his future actions. In attempting to set us free He became entangled. We really believe, if we analyze our own position, that if God shows mercy based upon any contingency, he compromises his own revelation and violates his own law. We cannot think of God being a "liberal" or a "lawbreaker" and in our finite reasoning we cannot realize that he is above all law, and what he does in any given situation is the divine will for that situation, and is therefore consistent with every announced divine principle, and it is not subject to human review or criticism.

Without realizing it we have assumed the same position of the Jews. God specifically established the right of primogeniture, the primacy of the firstborn. "And yet, in order that God's selective purpose might stand, based not upon men's deeds, but upon the call of God, she (Rebekah) was told, even before they were born, when they had as yet done nothing, good or ill, 'The elder shall be servant to the younger'; and that accords with the text of scripture, 'Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated'" (Romans 9:11-13).

This appeared to be a clear-cut violation of an established principle upon which God had always operated. So Paul asks the

pertinent question, "What shall we say to this? Is God to be charged with injustice?" Then he answers, "By no means. For he says to Moses, "Where I show mercy, I will show mercy, and where I pity, I will pity." Thus it does not depend on man's will or effort, but on God's mercy" (Romans 9:14-18).

It is assumed by some of us that when God states a law or principle of action this immediately precludes any manifestation or demonstration of mercy or pity except upon perfect compliance with those terms. But that is not mercy at all. Mercy is not required where there is perfect obedience. All that is required then is acknowledgment of the perfection. Mercy is accorded only to those who fail because of extenuating circumstances. We think that no human failure will ever reach heaven, when the truth is, that no one else will be there.

If man can be saved by perfect compliance with law, the death of Christ was wholly unnecessary. But if the death of Jesus was a demonstration of God's grace the cross is a plain and stark testimony that man cannot be saved by perfect conformity with law. This means that all of us must rely upon God's mercy and pity. It does not mean that this makes void the revelation of God, for that revelation is God's will. It is a sharing of the mind of God so that I can know the way my Father would have me walk in order to be pleasing unto him.

We must never forget that we are under the revealed will of God as announced by his ambassadors in a historical perspective, that is a space-time situation. We dare not ignore it. We dare not teach others to ignore it. We dare not weaken its impact. We must diligently study it and apply it and urge others to do so as well. But God did not exhaust his will by his revelation unto us. His will is still active and he has not grown senile. In his sovereignty he does not need to consult the book nor study precedent to act in the determination of any case. He can have mercy upon anyone. He can take circumstances into consideration. He can weigh all of the exigencies of a case in

making a determination of its outcome. He is not frightened by the thought that he might be branded a “situation ethicist” knowing that this is another term bandied about by finite creatures. With this rather lengthy and even somewhat rambling dissertation I am now ready to face up to your question. First, as relates to sprinkling, it must be remembered that most of those who have been sprinkled in the post-apostolic, modern sectarian, theological mix-up, had no idea of being baptized at all. With them, sprinkling was not an arbitrary choice in place of immersion, because they had no choice and their will was not operative. It was not a decision but an imposition. They were sprinkled while helpless infants and under complete subjection to others.

I can testify personally upon this matter. I was but twenty-nine days old when my beloved mother, frightened by the Missouri Synod Lutheran emphasis upon original sin, which she did not understand, turned me over to the Reverend Mr. Peterson for christening. I did not choose sprinkling. It was as harmless in my case as I was helpless. Sprinkling is not baptism. It cannot be equated with baptism philologically, philosophically, or scripturally. It is a different action altogether. One who has been sprinkled has not been baptized in the scriptural usage of that term.

A man is not going to be “saved on his sprinkling” as you put it. If a man with full knowledge of the meaning of the Greek *baptizo*, chooses something else, or even prefers some other action, it is obvious that he is deliberately thwarting a requirement of the Father. I doubt that very many do this. If one is that knowledgeable it would be easier to be immersed than to oppose it. I rather think most people are sprinkled under the impression that they are fully complying with the divine requirement and being born or brought into a new relationship. They equate their action with the ordinance of baptism.

It is never as good to be mistaken as to be right, and no one

ought ever to deliberately choose to make a mistake. But what about the sincere and honest person who, upon the basis of all the teaching he has ever had or heard, is sprinkled under the honest conviction that he is fulfilling the requirement of our precious Lord? Will God accept any such person into his everlasting habitation? I do not know. One thing I do know is that God's will must be done and it will be done!

No man will be saved "on his sprinkling" because God has not made sprinkling a condition of salvation. No man will be saved on his mistake. Mistakes are not a procuring cause of salvation. It would be well for most of us if they were. The question then is not whether a man will be saved by his being sprinkled, but whether any man who sincerely seeks to obey God will be saved in spite of his mistakes. Will the mercy of God be applicable to such a person and will that mercy as an attribute of divine grace receive one who does the best he knows to do in his particular situation?

I probably would not be any happier if I knew the answer and I am content to trust in divine goodness. No problem is too great for God but some of them are a little "sticky" for me. One thing I can be assured of and that is that one who trusts implicitly in Christ and implements that faith by immersion in water has made the proper response to the good news. He has a quality of assurance which can never be the lot of one who has not thus responded. I have done what Jesus required and I speak of it in humility rather than in pride. I expect to teach and urge all others to do the same. But what God will ultimately do with those who do not or cannot understand I must leave in his hands, where I also rest.

Since you have asked the question, however, I must interpose a little more before I leave it. I do not believe that one will be saved "on his sprinkling" but I am not sure that, within the context of your question, he will be saved "on his immersion." Perhaps I misunderstand the implication and if so,

I beg your forgiveness for my density. In any event I think a word of caution and clarification may be in order.

Forgiveness of sins and justification are represented in the sacred scriptures as results and, like all such results, are said to be dependent upon a combination of causes. I recall that Alexander Campbell once wrote: “Call these *causes* or *means* of justification, and they may severally indicate an influence or instrumentality in the consummation of this great act of Divine favor. He that assumes any one or two of them, as the exclusive or one only essential cause of a sinner’s justification, acts arbitrarily and hazardingly, rather than discreetly or according to the oracles of God.”

I have found it extremely difficult to “keep the even tenor of my way” in this sectarian age in which my lot has been cast. There is ever the danger of becoming sectarian in attempting to prove that one is not. The danger is enhanced with reference to those items of revelation to which one clings while others do not, and which thus serve as marks of differentiation between themselves and him. The question of immersion unto the forgiveness of sins sets us apart in the present era of religious strife and partisan ferment and emphasis.

In our zeal to promote what we regard as essential and to offset the arguments of those who attack our thinking, there is the possibility that we may lift baptism out of its perspective and lead others to regard it as the meritorious cause of their justification before God. Because I recognize human tendency under pressure and because I am aware of my own inclinations and weakness I entreat the Father about this more than almost anything else. I do so want to grasp the majesty of grace in all of its multi-faceted demonstrations even while I cling to each individual item of revelation.

That is why I think it is important that we not think of being saved on our immersion in contrast with being saved “on

sprinkling.” The original and moving cause of our salvation is the grace of God our Father as manifested in his Son; while his sacrifice in our behalf through the shedding of his blood is the meritorious cause.

We are not saved by faith in immersion but by faith in Jesus. If we trust for salvation in any act or performance, whether mental or overt, our faith is misplaced. It is one thing to trust in a prescription and a wholly different thing to trust in the physician. The validity of baptism is not found in the act but in the Author of it. It is not inherent but invested. If we forget this we may turn out to be modern Pharisees, and baptism may become a mere outward rite.

If God wills, we shall continue our discussion in the issue of the paper for next month. The first question with which I will deal is stated in this fashion, “Would you receive a man into your fellowship on his ‘Baptist baptism?’” The second question is phrased, “Can a man be baptized *into Christ* upon the basis of a wrong doctrine?” We sincerely trust that you will be looking forward to the answers as we shall give them.

The Cherished Freedom

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Volume 35

[Abstract]

Liberty of opinion! No other right accruing to citizens of the kingdom of light by virtue of their citizenship should be more cherished. No other should be more stoutly defended. Forfeiture of this right means that we cease to be servants of one Lord and become slaves to men. The truth of heaven belongs not to a special caste. It is not the private domain of a hierarchy, to be dispensed at a fee to lesser mortals. It is as universal as the atmosphere, and like the air, it must be breathed by each one for himself.

No man should seek to be free from Christ but all should strive to remain free in Christ. This entails the right of each man to go to the fountain of revelation and drink from it directly, rather than from the mental dipper of another who has filtered it for safety and convenience. There are no keepers of the springs! The right to read and meditate personally entails the corollary privilege of forming conclusions and making deductions for oneself. Abrogation of the right of private interpretation makes a farce of the right of personal investigation. One is not real without the other.

Involved in this fundamental right is another— the right to cherish and hold an opinion as a member of the one body. Fellowship in that body is based upon acceptance of Jesus as Christ and Lord and not upon acquiescence in the opinions of

one another. It is founded upon faith in the Son of God and not upon the mental deductions of the other sons of God. Otherwise, we have more than one Lord over conscience. Those who would not have men lord it over them, must not lord it over other men. Free men must remain free.

In practical application to our own messed up situation this means that I dare not enquire of another his opinion about the validity of instrumental music, the support of Herald of Truth, the millennium, the present-day work of the Holy Spirit, or the use of Bible Classes, *as a basis for our fellowship*. I can discuss with him at length the views at which he has arrived on these matters, and share with him my own views which run counter to his. I can tell him the route by which I arrived at my conviction and listen just as eagerly to the grounds which he advances for arrival at his opinion.

But I must receive him first as a brother, because he is in Christ, and then we must converse together as equals in the Lord. We were raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places. Neither of us can assume an arrogant stance because both of us arrived at our present place, not by our own goodness or works, but by the wonder of divine grace. And that grace, in order to receive us, had to be extremely longsuffering and tolerant toward our many wrong opinions. It was faith which gained access to the grace wherein we stand and not doctrinal correctness. And it is by faith we continue in that grace while we strive to grow in knowledge of truth and alter our opinions.

But do the elders not have a right to forbid certain opinions to be held by the constituents of a congregation? Certainly they do, if they are the front men for a human sect. Any human party has a right to devise a creed consisting of a bill of particulars to which men must subscribe to be recognized as being in good standing with the party. But no group of men on earth can prescribe the orthodox opinions to which men must

pay lipservice to be in Christ Jesus. The divine-human relationship is conditioned upon recognition of the Lordship of Jesus, and elders are specifically forbidden to lord it over the lot or portion which has been assigned to them.

In the kingdom of heaven the shepherds are also sheep, and they are not infallible. Moreover, no one can divest himself of an honest opinion at the command or behest of another, as witness the case of Galileo. The only way you can force men to form opinions slanted toward any propaganda norm, political or religious, is by the cruel and uncharitable art of brainwashing. The organizational mind is only possible when men surrender their mentality to the organizational structure. When this happens liberty flies out of the nearest stained-glass window and leaves only an assembly of automatons and a round-up of robots. The blood of Jesus was not shed to purchase zombies!

We all need to respect the revelation handed down from above to the church, but the same regard cannot always be given to those opinions handed down from above in the church. There is a difference between divine directives and dogmatic dictatorship. No one has a right to intrude upon the sacred precincts of the human heart and throw out opinions any more than he has the right to invade his neighbor's home and throw out his furniture. We must be always on the alert that our faith stands upon the power of God and not upon the wisdom of men. The divine injunction is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It is my intention to do that and to also defend your right to do it!

Voltaire, the skeptic, wrote in his *Philosophic Dictionary* (1764): "The individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he is not of the same opinion is a monster."

More About Baptism

Mission Messenger (June 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

“It seems as if Mr. Rice had found a most delicious theme in my alleged illiberality. He glories in an assumed liberality. I desire no invidious comparisons. Still I hesitate not to say, that, truly and sincerely, on the proper meaning of the word, were our respective views, feelings, and actions thoroughly dissected, I am incomparably more liberal than he: for I suppose there are many conscientious, religious, moral and Christian Presbyterians; and that, although our Savior has no Presbyterian church in heaven, or earth, yet I doubt not but that he has had many, very many, that loved and honored him in that worldly church, whom he will honor in the world to come.”

The foregoing is a statement by Alexander Campbell in his debate with N. L. Rice on the design of baptism. It will serve to show how we have forsaken the ideals of the restoration fathers, and have crystallized into a sectarian establishment which today would exclude even Alexander Campbell from the communion of the saints who compose it. Indeed, our brethren have posthumously withdrawn themselves from every one of the original restoration leaders and cast them into the particular perdition which has been invented to receive all of what are ignorantly referred to as “apostates.” These “prophets” were rejected by the world while they lived and by their heirs after death.

Last month I dealt at length with questions related to baptism and answered a goodly number of queries which I encounter in almost every place where I go in these days to spread the gospel of peace on earth to men of good-will. I did not get through with those questions and in this issue we will resume where we left off. It is almost imperative that you read what was written in the paper last month in order to get a proper clue to the reasoning which will be employed in the copy you now hold in your hand.

Again, it must be made clear that I do not gauge my love for others upon their agreement with me. I want you to sincerely study the revealed word for yourself and to formulate your own convictions. I shall love you if you cannot concur with what I write. I intend to be accountable only to God for what I believe and I allow all of my readers to occupy that same ground. I shall be dealing with some pretty “sticky” questions among the believers who generally read this paper and I want you to be free from any pressure.

BAPTIST BAPTISM

1. *Would you receive a man into your fellowship on his “Baptist baptism”?*

In the first place, I think it should be clearly understood that the fellowship with God and Christ is not something we can extend or withdraw, but something in which we share through divine grace. It is a state or condition into which we are called (1 Corinthians 1:9). I am in the fellowship with every person on this earth who is in Christ Jesus and in whom the Spirit dwells.

The fellowship is the fellowship of the Spirit, and there is only one Spirit. All in whom he abides are in the fellowship. So it would not affect one’s standing with God whether I accept him or not, but it might affect my standing if I reject one whom God accepts. However, I presume you really mean to ask if I would

receive into the congregation of saints with which I am associated, and recognize as a brother in the Lord, one who had been immersed under the influence and teaching of members of the Baptist Church.

This may be rather plain, but I would be as much inclined to receive one on the basis of "Baptist baptism" as I would "Church of Christ baptism" or any other exclusivistic partisan baptism. I am not interested in either one. When baptism is made a sectarian rite it is prostituted from its original and divine purpose, and made to serve a selfish end for which it was not ordained.

It would be rather incongruous for a group to seek to get control of the universal birth process and copyright it, and insist that those who entered the world through the ministrations of one who was not an authorized obstetrician was not a child and should not be accepted as a member of the human race or family. I doubt there is such a thing as "Baptist baptism." One is either baptized or he is not, and whether it is a Baptist who immerses him has little significance. The validity of baptism depends upon the heart of the believer and not upon the theological slant of the administrator.

I must confess that I have never met a person who confessed that he was immersed with "Baptist baptism." I suspect this is a term originated by enemies of the Baptist position, and applied by them to people who would disavow it. Having had some little experience with folk who credit views to me which I do not espouse I am a little reluctant to put words in the mouths of others or to state their views in language which they would not personally indulge.

We are not called upon to receive anyone as a Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, but we are called upon to receive all who are Christians. If a Christian has previously been identified with some religious party and expresses a desire to be just a

Christian and a Christian only, we are not obligated to receive him as a partisan, but as a Christian. His obedience to the good news made him a Christian, and he does not have to cancel that obedience and go through the process again to become a Christian.

I recall the remarks of E. G. Sewell, an editor of *Gospel Advocate*, in association with David Lipscomb. “I have been preaching for sixty-two years, and have never had any one to come forward to unite with the church of Christ that said he had been baptized into the Baptist Church . . . But I have found a number of people that said that when they were baptized they did it in submission to the will of God, and they were encouraged to take their stand at once among those who are simply Christians and to live the Christian life as the word of God directs. So I am in no dilemma in regard to the questions you ask. But those that require all those that have been baptized to do God’s will to be baptized again, ‘having it in view that baptism is for the remission of sins,’ are the ones that are in the ditch, there being no authority in the word of God for any such procedure.”

BECAUSE OF REMISSION

2. But is not remission of sins the design of baptism, and if so, can one be saved who is baptized because he believes his sins have been remitted?

I trust that you will bear with me if I seem to speak at length in answer to your question. I know of nothing else so fraught with the possibility of subtle error as this question. I do not impeach your integrity or impugn your motives for I used to ask the same question in the same way and for the same purpose. I asked it with the sincerity and the same eagerness to be right that you manifest. I am convinced, though, that there was a motivation behind it which is not right or scriptural.

First of all, forgiveness of sins is not man's design for baptism but God's design for those who are baptized. Forgiveness of sins is a judicial act. It is an executive act of pardon. It takes place in heaven in the mind of God. It is not something to be secured by purchase or barter. One does not obtain it by trading off or swapping any act or deed. It is not, therefore, the exclusive design of baptism and may not be the most important motivation.

Secondly, there are at least nine "designs" for baptism set forth in the new covenant scriptures and the selection of one of these as the specific or superlative design which must be understood and recognized to establish the validity of obedience, to the exclusion or ignoring of the others, does not speak well for those who profess to revere all that the Spirit has spoken.

The primary design or motivation for baptism is the desire to unquestioningly "conform in this way with all that God requires" (Matthew 3:15). It is unthinkable that Jesus would be immersed in water purely for a secondary or inferior purpose, and this is the reason he gave when insisting that John immerse him in the waters of the Jordan.

The highest form of obedience of authority does not question or enquire what reward will be received for obedience, or what favor will be granted. It is prompted by reverence and respect for the will of the one whose requirements are met. It is not obedience to receive something but to honor the requirements of the one obeyed. It is upon that basis that our Lord set the example for us. Small wonder that, at the time, a voice from heaven declared, "This is my Son, my beloved, on whom my favor rests."

I am inclined to agree with David Lipscomb in his expressed view that few, if any, who have been immersed have obeyed this divine requirement because their sins have been forgiven. There is not a sufficient motivation about such an idea

to prompt anyone to be baptized. No logical or rational explanation can be given for such a procedure. Here is the statement by Lipscomb:

I do not think any one was ever baptized because his sins were remitted. They may have believed their sins were remitted before they were baptized, but the remission of sins was not the moving cause. There is nothing in remission of sins as a motive to prompt one to be baptized. They may have thought, inasmuch as God had forgiven their sins, they ought to obey his command to be baptized; but in that case the desire to obey God is the moving cause. When a man is baptized to obey God, he is led by a proper motive; and I believe when he does this to obey him, God will forgive his sins, whether he knows the act in which God forgives or not. Man cannot be led by a holier or more acceptable motive than the desire to obey God and so 'fulfill all righteousness.' It is a dangerous thing to require more than God requires.

Men may be told that they were justified and forgiven upon the basis of personal faith and at the very moment of trustful surrender. They may accept it as factual and rely upon it, but there is nothing in this to motivate them to be immersed. Intellectually and philosophically, those who are immersed, believing their sins have been forgiven, are led to obedience for another reason. When sifted down it will generally be found that their desire is to obey God, to do his will, or to follow the example of Jesus.

They may be mistaken about the time when the forgiveness of God was accorded and when the pardon was decreed. They may be the victims of theological error in that respect, but such a mistake will not cancel God's gracious promise. It is not conditioned upon being correct about every theological point at the time of obedience. I do not serve the kind of God who bestows his love only upon those who have an intellectual key honed down until it fits every slot in the keyhole of mental

correctness. This would deny grace, which, I suspect, is the real problem of all too many of us.

I no longer have a zoo concept with one cage labeled Baptists, another Methodists, and another Presbyterians, and I no longer separate God's precious word into the proper "chow-mix" to fling through the bars to each species. All of these names are as human as the cages. God regards no one as a Baptist, a Mennonite, or a Congregationalist. He regards every person on this universe as one for whom his Son died. So I receive men as individuals without reference to their sectarian categories. I accept what truth any man possesses as truth, and I seek, upon that foundation, to build more truth. It is pretty difficult to sectarianize everybody else on earth without ending up with your own sect of left-overs. When you get all of the other species in their respective cages, you may end up as "the great uncaged species," and may be the most dangerous of the lot!

When a man from the Baptist tradition tells me he was immersed to obey God or follow his will I do not catechize him about how many wrong ideas he had at the time. I have immersed some people in my time who had some pretty scrambled notions but who sincerely sought to obey the Father in humble submission. I did not try to straighten out all of their hang-ups before I assisted them in their obedience to my Lord.

It will help you to remember that "unto the remission of sins" is not a part of the command Peter gave to conscience-stricken enquirers on the day of Pentecost. When they cried aloud asking what to do they were told to do two things, "Reform your lives and be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ." "For the remission of sins" does not express what we do for God but what he does for us. This is just as true of the Holy Spirit which is bestowed as a gift.

When any person reforms his conduct and is immersed upon the basis that he believes in Jesus Christ, he has done all

that is required to receive the forgiveness of his sins. He may be incorrect in his information as to when God accords amnesty or bestows pardon, but this no more invalidates the promise than a mistake as to when the bank credits your interest wipes out your deposit.

Let me anticipate your next question. Certainly I have brothers in the Baptist party. In that respect I am just like Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, Tolbert Fanning, Benjamin Franklin, David Lipscomb, and the great majority of restoration leaders. Not one of these would have dreamed of insisting upon “re-baptism” as essential to entering the fellowship of the Lord, unless the one seeking to be re-baptized positively stated that he did not believe in Jesus at the time of his immersion. I want to share with you a lengthy quote from the pen of Alexander Campbell which needs to be studied and considered by every person in our list of readers today.

Let me once more say, that the only thing which can justify re-immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is a confession on the part of the candidate that he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God— that he died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, at the time of his first immersion— that he now *believes* the testimony of the Apostles concerning him, and desires to be buried and rise with Christ in faith of a resurrection to eternal life. The instant that re-baptism is preached and practiced on any other ground than that now stated— such as deficient knowledge, weak faith, a change of views— then have we contradicted in some way and made void the word of the Lord, “he who will believe and be immersed shall be saved”— then have we abandoned the principles of the present reformation, instituted experience meetings, committees for examining candidates, changed the bond of union, and made something else than the belief of the gospel facts the faith of the gospel.

As if this assessment of our condition were not enough, Campbell goes on to predict exactly what has transpired as a result of our legalistic approach and sectarian emphasis. Read his next paragraph and you will see what I mean!

A scene of confusion, such as was never excelled in any community, will obtain in our churches: persons with whom we communed at the Lord's table for seven or ten years, will occasionally take it into their heads that they did not understand baptism at the time of their immersion, that they were hypocrites all the while, and must now get up from the Lord's table and go to the water, confess the Lord, and be immersed. Thus all confidence will be destroyed; and these twice and thrice immersed persons, fond of making converts to their practice, will be agitating the minds of other brethren, urging the weak and credulous to be baptized as a substitute (in fact) for walking more closely with God: for every member of a church who thinks of improving his experience, or increasing his enjoyments by going to the water of baptism, has been living in disobedience or wilful neglect of his duty, not coming daily and constantly to the throne of grace, not walking with God, not keeping his commandments. Reformation, and not immersion, is wanting in all such cases.

If someone reared in the Baptist tradition tells me that he was immersed primarily and solely to become a member of the Baptist sect (and no one ever has) I will urge upon him that he has not really been immersed at all in the scriptural context, or for a scriptural reason. Baptism is not a partisan door. It is not a sectarian passport. When led by the Spirit, we are all baptized into one body and every person who has been baptized at the prompting of the Spirit through the good news is in that body.

A man does not become my brother by coming out of the Baptist party but by coming into Christ. I do not receive men because they are Baptists, Mennonites, or any other kinds of "ists" or "ites," but because they are children of God. If I

received one because he was a Baptist I would have to reject all who were not Baptists. But if I receive men because they are children of God I am free to receive all of God's children.

Certainly, I would prefer that we were not partitioned off and divided into separate corrals. It would be great if all of the walls were knocked down and we could roam the great pasture and eat the provisions of love with no cross-fences, but it is not that way, and until it is I am going to love my brothers where they are. I do not think you can argue or debate the fences down. I do believe they can be melted down by the warmth of love. God's love is a blowtorch when directed against steely barriers.

I can summarize by repeating that I do not recall meeting anyone who was baptized *because* his sins had been forgiven. I have met a lot of people who thought their sins were forgiven before they were baptized, and my thought is, of course, that they were mistaken about it. But they did not give that as the reason for their baptism. I do not consider that their immersion was invalidated by their mistaken view as to something else, and neither do I think they have to have a clear view of the matter before they can obey the Father.

A lot of our preaching brethren who live in mortal fear and tremble at the thought that somebody may not be clear about when God's grace becomes efficacious, intone over a candidate, "I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of your sins.*" But they do not know if they are baptizing one for the forgiveness of sins or not, because they cannot read his heart. They do not know his thoughts or intents, and cannot guarantee that what they are doing is at all acceptable with God. We borrow a leaf from our Catholic neighbors when we assume that we can, by pronouncing a certain formula, place God in a position where he cannot deny our action.

The one whom you are baptizing may not even believe that

Jesus is the Christ. He may be submitting to baptism merely to marry one of the girls in the congregation, or because his father has threatened to leave him out of his will if he is not a member of the church. All we can do is to take the word of one who confesses that he believes. He may be lying at the time. We do not know if he has sincerely repented. Only God can forgive sins because sin is an offense against the majesty of God. Pronouncing certain words over the head of a person will not change his state.

WRONG DOCTRINE

3. Can a person be baptized into Christ upon the basis of a wrong doctrine?

No, and he cannot be baptized into Christ upon the basis of a right doctrine, either. It is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of the gospel, the good news about deliverance from our sins, through his death, burial and resurrection, which saves us and brings us into him.

The gospel was fully proclaimed upon Pentecost. Not one word was ever added to it. Not one apostolic letter is a part of the gospel. The gospel is a message to the whole world, the apostolic letters were written to the saints. No letter contained in the new covenant scriptures was addressed to aliens to persuade them to be baptized. All were written to disciples to remind them they had obeyed the gospel and were in Christ. The apostolic letters were not to be proclaimed to the whole world. The world was not to be saved from sin through doctrine but by the gospel.

One may be wrong about a lot of facets of apostolic doctrine and still obey the gospel. He need not be right about the millennium, the perseverance of the saints, circumcision, eating of meats, or observation of days. In fact, which ever position he takes upon these issues will not affect his relationship to Jesus. “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor

uncircumcision) but a new creation” (Galatians 6:15). Of course, what you are really getting at is whether a man can be wrong about some facet of “Baptist theology” as the world (and the Baptists) express it, and still be saved. The answer is that he may be if he obeys the gospel. It is faith in Jesus, implicit trust in and surrender to him, which is the determinant factor. If one has to be right about partisan doctrinal emphasis before he can be received into the fold of the Good Shepherd he is in real trouble. There are at least two dozen different “Churches of Christ” with different points of stress, and every single one of them regards its doctrinal peculiarities as of sufficient importance to cleave and split the body of God’s Son over them. I know what I am talking about, because I used to hold the cloaks of brethren who “stoned” our fellows because they could not agree with us over some point.

Which one of these myriad views must one have before he can be born again? Upon which one does the efficacy of his baptism depend? If one can become a child of God and be wrong about any of them, can he continue as a child of God in the same condition as he became one? If not, how long can he remain before being blacklisted and drummed out of the regiment of the loyal? Who is to set the date and limit the time?

The truth is that forgiveness of the sin which has alienated us from God depends upon none of these things. God does not forgive us because we have learned a lot of good things. Forgiveness is not on a canteen basis where you drop in enough correct views until you trip the mechanism and get the prize. You can quote scriptures to sustain your position on a lot of things and never be forgiven at all. Forgiveness is not conditioned upon knowing the Bible by heart but in knowing Jesus from the heart.

We are justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through

faith. The question is not, "What think ye of the millennium?" but "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he?" If a person believes that Jesus is the Christ and God's Son, he is baptized into Christ when he surrenders his heart and self, even though he may have mistaken views about many things. He does not enter Christ on the basis of mistaken ideas, of course, but in spite of them.

In the congregation at Corinth there were actually some brethren who did not have a clear conviction that heathen deities were not real. The apostle acknowledges that "A false god has no existence in the real world. There is no god but one." He also writes, "But not everyone knows this. There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience being weak, is polluted by the eating."

He argues that the superior knowledge of some who have such a clear concept of deity may be "utter disaster to the weak, the brother for whom Christ died." And to sin against such a brother is to sin against Christ. In the same congregation there were some who said there was no resurrection of the dead. Paul even wrote; "There are some who know nothing of God; to your own shame I say it." If people could be in the church of God as a result of apostolic proclamation and have such hangups certainly they will not be debarred because of some of the little sectarian ideas they have inherited and have not shaken.

I challenge my brethren to restore a concept of the community of the saints where brethren with a superior knowledge do not destroy those who are uninformed. If we want to capture again the primitive order of things, let us bring back a community where even those who are misinformed about the existence of other deities are still received and nurtured and trained in love until they realize the majestic truth that there is but one God.

If I hound my brother out or destroy him because of his doctrinal opinions I sin against Christ. Christ died for the brethren regardless of what views they may hold about the millennium, the activity of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, missionary programs, or all the rest of the divisive bit. Our brethren ought to be ashamed to live and afraid to die, who think so little of the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God that they will negate its effect and wipe out the relationship it created over such trivia as have divided us.

What a sense of values one must have who will undo the plan of the ages and render the very purpose of God ineffective over such a question as to whether the saints can separate into classes to study the precious word. I absolutely refuse to be the cause of the downfall of my brothers in Christ. I love my brothers more than I do my scriptural knowledge. Knowledge breeds conceit; it is love that builds. So says the apostle, and so I believe! Deliver me from the kind of supercilious arrogance which would cast out even the apostles if they were here and showed the love and concern they did while on earth. We are afflicted today with an outbreak of Diotrephesian rash. “And not content with that (putting himself first), he refuses himself to welcome the brethren, and also stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church.”

DESIGNS OF BAPTISM

4. You said there were nine designs of baptism mentioned in the scriptures. Will you list them for us?

I said there were at least nine. There may be more. My list is not necessarily complete or exclusive. But I will provide them for your notice with scriptural documentation. However, I think I should speak a word of caution. Actually, there is but one primary motivation. The others are secondary and subsidiary. They accrue from it. They tend to express blessings which result

from obedience and thus offer an incentive, but the highest and noblest design is simply to obey the will of God.

I have already documented this as the design for the baptism of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 3:15. The desire and eagerness to fulfill all righteousness should prompt our every action and any other reason should be subsidiary to it. For this reason I do not want to make this foundational purpose seem to be in the background because of anything else I may say or think. Nothing else is really a design of a legitimate nature if unrelated to or exclusive of this.

The *second* design I shall mention is the securing of or returning the answer of a clear conscience. In 1 Peter 3:21, the apostle, who has just been writing about the flood, asserts, “The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

But what does this mean? It occurs in a context of which William Barclay says, “This is not only one of the most difficult passages in Peter’s letter; it is one of the most difficult passages in the whole New Testament.” While Barclay is referring primarily to the preaching to the spirits in prison, it is also true that the expression “the answer of a good conscience” is not without its problems. This will be recognized when one compares the various renderings. Here are a few samples.

“And, corresponding to that figure, the water of baptism now saves you, not the washing off of material defilement, but the craving of a good conscience after God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Weymouth).

“A counterpart of that water, the rite of immersion, not the removal of physical dirt but the request to God for a clear conscience, now preserves you also by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Schonfield).

“The representation of which, baptism, is now saving you also (not the putting off of the filth of the flesh, but the enquiry of a good conscience to God.” (Concordant Literal New Testament).

“Baptism is not the washing away of bodily pollution, but the appeal made to God by a good conscience; and it brings salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (The New English Bible New Testament).

“And water, of which this is a figure, now saves you, that is, baptism; not as the washing away of dirt from the body, but as the prayer of a good conscience before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Charles Kingsley Williams).

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Revised Standard Version).

The reason that the translators differ in their rendering of the word which the King James Version designates as “answer” is because the term originally meant a question or enquiry, and later, the reply to such an enquiry. Thus, it came to mean the queries proposed during an examination, and the answers given to them, and finally, the whole process of scrutiny or examination. Does baptism secure a clear conscience from God because of divine cleansing action, or does the person who is being immersed have a clear conscience as the result of his action?

To put it another way, is baptism an appeal for a clear conscience, or is it the response of a conscience that is clear? It will help to remember that the Greek word is *eperotema*, and this was a legal term. It was used in making business contracts or drawing up legal agreements. If a firm decided to accept a junior partner or executive, he was asked if he properly understood

and agreed to the conditions proposed, and if he would faithfully carry out the responsibility of the new relationship. His answer in the affirmative made it legal and binding from that time forward.

If a man desired to enlist in the army he was asked if he would pledge allegiance. Publicly he was confronted with the question as to whether he would forsake all other interests and devote himself without quibble to the duties devolving upon a soldier. When he made a solemn response in the form of an oath to give himself unstintingly to the new calling he was accepted and sworn in.

Those who come to Jesus are regarded as being invited to a partnership in which they must devote their energies to the advancement of the cause. They are looked upon as enlisting in the royal forces of the King of kings. Baptism is the public answer or attestation of one who, in good conscience, renounces all other concerns and gives himself wholeheartedly to the new enterprise. It is a pledge or appeal to God for a reception upon the basis of the proper response to the divine will.

Baptism is not a physical rite intended to produce external cleansing. It is a bath of regeneration and not for the purpose of cleansing bodily defilement. It rather cleanses from the guilt of sin and thus purges the conscience from the stain of transgression making possible access to God.

The *third* design of baptism is to bring us into relationship with the Godhood. The term "Godhead" in the King James Version is not a good rendering. It is intended to embrace all that is recognized as deity and for this, the word I have chosen is better adapted. Just as priesthood signifies all that pertains to the relationship of the priests, and brotherhood indicates all that is embraced by the relationship of brethren, so Godhood indicates all that is known as God.

Deity is revealed or manifested in the form of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we are baptized into the state or relationship embraced by the name of these three, as shown by Matthew 28:19. Again, the King James Version is incorrect in rendering *eis to onoma* by “in the name.” The Greek *eis* signifies action from without to within. It is not that we are baptized “in the name,” but *into the name* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The word *name* means more than a mere designation or title. It relates to the character and attributes of those under consideration, and it here implies that we are immersed into a state where we share the divine nature, that is, eternal life, the life of God. Certainly Jesus is not giving a formula to announce in immersing a candidate for citizenship. There is no such formula. He is not telling us what to say, but into what we induct men and women by baptism.

If I may be allowed a little freedom in paraphrasing, what he meant was, “Go and enroll students from all of the nations, and bring them into the new relationship by immersing them into that state involved in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” One who sincerely believes that Jesus is the Messiah and God’s Son is as scripturally baptized if the administrator says nothing as if he pronounces in clerical tones a ritualistic statement. It is not the ritual of a doctor which makes birth possible or valid, nor is it the words spoken by the mortician which constitutes burial.

We have been trapped into traditional modes which become official methods and I always feel sorry for those poor souls who question the baptism of a sincere person because a cleric did not utter the approved or recognized epigram while burying him in water. It is Romanism which teaches that a prescribed sequence of words must be pronounced in exactitude or else the ordinance is of no avail, and some of us are a lot closer to Rome than we are to Jerusalem. In any event, it is a design of baptism to introduce us into that glorious state in

which we enjoy fellowship with the divine.

The *fourth* point which I will mention is that baptism is to enable us to receive the Holy Spirit, to indwell us as God's wonderful gift (Acts 2:38). This passage promises the Spirit to those believers who reform their lives and are immersed, and Acts 5:32 shows that the Spirit was given to all who obey. It is tragic that men today often confuse the Spirit with the word, which is his instrument, but on Pentecost they received the word and were then baptized, and they were baptized and then received the Spirit as a gift. Receiving the word precedes baptism and receiving the Spirit as a seal succeeds baptism.

This does not argue that the Spirit does not operate upon the heart of an alien through the gospel, for it is the gospel which is God's dynamic to salvation. Certainly the Holy Spirit is in the Word to make it living and vital, just as he is in me to provide the more abundant life and in the body of Christ to make it a living entity in this world. But this no more argues that the Spirit and the word are identical than it argues that I am identical with the Holy Spirit, seeing that both are indwelt as the scriptures clearly teach.

The argument that Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit prior to being commanded to be immersed in water, cannot be urged as an objection to what I have said for the simple reason that this household was chosen to initiate the non-Jews into a state of fellowship with Jews and thus clarify the divine mystery which had been concealed from previous ages. The secret was "that through the gospel the Gentiles were made joint heirs with the Jews, part of the same body, sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6). The purpose of the prior baptism of the Spirit was to convince the Jews that this was God's will. "And God who can read men's hearts showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them as to us" (Acts 15:8).

When Jew and Greek became one body there was no further need of this unique phenomenon of the Spirit, and there is no indication in the scriptures that there was ever a repetition of it. Indeed, a constant occurrence of the experience would have lessened the effect rather than enhancing it. Today, one does not become an heir because he has received the Spirit, but he receives the Spirit because he has become an heir. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

The *fifth* design of baptism is to bring us into an organic relationship in the one body of Christ. Paul argues, "For Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of many parts." He affirms, "In the same way, all of us, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free men, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13).

In this instance the Spirit is not the element in which we are baptized, but the divine agent who prompts or motivates us through the good news to be baptized, and who guarantees that all who are obedient to the heavenly proclamation enter the one body and become an organ or functioning part in it. There are two opinions as to the meaning of this passage with which I cannot concur. One is that the baptism under consideration is a baptism in the Spirit, in which case the Spirit cannot be the agent or administrator, since only Jesus can baptize in the Spirit as an element or a medium.

The other position, created by our unfortunate sectarian stance today is, that many who are baptized under the influence of the Spirit through the good news are not brought into the one body at all. This always occurs when partisan adherents arrogantly assume that they constitute the one body, to the exclusion of all others, and that one must belong with them to belong to Christ. I hold that when a humble penitent believer is baptized on the basis of his faith in Jesus that he is brought into the one body in spite of either the ignorance or arrogance of

those who immerse him. The purpose and action of the Spirit will not become a failure because of the presumption of a faction of finite folk.

The Holy Spirit sustains two relations to the body. The first is preliminary and leads to baptism by motivation effected through the gospel; the second is subsequent and intended to sustain those in the new relationship. The same Spirit who prompts us to initial obedience is given us to drink, that is, to satisfy our thirst and preserve us. One provision makes us members and the other supports us as such. But I think that the baptism which brings us into the relationship is immersion in water of the humble penitent who turns to Jesus.

The *sixth* design is to enable us to share in a likeness of the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). It is obvious that there must be two crosses and two deaths involved in my salvation. Christ died for the sins of all men, but all men must die to sin for the sacrifice to become effective unto them. I must be crucified unto the world and the world must be crucified unto me, for only then can I be dead and Christ live in me. Actually, of course, there are not really two crosses and two deaths, for the death I die is on his cross. It is his death with which I become identified.

Just as Christ died, was buried and rose again according to the old covenant scriptures, so I must die, be buried, and rise again according to the new covenant scriptures. Thus, the apostle writes, "For surely you know this: when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. By our baptism then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life. For if we became one with him in dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was" (Romans 6:3-5).

To get the full impact of this statement one needs to

underline the words “with” and “into.” With Christ Jesus and with his death! It is thus we become one with him. Note that in baptism we “shared his death” and “in the same way.” Paul knows that every person in the community of saints has been immersed. His argument would be ridiculous and absurd otherwise. In view of this, it is a little bit silly for someone to quote what Paul has to say about faith in order to offset what he here says about baptism.

Even the casual and careless reader of this passage must conclude that every person in the community of the reconciled at Rome had been immersed. And the very design of baptism as here enunciated was to make it possible to become identified with Jesus in his death, and in his life. What Jesus did for all men that they might be saved, each man must do for Jesus that he may be saved.

The *seventh* design of baptism is to enable us to put on Christ as a garment (Gal. 3:27). It is one thing to identify with Jesus in his resurrection, but it is a wholly different thing to wear him so that the shame of our nakedness do not appear. The New English Bible translates the passage, “For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him you have all put on Christ as a garment.”

When we come to Christ we “put off the old man of sin,” that is, we remove, lay aside, or hang up the tattered garment furnished by unregenerate human nature. We divest ourselves of the fabric woven of the evil ways of this present age and manufactured at the loom of the commander of the spiritual powers of the air. But it is not God’s purpose that we be naked or exposed. We put on Christ as our covering or protection from the weak and beggarly elements. The word for put on is *enduo*. It literally means to clothe with a garment. A good example of its several occurrences is found in the treatment of Jesus by the soldiers, “Finally, when the mockery was over, they took off the mantle and dressed him in his own clothes” (Matt. 27:31).

The baptistery is God's dressing-room. Before an actor comes out upon the stage to take his part in the drama, he divests himself of his old clothing and dons the costume adapted to his part. And before we can step into our role upon the stage of life we must lay off the old garments and put on the vesture furnished by the One who wrote the drama and whose invitation to participate in it we accepted.

Ragnar Bring, whose *Commentary on Galatians*, is so thorough, as is characteristic of the Scandinavian school of thought, writes: "When Paul says that those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, he uses the verb *enduo*, 'to put on.' This verb means also 'to cover oneself with,' 'to penetrate,' 'to submerge oneself in,' 'to dive into.' The baptized person had become completely united with Christ and one with him. We may also think of putting on the heavenly robes of baptism for which the baptized person was destined."

If you want to read something really interesting on the passage in Galatians, you should read what William Barclay has to say in his *Daily Study Bible Series*. Here is a taste of it to whet your appetite. "Baptism was no mere outward form and ceremony; it was a real union with Christ. Paul goes on to say that they had put on Christ. There may be here a reference to a custom which certainly existed later. The candidate for baptism was clothed in pure white robes, symbolic of the new life into which he had entered. Just as the initiate put on his new white robe he put on Christ; his life was clothed in Christ."

The *eighth* design of baptism is to bring us into a state of wholeness, that is of salvation. We must never forget that wholeness and holiness were not too far apart in Jewish thought. In Mark 16:16, we read, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that does not believe will be condemned." The word *sozo*, save, is also rendered heal 3 times, make whole 9, and preserve 1. Jesus used this very word when he told the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years, "Your

faith has made you whole.” One who is in sin is deformed. He is crippled and abnormal. He must be restored to the state of normalcy, by being rescued or saved from his condition.

Nothing is sillier than for someone to excuse sin by saying of the transgressor, “He is just acting naturally, he is perfectly normal.” The devil has conned us into warping the abnormal into normal, and vice versa. In the case of the long-suffering woman her faith prompted her to touch Jesus, and it was a faith so great as to overcome her timidity and make the contact which enabled her to be restored, made whole, or be healed. Baptism is the touching of Jesus prompted by faith. It is contacting his person in a demonstration of utter trust, and it is the ordained response to the grace that heals.

To change the figure and bring the metaphor up to modern standards, faith is the electric eye which opens the door for one who approaches the storehouse of grace, while baptism is the door that makes possible the access. It is a sad thing indeed when one becomes so enamored of the unseen power which operates the door that he simply stands there admiring it and bragging about his having discovered it, without ever going through the door. But it is a tragedy when someone who ought to know better brainwashes and befuddles him until he thinks that one is as well off standing out under the portico as he would be if he entered.

It was J. W. McGarvey, in dealing with this passage, who said, “When the apostles went out to preach under this commission, they knew only from its terms to whom they should promise pardon, and consequently they never encouraged anyone to hope for it previous to baptism, nor gave any unbaptized person reason to think that his sins were already forgiven. If any of the unbaptized therefore, are pardoned, it is because God has granted to them more than he has promised. This he may unquestionably do, if the circumstances of individuals shall make it right in his eyes to do so, but of these

circumstances he alone can judge, who knows all things and whose judgments are guided by infinite wisdom.”

The *ninth* design, and the final one which I shall discuss here, is the remission, or forgiveness of sins. It is not my intention, by suggesting these other designs, to make it appear that this one is inferior to the others, or in any way insignificant. I have not listed the designs in the order of their importance, for no intentional design of God can ever be unimportant.

The conscience-stricken hearers on Pentecost, asked what they must do, having been guilty of slaying the one who had since risen from the dead to be made both Messiah and Lord. It is interesting to note that they did not ask what to think, believe or acknowledge. They knew that lordship created a master-servant relationship and entailed doing the will of the Lord. Accordingly, they asked what they must do to implement their faith in his lordship.

The reply was simple and direct. “Reform your lives and be immersed, every one of you in the name of Jesus the Messiah.” Their obedience to these instructions would result in forgiveness of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit as God’s gift. Repentance is a change of mind, preceded by a remorse for guilt, and succeeded by a reformation of conduct or life. A mere change of mind which does not cause one to turn away from and renounce his sin is not repentance. Such a change is produced by a wrong, or inferior, motive.

Forgiveness of sins is a divine act. It is a judicial procedure of offended majesty, proceeding from inestimable mercy. It is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus, his blood atoning for our guilt. God put him forward “as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Romans 3:25). That is why the record says that “God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). Forgiveness cannot be earned, deserved, purchased or bargained for.

And it is here that I think many brethren need to examine anew their thinking. They have concluded that remission of sins is an integral part of the command and that the command cannot be obeyed by one who has reformed his life consistent with the life of Jesus until he understands and is baptized for this one specific purpose. But forgiveness is not a human design at all. It is the divine design. God designs to forgive those who reform their lives and are baptized to demonstrate obedient discipleship.

With many it is almost as if forgiveness was dispensed by a divine slot machine and was automatically bestowed when two items were dropped in to trigger it off automatically. In our day security is obtained behind doors and gates which can only be opened by one who has a card punched with proper apertures. And some have been betrayed into thinking that a computerized card with two properly synchronized holes will gain the prize of forgiveness. In such an arrangement there is little personal understanding or compassion, and God may be as detached in attitude as a girl selling tickets behind a bullet-proof window.

But forgiveness is not bestowed in such a routine, offhand, impersonal and systematic fashion. The one who comes to God in complete surrender, weeping over his transgressions, and humiliated by his weaknesses, may understand little about how or when he will be forgiven. He does not bring his baptism in to trade for forgiveness. His theme may be, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." Like the prodigal, he may disclaim worthiness to be called a son, and in his abject state may be willing to be like a hired servant. When such a one submits to baptism, believing it to be the Father's will, God designs to forgive his past and to welcome him to a new start and a new life.

Baptism is unto forgiveness, not because it purchases, procures or produces it, but because it transfers the obedient believer from a state of alienation to one of citizenship where

amnesty can be freely granted by the King to all who have received Jesus. It is the very antithesis of baptismal regeneration, although a great many of our brethren affirm that unfortunate doctrine while vociferously denying that they do so. The charge that they teach “regeneration by water” is fairly and justly made against a lot of folk, for that is exactly what they believe and advocate although they are not astute enough to know it!

It is not belief in baptism for the remission of sins, but belief in Jesus as the atonement for our sins, which really counts. We do not trust in a body of water for salvation but in Jesus who is head of the one body. And we do not trust in Jesus because we have been baptized for the remission of sins, but because we believe in Jesus we are baptized to enroll as his disciples, and God forgives our sins. It is Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness and redemption. It is not faith in the design, but faith in the designer, that makes our obedience effective. We have neither the right nor the authority to formulate a new and amended creed, and ask of those who seek refuge under the spreading wings of divine love, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that baptism is for the remission of sins?”

CONCLUSION

When “The Church of Christ” began to exhibit symptoms of its growing sectarianism its members started to emphasize the new doctrine of “knowledge of the design” instead of faith in the Lord Jesus as the ground of acceptability. This enabled the brethren to draw a more definitive line between themselves and the Baptists with whom the restoration movement was originally aligned after it was launched by good Presbyterians.

But it also caused the preachers to hold a “coroner’s inquest” over every case of baptism not performed by one of

their number. Men were actually rejected who would not submit to re-immersion in order to please the party. This was by no means the attitude of the early reformers. Tolbert Fanning wrote: "If a Baptist were to present himself to me slating that he was satisfied with his baptism, but still would be baptized again to please the church, if required, I should be certain that man was a hypocrite, or lacked the gospel knowledge and faith." Despite this, I have met numerous brethren who were baptized once to please the Lord, and baptized again to please the congregation!

The restoration fathers saw the proper relationship of baptism to Christ Jesus, and thus to salvation. A. T. Anderson, an eminent student, wrote in *Christian Review*: "I can never believe that God will withhold the act of pardon because I may not have understood that my sins were forgiven in the act of baptism; knowing that my whole confidence was placed in his Son, and his death for my sins, at the time of my immersion. Christ is greater than immersion. Though I believe with all my heart in Christ, and have the disposition to do whatever he bids me; yet I cannot be saved from my sins, because I have not been taught that he will forgive me just at that time. If this doctrine be carried out, it would make baptism a savior, or I know nothing of reason. This makes immersion the greater and Christ the less. This makes our salvation to depend not on our faith and obedience, nor on the faithfulness of him who promised."

When a man is motivated by any of the "designs" of baptism to obey God, then Jesus is the author of salvation to all them that obey him. There would be no more efficacy in "Church of Christ baptism" than in "Baptist baptism." Both would be for the purpose of pleasing a party. When a man is baptized to please God, or to obey a command of God, that is not party baptism at all. He has done what God requires and "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." A misunderstanding about God's part in the procedure will not negate the promise to one who has done his part as God

commanded.

The Plan of Salvation

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[Abstract]

“We’re all so clogged with dead ideas passed from generation, to generation that even the best of us don’t know the way out.”— Peter Weiss, Marat/Sade.

One who challenges the traditions of a people must always be prepared to face their hostility. When opinions have become crystallized by constant repetition men are frightened at the thought of divesting themselves of them. Without them they feel helpless and insecure. They regard the surrender of them as being an unfair reflection upon their fathers, and fear that a denial of them will weaken the truth which they have sought to buttress with them.

It was Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist and historian, who wrote, “What an enormous magnifier is tradition! How a thing grows in the human memory and in the human imagination, when love, worship, and all that is in the human heart, is there to encourage it.”

I am not by nature an iconoclast, an idol-smasher. I think a lot of traditions are harmless and insignificant and I have no ambition to go around slashing at them for the mere satisfaction of revealing them for what they are. But others are detrimental to the revealed truth of heaven, because they parade as truth, and may contribute to the destruction of the one body, and the

ultimate destruction of souls. I am an avowed enemy of anything which obstructs the eternal purpose.

In the Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University is a bust of Mark Twain. Beneath it are the words, "Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul." I am resolved, with the help of God, to stand by, with, and for the truth of heaven, but I feel no compulsion to defend with equal fervor those traditions which are "ours." I say this despite the fact that Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote, "To almost all men the state of things under which they have been used to live seems to be the necessary state of things."

Perhaps I can help you understand my personal reaction to some areas of thought by reproducing for you a little of the dialogue which took place one morning in a question period in which I fielded queries from a good-natured group whose members were not all in agreement with my views.

1. *Is it true that you hold that there is no plan of salvation?*

I think it would be a little silly to say there is no plan of salvation. It is obvious that God had a design by which the chasm eroded by sin was to be bridged. There certainly is a response to the good news which must be made by the lost. The heart must reach out in love to grasp the infinite and to tune in to eternal life.

What I have said is that the so-called "five steps of salvation" advocated by my brethren as *the plan* conveys a wrong impression. One does not come into the vital, life-giving interpersonal relationship by a hop, skip and jump method. The kingdom of heaven is not attained by scampering up five steps at the urging of a preacher, as if the house of God was a split-level domicile. The tragic thing about reducing the divine response to grace to such a simplistic sequence is that it leaves many people as empty, lonely, and forlorn afterwards as they were before.

When I was a very young preacher conducting meetings in a rural area, I would go to the plain meetinghouse every afternoon and put a chart on the blackboard. Some of these drawings were quite elaborate and designed to elicit complimentary remarks from those who remained awake long enough to see them. An invariable ingredient of every one of them was a circle bearing the label, “kingdom of heaven,” with a little kitchen stepladder leading into it. The five rungs were designated h, f, r, c, b. It was not necessary to spell out the words. Any “Church of Christ” audience on earth knew the initials stood for hearing, faith, repentance, confession and baptism.

But there are several things wrong with this clever little arrangement. For one thing, God overlooked it in his revelation, and nowhere delivered it in the neat package in which our brethren tie it up and pass it across the counter to aliens. They must search around and dig about in the scriptures to find the verses that fit, and the pile of passages they reject in the process is a lot larger than the little one which validates the steps. It might be all right to pick out the kernels and discard the shells, except for one thing. No part of God’s revelation is husk or shell and the word of God is not nuts! Why not read that last sentence again?

The “plan of salvation” has been contrived by human ingenuity and nailed together by men. They have lifted a passage from Matthew, another from Luke, a few from Acts, and a goodly assortment from the epistles, and out of these have constructed the stairs to the stars which men must climb, leaving each in turn, until the last one leads smack into the new creation. But the new creation is the work of God and not of men. We can no more create ourselves the second time than we could the first. And we are not created by someone lowering a little ladder for us to climb.

That is why some of the most frustrated, unhappy,

grumbling individuals on earth are “in the church.” They are frightened and insecure. They have done all they were told to do, by a preacher who is as perplexed about how to order his life as they are theirs, and yet they are uncertain and bewildered. Instead of coming into a glorious life of light and love they took the last step and were left dangling and kicking with their suspenders caught on the leg of the ladder. They are afraid to let go and let God, so they remain close to the water, trusting in their baptism rather than in the grace of our God. And when they find the same desires and lusts welling up in them as before they begin to wonder about their baptism. They can’t understand why it did not “take.” Perhaps the preacher was awkward and did not get them all the way under and left something sticking out of the water! It is a traumatic experience when you are twenty years old and are still wondering if you were ever born.

There is a tremendous difference between knowing that baptism is required and in experiencing eternal life. You could train a parrot to repeat the five steps, and if he was a particularly smart bird, he might even learn where the scriptures are found for each, but he would still be caged. And many of my brethren, instead of finding release, think they have stumbled into prison where they must work arduously or toil endlessly under the watchful eyes of the wardens, or the angels will heave them into Gehenna. Life is one continuous round of fire-fighting and it is hard for a fire-fighter on the job around the clock to take time out to be very loving!

There is another thing wrong with the staircase to salvation. It creates the impression that you hear the word of God awhile and then leave that step and move on up to faith, and then leave faith and move on up another notch to repentance. The fact is that we can never get high enough that we can quit hearing the word, and we can never leave faith for anything else.

We need to change the illustration from a ladder to an escalator. On an escalator you take one step and that places you in a position where an unseen power can lift you up to your destination. The step you take is faith, and wherever else you go, or whatever else you do, it must be done while standing on faith. It is in faith that we repent, and in faith that we are baptized. Indeed these are the responses of faith. They are faith expressing itself, faith demonstrating that it is alive and active. By grace are you saved through faith. Grace is the escalator which draws us unto God and faith is the step we take to enter grace.

ORIGIN OF THE PLAN

2. Did Walter Scott originate the idea that there were five steps?

Walter Scott, known as “the voice of the golden oracle,” truly felt that he discovered and restored the plan of salvation. Legend has it that, in an attempt to make the message clear, he appeared at a schoolhouse to announce that he would preach that night and to urge the children to carry his invitation to attend to their parents. Upon impulse he asked them to hold up the fingers of one hand, and beginning with the thumb he designated each finger by a word or phrase, and had the children memorize these.

Unfortunately for our current crop of traditionalists, Scott’s “five-finger exercise” was different than the more modern variety. He labeled the fingers faith, repentance, baptism, remission and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He contended that faith destroyed the love of sin, repentance the practice of sin, baptism the power of sin, remission the guilt of sin, and the gift of the Spirit the punishment of sin.

A corollary to this was that death, the sting of sin, would also be destroyed and the believer made free. The simplicity of it all caught fire among the humble frontier dwellers and they

sometimes reduced it to a jingle which they recited or hummed to themselves at work in field or forest. This aggravated the sectarian clergy. A Methodist preacher who lost a number of members passed out word that Scott had strangled a number of them and actually drowned several of them while immersing them. Rowdy Methodists and Presbyterians gathered at the river to jeer at and ridicule those who were baptized. Frequently Scotts' horse was loosed and driven off while he was in the water, and once when he had tracked it for several miles he found it with its tail cut off.

The change in "the plan to salvation" as it is now proclaimed is very significant. We dropped a couple of items in the plan as announced by Scott and inserted a couple of others of our own choosing. In doing so we merely signalled the fact that we had lost a sense of the nature, power and consequences of sin, and the purpose and design of God in the conquest of this usurper of man's heart. In devising our "steps" we encouraged men to take them as a kind of ritualistic dance without any thought as to their relationship to the divine intention.

More and more we concentrated upon baptism as the culmination of the whole purpose of God, and while emphasizing it as the key to forgiveness, we played down that forgiveness as a free act of grace, motivated by divine love and extended in mercy as deep and boundless as the ocean. The result is that, in spite of all we said, the guilt-consciousness lingered on, and some have been baptized three or four times, not to fulfill all righteousness but to try and remove the gnawing doubt in their insecure hearts.

And the gift of the Spirit as the divine seal of promise and the guarantee of the inheritance was forgotten, and was no longer part of "the plan of salvation."

There wasn't even a rung of the remodeled ladder reserved for the Spirit, and as our developing sectarianism flowered into

full-blown partisan provincialism we heard less and less of the Spirit, and men began to equate Him with the word which they read, believed and sought to understand.

To directly face up to your question it is true that Walter Scott deduced the “plan of salvation” from the scriptures, but it is not “the plan of salvation” you hear proclaimed in our revivals, which we call “gospel meetings” and which some of our more immediate progenitors called “protracted efforts.” It is hard to think of three or four night sessions as “protracted.” It is equally difficult for me to think of five nights of haranguing on the evils of orphan homes, Bible classes, individual cups, instrumental music, or the danger of world communism as a gospel meeting. Apparently we have not only changed the “plan of salvation” from the time of Walter Scott, but we have changed the content of the gospel since the days of Paul.

AN ADDED ITEM

3. Will you dare to name specifically one of the items in “the plan” which has been added without warrant?

I do not think of myself as a spiritual daredevil, and I doubt that one needs to be a “Fearless Fosdick” to point out an error. Perhaps you imply that our brethren are so entrenched in their opinions that one who questions them puts his neck in the noose. But I never forget what happened to Haman who contrived a gallows to get rid of one of God’s servants only to end up with his feet dangling and his body slowly gyrating at the end of the hemp. So I will risk naming “one of the items.” In doing so I must first issue a word of caution. A lot of brethren who are always poised to jump at any statement made by one whom they would like to see removed from the scene allow their ambition to outdistance their judgment. They assume that when one says a thing is not essential he implies that it is wrong or sinful. This does not follow at all. A thing may be innocent in

itself, and devoid of evil, but when it is bound as part of a dogmatic system or divine requirement to salvation, it is clearly out of place.

This certainly applies to “the good confession” which has been hammered into place as one of the steps on the same basis as faith and repentance. I do not think God ever demanded this of an alien sinner as a condition for remission of sins in the form that it is now taught and required. I am constantly receiving tracts purporting to answer the question of what one must do to be saved. Almost invariably the answer is given, “Five things are required of the sinner,” and then they are ticked off with oral confession as the fourth in line.

Of course what our brethren have done is to construct the ladder and then look at the “blueprint” to see how they can justify it. And they have come up with some quotations which satisfy them a lot better than they do reason or scripture. One of the most familiar is Matthew 10:32. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” To apply this to people as a prelude to coming to Christ is a wee bit ridiculous in the light of the context.

The passage occurs in conjunction with the calling and commissioning of the apostles. They were to be sent as sheep among wolves and must beware of men. They would be delivered up to councils, scourged in synagogues and brought before governors and kings for public trial.

They would be persecuted from city to city, but were not to fear those who could only kill the body. In such periods of trial those who stood firm against pressure and openly confessed their allegiance to Christ would be confessed by him before his Father. Those who weakened and recanted the faith would be denied.

It was not even necessary for one to speak in order to confess Christ under such circumstances. He might do it by his attitude or action. I have never known of a congregation asking one to “come forward” in order to “deny Christ before men.” But if it is not necessary to come forward to deny him before men it is not necessary to do so to confess him before men. If you can deny him before men by conduct and deed, you certainly can confess him thus. Our brethren are hard put when they must take a scripture like this out of context and warp it in order to get one of “the five steps of salvation.” I say this in full recognition that, in my ignorance I used to do the same thing. This passage has no reference to one who is coming to Christ. It refers to those who are in Christ and under pressure of the authorities for that very reason.

But I suspect that all of you know that the textual “trump card” for such maneuvering is Romans 10:9, 10. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

I think a careful study will show that the apostle is not talking of a one-time pre-baptismal confession, but of the entire course of Christian conduct or life. He begins the chapter with a statement of his concern for the Jews who had a zeal for God but lacked knowledge. In their ignorance of God’s basis of justification or righteousness, which is by faith, they presumed to contrive their own method, which was by law.

The apostle then declares that Christ is the end of the law for justification unto all who believe. By his death on the cross Jesus forever banished any attempt at justification by law. Righteousness does not come by law, but by faith. Those who trust in law as the basis of righteousness are like the Jews. They are ignorant of God’s system of justification. There are but two foundations for justification— law and faith. The first is

impossible, not because of the nature of law, but because of the nature of man.

Moses describes righteousness based upon law-keeping by saying, “He that doeth these things shall live by them.” This simply means that life based upon law demands perfect conformity and absolute obedience. The least infraction brings death. Any failure to comply ends life at that point. Law revives sin and man dies. It is silly to talk about being justified by faith and law at the same time, or by believing in law as the basis of justification. If you are justified by faith it cannot be by law, and vice versa.

Contrary to the justification which Moses described, the righteousness of faith is not based upon human effort or accomplishment. One does not need to go anywhere or see anything in order to believe. He does not need to ascend into heaven and bring Christ down from above. He does not need to go down into the abyss to raise up Christ from the dead. He has the testimony at hand. It is near to him and available unto him. It requires no further miracle to confirm it but is already in his mouth and in his heart, internal and external, a subject of conviction and communication.

The word of faith which has been proclaimed is sufficient to cause one to believe in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. It is sufficient also to prompt him to confess that Jesus is Lord. No further ascension or descension of Jesus is required. It is not essential to faith that we produce Jesus, either by going up after him, or by going down after him. It is only necessary that we proclaim him, impelled by our inner faith.

The word for confess is *homologeō*. It means to assent to, or verbally endorse what another has said. Literally, it is to speak that which agrees with what another affirms or maintains. In this instance it is the expression of agreement with what God declares is true. Thus, it does not contemplate here a formal

repetition of a statement or sentence, but of a constant testimony of acquiescence with God's wonderful revelation concerning Jesus.

It is helpful to remember that the word for confession is the same as the word for profession. A man's profession is not his oath of office but his vocation. It is used of Timothy who "professed a good profession before many witnesses," and of Jesus, "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Timothy 6:12, 13). Certainly, neither of these were alien sinners as our brethren designate those who have not made "the good confession." The word is found in Hebrews 3:1, where Christ is designated "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." Whatever is involved in our profession as Christians is included in our confession. It is not what we say or do to become Christians but what we say and do as Christians.

Albert Barnes, in commenting upon Romans 10:9, says, "A profession of religion then denotes a public declaration of our agreement with what God has declared, and extends to all his declarations about our lost estate, our sin, and need of a Savior; to his doctrines about his own nature, holiness and law; about the Savior and Holy Spirit; about the necessity of a change of heart and holiness of life; and about the grave and the judgment; about heaven and hell."

There is nothing in the scriptures about a ritualistic or formal "confession" as a step into the fellowship of God's Son. I have known preachers who would privately convince a man that Jesus was the Son of God and when the man testified to his desire to be immersed because of his acceptance of that fact, they would still have him "come down the aisle" and taking him by the hand, would ask him a question which he had already answered in their presence, "Do you believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God?" And they thought this was essential as a preliminary to baptism.

Once, a man who by virtue of his study and meditation, reached the conclusion that he should be immersed, wrote to a preacher and asked if he would meet him at the church building at 9:00 a.m. on Monday and baptize him. The man wrote, "I am so thoroughly convinced that Jesus is the Son of God that I simply must obey him as Lord of my life." The two of them met at the appointed time and the preacher suggested prayer. After they had prayed he said to the lone individual, "Will you please stand?" Taking him by the hand, he fastened his eyes upon him and said, "Do you believe with all of your heart that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God"? Puzzled, the man replied, "Why, didn't you get my letter?"

It will be hard for you to believe that I have actually heard people argue that before you can "take the confession" you must have more than one witness present because the book says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men" and men is a plural word. In the light of the context which shows that Jesus is talking about the testimony of his apostles this is ridiculous and absurd.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

4. Did not Philip require the eunuch to make the confession before he would baptize him according to Acts 8:37?

Certainly not! You are reading back into the account a procedure which we have devised. Do not let that throw you. It is a common practice among the brethren who must validate what they do by "the pattern" even if they have to invent the pattern.

In the first place the verse to which you refer is not found in the majority of the Greek manuscripts. It is omitted in the oldest extant copies. It is wanting in the Ethiopian and Syrian versions and is rejected by the ablest critical scholars. This does not mean that what it states is not valid but it certainly means that one cannot honestly base a requirement or practice upon it

and make it “a condition of salvation.”

But even if the passage was written by Luke it still does not bear out the use to which we have often put it. Philip did not require, request or demand “a confession” of the treasurer. When the man pointed to the water which they were approaching and asked what hindrance there might be to his immersion, Philip simply stated that the only requisite condition was a firm conviction of heart in the Jesus whom he had proclaimed.

If the verse, the insertion of which is questionable, was recorded by Luke, the man merely replied with a statement that he believed that Jesus was the Son of God. If the verse was not written by Luke, the man just stopped the horses and went down into the water with Philip. In either event, the idea of a formal confession as a step in a “plan of salvation” is not in the account and nothing would have surprised Luke or Philip more than to learn that we thought it was. One of our tracts would have really confused them when they learned that we were crediting our traditional position to what they said and did.

We are only instructed to immerse believers, and if one presents himself to us for baptism and we are not sure if he believes we ought to enquire of him about the matter. His statement of faith is not for the benefit of God who can read his heart, nor for the benefit of the candidate who knows his own feeling in the matter. It is only for the information of the immerser. Certainly if, through long association and counselling, I am aware of the deep conviction of a person, it is not necessary for me to solemnly intone a question and elicit a stereotyped reply, designated “the good confession.”

This is not saying there is anything wrong or sinful about asking one to affirm his faith in the presence of others. All of us ought to do that every time an appropriate season is presented for so doing. But we need to keep this in proper perspective and

not make of it a stilted and precisian performance for candidates for baptism. Surely we need to quit twisting the scriptures to conform to our practice and then labeling the procedure “the divine plan of salvation.”

INVITATION HYMNS

5. Would you make a comment about our practice of singing invitation hymns at the close of a service?

I will because you have asked me to do it, but I am not overly anxious to do so. It is so much a part of our hallowed tradition that to say anything derogatory about the practice is about the same as talking against motherhood and apple pie. I will never forget a good brother and sister in Arkansas who walked out on the congregation and refused to have anything further to do with the brethren. He explained their action to me. “They brought in one of these young preachers from college who was too big for his breeches and had no respect for God’s word. We didn’t like him from the first, but the last straw was when he omitted the invitation song one Sunday morning because there was no outsiders present. We just couldn’t stand such disrespect for the teaching of the Book, so we up and quit.”

Of course, the practice of singing an invitation song addressed to any sinners who may be “within the sound of our voice” is wholly without scriptural foundation. As our brethren fondly recite about other things, “It has neither command, apostolic precedent, nor logical inference to justify it.” Fortunately no one has jumped on it as a ground for division and we are not troubled by radio attacks on the matter.

The practice is cultural, or was! I suspect the culture has outgrown it, but it frequently happens that the culture changes while the brethren do not. We still had a hitching-rail around the meetinghouse where I attended as a lad for years after everyone had quit driving horses. Fortunately for us, but

unfortunately for her, a nervous sister backed their new Buick into it one Sunday and knocked down a couple of rods of it, and no one ever put it back again, so we didn't have to crawl under it to get to "the place of worship." It just occurred to me now that a lot of older brethren pronounced it "warship" which was a more appropriate designation when we had an occasional business meeting.

The invitation hymn is an outgrowth of the great revival on the American frontier, and was popularized by Moody and Sankey. "Coming down the aisle" is the restoration movement substitute for heading for the mourner's bench, or "penitent form" as our British brethren refer to it. In tabernacle meetings held by others it was called "hitting the sawdust trail." We are trying to do what Billy Graham does when he has the audience stand and sing, "Just As I Am" and pleads with people to "Get up, come down and stand here in front as a testimony of your faith." We are not getting as many to leave their seats as he does, but then he preaches about Jesus, while we proclaim the Good News that it is wrong to have Bible Classes or to support Herald of Truth.

I've often wondered how Paul and Silas would react if they dropped in on us some Sunday morning. They would not recognize what takes place as having any relationship on earth to anything they had ever seen before. For one thing they would not be called upon to participate. The elders who "guard the flock" and "watch for our souls as they that must give account," could not afford to allow a man to speak who circumcised a young man so he could have influence with Jews, much less one who said he spoke in tongues more than anyone else who claimed the gift. Someone would be sure to ask them if they "fellowshipped" Pat Boone.

I suspect one thing that would really surprise them would be to see the whole audience interrupt their praise rendered to God to jump up and start singing to sinners in broad daylight,

“Why Not Tonight?” What a sight it would be for the apostles to attend one of those meetings where the preacher wiped sweat and paced back and forth pleading, cajoling and exhorting, running down the aisle, putting on the emotional pressure, pausing after every verse to beg those who were present to come now.

It hardly seems necessary for an obstetrician to beg and exhort a baby to be born and to come on into the world, when he is in the delivery room. It would appear that when one has come to the birth that he will arrive even if the doctor himself is not ready! Apparently those that are begotten of the Spirit are only delivered after hard labor, but the labor is not on the part of the baby or Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all, but upon the part of the doctor called in as a specialist to induce birth.

I do not entertain any great hope that our practice will be changed. We have made “conversion” an institutional project and an assembly-line production with plans drawn up in a lovely office complex. We have reversed the Savior’s directive for us to “go into all the world,” until we now invite the world to “come to church.” What we designate “personal work” is more an attempt to get men and women to attend meetings than to know the Lord. We spend our time telling those who look out of a crack in the door about the qualifications of the preacher rather than about the Lord of glory. I doubt we will change! Tradition is not easily overcome.

A Growing Army

Mission Messenger (July 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

I have been corresponding recently with a number of young preaching brethren whose names I cannot divulge. To do that would be like bestowing the kiss of death in some circles. They are having a difficult time remaining in the places where their lot has been cast because they have outgrown spiritually and intellectually the factional garments issued to them by the party commissary when they graduated from college. They are chafing at the sectarian restraints placed upon them by brethren who claim to be non-sectarian. They want to get on with the job of promoting the bonds of peace in which the unity of the Spirit is to be kept, and, like Jeremiah, they are “weary from holding in.”

I suspect that I am of small comfort to some of these “precocious neophytes” as one good brother has named those within a certain segment, because I counsel them to remain where they are and to continue to share with the brethren with whom they have labored. We must not “come out from among them” and start another faction. We have too many factions now and it is hardly the way to prove our faithfulness to Christ by creating an additional “loyal sect.” There is not a disloyal sect in the whole lot if we may trust the testimony of each in favor of itself. It is as Solomon wrote, “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6).

It is tragic that brethren get their opinions mixed up with God's revelation, but it has always been so, and those who can tell the difference are always in a predicament when they must work among those who value tradition above truth. Barton W. Stone once wrote, "The doctrines of the Bible, we believe, have never divided Christians, but human opinions of those doctrines without charity have always done the mischief." And Frederick D. Kershner said, "I have lived long enough to know the fallibility of knowledge and the infallibility of love." I like that statement!

The best thing about the current dissatisfaction with the *status quo* is that it is not limited to one party. If it were this would betoken discontent with some particular point of factional emphasis. As it is, the brethren are identified with every faction. The revolt against the sectarian stagnation is not directed against a partisan issue, but against the whole divided and divisive philosophy which fragments God's children into hostile tribes and sets them in array against one another.

The spirit of brotherhood is proving to be more powerful than the worldly and sensual power of schism. Brethren are no longer being hoodwinked by front men and promoters who peddle division as the prescription for divine approval. In spite of blatant assaults by the guardians of orthodoxy there are those who dare to do their own thinking, refusing either to be bought off or scared off. It is not that they have it in for "the old guard" but that they no longer buy what they are guarding. They realize that the sectarian bill of goods which has been palmed off on men as "the Lord's will" never was the will of God, and is not now.

I predict that more and more men will choose to be free in Christ Jesus and to exhibit their liberty by crossing back and forth over the silly barriers erected by debates over trivia. The day is fast passing when men will be deterred by dogmata directed at them from some partisan headquarters. Many of the

“big guns” which have been accustomed to having men lie down and play dead when they have directed a barrage at them will find that fear of their reprisals no longer exists.

Brethren are thinking and acting for themselves and for Christ Jesus without first clearing things with the party “powers that be.” We are on our way out of the sectarian swamps in which we have been wading and wallowing and tomorrow will be better than today. Wounds will be healed, schisms overcome, and reconciliation established. When it comes a great deal of credit should go to young men and women who love Jesus more than party popularity!

I owe a debt to many of them. They have strengthened my faith and renewed my courage. Above everything else, they have helped me to form better value judgments, and to put first things first. God bless them!

Questions About Baptism

Mission Messenger (August 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

*“There is no reason why those who advocate justification by faith alone should hesitate to admit that baptism is an antecedent to the granting of that blessing to faith. It would not be adding another condition to faith, but simply determining whether the candidate’s faith fills out the required measure. That the faith of a man should be measured before it is reckoned for righteousness, is a perfectly natural and necessary procedure, growing out of the fact that justification is not by faith simply, but by an adequate faith.”— N. J. Aylsworth in *Moral and Spiritual Aspects of Baptism*.*

I am going to tender an apology to our regular readers for interrupting our routine to insert another article dealing with my concept of baptism and its relation to citizenship in the kingdom of heaven upon earth. My previous articles on the theme appearing in the May and June issues, produced a mixed reaction and stimulated a number of questions. I have neither the time nor space, and hardly the inclination, to deal with all of these. I am going to make one exception because I think it is important that I do so and place myself on record before this journal breathes its last and expires in 1975.

One particular blessing accruing from editing MISSION MESSENGER has been the forming of friendships with eminent Biblical students outside of our specific background. These associations I cherish because of their impact upon my own

thinking. For example, there is a professor of theology in a Biblical Seminary, known throughout the world, who has been a reader of the paper for a number of years. A writer of renown, his literary compositions have often forced me to examine afresh my own convictions.

After my first article on baptism he was prompted to write me a letter which I shall reproduce herewith. At first I thought of making a personal reply, but after meditation upon the matter I reached the decision that I owed it to all of my readers to share my views. This brief preliminary statement will serve to explain the reason for this issue and the inclusion of the letter which follows.

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Dear Brother Ketcherside:

Frequently on reading the MISSION MESSENGER, I feel like sending a note either of appreciation or of enquiry: as I gain increasing awareness of some of the specific dimensions of the radical Campbellite movement, I also have new questions of information to ask.

Your major text in the May 1973 issue prompts me to ask simply one question of clarification. The extended discussion of those who are “begotten but not born” or who sincerely believe but are not immersed, is not tested by asking which categories of persons it would apply to. The image of conception as contrasted with birth, and phrases like “not *yet* baptized” would of course point to a person just recently responding to the Gospel.

What I am not clear on is several other categories of unbaptized believers. Since your position in general is more open than that of those with whom you have to argue most of the time, I hesitate to guess what you would believe.

One category would be persons within specific

denominational traditions who, on the ground of the best scriptural understandings available in their own experience, and often in connection with a concern to correct some abuse of past dominant sacramental practice, would not use the outward symbols at all. The Salvation Army and the Friends would be the best examples. The other category would be those who, also on the basis of the best scriptural understandings available to them do not in the practice of the baptism of believers in water use a form which corresponds to your convictions.

One question which it would be helpful to see you respond to is simply whether these two classes are the same: i.e., whether the use of water in an outward ceremony to testify to the faith obedience of the believer is any good at all in your eyes if it is not done in the correct form. But the larger question is whether there is some active sense in which you can refer to such persons as brethren in a reality that you can relate to, or whether they can only be left through the loophole of being “brothers in prospect” who might by the grace of God be saved by virtue of the intent rather than the deed. . . .

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REPLY TO ABOVE

It is in order, I think, to point out that the primary *movement* of “the radical Campbellite movement” (my friend uses the word “radical” in a good sense, I am sure) is away from the views and expositions of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. In no other field is this more observable than in the way we should regard sincere believers who have not seen the need for immersion as a validating or appropriating act of faith.

There is a very real question, I suspect, whether our brethren should be longer regarded as a part of the restoration movement launched primarily by pious Presbyterians, some 175

years ago. They have renounced many of the principles and repudiated virtually all of the attitudes characteristic of the pioneers. Even worse, they have excluded posthumously all of the fathers of the movement by driving out their present-day successors for advocacy of the very things enunciated by the fathers. Can a people maintain tenuous historical links with a movement while berating as heresy the very principles which gave birth to it? Can a state of fellowship be maintained with brethren of yesteryear while making tests of fellowship out of the very ideas they promulgated?

My friend and brother proposes some good questions which my position obligates me to try and answer. What shall be my attitude toward sincere men and women who have been reared in a denominational tradition which rejects all outward symbols and formal ordinances as having no vital relationship to a spiritual walk with God? Is there some active sense in which I can refer to such persons as brethren in a reality to which I can relate?

The Society of Friends has been suggested as an example. Let me first of all express my deep appreciation for those who are a part of the Quaker heritage. I give grateful thanks to the Father for every ministration of good which they accomplish, and certainly their influence has been a leaven for peace in many parts of the world. I freely confess that I have never been the same since reading the journal of John Woolman.

But, having said this, I must add that, as I view God's purpose for our lives, the Friends are seriously in error, and their error is precisely the kind which will keep them from obeying a plain requirement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is admitted by them that most professors of the Christian name regard water baptism as "the essential means of initiation into the church of Christ." Why do they reject it? First, they have become convinced that only the redeeming power inwardly revealed, can set the soul free from the thralldom of sin.

Secondly, they hold that as there is one Lord and one faith, the one baptism in nature and operation is a divinely-administered unction within and that only this internal action can make a living member of the mystical body. Accordingly, baptism in water belonged to an inferior dispensation as its original administrator, John, indicated in John 3:30.

I have striven to be absolutely fair in presenting the position occupied by the Friends. I would gain nothing by misrepresentation. Although they accord the title “word of God” only to Christ and not to the Scriptures, they regard the latter as having been given forth by the Spirit and as binding upon every Christian. It is from the scriptures they have learned that John baptized in water, but the same scriptures teach that baptism in water did not cease with John.

After his resurrection, Jesus commissioned his apostles to enroll students or disciples from all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Godhood, and one of these apostles, several years after Jesus had ascended to the Father, asked who could forbid water that certain ones should not be baptized who had received the Holy Spirit as indicative of the reception of the Gentiles by God.

When Jesus commissioned the apostles to baptize he did so upon the basis that all authority had been conferred upon him in heaven and upon earth, and when the apostle baptized those to whom we have alluded, he did so on the basis of the word “which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, *after the baptism which John preached*” (Acts 10:37). The view that baptism in water was limited to an inferior dispensation is not taught in God’s word.

In John 3:30 the matter under consideration is not the inferiority of water baptism to baptism in the Spirit, but the relative inferiority of one who was of the earth fulfilling a preparatory work of introduction and one who came down from

heaven and who was above all. Baptism in water was perfectly adapted to the purpose it was ordained to accomplish and in this respect could not be inferior to anything not ordained for that purpose.

The Quakers are sadly misled by their assumption that baptism and the Lord's Supper are *mere* ceremonials and therefore have no efficacy in conveying the blessings of God. On the contrary, a careful study of the scriptures will show that the Creator has universally bestowed his blessings through ordinances, and one could safely affirm that this has been his invariable procedure as well, in both the natural and spiritual realms.

Our brother intimates that the deep aversion to the ordinances may result from "a concern to correct some abuse of past dominant sacramental practice." I doubt not that the undue emphasis on ritual and liturgy which often results in empty formalism devoid of the Spirit, has had a great deal to do with formulation of the position I am examining, but the answer to abuse of what God has ordained is not abandonment, but correction of it. The will of God is not revered by forsaking the ordinances because others make a fetish of them. It is as wrong to flout them as it is to flaunt them.

Jesus is my Lord, and he conveys his will for my life, not through visions, dreams or subjective inner light, but through the word of his chosen envoys. From them I learn that penitent believers are to be baptized unto the forgiveness of sins and into the wonderful relationship signified by the glorious triune name of the Godhood. The record is clear. "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26, 27).

If a member of the Society of Friends had been with Peter at the home of Cornelius when Peter asked if any man could

forbid water that these should not be baptized, to be consistent the Friend would have had to forbid it. If I went today to a meeting of Friends and asked them to baptize me upon a profession of my faith in Christ Jesus they could not and would not do it. If I said, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" they would propose any number of doctrinal hindrances and barriers.

Much as I deplore what may seem to many the manifestation of an uncharitable attitude toward a people renowned for their gentle goodness, I freely acknowledge that, upon the basis of my understanding of the teaching of God's precious word, the Quakers are not in the fellowship of the called-out ones. They may have heard the invitation to become citizens of the kingdom, but they have not responded to it in the manner prescribed by the King.

I have thus far dealt with the "denominational tradition" which has created the specific party known as the Society of Friends. But I am asked about persons within that tradition "who on the ground of the best scriptural understandings available in their own experience . . . would not use the outward symbols at all."

I make a distinction here between a sect, and individual members who are caught up within it, perhaps from birth, or because of circumstances arising from the vicissitudes of life. One can be a sectarian and not be identified with a sect, and one can be in a sect and not be sectarian. In the final judgment God will not be judging sects but individuals. Thus, all of us, whether in sects or not, are individually responsible before God and accountable unto him.

Responsibility is conditioned upon three bases according to the scriptures. One is accountable for what he knows and will not do; for what he could know and refuses to learn; and for what he professes to know and will not practice. All of these

have to do with the exercise of will, for will is the determinant factor in life. One will not be damned because of ignorance unless it is wilful and voluntary, else heaven would be useless and without an inhabitant, since all of us are ignorant about many things.

Those who are in the Quaker tradition will not be judged as Quakers, but as individuals for whom Christ died. God judges no one as a Pharisee, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, Methodist or Presbyterian. Religious parties, like political parties, are created by men and not by God. They are all artificial and without power to save. God has promised salvation from past sins upon the basis of belief in the good news about Jesus and baptism as a validation of such faith. Certainly one cannot be expected to believe in one of whom he has never heard, nor can he be expected to obey a command which he has never learned.

Whether he could have heard and learned, only God can know. There are degrees of responsibility and only an infinite mind can determine the extent of responsibility at any given time. It does not at all disturb me to think that many pious individuals who love God and their fellowmen within a “denominational tradition” will walk the golden streets. I do not limit the grace of God, nor seek to frustrate it. But I intend to continue to disclose what I believe Jesus has taught without compromise, and I intend to implement it by my obedience to the full extent of my feeble knowledge and ability. I also intend to oppose all sectarianism, including our own.

I am not asked to determine the final destiny of man, nor called upon to decide with whom I shall associate in heaven. I am under divine compulsion to recognize the terms of citizenship for the kingdom of heaven upon earth as I understand them. I am not authorized to enlarge the borders of Zion nor to restrict them. That is the prerogative of the king and I am but a subject, a very weak and unprofitable servant. It is

my understanding that the King has decreed that the terms of citizenship involve a pledge of allegiance unto his sovereignty and immersion into his death.

I reject no one because he is a Quaker, for that would be sectarian. I regard one as not being in the fellowship of the saints simply because he has not complied with the terms. If the rights and privileges of citizenship are accorded to those who have not complied with the terms, both the terms and the citizenship become meaningless. The quickest way to destroy that which the right of franchise is expected to protect is by extending it to those who are not citizens. Of what value is a false charity which destroys the rights of those who have obeyed the King by extending them to those who have not? Pardon and amnesty beyond the limits prescribed by the King belong not to the subjects but to the King, and if his is a universal sway he may have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

Any exception to a general rule given by authority must, by its very nature, be specific, and must be made by the same authority which gave the rule. The rule governing salvation from past transgressions is that men hear the good news concerning what God has done for us through Jesus, trust in that, and be immersed upon the basis of that faith. We must operate under that rule. We can make no exceptions, for to do so, would be to appropriate the authority of Jesus. But he can make exceptions, for His will is sovereign. All authority is given unto him on heaven and on earth. He can suspend the requirements in any specific situation, but we cannot.

To say this does not weaken the authority of the King. It does not abrogate the authority of his revelation. It enhances and increases his authority. His authority is so great and majestic that it cannot be bound or inhibited by any rules, regulations or terms, not even those which he has given for the general good of mankind. No man denies the authority of the scriptures who respects that authority for his own life and urges

it upon others, while leaving the final disposition in the hands of him who is the source and fountain of the authority. We need to be careful that in defending the authority of the scriptures we do not deny the authority of him who is above all and over all!

ANOTHER CATEGORY

In the plainest of terms, I am now asked about my relationship to those who have had water sprinkled or poured upon them. My brother speaks kindly of them as using a form which does not correspond to my convictions “on the basis of the best scriptural understanding available to them.”

I could bluntly and callously say that such practice is not scriptural understanding at all, but unscriptural misunderstanding, and dismiss them. However, being caught up in the human predicament as I am, I want to avoid such arrogance and bluster. I have a very real compassion for all who seek to do the will of my Father, and their lack of understanding of that will, as I understand it, will not deaden that concern. I admit that I am placed in a quandary by the expression “the best scriptural understandings available to them.”

In this fortunate land where a copy of the new covenant scriptures may be purchased for a few cents and where the Bible is a perennial best-seller, it would appear that everyone has access to God’s revelation and there really is no excuse. But then I remember that there is a great deal of difference between having a Bible in reach of your hand and having scriptural understanding. Printing Bibles is a purely mechanical process. They can be produced by the millions and everyone look and read just alike. But human understanding is not the product of a machine.

No one studies in a vacuum. No one reasons in isolation from his past or present. We approach the scriptures from where we are intellectually, because there is no other place from

which to approach them. And no two of us start from the same place. I wonder how I would regard baptism if I had been reared in a Quaker community, and never heard another explanation given except the orthodox position of the Friends. I do not have so much difficulty about sprinkling because one side of my family heritage was Missouri Synod Lutheran, and I was sprinkled before I had attained the ripe age of one month.

Regardless of what else may be said about it, sprinkling or pouring do not constitute baptism in the scriptural context. When I speak of baptism I must mean the same thing Jesus and the apostles meant when they spoke of it, else my words have no relationship to the scriptural content. If I use a word they used but mean something else than they meant, I am either deceived or a deceiver. In spite of debates and controversies which may arise as men attempt to justify their respective practices. I must transcend the semantical disputes and seek to understand the mind of God as it was revealed through the Spirit.

If baptism, as Jesus employed the term, meant a burial or immersion, it follows that one who has not been immersed has not been baptized. Whatever “form” may be used, it is not baptism. My own study has convinced me that baptism is a burial, and this view appears to me to be undeniably sustained by etymology, philology, example, symbolism and scripture. I was not baptized at all when I was twenty-nine days old. The “form” which was used was not baptism, but something else.

Therefore, as cruel as it may appear to a modern and vacillating world, I do not consider those who have used a form unauthorized by Jesus, unsanctioned by the Spirit, and unknown to the apostles, as being in the fellowship of the congregation of saints. When torn between the longing to receive all people who profess a love for my Lord, and of remaining true to him according to my understanding, the matter was settled not when the question arose, but when I pledged my full and complete allegiance unto him!

I do not regard baptism as simply an outward ceremony. I do not think of it as a mere sign. That it is a sign and a ceremony no thoughtful person can deny. But it is not something portraying a reality from which it is divorced, perhaps by time and place. Rather it is itself the actual participation with Christ Jesus in the fact of his death and in the fact of his resurrection. As I view it, baptism is not simply an engagement ring, or a wedding ring, a visible token of heartfelt affection, but it is the consummation of a relationship to which one has looked forward with supreme desire. It is obvious that two people can become one without a ring, but can they become one flesh without the act of union, without the initial act of consummation?

The apostle who once persecuted and even killed believers until he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, points out that we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. But he does not stop with that. He immediately adds a “for” statement, an explanation of how and when it happens or transpires. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” It is in baptism, then, that my faith becomes operational with reference to divine sonship. Shall I add to the statement another of my own, “and as many of you as have not been baptized into Christ have also put him on”? Will not the human addition negate and nullify the point made by the Spirit?

The gospel consists of testimony to the seven great facts related to the life of the One in whom there dwelt all the fulness of the Godhood bodily. Three of these are saving facts— the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. But they cannot save by the simple fact of their historicity, else all men will be saved by the mere transaction of two-thousand years ago, and all discussion of forms of acceptance is useless. They must be believed, accepted, and appropriated. One must identify with Jesus personally. Just as Jesus came in a body to identify with man, so man must come into the body of Jesus to identify with him.

What Jesus did for all men that they might be saved each man must do for Jesus that he may be saved. This means that to appropriate the sacrifice of Jesus unto himself, a man must die, be buried and rise again to walk in newness of life. That he does this in baptism is evident from the testimony of the new covenant scriptures in Romans 6:3-6. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again according to the old covenant scriptures, and I must die, be buried and rise again, according to the new covenant scriptures.

Any refusal upon the part of Jesus to die for my sins, to be buried in the tomb, or to rise from the dead, would have left me in sin. He had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it again (John 10:18). Any refusal upon my part to die to my sins, to be buried in baptism, and to rise with Christ, will leave me in my sins. I also have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again through the Lord Jesus Christ.

To me, therefore, baptism is more than a sign that something has happened, or is happening in me, or in my behalf. It is the very act appointed by God in which and by which, I appropriate the forgiveness through grace by personal identification with Christ. The cross of Christ is a symbol of sacrifice and divine mercy, but it is much more than that. It was the actual instrument by which death came to the Son of God. And so my death by crucifixion and my burial in the watery grave becomes a sign after the act. At the time of my surrender it is the instrument of identification.

THE LARGER QUESTION

I am aware of the larger question. It results from the attempts of men to creedalize and institutionalize the faith once delivered. It is post-apostolic, for while the germ infected the body even in the day of the special envoys, it had not yet developed in all of its inflammatory aspects. I do not know,

therefore, how they would have treated it, or regarded all those who have been made victims of its contagion or septicity.

Certainly the apostles warned against allowing it to become endemic, but the prescription for prevention is one thing while the treatment of a developed disorder is another thing. We now face sectism in all of its divisiveness and fragmentation. If we love those afflicted we cannot ignore them, nor form an isolated enclave to which we can retire in monastic seclusion while we simply mark off those who are outside our whitewashed compounds.

“The larger question is whether there is some active sense in which you can refer to such persons as brethren in a reality that you can relate to.” My friend is not an outstanding professor of theology for nothing. He has placed his finger pointedly upon the sore spot which must be honestly faced by every person like myself who believes that baptism is a part of the God-ordained response to the good news about Jesus, and is the ordinance by which one enters into the relationship of the life in Christ.

I wish that I did not have to face it. I wish that I could escape or evade it. But because I must face it, I find myself more deeply opposed to the fleshly virus of sectarianism which makes it imperative that I do so. I am an inveterate foe of sectarianism for the very reason that it clouds the issue of brotherhood and fellowship. I am not so much an enemy of sects as I am of sectarianism. It is because of this that I am dedicated to a war against our own sectarianism, for recognition of brotherhood within the framework of the immersed ones is as confused by partisanship as it is beyond that pale.

Indeed, it is this confusion which militates against the power of the testimony concerning the need for an efficacy of immersion. What strength there would be in the witness for immersion if all who were immersed stood as a unit. If it is not

true that we are all baptized into one body through or in the one Spirit, then why make so much of baptism? Thousands there must be who ask this question.

The “larger question” is how I must regard and how I can relate to sincere and conscientious believers in the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth. I would to God that I could lead all of these whom I love into the waters of some quiet “Jordan” and baptize them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, after the example of him who said, “thus it becomes us” so to do. And yet, I would not have a one of them submit to this out of human compulsion, partisan pressure, or sublimation of personal conscience.

Here then are my conclusions. I will regard them as begotten of my Father and quickened by faith in the womb of grace. I will treat them as believers and not as pagans or heathen. I will go among them at their invitation to share any insights I may have in God’s great revelation, and I will rejoice in and encourage any deeds of kindness and mercy in which they engage for the betterment of the world and the improvement of the moral and spiritual atmosphere breathed by fallen man!

I will not conclude that all of them are bound for perdition but will allow God to judge their final destiny. His disposition of all who believe in Jesus must be according to his sovereign will and I will but attest that “his judgments are true and righteous altogether.” But to regard those who are unimmersed as having been brought into the family relationship upon the same basis as those who have been immersed would make an empty farce of immersion and the testimony of the scriptures on the matter both useless and meaningless. This I cannot do and answer to my God with a clear conscience.

Every kingdom in the universe has one uniform way by which those who are aliens can be enrolled as citizens. Such a way must be specific and it must be recognizable, else those who

are citizens will not know whom to regard as sharing with them the rights and privileges accruing through citizenship. A kingdom without citizens is an anomaly. A kingdom whose citizenship is as broad as the unregenerate world is not a kingdom of the called out, but a kingdom of this world. It is a kingdom in which righteousness is not a qualification and sin is not a disqualification.

It is a denial of the universal authority of Jesus to assume that he is Lord of the house but not of the portal, of the temple but not of its gate. I eagerly beseech all who may read this humble entreaty to make your faith valid and operative this day. “And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.” May His Spirit motivate you to obey him in love and without delay. May your motto be: “Speak Lord, thy servant heareth!”

Thinking Out Loud

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[Abstract]

“It has become fashionable to mock at or treat with suspicion, anything that looks like faith in the future. If we are not careful this skepticism will prove fatal, for its direct result is to destroy both the love of living and the momentum of mankind.” — Teilhard de Chardin.

Most of my readers know what it is to have a meal of “left-overs.” In our own home we have difficulty in preparing just the right amount for two persons. Our work makes it rather necessary that we be a part of the “can-opener culture,” but a lot of cans contain more than you can consume at one sitting. The result is that Nell ends up with a saucer full of this and another container full of that, until some day we get all of them out of the refrigerator and have a luncheon made up of “this and that.”

The items in such meals have little relationship to one another and would make a nutritionist or home economist wring her hands in dismay and predict an early demise for us both. But I like to “bat in the clean-up position” and I confess that sometimes the variety makes up for the lack of balance. Eating with someone you love always helps the occasion, regardless of the food.

Taking a cue from that kind of kitchen preparation I am going to serve up a potpourri of questions which have

accumulated from various forums and seminars. I hope that you will not be too disappointed and that your spiritual digestion will not become upset. I can predict that a lot of readers will not be happy with the answers that I give, because I am never interested in purely traditional replies, the kind that are expected. I am concerned only that I be honest and open and tell what I personally think about things.

You will notice that I have repeated over and over that I am not seeking to bind my views or opinions upon any of you. I simply share my views, but if they cut across your thinking, I do not expect you to concur. It is not necessary that you agree with me for me to love you. And don't forget that I did not always see things as I now do. There is an old Yiddish proverb that says: "If God lived on earth, people would break his windows." It is very difficult for brethren to even tolerate someone whose thoughts differ with their own, but I am grateful to His wonderful grace and mercy that this is no longer a problem of mine.

SITUATION ETHICS

1. *What do you think about "situation ethics" as advocated by Joseph Fletcher?*

Boiled down and simmered away, the basis of situation ethics is that there can be no hard-and-fast rule laid down which can cover every contingency which can arise in human relationships. For this reason the ethical approach must be determined by the circumstances, and "circumstances alter cases."

In my personal encounter with Dr. Fletcher, he insisted, as he did in his book, that there are but three approaches which can be made to ethics—antinomian, legalistic, or situational. The first denies all law and each man becomes a law unto himself, with anarchy as the natural result. The second insists

that the law is supreme by virtue of being law, and must take precedence over persons and their needs. In any conflict between law and human need, the dignity and sanctity of the law must be upheld regardless of the results to the person. Keeping of law thus becomes the ultimate goal of man.

I am quite convinced, although it always “knocks my brethren for a loop” to hear me say it, that God endorsed situational ethics and Jesus practiced it. For example, God gave the law that “if a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die . . . so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.” Yet he spared both David and Bathsheba and they lived together afterwards. It is true that David paid for his guilt, but the penalty of death prescribed by the written code was not enforced.

Another case in point has to do with Aaron and his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, on the day that Nadab and Abihu were killed because of their transgression. It was necessary that the goat of sin-offering be eaten in the sacred place. Moses made a searching enquiry for it and found it had been burnt. He became very angry and assailed his brother and nephews for their misconduct. But Aaron pointed out to him what had happened to his family in the grief they had sustained, and said, “This is what has befallen me; if I eat a sin offering today, will it be right in the eyes of the Lord?” The record says, “And when Moses heard that, he was content.” Human anguish may take precedence over law.

Jesus pointed out that the divine intention was that there be one man and one woman united as one flesh, but circumstances created by the hardness of the hearts of men, forced Moses to alter the original intent and allow men to give their wives a divorce document and separate them from “bed and board.”

When Jesus was going through the fields on the sabbath,

his disciples plucked heads of grain, and rubbed them between their hands to eliminate the chaff, and then ate the grain. This brought immediate criticism and condemnation from the Pharisees. But Jesus argued that human welfare was the first priority. He gave two examples of men who did that which was unlawful. David ate the presence-bread with his men, and the priests performed tasks on the sabbath within the very precincts of the temple. The conclusion was that “Man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath was made for man.”

All law is given for the protection and perpetuity of persons, and when the law does not cover the situation (and no law can cover every situation), the welfare of man has priority over the law. All of us are situation ethicists, even those who deny it. We practice such ethics in our homes as we rear our children. We would not scruple to drive sixty miles per hour in a thirty mile per hour zone if transporting a badly injured person to an emergency room of the hospital. We may disagree with Dr. Fletcher over some applications he makes of the principle, and I certainly do disagree with him, but this does not disprove the validity of the principle. I am in favor of it for Christians simply because I believe it is the tenor and teaching of the word of God, and in harmony with the nature of God as revealed. Notice I used the term Christians. I believe that situation ethics can only be the guiding principle for God’s children and not for the children of the darkness of this passing age. What I mean by this will become more apparent as the questioning continues.

THE RULE OF LOVE

2. Don’t you think it is dangerous to teach that the only law under which we operate and serve is love?

No, I don’t consider it dangerous, because I think that is what the Holy Spirit taught. During his earthly sojourn Jesus said that the two greatest commandments were to love God and

our fellow-men. That is the difference between Jesus and a lot of preachers. They would have replied that all of the commandments were equal, since they all came from the same authority. A lot of them still argue that, even after Jesus made his statement.

Jesus said that all of the law and prophets were suspended from these two. *All of them!* This is another way of saying that love is basic and elemental and that all other divine rules and revelations are dependent upon and subservient to it. God decrees law and gives prophecies, but He is love! God is a lawgiver, but it is not His nature to give laws. His essence is love and whatever proceeds from God proceeds from love. And love is first and above all else, even law!

We are no longer under a law code but under grace. This means that citizens of the kingdom of heaven are not confined by law but constrained by love. Law is always external and imposed. Love is internal and impelled. It is also eternal. We love because He first loved us. Our love is a response to love. Law is a police power which keeps men together by defining limits and enforcing them; love is a magnetic power which keeps them together by holding them to a common center. Law was a custodian until faith came. Faith has come and we are no longer under a custodian. We have been set free by the grace of God! Before Jesus came as the living expression of God's love incarnate, God's love was expressed in law, but now God's law, or rule of faith and action, is expressed in love.

This is what I think the Spirit meant when he encouraged Paul to write, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor:

therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8-10).

A careful analysis of this is very revealing. It indicates that the extent of my obligation, responsibility and debt to all others upon earth is to be stated not in terms of law, but in terms of love. I owe this and must not owe more nor less. If I am forced to borrow money I must do it in the context of love (and love may keep me from borrowing it). When I repay it I must also do that in love. In the preceding statements I am instructed about what is due others, and I must pay taxes and custom assessments, and render reverence and honor, all with that agape which cushions life’s hardness with velvet, and oils the grinding wheels of commerce and business, as well as civic intercourse, with a lubricant which offsets heat and corrosion.

All of the commandments are summed up in love. The apostle names some of the familiar ones, but knowing the human tendency of the legalistic mind to search for exceptions, he adds, “and if there be any other commandment.” Paul says that they are all “comprehended” in the saying about loving your neighbor. The original word for “comprehended” literally means “to gather under one head.” It was used in Ephesians 1:10 where we are told that it is God’s purpose, plan and pleasure to gather all things in heaven and on earth in Christ.

But it was also used by the Greeks to indicate a summary of a speech, where all of the thoughts enunciated are collected and classified under one brief statement. The philosophers summed up their thoughts in such fashion. So Paul sums up the whole relationship we sustain to God with love. It should be remembered that we get the word “sum” from the same word from which we derive “summit.” It literally means “highest.” Thus love is not the lowest common denominator but the highest attainment possible. It is for this reason that it soars above law, as a lordly peak reaches above the plain. Paul specifically writes about the fruits of the Spirit that “there is no law dealing with such things as these.” The Spirit does not produce fruit by law

but by love!

The reason why love is the ultimate is because it works no ill to another. There is no law ever given that, in some instances, does not have built-in inequities. This is the nature of law because of the varying circumstances of men in the world. It is not the weakness of law but the weakness of man that makes law imperfect. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., said, “The standards of the law are standards of general application. The law takes no account of the infinite varieties of temperament, intellect, and education, which make the internal characters of a given act so different in different men.”

There is no mercy in law, which must require and demand strict adherence or provide a penalty. Law is inexorable and unmerciful. This is true whether the law originates with God or man. “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.” The “law of Christ” which is a “law of liberty” is love. The commandment of Christ is that we love one another as he has loved us. And this provides for mercy.

“Speak to others and do to others as becomes those who are amenable to the law of freedom. Under this rule of action one who does not extend mercy will not receive mercy, and remember that mercy takes precedent in God’s attitude toward judgment” (James 2:12, 13). Under the previous regime, which was one based on a legalistic code, one who kept the whole law and yet stumbled in one point was guilty of all. He had violated the code and, regardless of circumstances, death was the penalty. “Thine eye shall not pity him” was the injunction.

It is amazing how many people misunderstand the implication of James, who is contrasting the royal or kingly law of love with the codified system of the Mosaic economy, and thus overlook the fact that under a law of liberty we are free to minister mercy and must do so if we are to receive mercy. Mercy is never required when man keeps law to a perfect degree. It is

only shown when men are failures as judged by the law. On this basis we all need it.

William Barclay points out that the Christian is self-governed and self-directed by the love which dwells in his heart. He writes, “He follows the right way, the way of love to God and love to men, not because any external law compels him to do so, and not because any threat of punishment frightens him into doing so, but because the love of Christ which is in his heart makes him desire to do so.” I concur with that, although I find it one of the most difficult routes one can take in the flesh. I do not believe that one can ever do it merely upon his own strength or under his own power.

REPEAL OF LAWS

3. *Do you suggest that we repeal all laws in the world and allow love to be the only consideration?*

Of course not! I am not saying we should repeal any laws in the world. I am simply saying that in the body of Christ, love is the only law in the absolute. The love of which I speak is *agape*, and it is a gift of God, poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Those who are out of Christ must be subject to laws, or there can be no social structure. Such laws are not needed and are not made for those who have put on Christ as a garment and who have come to trust in his righteousness. Until we receive Christ as God’s gift of love we cannot receive love as God’s gift through Christ!

Paul asserts that it should be a matter of common knowledge that “the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for homosexuals, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be anything else that is contrary to sound teaching.” My brethren who claim they are

under law have placed themselves in the company of a motley group, but maybe they know more about themselves than I do.

It is here that Joseph Fletcher is in error with regard to “situation ethics.” This is probably caused by his humanistic philosophy. Love can never become the dynamic for those out of Christ, because they walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit. And those who live after the flesh will die. They are the unrighteous, those who have chosen not to accept Christ as their hope, but are motivated by all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Love is not the universal rule of action for the unregenerate world but for the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It is effective only in a theocracy and can never be in a democracy.

Those who are dead and whose life is hid with Christ in God, who are no longer children of disobedience but have put off the old man with his deeds, are the ones who are told above everything else to put on love, which is the very seal of perfection. They have donned the new man and are renewed in knowledge after the image of God who created them. They are no longer under the dominion of sin and for that reason are not under the reign of law. They have begun in the Spirit and are free from fleshly domination, because those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Nothing is clearer than the fact that those who walk in the Spirit have been delivered from the whole domain of law. Indeed, the apostle says, after he has listed the entire catalogue of the fruits of the Spirit, “In this area there is no law.” He bolsters his declaration that “If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law” (Gal. 5:18). Again, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Sin rules over those who are under law, and they are under law precisely because sin rules over them. Sin takes occasion by the legal commandment to deceive and slay them.

UNDER LAW TO CHRIST

4. What you say about this really troubles me because we are plainly told that we are not without law to God, but are under law to Christ. How do you reconcile this with your views?

First, you must remember that when I talk about being delivered from law, I mean that we are not under a written code. We are not amenable to a statute-book as were God's people before the coming of the Messiah. I do not mean that we are not subject to Christ for he is the very Lord of life. I do not mean that we are at liberty to sin for such liberty would be license. We are free in Christ, not free from Christ.

But the new covenant of God is not what men call "The New Testament." The new testament, or covenant, of God was not written with pen and ink at all. The epistle of Christ, ministered by the apostles was written on the hearts of believers with the Spirit. "You are plainly affirmed to be the letter of Christ by our service, and this letter was not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3).

In view of this Paul writes, "We are granted ability by God, who has also made us capable of ministering the new covenant, which is not a written code but a spiritual bond, for a written code produces death, while the Spirit produces life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

"Now we are freed from the bondage of the law, since the law which once bound us has died, and this freedom makes us able to serve under a spiritual bond and not under the old domination of a written code" (Romans 7:6). Regardless of what Paul may have meant by the expression "under law to Christ," he certainly did not refer to a written code or compilation of statutes set down with pen and ink.

The new covenant scriptures do not constitute such a

compilation of laws, statutes and judgments. They represent the thoughts of God exposed and not the will of God imposed. In order to observe them we must have “the mind of Christ” and this means allowing the word of Christ to dwell in us richly in all things.

The new covenant in Christ and the relationship to the covenant is a personal matter. Jesus is our covenant. The promise of God in the prophetic message was, “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). Again, “Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people” (Isa. 49:8).

To be under the law to Christ is to be in Christ and under his lordship. This means an abdication of the human will to the will of God. It requires a hauling down of the flag of self and the surrender of the fortress of the heart to a new captain. He occupies the throne room of the inner man. He becomes the master to whom one stands or falls. God’s law is in the mind. It is written on the heart. It is not the engraving of the finger of God on tablets of stone, or the inditing of precepts with pen and ink, but the writing of the name of Christ on the walls of the heart, so that “whatever you do in word or deed is done in his name.” Praise God for that name which is above every name. Thank God it is written in the chambers of my poor and unworthy heart.

This makes it possible to say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” And again, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God.” This is distinctly called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2). That means just what it says. Our law is the Spirit of life! Those who are hooked on the written code concept of law, assume that even such mention of the word “law” refers to the letters constituting the

new covenant scriptures. But these are not a law. They are a compilation of love letters written to congregations and individuals who were in the covenant. These brethren were not in the covenant because they had these letters but they received the letters because they were in the covenant. Everyone of the letters was written with pen and ink on parchment or papyrus, but the man who wrote most of them, said in one of them that the new covenant was not written with ink, but with the Spirit on the tablets of human hearts.

Let me say again that the law of the Spirit of life is “the Spirit of life.” It is contrasted with the law of sin and death. The Spirit of life is now the governing principle, the rule of action, for the covenant people. In Romans 8:3, the law which was “weak through the flesh” is not superseded by another law, but by God sending his own Son in the flesh. Many of our brethren think Jesus nailed one law to the cross and handed another one down. But Jesus did not offer us another law. He offered up himself. He did not condemn sin by statute but by sacrifice of himself. When the custodian brought us to faith it did not turn us over to another custodian but to Jesus.

The result is that the righteousness at which the law aimed and which it could not achieve because of weakness is now attained by having the Spirit.

Righteousness cannot be obtained by law, even though the law is divinely-given. If God had given us another law it would have been as ineffective as the first because of our weakness. Moreover, if righteousness could be obtained by law the death of Christ was unnecessary and in vain. Now the righteousness of the law is “fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The law of God, that is, the principle of divine control over human personality, is not a written code, for such a code is always weak because of the flesh. The covenant is Christ. The

inscription is in the heart. The law is the life of Christ, eternal life, and the empowering agent is the Holy Spirit. Anyone who seeks to bind man to an attempt to be righteous by conformity to a written code, regardless of origin, dooms man to eternal condemnation, for “by the works of law shall no flesh be justified.”

COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

5. What about the commandments of Christ which we are obligated to keep? Are these not a law, and if they are not, why not?

I think I should make a few preliminary observations because of the insistence of most of my brethren that we are under a written code and will be saved by law-keeping. This feeling is probably engendered because we are immature and spiritually adolescent. All adolescents crave for law and imposed restraint even while rebelling against it and struggling for freedom. Psychologically this stems from fear, a fear that the experiences of life thus far do not equip us to handle life on our own. A lot of God’s children get to the spiritual teenager state and halt their growth, which means that they must always suffer from the tensions and strife peculiar to this stage of development. They want to remain under “tutors and governors” and we have a lot of applicants for the job.

That is why, when God plainly states that we are not under law but under grace, a lot of brethren actually busy themselves trying to turn grace into law. We regard grace as merely another lawgiver, imposing a new written code under threat of damnation for every misunderstanding. We are frightened by freedom because freedom creates awesome responsibilities in which we must make judgmental choices and be responsible for their outcome and results. It is much easier to be responsible to the law than to be responsible under grace.

Let me now make a clear distinction between the law of

Moses and the life of Christ, that is, between Deuteronomy and the Sermon on the Mount. Both contain commandments, but under the law men lived only because they kept the commandments, while in Christ we keep the commandments only because we have life, eternal life. In the Mosaic economy, men earned the right to live by strict obedience to the law; in Christ we receive the right to serve by the gift of life. We have not been called unto law, but unto liberty, and the two are antithetical to each other. Our ruling principle, our governing guide, is a “law of liberty,” that is, a principle of freedom. Our law is liberty! “For brethren you have been called unto liberty, but do not take advantage of liberty to gratify your flesh, rather by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

The commandments of our Lord are guidelines for life. Because we love him we remain within the guidelines which he marked out for us by his life on earth. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” This is the natural, spontaneous reaction of love, for love always seeks to please its object. It does not require a list of “dos” and “don’ts” drawn up in legal form. Through the indwelling Spirit God works in us to do his will. We are not on our own to do or to die, to sink or swim! It is important to know how we should work in God, but it is no less important to know that God works in us.

This is the nature of the eternal covenant, ratified by the blood of Jesus, and validated by his resurrection from the dead. Under the terms of this agreement God covenants to empower us and furnish everything necessary to do his will. “Now the God of peace who brought back from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you thoroughly for the doing of his will! May he effect in you everything that pleases him through Jesus Christ.” Wonderful!

We follow the Shepherd because we hear his voice, not because he cracks the whip. A shepherd does not lay down the

law. He throws down the feed! But what the Shepherd calls feed some of my brethren call law, and because they think of it thus, some of it is hard to swallow and they choke on it. The shepherd did not come to kill or destroy. That is the work of the thief who invades the fold. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Law brings dread, despair and doom; life brings light, love and long suffering.

It is important, I think, that we note the interchangeable use of the singular and plural as regards the word "commandment" when employed with reference to Christ. Failure to do so can create a sad misunderstanding. A good illustration is found in John 15. Jesus distinguishes between the Father's commandment in which he walked, and his commandment given to the disciples. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (verse 10). Then he says at once, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (verse 12). Again, "These things I command you, that ye love one another" (verse 17).

If this seems strange, it is no more peculiar than Paul's insistence that the commandments he quotes, plus any other commandment, are briefly stated in one sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This is identical with the point made by Jesus. Love is our principle of action, the guideline for life.

Another illustration is found in 1 John 3. The apostle urges us not to love in mere verbal expression or oral declaration, but in performance and reality. He asserts that it is only by demonstration of our love in deeds that we know we are for real and our hearts are free of hypocrisy and doubt. He reasons that if our own heart condemns us because of our emptiness, God is greater than our hearts, He is a greater judge than our own conscience, and he knows everything there is to know about us.

On the other hand, if our heart is not conscious of a lack of living love this makes us confident in the presence of God who is love. The loving heart does not shrink from the God of love.

The apostle then says that whatever we ask from such a confident and assured heart we will receive, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. In this context his commandments are that we love in deed and in truth, that is, in demonstration and in reality. The very next verse is explanatory. “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”

But the next verse says. “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.” Put it all together and it informs us that “we keep his commandments . . . and this is his commandment . . . as he gave us commandment . . . and he that keepeth his commandments.” It is neither confusing nor contradictory.

The commandments of God simply create and sustain a relationship, a unified relationship of faith and love. We believe “into the name of His Son” and love one another. This is it. Everything else is an expression of love and faith, proceeding from the heart, the inward spiritual nature. All of the commandments are summed up in *the* commandment. The commandment embraces and exhausts the commandments, not as an external law, but as the dynamic of the indwelling Spirit which is proof of the divine inner abiding.

IS THERE A DANGER?

6. *Isn't it dangerous to teach people in the church that they are not under law?*

That depends upon the people and upon that to which you

have “converted” them. If they have been taught to trust in their membership in an institution and in their own righteousness for salvation, you should build a high wall around them and patrol it regularly. You should also gather them together weekly and rehearse all the words of the law in their ears. It will help if you will also develop an intricate spy system since the “somewhats” in the congregation cannot be everywhere at once and will need to know whom they must threaten with expulsion from the camp.

Never forget that all external law requires both an interpreter and an enforcement squad. If these two functions can be combined in one agency, so that those who determine what must be believed to remain in the party corral can also throw or drive out the non-conformists, it will simplify matters. Such a system will lessen the danger of people thinking and this is always the real threat to the *status quo* in any company. It is always safest in a closed-end corporation to teach the people how to swallow everything but not to speak about anything.

However, I am not a part of such a religious order. I suppose I was at one time, but that was before the Deliverer entered in and set me free. I was “high” on rules and regulations, but I was a lot better at laying them down for others than I was in living up to them myself. I do not recall ever laying down a law God had not given. Anything we thought was the will of God. That was before I learned that no one is transformed by the mere fact of having membership in an organization, regardless of its origin. Calling such an organization a church does not change things. It only compounds the crime and may make for more widespread hypocrisy.

If the church, as you conceive of it, is a round-up of individuals still retaining their criminal tendencies, and who must be confined to keep them from temptation, I suspect it would be dangerous to tell them they are not under law. As I

view the community of saints it would not only be incongruous to tell them they are under law, but it would be an insult. Moreover, it would imply that law is superior to grace as an instrument of righteousness. I do not believe that. It would be a tacit admission that even after faith came we are still under a custodian, a child-conductor, and are no better off than slaves, even though we are the promised heirs of all things.

I think of the believers who are under the Lordship of Jesus as righteous, while law is aimed at the lawless and unrighteous. I do not think of myself as clothed in my own righteousness, but in His. I have nothing of my own in which to glory or even trust. "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling!" When I sing that I mean it. The things in which I once trusted, including legal rectitude, I count as so much garbage, for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, but the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith? Does that sound like Paul? It is!

When I responded to the righteousness which is in Christ by my faith, God responded to my faith in Christ with that righteousness. The righteousness I now have did not come from keeping laws or obeying statutes. It is a gift from my Father, an heirloom of heaven. I am not righteous because I keep the commandments, but I keep the commandments because I am righteous! In the case of law, the law comes first and righteousness follows through obedience; in the case of grace, the righteousness for those in Christ Jesus comes first and obedience follows! "We do always those things which please him."

It doesn't bother me when brethren who dwell in fear attack what I am saying, because they really do not know what I am talking about. It is difficult for one who is in prison and under the watchful eye of an armed guard to write a meaningful

critique of the life of one who is free. I know, because I was a prisoner in the custody of law, shut up to that faith which was revealed to me through personal meditation long after it was revealed to the world of mankind through divine revelation given to the holy apostles and prophets.

I am not boastful about this, for I did not escape at all. I was rescued. And I have no animosity or hostility toward those who are still behind the walls which they equate with maximum security. I am not inclined to lob missiles or Molotov cocktails over the barriers even when they fire at me and take journalistic potshots while patrolling the precincts to see that no “heretic” passes a freedom paper to the inmates through the barbed-wire. It would be childish for one who escaped from a cage to stand outside and make faces and stick out his tongue at those who are still inside. I do not have time for such “monkey business.” I am too busy celebrating my freedom, and I am also too wise to start another party built around myself or my concepts. We’ve got enough walled-in sects on this earth now. If you are waiting for another faction to frame up, forget it and face up to reality!

I just do not believe that any person on this earth will ever attain unto righteousness by law. He will always fall short of his potential and wash out on his dream. He will never come into fulness of being by walking that kind of a tight-rope while doing his balancing act. There is no strength or power in law to perfect a human personality. On the contrary, the very strength of sin is the law itself. “The sting of death is sin, and sin gains its power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:56, 57). Victory over sin, victory over death, and victory over law. “This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.” That is where the victory is and that is where I intend to stay! Praise the Lord!

Then where do we get our strength if not from our obedience unto law? And how do we attain unto fulness if not through perfect law-keeping? The answer is plain. We get our

strength and power from the indwelling Spirit. We get our fulness from experiencing the four-dimensional love which the Spirit pours out or sheds abroad in our hearts. Have you not read?

“He may grant you strength and power through his Spirit in your inner being, that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations, may you be strong to grasp, with all God’s people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ and to know it though it is beyond knowledge. So may you attain to fulness of being, the fulness of God himself” (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Did you notice that little word “so”? It provides the “how-to” key. *So may you attain to fulness of being!* How? By grasping and experiencing the love of Christ. Look up to its height, look down at its depth, look out at its breadth, look into its length, and realize that as high as that love is, as deep as it reaches, as broad as it extends, as long as it lasts, it is yours. You can know it, that is share in it, although it passes the kind of knowledge that you get through study, deduction or meditation. It is mind-exploding, volcanic, terrific, and it is yours. Through it you can attain unto the very fulness of God himself! Do you believe that? I do, and I am thrilled with the dynamic of love which can overcome everything and outlast anything.

7. *Will this view ever come to be accepted and dominate the thinking of our brethren generally?*

I certainly think so. It is simply a matter of spiritual maturity and while we have a long way to go, we are on the road and obviously a lot farther along it than we once were. I think the future holds great promise. Our greatest enemy and drawback is fear and this is enhanced because of the fright tactics employed by sincere men who are intensely partisan and reactionary. They are like the circumcision party in the primitive ekklesia.

What I have been saying is branded as “liberal” and this scares off good men and women who would like to demonstrate love for all of God’s children, but who shrink from doing so because they know they will be attacked from the safety of the pulpit which is off-limits even to those who contribute the cash to pay the salary of the one who assails them from the “sacred desk.”

However, dogmatism and the authoritarian spirit will gradually lose their power to manipulate thinking people and as they search the scriptures for themselves they will see that much of what has passed for God’s will has been human tradition and is a rope of sand which cannot bind them. The day is coming when men will no longer regard preachers and elders as being the infallible interpreters of the word of God and our little papal kingdoms will disintegrate.

There will be a period of reaction against the will of God as expressed in his wonderful love for the world. Grace will be attacked under cover and will be equated with law. Lectureships will be held in which it will be made to appear that brethren who stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free are heretical. Preachers who are jealous of their standing with the party will be loud in their boasting and violent in their attacks. It will be made to appear that the most important things in the world are the issues over which our fathers fought and divided. But the love dynamic is so great and so powerful that it will eventually triumph.

Already scores, and even hundreds, of young brethren are coming to see that the dogmatism of yesterday has no place in the world of the present. They are under attack as leaving the faith when really what they are doing is finding it. Pressures will be brought to bear against those who verbalize their relationship with Christ as transcendent over everything else, including the partisan stance, but many of them will not succumb to pressure tactics. They will seek secular employment for support before

they will give up their liberty.

Men always fight harder for their traditions than for revealed truth although they often equate the two as identical in their own thinking. But we are in a day of intellectual breakthrough and many of the rationalizations of the partisan status quo are being challenged. This is good and will make of us a more honest and straightforward people although the pioneers who lead the reformation will be hated and maligned as all pioneers are. But cheer up, for the privilege of being strangers, pilgrims and pioneers is worth the cost!

Strained Arguments

Mission Messenger (September 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

It is in no fit of pique or sense of uncharitableness, that I have frequently suggested that some of our brethren seem to devise their “laws” first and then search the scriptures for quotations with which to validate and force them upon others. And some of the strained and strange arguments which they make demonstrate both the fallacy of their laws and the folly of human legislation in the area of the spiritual.

A good example, I think, is found in a leaflet which I received sometime ago and which purported to be mailed by a Church of Christ in Texas. The first page article is an attempt to combat instrumental music and other things as rendering *our religion* impure. In the interest of absolute fairness I reproduce the article in full.

LAW OF EXCLUSION

The above is merely the title to this article; it is not a biblical expression. However, we feel that it helps to illustrate a biblical principle: i.e., that when God specifies a certain thing, that specification excludes all other things of that class. Let us illustrate. In Psalms 2:7 God says of Christ, “Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.” Also, in the New Testament we read this question, “For unto which of the angels said he at any

time, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?’” (Heb. 1:5). Now, the Hebrew writer is here making an argument based on the law of exclusion. He is saying in effect that God specified that Christ was His son, and that that specification excluded all other things, e.g., angels. Could an angel make a valid argument that he was the Son of God saying, “God didn’t say I wasn’t”? No, because in saying who was His Son He also said who wasn’t His Son. To specify Jesus as His only unique Son is to exclude all else as His only unique Son.

Now all of this is to point out that in considering the worship, organization, and work of the Lord’s church we are confined to God’s specification. Whether instrumental music, counting of beads, or holy water, let us purify our religion of all that is presumptuous.

THOUGHTS ON THE ABOVE

It is an interesting admission by our brother who composed this little treatise that his designation is not a “biblical expression.” No one who speaks as the Bible speaks can bind the term “law of exclusion” upon anyone, because it is not found in the Bible. He feels that such usage of an unscriptural term helps to illustrate a biblical principle. I think it is an abandonment of the motto to call “Bible things by Bible names.”

I am just not too certain that God ordained a “law of exclusion” which is as specific as our good brother indicates. If it is that specific it would appear that all of the brethren who respect the Lordship of Jesus could interpret it alike and exclude the same things. As it is, it appears to be too flexible to be much of a law, because the brethren can bend and stretch it to include what they want and to exclude what they don’t want, until “the law of exclusion” has not “purified our religion” but fragmented our brethren into about two dozen “exclusivistic parties.” Perhaps we should call it the “law of exclusivism” as that seems

to be the “ism” on which a lot of saints are high!

The “law of exclusion” is employed by some as an excuse to exclude instrumental music, and by others equally concerned with purity, to exclude support of Herald of Truth, certain kinds of orphan homes, colleges, individual cups, Sunday Schools, and a hundred other things too numerous to mention. This would not bother me too much, except for the fact that a lot of “lawyers” insist on excluding brethren who disagree with them on the motley horde of issues which have been made to appear of more worth and value than the glorious relationship created by the blood of God’s dear Son and my wonderful Savior.

I suspect that some of us estimate the spiritual validity of a thing on the basis of the scriptures used to justify it. If the citations have to be wrested and perverted from their proper context and purpose, we must assume that the case for the law is about as weak as the reasoning employed. Upon that basis our brother has jerked the rug out from under “the law of exclusion.” He went way out to find something to make his case but it would have been better if he had stayed closer to home plate and not tried chasing “fungoes.”

The Hebrew writer was not “making an argument based on the law of exclusion” at all. He may not have known there was such a law, since it is not a Biblical expression. It was not his purpose to prove that angels could not claim to be sons of God because the designation of the Logos as His Son was exclusive. A careful study of the Hebrew letter will show that it was addressed to Palestinian Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and were in grave danger of defecting to Judaism. To offset this, it was pointed out that what we have in Christ is eminently superior to what was provided by Moses. The word “better” occurs thirteen times in the thirteen chapters as men have divided the letter.

The Jews believed that their law had been given by the

disposition of angels (Acts 7:53) and had been ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator (Galatians 3:19). As a prelude to proving that we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, as contrasted with the words delivered by angels (Hebrews 2:1, 2), the writer affirms that the Son of God is superior to angels because a superior designation was bestowed upon him.

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,’ and again ‘I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son?’”

By inheritance Jesus was entitled to the name “Son” as a patrimony, and this proved his superiority to angels. Our brother is in error when, in his eagerness to prove a case against the use of instrumental music in conjunction with praise to God, he asserts that the Hebrew writer was “here making an argument based on the law of exclusion.” I am glad that the argument made by the Hebrew writer was not as forced as the one our contemporary brother has made, else the Jewish believer’s might all have returned to the ritual and pageantry of the temple.

Reading back into the word of God the arguments and terms we have devised in debate is not a very good way to “purify our religion” and will probably seem a little bit presumptuous to those who love God’s revelation more than they do their own opinions and interpretations. As William Ellery Channing has pointed up a danger, “False and absurd doctrines, when exposed, have a natural tendency to beget skepticism in those who received them without reflection. None are so likely to believe too little as those who have begun by believing too much.”

About Opinions

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[Abstract]

“We have no nostrum, no peculiar discovery of our own to propose to fellow-Christians, for the fancied importance of which they should become followers of us. We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore, we have nothing new. Neither do we pretend to acknowledge persons to be ministers of Christ, and, at the same time, consider it our duty to forbid or discourage people to go to hear them, merely because they hold some things disagreeable to us; much less to encourage their people to leave them on that account.”— Thomas Campbell in Declaration and Address.

The longer I sojourn among men and the more ardently I study the message of divine revelation, the more enamored do I become of the ideal of those princes of the faith who caught a glimpse of the pristine unity of all believers in Christ and proposed to restore it by renouncing all creeds and confessions as a basis of oneness, except the great and abiding foundation truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

The efforts which they exerted to effect such union, and which gained the momentum to graduate into a swelling movement, are laudable and praiseworthy. It is fascinating to realize that they captured the concept of oneness predicated upon belief in and reliance upon historical facts directly related

to the person of Jesus, and at the same time had the foresight to distinguish between those facts and any opinion or speculation formed concerning them. The hope of a united body of saints was thus lifted out of the morass of debates and tumults and placed upon the solid ground of verifiable fact.

Properly understood, this strikes at the very heart of all sectarianism. If the gospel is Jesus Christ himself, and if obedience to it is simply identification with him in the saving facts of his death, burial and resurrection, we have a basis upon which to unite everyone on this earth who believes into him through the apostolic testimony or proclamation. By its very nature the gospel, the evangel, is unitive. It calls men out and calls them together. God calls us into congregation with one another and not to separation from one another.

Our separation is from an alien world which does not acclaim Jesus as Lord. It is not from the new humanity. It is the gospel which we hear while in the world and to which we respond. That response brings us into a state where we share a common life, the life of Christ, the more abundant life. It is obvious to all thinking believers that the gospel unites by bringing all who receive and obey it into one body through the Spirit.

Those who are inaugurated into the one body are not one in opinion nor will they ever be. They may even hold varied views related to the very facts of the good news. For example, they may differ upon the day of the week that Jesus died, they may differ about the number of hours he spent in the tomb, and may speculate about the nature of his resurrection body which could appear in rooms where the doors were locked.

But no opinion upon such matters will legislate against one's acceptance by God, or negate the promise of forgiveness. One is not saved from sin by the formation of correct opinions, or deductions from and explanations of the facts, but by belief or

trust in them. There is a difference between reposing trust in one and being able to explain all the things which happened to that person. Most of us can only speculate as to why certain things happened to ourselves. One need not be able to explain the Federal Reserve System to trust the bank with his deposit of money or other valuables.

To me it appears quite tragic that most of the heirs of the restoration movement have lost all consciousness of their great patrimony. As a result they are milling about defending their unwritten creeds as fervently as their fathers once rejected them. Remember that whatever one must mentally or verbally subscribe to in order to be received by or welcomed in a party is the creed of that party. This is as certain as if that thing were emblazoned above the speaker's platform. And whatever grounds are urged as a basis for excluding one from communion constitutes the creed of those who exclude him. And their exclusion of him upon any other grounds than a rejection of the Lordship of Jesus over his life, proves that they are a sect in the fairest terms of the word.

Those who exclude their brethren because their views, explanations and opinions are at variance with the orthodox views of the group should cease parading under the guise of being Christians only! To be fair they should itemize and print the things one must believe, and those which he must not hold, in order to remain in the party. They should present this list to all prospects prior to baptism. True, this would constitute a written creed, but it would at least make the sect honest and open. It is dishonest to bring people in on the glad good news that our only creed is Jesus, and then throw them out because they did not read the fine print in the contract. We need to stress our exceptions as well as our acceptance. When I talk about these things they gender a lot of questions. Let me mention a few of them with answers.

OUR GREATEST ERROR

1. *What do you think was the greatest mistake in our history as a people?*

By “our history” I take it you are talking about heirs of the particular restoration movement with which we are identified. I say “particular restoration movement” because ours is one of some sixteen restoration movements. Many of them began in the same era. All had the same ideal, the achievement of unity by a return to the pattern of profession and practice of the primitive *ekklesia* of God. All of them suffered from the sin of division, and most of them divided over some of the same things as the concept of idealism clashed with the changing culture.

Certainly we must have hit a derail and jumped the track somewhere because we started out to unite the Christians in all of the sects and ended up smashed to smithereens among ourselves. Being human, we made a lot of mistakes, some more tragic in consequence than others. It will be a difference of opinion as to which one was the most critical and any one that I choose will produce a good crop of dissenters.

However, I think our greatest error came when we began to equate the restoration movement with the church of God. For one thing this took the “move” out of the movement and added a new party to the spectrum. We crystallized into a religious sect which we assumed was the restored church and from that time on we ceased to be unitive and became divisive. Since then we have not even united among ourselves but have divided even the “unity” movement.

The body of Christ has never ceased to be a living entity since its inception at the coronation of Jesus at God’s right hand. It was marred, scarred, bruised and battered, and appeared under some strange forms during the changing centuries, but it never died. Sometimes it was an underground entity and

sometimes an above-ground organization, but it was the one body composed of all of the saved on earth at the time.

Men arose in various ages and places to attempt reformation as the form took on new shapes, for reformation is simply re-forming, and most of the reformers had as their goal the elimination of accretions and the recapture of lost values so as to return the *ekklesia* to its original shape. None of them had the idea that the Lord had closed shop, or that the church had ceased to exist, although they were quick to confess that it suffered from abnormality and malformation.

Each reformatory effort produced a new creed defining what men thought of as essential to the faith, and each such creed created another cleavage, so that every effort at reform of the existing order produced a new sect. The restoration movement which grew out of the efforts of men like Thomas and Alexander Campbell, was an attempt to unite all Christians by ignoring all creeds and synopses of faith and going back beyond their origin to restore to the church the primitive order of things.

It was not an attempt to restore the church. None of the restoration pioneers believed that the church had disappeared or been stamped out. In the first paragraph of *The Declaration and Address*, Thomas Campbell asserted that “The Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one,” and identified its membership by their character. The successors to the pioneers, as always, were the settlers, and these ceased to explore and probe and began to defend. Assuming that the ground which had been captured was all there was, they denied that there was any more to the universe, and began to build a wall around it and to hang as traitors those who still wanted to be explorers.

And that is where we are today. The “Lord’s Church” in our vocabulary does not refer to the one body of believers in the

world but to the particular segment of the restoration movement to which the speaker adheres. There are no “Christians in the sects” to unite, so our original goal has been abandoned, not because it has been attained, but because Satan, as always, has brainwashed us into becoming an additional sect.

The one body is the result of man’s response to the universal call of God. The restoration movement is a human attempt to restore to the called a sense of proper relationship to the revealed will. To confuse and confound the movement of God in the universe with a movement of man in the church is like confusing citizenship in the United States of America with a women’s liberation movement in California. And to designate such a movement as the United States and assume that only those identified with the movement are citizens of the commonwealth would be both absurd and asinine. Yet, as I visualize it, that is what we have done with reference to the kingdom of heaven in this age.

A PRACTICAL SOLUTION

2. Is there any practical solution to the problem we inherited?

If there is not we are doomed to become ever more sectarian and exclusivistic. There is no use trying to correct the situation by impractical methods. We have been trying them for decades and they are continually being trumpeted in “brotherhood journals” and pompously advocated and proclaimed in “brotherhood lectureships.” You could as easily straighten out the spaghetti in a can by pounding on the can, as you could to untangle our tragic mix-ups by hammering away in a one-sided college lectureship. We have organized, reorganized and disorganized the restoration movement until it is no longer a race with the runners looking unto Jesus, but a ride on a partisan merry-go-round with the passengers all looking for justification for their factional projects. Unless we get off the

whirling carousel we shall continue to grow dizzier for “round and round she goes, and where she stops nobody knows!”

Our pioneers had no problem with the ripped-off fragmented religious scene of their day. They simply recommended ignoring all of the sectarian creedal tests of fellowship which had arisen, and returning to the original dynamic. They were not interested in debating the deductions and objecting to the opinions which give rise to the creeds. It was the tests of union and communion which they wanted to scrap in favor of the faith in the gospel which introduced men into and sustained them in the unity of the Spirit.

If that approach was valid for the fractured religious world of that day why is it not equally appropriate for the fractured restoration movement now? The only practical solution is to ignore all of our parties, plans and programs, and all of our debates, dogmas and details, and return to the concept of the *ekklesia* as the called out, the people of God, the family of God. It was never intended to be a church among churches, or a sect among sects. It was not meant to be an organization supported and sustained by other human organizations, institutions and inventions. The way to unite is to unite, not to debate!

The calling of a religious party “the Lord’s church” does not make that party the kingdom of heaven over which the Messiah presides. Designating a religious movement “the church of Christ” does not make that movement the exclusive, warranty-guaranteed body of which Jesus is the head. We are not to be identified as his disciples by our signboards but by our love for one another. If we do not have that distinguishing characteristic it makes no difference what we huddle behind. If we do have it, it may not make too much difference either.

The body of Christ in a city is not a party meeting at a certain location or street address. There is certainly nothing

wrong with a group of saints meeting at such a location. There is nothing wrong with them appointing a board of trustees and owning property if they wish. The sin comes when they think of themselves as the whole body in that city and deny that any others are children of God, or arrogantly assume that only those belong to God who belong to them. The body of Christ in a given city or district is composed of every saved person in that area. It embraces every individual in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, every cleansed, justified and sanctified member of the new humanity!

The practical solution to the grave problem created by equation of the restoration movement with the body of Christ is to abandon this egotistic, self-righteous concept and return to our original goal which was to be a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects. We will have to stop trying to con honest people into believing that we have tried to make Christians and Christians only. That is just not true! We have been trying to make “Church of Christ Christians” just like the Baptists have been trying to make Baptist Christians and the Presbyterians have been trying to make Presbyterian Christians. They deny this charge just as we deny it. There is a difference! Our good Baptist friends will say that they seek to make Christians first and Baptists secondarily. We just try to make “Church of Christ Christians” first, last and all the time. Because we have come to the conclusion that “the Church of Christ” to which we belong is identified with the one body which belongs to Jesus, we do not think there are any Christians in the sects. If you are not in “the Church of Christ” in a city, you are just not a Christian, and if you are in the wrong “Church of Christ” which means in another organization than ours, you are not anyway. We are in jeopardy until some brother with a sacrificial spirit is willing to move in and start a “loyal church” and then we can move to it and be safe. We have left off trying to reach Jerusalem and have settled for building a modern Babylon, a state of unparalleled confusion.

The practical solution is to “discern the Lord’s body,” and

to cease regarding it as a nineteenth century movement with a twentieth century existence, hung-up and strung-out on all of the trivia promoted by professional preachers and organizational schools. All of these things quench the Spirit under a heap of noncombustible issues. The practical solution is to triumph over the organizational concept dumped on us by a Roman hierarchy and free men and women to be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, brothers and sisters in the majestic family. It is enough to be members of the new humanity, citizens of the royal and divine commonwealth.

Let us receive, recognize and respect all of God's children. Let us confirm our faith in Christ Jesus by confirming our love for them. To love the brethren in deed and in truth, as opposed to mere word and speech, is the first qualification of a peacemaker and the first principle of any endeavor toward unity. Membership with us may or may not be important but being a member of the one body is an imperative. There is no life if you are severed from the head.

THE GRADUAL APPROACH

3. Will it not be more effective to move more slowly and divest ourselves of our problems gradually?

It might be for you but it would not be for me. It is too much like cutting a dog's tail off an inch at a time to make it easier on the dog. I am not sure we will ever get rid of the sectarian spirit by dissolving it gradually. I am afraid that with such an approach there would always be a residue left in the heart. Moreover, the party spirit (*hairesis*) is a sin, according to Paul. It is a serious question whether one ought to pull out of sin by degrees or repent of it and be washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

I have chosen for myself the latter approach, preferring to throw off the chains than to file away at one link at a time. I do

not bind this upon all and I recognize that freedom gained too suddenly may bring additional trauma to those unaccustomed to it. But I want Jesus to rule over my heart and being and I am too old now to surrender myself to him a bit at a time. I think God will stand by me if I kick the whole sectarian habit. “God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.” If I cut loose from all the moorings of the flesh, he will not let me drift. “‘Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will take me home.”

To me the party spirit is an octopus, and I am not interested in being freed from one tentacle at a time. I want to kill the octopus. I do not want one foot on solid ground while the other remains in the quicksand. But again, I would make it clear that I do not expect others to see things as I do. It is not necessary for them to implement their lives as I do. I want to be free from the virus and infection of sectarianism, and I want to be free *now!*

I have no intention of being a front man or a promotion agent for any factional group of earth. I belong to Jesus Christ my Lord. He is the sovereign over my whole life. Never again will men entice me into a party where I must exhibit my love for them by hating or mistreating other brethren. Jesus is not dragging me out of the sectarian spirit by degrees. He delivered me and I intend to stay free. This disturbs a lot of my good brethren who would prefer that I “line up” with something so they could more effectively attack me. As it is, they take a cut at what they think is the root of things with their little hatchets and frequently cut one of their own feet off.

REACTION TO ATTACK

4. *You have been under scathing attack for your position on fellowship in a number of brotherhood papers lately. How do you react to this inwardly?*

It is true that a lot of brethren have been training their big journalistic guns on me in recent months, but none of these things really move me. For one thing, those who make such personal attacks and accusations are generally professional preachers, men who in other communions would be called “the clergy.” I don’t think most of the common everyday folk like myself are as hostile and bitter. Many of them realize there is something seriously awry with our approach to unity which has resulted in so many tragic divisions. There are people in every area of the non-instrument spectrum who share my views, although a lot of them do not dare express their real feelings, or they will be cast out of the synagogues. They appreciate the fact I am saying what they would like to say.

I have a great deal of compassion for the preachers who feel that they prove their faithfulness to God by attacking me. I know of men who were “smoked out” by their brethren and had to take “a public stand” with reference to me. But I used to react exactly as they do now. I was just as factional and exclusivistic as they are. Herein lies our real hope. If God could change my heart and make it possible for me to love and cherish all of the brethren, he can change them!

One problem is that a lot of brethren exalt their power and derogate the power of the Spirit. They think they are here to save the truth and forget that the truth is here to save them. I get a real bang out of some of the things they say about my thinking. Everyone of them admits that men can be wrong about some things and still be saved. But they are not about to list the specified “issues” on which you may err and still remain in the fellowship of the Spirit. No two of them would come up with the same list. All of them would differ!

What I have done is to lift the matter completely out of the arena of wrangling over “issues” which are purely temporal and secondary, and have elevated it to the plane of relationship to God through Christ Jesus in the Spirit. This is more than one

can stand who trusts in his own righteousness achieved by works. All of the “lawyers” in all of the parties oppose me and for the same reason. I belong to none of their parties but am free in Christ. I trust absolutely in His righteousness but I do not trust in my own.

I do not think God is nearly as interested in our tests of fellowship as our debaters are, and even if heaven smiled upon our silly party standards under which we march, the Father would not wilfully murder his children because they were honestly mistaken about them. Jesus shed his blood for persons, not things. It is persons who have been redeemed, not things. And persons whom Jesus ransomed can be mistaken about things and still be saved, provided they do not let the things become an object of worship and turn them away from Jesus.

I have not been mealy-mouthed or used weasel-words! I am bold in saying that the loving God is not going to deliberately destroy a loving child because he claims to speak in tongues. He is not going to brutally destroy one of his children just because that child thinks Jesus will precede the millennium. I have read the scriptures through time and time again and that is not the nature of the Father therein revealed. He loves those who have been born again, and so long as one acknowledges Jesus as the Lord of his life, his whole life, God is not going to drive him out into the cold.

When I began to write on the theme of fellowship I anticipated that I would be branded as a heretic and castigated as a betrayer of the faith. A lot of brethren cannot distinguish between the faith once delivered to the saints and their own opinions delivered daily on the brotherhood milk route. So I am not at all surprised that a lot of them are against me. It would cause me to do a lot of rethinking of my position if some of them were for me. I feel fairly safe as long as they are in the opposition. But a lot of them will see the light and change. Even if they do not I shall go on loving them anyhow!

WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP

5. How would you react if they should “withdraw fellowship” from you?

I probably wouldn't miss it too much. It is a little childish for brethren to talk about withdrawing something they have never exhibited or manifested. You don't miss the money if someone withdraws ten dollars he never gave you. That is the trouble with “withdrawing fellowship” in a lot of places. There wasn't any to start with.

My position is that fellowship is not something men can extend or withdraw. We are called into it by God. It is in Christ and it is the fellowship of the Spirit. As long as the Holy Spirit dwells in one he is in the fellowship. It is only one who has not the Spirit who is none of his. Men cannot bestow the Spirit and they cannot withdraw Him. They can put you out of parties, sects and denominations, which is really what you meant by your question. But anything men can put you out of, you are probably as well off out as you are in. It is like an updated sign I saw recently, “Confucius say, ‘Man who sits on tack is better off.’”

Really, I am only in the fellowship with brethren because I am in the fellowship with the Father. Our horizontal relationship is simply the result of our vertical relationship. I was not adopted by men but by God, and while all who love God should receive those whom God receives, if they do not it is their misfortune. Only God can add me to the body and only God can remove me. “God hath set the members in the body as it pleaseth him.”

I intend to stay so close to Jesus that nothing can ever move me. He is my guide and my leader. I will not fear what men shall do unto me! I shall welcome all who are in Christ Jesus and I will receive them as God received me with all of my

longings, shortcomings, weaknesses, hangups and ignorance. God did not tell me that when I was good enough, or smart enough, or wise enough, he would accept me. He did not tell me that when I made a good grade on the doctrinal test I would pass. He accepted me and I have been trying to become a better person ever since, although I still have a long way to go. It isn't always easy for me!

So-called “discipline” and “withdrawal of fellowship” in our day, has little to do with what the new covenant scriptures teach. It is not spiritual action taken by those who love Jesus, but human reaction of those who fear change. It is administered not by loving saints but by institutional wardens. It stems not from love for brethren, for generally those excluded are much more loving than those who exclude them. The basis of it is insecurity. Those who think for themselves and can no longer goose-step in unison to the sound of the party trumpet are regarded as a threat to the authoritarian structure. So they are warned, threatened and finally thrown out, by *status quo* defenders.

We should not feel sorry for the excluded! Not every one can get out of a trap so easily. To be freed from a snare without having to gnaw your leg off is a blessing. Our sorrow should be reserved for those who pompously regard themselves as the guardians of orthodoxy and who issue ultimatums, and who arise on Lord's Day to pontificate on error by which they mean disagreeing with tradition and their opinions, and who then read a document, generally drawn up by the preacher, declaring that a brother and his family are consigned to limbo because they claim to have attained a closer walk with God through an experience with the Holy Spirit. With shepherds like this watching the flock, who needs wolves to scatter the sheep and drive them away?

WEAKENING DISCIPLINE

6. *Will your position not weaken discipline in the local congregation?*

First of all you need to ask if what you call “discipline” is the will of God. If it is not, it should not only be weakened, but abandoned. Is it the will of the heavenly Father to cut off from our association a saint who has diligently studied the scriptures and come to the conclusion that Jesus will return before the millennium? Is it the will of God to hound out one who believes that a Christian cannot serve in the armed forces of the United States, or one who holds that he can? Is it the will of God to set up arbitrary rules that if one is absent from three consecutive gatherings of the congregation he is summarily dismissed from the “membership” and to “return to the fold” must march up during an invitation song and make an acknowledgment and ask forgiveness of “the powers that be”? “Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed, that he hath grown so great?”

The will of God is revealed in the word of God. It says nothing about such high-handed tactics in the family of God. We are encouraged to receive one another, to be patient and longsuffering. We are to be kind, considerate and merciful to each other. We are a family circle not a big business organization. Our names are enrolled in heaven and not on a factory payroll. The *ekklesia* of God cannot be maintained like an assembly line. We are not to judge one another but to love one another. We dare not “set at nought a brother for whom Christ died.”

Many of our brethren cannot distinguish between sin and error. The first is an action of the heart which is an offence against God and His majesty. It dethrones God in the inner chamber of the spirit and substitutes self in the reigning position. On the other hand, error is a mistake of the mind. We can no more endorse error than we can condone sin, but error, like disease, is not always fatal. Our hope of life is not conditioned upon a person being right, but upon being in the

right person. He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath not life!

Error can become sin when it is voluntary or when it causes the errorist to swerve from the faith. Involuntary ignorance is never a sin. Voluntary ignorance is a sin because it causes one to fall below his potential deliberately. But all of us form opinions and not all of them are correct. We are neither infinite in perception nor judgment. We are not saved by being correct on all matters nor damned because of being incorrect on some. If we were, there would be no salvation, and damnation would be universal and the lot of all.

No opinion held under the Lordship of Jesus is a ground for congregational action against an individual. It is only when one is led to deny the relationship he sustains to Jesus through the Spirit, or to subvert the divine purpose by factionalism and deliberate fragmentation of the one body as God's unitive instrument on earth that the community of saints should dissociate from him.

One cannot divest himself of an honestly-held opinion by order of others. Such orders do not make better Christians but greater hypocrites. Anyone who denies what he holds as a conviction in order to remain in good standing with a group only proves his insincerity, and not the rightness of the group. Any group which issues dogmatic orders of this kind intrudes where it has no business, violates the rights of citizens of the kingdom of heaven and sins against the consciences of the brethren. All who engage in such high-handed action seek to lord it over the heritage of God, and become the greater sinners.

Honest opinions are our brain-children and one can no more be expected to abandon them than he should be expected to abandon his children in the flesh. One can conceal his thoughts as he can his children when his home is under attack, but he ought not to deny them to save his own skin. One who

reads the word of God and meditates upon it cannot help but form opinions about what he reads. If he is a person of integrity he will never ask himself what opinions he must hold to be in good standing with men. Instead, he will reach conclusions which appear to him to be the will of God in the subject-matter involved.

To hold that a person is subject to penalty for holding an opinion is like punishing him for digesting his food. One can no more keep from digesting mental food than he can his physical food, if he is mentally healthy. Mental digestion is as spontaneous and natural as is physical digestion. It is absurd to pour every mental capacity into a party mould, for all such moulds are themselves but crystallized opinions which have been set and hardened.

Reading History

Mission Messenger (October 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

I must confess that one of my greatest pleasures in life is the reading of history. I am intrigued by it and I wade through it with gusto, gathering ideas, plucking thoughts, and stuffing my mind with them, like a boy eating candy when given five minutes of freedom in a confectionery. I can take an oversized volume of Greek and Roman annals and settle down to it with as much delight as I used to tackle blackberry cobbler with homemade ice cream over it.

I am fully aware that not everyone shares my taste. When reference to history was cited to establish a precedent in a libel case against the Chicago Tribune, in 1919, Henry Ford said, "History is more or less bunk." Napoleon offered the view that, "History is fraud, agreed upon." Matthew Arnold referred to it as "that huge Mississippi of falsehood." I think all of these pessimists were somewhat biased and I do not share their views.

Edward Gibbon, in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, suggested that, "History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." But he may have been a little perturbed because David Hume, who denied the possibility of anything miraculous, warned him that he would be severely criticized because of his chapter on Christianity. He did not regard history as I do, for I think of it as an account of the footprints of God in the passing centuries of

human behavior.

A few nights ago, while Nell was working late on the subscription list, and I was seeking respite from the fifty letters I had written during the day, I took from the shelf my worn copy of *The Early Church*, by David Duff, one time professor of church history in Edinburgh. There have been a number of church histories written since the days of Hegesippus, who wrote the first one, but this eighty-year old one is a favorite of mine.

I am indebted to the author for many things, but chiefly for the insights into Gnosticism, which a German historian, Graul, called “the gigantic serpent which lurked by the cradle of the infant church.” Once I came to understand the great schismatic evil against which the saints struggled and fought, some of the letters in the new covenant scriptures came alive. Phrases were pregnant with meaning I had not previously seen, and John’s statement about “many antichrists” in the world was understood in its true light.

It was Irenaeus, whose name means “peace,” who seemed to have seen the real danger in the false thinking which paraded under the banner of “Knowledge,” and which Paul long before had designated as “science falsely so-called.” And it was Irenaeus who saw in Gnosticism the stolen trappery of pagan philosophy. Professor Duff writes, “He was alarmed that the Gnostics had borrowed all that their systems contained, partly from the theogonies of the old Greek poets, and partly from the systems of the philosophers, only changing names while adhering substantially to their heathen views.”

In our day, the faith once delivered, is called upon to face up to the attack of varied systems which are mistakenly called “modernistic philosophies.” The fact is there is nothing new or modern about them. Each one has its counterpart in the Greek schools of thought which existed long before the Logos became flesh. Although called by new names and operating under new

brands and labels, they are as old as “the wisdom of this passing age” which Paul confronted in Corinth.

Humanism, for example, did not originate with Dante, Petrarch, or Boccaccio. It was not given birth by the Byzantine scholars who fled to Italy when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. It is not at all strange that its advocates revived an interest in the Greek and Latin Classics, and it is one of the strange quirks of history that the invention of the printing press, which made possible the circulation of the revelation of God, also made possible the circulation of the written works of the patrons of the gods. Thus the stage was once again set for the struggle between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world.

All of this results in an overwhelming optimism in my breast. The faith faces no new foe in this generation! Certainly the enemy is more sophisticated in approach and more persistent in attack. But the faith has triumphed in every direct encounter in the past. The fact that The Way still exists is a tribute to the life with which it is energized and which makes it possible for God to use things that are not, in the eyes of the world, to bring to nought the things that are!

Our only fear stems from the weakness of the saints, and not from the power of the enemy. In the minds of many the germs of compromise lurk, and the faith is regarded as a way of life rather than as the life of the Way. Under the guise of tolerance for the world we sign a pact of peaceful coexistence with Satan. We erode away our resources in internecine strife and civil wars, laboriously toiling up molehills as if they were mountains. We get along better with the world which we are told not to love, than we do with brethren whom we are admonished to love. We sharpen our sword, not to do battle against the principalities and powers, but to hack one another into bits!

It was not by accident that John, who survived to fight the

inroads of Gnostic philosophy, offered the two-pronged commandment of faith and love. "This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded." To relinquish our allegiance to the Son is to come apart at the center of the faith; to cease to love one another is to fly apart at the periphery. Never is faith so important or love so needful as when an insidious enemy moves in for the kill.

It is impossible to gain the victory over what Paul calls "hollow and delusive speculations" with a secondhand faith or a borrowed set of beliefs. Actually such a faith is not "faith" at all, but prejudice. It is simply inherited and adopted without personal examination. In a crisis it cannot stand because the one who holds it cannot defend it. Many a person who is said to lose his faith on the university campus had none to lose. He was operating on what his father believed, or on what a favorite Sunday School teacher had said. One might as well try to masticate food in the college cafeteria with his father's borrowed dentures as to try and chew on metaphysics in the classroom with his father's borrowed convictions.

It will help us when we are assailed by clever advocates of philosophy to remember that we are battling against a foe which is not invincible, but which has been put to flight upon numerous occasions. We need not shed tears of frustration nor wring our hands in futility. No weapon formed against the truth shall prosper. History attests to the power of the faith to overcome the world. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith!" We are fighting upon familiar ground under the leadership of one who never lost a battle and will never know defeat.

"Let no one deceive you with shallow arguments; it is for all these things that God's dreadful judgment is coming upon his rebel subjects. Have no part or lot with them. For though you were once all darkness, now as Christians you are light. Live like men who are at home in daylight, for where light is, there all

goodness springs up, all justice and truth” (Ephesians 5:6-8).

***Where light is!* I am resolved to stay in the Son-light! No one need be reluctant to enter the fray while clad in the armor which God has provided. Nothing can stand against the sword of the Spirit when swung by the hand of one whose trust is strong and who will die for the faith he holds in Jesus.**

Visions of Love

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Volume 35

[Abstract]

Recently I sat one evening in the ballroom of a huge hotel in the heart of a renowned metropolis. The banquet tables were crowded with attractively attired men and women— brothers and sisters in the most majestic family circle in the universe. Great chandeliers lighted the room and accented the Oriental wall panels of red and gold. Skilful black waiters clad in matching uniforms glided noiselessly between the groups of seated guests, pampering appetites educated to gourmet status by an epicurean society.

When the feast was finished and the sound of animated conversation had subsided, a man arose to speak. His ability was immediately apparent. His oratorical powers lent strength to his every sentence. He began by reading the words of Jesus about the new commandment, which really was the old commandment written again in the blood drawn from his own veins. The speech was flawless in content and articulation. The points were pressed home to friendly hearts, and the illustrations which reinforced them were meaningful and well chosen.

But suddenly I found myself in thought in yesterday's world of two millennia ago. I was not turned out to the speaker. His words found their way into my consciousness, but on wings of mental fantasy I soared back into the simpler world where all of the external trappings of the *Now* fall away! Perhaps an

ancient prophet would have said that I was caught up in the Spirit. A modern psychologist would have replied that it was merely a case of thought transference sparked by association. I do not try to account for it. I simply recount for you the images of an unfolding imaginary panorama.

First, I found myself looking down upon a lonely island, a rocky promontory jutting up out of the greenish-blue water of a mist-shrouded sea. The mewing of wheeling gulls served to break the silence along a shore where the spume and spray marked the death of rolling waves moving in like soldiers marching relentlessly to their doom. Then I saw the grotto in which sat a bearded man whose wrinkled face spoke eloquently of his age. He was writing, dipping the calamus into an inkhorn and penning words with an awesome concentration upon the task.

The thought struck me that this was the one-time fisherman, John, last survivor of the little group summoned to be with the Son of man during his earthly pilgrimage. It was he who wrote about love more than any other, and now he was here, forsaken and yet faithful, paying the price which true love exacts during a time of crisis. It was his fate to be alive when the two great philosophies met head-on at the crossroads of history. "Might makes right" was the watchword of the Caesars, and "right makes might" was the motto of the Christ, and now the aged saint was temporarily banished by Domitian, and was in the isle called Patmos for the testimony of the word. Love may mean loneliness, banishment, and waiting for the angels to come.

Then I was whirled away to look down upon the spreading city sprawled across the seven hills, the Great Whore flirting with the kings of the earth, drunken by the wine of her own lust, exuding the sour stench of her own vomit, yet clothed in scarlet, and summoning the wealthy of the earth to her intoxicated embrace. There were the dirty ghettos with their stinking tenements, with sottish men and sodden women crawling in and

out of them like insects.

But the divine spotlight sought out the inner fastness of the dank Mamertine prison, and brought into focus a man with a long chain fastened to a shackle above his ankle and the other end fastened to a hasp in the belt of a member of the Praetorian guard. There was room for the prisoner to walk about but I saw him sitting on a low stool in the shaft of light beaming through a narrow aperture serving as a window in the thick stone wall. He was writing on a sheet of parchment, thoughtfully setting down a message while tears welled up in his eyes like water flowing from the soul's unseen cistern.

I knew that I was looking at Paul, the oft-battered ambassador, and I remembered what he had previously written to the Lord's underground in this teeming world capital. "Owe no man anything but to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the whole law." Love had led him into a life of hardship and suffering, "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren."

The way of love may be the road to prison. He who once hated and breathed out threatenings and slaughter, casting men and women into prison, now loved, but drank from the same bitter cup which he once held to the lips of other saints. Love does not count the cost. It keeps no account of returns. So it enabled the aging captive to write, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

Once more the mental camera swung upon its pivot and I glimpsed a skull-like hill with three crosses stark against the Judean sky. Over the center one, like a rainbow, the word love was arched in technicolor and I knew that here was the love center of the universe, and all human love was simply a beam or

ray flashing from it. And I remembered again those words which have challenged me ever since I first read them, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Herein is love! Not a human emotion but a divine disclosure.

Suddenly I was back in the great hall again, looking at modern men and women, twentieth century brothers and sisters. And I wondered if love was a verbalization in a vocabulary, a subject for sermons, and an exercise in expression. It is wonderful to sit with the saints in a sharing situation, to break bread with those whom you cherish for their faith. Still the gray ghosts of long ago keep marching through the corridors of the heart and as one sees the scars, the blood and the bruises, he wonders if love has grown fragile and delicate until it can no longer believe all things, bear all things and endure all things. The humble soul chastened by the memories of what has been can only cry out anew, "Lord, teach me to love!" Let us walk in that light!

Forced Conformity

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[Abstract]

“Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or an assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy.”

These are the words of the Puritan poet and pamphleteer, John Milton, whose character was a strange blend of winsomeness and severity. Although he became totally blind at the age of forty-four and continued so for the remaining twenty-two years of his life, he produced some of his finest material during this period of enforced darkness.

He is known chiefly in our day because of his beautiful poetry, but he was a prodigious writer of tracts, and I have read many of them such as *How to Rid Ourselves of the Clergy* with a great deal of appreciation. He was a firm defender of the right of every man to interpret Scripture according to his own conscience, and some of his statements have made an undeniable contribution to my own thinking, although I am sadly deficient in trying to convey my thoughts in the beautiful language which he employed.

Before I leave Milton, however, for the more prosaic task

immediately at hand, let me ask you to consider this other statement which flowed from his sharpened quill. "Is it not possible that she (truth) may have more shapes than one? What else is all that rank of things indifferent, wherein truth may be on this side or on the other without being unlike herself . . . What great purchase is this Christian liberty which Paul so often boasts of? His doctrine is, that he who eats or eats not, regards a day or regards it not, may do either to the Lord. How many other things might be tolerated in peace and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief stronghold of our hypocrisy to be ever judging one another! I fear this iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks."

In the earlier part of this year I made a rather extensive study of religious intolerance and the constant struggle of the mind to be free. I have concluded that there is always a conspiracy to reduce men to serfs to the institution and to manipulate them to the gain and promotion of others. But I have developed a deeper appreciation for those who have fought for the only liberty that is real, the freedom to think, speak and act.

Erasmus of Rotterdam said, "The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity and these can scarcely stand unless we define as little as possible and in many things leave each free to follow his own judgment."

Sebastian Castellio said, "Nothing can be essential to salvation that cannot be known, and much in Christian teaching cannot be established with absolute certainty, particularly the matters that are most controverted."

John Locke wrote, "It becomes all men to maintain peace and the common offices of friendship in a diversity of opinions, since we cannot reasonably expect that anyone should readily and obsequiously quit his own opinion and embrace ours with a blind resignation to an authority which the understanding of

man acknowledges not.”

Alexander Campbell wrote, “We have been censured long and often for laying too much stress upon the assent of the understanding; but those who have most acrimoniously censured us, have laid much more stress upon the assent of the mind, than we have ever done. We never did, at any time, exclude a man from the kingdom of God for a mere imbecility of intellect; or, in other words, because he could not assent to our opinions . . . We will acknowledge all as christians who acknowledge the gospel facts, and obey Jesus Christ.”

And the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to write: “Welcome one whose faith is weak, but not for the purpose of deciding mere matters of opinion . . . Who are you that you should find fault with the servant of another? Whether he stands or falls is a matter which concerns his own master . . . As for you and your convictions, keep your personal faith to yourself in the presence of God.”

That should be enough to introduce the subject with which I am requested to deal in this issue of our little journal. It may not be generally known, but there is a frantic wave of exclusion now sweeping through Churches of Christ. Elders are jumpy and quick on the trigger. In every section of our land, motivated by reckless attack from the pulpits, brethren are being “cast out of the synagogues” for no other reason than the fact that they dare to think for themselves. And it is observable that those who are driven out are conceded by their persecutors to be pure in morals, holy in life, faithful in attendance, and studious in their habits.

Perhaps this last is the real problem. An elder in Texas said of one brother who was callously thrown out, “He was a good man as long as he stayed with our old-time doctrine. But he wasn’t satisfied and he took to reading too many books and papers not written by faithful brethren, and he tried to tell the

rest of us we were wrong in some points, when we knew we had the truth all along. So we had to get rid of him before he influenced others into becoming dissatisfied with our way of looking at things.”

It is a commentary on the attitude of the elders who discharged this brother because he learned too much, that they also placed him under a social ban and notified all who were under their “jurisdiction” that they must not visit in his home, talk with him by the way, or have anything to do with him, and any violation of this edict or proscription would make them amenable to the discipline of the congregation and liable to the same penalty. It would appear that some of the congregations have been victimized by power-hungry dictatorships which reserve unto themselves the power to save or condemn!

REGULATION OF OPINION

1. But are not elders charged with regulating opinions of the members?

Indeed they are not! Elders are not to be tyrants or despots! They are fallible men, as likely to err in judgment as other men, and more liable to do so if their decisions are warped by a sense of power or pride. The opinions of elders may be just as erroneous as those of others in a congregation, and that is why no opinion can be made a test of fellowship, or of union and communion.

Only infallible men should have any right, or even inclination, to demand that their opinions be adopted by all. Since there are no such men upon earth, uniformity of knowledge and conformity of opinion can never be enforced or imposed. The Congress of the United States would make as much sense to pass a law that no person could be a citizen unless he was exactly five feet and nine inches tall, as for brethren to condition citizenship in the divine kingdom upon a certain

arbitrary mental stature.

Elders are not political opportunists who can conspire, manipulate and change the rules in the middle of the game, in order to keep the power they may have unjustly seized. In the divine economy no provision is made for government without the consent of the governed. The word rendered office in the King James Version does not refer to an elective position, but to a function or work. “He that desires the office of a bishop desires a good work.”

It is a frightful commentary upon how far we have fallen in the Churches of Christ, that men have turned a function into a power structure against which there is no appeal even in cases of flagrant abuse and injustice. In some places preachers and elders meet in closed sessions and clandestinely plot to force the saints to “knuckle under” as the price for remaining in the congregation, and ruthlessly eject men and their families who dare to question if this is faithful adherence to the word of God.

Nothing is more absurd in the light of the new covenant scriptures, than to hound someone out of the congregational association because he can see no wrong in the use of instrumental music as an accompaniment to praise, or because he has reached the conclusion that the millennium will follow the return of Jesus, or because he honestly feels that “the gifts of the Spirit” are available today. Those who elevate such ideas into tests of union or communion and condition their acceptance of brethren upon conformity to their orthodox legislation should be ashamed to live and afraid to die! To wound the consciences of brethren who are in the Lord Jesus and fervently seeking to follow him, is not alone to injure them but the Lord who bought them! Elders and preachers who bind upon those in Christ something more than faith in the Lord Jesus and trust in His wonderful grace, for justification, are the modern Judaizers, the twentieth-century circumcision party. They are our revised version of the “certain of the Pharisees” who have crept in to

steal away the liberties of the saints. They walk not according to the truth of the gospel. These are serious charges and I do not make them lightly or flippantly.

I affirm them because I believe that a great principle is at stake. When the divine right of each child of God to approach the scriptures for himself is abridged or denied, then have we blotted out almost half a millennium of Protestant gain and returned to the spirit of the papacy. We have turned our backs upon the ideal of true restoration and restored the spirit which made possible the Inquisition and cast that mighty pall upon the earth which came to be known as “the Dark Ages.”

The rational powers of the saints will be stultified and their thought processes stifled. If the price of being received is not to think, men who love the social institution above their own integrity will cease to think. Thus the congregation will come to be composed of frightened conformists who trust in the wisdom of men and deny the wisdom of God. Sterility will prevail and moral compromise arise as it already has in many places.

DRAWING THE LINE

2. If elders cannot draw a line on the opinions held by brethren, who can?

No one can! Are not elders also brethren? Who is going to draw a line on the opinions they hold? Why should a small group of men place an executive ban on the opinions of other saints? Is this not, in effect, imposing their own opinions upon others? If a group of brethren hold an opinion in conflict with the opinion of the elders, why not have the elders surrender their opinion? What is there about being in the presbytery which makes one’s opinion infallible and imperative?

And what is to happen when the elders hold varied opinions? Whose view is to prevail? Will it be the view of the one

who has the biggest bank account and the largest amount of building and loan stock? Will it be the view of the one whose wife works hardest behind the lines to make him toe the mark and tell the others where to get off? Or, will it be the one who has the largest family and the most people “lined up”? Who will have to resign so that the eldership will be a unit in “presenting the truth”?

The fact is that God has freed us all from domination by others in the realm of opinion and made our opinions subject only to the bar of personal conscience. We are specifically told that in our reception of others, even those who are weak, we must not engage in disputes over opinions (Romans 14:1). The kingdom of heaven is spacious enough for men to dwell together in spite of differences, so long as they neither despise nor judge one another. Even then, the problem is an attitude toward brethren and not so much one toward things.

The sin is not in having varied opinions, for God receives men in spite of them. The sin comes when we “set at nought a brother” (verse 10). It lies in destroying one for whom Christ died by insistence upon having my own way (verse 15). Obviously someone is mistaken when our views clash, and both may be. But one who is not free to make mistakes is not free at all. It is about time that we assert our right to read and think for ourselves and rise up against the domination of preachers and editors. The slavish worship and adulation heaped upon journals is unworthy of free men and women. Read what you want to but make up your own mind. You are not a door-mat for other men!

Let me come down to a current problem so I may make myself clear. The traditional position of our brethren in the restoration movement has been that “the age of miracles” ended with the work of the special envoys of Christ, and when the last person had died upon whom apostolic hands were laid, the spiritual gifts available to the primitive *ekklesia* were withdrawn, or simply ceased through attrition.

One of the passages occupying a prominent place in the list of texts summoned to bolster this rationale was 1 Corinthians 13:10. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The context mentions the unfailing quality of love, as distinguished from prophecy, tongues and knowledge supernaturally given. It was assumed that "that which is perfect" was the completed revelation of God as now contained in the sacred canon of new covenant scriptures. Few, if any, among us questioned this, so it became the accepted, or orthodox way of explaining it. It created no problem because no one even thought of questioning it.

Now, however, it is a horse of a different color, as a man said when he saw his first zebra. As a part of that which the world of religion designates "the charismatic renewal," and which has been a recurrent phenomenon through the centuries, some of our brethren are directly involved. In order to attempt a validation of their experience they have taken a new look at 1 Corinthians 13:10 and decided "that which is perfect" has not yet arrived.

This has obviously set off a few fireworks and in some places the elders, frightened by what has happened, or what may happen, have accused those of their number caught up in the excitement, of "denying the plain teaching of the Bible," and of "having no respect for the authority of the word of God." Careful thought, unaffected by the emotional reaction of either side, will show that this is not true and such thoughtless accusations may do more damage than some of the thoughtless actions of the "charismatics."

The cold fact is that Paul did not identify that which is perfect, and he did not tell us when it was to arrive. If he had done so there would be no real hangup on the matter. We have deduced from our reasoning, that the perfect was the completed revelation as now contained in the sacred scriptures. Others question our interpretation.

That the “teaching” is not as plain as some brethren would like to think was made clear when a publisher among us asked six different brethren to explain what was meant in 1 Corinthians 13:10. All of them were excellent students of the new covenant scriptures in the original Greek language, but they all came up with a different approach, and they did not agree upon the identity of what constituted “that which is perfect.” Being such apt students they used terminology in some cases which tended to confuse, but what they said was about as confusing as the way they said it. I think a lot of common folk like myself reached the conclusion that if the “experts” could not agree we would just have to allow for differences from now on!

But both groups among us believe there is a perfected state, and that it either has come or will, and both believe that with its coming the partial will be done away. The reason both believe that is because it has been revealed, and there is not one person among us who denies the revelation of God. Our problem is not with revelation, which is the uncovering of the divine mind. It is with interpretation, which is the application of the human mind in an attempt to understand the revelation. Revelation is what God has said; interpretation is what one thinks God meant by what He said. The first is infallible, the second is not!

No one can believe that which is perfect has come, because God did not say that. He can hold the opinion that it has come. He can say, “As I understand the revelation given in 1 Corinthians 13 that which is perfect refers to the completed canon of the sacred scriptures, and on the basis of my understanding I conclude that prophecies, tongues and supernatural knowledge are no longer available.”

One’s personal conviction about the matter will be weaker or stronger based upon the mental case he can make for his deduction by his knowledge of and application of other scriptures which he sees as related to the matter. There is always

a danger that we may have a bias depending upon our confidence in and advocacy of a certain viewpoint. It is difficult to listen objectively to one whom you have already classified as either a crackpot or a traditional legalist. In the Biblical connotation, the first is despising a brother, and the second is judging a brother. We are specifically forbidden to do either, because either attitude may be followed by setting him at naught.

Someone will certainly say that all of this is good in theory, but just what shall elders do when confronted with a group of saints in the congregation who testify that they have “received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues”? First of all, they should fervently pray that the Spirit who dwells in all of us will guide them and give them insight in their application of the revealed testimony so none will be lost. They should ask those with whom they differ to meet with them and relate the experiences which are being rumored and they should listen carefully, patiently and earnestly without rude interruption or interjection of argument.

At the close of such a session in which they have eagerly sought to understand, they may well say, “We were anxious to hear from you personally what has transpired in your lives because we are so closely knit together by the ties of love that what affects one of us affects us all. Now, having heard you through, we ask you to meet with us in the same fashion and listen to our views which differ from yours, as you know.” Under no circumstances should such a gathering disband without all kneeling to pray that they may “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Those who claim that the Spirit has moved into their lives in a new dimension should be anxious to prove it by weighing what is said by those who have their spiritual interests at heart. But what happens, if after the sessions, there is an impasse? The possibility, and even the probability, that this will result must

never deter the people of God from talking together about their differences. We must hold ourselves always ready to talk with brethren until we mutually agree that we have exhausted our efforts at agreement. Even then we must not slam the door shut with such force that we cannot open it to future attempts.

If I were an elder I would tell the brethren that they meant more to me than any opinion of mine about the work of the Spirit in individual lives. I would point out what love obligated me to do and what I felt it obligated them to do. Under no circumstances should preachers or elders harangue the brethren from the security of the pulpit in times like these, aggravating situations into an importance they do not deserve.

Of course the brethren who feel they have discovered something precious to themselves must never thrust or push it upon others who do not wish it, or who are not ready for it. If their claims about the Holy Spirit are truly valid they ought to become more understanding, loving and considerate of others. They will not measure the faith of others by their own experiences, nor conclude that God cannot accept others except on their terms. They should not deliberately create emotional reactions by publicly insisting upon testifying. It is certainly not a work of the Spirit to divide brethren over the work of the Spirit. Those who have faith in such matters, should heed the divine injunction, to have it to themselves.

It is a little silly for elders to tell people they cannot meet in their own homes and discuss what they wish. So long as brethren do not make themselves obnoxious by trying to disturb the peace we should not disturb theirs. Elders are not exempt from the admonition to “live peaceably with all men.” It is not necessary that those of us who have eaten together at the Lord’s Table for years start hating one another because of varied opinions about the present influence of the Holy Spirit. What we should all come to realize is that one’s standing is not to be judged by his gifts but by his fruits.

As I read it, the scriptural antidote provided for the problems growing out of the charismata was “the more excellent way.” This was the divine option or alternative, intended to quiet the tumult and settle the dust of strife. I fail to read anywhere the instruction to throw out in the cold those who were regarded as “God’s problem children.” I suspect that banishment of those who differ is a lot easier than loving them. Most of us find it less difficult to love brethren at a distance where they don’t “bug” us than when they are up close and do. We put them out of the congregation to “get them out of our hair.”

I am fully resolved to make no test of fellowship out of divergent opinions as to the implication of the expression “that which is perfect.” I have my own opinion about it, of course, and it is a perfectly good one. I like it better than any other opinion of which I have heard. It is not overly-used because I have not worn it out clobbering other brethren over the head with it. I get it out occasionally and examine it and polish it up, and admire it all to myself. I am not married to it like I am to Nell, so if someone shows up with a better opinion I’ll swap mine off or trade it in. I would not do that with my wife. I would no more withdraw from a brother for differing with me than I would exclude everyone who did not drive a blue Ford.

In down-to-earth terms this means that I accept both Pat Boone who wrote the best-seller *A New Song*, and James D. Bales who wrote the non-best-seller, *Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues*. Naturally, they are both “brothers in error,” but who isn’t? In some cases they are mistaken about the same things and in other cases they are mistaken about different things, which proves that they are both human and fallible. Since I am in the same boat I do not intend to rock it or abandon it. I intend to continue to be human and fallible as long as I live on earth, and that makes it easy to put up with Pat and Jim, and all of the other brethren who admit to being human, and even those who suspect they are but will not admit it.

I got a kick out of talking with an elder in a congregation down in the hills not long ago. We've always liked one another although he thinks I may be a "mite liberal" on the fellowship question. In any event, the teacher of the adult class and his wife "got to monkeyin' around with prayers" as the elder put it, and "babbled something that they thought was tongues." The elder knew that he had to put a stop to it before it spread to "the ignorant members and they got all carried away." "How did you handle it?" I asked. "Well sir, I'll tell you," he replied. "I sent off and ordered that book by James D. Bales in which he lined Pat Boone out. The thing was pretty high priced. I've sold a two-hundred pound hog for less, but not lately, of course! I only read about halfway through it, but that was enough to show me what I had to do. I never did finish the book but I loaned it to this couple that was goin' into orbit. It didn't change 'em none. The wife said it was as dry as cornflakes without milk, and the man said if Brother Bales taught like he wrote that Harding College was a corpse and didn't know it. So I got the other two elders together and we withdrew from them. About a dozen others served notice they were leaving too, so we give them a dose out of the same spoon, and withdrew from them too. They're meetin' in a home and they pretend like they're happy. Things have settled back to normal at church with business as usual."

"Did you read Pat's book along with the one by Brother Bales?" I asked.

"No, I didn't read it. They gave it to me when I handed them the one by Brother Bales, but I just leafed through it and saw that Pat was off and as high as a kite. That's what comes from a Christian messing with that Hollywood crowd. They get used to acting and now they've got Pat acting like a holy-roller."

"Maybe the folk you withdrew from will think through their position, and return," I suggested.

"I doubt it. They said when we put 'em out that they

wished it had happened a long time ago. The woman said that she felt like she did when she passed a jail, every time she looked at us. No, I don't think they'll come back, and I hope they don't unless they give up their foolishness. We've never had the Holy Spirit in this congregation and we're not about to have it now. There's nothing that can upset the peace of a place like the Holy Spirit."

SURRENDERING OPINIONS

3. Why should one not divest himself of his opinion if it creates problems for others?

For the simple reason that no person can divest himself of an opinion which he honestly holds. It is an intellectual impossibility. If one thinks a thing is true he cannot say he believes it is not, without falsifying. When you study the revelation of God as fully as you can, putting together the scriptures as you are able, and you reach a conclusion which seems to reflect the tenor and meaning of the Bible on a certain subject, that conclusion becomes your conviction.

You cannot deny a conviction, either by your own effort or at the command of another. The fact is that the more you concentrate on an effort to remove it from your consciousness the more sharply will it be etched there. Men have been tortured, put on the rack, hanged on the gallows, and burnt at the stake for clinging to convictions which they could not erase and about which they would not lie. William Barclay wrote, "We would do well to remember that, in a great many matters, it is a duty to have our own convictions, but it is an equal duty to allow others to have theirs without regarding them as sinners and outcasts."

For example, if from your study you conclude that the coming of Jesus will precede the millennium, you cannot make it incredible by denying it is credible, when it was the apparent

credibility of it which influenced you to accept it. All of the people on earth who disagree with you cannot drive it from your mind by declaring that it is incredible to them. They may influence you to re-examine it, but they cannot force you to mentally relinquish it until your own thought processes lead you to do so.

Any attempt at unity based upon conformity is doomed to failure. It is simply another way of expressing unity based upon coercion, or by edict of an authoritarian power structure. It is impossible to achieve because there are always honest men who, like God, cannot deny themselves, and who are willing to die rather than betray their true sentiments.

When brethren differ in opinions, God does not demand that they surrender them. He only requires that they do not despise or judge those who differ with them. One man believes he may eat all things while another because of conscientious scruples, eats only vegetables. Neither is required to give up his conviction out of respect for the other, because he cannot do so while he is sane and rational and possessed of his mental faculties.

The man who believes he can eat meat is asked only to suspend his *practice* out of deference for his brother's feelings. A man for whom Christ died is worth more than one's conviction about the right to eat meat or drink wine. He may continue to hold his personal opinion (or faith) and in the absence of offence, he may practice it. The Bible does not say "It is *not right* to eat flesh or drink wine, or anything by which your brother is made to stumble." Instead, it says "*It is right not to do so!*"

It is here that brethren often move in and make laws of their own, binding them upon men and even making them tests of fellowship. There is a great difference in saying it is not right to do a thing, and in saying it is right not to do it. At various times in history, professed followers of the Messiah have

concluded it was a sin to eat flesh and have “commanded to abstain from meats.” At various times they have concluded it was a sin to drink wine as a table beverage, or in strict moderation, but this is a human legislation and not a divine one. Neither is a sin according to the scriptures and no one can prove that they are sins except by wresting the scriptures.

Paul places eating of meat and drinking of wine in the same category, as things not good to do if the doing causes a brother to stumble, be tripped up in his Christian walk, or rendered weak and powerless. The right to do a thing is secondary to a love for brethren. The right not to do certain things to protect a brother’s welfare is transcendent over the right to do them to demonstrate my strength of conviction.

I am resolved not to allow my personal conviction about issues and things to sever me from the brethren whom I love. I say this in spite of all the complaints and criticisms of the intellectuals among us. In his book *Who Put the Bomb in Father Murphy’s Chowder?*, Richard Frisbie, writes: “When the intellectuals stop complaining, it is either because a culture has died and there aren’t any intellectuals left, or because a police state has locked them all up. In a healthy society, all that diverts them from complaining about affairs generally is the pleasure of complaining about each other.” Have at it, brethren, I refuse to be affected or side-tracked!

Applied Dogmatism

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[Abstract]

*Religious society is the object of our present concern. Christian society is composed of infants, or minors, and adults. These, when admitted to the kingdom or commonwealth over which Jesus Christ presides, have certain natural, inherent, and inalienable rights. Amongst these are the preservation and enjoyment of Christian life, the acquisition and enjoyment of Christian reputation, and the pursuit and application of Christian wealth. These are the inalienable rights of Christians. They are all born equally free and equally independent of foreign agency.—Alexander Campbell, in *The Christian Baptist*, August 3, 1829, page 5.*

Since writing the main article and answering the questions it contains I have decided to express myself a little further about the serious problem created when dogmatism leads to despotism and reduces the Lord's children to mere serfs, stealing from them their glorious heritage of freedom in Christ. I will deal primarily with abuses of the eldership, but I would not have our readers think I am singling out elders because they are more obstinate and intractable than others. There are hundreds of wonderful and worthy men who are functioning as bishops. Those who are otherwise often stand as they do because of the influence of preachers and editors. They might have turned out to be good men if they had been left alone by the partisan and political manipulators.

In the organizational set-up which we have devised and which we confuse with the “Lord’s church” the eldership in many places has been elevated to a status unknown to the primitive saints. It is now an upper echelon power structure which wields control over the lives of saints which is virtually absolute and from which there can be no appeal for redress of grievances.

A few years ago two elders and less than one-third of the congregation in a midwestern state, publicly withdrew from a third elder and the remaining two-thirds of the congregation. The affair ended up in the civil court and various preachers were called to qualify as experts and to testify as to “the doctrine, the customs, the teaching and practice, of the church of Christ with respect to the question of who has the authority in a particular congregation.”

One of the oldest and best known preachers in the South, testified that the elders had the authority over the possession, custody and control of all buildings and physical property, and to regulate the programs and policies of the congregation, and if “a substantial body of the membership assumed a contrary attitude about the matter,” the elders could drive them out and retain control.

The opposing counsel, who was an elder of another congregation in Texas, said to the witness, “I will ask you if it is not the teaching and practice and custom and doctrine of the church all over the country, to accord to every member, officer or otherwise, of any congregation, the right of self-defense in a hearing or investigation of a charge against him? Answer that question.”

The prominent evangelist replied, “It is not mandatory, nor is it the practice of the church of Christ to accord to any man, necessarily, what you say. He may be withdrawn from, and is often withdrawn from, without even being advised the act was

going to take place of being withdrawn from, and maybe not even notified for weeks he was withdrawn from.”

The transcript of the testimony furnished by the official court stenographer shows that the preacher hedged all over the place when he was asked to explain what Peter meant when he said, “Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.” The witness, hailed as one of the greatest expositors in “The Church of Christ” miserably failed when the counsel bombarded him with that.

This is a case in point to demonstrate that the community founded upon faith and love often acts in an arbitrary and imperious manner not even countenanced among the kingdoms of this world. Imperial Rome, which savagely persecuted the Christians did not behave in such an arrogant and high-handed manner. Even Porcius Festus, the Roman procurator said, “I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met his accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him.” When the Roman political hacks demonstrate a greater fairness and justice toward those accused as criminals than elders of the church do toward their brethren, it is no wonder that young people flee the confines of the institutional church.

In a certain town out west the elders gave notice to a respected brother that he would have to quit holding Bible study and prayer sessions in his home on Tuesday nights until he received permission from them to conduct such meetings and they could assign one of their number to be present and keep an eye on the proceedings. The basis of this cease and desist order was a report which some local “Hawkshaw” had retailed to the elders that the host had called upon a good Baptist neighbor to petition the throne of grace while they kneeled on the living-room rug to pray.

A brother in Texas, a rather outstanding business executive who shares some of my views about fellowship, secured a bundle of papers each month which he kept on his office desk and passed out to those he thought might appreciate them. One day he received an official “writ of mandamus” demanding that he no longer distribute dangerous and harmful material, nor disseminate heresy produced by W. Carl Ketcherside. Although signed by all four elders, it did not sound like them. A little inquiry revealed it had been written by the preacher who then got the elders to affix their signatures to try and help save the congregation from the awful sin of regarding me as a brother. However, the preacher soon left town owing quite a few merchants who could not collect their accounts from him. No further notices were served on the brother in business, so he doubled his order for *Mission Messenger* and is passing out twice as many. It is interesting that each month, one of the elders comes up to the office and borrows one of the papers under the guise of seeing how far I am going!

Down south, in a beautiful city where anything can happen and practically every thing does, the elders went on a little enforcement binge to get everybody into their palatial structure every time the doors opened, and to build up the treasury for the programs they had arbitrarily included in the budget without consulting the rest of the saints. They held an exclusive meeting with the preacher and came up with a document which was mailed to every member declaring that any person who was absent without prior leave or permission for three consecutive Sundays would automatically have his name stricken from the roster, and in order to be re-instated would have to march down to the front on his return and confess his wrongs. The preacher not only approved this dogmatic action but tried to justify it in a sermon by misapplying the scriptures.

A lot of good folk who have been victimized by “The System” live in constant dread that the axe will fall upon them. The brethren have devised a chain of association ban, so when

someone is cast out, a warning is issued not to have anything to do with him. And the remote control reaches down several links, so that a brother may be excluded for associating with someone, who associates with someone, who associates with the original one who was dismissed for thinking that Jesus may get here before the millennium does.

This creates some real problems of enforcement for the elders. In one place they excluded a brother who was the star bowler on a team which included two other members, one of whom was a deacon. The elders served notice on these two that they could continue to play with the one excluded but they must not step up to the snack counter with him in the rink because the Bible says, “With such a one no not to eat.” He could bowl on the same team but could not eat potato chips out of the same bag. The deacon, who told me about it, said he asked the elder, “Doesn’t the Bible say that the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play?” The elder replied that he did not know but would look it up!

All of this helps to develop some first-class sleuths, as well as some second-class sneaks. Once I was in a short series of meetings with a little group in a small southern town. I decided to get out and visit some of the brethren who were members of the larger congregation whose preacher had warned them from the pulpit the Sunday before not to attend my studies. “This will be your only warning and it is final,” he said.

At the first place I called, the brother came out on the porch and he was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. He did not invite me in. He did not even ask me to be seated on the porch. Knowing this was hardly the hospitality for which the area was noted I watched the street. A black car cruised slowly by three times. Later I learned that it was one of the elders “casing the joint” to see if I was welcomed.

But now, before you feel inclined to “lower the boom” on

the elders in our great land, pause a moment to realize that most of these brethren are basically good men. Outside of the organizational bailiwick they are polite and even genteel. But given a little power and placed under all the pressures applied by preachers, and neighboring congregations, they react emotionally, and even while destroying the body, think they are defending it. They are victims, like those under them, of the factional system which deceives men and destroys the best that is in them, burning the real manhood out of their hearts.

The party spirit is insidious and delusive. It has that subtle faculty of crushing out virtues and values, and of turning gentlemen into boorish and insulting personalities under the mistaken idea that to be loyal to Jesus one must be insolent to his brethren. That the sanctity of homes and the privacy of business offices can be violated by men who intrude themselves as guardians of the faith and morals is a clear indication of Satan's power to hoodwink both the perpetrators and the victims.

As bad as the usurpation of rights may be, however, it is not nearly so dangerous as the creation of unwritten creeds by which to judge the honest opinions of humble men and women and thrust them forth from congregations they have sacrificed to build. Nothing Rome has ever done as a persecuting power exceeds *in spirit* what "the Lord's church" has perpetrated in some localities. Let me mention one example to illustrate to you what I mean.

A certain man and his wife, members of a congregation they had labored to help build for almost a quarter of a century, found their marriage in difficulty for reasons which need not be mentioned here. Since all of their children were faithful in service to the congregation, and their grandchildren regularly attended, they knew they must find some answer to their problem which would allow them to finish their course with joy. In her desperation the wife mentioned her anxiety to a neighbor who was a devout Methodist. The neighbor told her that she and

her husband had gone through the same trauma but had been delivered from it by an experience with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

One evening the Methodist couple knocked on the door and after being invited in, sat down and told them what had happened to their own lives through prayer. The apparent radiance they exhibited made an impression upon the man and his wife, and they sat talking until midnight after their neighbors had returned home. Although they had not prayed together for years, they finally were driven to their knees by an uncontrollable desire to talk to God, and with their arms about each other, weeping, sobbing and shaking, they confessed their real feelings and errors to one another, and cried unto God for help and strength.

This was a strange and uninhibited thing for them to do, but about two o'clock in the morning, according to their testimony, the wife said she felt a tingling sensation start at the crown of her head and travel down her entire body, and at once she uttered two or three words or syllables which made no sense to her. After this she experienced an ineffable sense of release and peace. They continued together to talk to God until the streaks of dawn appeared and they realized they had continued all night in prayer. In an embrace of deep trust and security they accepted one another, each as God's gift to the other.

It was the wife who made the mistake. In her newly-found release and happiness she simply had to tell someone. First she called her daughters and the daughter-in-law to tell them that Jesus was real and had moved into their home. It frightened her daughters who thought she had "gone off her rocker." One of them hurried over to check on her, with a promise to call her sister if she needed help to restrain her mother. She found her "clothed and in her right mind" sitting at the kitchen table and reading from The Living Bible.

That was not the mistake! It was made when the wife called one of her best friends, the wife of an elder. In less than two days the news had flashed throughout the whole congregation that the couple had “gone Pentecostal” and were having prayer meetings in their home with Methodists. Although their experience had only occurred on Monday night, when they arrived for midweek meeting on Wednesday night, things were different. Friends who greeted them were strangely subdued. They did not linger to visit as usual. The woman was seized with an impulse to throw her arms around the elder’s wife, but she later described it as trying to hug a gunny sack full of leaves and grass clippings. The elders were up front in conference with the preacher, both before and after the meeting, and did not come back to greet the audience as was their custom.

The next day one of the elders telephoned and asked if he and his fellow-elders could come over and meet with them on Friday night. They were invited to do so, and arrived at the time appointed. One of them opened by saying, “Well, I guess you know why we are here.” The husband replied, “No, we don’t but we praise God that you came.” When he said “praise God” it was as if someone had pulled the same string on three puppets. They all jumped at once. I need not bore you with the details.

The happy couple were informed that nothing really had happened unto them, that the days of supernatural signs had long since passed, and that which is perfect came about two thousand years ago. They were given orders not to mention or talk about any experience to any person, either in the church or out of it, and were informed that if they did not acknowledge their wrong it would be the duty of the elders to take appropriate action.

The wife spoke up, “But I cannot help speaking the things I have seen and heard.” The elders assured her that she had been mistaken, that she was overwrought and had been hysterical. One of them said, “You are a woman, you know!” It

ended by the husband asking if they might pray together. Reluctantly the elders agreed but remained seated while the couple kneeled. After the husband had prayed, there was an awkward silence. No one else prayed but at the door one of the elders said, "I hope you'll realize we did what we had to do, and that you'll repent and return to the fold." As their car backed out of the driveway the man and his wife found themselves staring at one another in open-mouthed astonishment.

The following Sunday the preacher announced that error (he pronounced it "era") was rampant in the community, and to save the church from the evil work of Satan he was going to deliver a series of talks, six in number, on the work of the Holy Spirit. He went through the outlines received in the Christian college he had attended but almost "ran out of soap" before he finished. Meanwhile the couple did not broadcast what had happened, but when anyone asked about it related it as they had to the elders. When the preacher concluded his six dissertations one of the elders called and asked if they had seen their wrong and would acknowledge it. He became highly incensed when they calmly said they had not changed at all, and if anything, were even stronger in their conviction that something extraordinary had happened in their lives.

The next week they received a formal letter charging them with advocating false doctrine, insubordination to the elders, rebellion against Christ and refusing to acknowledge the truth as set forth by a faithful preacher of the word. They were notified that unless they contacted the elders before Saturday night, to indicate their repentance and willingness to confess the guilt of the charges, they would be withdrawn from on Sunday morning. On Sunday they occupied their accustomed seats. One of the elders stood up and read a statement to the effect that they had counselled and prayed over them to no avail and because of their stubborn adherence to error they were hereby excluded.

The brother arose and asked if he might say a word. The

elder was nonplussed and upset, so the preacher quickly arose and stated that the church could not allow false teachers to speak, and quoted 2 John 9, 10, "If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house nor bid him Godspeed." A former elder, who had resigned three years before, then arose and said, "I do not think that scripture has any relation to this situation, and I suggest that we listen to what the brother has to say." The elder, who by this time had recovered his voice said, "Sit down and do it now! You are out of order! The elders have the authority here and you cannot question them. I'll prefer charges against you just like I did these other two."

In the next several weeks more than forty people were excluded because of their protests at such despotic measures. They began meeting in the home of one of the brethren. When I last heard from them they were happy in the company of one another. No one else had "spoken in tongues" but the warmth of the fellowship was such that they regarded their trials and persecutions as God's deliverance from an intolerable situation. There was no spirit of rivalry toward the brethren who had excluded them, but when any of them attended at the meetinghouse they were virtually ignored. Men who had contributed thousands of dollars to help erect it were never called upon to pray within its walls. Those who had made no commitment to Jesus were given a warm welcome when they attended, but the brethren were given a cold shoulder.

This would be a tragic occurrence, fit to make angels weep, if it were an isolated case. Such callous regard for fundamental human rights, with its repercussion in the family and social life of the saints is frightening to contemplate. It runs counter to the very spirit which Jesus came to inculcate. But evidence is mounting to indicate that it is a rather common phenomenon in many parts of the country. I am persuaded that scores of preachers are living in a state of internal disruption, torn between what God expects and what the elders demand. The

erosion of personal integrity under such circumstances is great. Men pay a price for trying to conform outwardly while their very bowels scream out in anguished protest.

The sheep are being led through troubled and tempestuous waves rather than beside the still waters. They stand in abject terror and cannot lie down in green pastures. And it is the axe in the hand of the shepherds and not the fangs in the mouth of the wolf which they fear most. "The System" has become a Juggernaut, relentlessly grinding its way, and crushing the pilgrims beneath its tread. And as bad as all this may be the saddest feature is that it has substituted another creed for Christ. Regardless of how deeply one may trust in Jesus it is no longer of any avail. It is a personal opinion about this thing or that which opens or bars the door to congregational grace.

When our brethren exalt an opinion about instrumental music, the support of Herald of Truth, the millennium, cups, classes or colleges, to the place that a personal view about these cancels the divine-human relationship which Jesus came to create by His atoning blood, they have sold the church down the river and done despite to the Spirit of grace. When elders ruthlessly trample underfoot the very sense of human justice because men cannot deny an experience, whether they are mistaken about it or not, then we are on the road to tyranny and despotism.

Every scripture quoted to divide and separate brethren, and to fragment and splinter the glorious body of the Son of God is misapplied. Every arbitrary action to harass humble saints and to ride roughshod over their sensitive feelings without giving them opportunity for defense before their accusers is usurpation of the worst kind. It freezes ignorance at the present level, places a premium upon spiritual illiteracy and enshrines the *status quo* as the ultimate of heaven's plan. It stunts growth, stultifies the conscience and promotes hypocrisy of the deepest dye.

In conclusion, I testify again, as I have said before, that I admire and revere shepherds who look with love upon the flock of God. Such men are an inspiration to my life and a blessing to my soul. But I deplore those who become drunken upon the wine of their self-importance, and who play God with the lives of others. Jesus did not purchase the *ekklesia* as a kingdom for petty tyrants, but as the royal domain to be governed from heaven where He sits at the right hand of God.

May heaven deliver us from *the system* into which we have grown and which chokes the spiritual life out of the fairest and best, while retaining and exalting those who are blind conformists, and who mistake obsequious acquiescence to the will of men for obeisance to the Lamb of God. If this seems too strong, I can but say in the oft-quoted words of Thomas Jefferson, “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

Statement of Conviction

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Volume 35

[Abstract]

*Few of us take the pains to study the origins of our cherished convictions; indeed, we have a natural repugnance to so doing. We like to continue to believe what we have been accustomed to accept as true, and the resentment aroused when doubt is cast upon any of our assumptions leads us to seek every manner of excuse for clinging to them. The result is that most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing what we already have. — James Harvey Robinson in *The Mind in the Making*.*

It is a little bit strange how one can get caught up in the realm of controversy when he really doesn't want to be. As long as you pretend to love all of your brothers, without really loving any of them, or even yourself, you are fairly safe. You come under some fire, of course, but a life of loveless mediocrity does not attract too much flak. Preachers are not generally opposed to mediocrity. They feel comfortable around it. It is only unreserved love which men cannot stand. Such love is vulnerable because it is unlimited like the love of God. And, like all true love, it seeks for demonstration. It is active and outgoing. It cannot be stifled, sublimated or suppressed. It can only be nailed to a cross.

I have some well-intentioned advisers who are always suggesting to me to “let up on fellowship” and to write about

other things for awhile. They would like for me to edit a safe, innocuous journal, until the furor subsides and the attacks dwindle away. “You have so much else to share,” they flatteringly say, “and you could meet with brethren who are not under suspicion or attack, and have a quiet existence until the sun sets.” These are nice people and they have my interest at heart. I love them as much as I deplore their advice.

What they overlook is that I am not so much concerned about sharing thoughts, ideas, or concepts, as I am interested in sharing life. I am not projecting a philosophy. I am following a Savior. And he left where he was and entered a world of agony and sin, to touch people, to mingle with the crowd, and to commend his love toward them all. I can’t stop writing about fellowship. I can’t quit talking about brotherhood. Since the love of God was poured out in my heart, and rivers of living water began to flow, I can’t dam up the channel. I’d break out in a dozen places. Anyway, I am on a float trip with God and not engaged in an engineering project to control the flow. I am not the least interested in playing it safe to please a party. I am only interested in risking everything to please my Lord.

The day that I learned that the fellowship of the Spirit is actually the sharing of eternal life, the life of God, I really became a new creation. God had received me, welcomed me and loved me ever since I was born from above, but I didn’t know what it was all about. I thought eternal life was like an old line insurance policy which you had to die to collect. And then I learned that if you have the Son, you have eternal life— now! That put it all together!

John said, “This life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony we here declare to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.” The expression “share in a

common life” is a translation of *koinonia*. That’s the word translated “fellowship.” So fellowship is sharing the life of God. That is what I am called to do. “It is God himself who called you to share in the life of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and God keeps faith” (1 Corinthians 1:9). Praise His name!

No man has power to extend to me a share in eternal life, and no man has the power to withdraw it. When you look at the fellowship of the Spirit as God looks at it, it is downright silly for puny and ignorant men to talk about “withdrawing fellowship” from other brethren, the sons and daughters of the Lord almighty, who loves them and cherishes them as His own. Of course men can put you out of their synagogues and Jesus said they would (John 16:2). But anything fleshly and imperfect men can put you out of, you are as well off out of it as you would be in it. Being in it will not save your soul and being out of it will not damn you. All it will do is to free you from tyranny!

While our precious Lord was on earth, “Many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogues: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42, 43). We have many yet who are scared silly by the Pharisees. Of all my faults and sins, and I have a lot of them, that is not one. Perfect love has cast out fear just as He said it would. I am not going to be bought off or frightened off. And I am not going to give up or quit. I shall remain in Christ if every synagogue on earth slams its massive door in my face. But men cannot put you out of the fellowship when around you and beneath you are the everlasting arms!

I get scores of letters from heartbroken brothers and sisters who tell me they have been “withdrawn from.” Pompous men, filled with pride of office have issued dogmatic decrees. They must deny the premillennial coming of the Lord. They must cease to talk about the present-day work of the Holy Spirit. They must quit holding prayer meetings in their homes unless

an elder is present. They must publicly admit that they think instrumental music in connection with the praise of God is a sin. They must ask forgiveness for meeting with a congregation of saints where the brethren study the word of God in Bible classes.

When these consecrated ones could not stifle their consciences and lie about their feelings, they were “cashiered out” of the congregation and drummed out of the regiment. If they had been willing to lie they could have stayed in. They should dry their tears, cease to tremble and begin to praise God. They should shout for sheer joy. “Oh the bliss that is yours when men shall persecute you and revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.” What men do to you will not have one thing to do with the fellowship of the Spirit. The Spirit is not led by men, but men need to be led by the Spirit.

Imagine the callous indifference involved in trying to dissolve the blood-purchased, heaven-cemented ties of brotherhood over some of the inane, piddling and petty issues which have fragmented and fractured us. Shall we cut off an organ of the body trying to cure a flea bite? Shall we bomb God’s great heritage into oblivion because of a molehill in the front yard? What kind of fraternity is it which requires a man to lie about his convictions to remain a part of it? What manner of brotherhood is it which demands that one sublimate and crucify his honest opinions to prove that he is “faithful”? Did Jesus pay the cruel price to form a faction of men and women who spend their lives playing tiddley-winks with pawns of trivia?

Fellowship is a beautiful, inspiring and exhilarating word. It speaks of everlasting arms around us and beneath us, of riding upon eagles’ wings and basking in the sunlight of a love so great that it soars above human understanding. It is Jesus bending down to find a lost sheep and laying it upon his shoulder. It is a Father folding us to his bosom and soothing a broken heart. It is not arguing, striving, or debating over the merits of this or that thing as if the kingdom of heaven depended

upon every person in the whole wide earth seeing it exactly as I do and agreeing with me in every minute particular.

Once I knew no better than to think that our feeble attainments constituted the divine criterion by which to measure everyone else. I mistook a life of stale conformity for the glorious communion of the Spirit. How wrong I was! How mistaken! How fallacious were the applications I made of the heaven given scriptures as I quoted them to justify our divisions when they were penned to promote that unity planned by the Father. My shame for such abuse is equalled only by the praise for Him who delivered me from feeling a need to try and vindicate a narrow traditional factional course.

I am constantly assailed now by questions in journals and queries in letters asking me if the divine-human relationship is all there is to fellowship. They want to know if there are not aspects of it which relate to association with brethren and engaging with them in their various enterprises. Of course there are, but all of them are within the bounds, and grow out of the relationship I sustain to Jesus. It is precisely because I am in the Father that I have brothers in the Lord. It is because I am in the fellowship with Christ that I am an organ among other organs constituting the one body. Brotherhood results from a common Fatherhood, fellowship is the sharing of a common Sonship.

Statements like that upset some of the brethren who are editors of partisan journalistic mouthpieces among us. One of them, who edits a pretty prominent paper in Texas occasionally takes a sly little dig at my reasoning, so he can prove to the segment for which he carries the torch that he is still “loyal” and not becoming infected with the “Ketcherside view.” I feel a deep sense of compassion for men like this. I know how they feel. Once I was just as sectarian in attitude as they are now.

It is unscrupulous to quote passages regulating my relationship to a world of pagans and aliens and apply them to

my relationship to redeemed and reconciled saints. It is unfair to God's word given to urge the saints to separate from an idolatrous culture and use it to encourage brethren to separate from one another. Talk about "respect for the authority of God's word"! Brethren who thus twist and wrest the scriptures ought to be afraid to meet God in the last day. Separation of God's family from the world is commanded, division among brethren is condemned. Not even an oracle from Arkansas can change that!

But having said this we must realize that there will always be differences of opinion, understanding and interpretation among brethren who think. Sincere men who love God will not see everything alike. They never have done so. They never will do so, and to demand that as a basis for fellowship is but to kindle the flames of schism and throw more fuel on the fires of division. Such a course will not produce better Christians. It will only make bigger hypocrites.

But can men endorse actions in others against which their consciences revolt? Of course not! Can they participate in actions which their hearts cannot condone? Certainly not! It would be absurd to request them to do so! But the fact they cannot participate in some practices with brethren does not mean they cannot participate in any. In a physical family, if one brother smokes cigarettes, another brother who is deeply opposed to smoking cannot engage in it with him. He cannot purchase cigarettes for his brother nor light them for him. But that does not mean they cannot paint the house together, or eat at the same table. They are still brothers, even though there is something in which they cannot mutually engage. One is a brother who smokes, one is a brother who does not, but they do not need to divide the family into two parties which will not speak to one another, or go to visit the father together.

In the family of God, if one cannot contribute to a television program sponsored by certain brethren, he can

withhold his support from the program, but he cannot scripturally withhold his company from the brethren. The fact that he cannot support the television project does not mean he cannot join with the brethren in prayer, study of the word, inner-city or foreign mission endeavors. We should certainly work together up to the point of division and not shiver the trunk of the tree because the limbs grow in different directions. It is both childish and unscriptural to deny brotherhood because we differ on what brethren may do in Christ Jesus. It is a sin against God to divide over the method of support for propagandizing the gospel or caring for the needy. If one cannot conscientiously support a method he ought not, but to divide into warring and hostile parties is sinful and shameful. It is just as sinful to be frightened into endorsing, maintaining and perpetuating such schisms.

It is wrong to pay lipservice to brotherhood and fellowship, and to pretend we are all brethren and then treat one another as half-brothers, outcasts, or step-brothers. The fact is that some among us treat pagans with greater politeness than they do brethren who differ with them and are too honest to deny it or pretend that they do not. This whole “withdrawal bit” which has become an inglorious obsession with some “Churches of Christ” and is enshrined as a part of Church of Christism is a work of the flesh. It is simply the party spirit or factionalism dressed up in the stolen livery from the wardrobe of God and passed off as a manifestation of loyalty. Nothing can be more disloyal to God than driving out and spiritually murdering His other children!

Those who are high on “the authority of God’s word” need to tell us on what ground they ignore the plain teaching of the scriptures on loving and receiving the brethren, in order to hound them out over matters which the scriptures do not even mention. Is the silence of God to be interpreted so as to countermand the revelation of God? What about the scores of passages about loving the brethren, living in peace, and welcoming one another as God welcomes us? Can these be

ruthlessly tossed into our institutional garbage cans as having no meaning, value, or authority?

It seems imperative at the close of the year that I state again my personal position. I do so in full view of the fact that I must meet my Lord face to face and answer for every word. I welcome as my brother in Christ every sincere believer in Jesus Christ who has been immersed on the basis of that faith. I am in the fellowship with all such. I share with them the common life of the indwelling Spirit of my God. I make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Any person who is good enough to be received by the Father is not too bad for me to welcome. My creed is Christ! If one is related to Christ through the Spirit I am related to him as a brother. The umbrella of God's love is great enough to overshadow brethren of diverse opinions and views. That is what mercy is all about. It is what grace really accomplishes. I am not in perfect agreement with any other human being under that umbrella. I cannot share with any one of them in all he thinks, does, or says. I am committed to discussing with every one of them our differences as long as I live, but I will do so as a brother in the one body and not as a representative of another faction. I no longer represent any faction or sect among us!

So I shall receive all of the saints while I do not condone fully what any of them think or practice. I shall receive them as God received me, not because of how much I knew but because of Him in whom I had come to trust. I am justified by faith and not by a superior knowledge. The grace of God can save an Igorot as well as an intellectual. In my own imperfection I dare not demand perfection of God's other children. But *agape* is love for those you cannot like and my love reaches out to embrace all of God's children in their frailty and failures. It reaches out to them wherever they are, just as He reaches out to them the same way.

I eagerly pray that you will overcome the sectarian bias

and the provincial prejudice which keeps you aloof from the family of the Father, the whole family, and not just those who live within your little compound. Tear down the fences men have erected. Break down the bars of tradition. Let love reign and rule and conquer, and you will be a peacemaker and be called a child of God!

Letters to the Editor

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[Abstract]

It occurred to me that you might like to look over my shoulder and read some of the questions contained in letters I receive. A lot of good folk are concerned about what is transpiring in our day. Some of them are worried. And their letters exhibit their feelings. Without identifying the writers here are a few random questions and my reply to them.

1. *How can you justify the fact that you seem to preach for the Christian Church as much as you do for the Church of Christ?*

You are mistaken. I do not preach for either one. I share my feeble knowledge of God's revelation wherever I am invited to do so and welcome the opportunity. But I am not a front man for any partisan group on earth. God does not recognize any of our parties as the church of which his Son is the head. There is only one body and all the saved on earth, without exception, are members of it.

There is no such thing as "the Christian Church" or "the Church of Christ" in God's sight. Neither is there in my sight. I no longer regard our walls and fences as being valid. I ignore them and go among all the brethren. I have made a promise to the Father that I will go wherever a door is opened up unto me of the Spirit, and will lovingly teach all who will listen. I intend to keep that promise as long as I live. I am speaking *for* Jesus,

but speaking to men.

2. How can you help people see the light if you fellowship them in things that are wrong?

You have a wrong slant on fellowship. I do not fellowship people or things, but I am *in the fellowship* with all who are in Christ. Fellowship is a state of sharing, into which we are introduced by responding to God's call. If a man is in Christ I am in Christ with him and we are in the fellowship. He will think and do things which I cannot condone or endorse. But we are not in the fellowship because we are perfect in life or understanding but because we are in Christ.

All of us are ignorant about many things and the fellowship is the sharing of a common life by finite beings who are often mistaken.

To be in the fellowship does not mean that we excuse, condone or endorse anything we believe to be wrong. It means we recognize the relationship we sustain in Jesus as of greater importance than our opinions, and that by working together as a unit we can help one another to greater knowledge and service. The Holy Spirit placed all of us in one body. Our task is to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We face up to our differences, not as aliens or enemies, and not as tribal spokesmen in rivalry, but as brothers in one Lord. That way we can help one another see the light on many things.

3. Isn't all this talk about unity in diversity a real come-off? Is that unity at all?

Certainly it is unity and the only kind there will ever be among thinking men who are not puppets or pawns for sectarian editors. It is silly to talk about any other kind of unity as if it were possible, or even desirable. God did not make us like a row of gingerbread men stamped out by a divine cookie cutter. Our mental capacities are as divergent as our facial features. We can

no more all think alike than we can all look alike.

We will never agree upon everything, nor do we need to do so to be one. The primitive saints had many varied views but were one body in Christ. Our unity is not achieved by us but is supplied by God. It is the fact that we are all indwelt by the same Spirit which makes us one. The members of the spiritual body are like those of the physical body. Each has a different role or function. It is not performing identical services but working in unison which makes a unit of the one body into which we are gathered.

The only unity there is in any group composed of human beings is that of diversity. Every family which works together has unity in diversity. The children do not always agree with their parents but they love one another more than they love their diverse opinions. We are the United States but each state of the union is diverse from all the others. Religious politicians ought to quit trying to “con” brethren into thinking they can have unity based on conformity. There is no such thing among fallible men! If there was it would stifle all further growth and development. Unity in diversity is God’s plan for mankind!

4. What can I do to encourage the unity of the believers of which you speak?

The first thing you can do, and it is very important and extremely vital, is to begin to visit meetings of brethren outside the segment with which you are affiliated. All sharing begins with association. As long as all of us are locked up in our tight little compartments, we will only strengthen our own factional spirit. Break out of the sectarian barriers. Be loyal to Jesus and not to a party. If you cannot go to other meetings on Sunday morning, make a point of doing so on Sunday nights, or at other times.

Be friendly and cordial when you go. Don’t rush for the

door as soon as the benediction is finished. Become acquainted with those who attend there. If you want to help God's ultimate program be an ambassador of peace. I go to all kinds of places, including little "storefront churches" and I simply make myself available for God to use as He wills. I am thoroughly convinced that He will open up great doors and effectual if I am willing. I think you should resolve to visit at least twelve other groups in the coming year, and more than that if you can.

5. I am a Junior in high school and I wanted to start a rap session one night per week, but the elders will not allow us to have it at the church. What should I do?

Have it somewhere else! A meetinghouse is probably one of the worst places to have it anyway, because those who come feel uptight and not really free to participate. There's nothing wrong about having it there. Where we attend, the kids are well into their second year of such a weekly gathering. But if it is off limits to you, have it in a home. Someone will let you have it in the living-room of their house or apartment. If you conduct it in reverence and godly fear, and outgrow the facilities, God will open up a place for you. He always does!

I'd like to suggest, if the authorities permit, that you start a prayer and rap session at school once per week. Hold it in the morning before school starts. It will almost certainly grow in interest. I was at one school lately where four kids met for prayer for more than a month before it began to grow. The morning I was there more than a hundred were present at seven o'clock in the morning. In another place, the kids who are for Jesus bring a sack lunch and eat and pray together every day at noon. I was with them two days to answer questions. All kinds of kids dropped into the laboratory where they meet.

In another school the Bible Club was listed as a definite social activity project, which made it possible for them to meet once per month in the library. The day I spoke to them there

were 225 present out of a total enrollment of less than a thousand. These young people had changed the moral climate of the whole school. I am anxious to hear from young people in high school who are on fire for Jesus and doing something to bring a witness where they attend. If you have something going write and let me know. I'll use your letter to encourage others who would like to get going but have been stymied so far.

6. I live in an apartment complex and I am alone every day until my husband returns from his office in the evening. Is there anything I might do to help with the work of Christ?

Indeed there is! God has raised you up for such a time as this. He has planted you in that apartment as his minister of reconciliation. First, start praying that God will take you and use you for his purpose. Make yourself like putty in his hands, non-resistant and ready to be fashioned by his will. Then start thanking him for placing you there as his divine agent, for that is what you must really become.

Invite some of the neighbor women over to a mid-morning coffee "klatch," and tell them you'd like to start a weekly Bible study, and you need their help. Explain that you would like to begin the next week with the epistle of James because it is so practical. Ask those who will promise to come to read the first chapter in advance. Urge them to invite their friends to come with them. Do not be disappointed if only three or four come the first time. Thank God for those who are there and do not moan about those who are not. It will grow!

I know a sister in the Lord who moved into a new neighborhood and started a study in her home. It is now attended by women of all religious backgrounds, and the discussions are lively and informative. I went one day, by invitation, to answer some knotty problems which had arisen. We ended up staying about three hours conversing about the word of God. I know another sister who secured a room in the

local YWCA building for a Bible study one morning each week. She advertised it in the neighborhood newspaper, and it is now attended by more than forty women. I spoke to them once when in the area and found them alive and vibrant, anxious to talk about the Book. God has a work for all of us but we must be willing to do it.

There has never been an era more conducive to small group study than the present. The lonely crowd is looking and longing for a chance to relate. The individual Christian has an opportunity to serve now like never before in history. Of course, he must love men's souls, and be willing to start with them where they are and as they are! Life styles are not imposed. They are imitated. If we want to change people we must give them an example to follow.

When Benjamin Franklin decided to do something about the dark cobblestone streets in Philadelphia, over which people stumbled after dark, he did not start writing articles of protest in the paper, nor convene the citizens to appoint a committee to make recommendations. Instead he placed a long bracket above his front door, and hung a lantern from it. Each day he polished the globe and each evening lighted the wick. People walking the streets after night trod safely in the circle of light in front of the Franklin house. Soon others began to put up lanterns and before long the streets were well lighted.

I wish a lot of the brethren who promised, before they retired on social security, that they were going to work for the Lord, would get with it. Some of them have done nothing except walk around with a fishing rod or a golf club in their hands, complaining about inflation and the deflation of the dollar. Forget it, and start a Bible study in your home for the rest of the retired people who are just as bored as you are. Sharing your knowledge with others is better than arguing with your wife about which shirt to put on when you eat out!

7. Are the efforts being made to encourage recognition of fellowship making any real progress that you can see?

Indeed they are! Great gains are being made all over this land. Proof of this is found in the frantic efforts of the defenders of partisan orthodoxy to turn the minds of the saints back to parochial legalism. The most stringent factions admit they are losing brilliant young preachers and even some older brethren, who are no longer satisfied with the sectarian stance they have been taught.

Hundreds of brethren are re-thinking their position in the light of advancing knowledge and more profound scriptural insights. Factional leaders are in for a difficult time as men throw off the mental shackles and reject the brainwashing tactics which enslaved so many and made increasing strife and division a foregone conclusion. In many cases it is possible for brethren from divergent groups to meet in love and tolerance and listen to each other in spite of their variant views.

Debates between brethren have lost their appeal and few are being held today. No one seems more out of place than the swaggering arrogant challenger who parades around trying to drum up a public wrangle. Calm study and research are replacing public discussion with its emotionally charged atmosphere and its striving for partisan victory. It is true that some college lectureships, seeking to project an image of defenders of the bastion, present one-sided attacks upon those who plead for fellowship in Christ. This alone is an indication that effective gains are being made. These men are not “flogging a dead horse.”

You may look for even greater manifestations of love across party lines in the future. Younger brothers and sisters will no longer buy the kind of exclusive better-than-thou spirit which has hand-cuffed us in the past. They will reject creedal Church of Christism exactly as they turn away from other

creeds and isms and for the same reason. The sectarian attitude has had its day!

8. *To what factor in your own approach do you attribute the growth of interest in fellowship and unity?*

I do not deserve any particular credit. I just happened along at the right time. A lot of other brethren I could name have done a lot more than I have because of their superior qualifications. But when God got through to me and I became convinced of the consummate folly of our own sectarianism I became deadly in earnest about sharing the message of peace with all of the saints.

I have not avoided or evaded confrontation with those who seek to defend our human traditions. Repeatedly I have offered to go at my own expense to Florida College, Abilene Christian College, David Lipscomb College, or Pepperdine University, and be questioned publicly by a panel of three faculty members chosen by the administration, or by the student body as a whole. It is significant that not one of these institutions of “higher learning” has accepted this offer in spite of the fact that my name has been repeatedly mentioned in classes and I have been attacked while not present. Of course, the students are well aware of all this and their innate sense of fairness and justice causes them to rebel against the frightened institutional attitude.

I recall the words of William Jennings Bryan upon one occasion, “I have a fight on my hands and I am on the defensive. I have been on the defensive all my life, but when I am defending a thing I do not wait for the enemy to come and attack; when I find there is to be an attack, I go over and do the fighting on the enemy’s territory.” Of course, it is really not that bad with me. I do not regard the brethren who attack me by name in their journals as enemies. They are simply defenders of the partisan *status quo*. When I had a sectarian concept of God’s community I acted just like they do now.

The greatest factor leading to saner thinking is the “fulness of time.” People are weary and tired of fighting one another over secondary issues. The narrow bitter attitude inherited from a frontier culture has no place in the lives of those who are maturing in Christ. Sectarian littleness has had its day. Men who do their best to drum up a following over artificial issues, and who seek to appear as the last defenders of embattled truth are in for a hard time. Brethren are fed up with being made financial angels to bail out someone’s new crusade against an imaginary threat. Unity in Christ will displace division over “crisis issues” invented to justify existence of journals spawned by schism. Better days are in the offing! Praise the Lord!

Return to Sanity

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Volume 35

[Abstract]

There are a lot of things transpiring in these days which are occasions for real joy. God is working in a wondrous manner to bring together brethren who have been separated and isolated and who have sometimes hated each other without cause. I am thrilled at the discovery of brothers and sisters I never knew I had. The number of these is growing all of the time.

Yesterday while I was writing on the manuscript for my next book the doorbell rang and when I opened the door there stood a young man who said he had been praying for an opportunity to meet me. He was driving through Saint Louis and decided to come and see if I was at home. His story was almost identical with scores of others I have heard the last two years. He grew up in a “Church of Christ” family, was baptized when he was eleven years of age, and encouraged from the time he started high school to “study and become a preacher.” Since the congregation was one which had split over “the institutional question” it was assumed he would attend the “loyal school” in Florida, which he did. He developed a wholesome respect for the faculty and a close relationship with most of the students. But as he began to cultivate his rational powers, and his thinking processes were awakened, he became vaguely uneasy about the validity of the divisiveness which was condoned and encouraged.

The students privately discussed the glib answers handed

down by visiting preachers and debaters who were regarded as celebrities while on campus, and some of the students were smart enough to recognize fallacies and detect weak spots. They never thought of bucking “the system” and expected to continue in the framework of the party when they went forth to preach. But there was some heart-searching and mental unrest.

My name came in for rather frequent mention in classes and in private. I was presented as a heretic who had abandoned every scriptural principle, without respect for the word of God, and who would “fellowship” anyone who verbally admitted a faith in Jesus, whether he was baptized or not. Students were told that once I had stood upon a scriptural basis, in spite of certain extremes, but I had now abandoned all of that and swung completely over to “liberalism” of the worst kind.

He also told me that I was held up as one of the most dangerous men in the whole theological spectrum. I was a persuasive orator and a genius with both pen and voice so that even strong men who came under my spell were lured into apostasy and spiritual destruction. I was depicted as Satan’s most effective agent alive today, a man who could make black look white and vice versa. Some of the students developed a sort of moral and morbid fright of me, although they had never seen me or read a word I had written.

One Sunday this lad was sent to preach at a certain congregation and was invited home by one of the deacons. He wanted to demonstrate to his host that he was both faithful and alert to danger so he began to tell him about me. The man asked him if he knew me or had read anything I had written. When he admitted all he had was hearsay, the deacon told him he had misrepresented me. He gave him one of the bound volumes of my paper and asked him to read it and mark the things which were unscriptural so they might discuss them upon the occasion of his next visit.

The brother told me with what trepidation he took the volume back to the campus and how fearful he was that he might be discovered reading from what one good brother referred to as “the arch-heretic of liberalism.” But the more he read the more engrossed he became. He wrote to me and I replied at once. He became a regular reader of MISSION MESSENGER. And now we were sitting together in the same room— a man of sixty-five and another not nearly half as old. And we were brothers! There was no question about that!

He wanted to apologize for the way he had regarded me and the things he had said about me. He was conscience-stricken because he had been brainwashed by hearsay evidence, most of it from preachers who did not know me either. I told him I was long past the place where “preacher gossip,” which is always rife in all parties, created any concern. I no longer have to worry about standing in with party “somewhats” and so I am not afraid what men shall do unto me. Peace, it’s wonderful!

I told the young brother what had happened years ago when I visited the school and came in for attack from “loyal” brethren like Pat Hardeman, Bill Humble, and G. K. Wallace. All of these have now been turned out as “liberals” and have been marked off the factional roster of the faithful. Others who are there now will suffer the same fate when the political machine grinds them as grist. The defenders of today are the defamed ones tomorrow. It will always be thus when the system is built upon conformity, for it is difficult to freeze ignorance at the current level. It is impossible when men reason and think.

It is good that we are bursting out of our shells and starting to breathe the air of freedom. And it is happening clear across the board. Some of the greatest contributions to liberty in Christ are being made by young brethren who have grown up in the segment which makes a test of fellowship out of the use of individual cups and classes. Most of them still labor with congregations which have one container and an undivided

assembly for study and edification, but they are not uptight about it, and would not dream of drawing a line of fellowship against brethren who do not share their position.

Brethren who always used multiple cups but were dubbed the “anti-Sunday School group” are truly taking the lead in promoting unity in many areas. Brilliant, incisive men, some of whom were noted debaters, are rejecting partisan fighting and are choosing the worthier course of becoming peacemakers. The fact is that not a single group of saints is unaffected by the plea for unity of the believers. Of course, every group has brethren who decry manifestation of love to others and call it compromise, but their influence is waning and a greater sense of oneness is affecting the hearts of men all over the land.

I am constantly receiving letters from every state in the nation in which brethren confess they are changing their position. They are coming to realize they have mistaken loyalty to tradition with fidelity to the scriptures. They are trying to undo the effect of their previous bigotry and intolerance. Perhaps never since the inception of this historical movement has it seen such a leavening influence as it is now experiencing. Raucous cries of hatred and hostility, and acrimonious accusations, fall upon ears no longer attuned to them.

Our brethren are marching to the sound of a different trumpet. They are no longer moved by the uncertain sound of the factional horns. We are growing up in Christ. We are maturing in the Spirit. Perhaps God is again preparing us to resume the march toward the goal from which a century and a half of internecine fighting has deflected us. If so, tomorrow will be brighter than today!

One of the best things happening, as I see it, is that men are starting to trust in Jesus as their hope, rather than in the church, which often means the party organization. This frees them to love others realistically as God loves them. It is not

necessary to get people into a particular category or pigeon-hole to know how to treat them. One need not ask how they stand on this thing or that before calling upon them to lead prayer or share in praise. Loyalty is not tested by what you are against, but by your being with Jesus. The fundamental question is not, "What do you think of instrumental music?" but "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?"

This allows each person to retain his personal conviction as to things without affecting his relationship to others. The faith which should be shared with everyone is not affected by the faith which should be kept to one's self. It is a real sign of spiritual maturity when one can love and receive those who hold divergent views, simply because they follow one Lord and are in one body. It is only shriveled intellects which measure the standing of others, not by the breadth of God's word, but by the narrowness of their human understanding. This is the root of papal authority, the fruit of which is assumption of infallibility.

We will not lead the world to Jesus along the divisive path we have trodden in the past. We will negate our own influence, and lose our own children. We must renounce our past approach. It only leads us deeper into the swamps of schism. We must pull our feet out of the stinking ooze and plant them on higher ground. We should not strive to salvage any of our sectarian trappings. They will but burden us on the onward march. We must abandon our unsavory attitudes and discard our unwholesome trappings. With crushed spirits because of our past failures, but with unbroken courage for the future we must begin anew the trek toward sanity and renewal.

Everywhere there are signs that this is happening. I rejoice to see it with joy unspeakable. Let fearless men arise to proclaim anew the truth that makes men free! Let the party spirit die, be buried and never resurrected to plague us again. Let the Holy Spirit fill the hearts and animate the lives of all of us. Jesus reigns as sovereign over all the earth. Let no one else lay claim to

**the throne-room of our hearts. Jesus! Jesus only! Jesus as Lord,
now and forever, world without end! This is my story, this is my
song! Let us all sing it together and in harmony.**

Two Years More

Mission Messenger (December 1973)

Volume 35

[Abstract]

It was just one year ago I announced in these pages I intended to cease publication of MISSION MESSENGER on December 1, 1975. We have just two more years of editing a paper, which began as a little inconsequential journal, and now goes all over the world. I reached the conclusion to halt this phase of my life after more than half of my earthly sojourn has been actively involved in it. It was not easy to do. I wrestled with the matter for months until I felt I had an answer to my prayers as to God's will for my lessening existence.

Editors often tend to feel they are indispensable. They come to the place where they think neither God nor the brethren can do without them. The result is their thinking, which seems so precious to them, becomes ever less meaningful to the saints, who simply quit reading what they write. This causes the editors to feel unappreciated and neglected. They rail at others for putting them on the shelf when actually they crawled upon it themselves to gain a better vantage point from which to snap at those who pass by below.

The paper is now at its highest point in readership. One month this year, July, broke our previous record. This runs counter to all past experience. The summer months have generally brought a drop off. I want the paper to expire gently, as a faithful servant in the arms of those who love him, at the

very peak of his strength and virility. I want it to die, as I would like to die, facing the world in vigor until the dart of death brings release. I do not want it to go like an outworn stag making a pitiable stand against a boulder while the slavering jaws of a wolf pack move ever closer, waiting for the inevitable moment for the fight to be ended.

Ever since I announced my decision I have been besieged by letters pleading with me to reconsider. A lot of dear people have said they can hardly bear to think of not receiving the paper each month. It has brought help and comfort to them in difficult circumstances. Most of all, it has brought hope, real hope that the church will return to sanity, even after having gone so far out of its mind as to lash at itself and devour its own flesh.

A good many have volunteered to continue the paper if I would give it to them, and some have offered to buy it. But my decision is irrevocable. If someone else sought to edit it, it would not be MISSION MESSENGER, for this paper is simply Nell and myself. It has been kept alive by our own sweat and blood, and sometimes watered by our tears. It is the two of us coming to visit you each month, like your folks from down home. The paper is not profound or sophisticated. It is not dolled up in Sunday clothes. It is a country journal, the same kind of homely fare in the literary field as ham and grits and red-eye gravy on the kitchen table. I would not be qualified to edit a scholarly periodical if I wanted to do so. Fortunately, I don't want to!

The death of the paper will be as unostentatious as its birth. We began without a flourish and will conclude the same way. The last issue will simply be a farewell. I will not sell the mailing list and I will not give it away. I regard a subscription as a covenant and a faithful trust. I would as soon sell the addresses of our children and grandchildren for others to exploit as to sell the names of my brothers and sisters for profit. I know that is regarded as old-fashioned and quaint, but that's the way it is,

and that's the way I am.

For years I have had to resist attempts of brethren to organize us, dress the paper up, get an office, up the subscription price, and pay me a salary as editor. In each instance I've told them to start a paper on their own and I'd advertise it for them without charge, but to let us alone. Nell and I have continued to do all of the work except the printing, in our own house. It is the editorial sanctum, the addressing department, the circulation area, and the mailing room. And it only has two employees, neither of them paid. All of the books are wrapped and prepared for mailing in the garage. Sometimes Nell does it, sometimes I do it. It really isn't much, when you think about it!

Some of you will be pleased to know that I'm closing down the paper so I can get on with the things I really love to do—writing books. There are seven simmering on the back mental burner now, waiting for the opportunity to be served up. Most of them have been started. You'll be hearing about them as they are born. I must hurry because time is running out! I plan to submit articles to other journals where they will be scrutinized by other and younger editors who may weed out material which might hinder rather than help.

I have lived to see many prestigious journals fold up because of rising costs. The subscription rate for our little paper does not even begin to pay for its publication. It has been kept alive by brothers and sisters whose hearts have been touched and prompted by God to share their substance with us because they too believe in “bringing glad tidings of peace on earth to men of goodwill.” Many of them we have never met but they have been willing to stake their generous giving upon the integrity of Nell and myself. And each year we have ended up with all obligations paid and without a cent of debt. This year is no exception. We owe no one on earth anything except our love!

You do not know who these donors are, but we know and

God knows! We are trusting Him to reward their generosity with His mercy and lovingkindness. The greatest risk we have ever faced financially will come in 1975, when we can no longer take subscriptions, while the cost goes on, many hundreds of dollars each month. We are not worried in the least. Many of our faithful helpers will continue with us until the last round is fired and the flag is furled and laid away as a memorial of the power of love, in the battle against partisanship and hostility toward God's wonderful people!

Thank you for reading our feeble offerings through the years. If you desire to continue reading until the end, send only two dollars and you will be enrolled for the duration. If your heart is moved to send more, the surplus will be used to take up the differential in cost of printing and production, and in the fund to mail out free books to college and university students. We have sent in excess of nine hundred volumes of my works all over the earth, without a cent of obligation to students. We have even paid the cost of wrapping and mailing. Praise God for your help!

All of the papers for 1973 will now be bound in an attractive book called "The Question Box." If you want one or more for your library, why not send your order now and we will enclose an invoice for the minimal amount when we send it to you? If you'd like the last three bound volumes simply request Nell to place you on the permanent list and they will be sent as they are ready for mailing.

The articles next year will deal with some of our real organizational problems and I will be saying some things I have long wanted to say. The book which results from the 1974 articles will be called *Pure Words*. For only ten dollars you can put five of your friends on for the life of the paper. For one hundred dollars you can do the same for fifty members of your congregation. Do you know of a better reading bargain than this? If you plan to send gift subscriptions, please hurry so we

can start them with the January issue. If you'd like to receive twenty-five or fifty copies each month to hand out, write for our bundle rate. It will surprise you!

Nell joins me in this expression of thanks and appreciation to all of you. We love you whether you agree with what you read in the paper or not. If you have been accepted by the Father as a child, we accept you as our brother or sister. It is just that simple.

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1974)

Volume 36

Pure Speech

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Defining My Purpose

Mission Messenger (January 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

On March 1, 1711, a British journal called *The Spectator* was introduced to the reading public by Sir Richard Steele. Associated with the Dublin-born essayist was Joseph Addison whose writing style was acclaimed for its polish, grace and elegance. The journal lasted but two years, and during that brief span carried 236 articles by Steele and 274 by Addison. Today, in literary circles, Addison is remembered chiefly because of the *Sir Roger de Coverly Papers*. I remember him because of his suggestion that authors must remain in the flames of purgatory until the influence of their evil writings has disappeared. For some that would mean forever.

I have been long fascinated by the power of speech, the faculty by which human beings can take abstract ideas and put them into words, and utter them in such a manner that others hearing the sounds in combination can grasp the idea which flits through the mind of the speaker. The physical organs which make speech possible are proof of the majestic design and creativity of God. The palate which acts as a sounding-board for projection and the teeth which play a role in the formation of certain sounds are contrived in such a fashion that the tongue can use them for its proper function.

Man was created as a social being. As such, he must be able to communicate with his fellows. I happen to believe he was

so made that he might also converse with his creator and receive communications from Him. I have long argued that man's ability to speak is proof that he was made by an intelligent being who possessed the power to speak prior to man's creation. Speech is an imitative and repetitive process. No one has ever spoken who was not first spoken to.

A baby, taken at birth from all human association, and reared by animals, would not speak but would whine or growl in animalistic gutturals. The idea that sophisticated human speech developed from such animal sounds through millions of years of snapping and snarling, is a little bit absurd, and would require faith in a much greater miracle than that of creation by a beneficent personality in the beginning. It is my conviction that the first man began speaking only after being addressed by God and thus being taught by Him. Man heard speech before he began to speak. The record of this transaction in the book we designate *Genesis*, is accurate so far as I am concerned.

While all of this is most interesting, and provided the subject of a rather lengthy dissertation in one of my books, it is not now my special concern in the series of articles I am beginning herewith. I am chiefly concerned with our use and abuse of words selected by the Holy Spirit to convey the thoughts of the divine mind. I have not the least doubt that God is, and that He has spoken to man. I am fully persuaded that he employed words already in use by man and that the meaning of these words can generally be ascertained and understood in the same manner as we may understand other communications in the same time and place and among the same people to whom the divine revelation was given.

When Alexander Campbell was requested to formally state what he believed to be the essentials requisite to produce a reformation, he gave top priority to recapture of "the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit." Succeeding generations, hooked on slogans, thought they were being true to this when they glibly

recited, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” In many cases they were like a person seeing a banana for the first time, and eating the peel while throwing the fruit away. In actuality our brethren often did neither of the things in the slogan. It became a catchword to be reeled off as an escape from responsibility to study.

In this instance the slogan was originally adopted by men as an approach to the goal of unity, which so many had sought so seriously and died without achieving. But before long it was being quoted to exclude those who could not conscientiously conform. It was used as a divisive weapon rather than as a unitive instrument. A great many who claimed to speak where the Bible speaks did so without speaking as the Bible speaks. They parroted the words and memorized proof-texts with no genuine concern for their true implication. This year, if our precious Lord so wills and allows, it is my intention to re-state some of the things which I believe have been ignored.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

My style of writing during 1974 indicates no abandonment of my intention to promote the unity of the Spirit among all who acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of their lives. In a fragmented and fractured world I know of no greater task to which one can address his feeble talent than to encourage the saints to have a common mind for unity. We must somehow find the solution which will enable us to labor together for Him “whom having not seen we love.” Bertrand Russell declared that “we must find a moral alternative to war.” I paraphrase that statement by saying that we must find a moral alternative to division.

We cannot continue to escalate every issue into open warfare which always ends in fragmentation. There must be some dynamic which will hold us together in Christ Jesus in times of stress and tension. We dare not continue to expend our

energies and waste our resources in attacking God's other children. There are papers printed in our day which devote almost every column inch to fighting brethren who honestly differ with the editors, and the paganism grows on every side. We must somehow come to that place where we can distinguish brethren from enemies, for not all who differ with us are enemies of the cross of Christ.

I believe that a disorderly and indiscriminate form of speech contributes to a deranged and perplexed body of believers. We can never restore peace and harmony in the Spirit if we do not know what the Spirit revealed, and we can never know what the Spirit revealed if we use the terms he employed in a sense which he never intended.

I think that most of our brethren are sincere. They recognize that the present disturbed and dislocated state of affairs is not the will of God. It denies the prayer of Jesus for unity and makes our plea a farce in the eyes of a contemporary society. Imagine the sorry state in which a visitor from another planet would find himself if he resolved to arrive at truth by visiting with and consulting the two dozen segments of the "Church of Christ" in our land. We have been victimized by tradition. We have inherited partisan pride. This results in only one approach to unity and one strategy for peace, the verbal bludgeoning of everyone who differs with us into submission and conformity as the price of our acceptance. One grave problem is that, along with the rest of the religious world, we have been handed a "theological jargon" which promises peace and always ends in producing polemics.

On March 31, 1819, John Adams wrote to J. H. Tiffany, "Abuse of words has been the greatest instrument of sophistry and chicanery, of party, faction, and division of society." George Santayana said in *Obiter Scripto*, "Words are weapons, and it is dangerous in speculation, as in politics, to borrow them from the arsenal of the enemy." That may be a true observation but I

think Satan has infiltrated the ranks of the believers and captured much of our vocabulary and turned it against us. Our aim will be to re-take it and use it for that cause which means more to me than life itself.

God has demonstrated the power of confusion of tongues to divide and scatter a people. It is amazing to recognize the perversity of the human race. When God commands them to scatter they insist upon remaining together, and when he commands them to unite they insist upon scattering. After the deluge it was the divine intention that the earth be divided among the progeny of Noah who were to be dispersed abroad and inhabit and populate it.

There was one factor which operated against the dispersion. "The whole earth was of one language, and one speech" (Genesis 11:1). They were thus encouraged to remain in proximity to each other because of mutual understanding. As men journeyed from the East they came to a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They resolved to construct a city as a dwelling-place and a tower as a landmark and rallying center, as they said, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This was the very opposite of God's will and instruction.

But in dealing with the rebellion God acknowledged the power of a unified language. He said, "Behold, the people are united in purpose, and speak the same language, and they have begun this undertaking, and nothing can thwart their plans while this is the case." What a divine tribute to the power and force of unity! It required heavenly intervention to contravene their design and scatter them so the earth would be populated. The instrument chosen for dispersing the rebels was confusion of language so they would not understand each other.

It would seem that if men can be "scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth" by the mere act of confusing their

tongues, it would require a unity of language to unite them. The confusion would have to be dissipated, the dissonant and distracting elements eliminated, and a sense of understanding restored before they could be gathered together. To this a statement in Zephaniah 3:9 gives assent, “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the Lord, to serve him with one consent.” *The Revised Standard Version* renders it “Yea, at that time will I change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.”

This is important! It shows that God, who confused the language in order to scatter the people, recognizes that he must change the speech to an unmixed or pure speech, before all can call upon his name and serve him in unity. The Hebrew root form rendered “one consent” or “one accord” is literally “with one shoulder.” We still speak of the need of putting a shoulder to the wheel. We talk about “pulling together” although the prophet used a term which meant “pushing together.” In any event we need a pure speech to be able to accomplish this.

WORDS AS WEAPONS

It is an adage among us that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* Robert Burton wrote, “A blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with the sword.” Joseph Conrad wrote in *Lord Jim*, “A word carries far, very far, and deals destruction through time as the bullets go flying through space.” Jeremiah declared of his people, “Their tongue is a cruel arrow, their mouths speak lies. One speaks amicably to another, while inwardly he plans a trap for him” (9:8).

Throughout the old covenant scriptures, words are compared to a sword, and in the new covenant scriptures the word of God is called “the sword of the Spirit.” All of this points up the fact that if Satan captures the vocabulary and turns it

against the saints irreparable damage may result. I am quite convinced that he has stolen a lot of the arsenal and spiked a good many guns he has not carried off. It is my intention, God willing, to point up a lot of the problems which have been caused in the whole religious realm by a surrender of the weapons provided by heaven.

Perhaps you will indulge me if I take a little space to suggest some of the ways by which the truth can be obscured and made to appear indecisive. We cannot be exhaustive because of lack of time and space but we can provide an idea of some of the problems with which I will be dealing in coming issues. It is to be expected that not all of you will agree with my emphases or conclusions, and that is not necessarily to be deplored. It is out of brotherly exchange that all of us learn. We all need critics who challenge our finite views.

No two of us would edit a paper alike. All of us have varied opinions about the relative importance of things. Some of you will wonder why I spend time with the matters we will be considering, and others of you will hail what we say as the greatest blessing in print. That is why we never try to please our readers. I am not writing verse for greeting cards, but editing a journal which reflects my honest convictions. If you do not agree with what I write, well, praise the Lord anyhow!

1. One way by which uncertainty is created is by taking terms which have a specific application in God's word and giving them a general scope. The wrong here is invalid expansion which creates new concepts never intended by the Spirit. Making a universal application of a specific not only invents and licenses novel ideas, but clouds the value of the specific by spreading it too thin. Does that sound a little confusing. Then let me cite an example.

Look at the word "church" as an illustration of what I am saying. If this word is to be used as a translation of *ekklesia*, and

a considerable number of good brethren think we are stuck with it for the duration, it should certainly be employed as the Holy Spirit used it. In God's word it refers to the called out ones who are called together in Christ. In whatever area it embraces it includes every person in that area who has responded to the call and who has been born from above. We use terms the Spirit did not use when we talk of "the church universal" and "the local church." But if we must use these terms we have invented and sanctified by our usage, we certainly ought to be true to the original which we render by "church."

The "church universal" must include every saved person on this whole wide earth. If it does not include even one person whom God has accepted and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, it is incorrectly used, and is not sound speech. To talk of "the church universal" and mean only a clump of congregations here and abroad which are bound together in defence of or in opposition to some issue which has nothing to do with our entrance into God's grace, is to act from sectarian motives and to project a sectarian image.

Whether the designation or denomination for such a group of congregations is borrowed from scripture or dreamed up because of some other association does not affect the sectarian stance. When I speak of the "Church of Christ" in a universal sense, and mean only congregations of believers in the world whose communicants do not use instrumental music in their public praise, I am sectarian. When I speak of "The Christian Church" and regard it as the one body to the exclusion of God's sheep who are scattered over the sectarian hills, I am a sectarian.

If I do not mean by the term "local church" every child of God in that locality I am partisan and sectarian in my meaning. The church in Saint Louis embraces every saved person in this metropolitan area. If I use it in any other manner to embrace fewer than that, my usage is sectarian. If I speak of "the church

of Los Angeles” I must include every saint in that city who has been adopted into the wonderful family of God, every person who is enabled to cry “Abba, Father” by the indwelling Spirit. The church of Christ in California either includes every saved person in California or it is not the church of Christ. It may be “The Church of Christ” and there are two dozen different kinds of these in California, but there is a big difference— and I do mean big!

It is silly to talk about a Methodist Church, a Baptist Church, a Lutheran Church, a Presbyterian Church, or a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. There is only one church, and there never was but one. It is the body of Christ and is a divine creation. God only created one church through the Spirit because he is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Men cannot create a divine organism, and God did not create a human organization. When men adopt the word for the divine organization and apply it to a legion of human organizations they confuse and confound the sacred and profane.

Let me hasten to add that such confusion of tongues only confounds men. It has no bearing or effect upon the purpose of God. He has never been in a dither as to who constitutes his family. “The foundation of God stands firm, having the assurance that the Lord knows who are his.” Men may not be able to identify all whom God has accepted, but he knows them. In our human predicament we must be constantly aware of our need to “discern the body” and resolve never to be confined by traditional walls erected in partisan fear by our fathers.

Not a single one of the two dozen “Churches of Christ” is the body of Christ in its fulness. I do not doubt that God has children in each of them, and I do not doubt that he has children outside of all of them. It is for this reason I refuse to be confined to either of them. I am resolved to be true to the “ekklesia of God” as the Holy Spirit used that majestic term. Wherever God has a son I have a brother; wherever God has a daughter I have

a sister. I praise God for delivering me from the narrow confines of a partisan clan into the glorious freedom of the kingdom of his dear Son. And I am not going back to the dark depths of a factional cave.

2. The opposite to what we have said is also a problem, for the taking of general terms and restricting them to certain specific things defeats God's purpose in revelation. Here the mistake is unjustified limitation. This is what occurs when a word like *ministry*, which applies to every form of service to God or man, is used to apply only to the work of a preacher, and generally to one hired to serve a particular congregation. If every child of God is a minister, and most of us pay lipservice to that concept, to call one man "the minister" is to do serious injury to the ministry of all of the other saints. Our gradual drift toward Rome, in this respect, has led us into all kinds of verbal error, which tends to be far more serious than we think.

No one who is committed to restoring the ancient order should ever be guilty of speaking about someone "entering the ministry" who has been a Christian for a number of years, or even a few months. If one does not enter the ministry when he is baptized into Christ, whatever he enters later will not be too important. One does not go away to "study to become a minister" although one who is a minister may go away to study. If a "school of the ministry" does not prepare saints of all kinds to serve, it is not a school for the ministry at all, but for professionals unknown and unrecognized in the word of God revealed by the Holy Spirit.

We will be dealing with some of these matters as we seek to recover a pure speech so that we may serve the Lord with one accord, and not seek to be served by one man. It is for this reason that I shall deal in our next issue with the distinction between clergy and laity which creeps into the language of the brethren more and more. That this is a ticklish subject, I am fully aware, and that it creates an emotionally-charged

atmosphere I am well informed, but I think it is time something definitive was said about it, and since I refuse to request my brethren to deal with issues I am afraid to touch, I shall write my honest sentiments about the problem. You need not agree with what I write for me to love you, but I would like to have you read what I say whether you love me for saying it, or not.

Who Is Sectarian?

Mission Messenger (January 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

A good brother in Arkansas takes exception, in a rather pointed and scathing letter, to my intimation that the segment of the restoration movement of which he is an affiliate, is a sect. He affirms that he is a member of the Lord's church, the body of Christ, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. He resents deeply my lumping that church off with narrow and insignificant groups of "antis" who oppose cups, classes, and the support of orphan homes. But above all else he wants it known that members of what he quaintly refers to as "The First Christian Church" are not his brothers in Christ. They are apostates and can only get to heaven by renouncing what they are in and returning to the "true church."

The letter came as somewhat of a surprise, like the resignation of Spiro T. Agnew. It has been a long time since I have received this kind of epistle and I guess I thought that those who wrote such venom about their brethren had all died off. Much as I feel compassion for one who has to use rash statements to work off steam when he is in high dudgeon, the letter served to arouse a feeling bordering upon nostalgia. It took me back along memory's lane a few decades, to the time when such letters were in vogue, and the one who could write the meanest was always head of the debating class.

In the old days things used to get pretty rough when

members of the divergent “true churches” met to discuss their differences in the spirit of Christ. Once at Sedalia, Missouri, two brothers in the flesh and in the Lord, got into a shoving match across the Lord’s table, and one swung a haymaker at the other. If a deacon had not separated them they would have scattered the emblems all over the floor. It ended up with two “loyal” congregations in town, the members of which would not even pass the time of day with one another when they met in the post office.

I don’t think that we were any worse than most of the other religious organizations around us in that day and time. I remember an old saint down in the hills who was trying to tell me the seriousness of an argument which broke out among the brethren who met in a district schoolhouse. He said, “Before the fracas ended, they fit like Missionary Baptists!” By and large, I think the Baptists as well as the rest of us have overcome that sort of reaction, and most of us are glad of it. Occasionally, however, someone feels called upon to come to the front and battle for the pride of the party.

I grew up in one of two dozen parties in the church of Christ which does not use instrumental music in its expression of public praise. There were really not that many at the time I was immersed, because the number has grown at about the rate of two for every ten years since 1906 when we were set free by the United States Census bureau and became the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth, a matter which the Roman Catholic Church always contested. Really we did most of the contesting because the Catholic Church didn’t know we even existed.

I know exactly how our brother feels, for I once felt the same way, although I was in a different faction than the one he is in. I grew up believing that it was the house of God, the kingdom of heaven, and the bride of Christ, and I quoted scriptures which proved that we were the flock of God, while brethren in other

segments were all goats or wolves in sheep's clothing. When one of them dropped in on our meetings we would not grant him any public recognition or call upon him to pray, although we were glad to see him come so he could see how "loyal" brethren behaved. We hoped that by giving him the cold shoulder he might see the error of his ways and come into the warmth of our fellowship.

Not many ever returned, and those who did were often in trouble somewhere else. They were not so much fleeing to us in refuge as they were running from a mess they had helped to create. We depended for growth mostly upon the children we reared and upon those from outside who married our members. Growth was a little slow because when some of our young people became old enough they "went over the hill." They were baptized at the age of twelve and were subsequently brought by their parents until they became too big to whip, and then stayed away.

That was not true of all of them because some remained "in the fold" and succeeded their fathers in the work, to help perpetuate the party. They never attended a place which had a preacher who was not "faithful" to the factional plea. They never read another journal besides the orthodox party organ. Sometimes they did not even read it. They knew they were safe and they did not have to read anything else, often not even the Bible.

I remember how sorry I felt deep down inside for members of the Christian Church. I regarded them all as doomed for having forsaken the faith. We had restored "the faith" and anyone who was not with us was not with God. If one of our girls married a boy who was in the Christian Church we knew she was lost. Her father and mother felt a sense of shame like they would have felt if she had run off with a sideshow freak from the Barnum and Bailey Circus.

When you have been beguiled into believing that your group is the elect of God, chosen before the foundation of the world, and you are all that God has left upon earth, the final hope of mankind, it makes you a little heady. There is something exciting about the realization that you alone possess the key to glory and that everyone else will be turned back at the pearly gates, while you sweep past into the New Jerusalem with all of the angels there to greet you with a friendly slap on the back and the right hand of fellowship.

It provides a real sense of confidence and assurance if you have been hoodwinked into thinking that when the Son of man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, he will immediately start culling out everyone who has attended where they had a piano, Sunday school classes, individual cups, or a Herald of Truth announcement on the cork board in the foyer. It is a glorious contemplation that you can stand off to one side with your arms folded while the poor dupes who wouldn't listen to you when you tried to tell them, are herded off, and you can then hear the voice saying to you, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." When you step up to the throne to receive congratulations for having pressed the right button on all of the issues, even the goats will realize how important it was to be right on everything.

I can personally testify what an inward shock it is when you suddenly are made to realize what you have actually been doing is defending a sectarian image couched in a nonsectarian plea. I know how it jolts you to see, for the first time, that the body of Christ is greater than any faction, including your own, and you have actually been opposing God's purpose by your bigotry and intolerant attitude. When you've lugged around in your inside coat pocket a signed challenge proclaiming that the church of which you are a member is scriptural in name, origin, doctrine and practice, it sort of knocks you cold to have to face up to the fact that the church of which you are a member is

actually one of about a couple of dozen splinters in a historical movement which started out to “unite the Christians in all of the sects.”

That is why I know exactly how our Arkansas brother feels. He has come to equate the particular segment of “The Church of Christ” with which he is affiliated as “the Lord’s church,” lock, stock and barrel! It is the one body for which Jesus died, the genuine authorized new testament church restored in its fulness as at the beginning. It is so because it is right on instrumental music, cups, classes and colleges. It is the right church because it is right on the right things, the important things, the things that count. Anyone who is not right on these things is not right with God. Regardless of one’s faith, hope and love, he is out of Christ if he is out of step with our brother.

I do not want to hurt our brother. I would not be gross or gruff or crude. But I must be honest, and I must be plain. I do not believe that any faction or party in the non-instrument Church of Christ is the body of Christ in its magnificent fulness. I do not believe that all of the divergent factions taken together exhaust the body of Christ. For that matter, I think the family of our God is greater than any movement within it, including the restoration movement. The kingdom of heaven over which Jesus presides transcends every corral in which men seek to confine it. We have not boxed God in.

I also hold that, in the fair meaning of the term, my protesting brother is a member of a sect. His very letter of protestation demonstrates a sectarian spirit and proves beyond doubt that he is guilty of partisan exclusivism, the first and chief symptom of sectarianism. Actually, our parties may be quite right about some things, but they are wrong about the right things. They are cruelly mistaken about their attitude toward fellowship, brotherhood and the family relationship in Christ Jesus.

Any group which bases its reception or rejection of brethren upon an opinion about instrumental music, the millennium, the indwelling Spirit, or support of orphan homes has invented and adopted another creed than Christ. Faith in Christ Jesus as the Messiah of the prophets and the Son of God, goes for nothing with such a group. It is the thing one is against and not the Christ he serves which makes the difference. To set at nought a brother because he cannot conscientiously support a method of financing a television program is blatantly sectarian.

Those who make tests of fellowship out of things God has not made conditions of salvation are not Christians only. They are a special kind or brand. As far as they are in Christ and follow him they are Christians, but in areas where they create tests of fellowship based upon opinions they are not Christians. And many have more tests of fellowship than they have a real depth of Christian love and concern for their blood-bought brothers.

What our good Arkansas brother overlooks is that by setting aside and creating a special segment of “antis” he automatically puts himself in a special segment of “pros” and becomes as sectarian as those whom he wants to separate and segregate. A ghetto of “pros” is as partisan as a ghetto of “antis.” Jesus did not die for a clan or tribe but for a body composed of those who believe into him on the basis of the apostolic testimony, the good news, or gospel.

When God’s word finally got through my sectarian shell, hard as it was to crack, it became a foregone conclusion that I must receive, recognize and respect all of my brethren, simply because they were God’s children. It did not mean I would agree perfectly with any of them. It by no means meant that I would endorse their every concept and action. My reception of them as my brothers was an endorsement only of their reception by the Father through the shed blood of his Son. They belonged to God, so I belonged with them. It was Just that simple, and it still is.

Whether they were pre-millennial, post-millennial, or ignorant of the millennium, had nothing whatever to do with my recognition of brotherhood in Jesus Christ. This concept of the one body is so majestic and wonderful it is frightening to those who parade always under party labels. But it is not a threat to any particular party. It is a threat to all of them because it denies the fleshly spirit which gives them birth.

Once I saved every scrap of material about this faction or that, filing it away carefully for use in debate. Now that I have been delivered from the party spirit in my own heart I no longer keep such files. Being free from the factional attitude I am no longer concerned about members of one segment triumphing over the members of another. What I am concerned about is the triumph of my Lord over the wisdom of this passing age. I want to help bring about that glorious consummation of universal history when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ. I am not too sure that being right on whether to have classes or not will either help or hinder in the majestic design of the ages.

I am in the one body with every member of the Church of Christ or Christian Church who is in Christ Jesus. I am also in it with a lot of folk who are not in either one of the parties created by the "great divide" in our particular restoration movement. I do not sit up nights worrying about what any of them think about me or write about me in partisan journals. I just go on loving them whether they count themselves as my friends or enemies. In the only organism to which I belong there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, premillennialist nor post-millennialist, instrumentalist nor non-instrumentalist, for Christ is all and in all.

In that wonderful body neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love. Faith and love! What a difference they make when you cease to trust in your own righteousness which is by works of law and

trust only in His. What a terrific change takes place when you can truly love all of your brethren and can stop pretending.

I would not want to judge my Arkansas brother, but based on my personal, experience, I suspect that he wrote his recriminatory and antagonistic letter more for his sake than for mine. He was trying to prove to himself that he was still loyal after having read my writings for several months. I doubt he thought it would rescue me from the freedom with which Christ set me free, and return me again to the yoke of bondage. What he was doing was clanking the chains to be sure he was still confined and restrained by his “loyalty.”

We should not give up on brethren like this: Jesus never gave up on me, even when I was debating and “skinning” other brethren and trying to cut their opinions to shreds. Quietly, but persistently, the Spirit pursued me until I waded out of the factional muck so God could “lift me up and let me stand, by faith on heaven’s tableland.” It is not that I grew mellow with advancing age, for I was really not that old when I learned better. Instead, the Spirit became real, and when I opened my heart, he poured the love of God into it.

My brother may even now be on his way out of the partisan antagonism which has enslaved him. If so, it will be sometime before he will be able to openly admit it. He will first try to convince himself that his congregation is becoming less sectarian and is more open than others. One who has been factional all his life and trusted in the institution for his identity and salvation is afraid to make the break and stand alone with only Jesus at his right hand to help and strengthen. But if he is honest, the glad day will come!

It came for me when I was able to admit publicly that I had been wrong, seriously wrong, about fellowship, all of my life. I was not only mistaken but my error was such that I was actually defeating God’s eternal purpose when I thought I was

advancing it. Now I know what grace really is, the quality of grace which brings forgiveness and the peace that passes understanding. It is this I crave for my brother in Arkansas, and for every other brother and sister on this terrestrial sphere!

The Scotch Influence

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[Abstract]

I think there are few other places I have ever been where the winter can be as cold and blustery as it is in Scotland. It was my lot, the first time I went over to visit the gracious saints who live in that marvelous land of the heather, to arrive in one of the worst snowstorms they had experienced in several decades. It was a wonder to behold how they kept the big doubledecker buses operating as efficiently as they did. But they are an efficient and enterprising people and impressed me greatly with their abilities.

One day I left the little colliery village where I was staying and rode into Edinburgh to transfer to another bus which was to take me to a town where the good brethren had arranged to have their anniversary meeting a week early so I might fit it into my schedule and address them.

When I arrived at my destination shortly afternoon the wind was sweeping down in a gale from the Firth of Forth and the snow was swirling about so heavily that it was impossible to see even ten feet. When I arrived at the home of my congenial host the cup of hot tea which was waiting was more than welcome. It was such a nasty day outside that it was suggested I stay in the living-room close by the ingle, the little fireplace where the coals were glowing cheerily and sending out waves of warmth.

A large bookcase in the room was filled with bound volumes of brotherhood journals from days gone by— the British Millennial Harbinger, the Ecclesiastical Observer, Bible Advocate, and Old Paths. I settled down to an afternoon of trying to assimilate all that I could from volumes of which I had heard, but had never before seen. That evening before we went out to wade the drifts to the little old-world meetinghouse, the elderly brother came in to tell me he wanted me to select a volume of each of the papers to have as a souvenir of my visit.

Years have passed away and the brother who was so kind has long since departed to be with Jesus. But even yet when the wind whistles around the eaves and the snow piles up in my driveway, and the birds huddle in the evergreens, I go to my own shelves and take down one of the books brought from a land so far away, and when I settle down to read the well-marked pages my heart returns along the path of memory to that afternoon in Auld Scotia.

The Bible Advocate and Precursor of Unity, as it was called, was a pocket-size paperback published on Paternoster Row in London. It was “devoted to the restoration of original Christianity” according to the sub-title, and one of my favorites is the 1847 edition, now more than 125 years old. It carries a running account of the visit of Alexander Campbell to England and Scotland, written from the British viewpoint. It also presents two relatively long articles by Campbell. One is on creeds and the other on the Holy Spirit. Both are excellent samples of some of the most poignant writing in the history of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I acknowledge a great debt for the impression made upon my own feeble consciousness by the dissertation on creeds. Campbell recognized that the divine foundation upon which Jesus erected his spiritual edifice was a confession expressing but two ideas, both of which were related to the person and office of God’s beloved Son. “Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living

God.” When Jesus declared that upon this rock he would establish his community he rejected every other rock or proposition as basic or fundamental to reunion with the Father. This was the divinely-selected and ordained creed.

Campbell wrote, “Here then, is the whole revelation of the mystery of the Christian constitution— the full confession of the Christian faith. All that is peculiar to Christianity is found in these words; not merely in embryo, but in a clearly expressed outline. A clear perception, and a cordial belief of these two facts will make a man a Christian. He may carry them out in their vast dimensions and glorious developments, to all eternity. He may ponder on them until his spirit is transformed into the image of God; until he shines in more than angelic brightness, in all the purity and beauty of heavenly love. Man glorified in heaven, gifted with immortality, and rapt in ecstasies of infinite and eternal blessedness, is but the mere result of a proper apprehension of, and conformity to this confession.”

The marks with which I bracketed the statement on that snowy afternoon in Scotland are still there. At the time I did not know where my meditative wrestling with this sublime thought would take me. It was but the first shaft of light from the rising sun, but gradually as it rose higher over my intellectual horizon the shadows began to flee away. I could see clearly that every party among us sprung from another creed, another belief or set of beliefs bound upon men by their fellows as being essential to fellowship here and life hereafter.

In our zeal to make what we thought would be better Christians, we were actually un-Christianizing them. We were laying another foundation than the noble one consisting of faith in the majestic two-fold proposition upon which Jesus said he would constitute the summoned ones, the called-out community. Whatever it is to which one must subscribe mentally and orally to be received into and recognized as worthy of fellowship by any community is the creed of that community. And any

community which demands of its communicants as a basis of reception, faith in any other proposition than the Messiah and divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth is not the community which Jesus planted. It is built upon a different rock.

This does not mean that none of the members of such a humanly-devised community or sect are in Christ. One can subscribe to an opinion in ignorance and consider it so important as to be a rallying-ground. He can be a member of a party through birth or association as Paul proclaimed himself to be a Pharisee as well as a disciple of the Messiah. But the community built upon an exalted opinion is no more the body of Christ than the sect of the Pharisees was the body of Christ.

Let us take a modern example recognizable to most of the constituency of that branch of the restoration movement which does not sanction the use of instrumental music in its public praise service. A man may become convinced that certain kinds of orphan homes created by brethren to care for the needy are human institutions and without divine warrant, and that he cannot support them financially or otherwise. Certainly if he cannot support them without violating his conscience it would be a sin for him to do so.

In his zeal to defend or promote his personal conviction which he regards as scriptural he may convince others of the rightness of his position and they may adopt it. But when they begin to demand that all brethren reach the same conclusion and hold the same opinion as to implication of the scriptures, regardless of personal conscience, as a price for being regarded in the fellowship, they have made an opinion into a creed. Every new creed will create a new party as certainly as the law of cause and effect operates in the universe.

But a party which crystallizes around such a creed is not the community which Jesus planted. Its adherents may give allegiance to Christ, and insofar as they do they are disciples or

followers, but one no more needs to be a member of such a party to be in Jesus than he would need to be in the Baptist or Methodist parties to be in Christ. Men need not surrender their opinions in order to have unity. Indeed, they cannot do so, for personal convictions represent our mental and moral values. All they need to do is to cease regarding them as creeds or foundational truths upon which to erect rival parties. To the strife-torn saints in Corinth, Paul wrote, "For other foundation (that is, for unity) can no man lay, than that which has been laid, and that is Jesus Christ."

When it first dawned upon me that I had been promoting unwritten creeds as the basis of partisan existence and acceptance, I could hardly believe it. I fought myself all the way back across the Atlantic Ocean trying to find some loophole to justify my remaining a partisan. One finds security in such a role. He is hidden behind monastic walls and scarcely needs to think. That is actually the most dangerous thing he can do. All of his thinking is done for him. He need only comply mechanically to be honored and respected by those in the party, and hated by those outside of it.

Fortunately God won out in my life and I shall never again build a party or plant a faction, upon any opinion of mine. I will not defend again as a kind of loyalty that spirit which produces factions. Campbell wrote, "Creeds have often operated and their tendency in time of defection is to cast out the good, intelligent, and pure, and retain those of a contrary opinion." He was right. I have seen it happen. I have helped drive out characters more pure and gentle than those we have retained who lifted up their voices in accusation against others who would not lie about their conscience.

Campbell went on to say, "Human creeds have made more heretics than Christians; more parties than reformations; more martyrs than saints; more wars than peace; more hatred than love; more death than life; that they have killed or driven out all

the apostles, prophets and reformers, of the church and of the world.”

There is nothing wrong with having opinions. There would be something seriously wrong with one who did not have an opinion. Opinions do not divide us. It is only opinions graduated and elevated into dogmata which create schisms. It is then that opinions are forced, driven and pressed until they result in war and strife. And, it is then that opinions become creeds by which to judge the worthiness of others to be received. My brethren in the restoration movement have at least twenty-four unwritten creeds, for every party is based upon a creedal foundation, deny it though they all will. All of this has been done in the name of “loyalty” and every party is the “loyal church” in the sight of its own participants. I have never met a disloyal brother by his own admission.

I am through with the whole sad and sorry mess! I refuse to be maneuvered by party politicians every five years or so into “taking a position” on this or that opinion and promoting another division. I recognize none of our party fences as valid or necessary to my personal relationship to God in the Spirit. Count me out when you start calling the roll of “faithful preachers” who line up behind some party leader or party journal. I am built upon the rock. My creed is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and God’s Son. Every person whom God has planted on that foundation is where I am in spite of our mistaken views, warped ideas and wrong opinions. I neither intend to drive him from that foundation nor fall off of it myself.

I am no longer interested in “lining up” some of God’s children on a partisan foundation. I am desperately concerned about having all of God’s great family remain together upon the one foundation. The opinions they hold neither frighten nor perturb me until they arrogantly begin to advance them as basic to my relationship to the Father and his other children. Although Campbell is not my hope of eternal life nor my

authority in things spiritual, I began this article by mentioning the effect of his writings upon my thoughts. I would mention another statement from his pen which has been valuable to me.

Amongst Christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the Christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural to excommunicate one another, because our knowledge is less or greater than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion on matters of speculation?

Indeed, in most cases where proscriptions and exclusions now occur in this country, the excluded are the most intelligent members of the society; and although no community will accuse a man because he knows more of his Bible than his brethren, and on this account exclude him from their communion; yet this, it is manifest, rather than heresy (of which, however, for consistency's sake, he must be accused,) is, in truth, the real cause of separation.

I do not want to bore you to tears with quotations from men whose thinking has helped to shape my life, but I would like to include one more. Most of us have heard about John Locke, the British philosopher who was born in 1632, and wrote an *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. I learned about his paragraph on the true church and read it over and over a number of years ago. I should like to share it with you.

“Since men are so solicitous about the true church, I would only ask them here by the way, if it be not more agreeable to the church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion to consist in such things and such things only as the Holy Spirit has in the holy scriptures declared in express words to be necessary to salvation. I ask, I say, whether this is not more agreeable to the church of Christ than for men to impose their own

inventions and interpretations upon others as if they were of divine authority, and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity, such things as the holy Scriptures do either not mention or at least not expressly command. Whoever requires those things in order to ecclesiastical communion which Christ does not require in order to life eternal, he may perhaps constitute a society accommodated to his own opinion and his own advantage, but how that can be called the church of Christ which is established upon laws that are not his, and which excludes such persons from its communion as He will one day receive into the Kingdom of heaven, I understand not.”

This is but another way of saying what I have constantly affirmed about myself, that I will make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. One who is qualified to be received by the Father of all glory is qualified to be received by me. If we receive all whom God receives and allow one to stand or fall to His own master, we can have that unity which the Father designed for his family. The one body was the creation of the Holy Spirit. Every party is the creation of the party spirit. I expect to allow the Holy Spirit to bind me to every precious child of God, and I refuse to allow the party spirit to separate me from any such child. I have learned the difference between the unity of the faith and the conformity of opinion and interpretation which is the real goal of politicians among us! The body of Christ is composed of parts but not parties.

The Carnal Spirit

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[Abstract]

One of the tragic features about that list of sordid things called “the works of the flesh” is that they seldom appear singly in the heart. One who is infected with the virus of carnality often develops a variety of symptoms, not all of which are external and visible. This seems especially true of “the party spirit,” an insidious disease which causes one to regard those who flock together around an issue unfurled as a sectarian battle standard, as infallible in interpretation and wholly consecrated to God.

Every party tolerates within its ranks those who are greedy, covetous and envious while castigating and attacking those in another faction whose lives are pure and dedicated and whose only crime is intellectual honesty. Most parties mistake the law of the pack for the love of the flock. But the one most bitterly attacked by every sectarian is the one who refuses to be conned or cornered into limiting either his love or activity to any party. Such a person is not so much a threat to any sect as he is a living rebuke to sectarianism itself. He strikes at the mother rather than the brood.

I can recall, and I do with a sense of abiding shame and deep penitence, when I was regarded as a factional leader, standing before an audience and naming and accusing brethren whom I had never met and whose writings I had never even critically examined. I operated purely upon hearsay and most of

it from those as biased and prejudiced as myself. Such boorish and ignorant public behavior was regarded as being like Paul, who named Alexander the coppersmith and Zenas the lawyer. It was certainly not like the words of the apostle to “be generous one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.” What an assignment!

I wish I could excuse such an uncharitable attitude upon the basis of my youth and immaturity at the time, and no doubt these played a part in it, for young men like to play to the grandstand. But it was also evil and vicious, and it was contrary to the spirit and instruction of the Lord of life. When one treats God’s other children worse than he treats heathen, and is more polite to pagans than to saints, Satan is operating the switchboard on his brain cells and he has his mental wires crossed.

I thank God for his deliverance, and many as the things are which I must yet conquer, I praise him that I am free from having to sit up nights and rack my feeble brain contriving arguments with which to blast other brethren in some other faction. It is a real blessing to be able to fight the devil without first withdrawing from everyone else in the same fight.

Satan never did a better job for populating hell than when he convinced men that compassion is compromise, fellowship is failure, and walking in love is weakness in the Spirit. I am resolved not to be hoodwinked into hostility, or harassed into hatred. I shall not dissolve the ties of brotherhood in factional gall.

The Clergy System

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[Abstract]

No class or order of men that ever appeared on earth have obtained so much influence, or acquired so complete an ascendancy over the human mind, as the clergy. The Christian clergy have exercised, for about fifteen hundred years, a sovereign dominion over the Bible, the consciences, and the religious sentiments of all nations professing Christianity.— Alexander Campbell.

In this article I am going to discuss what I believe to be one of the gravest errors into which the religious world has ever fallen. So widespread has it become that it will be virtually impossible to ever overcome it. So subtle is its encroachment that even those who deny being guilty of it are nonetheless victims of its malignant influence.

Historians search in vain for the date of its birth, and analysts are just as puzzled about the motivation which foisted it upon an unsuspecting world. Everyone is agreed that once it was not a part of God's revelation or purpose, yet it was suddenly on the scene exercising a baleful influence and claiming divine sanction for its existence, intruding itself as an interloper into the vocabulary of those who proudly claimed to speak where the Bible speaks, and to remain silent where it was silent.

I refer to the rise of the clergy system with its unwarranted and unscriptural distinction between "clergy" and "laity." Never

has there been a more serious imposition upon the kingdom of heaven, and never another more widely accepted. How did “the clergy” originate to first usurp the rights and privileges of all the saints, and then to claim their prerogatives as a divine right? Some assign the beginning, which ultimately resulted in “a universal father,” a papa, or pope, to the need for a strong voice to sound out the position of orthodoxy in a time of schism and heresy.

Others ascribe it to the overweening ambition of aspiring men to stand between their fellows and God, and to exercise a mediatorial office because of a fancied superior knowledge or life. Still others think the seed was planted in soil fertilized by political alliance with the church, making it possible for the secular ruler to control the destinies of a people by elevating men to hierarchical prominence in the spiritual structure.

Whatever its origin it became so powerful that, almost without exception, it became “the way of life” for religious organizations, and in the case of one, the Roman party, it became “the church” itself, to the exclusion of other communicants who bore the tax burden and picked up the tab for its maintenance. So much a part of the thought processes of our generation has it become that even those who seek to offset it are tricked into using its vocabulary, and parroting its specialized jargon.

A good example is found in the book *Body Life* by Ray C. Stedman. The theme of the little volume is “to search out from the Scripture the nature and function of true Christianity and thus to recover the dynamic of early Christianity.” The subtitle of the book is, “The church comes alive.” Yet, in the *Foreword*, Billy Graham writes, “The Peninsula Bible Church began with only five laymen.” And Stedman speaks of meeting “pastors and concerned laymen.” He says a lot of fine things from which all of us could profit but when he talks of “the ministry of the laity” as something separate and apart, he employs “the speech of

Ashdod.” There were *pastors* in the primitive community of saints but they were also a part of the *laos*, the people of God.

Perhaps, as we shall later point out, there is nothing seriously wrong with the mere words clergy and laity. It is the creating of a distinction between them which is so fraught with danger. The fact is that all of God’s clergy are laity, and all of God’s laity are clergy. Every child of God is a priest. Every child of God is a minister. Every disciple of Jesus has entered the ministry. The word of God knows nothing of a disciple who is not a minister. So long as we pay empty lip-service to this concept while practicing something which is exactly the opposite, we are hypocritical and acting out a sham.

Certainly those who justify their separate existence from the rest of the religious realm upon the ground that they represent a movement to restore the primitive order, ought to restore first of all the divinely revealed concept of the ministry of the saints, seeing that it was the gradual renunciation of this which resulted in the multiplication of parties from the hoary “mother of sects” upon the banks of the muddy Tiber, to the latest little group following a self-proclaimed member of the “reverend clergy.”

Yet, my brethren, in spite of their anguished protestations to the contrary, betray themselves in both speech and writing. Frequently, I sit in meetings of brethren, especially in Christian Churches, where a speaker will talk about how he involved “his laymen” in a certain project. A Roman Catholic prelate could not have said it better. The patronizing clerical tone in which one speaks of “my laymen” or “my elders” shows how much closer we are to Rome than to Jerusalem.

The Churches of Christ, non-instrument, are not too far behind. In a recent letter, a good brother speaks of resigning from the function of bishop and adds, “I’m satisfied to be just a layman.” Another, speaking of a preacher who became fed up

with bickering in a congregation and took a job as a schoolteacher said, “I am just not too sure how he will make it as a layman.” This is the language that belongs to *the system* which has its roots back to the Dark Ages and Italy, regardless of how innocent those may appear who use it.

Before the precious blood of the Lamb wiped out distinctions and removed all thought of caste among those who are in him, God had a special clergy. When the tribe of Levi stepped forward in answer to the call of Moses at a time of grave crisis, the members of that tribe were elevated to the status of a professional priesthood. They were separated from the people (the laity) in whose behalf they were to come before God with sacrifices and offerings, and in ritual observance. The tribe of Levi found their inheritance (kleros) not in the land with the people (laity) but in the direct service of God.

As priests of God the members of this tribe could perform certain functions which were forbidden to others under the penalty of death. They could touch holy things which others were not permitted to touch. “At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him, and to give the blessing in his name to this day. That is why the Levites have no portion or inheritance with their brothers; the Lord is their inheritance, as the Lord your God promised them” (Deuteronomy 10:8, 9).

This is very clear and one need not be too astute to observe that under the Mosaic economy a select group was set apart from the rest of God’s people and ordained to officiate and minister unto God. It was the exclusive right of the priests to bear the sacred ark. They intoned the regulation blessing over the heads of the people in the name of God. The people were barred from encroaching upon or entering the sacred precincts. They dared not touch a piece of the hallowed furniture.

The priests wore a special garb, a robe or tunic, girded

with a special sash, and topped off with a tall head-dress. No one outside the priesthood was allowed to wear this distinctive attire and any person who did so would suffer death for impersonating a priest. The priest was a mediator. He stood between the people and God. Men approached God only through other men who were empowered with sacerdotal authority. "If any one of the common people sins unwittingly in doing any one of the things which the Lord commanded not to be done, and is guilty, when the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat . . . and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven."

A special priesthood must draw its support from those for whom it officiates. The priests cannot farm or make a living. They must busy themselves with affairs of the temple. They must keep the ritual program moving. Those who constituted the priestly clergy could not farm, and those who farmed could not be a priestly clergy. So the people (laity) had to support the priesthood with their tithes and offerings.

"The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no holding or patrimony in Israel; they shall eat the food-offerings of the Lord, their patrimony. They shall have no patrimony among their fellow-countrymen; the Lord is their patrimony as he promised them" (Deuteronomy 18:1, 2). The priest was entitled to demand the part coming to him before the contributor could use anything for himself. "This shall be the customary due of the priests from those of the people who offer sacrifice, whether a bull or a sheep; the shoulders, the cheeks, and the stomach shall be given to the priest. You shall give him also the first fruits of your corn, and new wine and oil, and the first fleeces at the shearing of your flocks. For it was he whom the Lord your God chose from all your tribes to attend to the Lord and to minister in the name of the Lord, both he and his sons for all time."

There can be no question but what, under the fleshly

covenant, written and engraven in stones, God created a clerical caste separate and apart from the people. Members of this group encamped between the body of Israel and the sanctuary where God dwelt. They wore beautiful robes which distinguished the wearers from the remainder of the people of God. They performed functions forbidden to those who had not been anointed.

But the cross of Christ forever wiped out all such distinctions. They were abolished and done away when the legal custodian delivered us to Jesus, and faith in God's Son superseded that righteousness which is by deeds of the law. Every child of God is now a priest. Every person on this whole earth who has been purged and purified by the blood of Jesus is a priest of God. "To him who loves us and freed us from our sins with his life's blood, who made us a royal house, to serve as the priests of his God and Father . . . to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 1:6).

The old covenant, being a covenant of the flesh, with its seal of circumcision in the flesh, made its appeal to the fleshly nature. It provided pomp and pageantry, ritual and liturgy, gold and glitter. It had its visible temple of wood and stone called "the house of God." But this whole arrangement was temporary. "All this is symbolic, pointing to the present time. The offerings and sacrifices there prescribed cannot give the worshiper inward perfection. It is only a matter of food and drink and various rites of cleansing— outward ordinances in force until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10).

The time of reformation came! The age of which the prophets spoke was ushered in. The new covenant, written not with ink, but with the Holy Spirit upon tablets of the heart became a reality. We were no longer minors in virtual slavery. The term was completed. God sent His own Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the status of

sons.

What happened? Like the trembling, cowering multitude at the foot of Horeb, when the first covenant was given, we did not want God speaking to us. We did not want to become a family with its intimacy. We were afraid to be sons. We rebelled at the idea of a Father. We wanted a God afar off, a remote Deity to be worshiped in an institution and by a prescribed ritual. One can be a member of an organization, pay his dues and attend the meetings, without ever really becoming involved. His contribution pays for the benefits which the institution is created to provide.

So we wanted worship to be something done for us, a performance prepared in advance and carried out by trained actors whom we could watch and applaud and appreciate for their skills. We did not want worship to be the crying out of our own hearts for help or the sobbing on the shoulder of our elder brother, who endured all things as we do and was yet without sin. We craved an “order of worship” printed in a program and appropriate to holy days and holy seasons. And the flesh triumphed over the Spirit. We got what we wanted and we can go through it for an hour once per week wholly detached in life and concern.

Once more the startling questions of yesterday come echoing through the empty, dusty, cobweb-strung hearts which are no longer the abode of the Spirit. “Can it be that you are so stupid? You started with the spiritual; do you now look to the material to make you perfect? Have all of your great experiences been in vain— if vain indeed they should be?” (Galatians 3:3, 4). We have not progressed in the Spirit. We have retrogressed to the law. We have gone back to the weak and beggarly elements. We are acting as if the death of Jesus was a myth and the cross at Calvary a fantasy. We are not the family for which God planned. We are an organization of our own design, coming before God with a mixture of Judaistic and cultural forms which

we have blended together and call worship. There is a veil over our eyes in the reading of the Word.

Let me not be vague. Let me not hint at what I mean. We have refused to believe that the God who created heaven and earth and all that is in them does not dwell in temples made with hands, and neither is worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything. So we continue to spend millions of dollars every year to prove that Paul was mistaken when he stood among the pagan shrines at Athens. One of the strengths of primitive saints was that they had no shrines like the pagan world. Their God could not be localized, confined or shut up, so that men would have to visit Him as they did the sick. And now we dedicate buildings to God exactly as Solomon did in the days of spiritual adolescence, and men stand up and intone in sepulchral tones, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of God."

We have refused to learn that Jesus did away with holy places and holy days.

We are the temple of God. We are the house of God. Men can no longer dedicate material structures to God who gives us life and breath and all things. We do not go up to the house of God. It is the house of God which does the going. The only sanctuary God has on this earth is a consecrated human heart. He recognizes no place as a sanctuary or holy place because it has stained glass windows, wall-to-wall rug of institutional quality as the salesman stressed in his pitch to the building committee, or pews to match the pulpit furniture. I am the house of God when I am in a library, or the bathroom, or the shopping center. And if I am not the sanctuary of God there I will not be when I am in a meetinghouse designed for my air-conditioned comfort.

Such a place is only holy when it is filled with sanctuaries, with living, loving, throbbing, pulsating bodies of the ransomed

and redeemed, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, brothers and sisters rejoicing together, weeping together, sharing pain and tribulation, and joy and peace. When we build a “house of worship” and have a dedication ceremony, call it temple or what you will, we must think of a clergyman to conduct the ritual. A temple requires a special priest to minister. The pulpit becomes a stage for a performance in our behalf and the pews become a grandstand from which spectators view the performance.

When people find the Lord Jesus in a real and vital way, and want to live very close to him and experience the fellowship of others in praise that is spontaneous and unrehearsed they find a pall and chill when forced to sit through a dramatization with a robed choir and an actor. The praise of God is not intended to be a spectator sport but the pouring out of one’s own heart. A great many young people in the university, who come on the first day of the week, often to sit on the floor for lack of chairs, sing together, share together, walk up to the table of the Lord together, weep over their sins and comfort one another while holding hands, find themselves when they go back home in an atmosphere so detached from real life they can hardly stand it.

Not long ago I was invited to speak in the meetinghouse of a congregation with a long history in the restoration movement of which I am likewise an heir. The building is a huge Gothic structure styled according to medieval times. When I arrived the clergyman invited me to the “vestry” and the choir robing area. The place was a bustle of activity, as the performers made ready, some of them taking a last swig of coffee before they had to go on stage. A bell rang a three minute signal. The reverend clergyman, dressed in an official robe, gave me instructions where to sit when we formally marched in. The processional sounded on the organ, and we took our places, standing while two acolytes, schoolboys dressed in robes, marched the length of the aisle with tapers to light the candles on “the altar.” It was a scene right out of ancient Jerusalem, or perhaps out of ancient

Rome or Paris or Avignon.

It is mockery to call such a stony-faced performance the ekklesia of God in its social gathering around the thanksgiving table ordained by the Father. Whatever you may think of such so-called “high church” exhibition it has no relationship to the family of the living God meeting for a visible demonstration to the pagan world of that warmth of fellowship made possible by a blood brotherhood. When the recessional had sounded and we had moved from the pulpit to the vestry I asked “the minister” if he ever went to the door and greeted “his flock.” He replied, “I’ve got troubles enough of my own without listening to theirs.” I knew that he had troubles of his own about which even he did not know.

I hold no brief for the inappropriate jokes and undue levity which pulpit clowns feel they must indulge to keep the folks happy and entertained. Many times these are a cover-up for superficial knowledge of the Word of God and serve to fill in the borrowed sermon outlines from the latest book supplying such predigested food to harried preachers who must meet the needs of every other person in the community while neglecting their own families. There is such a thing as quiet dignity. There is a peace that passes understanding. But I deplore the cold, sluggish and frigid approach which Alexander Campbell described as “sacred gloom, holy melancholy and pious indolence.” The calm of the cemetery hardly appeals to one who has been born again.

In Christ Jesus our Lord there is not one item of praise or spiritual performance which is the exclusive right of a particular class. Any child of God who is qualified may serve in carrying out the will of God. The relegation of that which belongs to all to a special coterie of saints is a step away from the simplicity in Christ and God’s purpose. Let me give you an example. In some places the strange notion has grown up that presiding over the Lord’s table is a function of the elders, or bishops, while

distributing the loaf and the fruit of the vine to the assembled brethren is the work of deacons. There is not one shred of justification for this notion in the scriptures, yet that is about all the elders and deacons do from week to week in some communities of believers.

Any brother who is capable of doing so has an equal right with any other to preside at the table of our Lord, and all of the brethren should take turns distributing the bread and fruit of the vine unto the saints. These are not official acts to be carried out by special functionaries, and a congregation which truly wants to represent the *ekklesia* of God should encourage every brother, young and old, to participate. So far have we drifted into traditional red tape and spiritual bureaucracy that a good sister told me not long ago, “We were recently disturbed about a month ago when not an elder showed up by the time the meeting began and we were afraid we would have to dispense with the Lord’s Supper. Fortunately one showed up late who had experienced car trouble and we had the communion.” With all respect to my good sister in Christ, she was taking a leaf right out of Rome’s book of ritual. Elders who are truly worthy of their calling will quit looking at service at the Lord’s table as their exclusive work by right of office and will start to urge and, if necessary, train all of the brethren to preside and share. It is time to break some of the traditional bonds which have no scriptural basis.

No one is an authorized baptizer by virtue of position or office. Any Christian has the right to baptize a person who confesses his faith in Jesus as the Messiah and God’s Son. This is not a clerical act. It is not the prerogative of an “ordained minister” for every child of God is a minister of God, and ordained of God to fulfill the divine will. We should encourage Christian fathers to immerse members of their own families, or those who lead others to the Lamb of God to immerse them into the blessed relationship. What is wrong with allowing a high school student who has converted one of his schoolmates to

baptize that one into Christ?

In open forums the question of performing marriage ceremonies is always raised as an exception to what I have stated. But one who performs marriages does so as a representative of the state, not of the community of saints. It is a license from the state which permits him to serve in this capacity and the qualification for officiating is set by the constitution of the state, and not provided within the framework of God's revelation.

If a "local minister" is jealous and afraid that others will steal his glory, he is a living example of one who is disqualified by temperament and understanding to fulfill the role which he assumes. The purpose of special functionaries is to "train or adapt the saints to carry out the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ." The body grows through that which every joint supplies. The best leader is not one who does everything but one who can get others to do it. No one has an exclusive right to engage in teaching, exhorting or admonishing the saints. Why should the talents of scores of brethren be stifled and sublimated so that one can grow by exercise? Shall we bind all of the members of the body but one, and let them become paralyzed through disuse? Are not all of the bodily members expected to perform the work for which they are gifted by the Lord? Are any gifts of God useless and worthless?

We owe a tremendous debt to men like Elton Trueblood, the eminent Quaker philosopher of Richmond, Indiana, who has written some of the most startling and revolutionary material on the subject of "ministry" in our generation. It is startling because so little of it is heard from other sources, and revolutionary because it is an honest attempt to restore the concept of ministry as it was in the primitive company of the redeemed.

No one can seriously read the chapter "A Practical

Starting Point” in the book *The Incendiary Fellowship*, or the one titled “The Abolition of the Laity” in the book *The Yoke of Christ* without being made to think about the great chasm between what we practice and what God purposed. Unfortunately, we suffer from two evils. Many of our brethren never read anything that is spiritually enlightening. They consider that is the “duty” of the preacher. And many of those who read never do so seriously, with a view to making any real change in their thinking. It is not likely that a Quaker philosopher will change those who refuse to be changed by apostolic disclosures.

We are tricked into thinking that we are free from “the clergy system” because we have been clever enough to employ other terms to designate our clergy. But being a clergyman has little to do with whether “the common people” designate one by such titles as “Reverend” or “Right Reverend.” One who appropriates to himself by reason of his status, the regulation and conduct of that worship which is the right of all, is a clergyman whether he admits it or not. What is the real difference in function between “the located evangelist” hired by a non-instrument Church of Christ, and the “pastor” hired by the Baptist Church a block down the street?

The pagan business world looks upon them as identical in status with each other and the parish priest. Both can get reduced fares for the clergy upon airlines. Both can carry a “clergy certificate” for purchase of tickets on bus lines. In some places they will both receive cards admitting them to professional sporting events upon mere payment of the sales tax. In other places they receive a “clerical discount” when they purchase a suit or topcoat. A lot of those who inveigh against “the clergy system” from the pulpit on Sunday accept a “clergy discount” on Monday, thus demonstrating anew that where a man’s treasure is there will his heart be also.

It may have been such casuistry which caused Edward Gibbon in his well-known literary work *Decline and Fall of the*

Roman Empire to write, “To a philosophic eye the vices of the clergy are far less dangerous than their virtues.” It is easy to dismiss this by reminding ourselves that Gibbon was a skeptic, but it might help if we earnestly weighed the observation.

Not only the world which surrounds our little oasis regards us as “the clergy” when we appropriate the function of preaching, and contract to proclaim the word at so much per annum with vacation time specified. The saints who are taxed to support the organizational complex feel the same way. It is “the minister” who has his name on the signboard out front and upon the official letterhead. He has an office in the consecrated structure, and often a secretary who alone can admit you to the inner sanctum. The very world we have created for ourselves sets him apart.

In many places the bishops are “the forgotten men.” The catalog of tremendous qualifications expressed to Timothy and Titus were given apparently to make sure that a man was qualified to officiate ten minutes per week at the Lord’s table, and in some places to wear a white carnation on the coat lapel as contrasted with the deacons who may be identified with the wearing of a pink rosebud. I always get a bang out of being around a group of men who get in a real dither just before time to march in to the stage, about whether or not everyone has his flower pinned on.

Hardly anyone ever calls the bishops to advise with them in times of marital, financial or social difficulties. The elders are not solicited to come and counsel a wayward son. If a member of the flock is hospitalized a frantic search is made to locate “the minister” to go and “have prayer.” I have long been concerned with what we do when we *have* prayer.

In justification for the brethren who hoped to devote their efforts to proclaiming the message of God’s grace, I must point out that they are upset and frustrated because they have been

caught in the gears of the institutional meat-grinder or are constantly being run through the congregational corn-sheller. In their hearts they believe in the priesthood of all believers and in the ministry of all the saints. Secretly, I think a lot of them resent being put on the stage to say “the right things” in “the proper way” which means to employ the kind of religious jargon and double-talk which opposes sin without making it lose its respectability.

But “The System” operates to produce professionals, and a lethargic and indolent people, good-hearted though they may be, would rather hire someone whom they can own to “conduct worship,” whatever that may mean, than to worship in Spirit and in truth. And “The System” operates only to perpetuate itself just as does the political system or the economic system. And it makes no difference who is elected or selected. *The System* does not change.

“The System” uses men so long as they follow its unwritten creed and conform to its traditional method. But men are expendable. They are good only so long as they produce. Once they rebel at being owned and made flunkies they will be sent packing and reduced to a pulp, made to feel that they are deserters, renegades and apostates. And all of this will be done by good people who think they are following the will of Jesus. So it becomes easier just to play ball than to fight the team, the umpires and the fans in the stands. I say it is easier, but deep inside it corrodes the soul.

Since I have nothing to lose but my soul, and cannot be hired, fired, or railroaded out of anything, I think, with your permission, that in my next issue I will make some rather simple and plain suggestions about what we can do to get out of the trap without having to gnaw a leg off. I hope you will read it, and if you don’t agree with it, I will love you and praise the Lord anyhow! But I would like to have you read it! In the meantime may God bless you!

Not An Ambassador

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

During the past several years it has been my privilege to associate directly with several groups of young people affiliated with the “Jesus Folk.” This is a loose categorization because they come in a lot of varieties like lettuce seed. I have visited their communes, lived with them for brief periods of time and shared with them their interest in my best friend, “the man from Galilee.” In every instance I have been received with respect and politeness and the hours we have spent together have enriched my life.

Many of these young people are from homes where their parents had no commitment to Christ. Some of them, sensing their rejection, developed hostilities and went the whole route of the “Beat” generation. Many of them know the agonizing and frightful battle against drug addiction, having been hooked for long months. Some are young Jews, and a few of these I have helped to lead to Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who can put it all together.

It has been an interesting thing to me to listen to these eager young people who know that Jesus is real, and who accept the Bible as the word of God. They do not question the origin of the scriptures nor doubt the validity of what they teach. But with no previous discipline of study they are likely to think that Ezekiel was writing directly to the people in Saint Louis or San

Francisco, and this results in some bizarre interpretations and applications.

Since they are correct in assuming that God has lost none of His power and the infinite time-clock is not about to run down, they sometimes conclude that He sends direct messages or “prophecies” today. I have been in a lot of groups where an earnest, soft-spoken young man, with long hair and a bearded face, stood up in faded jeans, while reading a “prophecy” he had “received from God.” Invariably these are quaint and generally couched in the 1611 language of the translators of King James.

I never raise a question about the origin of such a message before the group where love for one another prevails with such intensity and there is an eagerness to know the will of God for life which previously was so raw and frightening. Instead, I seek out the young “prophet” and sit down with him to quietly talk over the nature of God’s revelation.

It comes as a surprise to many of my youthful friends who have rejected the symbols of an affluent, but morally-degenerating society, that I hold that God’s revelation was completed some nineteen centuries ago. I do not believe there has been an additional revelation since John wiped the ink from the point of the calamus and laid it aside after penning “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Our knowledge of God’s will for our lives is by deeper insight into revealed truth, and not by additional revelation.

When Jesus came in the flesh, he embodied all the traits and characteristics of Godhood in the flesh. And while he was here he called, qualified and commissioned certain men to be his ambassadors. He designed to give unto them and their contemporary assistants, the prophets, a knowledge of the mystery which had never before been divulged, that the Gentiles were to be incorporated into one body with the Jews, and made partakers of the glorious promises. Paul said, “By revelation he

made known to me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:3, 5).

This revelation was given to them to make *all men* see the mystery of the fellowship. The revelation was not given to all men, but to the apostles and prophets. Through their proclamation all men will be led to see God’s purpose. The household of God, the saintly citizens, are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). God is not still laying the foundation. He is building upon it. We no more need additional apostles and prophets than we need another Christ.

There are no ambassadors for Christ alive today. An ambassador is a minister of state with special powers, given the authority to act in behalf of and instead of a sovereign who has sent him forth, in making treaties and formulating covenants. It is improper to sing of ourselves implying we are ambassadors. The apostles were ambassadors of the King. They were empowered to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes. Paul declared, “Now then we (that is, the apostles) are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.”

I have no ambassadorial power. All I can do is to repeat to men the terms of amnesty which the ambassadors revealed. The apostles and prophets had no successors to office because they fulfilled the purpose of the office for all time. They did not abdicate their office, they retained it. They are in the foundation as much as they ever were and they exercise authority through their revelation. I am built upon that foundation. I am one of the living stones growing together with others into a holy temple in the Lord.

But I am not a prophet or revelator. If I received a revelation from God as did the apostles it should be

incorporated in the holy scriptures. If the Spirit gave me a message for a congregation in Buffalo there should be an addition to the sacred canon, starting out, "Carl called to be an apostle, to the saints in Buffalo." But I assure you there will be no First and Second Carl to augment First and Second Peter, nor will there be a First and Second Buffalo to update the letters to Corinth. I am still digging into the apostolic revelation and coming up with ideas to revolutionize my feeble intellect and bring me closer to "the man from outside."

Modern "prophecies" and "messages from God" are generally the fruit of a meditative and contemplative heart, suddenly rescued from despair and depression and brought back from the brink of death. When one goes through a crisis experience of deep despondency and finds help from an unseen hand reaching down to snatch him back from a world of scrambled brains and confused minds he is eager to praise and magnify his deliverer and he ought to be. As thoughts of purity and thanksgiving begin to seep back into a heart which was empty and void, he is liable to mistake them for a revelation from God. In a sense they are, of course, a revelation to him, uncovering what previously was a mystery and foreign to his heart. Too, it seems a natural tendency of those who have been saved to think of themselves as the saviour of others.

I like to sit and explain this to my young friends to whom Jesus is so new and His word so fresh. Maybe we are in the student lounge or it might be we sit down on the library steps outside. Most of them listen respectfully because they know I love them very deeply. And a lot of them concur in my explanation of revelation. Many of them exhibit more enthusiasm about what I say than those who sit in the pews and sometimes nap through the class on Sunday morning. As one kid put it recently, "Wow! Like that's great! To think that God exploded that artesian well nineteen-hundred years ago, and I've been running around with my tongue hanging out and dried up like a piece of leather from thirst and didn't know where to go

and get a drink. Man, that's cool. It comes on heavy!"

When I got back to my car in the university public parking lot, I buckled the seat belt in order to silence the buzzer, and leaned back and said "Wow!" An old duffer like me! But then I am not used to that kind of enthusiasm about the word of God. Some folks my age don't intend to get used to it.

Error and Sin

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[Abstract]

Several months ago I made a distinction between error and sin. My almost casual reference has brought several requests that I enlarge upon my statement and explain more fully what I meant. Sin is essentially a product of the heart, while error is a mistake of the mind. Jesus declared, “But what comes out of the mouth has its origins in the heart; and that is what defiles a man. Wicked thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander— these all proceed from the heart” (Matthew 15:18, 19).

Basic to sin is the factor which was responsible for the first transgression, the exaltation of self and enthronement of the ego to a sovereign state which denies or defies the authority of God. It is rejection of the principle, “Thy will, not mine be done,” and acceptance of the opposing rule of action, “My will, not thine be done.” Sin is the revolt against God of an accountable being. It is often the result of a deliberate choice to do one’s thing without reference to the will of God.

Not all sin is premeditated. One may sin through ignorance and when he becomes aware of it he must at once proceed to secure forgiveness. This is made clear in the old covenant scriptures. “If any person among the common people sins inadvertently and does what is forbidden in any commandment of the Lord, thereby incurring guilt, and the sin he has committed is made known unto him, he shall bring his offering,

etc.”

A man may be in error and not be a sinner, although error may lead one to sin. But simply being wrong or faulty in understanding is not a sin. It is obviously better to be right about everything than to be wrong about anything, but infallibility is not an attribute of fallible man. It is ridiculous for our brethren to fight the doctrines of infallibility in Rome which recognizes only one man as infallible, and then create a system which demands that every man be infallible to be received into their number. One may even understand the terminology in which a proposition is stated and be mistaken about the proper application of it.

No one has yet apprehended all truth in its fulness, not even revealed truth. Therefore, no human mind can be used as a measure or criterion for all minds. The most brilliant mind on earth is finite, and is by nature incapable of grasping the infinite. No generation exhausts the possibility of apprehension so that knowledge can be frozen at the level of that generation and all research cease. To attempt to freeze knowledge at a given level is actually to freeze ignorance.

All sects demanding conformity are based upon the false premise that all honest men will form the same judgments and reach the same conclusions when exposed to the same doctrinal revelation. Because of this, it is further assumed that any person who forms a divergent opinion is simply not honest. There are several things which indicate this is not so. It is not the case in any other field. A good example is constitutional law. The Constitution of the United States reads the same to every jurist, but there are grave differences over its implications. Even justices of the Supreme Court differ, and are seldom a unit in their decision. That is why we are treated to majority and minority *opinions*.

Moreover, even the most rigid parties among us

acknowledge that universality of opinion is unattainable by thinking men. For this reason they elevate the one issue around which they polarize and it becomes the partisan *beau ideal*, while on many other matters tolerance is exercised. Thus, men who must pay lipservice to an opinion about certain institutions and their mode of support in order to be regarded as loyal by a party which runs up the factional standard may disagree about scores of other matters, some of which are regarded as of such vital importance by others that they build parties around them.

Actually, what happens is that an opinion, or interpretation, is made into a dogma or creed, and becomes the foundation upon which another sect is built. The glory of the faith revealed is that it is not predicated upon a metaphysical conclusion but upon belief of certain historical facts validated by credible witnesses. One who acknowledges that the subject of these facts, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Messiah and God's Son, and surrenders his being unto his lordship may be in error about many other things and still be saved.

There are no error-free disciples of Jesus in the flesh. Instead of arrogantly pretending that we have perfect knowledge, our proper attitude should be one of openness to truth, so we can alter our concepts as we learn more. One is not wishy-washy when he changes his course because of a greater knowledge of the Father's will. The person to be pitied is the one who is glued to his past and is afraid to read or investigate what is said by those who differ with him, for fear he might be changed.

There is room in Christ for those who are mistaken else none of us could be in him. Freedom from error is not a term of admission into the family of the Father, but trust in His Son is certainly required. All of us are in error about many things, even though we have an eager desire to know the truth. We are not rebelling against God. We love him and seek to obey his will as we understand it. Being mistaken is not a sin unless it is

deliberate and voluntary. It is for this reason we must be gracious toward and tolerant of our brethren. Tolerance is not endorsing anything you believe to be wrong, but simply enduring someone who believes it to be right.

I think it will be readily agreed that we will never be able to unite all who believe in Jesus sincerely, except upon the ground of those things which are universally admitted, that is, truth which is at once recognizable as essential to the very nature and structure of the kingdom of heaven. It is for this reason that the apostle while writing about the unity of the Spirit, defined it in terms of seven cardinal facts. Nothing else can possibly produce unity among men in their current state.

I subscribe wholeheartedly to the statement of Alexander Campbell, "It must strike every man of reflection, that a religion requiring much mental abstraction or exquisite refinement of thought, or that calls for the comprehension or even apprehension of refined distinctions and of nice subtleties, is a religion not suited to mankind in their present circumstances . . . Christianity consists infinitely more in good works than in sound opinions, and while it is a joyful truth that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, it is equally true that he that says, 'I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'"

When opinions, interpretations and deductions are made the rallying-ground of the saints, when they must be subscribed to in order to be received, then we have new creeds and new confessions, and then we will have new parties and sects. When orthodoxy becomes the standard for judging righteousness, all of the powers of the inquisition, though refined, will again be the agents of conformity! And that will be a sad day!

White or Black Shoes

Mission Messenger (February 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

For several years I have been impressed by those members of the Dunkard Brethren Church whom it has been my privilege to meet. They are gentle, humble and unassuming. Like myself, they prefer the plain life, and this carries over, as it should, into their public expressions of praise to God. They have frequently attended my meetings in which instrumental music was not employed, since they deplore it, as do certain Presbyterian congregations. I have recently read a book *Purity of Worship* by M. C. Ramsay, M. A., containing a stern denunciation of instrumental music. It is distributed by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

The Dunkard Brethren are one of the segments of a fragmented restoration movement and have their roots in what historians refer to as “the radical reformation” to distinguish between it and the one which Martin Luther helped kindle. They publish a paper called *Bible Monitor*, under the auspices of a Dunkard Brethren congregation located on a rural route out of Converse, Indiana. I have been a reader of this little periodical for many months.

I am intrigued by its motto which reads: “Spiritual in life and scriptural in practice.” The purpose is stated thus: “Be it our constant aim to be more sanctified, more righteous, more holy, and more perfect through faith and obedience.” I am sure

that my own readers would label this as a worthy objective. The writers for the little paper are not journalists. They, like those in most religious parties which are exclusivistic, know all of the other adherents and recognize immediately the faithful and loyal.

I am also an heir of an attempt to produce unity by a restoration of the primitive order of things, but our forebears were principally from Scotland and Ireland. Those who sired groups like the Dunkard Brethren came primarily from Germany and the Low Countries. They were serious in their attempt to reproduce the way of life in the first century and thus made the love-feast, foot-washing, and the prayer veil for female communicants, part of their recognized approach to God. Our brethren, when confronted with these matters, arbitrarily decided they were simply cultural customs and threw them out as having no relationship to restoration.

Every restoration movement always has two barrels at hand while studying the scriptures. One is labeled "To be retained" and the other "To be discarded." As men study the word, which is so plain that a wayfaring man even if he is a fool cannot err therein, they throw in one barrel what is binding, and in the other what can be left out. The trouble arises because they cannot all agree on which things should go in which barrel. Even after they get the party barrels filled to their satisfaction with the right assortment, someone always gets itchy fingers and lifts something out of one and throws it into the other. Then a fight breaks out, a new faction is spawned and a "loyal paper" is started to resist the encroachments of the apostates.

No restoration movement ever has an easy time. Although their divergent groups always debate and argue, each one is "the Lord's church" and "faithful to the Book." In some Texas cities there are as many as ten different groups called "Church of Christ." Every one of them is "faithful to the Book" as they describe themselves, while all of the others are disloyal. They

may be more nearly correct on the latter statement than on the first.

Even humble folk like the Dunkard Brethren have problems. It is difficult to “hold the line” against innovations. This comes to light in the October 15 issue of *Bible Monitor*. A good sister is writing about certain conditions which she evaluates as “Satan perching on the front benches of our churches today.” Her chief concern is the mode of dress. In order to preserve what is called “gospel plainness” the Brethren have always worn unadorned black suits with no coat lapels. They have rejected neckties and wrist watches as symbols of pride and worldliness.

The women have always worn drab looking dresses with black shoes. The head covering is a plain bonnet, an indispensable part of the costume. There is no jewelry or hair styling. All of this is fairly well maintained in a rural setting with its isolationism and clannishness. But the world does not remain static in order to accommodate our faith. People tend to travel more in times of affluence and the *Brethren* are not immune to this tendency.

So the good sister “humbly submitted” an article detailing her concern. She decried the wearing of white, pink, yellow, or blue shoes, in place of black ones. She was agitated about those who were beginning to wear colorful prints “instead of the plain modest dress” and who added insult to injury by styling their hair high, while setting the covering half-way back on their heads. She knew that some had even worn a watch on the wrist.

In her inner agony of spirit, she asked, “Where is our church going to end at? Will there be a sharp turn that we will have to take or will the church keep going, hoping that some day these poor souls will wake up? Will there be such a church as we so-called Dunkard Brethren people in twenty years from now? It makes me wonder.”

Some of my readers will be inclined to smile smugly at the quaint, old-fashioned things regarded as visible symbols of holiness by good people. I do not share that feeling at all. I find myself filled with compassion because I have been associated all of my life with people who have projected other things as symbols of that same quality.

The word of God enjoins modesty in apparel, but it was uninspired men who decided one was a better person if he wore black shoes rather than white, or squinted at the sun or looked at a pocket watch rather than one strapped about his wrist. The Dunkard Brethren are right to urge modesty but they are wrong in thinking it can be obtained by arbitrary selections bound upon others by human dogma. These things are not indicative of Christian discipline but of party subservience, and they are enforceable only so long as men check in their intellects and abdicate their right to think or question.

Certainly one can be pure in heart if he has lapels on his coat. He can also be immoral in a coat without lapels. To paraphrase the scripture and take some liberty with it, "Neither a creased gray hat availeth anything, nor a plain flat black one, but faith which works by love." But let those who read this paper not look with disdain upon our friends in other groups for we share the same hangups and often judge the worthiness of others before God by their conformity unto us and our traditions.

Transforming Speech

Mission Messenger (March 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Words may be either servants or masters. If the former they may safely guide us in the way of truth. If the latter they intoxicate the brain and lead into swamps of thought where there is no solid footing. Among the sources of those innumerable calamities which from age to age have overwhelmed mankind, may be reckoned as one of the principal the abuse of words. — Thomas Hartwell Horne.

It was Sir Winston Churchill who came up with the famous quip that the inhabitants of Great Britain and the United States were one people separated only by a common language. I learned how true that was when I first went to Great Britain. Up to that time I had always assumed that I spoke English, but after I heard the English brethren speak I knew that one of us did not. Since they were on home territory I gave them the benefit of the doubt.

The same thing may be said of those in the various segments of the restoration movement of which we are heirs. I think you could blindfold me and allow me to listen for ten minutes to a brother from the non-instrumental Church of Christ talking to one from the Christian Church, and I could pick out the one who represented each segment. As Simon Peter was told when he was trying to gate-crash on those who arrested Jesus, “Your speech betrays you.”

Both groups have their distinctive terminology or jargon, and one does not need to be a linguist to pick them out. I know a brother who claims he can listen five minutes to a radio speaker from the Churches of Christ and tell which “brotherhood school” he attended. One day he was stumped. He could not tell whether a speaker was from Harding College or Abilene Christian College. It turned out that he had gone to both and each had left its mark upon him. Each has its own version of the “holy twang” as it used to be said of the pioneer preachers.

We form our vocabulary by our thinking and we also form our thinking by our vocabulary. It is true that “as a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” but it is equally true that “as a man speaketh so will he become.” Most of us are unwitting victims of our speech habits and some of us are unwilling to be, but we have been bound by the skeins of custom and tradition until we are as helpless as Gulliver when wound up in the threads of the Lilliputians.

This is made especially manifest among Christian Church leaders who nod vigorous assent when I point out publicly that under Christ there are no holy days, holy things, or holy places. There are only holy people, and the only sanctuary God has on earth now is a consecrated human heart. Before the service has concluded someone will inevitably announce that the morning question forum will be in the adult study room while the night gathering will meet back in the *sanctuary*. Not long ago, a man said to me, after a meeting which had been frequently punctuated with vociferous “Amens” that “If these people get home and think [about] what you really said, they will recall every amen they uttered, and you’ll be in for trouble!” Apparently no one went home and thought about what I said.

If one of the brethren is present from the “anti-Sunday School wing” of our ripped-off brotherhood he will always get me off to one side and point out, in all seriousness, that the term “adult classroom” is in the same category with “sanctuary.” It is

getting to the place where everyone but me is so jumpy that I may have to do all the talking and air my mistakes. I've got a lot of them which could stand a little airing, I'm sure.

I had better get to my theme, though, and quit rambling around and visiting with you as if you had all day. It could be your wife is waiting for you to help dry the dishes. Let me begin by saying that I have yet to meet very many brethren who do not pay lipservice at least to the priesthood of all believers, and the ministry of all the saints. When I bear down on that theme publicly, and I generally manage to squeeze it in somehow, the preachers who are present nod assent as fervently as they ignore what I say when I leave town.

I am convinced that most of us know we have been maneuvered around by the Enemy until we are trapped into perpetuating a system which is not scriptural, but we feel we must hang on to it or see all of "our gains" washed down the drain. I think the average man hired to be "the minister" of a congregation of God's priests would be tickled pink if the elders told him they were going to put him on the program to take his turn at edifying the saints about once every three months, while other brethren spoke on the other Sundays. There is little danger of that happening in a lot of places because the followers of Jesus would desert the place like flies when someone gets the Flit gun out. If the preacher didn't speak there wouldn't be anything to complain about while eating the pork roast and browned potatoes.

All of us pay lipservice to the priesthood of all believers but the thought that we should practice it has somehow escaped us in the shuffle until it is as remote as trying to fly to heaven without wings. There is no greater waste of talent on earth today than is found in the average community of believers. If a business concern or manufacturing plant carried on like we do it would have to file for bankruptcy in less than six months. If the physical body never exercised any member but the mouth it

would become flabby, futile and frustrated. We've got a big team but no one ever carries the ball but the coach. The rest of us stay in the huddle. When "the board" meets in a lot of places it is to plan more work for an overworked preacher and even then the meeting breaks up in a verbal fight. If the members spent as much energy in visiting the sick and going about doing good as they do in squabbling we could take the world for Jesus. There is no energy shortage in the talk field.

We have not restored the primitive ideal of a community able to edify itself without importing a professional edifier. We have let out the job of building us up in the most holy faith to a building contractor. Instead of having an equipping ministry we have developed quipping entertainers. And the congregation grows larger in number and weaker in ability. We do not seem to distinguish between flab and muscle, and we think that the bigger we get the more righteous we are. The biggest man I ever saw was in a carnival sideshow, but he was so helpless he couldn't even walk. They had to swing him over into a truck with a derrick. People came to see him but he did not do anything.

It is not at all certain that the devil cares how many we take in provided they act like many of those already there. They do not fight him any harder now that they are in the army of the Lord than they did while still on his team. Salvation in Christ Jesus and sanctification of the Spirit mean a great deal more than getting people into the water and enrolling their names on the roster and reporting their accession. Being in the church no more guarantees that you are a Christian than being in a potato patch assures you are a potato.

We bang away at the Jehovah's Witnesses as if they were the worst thing that has happened to the country aside from Watergate and the gasoline shortage. And I confess that ever since I was a lad and knew how they had to alter their books to cover up some of the laughable prophetic blunders of Pastor

Russell, who missed the mark as far as Joseph Smith of the Mormons, it has taken a lot of genial good will to be patient with them. Yet, with all of their ludicrous cover-ups they come more nearly practicing the ministry of all believers than those of us who have to hurry home on Sunday so we will not miss the Green Bay Packers or an old John Wayne movie on television.

Of course, one could sit here like I am doing and complain about his brethren until after dark, but it would do little good. So I want to suggest some changes in our spiritual vocabulary which will help us to more nearly do what we timidly affirm we would like to do. If you cannot agree with what I write, praise the Lord anyhow! I will not get uptight because you do not see it like I do. But I'll never die happy without writing it and I am sure you want me to die— happy, that is!

1. We need to quit talking about people “entering the ministry” when we mean taking up preaching as a profession, or means of livelihood, or both. Any service we render for Jesus is ministry. The brother who mows the lawn at the meetinghouse is a minister. So is the one who repairs the furnace or the speaker system. A mother who takes care of her children and rears them in the fear of the Lord is a minister. The sisters who meet and make quilts for the home for the aged are ministers of God.

We enter the ministry when we are baptized into Christ, and if we do not, there is something seriously wrong. The word *minister* is merely another word for servant, and just as a soldier enters the service the day he is inducted, so we enter the service of the King the day we pledge allegiance to Him in baptism.

2. We need to quit talking about people volunteering for “full time service” when we are referring to them accepting a special assignment. This makes it appear that the saints who do not march up and stand in front at “the altar call” are not full-time servants. But God has no shift workers and no part-time workers. Anyone who is in Jesus is in him day and night, body

and soul. The very act of having Christians come up and volunteer for “full-time service” creates the impression that those who do not are not obligated completely. But just as a soldier who enlists is a full-time soldier, so every Christian who has enlisted is a full-time soldier. You do not turn Jesus off like you do the gas burner or the faucet in the kitchen sink.

3. We need to quit talking about people “leaving the ministry” when they get tired of trying to find sermon outlines for Sunday and go into the real estate business or start teaching biology in high school. A man who sells real estate is God’s minister in the real estate firm. If he is not he probably would not be God’s minister in the pulpit either. One who teaches languages in a public school is as much God’s minister as one who preaches on Sunday.

Every Christian is a minister, every child of God is a priest. All of us claim to believe that, but if you think we do, let someone change his card from reading John Doe, Minister; to make it read John Doe, Priest, and see what the elders do to him. But why not? If you can take one word that applies to all of the saints and appropriate it for your embossed calling card, why not take another one? But a person who quits preaching as his job may not “leave the ministry” at all. He may exchange one field of ministry where he feels inept for another where he can function with greater latitude and success. You only leave the ministry if you leave Jesus. I know some men who are preaching and who would be Grade A automobile mechanics. Why should they continue to stay in the pulpit where everyone is gritting his teeth at them when they could repair automobiles for the brethren and win their smiles, whether they had teeth or not?

One need not quit working in a factory to “become a minister.” Paul was as much a minister of Christ when he was sewing tents or riding a plank in the ocean after a shipwreck, as when he was standing on Mars’ Hill telling the Athenians about the God who made heaven and earth and all things that are in

them. Luke was as much God's minister while prescribing for patients, as when traveling with Paul. Zenas was God's minister while practicing law. We have been trapped into thinking that ministry consists of making talks in a holy place, a dedicated structure, a temple made with hands, but that may not really be fulfilling our real vocation.

Elton Trueblood hit the nail on the head, and hit some of us in the same place, when he pointed out that it was a neat device for people to hire someone to be their minister, thus relieving all of the ordinary members of ministerial responsibilities. He adds, "But this way lies death," and then he tells why. You ought to read it in that engrossing book *The Incendiary Fellowship*.

Incidentally, I am pretty much encouraged by what a lot of good Anglicans and others are writing in these days. I suspect that about fifty years from now a good many of those within the "restoration movement" will be saying the same things. We tend to take about that long to catch up because of our enforced isolationism, and tendency to read only what is written by "faithful brethren," who are often not very faithful and certainly not good writers.

One statement that helps me was written by Bishop Stephen Baynes in the *London Church Times*: "There is nobody stuffier than a parson who is acutely conscious of the privileges of his order, of his monopoly of theological learning, liturgical authority, general sanctity, and so on. The worst of it is that the laity so often believe in all this nonsense, and put the sacred ministry on a pedestal, until they feel that the only way a man can serve God is by being ordained."

Then there was the statement of Canon Edward Patey, who was addressing a group of teachers from a technical college, meeting in Coventry: "All orders are holy. Plumbers are as much in holy orders as the clergy, serving God and their fellows.

Electricians, park-keepers, doctors and typists are all working as much with the things of God as the priest with the sacrament.” Of course I allow a little for the language of these good Episcopalians, seeing they have their own jargon as do we, but with a few men like these augmenting J. B. Phillips, John R. W. Stott, Michael Green, and the late C. S. Lewis, we might get something going even yet!

4. We need to quit making a big furor over those who propose to prepare for certain kinds of ministry to the exclusion of those who expect to pursue other avenues of service. It may take more intestinal fortitude to teach a third grade in a ghetto school in the inner-city in America than to hie off to some place in Africa as a missionary. Let me explain further. I know a congregation which takes particular pride in the number of preachers it has started out, through the years. And it has had phenomenal success. This is the constant emphasis and pressures are brought to bear on young people in high school to make plans to “prepare for the ministry.” They are urged to keep alive the tradition and “not let the church down.” In almost every meeting where visitors are present someone proudly mentions the number of men who have “entered the ministry.”

Every year a dinner is held to “honor recruits” and high school graduates who have enlisted for “full-time service” are seated at the head table with their parents and grandparents at a special table nearby. Each recruit is presented an expensive Bible after being lauded for his decision. But no one mentions those high school students who have resolved to devote their lives to teaching history, majoring in sociology, or serving as research technicians in the field of space exploration. Yet if these latter live for Jesus and witness to his impact upon their lives they may do as much to change the hearts of men as those who are granted public acclaim.

There is nothing wrong with having a dinner for those who are going to minister for Jesus, but it should be held for all of

them, and not for a special caste. The one who presides might well say, “Tonight we have met to honor four young people who are graduating from high school and want to pursue the ministry in which they enlisted at the time of their baptism into Christ Jesus. One expects to be God’s minister in proclaiming the Word on campus, another in operating a Shell Service station, still another in coaching athletics, while another will be driving his father’s garbage disposal truck.” Granted this may not enhance “the image” of the church, but the last will certainly improve the state of the community. And it has been my experience that those who carve out an image, always end up bowing before it and worshipping it.

I know you think I threw that “garbage truck” bit in for kicks, but I did not. I want to tell you a true story of using a garbage truck as a pulpit from which to share the good news. It did not have a sign on it “Gospel Chariot” like you see on some “church buses” running around town on Sunday. But it was a gospel chariot just the same.

One of the most interesting men I have ever met firmly believes that God has called every Christian to share the good news. He never “studied to be a preacher” and I doubt that he even finished high school. If you were out shooting preachers (and I hope you are not), he would be the last one you’d fire at, and you might not aim at him at all. He doesn’t look like a preacher and he doesn’t act like one. About the only thing he has in common with preachers is that he eats a lot. But I confess that I have learned things from him that no “clergyman” ever taught me. He has a heart of gold but his courage is solid brass. He is one of the best psychologists I have ever seen.

He started three congregations by just going from door to door in as many areas, and talking to people with such genuine warmth and concern that he won their confidence and started home Bible studies all over the place. Every time he baptized thirty or forty and they were going real good someone would

move up from Georgia or Alabama and want to bring in a preacher from down home to “set the place on fire.” All three places were successfully bombed and embalmed by “down home preachers” who got everyone into a big fracas and then headed back to the promised land that flowed with grits and red-eye gravy.

A lesser man would have become discouraged, but this man was too simple for that. He knew he was called to be faithful, not successful, so he just kept on and left the final account with God. He developed a real burden upon his heart for a resort area where many came to spend the entire summer, leaving Jesus at home, if indeed they ever knew him. He resolved to plant the cause in the area with God’s help, so he sat down and talked over the strategy of conquest with his wife, a motherly soul who never placed an obstacle in his path. He agreed that he should get into some kind of work which would enable him to visit every house regularly and where the people would like to see him come and even welcome him.

While he and his wife were praying a thought struck him like a coconut dropping from a palm tree. Everyone welcomed the garbage man. The longer he stayed away the more anxious they were to see him. If he missed them they would call him up to see what was the matter. So he bought a garbage truck from a city firm which was glad to sell an old one. He had some notices printed soliciting business. On the back of the cards were the words, “Jesus will be asked to be my partner in this business as he has been in all else I have done. I shall try to treat you as I think he would want me to.”

He got all of the business he could handle and people came out to talk to him about his card. Then he had a small folder printed, very neatly done with the words on the front page reading, “I can clean up the mess in your driveway but only Jesus can clean up the mess in our hearts.” In less than six months seventeen people were gathering every Sunday in a room

in the sports pavilion to break bread in memory of Jesus. If you had a hundred garbage-men like this in a state you'd start a hundred new congregations and no one would be bugged by a financial drive to get them going!

Please don't get me wrong. We should not get rid of preachers. We can use more of them than we have, and we should support them and do so well. What we need to do is to free them to do what God wants them to do, take the good news to a perishing world. We need to grow up in Christ Jesus until we do not need to pay a man to referee our little dogfights, listen to our whining complaints about other brethren, and act as a glorified nursemaid in God's incubator room. Why can we not learn to feed ourselves? Why do we need someone else to warm the pabulum and break the Melba toast of the bread of life into little bite size chunks for us? Let's support brethren who have the ability and willingness to take the message to the pagan culture instead of making them errand boys for the church.

Since we are all priests let's start acting like priests. This doesn't mean to turn your collar around but it does mean to reverse your thinking. Look around you. Study the congregation and community. What needs are there? How can you best serve those needs? What can you do that will count for God? Let's straighten up our vocabulary and straighten out our lives. Let us quit saying, "There he is Lord, send him!" and start saying, like Isaiah, "Here am I Lord, send me!"

Kokichi Kurosaki, in his book *One Body in Christ*, points out, "Man is a creation of God and God does not create like a factory, by mass production." You are a minister of God, but you are a unique minister of God, and thus, your ministry will be unique. If you do not carry it out no one else can.

The Last Prophecy

Mission Messenger (March 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

A few days ago I was reading in my recently acquired copy of *The New International Bible*, when I decided to study again the gospel record of John. I found myself especially wrapped up in the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, which Alfred Edersheim declares “marks the highest point in the ministry of our Lord.” It was this event which started the ball really rolling which made Golgotha the watershed of human history (John 11:51).

All of us are going to be raised from the dead by the voice of Jesus, but the case of Lazarus was a little different. He became sick and died specifically that Jesus could reach the summit of his miraculous demonstration by calling him back from his dreamless sleep. When Martha and Mary sent messengers to inform Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick,” Jesus returned the word, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

It is not my purpose here to detail what happened. Suffice it to say that by the time Jesus arrived at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, Lazarus had been dead for four days. But when Jesus went to the grave and called for him to come out, the record says that he did so with his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to the

onlookers, "Take off the graveclothes and let him go."

So impressive was this event that a lot of the Jews who had come to console Mary, expressed faith in Jesus. But there were others who hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had done. They were so upset that they joined the chief priests in summoning a meeting of the Sanhedrin. When they convened the members were all in a dither. "What are we accomplishing in trying to stop the influence of Jesus?" they asked, and then added, "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs." The enemies of Jesus who were present acknowledged the miracles. It is only his enemies who were not present who deny them.

The power of miracles such as the raising of Lazarus, to make believers was acknowledged freely by the members of the august council. They could not forget that they lived in an occupied country and that the Romans were suspicious of all Jews who began to amass a following. So they said, "If we let him go on like this, everyone will put their trust in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."

At this point, Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest that year, spoke up. "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." The Sanhedrists were apt students of the Torah and the traditions, and thus recognized at once the quotation from the Midrash, or commentary, *Bereshith Rabba*, "It is better one man should die than the community perish."

Here was justification for planning the death of Jesus. Despite the Roman prohibition, denying the right of the Jews to execute a man, the high priest had furnished them the motivation for ridding themselves of Jesus in order to preserve the nation which God had ordained. The power of miracles clashed with political expediency and the latter won. John

writes, "So from that day they plotted to take his life."

But John also writes something else about the adage of which Caiaphas reminded them. "He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one." Caiaphas, who later rent his garments when Jesus was brought before him, did not realize the final outreach of his words. A greater power was behind them, and although the high priest thought only of murdering Jesus to save a nation, God took his words and used them as prophetic of the atonement by which all men may be saved.

It is interesting indeed that John says that the death of Jesus was for God's scattered children "to bring them together and make them one." This was involved in the prediction of Caiaphas although he knew it not. He was the chief religious adviser of those who thought of themselves as exclusively the children of God. In the temple environs where he presided there was a court of the Gentiles with a wall separating it from the court of "the people," and on the wall a painted sign, "Any Gentile crossing this line will incur the penalty of death."

It was the design of an infinite God to use the cross to batter down such walls so that eventually in Christ there would be neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free. All who were called of God and who responded to that call to come out of the domain where sin reigned and trust in the righteousness of Christ Jesus would be one. Caiaphas did not realize this, nor did he know that with his statement Jewish prophecy came to an end. His was the final prophecy and it was involuntary. With him the prophecy of the Mosaic economy, as well as its high priesthood culminated. The goal of prophecy was reached in the atonement and the priesthood of Aaron ceased with the nailing to the cross of the handwriting of ordinances.

I find it thrilling to realize that this last prophecy before the conquest of the arch-fiend of the universe with the weapon he had chosen, was dedicated to the unity of God's scattered children. It is for this reason that I would lend my feeble talents to help gather them together so that the dream of his death may be realized. So long as the children are not one, that long is the will of God not done on earth as it is in heaven.

If he died to make us one I should live to help us realize that unity. I am resolved never to allow any issue, opinion, or human vagary of thought, to undo what His blood has accomplished. Nothing that my brethren may think under the Lordship of Jesus is as important to me as the blood which cleansed us and made possible the blessed new creation. Although my views of the implementation of his will and my ideas of his expressions through his twelve ambassadors are important to me, I shall never allow them to erase the effect of the cross, nor make that tragic death an inglorious failure.

I shall receive all of God's scattered children when and where I find them. I shall receive them not because they agree with me but because they are his children. I shall not seek to make them one with me in any faction, segment or school of thought, but in Christ. If we are in Christ it is enough for me, because it is in Christ God proposed to make us one. I shall never again think, so help me Lord, that only those are his children who huddle around some partisan standard, even though that standard be correct.

Nor will I ever confuse any movement, no matter how valid its claims, with the one body which the Spirit created. Call it restoration movement, unity movement, or whatsoever—movements are launched by men and most of them have worthy basic goals, but the one body is the creation of God and those who are in it have been accepted by God whether accepted by anyone else or not. Movements may be helpful, and even essential, at certain times and because of certain conditions, but

when they cease to be regarded as movements, and are equated with the kingdom of heaven, they become dangerous and divisive. Then they cease to be a road to solution and become part of the agonizing problem.

God regards nothing as the body of Christ which contains fewer than all the saved of all the earth. There are factions many and parties many, but there is only one body. By one Spirit we are all baptized into it. The Spirit never baptized any person into a sect or party. And no one was ever baptized into the one body because he was either right or wrong about some secondary issue, but because he believed that Jesus was God's anointed Son.

Let partisan promoters and factional agents cut their brethren off and cull them out because they will not forfeit their right to think for themselves; let them blast each other as liberals and antis, but I shall refuse to be made a political pawn by such childish claptrap. I shall recognize all of God's children and receive all of the redeemed. It is silly to think you can unite by dividing or combine by castigating one another. We will never achieve oneness by debate nor argue ourselves into harmony. We must receive one another where we are and as we are, if we are in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit will lead us into deeper unity and involvement with one another.

We must build bridges rather than erode chasms and throw out lifelines rather than hurl challenges. It is only little men who measure the breadth of truth by their puny and imperfect understanding of it, or who limit the boundaries of divine love by their feeble comprehension of it. If I am mistaken in judgment, and I well may be, I would risk loving too much than too little. I would rather receive as a brother someone God may have rejected, than to reject one whom God has received. If I err in showing mercy let it be in the extension of it to someone undeserving rather than in the neglecting of someone who is.

We are called out of sin and called together in Christ that we may further the divine purpose of uniting the scattered flock. Once we were bitter, carnal and worldly, hated and being hated. Now that we have been rescued from such ungodly behavior, shall we drag the old man of sin from the grave and exhibit these ruthless characteristics among the saints? I have renounced the works of the flesh and have received my brethren. In this path I shall walk!

Was That Thunder?

Mission Messenger (March 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

One of the really intriguing incidents in the life of Jesus took place the day he rode an ass into Jerusalem and the populace turned out to wave palm fronds and scatter them in his path, while yelling, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord!” It may get to you a little when you realize that a few days later some of the same ones were yelling “Crucify him!” But you should not be too cynical. It is always that way. It is the nature of mobs to crown you one week and crucify you the next.

One thing that heightened the excitement on that Sunday was the fact that several people who had been present when Lazarus was summoned from the grave still wrapped in his shroud, were in town, and buttonholing everyone on the street, telling them what had happened. This honed the curiosity of the folks to an edge as sharp as a razor, and they were elbowing their way into good vantage points from which they could get a firsthand glimpse of the wonder worker.

Then something strange happened. A group of Greeks who had turned up in the city for the feast looked for Philip and said to him very politely, “Sir, we would like to have a look at Jesus.” This probably unsettled Philip a little so he consulted with Andrew and the two of them personally relayed the request to Jesus. The result was electrifying. Realizing the importance of

the desire of these “other sheep” Jesus pointed out again the necessity and imminence of his death and subsequent glorification.

In the emotional state of the moment he cried out, “Father, glorify thy name.”

Immediately, according to John, a voice spoke from heaven, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” The people who heard it were at once divided in sentiment “Some said that it thundered; others said, An angel spoke to him.” Times have not changed a lot. On the university campus I’m constantly in contact with brilliant young men and women who can’t tell the difference between God speaking and thunder.

Of course the real problem is that a lot of humanistic thinkers do not believe in the supernatural and they have to scramble around to come up with a naturalistic occurrence to explain what took place instead of a miracle. And some of the explanations drummed up are farther out than miracles. You really have to have a lot of faith to go for them!

Even William Barclay, whose background material for the word of God is fantastic, weakens a little bit when confronted with some of the signs that Jesus did, and injects for optional consideration some of the screwball ideas which have been bandied around by theologians whose faith is as weak as their explanations.

A good illustration is the case of the feeding of the five thousand with one hamburger bun for each thousand and a couple of sardines. It is asked if it is logical to believe that people like this would set out without taking food, and it is suggested they all had a pretty ample lunch stashed away in their haversacks. But they were selfish and did not want to get it out lest they might have to share with the others. However, when Jesus began to pass around the meager supply of food which he

had cadged from a little kid on the fringe of the crowd, everyone got ashamed and hauled out his provisions, and it turned out they all had more than enough to eat after all.

As Barclay points out, if this explanation is accepted it “was not the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes; it was the miracle of the changing of selfish people into generous people at the touch of Christ. It was the miracle of the birth of love in grudging hearts.” This sounds very beautiful and I am all for changing selfish people, but I do not think for a minute it is what happened here. If it was I doubt that all four of the gospel writers would have recorded it.

Barclay writes that if there was an actual multiplication of loaves and fishes it would be hard to understand. He is correct, but I think that the outstanding expositor overlooks one thing. The miracles of Jesus were happenings. They were matters of fact, and can only be interpreted in the light of evidence or testimony of eyewitnesses. Facts need not be understood in order to accept the testimony. We are not called upon to explain them but to weigh the evidence. It is correctly said that “Facts are stubborn things.” A fact does not depend for its validity upon whether or not anyone can explain it, or whether or not anyone believes it. Belief of a fact may change a man, but disbelief of a man does not change a fact.

I have been saying for years that no one living today can *deny* the miracles of Jesus. In order to do that one would have had to be present at the time to see whether it happened or did not. All he can do now is to question the veracity of the account of the witnesses, and to do that he must either show they were not present, or, if they were present, they did not have adequate opportunity to know what transpired. Failing this, he must prove they were incompetent because governed by some ulterior motive or were wholly untrustworthy in character. Simply saying you do not believe something happened a couple of thousand years before the earth was blessed by your coming,

doesn't mean a lot if there is ample testimony from those alive at the time that it did happen.

I do not *know* that Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, because I was not present for the event. If I had been present I would probably have been on the front row, as hungry as I generally am. But I *believe* it happened and I don't think the idea that everyone had a bunch of sandwiches with him is worth the snap of your finger. I think you have to take courses in advanced theology to believe things like that. It just does not appeal to a common, everyday, down-to-earth disciple of Jesus like myself. You reach conclusions like that *by degrees*.

Don't forget that Matthew and John were present for the occasion. They helped pass out the food. Their record was written long after the event occurred. Mark records that the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to dismiss the meeting and let the audience go because "they have nothing to eat." If it turned out that all of them had brought an oversize snack along, surely the writers would not have allowed that statement to stand for it would have been a blatant untruth.

Matthew writes that Jesus took the bread and fish, and looking up to heaven, blessed the food, "and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, and they did all eat and were filled." Mark says, "He gave the loaves to the disciples to set before them, and the two fishes divided he among them all." Luke declares he gave the food to the disciples to set before the multitude. John writes, "He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would."

John, who was on the scene, records an interesting sidelight. After everyone had eaten to repletion and the disciples had gathered up twelve hampers of table scraps, the people got to thinking about it all. John puts it this way, "Then those men,

when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.” They began to conspire to take Jesus by force and make him a king, and thus inaugurate a welfare state with free food doled out every day. It is hardly sensible they would have talked and acted in this manner if all Jesus did was to inspire them to get their sack lunches out of their knapsacks.

The next day the whole bunch showed up on the other side of the lake to remind Jesus that Moses had fed their fathers every day for forty years while he had just supplied food for one day. They cleverly inserted a couple of questions. “What sign do you contemplate doing so we can see it and believe in you? What do you intend to work?” The intimation was that if Jesus wanted to be thought of as being as great as Moses he would have to put them on a free food stamp program for at least forty years. Jesus was not fooled. He said, “You didn’t look me up because you witnessed the miracles but because you filled your stomachs with the bread I supplied.”

The problem with the one who must explain every act of Jesus in natural terms is not with miracles but with the nature of God. His primary unbelief is not related to miracles but to Deity. I hold that God is omnipotent and all things are possible unto him. I do not need to sit around contriving natural explanations. If the power of God is not supernatural it is not the power of God. So when God speaks I do not flim-flam myself into thinking it merely thundered.

All testimony must be confirmed to be rendered credible. Human testimony is confirmed by natural means, while supernatural testimony is confirmed by supernatural means. Miracles did not make Jesus the Son of God. They merely acted as substantiating proofs that he was what he claimed to be. I am absolutely convinced by the life he lived and the words he spoke that Jesus is the Son of God. I believe the miracles for Jesus’ sake as well as believing in Jesus for the miracles’ sake.

I am pledged to Jesus fully, completely and unreservedly. He is my everything. He is my all. Anyone who tries to weaken my faith in Jesus is wasting his time and mine. I am joined to the Lord and I am one spirit with him. I will not be beaten loose by skepticism nor pried loose by doubt. In fact, I am dead and my life is hid with Christ in God. That's the way it is! And I am happy on the way to glory!

The Changing Scene

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

Human beings never welcome the news that something they have long cherished is untrue: they almost always reply to that news by reviling its promulgator. — H. L. Mencken in “Minority Report.”

An entomologist, that is a bug-studier, could tell you without batting an eye that a gadfly is of the family *Tabanidae*. I didn't know that back when I used to drive a two-row cultivator pulled by a nervous team, or try to milk a jittery cow with huge horseflies buzzing the scene and crash-diving on the old girl's hide. And now I guess it doesn't make any difference whether I know it or not. When we talk about gadflies we generally refer to someone who goads our sacred cows, and “bugs” the brethren. A good way to get into real trouble with the folks is to stick a hatpin into a favorite balloon.

You'll forgive me, then, if I deny any ambition to prod one of our borrowed institutions which we have had around “the Lord's church” so long we now think it's scriptural, just as we do a lot of other things we've invented or shoplifted from the bargain counters of some of our sectarian neighbors. Really I no longer get a bang out of pointing out that the whole idea of a professional ministry is foreign to the very nature of the family of God. Brethren do not want to re-consider their practice in the light of the word. They simply prefer to be left alone with it

while they “restore” the primitive order.

It used to be that most everyone thought I was kind of a crackpot, or on an anti-institutional “high” for advocating what all of our pioneers contended for so consistently. The generally expressed view was that even if the ministry of all the saints was scriptural it wouldn’t work in this generation when the faith has degenerated into a spectator sport. Our brethren, unlike the Savior, come not to minister, but to be ministered unto. While he came to give his life they are content to come and give their money to keep the machinery running and the gears operating.

This does not mean they are not sincere. It does not imply they are not children of the Father and my brothers and sisters. They are victims, as we all are, of the amalgamation of the once-delivered faith with cultural influences and affluent western civilization values. We have become organized and institutionalized. We cannot do anything Jesus wants done until we form a committee and pass a bunch of by-laws. We’ve painted ourselves into a corner and now the first and greatest commandment is “Thou shalt not rock the boat,” and the second is like unto it, “Thou shalt not make waves.” All of us want to be faithful, but our problem is how to be faithful to Jesus while also being faithful to the image we have carved out.

A lot of good brethren used to think that the ultimate goal was to get a huge congregation, erect a massive cathedral and secure a staff consisting of a senior minister, an associate minister, a youth minister, a minister of education, and a minister of evangelism. The prime task of the elders was to arrange try-outs for rival candidates, bargain with them about salary and fringe benefits and hire the ones who could improve the community image. It was argued, rather vehemently, that we could not hold the people without a good pulpit man, an orator of outstanding ability. No one ever stopped to ask whether we ever truly had those whom you have to keep buckled into their seats with oratory.

Then something happened. A revolution occurred in the world around us and “the establishment” came under fire. The establishment consisted of the political, the economic and the educational systems. It came to be believed these were always operated by an “in group” to manipulate the masses and to perpetuate injustices. Persons really meant nothing except as they were gears in the whirring wheels. As always, the revolution lapped over into opposition to entrenched religion.

A lot of good folk thought the church would not be affected because it was not of this world. The body of Christ is not of this world but the institutional church is very much of this world. For years it has been talking about “the business” of the church, and has been trying to ape the world to get the job done. That is why it was affected by the industrial revolution, and also by the Space Age revolution. And the recent revolutionaries argued that the church has always tolerated greed and practiced racial hatred and segregation, using minority groups to provide entertainment because of their quaint mannerisms. Anyone who thinks this has not been true in the so-called restoration movement needs only to recall how Marshall Keeble, a genial conformist was used to attract white people to a tent which sometimes had a rope stretched down the aisle, with one side reserved for white folk and the other used as a “nigger heaven” like they had in theaters.

In politics the battle raged around the police as guardians of the institution, and against judges as its protectors. In economics it zeroed in on corporation managers, and in education against the administrators, some of whom were locked in their offices while others were locked out. The protesters were not heard by most of us because we were trying to yell louder at them than they did at us.

One reason we were not bothered too greatly was because the protest against the church and organized religion took a slightly different turn. People just dropped out, frustrated,

empty and sick at heart, because they were hungry. And most of us thought it was good riddance of bad rubbish, which shows how low we can fall, when we think of God's thirsty people as rubbish. Jesus did not die for rubbish or garbage but for people. But some of us would rather live with garbage than with people.

In any event, when the revolution was directed against the religious establishment it had to seek out as most revolutions do, a figure who was deemed responsible for the closed-door policy. Since the clergyman, or professional preacher was regarded as the authorized spokesman for, and the "top banana" in the religious structure, he lost face. He was toppled from his former pinnacle and his pronouncements, like the stock market, hit a new low in value.

How far he fell in the minds of those who were crystallizing a new culture can best be understood when it is recalled that the village preacher was once called the *dominie*, or lord, and then the *parson*. This is simply an Anglo-Saxon word for "the person." The local curate was the man of highest honor. Often he was the only person who could read. Those who received a letter had to visit him to learn what was in it and to have him reply in their behalf. When they raised a good crop of vegetables they always took the preacher enough to see him through the winter. When they butchered, they took him some of the best cuts of meat. He was always called upon to pray at school functions, and was the only one called upon to return thanks for blessings in any home he visited.

He was quite literally *the person* in the community. He was expected to talk in a different way, and to have a wholly different bearing from others. When he was seen approaching, ribald laughter was softened, and shady stories being told by members of the flock were suddenly brought to a screeching halt. He lived in the parsonage, the home of "the person" and some of our brethren wholly unaware that the world has changed about them still call their place of residence "the

parsonage.” Some of them do not even know what it means, and most of them are unconscious of the fact that the glory has departed.

I was born into “the old world” when science had not yet made possible the intellectual breakthrough and the preacher’s word was still an end to all controversy. But now the community at large no longer regards the preacher’s home as the orb around which all else revolves as satellites. So much did the reputation of the clergyman fall (call him what you will) in the eyes of the educated world that the surest way to empty an auditorium on a university campus was to announce that a minister would speak. There were exceptions but they were rare indeed. Men such as Billy Graham, with smooth-functioning machines, could drum up a crowd, but lesser lights who tried to duplicate his crusades had to organize furiously to import busloads of constituents from their own segments of the religious complex to make even a fair showing.

For one thing, the smart young thinkers of our day, steeped in history, knew about the original religious crusades, and the very word turned them off. It will always be a real question as to how much we have contributed to the energy shortage by “a crusade” conducted in a large central auditorium by a personable brother from Arkansas, or somewhere else. The last one I attended found the place just about surrounded with buses bearing the label “Church of Christ.” Pressure was put on to bring sinners to be converted by the sermon under the influence of crowd enthusiasm and mass psychology.

The last night I attended was a little like “old home” week at one of “our colleges,” with people standing up on the seats before the show got under way to wave at someone from down home, and wives hunching their husbands to keep them awake. The message was the good news about Hell and who would have the red carpet treatment of the devil. It was apparent that hell would be more crowded than the auditorium. Across the street

was the jail noted for its homosexual rapes. A block away was the police station with its constant parade of prostitutes, addicts and pushers. The little island of light was surrounded by the pagan world, but no one seemed to know it. They came and listened and got in the buses and went home, thrilled that hell was not for them!

I am happy when anyone is baptized into that wonderful glorious relationship with my precious Lord, blessed be his name, whether it is in a portable baptistery erected on a huge stage, or in a creek in the cow pasture, such as the site of my own obedience, while simple country folk sang, “O happy day that fixed my choice on thee my Savior and my God,” as they looked through the shimmer of their tears. But I occasionally have vagrant thoughts about such things as crusades among people who are proud that they “call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways.”

Like the university students, I am probably prejudiced by my knowledge of history which indicates that “the crusaders” were whipped into a frenzy by some pretty scroungy characters like Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless. Fortunately, the brethren who promote our crusades are good men, earnest men, eager to capture the “holy land” from the agnostic Turks and the arrogant Muslims of our generation. But they do not go where these are. Our real problem is that we meet together to talk among ourselves about other people, but the other people do not know we are there, unless someone persuades them to come.

Recently I talked to an enthusiastic and well-meaning brother who wanted to organize a “Children’s Crusade.” Young people would do the singing, act as ushers, lead in prayers, and do the preaching. I did not tell him that the original “children’s crusade” set up in France, by Stephen, a shepherd-boy of Cloyes, ended in disaster with the kids sold into slavery. It never fails to impress me that in the days of yore, described in the scriptures, no one who met a sinner ever hauled him somewhere

else to hear someone else tell him about Jesus. No one ever organized something first in order to tell the old, old story. I have known men who have been secretaries of “evangelism committees” for years, who have never once visited a neighbor to talk about Jesus. All they have ever done is to interview professional “Jesus talkers” to try and hire one to do the work God has called us all to do. It could be that bringing in someone from a distance will have more effect upon the community because he is not so well-known. In some cases it is a good thing he isn’t. Sometimes our brand of Christianity suffers as folk come to know us better. It does not wear well under the constant observation of skeptical pagans.

Telling people about Jesus is not a professional job. Grace has not been put into the hands of suave dispensers to be glibly dispensed. Because we have hoodwinked ourselves into thinking it is, our motto now is, “There he is. Lord, send him!” We have about come to the end of our string. Prices have been going up. The cost of preaching the good news is inflated. Getting a good preacher is as difficult as getting a good plumber. Those who have a record of “success” and who can demand a princely sum including fringe benefits— housing, car allowance, secretary, social security assessments paid, and three meetings per year to pick up enough extra to buy the children’s school clothes— can negotiate with the pulpit committee (whatever that is), and turn down the call. Many are called but few choose to come. It is evident from reading his letters that Paul was not a good organizer. No wonder he had to make tents.

Do not get me wrong. I am not blaming the preachers at all. Most of them are not paid too much. They must combine the talents of office administrator, community co-ordinator, hospital chaplain, director of organized activities, camp supervisor, liaison man, umpire, referee and trouble-shooter. I doubt you could ever adequately reimburse a man for exercising the courage, or poor judgment, to hire out to a congregation whose members have fought, gouged and hacked away at each other

for three generations while singing “Peace, peace, wonderful peace, coming down from the Father above.” What is it worth for walking boldly into a den of brotherly lions bearing a signboard reading “Church of Christ— Romans 16:16”? What is the going rate for sticking your head into a meat grinder or jumping headlong into a community rock crusher?

What kind of salary can recompense one who clings to a job because of a commitment made around a campfire when he was fourteen years old, and who knows that his disillusioned wife is slowly coming unglued with her personality ripped to shreds and torn to tatters by trying to “keep up the image”? How can you pay a man for driving him to the brink of insanity because even his most intimate relationship with his wife is a matter of cold routine and duty because she realizes she married a man who is owned by others and these have first call upon him because they own the house, they put up the money, and they have first claim upon him? What can you pay a man to rear his children in a goldfish bowl or a shop window where everyone is watching for a flaw or looking for a lapse in a freckle-faced kid who knows that a family picnic is always contingent upon someone not going to the hospital with a ruptured appendix, falling off the tractor with a heart attack, or having a dish-throwing contest after three weeks of fighting and bickering “in the name of the Lord”? How do you make it up to a man whose son said, “My Dad was so busy saving the world he lost his own children”?

No, the preachers are not to blame! If they all quit tonight and went to work in service stations or teaching school, it would not cure the situation. It would come unraveled like a sweater on which someone pulled the wrong thread. You see, the congregations are not to blame either! Not even the “official board,” whatever it is, and the elders and deacons who invented it are to blame. What is to blame is *The System*. We did not create it. We inherited it. Probably no one created it. It is like Topsy in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* who said she was not born, she just

“grewed.” Like the machines of industry, so is the system. We no longer have it, now it has us. We’ve tried to make ourselves believe that it is of God, that He is the Father of a system instead of sons and daughters. We’ve tried to make ourselves believe that it is the body of Christ, and that he is the head of a system instead of living members. And we quote scriptures to clothe the system with respectability so that the shame of its nakedness will not appear.

Now the wheels are whirring at such a rate we cannot think. We are dizzy with meetings, many of which are meaningless. We have loaded calendars with all kinds of inane gatherings which keep our intellects down to the minimum and assure we will not think too deeply, nor reflect upon our direction. The merry-go-round of religion never stops, and the music is never silenced. It was Georges Bernanos, the French priest and philosopher, who wrote the most poignant stuff about what happens when you get caught in the machinery. Once he said:

I ask God’s forgiveness if the spectacle of the fool scratching himself affords me pleasure. The evil is not in the fool but in the mystery that encourages and exploits him, that encourages in order to exploit. The brain of the fool is not an empty brain, it is a congested brain wherein the ideas ferment instead of being assimilated, like undigested food in an infected colon. When one reflects on the means of coercion that the System has at its disposal and that grow more powerful each time, one realizes that the mind can keep its freedom only at the cost of an unremitting effort. And which of us can boast of keeping up our efforts to the end? Which of us can be sure, not only of resisting all the slogans, but of resisting the temptation to set one slogan against another? Moreover, the System indulges in any form of self-justification; there is no time; the catastrophes follow each other too quickly. It prefers to impress its victims with the idea of an inevitable necessity.

The System (call it what you will, even “Church of Christ”), which often destroys integrity and makes good men compromise, is not God’s doing and it should not be marvelous in our eyes. It is not the fellowship of the saints which was intended to satisfy deep human needs and provide the cooling water of life for parched souls. I know people who are caught in the gears and who dread to even attend a meeting of the saints on Sunday. They are boiling and seething inside when they are forced to listen to “the company lawyer” take the stand and rip them off, while being paid with the money they had wanted to use for a family vacation but dared not do so because they had to “lay by in store.” It is bad enough to have salt rubbed into a wounded spirit without being billed for the salt. When people dread to see Sunday come because they will be subjected to a soul-deadening and lacerating experience, may God have mercy. We missed out on restoring the early Christians and restored the early Pharisees.

It would be wonderful if we could face up to reality and admit that we have provided an image and developed a machine which is not *patterned* after God’s design at all. I doubt that most of us will ever be able to do so. Our brethren are entrenched in the idea that the “Church of Christ” as we have made it is the church of God as he wanted it. They have confused a nineteenth-century movement with first-century faith. If someone questions the validity of some of our cultural accretions and additions he is harassed and persecuted as an attacker of the Lord’s church. We treat prophets as they have always been treated.

History will reveal, however, that there was never a reform that was not sparked by a “heretic.” Bland conformists never work a reformation. W. H. Auden says their watchword is, “We would rather be ruined than changed.” We do not have the concept of ministry, fellowship or service which was revealed by the holy apostles. What we do have is a synthesis produced by sectarian pride and fear of human failure. The faith today is big business. Men sit up nights thinking up schemes and gimmicks

with a religious slant to get the shekels from the purses of those who are a soft touch when Jesus is mentioned. They are not about to return to the simplicity and unadorned worship of God which was a part of the freshness of the morning of the new creation.

Then every congregation was a training center for every saint. There was no officer's training school for an elite group. The whole word was taught to the whole church, and leadership rose to the top from among the brethren as cream rises upon the milk. Every bite of the bread of life is for every child of God. Every drop of the milk of the word is for every member of the family. There are no soldiers in the army of God who do not need the shield of faith. Every person is expected to carry the sword of the Spirit. There is no concept of one man carrying the shield for the company or of wielding the sword for the rest. Each person is to be trained to the use of his fullest potential. That is God's will, and it is regrettable that it is not generally our goal.

Men must be "led in worship" because they can no longer praise God. Service is now something to be conducted and not something to be rendered. We now "hold services" rather than bestow them. And this must be done by someone trained in the art because the saints are no longer qualified to exhort one another, edify one another, or share insights and spiritual strength. Men who have been bishops or pastors for years, become frantic when a preacher gets a cold or goes to the hospital, and have to burn up the wires to try and borrow someone to come over and feed their flock on Sunday morning. They are unable to throw down fodder for the sheep without having someone come in who has studied homiletics, hermeneutics and pastoral psychology.

Once I wrote a paragraph in my book *The Royal Priesthood* which I want to repeat here with the hope that you will meditate upon it:

The religious world in general has lost the pattern of the corporate worship of the original community of baptized believers. The early church gathered around a table; the modern church sits before a pulpit. The Lord placed the table in the church so it could remember its debt to him; the clergy placed the pulpit in the church to bring it in debt to them. In the early church they all spoke one by one; today all the speaking is done by one. Then the spirit was kindled; now it is quenched. Then they claimed to love each other and talked about Jesus; now they claim to love Jesus and talk about each other. In those days all exerted an effort to exhort; now all must be exhorted to exert an effort.

I find myself disturbed by one attitude. Many brethren seem no longer concerned by what is scriptural. They have become pragmatists so their objection to mutual ministry, the sharing of all the gifts of the saints, is simply that it will not work in these days. There is always the demand to produce a congregation which is successful without a minister hired to minister to the saints, that is, to pastor the sheep. It would seem that our task should be to determine the will of God and make it work rather than to devise an alternative. We are not legislators but citizens under a Sovereign.

Regardless of what else may be said, we have lived to see a myth exploded. The idea that men will no longer assemble for simple sharing sessions has been blown to smithereens. I know three “house churches” composed of former elders, preachers, and men from every walk of business life. These assemble every first day of the week in homes of the saints where the coffee table becomes the Lord’s table. Here any saint can express his heartfelt views. No sectarian sign adorns the building, no one is paid for serving his brethren.

In spite of this I am staying where I am, because I believe that all effective reformation comes from within. I refuse to believe that God’s way will not work. Somehow and in some

way, we will see again the informality and spontaneity of the early saints, and ritual and form will lose their significance. I shall probably be saying a lot more about it if I live, and if I do not, others more eloquent will arise and say it better than I can voice it!

Alice in Wonderland

Mission Messenger (April 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Not long ago I asked a group of students if they had ever heard of Charles Lutwidge Dotson. None of them ever had. I then asked them if they had ever heard of *Alice in Wonderland*. All of them had. But none of them knew that Dotson was the author and that Lewis Carroll was a mere pseudonym. Really Dotson was a pretty important member of the faculty at Oxford University and was author of some rather outstanding mathematical treatises, not the least of which was *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, published in 1879.

Few people know about that one, but almost everyone knows about the fantasy of Alice which was written fourteen years previously. Originally done for Alice Liddell, the little daughter of the dean of Christ Church, it caught on with adults as well as with children, and some of the characters such as the March Hare, the Mad Hatter, and the Cheshire Cat, have become a part of our proverbial language.

I am mentioning this because of the promotion of this clever blending of imagination and reality, irony and absurdity, in our day. I noticed in the book review sections of the Yuletide season a revival of interest in this 110-year-old story. There is a reason. Hard-nosed publishers do not generally sink their money if there is no market for their wares. But why should there be such a present concern for *Alice in Wonderland*?

The answer seems to be obvious. It is the same as the reason why “Amazing Grace” written by John Newton, who died on December 21, 1807, was picked up by the remnants of the “Beat Generation” and elevated to a place among the ten most popular songs. Newton became master of a slave ship, played around with drugs, and ended up a general wastrel. But the grace of God plucked him like a brand out of the burning, or as he put it, “saved a wretch like me.” And the young people who had felt condemned to a Zombie-like existence, damned by drugs, shunned by society, and doomed to a fate worse than death, found how amazing grace could really be. “I once was lost but now I’m found; was blind but now I see!” And they identified with John Newton, whose mother died before he was seven years old.

The same thing is true of Alice. Her world was suddenly changed. It was not that it was turned topsy-turvy and there was a question of how to get it right side up again. It was an unfamiliar world, an alien world, where remembered values had no real relevance. Was there any right side? Alice was altered psychologically, but there was a change of environment as well as physical size. Moreover, her companions seemed both real and unreal. And this brought up the big question. Since everything was changed, could it be possible that the change was in her, and the world was unchanged except in her eyes? And if the world was the same and she was different, was she really the person she had identified with previously, or was she someone else? If she was another, then who was she?

Carroll pin-pointed the predicament by having Alice muse in these words: “Dear dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night! Let me think, was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, ‘Who in the world am I?’ Ah, that’s the great puzzle.”

Not long ago the police picked up a sixteen-year-old boy walking in one of our parks at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, a very dangerous thing to do. There was no sign of intoxication, no indication of drugs. But the boy did not know who he was. He could not even give his name. About two years ago I was in a "rap session" with a group of high school kids who were seniors. As we sat in the comfortable library, surrounded by the embalmed lore of the ages, I asked, "If you were given an opportunity to learn one thing with absolute certainty, what would you most like to know?" A straight-A student who was a wizard in mathematics, spoke up and said, "Who I really am!" I asked why. He replied, "Because then life for me might take on some sense."

At another high school I passed out a list of ten questions and asked the students to check what they'd really like to have me discuss as we sat in a circle in the band practice room. The question for which most of them opted was "What's the real difference between me and my dog?" A sophomore girl came to me recently, crying and asking if she could talk to me. We sat down on the rug in the lounge and I asked, "What's the matter?" She recovered sufficiently to tell me, "Nothing makes sense. Nothing really matters. Nothing ever changes. It's all in a jumble and I'm all mixed up. Life is awful and I wish I didn't have to live."

I understand the search for identity. It explains a lot of things which have happened in the last few years. Movie and television script writers have tried to dramatize it. Playwrights have attempted to stage it before our eyes. Fiction writers have sought to capture it for us. Serious analysts have tried to define it. Unfortunately, a lot of parents "have eyes and see not, ears have they and hear not." So they have continued in their comfortable and snug cocoons, wrapped about with the skeins of materialism, which insulate them from agonizing reality. But their children often know what their elders refuse to know. So the gap grows wider and the chasm deeper.

A recent author of “a Christian study of contemporary writing,” has said that the idea behind *Alice in Wonderland*, the whole pattern of its development, is that life viewed with a certain cold, rational clarity, can appear to be a nonsense story. There is ample demonstration, I think, for the validity of her observation. It was H. G. Wells who wrote, “There was a time when my little soul shone and was uplifted at the starry enigma of the sky. That has gone absolutely. Now I can go out and look at the stars as I look at the pattern of the wallpaper on a railway station waiting room.” With all respect to this eminent historian, I wonder what he is doing at a railway station if he isn’t going somewhere. It is silly to sit there if there is no train.

Joseph Krutch, the brilliant artist and critic, said, “There is no reason to suppose that man’s own life has any more meaning than the life of the humblest insect that crawls from one annihilation to another.” And Pablo Picasso, who translated the ripped-off, fragmented, crazy cockeyed world into bizarre art forms said, “Today, as you know, I am famous and rich. But when I am alone with my soul, I haven’t the courage to consider myself as an artist.”

Alone with my soul! There is the secret, although expressed by an exponent of the distorted, the unsymmetric and the deformed. It is not the world in which I am that makes sense, but the world which is in me. I am not empty if my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. I am not alienated if I am with him who said, “Henceforth I call you my friends.” I am not alone if I remember he said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

The world may press in upon me but it is powerless to crush me. There is a victory which overcomes the world and it overcomes my doubts now. The world will not have the final word because the world will pass away with the lusts thereof. It is he who does the will of God who abides forever. I know who I am. I’m the child of a king. I’m a son of God. I’m a friend of Jesus. There’s no problem of personal identity with him who

said, “I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.” The world outside may be populated with people who are as wild as the March Hare, crazy as a Mad Hatter, and who grin as vacuously as a Cheshire Cat. But Jesus is real, real in my soul! It is his reality which makes me real. It’s not wonderland but wonderful grace that counts! Yes, Alice, there really is a Jesus.

What Happened?

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

How did the heirs of a consecrated effort to unite the Christians in all of the sects, become so hostile to one another that they ended up as one of the most fragmented movements on the current American religious stage? What happened to those who started out to restore the one body, to cause them to add as many as a couple of dozen additional factions to the already frightful mess into which the followers of Jesus had been betrayed?

In the beginning it was not so. Thomas Campbell, the genial unfrocked Presbyterian preacher wrote, “The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar cause, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations. All that we presume, then, is to do what we humbly conceive to be our duty, in connection with our brethren; to each of whom it equally belongs as to us, to exert himself for this blessed purpose.”

When Aylett Raines, a brilliant young preacher for a branch of Universalism, who was immersed, asked to be admitted to the Mahoning Association with which the Campbells were identified, the question arose as to whether one holding his philosophy could be received. Thomas Campbell arose and deprecated the introduction of such questions relating to opinion. He said, “Brother Raines has been with me during the

last several months and we have fully unbosomed ourselves to each other. He is philosophically a Restorationist and I am a Calvinist, but notwithstanding this difference of opinion between us, I would put my right hand into the fire and have it burned off, before I would hold up my hands against him. And from all I know of Brother Raines, if I were Paul, I would have him in preference to any young man of my acquaintance, to be my Timothy.”

In a spirit of submission to one another, since all had submitted themselves to the Lord, those who had grown up under the teaching of Barton W. Stone, and those who had come under the tutelage of Alexander Campbell, met in Lexington, Kentucky, and with tears of joy received one another and embraced in the unity of the Spirit. Their differences were so great that a mere mention of them would fracture any of our fragile factions now, but these men were giants in understanding and in brotherly love.

It was when a third generation arose that lesser men began to shiver the trunk of the tree which had borne such noble fruit. Confronted with changes, many of which were more cultural than spiritual, they became frantic because of fear that all would be lost if unwritten creeds were not devised as bulwarks to protect the gains of the past. Boastful and arrogant men became the heroes of the divergent groups. It was then they developed the fallacious notion that purity of doctrine could only be maintained by division of the body, and agitation for disunity began under the guise that true unity could only come by conformity of all to the party standard and programs.

In 1906 formal division was recognized even by the United States Census Bureau, and men began to deal with issues by debate rather than by dialogue. The party spirit, a work of the flesh, was enflamed. Open hostility burned in the hearts and flashing eyes of men who warred with one another “in the name of the Lord.” Problems were approached with cold hearts and

hot heads, rather than with warm hearts and cool heads.

The result is that we have made a travesty of a noble plea and a tragedy has marred our approach to the purpose, plan and prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers. But we no longer live in an age of religious infighting, bitterness and sectarian emphasis. That stance is as outmoded as transportation by horse and buggy. It is time for us to re-think our approach, which grows less tenable with each passing year. We have divided ourselves out of influence with thinking people, and rendered our plea for unity a joke.

But we need not remain in the trap in which our fathers were ensnared. Our repetition of their error will not endear us unto God. To perpetuate their follies will not honor them, but disgrace us. Let us renounce once and forever that forlorn and tragic philosophy which has severed us from one another in the past and will only serve to splinter us further in the future. I propose that we return to our first schism and undo it. Unless we have the courage to do that we will always be a fragmented people, resting under the stigma of our own division while vainly pleading with others to unite.

It is silly to try and salvage our pride at the cost of losing our souls. Instead of trying to patch up a craft which is not seaworthy, let us abandon it and board the larger vessel which the Lord launched, and not man. Are our traditions more precious to us than God's other children? Shall we maintain our parties while we heedlessly set at nought our brethren? There will never be a more propitious time than now to rise above the narrow and circumscribed limitations of factionalism. Division is a dead carcass which needs to be interred without a wayward tear, and buried without remorse of conscience. It has served no purpose except to confuse and confound the saints and throw a blockade across the highway of holiness.

Division among brethren is a sin. It is carnal and

immature. It is a work of the flesh. It murders the best sentiments in human hearts and turns men into spiritual cannibals, biting and devouring those whom they should serve in love. Turn your ears from the raucous cries of partisans who would make of you all that God has condemned and blight all that he has commanded. Let the light shine in! Let the darkness flee away! Let brotherhood come into its own and fellowship be the source of joy of which even angels sang.

Into the Action

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[Abstract]

I am a soldier. I enlisted to fight. I am engaged in a war in which there can be no truce or armistice, no cessation of hostilities to pick up the wounded and bury the dead. When I pledged allegiance to the King, and got measured for my suit of armor, I took the sword of the Spirit and made a commitment to swing the weapon until I fell lifeless in the thick of the fray and the swirling dust of the battlefield.

That is why I resent every retreat and deplore every inch of surrendered territory. I cannot live with myself unless I am planning a strategy by which to recapture every province overrun by the implacable foe. And no other such abandoned area rips me off like the field of higher education. By its very nature all education is the domain of the Sovereign under whose command I march. Its purpose should be to bring the universe intellectually, morally and physically to acknowledge his lordship. Men are to love him with all their minds. He is the creator of the cosmos, the ruler of heaven and earth. To see a domain which is his, captured by the enemy and using its resources to fight against his cause makes me burn within with a fierce determination to fight it out.

I want to penetrate the lines. I want to take the fight through them, behind and beyond them. I want to be a commando for Christ, never forgetting that while a commando

fights as a part of the regular army he must fight apart from the regular army. Sometimes he must fight alone. The great university complexes of our generation represent the place where the action is. Here secular man is seen in all of his vaunted glory, in the power of technology, scientism, and the wisdom of this passing age. Here the classroom may become the training ground for enemy forces, the arsenal of enemy strength. And I have an obligation to capture this humanistic stronghold. "The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons, with which to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments, we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ."

That's war talk! It is battle language! I love it! Destroying strongholds! Devastating false arguments! Pulling down obstacles! Capturing thought and making it do obeisance to my King! That's great. It's terrific! The clash of arms! The din of battle! What exhilaration! What thrill! I am not too high on campus ministry which has as its only object the protection of "our young people" by building a corral and riding herd on them.

Christian campus centers should be drill fields where young people are trained in the art and science of spiritual warfare, places for examination of the strategy of Satan, command posts where counter-strategy is developed and from which it is directed. They should be arsenals and ammunition dumps where one can come and secure a replenishment of fire power to get back into the lines again. All too often they are simply rest and recreation areas for those who have never smelled burning powder or seen the spiritual blood flow from gaping wounds.

There is nothing wrong with providing an off-campus facility where students can retire from the raw paganism of the teeming campus, where they can play ping-pong and indulge in

the great American pastime of criticizing the “institutional church” which is generally as impervious to their criticism as to everything else outside of its Sunday-school rooms. It is not sinful to have a place where you can drink hot coffee or sip iced Cokes with other young Christians, but if that is all we do, a generation will pass away and the revival of Greek philosophy and pantheism will pass unchallenged and unchecked.

We have not been called to hold the fort, but to storm it. Our task is but half done when we make sure we go through four years of disciplined study and come out unscathed and unscarred. We are to guard the faith but also to share it. Every unsaved person on the campus, red or yellow, black or white, moral or immoral, brilliant or mediocre, must present a challenge. Fortified by prayer that God will open up a door to the heart we must move in upon him with love and rescue him from slavery, even while hating the garment that is spotted by the flesh.

Jesus is not simply Lord of the foolish or of those with whom I feel comfortable. He died for intellectuals as well as people like myself. And when I am in a philosophy class where the faith once delivered is under attack I must bombard heaven with my request for reinforcements, but at the same time I must zap the attacking professor with love. If I allow my feelings of resentment and hostility to be directed toward him for whom Jesus died, instead of his fallacious rationalization, I render myself useless. “Whom the gods would destroy they first make angry,” is a heathen adage which contains a kernel of truth. I propose to stalk relentlessly every teacher of error, shadowing him until I find the weakness of his reasoning and then moving in to capture his thinking for the Captain of my salvation.

I do not resent his paying me back in my own coin, probing and poking at my faith, seeking to discover the chinks in my armor and the weak spots in my defense. War is not always one-sided. We have not been furnished a long-range rifle, but a

sword. And a sword is not for sniping, but for close infighting, face-to-face combat where you can hear the steel ring and see the sparks fly. The shield of faith will extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked. The helmet of salvation will never be dented by human philosophy.

The ground I occupy is safe. I have fled for refuge to the Rock of ages. He is my strong tower and my defense. My position is unconquerable although frequently assailed. I represent no sect, party, or religious movement. I offer no defense for any group, segment or faction. My only creed is a person. That he is the Son of God embraces my position. I am simply a member of the fellowship of the unashamed. "I am not ashamed of the good news about Jesus, it is God's dynamic to save everyone who believes it, whether he is a Jew or a Greek." For this I live, and if I know my heart, for this I would be willing to die. This is the ground upon which I shall join battle with my opposers. This is the ground upon which they must face me. Jesus died for my sins. Jesus was buried in the grave. Jesus arose again the third day. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. Upon these facts I risk my soul and rest my hope. To a trust in these I seek to win every soul.

For my faith in these facts I am a militant. I crave to do battle for trust in these things. The prime question of the universe is, "What think you of Christ? Whose Son is he?" All other questions are secondary to this. One can be right about all of them, but if he is wrong about this he is lost. If he is right about this, he may be wrong about many other things and still be saved. Let others argue, fuss and fume about little questions which they have puffed up into false importance. My concern is Jesus, Son of God and King of kings. I am not concerned that men bow to my feeble wisdom. I am only concerned that they kneel in acknowledgment of his sovereignty.

The real enemy is out there and I refuse to fight with other soldiers in the tents of the saved! Let others who have time argue

and debate with one another about this or that strategy, but I crave to make contact with the forces of sheer unbelief. The wisdom of this passing age can never overthrow that wisdom which is from above. But they were made to clash head-on and my task is to bring the truth as it has been revealed into direct conflict. I must conquer or be conquered, capture or be captured. My orders were not given by men but by the King. While others advise to take it easy, his words are to take it to them! I can never be happy unless I do! I've got a quarrel with Satan!

Pastoral Flypaper

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

We often believe we are constant under misfortunes when we are only dejected; and we suffer them without daring to look on them, like cowards who allow themselves to be killed through fear of defending themselves— **La Rochefoucauld in *Maxims* (1665).**

A lot of good folk like to point to great scientific advancements to show the tremendous changes which have occurred during the brief span of their lifetime. Undoubtedly they can point in many directions. But while plunking astronauts down on the moon in a space bubble is a good illustration I doubt it is necessary to become all that scientific. There are a lot of simple things which also demonstrate how we have altered. As a kind of everyday down-to-earth example, take our attitude toward flies.

One little puny insignificant housefly can now throw a dinner party into a tizzy. Not long ago I was the guest of a fairly calm brother who was married to one of the most nervous females I have ever seen. She fluttered around the table while preparing lunch like a sparrow in a chicken house. When we sat down to eat, a lone fly made his appearance and buzzed the scene. You never saw such beating the air. Every time the determined and persistent insect got anywhere near her end of the table, the wife took a swipe at him, missing him as far as the last batter on a girl's softball team. Finally, the husband, who

was far more upset by his wife's actions than by the zooming around of the fly volunteered to bat the offender into the wild blue yonder. He politely excused himself to me, arose and got the advertising section of the Sunday paper, rolled it up into an effective weapon, and returned to the scene of action. When the fly headed in his general direction, coming in low to make a three-point landing on the fruit salad, the genial host took a cut at him and hit the dish of apple butter. He scattered pulverized Jonathans all over the wall-to-wall carpet. Mighty Casey had struck out!

It wasn't that way when I was a lad. In those days flies were expected. They were as much a part of the dinner scene as cooked turnips. Most people could not afford screen doors, and those who did have them found them little protection. Almost every screen door had a hole in it big enough to throw a cat through. This was a convenience because there was always a bedraggled feline with which to practice such shots. That was the day when grown folks ate first and got the pick of things while the kids were expected to run and play until summoned to sort through the remains and gnaw on the necks and backs remaining on the chicken plate. Also the gravy was as cold as a miser's heart.

Always, however, there was one youngster who did not get to play. His job was to mind the flies. Armed with a peach tree branch with the leaves still on it, he stood behind the guests, gently waving the limb back and forth, keeping the swarm of hungry insects at bay, and only occasionally being lucky enough to knock one into the dish of black-eyed peas. No one got butterflies in his stomach because flies fluttered around the place.

Some of you will remember *Tanglefoot*, the flypaper with the sticky substance on one side. If you laid a sheet of it on the kitchen table and sprinkled a little granulated sugar around on it, it became a death trap for unwary insects. I shall never forget

the time I was setting the table and placed the sticky sheet temporarily on a chair. I was in a hurry to get back outside and play “shinny” with a battered Pet Milk can and I forgot and left the *Tanglefoot* on the chair. It was the day the “Watkins Man” stayed for lunch and he drew that chair. Mom scraped it off the seat of his pants the best she could, flies and all, but I later heard that when he got up from his wagon seat, the seat decided to get up with him.

There wasn’t much to do when rain poured out of leaden skies, with only the ducks getting a kick out of it while the chickens huddled under the back porch. We would play “Fox-and-Geese” on a homemade board, using grains of corn and beans for counters. Sometimes we would play checkers, and the checkers had been cut from a broomstick with half of them colored with black shoe polish.

When things like that palled you could always lean on the table and watch flies get caught on the flypaper. When one gingerly approached it in happy anticipation of the sugar, and got one foot caught in the glue he was “in a heap of trouble.” He took his other front leg and tried to extricate the first by rubbing it. But he was like Brer Rabbit cuffing the tar baby. Soon he was stuck with all four feet. For awhile he feebly struggled but finally gave up the battle and grimly settled down to face the inevitable. It was not long in coming. A few more twitches and then the final quiver found him hopelessly entangled.

I think this is what has happened to a lot of us human flies with the reference to the clergy system in the restoration movement. We are all stuck up and bogged down in the semantic tanglefoot. We started out nobly to restore the ancient order to the church. Like plumed knights we rode forth to try our lances against every system which had been devised by man and which prevented the recapture of that marvelous simplicity which was in Christ Jesus. But we were lured by the sugar and the syrupy sweetness of the sectarian system and we have given

up the struggle. We are discouraged with ever achieving our goal and now some of us doubt that it ever had any real value to start with.

Justification for the conclusion that a good many brethren couldn't care less about real restoration— a conclusion which I have been reluctant to reach— stems from several factors which are quite general. Our brethren seldom say anything about the clergy system, and never about the form of it we have adopted. It is not unfair, I think, to say that many of them resent anyone even questioning it, much less examining its claim to scripturality. I receive more bitter letters about my writing on this theme than any other. Some of them accuse me of opposing proclamation of the gospel. Others express deep grievance that I am arrayed against preachers. Our tradition has blinded us. We cannot distinguish between opposition to a borrowed system which has its stranglehold on the whole Christian world, and proclaiming the message of hope and heaven to a world of frightened mankind steeped in sin.

In some places, particularly in seminaries which are sometimes dedicated to development of a professional clergy caste, my writings are dismissed with a flirt of the hand and with the casual offhand remark, "That's Carl's hangup and hobby, and you just have to overlook it and forget both it and him. At his age he can't last too much longer and we can outlast him if we are careful and he doesn't give us high blood pressure or apoplexy."

Our restoration fathers had much more to say about what they called "the one-man hired pastor system" than they ever did about any other problem which confronted them. They had a fairly clear-cut idea of what the revelation of God taught on what we now label "church polity." They respected that facet of revelation as much as they did any other. So do I. Our washed-out attitude toward certain portions of God's word stems from the fact that a lot of us read it to validate what we already have

and not to find out what God wants us to do. We have “restored” the apostolic church, and there’s really nothing left to do except to go along for the ride and not to think too much.

I am quite convinced that the system we now practice and defend has no scriptural basis. This is a grave charge and I make it with reverence for God and respect for the hearts of all my brethren. I think we are not only denying by our actions the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of all the saints, but I also think we have no burning desire or intention to implement them. We have given up the fight and are mired down in the sticky “goo.”

The pastors in the primitive communities of the saints were not the proclaimers of the word, the preachers or evangelists. They were the bishops or overseers. They were not imported or invited in by a pulpit committee. There were no pulpits in primitive congregations. The pastors were selected from the flock and given their responsibility when they met the qualifications and requirements as specified by the apostle and not until then.

There is no such thing hinted at as hiring a man from the outside to come in and pastor or shepherd a flock for a fee. Neither is there a suggestion that men were appointed as bishops in order to encourage them to try and qualify or to become more faithful. To ordain men to this sacred office merely to fill a form, meet the requirements of the by-laws, or encourage them to be more diligent is a burlesque upon God’s holy arrangement. And to allow oneself to be ordained as an elder or bishop when not qualified is to be thrust into a position where you must give an account before God.

The word *pastors* in Ephesians 4:11 is from *poimen*, a herdsman, shepherd or flock-tender. It is distinguished from evangelists in this very passage. An evangelist was, as the word clearly indicates, a bringer of good news. He was a herald or

announcer. He told the world about what God had done for mankind at the cross. The pastors were the feeders and guides of the gathered flock. In the Authorized Version the word *poimen* is rendered shepherd 17 times. It is the word for the shepherds who came to the stable in Bethlehem after hearing the angelic chorus. It is also the word for the functioning of Jesus and was used by him five times in John 10.

The term *poimaino* is rendered by “feed” 6 times and is translated “feed cattle” once. In Acts 20:17, we are told that when the sailing vessel upon which Paul had booked passage anchored in the harbor at Miletus “he sent to Ephesus and called unto him the elders of the church.” He recalled to their memory that when he was among them he had taught them publicly and from house to house. He told them he would not see them again. But it is obvious he had trained them until all he needed to do was to commend them unto God and to the word of His grace.

So he charged them to “take heed unto yourselves and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with the blood of his own (Son).” *Overseers* is the same word elsewhere rendered “bishop.” The elders are the bishops of a community of the saints. Thus, when the apostle wrote to the congregation in Philippi, he addressed his letter “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (1:1).

But the word *feed* is a form of the word rendered *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11. It means to tend to the flock, to do the work of a shepherd. So the words for elder, bishop and pastor are all applied to the same men. *Elder* signifies they must be men of age and experience; *overseer* signifies that they must supervise and guide; *pastor* that they must lead and feed the flock. The first has to do with age, the second with authority, and the third with activity.

I do not want to be obnoxious to my brethren, and I have no desire to “bug” them, but one thing is ever apparent, and that is the fact that the one “most important” functionary among us is never addressed or mentioned in the apostolic epistles. One can hardly imagine addressing the saints in various places and not doing so through the preacher. It is not an exaggeration to say that in the Churches of Christ (non-instrument) there is no way to write a letter to the saints at all. The preacher reads it first and if it does not pass his censorship the saints never know that it was written. Some of the letters by Paul wouldn’t have gotten past the front office.

What has happened to us, of course, is that we have adopted a new office and created a new officer to fill it. Since we have done so it has to be scriptural, not because it is in the scriptures but because we have it, and it is a part of our “restoration pattern.” We did not create this office at all. We borrowed it. It is simply the sectarian pastor system and we like it because it works. We have no real concept of how to make the ideal of God work in our day because the brethren who constitute the churches were not converted to the task of really serving. They have come in to be served.

It would not do to call the new officer whom we have installed “the pastor” because we know “church polity” too well to do that. (It may be mentioned in passing that some of the congregations, especially in Christian Churches, do use the word “pastor” and it appears as the title on the stationery exactly as it would in the Lutheran Churches, for example.) Generally, we cover up the system by applying another title. Our pastors are evangelists, ministers, preachers, varying in different places according to the term which will provide the best cover-up.

In 1 Peter 5:2, 3, the apostle instructs “the elders among you” to pastor or tend the flock of God and to take the oversight thereof, that is, function as bishops. The work of the pastor is the work of the bishop, and it is the function of elders. The

qualifications for bishops are the qualifications for pastors, and there was a plurality of these in every congregation. Before they could serve they had to demonstrate their ability to care for the church of God by ruling and regulating and governing their own family circles.

“He must manage his own household well, keeping the children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God’s church?” (1 Timothy 3:4, 5). Contrast this with the modern practice of teaching beardless youths “pastoral psychology” and graduating them to start out with diploma in hand looking for a church on which to practice the art. We have come a long way, but in the wrong direction.

God’s word would not permit a man to serve even as one of several pastors until he met stringent qualifications. But “the System” creates pastors with machine-like precision and on a production line basis, who single-handedly attempt the task with hardly any of the qualifications but with a portfolio of sermon outlines, some of which have no more relationship to life than if they had been sent down from Mars. A well-modulated speaking voice which can rise and fall in proper cadence is hardly a compensation for the vacuity of some of the messages that are delivered, and which send the people away as empty and devoid of spiritual strength as they were when they turned into the parking lot.

No longer are pastors chosen from among the local saints, upon the basis of the qualifications for bishops. Now they are called in to exhibit their wares. The word *sermon* isn’t even in the Bible and for a very good reason. Preaching to the church, as Alexander Campbell pointed out, was not once mentioned in the sacred scriptures. Nothing that men have devised is more absurd than a “trial sermon” presented as a credential in rivalry for a job. The very idea places the task of proclaiming the good news on a crass commercial basis. It denigrates the gospel, depresses

the preacher and secularizes the saints. Imagine one who loves the Lord being forced to compete for the favor of people who want to “size him up” before negotiating with him to see if they can raise enough money to employ him to come and throw down fodder for starving sheep.

Ponder the selection of such a one for such a spiritual task by the cut of his clothing, the length of his hair, or the shine on his shoes. Do not forget that a candidate may be turned down because of the color of his necktie or because he twitches his eyebrows as nervously as Sam Ervin. Regardless of what else enters into it, candor and truth force us to admit that one’s spiritual knowledge may not mean nearly so much as his pulpit mannerisms or his effect upon the congregational image. Ah, that image! How we worship it! A great man of God may stand but little chance if the saints are looking for a “good mixer.” If the brethren belong to “the personality cult” a plain man filled with the Spirit but who cannot play softball, had just as well go bark up a persimmon tree as to “try out” for the “opening.”

What can we do about this sad, and even disgraceful state of affairs where strings are often pulled and politics are frequently played? Most places do not realize that they are not selecting a man at all, but he was selected for them from afar. He was picked out of a group of prospects and sometimes the fact that his father is a generous contributor has much to do with the selection. None of us like to think that these things are true, but all of us know they are, and they are true in every segment of the restoration movement.

So, what can be done? In most places nothing will be done! Nothing can be done if “the System” which we think of as “the Lord’s church” has made cowards of us and we tremble for our jobs. I do not hold to the idea that because you cannot do everything you ought to do nothing. But whatever is done in most places will have to be done slowly. We will need to proceed cautiously unless we propose to kill the patient while pretending

to cure him. All of us, including myself, are victims of a condition which has crept up and put its tentacles around us and we will disengage ourselves only with patience, if at all. A lot of good folk think we will never do it, so they are resigned and are obeying the first and greatest commandment "Thou shalt not rock the boat."

Running from responsibility, or quitting cold-turkey, will not get the job done. Anyone can resign where he is and chase around over the landscape looking for a church more to "his liking" but that only transfers the problem. The chances are he is the problem. The System has weakened congregations until they are helpless to stand alone without receiving artificial respiration on a weekly basis. But the fact that some of them have survived the sermons they have heard indicates a greater strength than one might imagine. A constant diet of noodle soup is not calculated to develop soldiers who can go out and tackle principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, or low ones either. It takes more than pap or pabulum to produce fighters for truth.

The way in which we have enlisted the saints has started them out as incubator babies. They have been on milk so long they cannot immediately be force fed with meat, or they will choke to death. Let us candidly admit that we have gotten people into the water without really getting them into Christ. They came out of the baptistery all wet and some of them have been that way ever since. We have brought babies to birth who never intended to grow. We have enlisted soldiers who never intended to fight. We have enrolled runners who never intended to race. They want to sit in the grandstand and watch fencing exhibitions. They prefer to lean on the sword rather than to wield it.

I think we can keep them coming, if we can keep enough "new ideas" dreamed up, or borrow enough gimmicks from our good sectarian neighbors and "apply them" to the "true

church.” But the question is if this will get them to heaven or simply delude them into thinking they are safe until it is too late. Can one live a life of peaceful co-existence with the devil and receive the unfading crown at the end of the journey? Can one be called a soldier who never picked up a weapon and wouldn’t know which end to swing it by? Can one be called a soldier of the Lamb who cannot find 1 Corinthians without flipping the pages after having enlisted twenty years ago and never missed “Sunday school”? In short, are we simply fooling ourselves and hoodwinking both the brethren and the public about what the faith is all about? You think I’m all worked up about this, don’t you? And you could be right about that!

No one will ever develop into a soldier by listening to repeated lectures on how to enlist. A capable fighting force does not result from recurrent oratorical flights on “The Steps to Salvation.” You can assemble a bunch of raw recruits together and have a community sing once per week and top it off with a nice talk, and ten years from now they will be no more capable of warfare than when they enlisted. A Jehovah’s Witness can make them dive for a foxhole like a scared rabbit.

Our problem is we have been preached to death instead of taught how to live. The sermons change only in the titles assigned to them. The church has become a place to entertain the troops, not to train them. We have to pamper them to keep them coming. We actually spend more in building comfortable barracks than in fighting the foe. Brethren have been in the ranks for years who cannot find Galatians in the manual of arms. They become “duck soup” for the enemy. The devil is really not afraid of them. They could not hit him with a spiritual cream puff.

A boy who is ambitious to become an electronics engineer grows up in a congregation where the brethren have an obsession about the sin of supporting “Herald of Truth.” The congregation is given a steady diet of anti-institutionalism. When

the young man gets to the university campus he is in a world that never heard of Herald of Truth and might not have heard of the “loyal Church of Christ.” He has a head full of arguments and a heart empty of real faith, the rugged faith which will not be eroded away by the materialism, humanism and scientism to which he is exposed. He will probably be washed down the stream in the first flood. His arguments do not fit the problems he faces.

In view of all this, may I make a few suggestions of a practical nature? If you cannot agree with them, or if you think I am mistaken about the whole mess, I’ll love you anyhow! It isn’t necessary for you to share my concerns for me to reverence and respect you as my brother or sister. If you think I am off the beam and will miss the runway, praise the Lord anyhow!

(1) If you are employed by a congregation to minister to them and you have the pastoral concept, change your thinking. Put your mind in reverse and back out. If your name is on the “official letterhead” or the “official signboard” with the title “pastor” following it, remove the title. Point out to the brethren who hired you that you are not their pastor. Tell the congregation that the elders are the pastors. It will surprise them both!

(2) If possible, change the emphasis from delivering “sermons” to teaching the word. Preaching the gospel is for the world. Its design is to call men out, to enroll them in the school of Christ. The apostolic doctrine is for the saints. They do not continue in hearing the gospel. They respond to it and continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, although, if necessary, they may be reminded of the gospel which was proclaimed unto them. Preaching is proclamation of news, teaching is instruction in a course of discipline. Preaching the gospel summons men from death unto life. Expounding the doctrine shows them how to live that life.

It is a little bit absurd for men to lay aside the Bible as soon as they finish the Sunday-school class. Insist they bring their Bibles with them into the auditorium. Notice, I did not say “the sanctuary.” It would be well to forget the “sermonic” approach, for which there is no scriptural basis, and select an epistle for a series of thirteen lessons. Let us assume that you select the letter of James. You could not choose a better one. Read a paragraph while the whole audience looks on with open Bible. Draw out the message from the paragraph. Explain the words employed and make application of them to life. Suggest that the brethren underline certain key words. Tell them to write down notes on an envelope pulled from purse or pocket. Get them involved in the lesson.

On Sunday night arrange the meeting so the saints can share their views on the lesson and question your thinking as given in the morning. Let it be a “talk back” session. To kick it off, if they are frightened at the sound of their own voices in a “holy place,” ask leading questions. “What did the Spirit say to you in this lesson from James? What idea or thought did you get that could make any change in your life? What promises did you find which might give you hope? What warning was there which will teach you caution? Did I say anything with which you disagree?” Encourage the brethren to express any point of disagreement. Do not argue about it publicly. They did not jump up and start an argument with you in the morning. If you continue this for three months you will have a community of saints which will know more about James than ever before. You will also have some feedback from those who object to your disturbance of their sleep and rest period.

(3) Elton Trueblood is eminently correct, as he is about many things, when he points out that the preacher should be a coach. But you can never develop a football team by assembling the players once a week to sit on benches in the clubhouse and listen to a lecture on the history of football, and the art and science of playing the game. Nor can you train them by giving

them a notebook full of arguments to use to show the superiority of football over baseball. You must get the ball into their hands. You must put them on the field. Certainly the coach can devise a strategy for meeting the opposition but it is the players who must carry it out. In the service of God the coach must stay off the field and on the sideline. It is the elders who should call the signals. They are the backfield men. A good coach trains the whole squad until it can function as a unit.

I confess I am not too hot on “eldership training sessions” where cram courses are provided for a small select and elite group. Of course I could be as wrong about that as I am about a lot of other things, but it seems to me we are making some errors which will eventually destroy us. We select some young man who is ambitious and articulate, perhaps a little too much, and send him away to train for four years “to take over a church.” He is taught homiletics, hermeneutics, pastoral psychology, public speaking, and a good deal of Bible and restoration history. If it is in a “Church of Christ” school he is given a good stiff dose of “pattern theology” and it all depends on which school he attends as to which “pattern” he will study.

All of this may be good, but what about the church he is to take over? It is composed of successful farmers, school administrators, attorneys, postal clerks, assembly-line workers, housewives, and others who are given the impression that when it comes to exercise of the faith they are “laymen,” that is unskilled, inept, bumbling, and without religious know-how. Their task on earth is to contribute part of their daily earnings to support a professional who is trained in the art of managing the religious enterprise, and maintaining “worship.” In the Catholic Church the professional is called a priest. In the Anglican community he is a canon or rector. In the Lutheran Church he is a pastor. In the Protestant world he is a clergyman. In the Church of Christ he is the minister. Much as it galls a lot of us who have “restored the Lord’s church” to have someone say it, the minister among us sustains the same functional

relationship as do all of the others. As Lesslie Newbigin pointed out in his speech to the World Convention of Churches in New Delhi, the clergyman wants to be the *prima donna*, to hold the center of the stage and shine as the director of praise and worship.

Since “preaching the gospel” has become professionalized and the religious structure which supports it has become institutionalized we are constantly aware that the whole complex is made up of two kinds of seekers. Preachers are seeking churches, and churches are seeking preachers. A lot of those who are not in the market wish they were. A great many congregations endure the preacher they have. They regard him as a part of the cross they must bear because they cannot pay more. And a lot of preachers tolerate the congregation which pays their salary. They regard it as a kind of divine punishment for their youthful indiscretions and their lack of interest while “preparing for the ministry.” Secretly, a lot of them are wishing “the Lord would call them” to another field, and if their wives are pregnant they wish the Lord would get on the ball and do something before they have another mouth to feed.

When you put a young man with high hopes in a congregation with a cloud cover and low visibility, where the brethren have spiritual astigmatism and are blind and cannot see afar off, you have a sad condition. Many a young man has set forth gallantly, clutching his Bible in one hand and his diploma in the other, with the words of the commencement address ringing in his ears, and his attractive young bride carrying the suitcases, ready to restore the faith and reform the world. He soon learns that he is not going to change things a great deal. If he is an “associate minister” he is not going to change them at all. Subtly, and not so subtly, the message gets through to him that the congregation is satisfied as they are. The sign on the door reads “Sleeping! Do Not Disturb!”

Most young brethren make a noble effort. They remember

the glowing reports of “a successful ministry” made by the chapel speakers in school. No chapel speaker ever gets up and confesses that he is a flat flop and a failure and he would be better off selling insurance or running a service station. The young man is saturated with the thought that “it will work if you work it!” But that is before he accepts his “first church.” He then learns that the brethren who are good folk, don’t want to change and they don’t want to be changed. They are like the Book says, “rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.”

Since nothing is what they have need of, that is what they get! The preacher, like the fly, realizes he has become caught in the religious Tanglefoot. He soon ceases to kick against the pricks. The struggle ceases. He resolves that he will visit the sick, comfort the aged and frightened, talk to high school kids who are rebelling, and maybe he can get to heaven when he dies, even if his salary is not raised while he lives. I feel sorry for men whose dreams are shattered by people whom they love. I feel even more sorry for the wives who love these men whose dreams are shattered. Soul hurt is the worst kind!

What is the solution? It is the same as the solution to any problem involving human beings in a structure which denigrates the individual and destroys personal initiative. It makes no difference whether that structure is an inner city ghetto, a piney-woods turpentine colony, or a church. There is only one solution and it can be expressed in one word. *Education!* You can go into the inner city with all kinds of brilliant theories and you can put up a soapbox on every corner and lecture until you are blue in the face and white around the gills, but you are not going to change anything. Substitute a pulpit stand for the soapbox and the result will be the same. The most inefficient method of teaching on earth, whether in a big university, or in a “big church,” is by the lecture method. It was John Ruskin who wrote in *Stones of Venice* that education is “a painful, continual and difficult work to be done by kindness, by watching, by

warning, by precept, by praise, but above all— by example.”

There are only three ways to train people! This is true whether you are developing workers in a shop or workers in a congregation. It is true whether you are training soldiers for the country or soldiers of the cross. Tell them how! Show them how! Let them do it! The best trainer, like the best parent, is the one who works himself out of a job. If your children are as helpless at the age of twenty as they were when born, you have failed as a parent. If you stay with a congregation twenty years and they cannot feed themselves at the end of that time you have slipped somewhere along the line.

I do not want you to get a wrong idea. When I talk about “working yourself out of a job,” I do not mean there will be nothing for you to do. Regardless of how active and efficient you are, there will still be sinners on earth who need to be reached when you die. But there will be fewer of them if you train every saint to be a soul-winner for Jesus. I think a lot of brethren would like to be but they think of themselves as second-class citizens in the kingdom of heaven. They have never gone to a Christian college. They have not had a course in “Techniques of Soul-Winning” or “How to Capture Sinners in Six Easy Lessons.” They are not invited to “preacher’s breakfasts.” They do not think of themselves as priests. They do not regard themselves as ministers. They blush when someone mistakes them for “the minister” and hasten to disclaim they are in that category. But they must be led to see themselves as both ministers and priests.

It is time for a revolution, a radical revolution in the church. The unfortunate thing is that the word revolution makes shivers run up our spines. And the word “radical” makes us have goose-bumps and causes a cold sweat to break out all over us. That is because we have a mistaken idea of the real meaning of both terms. We have allowed them to be ripped off by vandals and used to destroy. But the faith was the most revolutionary

idea in the world. There has never been another revolution like Christianity, toppling the Caesars from their thrones, capturing strongholds and bringing thoughts into subjection.

We also misunderstand the word *radical*. It conjures up images of people with bushy beards, straggling hair and burning eyes carrying bombs or setting fires in the men's restroom of the Pentagon. But radical is from the word for *root*. A radish is a root vegetable. And we need to get to the root of our problem and quit snipping away at twigs. The greatest issue facing us today is the institutionalizing of the called-out ones, the creation of a human organization to replace the divine organism. It is in unsanctifying and de-personalizing brethren by making them "members of the church" instead of "members of the body."

Don't argue that these are the same thing. The called-out ones constitute the body, the church, as God looks at things. But there is a vast difference between the church as we have contrived and manipulated it and the body of God's dear Son. In some areas the difference is the same as that between a plastic dummy in a store window and a living person walking along the street. Regardless of how natural you think the first looks, it is dead, because it has no spirit in it.

It is the same difference as you will find between a Christmas tree and a fruit tree. You can decorate the first and hang all kinds of ornaments on it. You can make it glitter and glow. But it is dead, and because it is not living, it cannot sustain life. We must change our thinking if we are to survive the shock of a world which looks behind our mask. And that change must come from recapture of the primitive order of things, in which all of God's people were priests and all knew it.

We differ in talents. We do not all have the same ability. But we do sustain the same relationship to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the fellowship of the saints is to give everyone the opportunity to develop to his fullest

potential, to encourage and strengthen him for growth in grace as well as in knowledge of the truth.

As Kokichi Kurosaki wrote in *One Body in Christ*, “Our problem lies in the fact that we have come to doubt that the spiritual relationship God has given us to Himself and one another is sufficient as the basis for true fellowship. This doubt exists only because such free and simple fellowship has been so long hindered and hidden by the *bonds* of institutionalism.”

The Art of Nitpicking

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[Abstract]

I had never really thought of Anderson, Indiana as being a “lousy” city. I’ve preached there a great many times in days of yore and enjoyed the association with brethren whom I found it easy to love. That’s why I was surprised when I read in *Time* that the entire school system had to be closed down for three days to combat a city wide epidemic of infestation by *Pediculus capitis*, which, in case you did not know it, is the head louse.

When I was a little kid in school they didn’t shut up shop because of lice. If they had the schools would have stayed closed like they do now for a teacher strike. The teacher would send a note home, and if you had parents who could read, they would get you in by the big kitchen table which was covered with the red-checked oilcloth and go after the lice and nits with a fine tooth comb. Nits are the eggs, laid on hair follicles, and when the comb had scraped your scalp raw and dredged up a supply of them they were held over the lamp chimney where they would snap, crackle and pop like modern breakfast cereal.

I get a kick out of the story about the teacher who sent a note home by a tousle-headed little roughneck, “Will you please have Johnny examined for adenoids?” The next day Johnny brought a pencilled note from his indignant mother to the teacher, “I wish you’d pay attention to your own business. I’ve combed Johnny’s head three times with a fine tooth comb, and

nary an adenoid did I find.”

I thought lice had gone out of style, if they ever were in it, like an asafoetida bag tied around your neck to ward off cold. It worked because no one could stand getting close enough to you that a germ could jump on you. But if lice are about a thing of the past, and they certainly must be rare to be reported in *Time*, the word derived from searching for their eggs is still with us. Everyone has heard of nitpickers.

In the religious realm I have been around some of them almost my whole life. They are good people but they major in minors, throw tantrums about trifles and fragment the saints over fly-specks. They get nits mixed up with the gospel and go out to proclaim the latter while they are actually conducting a neighborhood research in the former. While the world around is grappling with prodigious problems we tend to become unstrung and pursue gnats with a gun loaded for elephants. We are inclined to think that heaven is all agog about our issues with the angels suspending world operations to line up on the ramparts of glory and watch with fear and trembling for the outcome of one of our arguments in Texas. It could be that they do not glance at one of our little tempests in a Texas teapot. They are accustomed to them!

Jonathan Swift, who was one of the sharpest satirists ever to point his pen at the foibles of the foolish, writes in *Gulliver's Travels* about a country which was rent asunder by a terrific debate over the question of whether an egg should be broken at the big or little end. The “Big Enders” belabored the “Little Enders” and vice versa, until parties were formed that bred hate and hostility which endured long after most of the people forgot how the fracas started. We have Eggheads like that with us until this day.

Nitpicking will destroy a home or a congregation. I had an aunt who never saw anything good in her family and never

missed seeing anything bad. She was a first-class, Grade-A nagger, and she never let up. She not only made mountains out of molehills, but she made mammoths out of the moles. My uncle took to drink and the kids took out for the city. Even my uncle's death did not cure her. She nagged at him posthumously and *in absentia* for leaving her alone. She thought he had died on purpose. I think she really missed him, but he would not have returned from wherever he was if they had given him a furlough.

In her later years she decided she wanted to arrange in advance for a funeral plan and pay for it while she was still here. She went to the mortician and he showed her twenty different caskets. She found something wrong with everyone of them and said she would not be caught dead in them. The one she liked most did not have the right kind of handles on it. I volunteered the opinion that this was of greater concern to the pallbearers than to the occupant, seeing they had to bear the burden of the day. But she did not buy my statement. She did not buy the casket either. When I was young I used to wonder if naggers lived longer than other people. I have reached the conclusion that they do not, although I have no statistics. It just seems longer.

I remember an old brother in North Missouri who objected to everything the brethren wanted to do. He thwarted every plan to advance the cause. Finally they got fed up, wrote out charges, and notified him they were going to withdraw from him on a certain night. He showed up for the event in his Sunday suit, big as life and twice as natural. He listened to all of the accusations with pride, and heard the grounds for the proposed action. But when one of the elders cited a scripture to justify their course, the accused arose to his feet and said, "I object! You've got the wrong scripture. I don't blame you for putting me out, but I want it to be scriptural. Now here's the scripture you should have used on me." He then proceeded to give them book, chapter and verse, as our radio preachers always say.

Nitpickers always pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin. They give the Lord one stalk of spearmint out of every ten. But they do not have enough time left to attend to such weighty matters as justice, mercy and faith. These are not nits. Those who engage in a search for minutiae have their eyes adjusted to see the little things. They can spot a speck of dust in a brother's eye a half mile away and miss a building beam sticking out of their own. They can fall over a cow on the way to pick up an acorn.

The Jews who were enroute to murder Jesus would not go into the Judgment Hall lest they become unclean and not be able to eat the Passover. You did not dare miss that even if you killed a man on the way to it. Most of you have heard of the man years ago who stole a horse on Saturday evening. Monday morning the sheriff went to pick him up just as he was getting ready to ride out of the country. The astonished officer of the law said, "Why didn't you leave before now?" The man was incensed. "You don't think I'd travel on Sunday and despise the Lord's Day, do you? What do you take me for?"

A few years ago one of the brethren who lived in Texas would not permit mixed bathing of young people from the congregation in his private swimming pool. Later he was indicted and did a stretch in a federal penitentiary for promoting a fraudulent scheme which was a pretty clever confidence game. I knew a brother who used to inveigh against movies every time he got in the pulpit, but all of the time it turned out he was going to burlesque and "girlie" shows. Such inconsistency never really seems inconsistent to nitpickers. The legalistic mind has ways of justifying neglect of justice and mercy while making a great hullabaloo about things which may or may not be nearly so important.

Perhaps it is a part of the human predicament that we look through the wrong end of the binoculars at our own actions and use a magnifying glass to inspect those of our brethren. No

doubt nitpickers are like the poor and we shall always have them with us. But it seems a crying shame that those who know “the power of Jesus’ name” should get so embroiled in fighting over insignificant matters they will let the world go to hell while they clobber each other. It is a “lousy” way to spend the time which God has told us to redeem, seeing that the days are evil. I hope you don’t think this article is nitpicking!

The Common Error

Mission Messenger (May 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Have you ever had one of those days when you go around humming a tune or singing over and over a brief snatch of a song which has burned itself into your consciousness until you cannot shake it? I must confess that I've become hooked like that until someone whose nerves became taut and frayed screamed out, "Is that all you know? You've sung that one phrase a hundred times. Why don't you wait until you learn the rest of the song or get lost in the woods where you can sing it to the squirrels? They spend their entire life looking for nuts."

I get that way about quotations also. I'll be reading a book, sailing through a page with the greatest of ease, when a statement will leap out from the print and zap me right smack in the brain cells until I keep riding it around mentally in my waking moments. One such statement which I recently read was made by Lord Salisbury, that member of the Cecil family who landed the office of Prime Minister in Great Britain. He said, "The commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcase of dead policies."

I happen to think that it is also the commonest error in the domain of religion. That may be due to the fact that in a lot of places you cannot separate the two, and a lot of folk who think they are worshipping God are actually just playing politics with the souls of their brethren. My good brethren seem as prone to

this as anyone I know. Let me cite an example. The idea of attempting to secure or maintain purity of doctrine and uniformity of opinion by division and fragmentation of the body of saints has been proven wholly unsuccessful. It is a dead horse, but the brethren will not remove the saddle and are still trying to ride it to glory.

One good old brother of my acquaintance, who had a private corner on truth, and who was never wrong on anything, went through three divisions he had helped to promote to preserve sound doctrine. He told me he would stand for the right if he had to stand alone. He ended up doing just that, not standing for the truth, but standing alone, after finally withdrawing from his son and the son's family. The son told me, "Dad wasn't nearly as faithful to God as he was stubborn with people." The kingdom of heaven, foretold by all the holy prophets, is a mighty bedraggled looking spectacle when it is down to but one citizen, old enough to have one foot in the grave and the other one on a banana peel.

What happened to us, as a people, of course, was that when certain problems arose among the brethren a century and a half ago, they had no real spiritual approach to them. They could harangue the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians about the sectarian divisions and drive them up a tree in debate, but they had no real dynamic to accept one another as God had accepted them all, in spite of their ignorance. The Enemy, who hates reformation and has never failed to smash a restoration movement to smithereens, was waiting in the wings. He came in on cue and splintered us like a quaking aspen struck by a bolt of lightning.

Our very first division among ourselves ended the effectiveness of our appeal for unity, and directed most of our time, talent and treasure toward fighting each other. The more we fought the more we divided, and the more we divided the more we fought. Great values went out the window and while it

was open we jerked one-third of our favorite motto off and threw it out also. From that time on we were no longer inhibited by “in all things charity,” and it was dog-eat-dog and “the devil take the hindmost.”

By the grace of God we have been preserved until this day, perhaps as a showcase exhibit to the rest of the world of what happens when a unity movement is plowing along and hits a stump and comes unglued. And some vociferous individuals, still breathing the atmosphere of the nineteenth century and sucking the paps of “Mother Schism” are crying out in their sleep for more division despite the fact that such division among brethren is everywhere condemned and not once commended in the sacred scriptures.

As bad as things were in some of the seven congregations scattered over Asia Minor, not once was the recommendation given that “the faithful few” pull up stakes and go out and start a “loyal group.” The Holy Spirit, who craved to be heard by anyone who had ears, was speaking to some pretty rag-tag congregations, but he still recognized them and was still speaking to them. God knew that once he advocated cleavage of the saints in Christ over matters of understanding and interpretation, it would jerk the lid off a Pandora’s box of ills which would never again be corralled. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men could not put that Humpty-Dumpty together again!

But what the Holy Spirit would not do the party spirit has now done. It has lacerated and slashed us, mangled and gashed us, until in some areas the brethren spend more time in civil war and internecine strife than in battling the malign forces of hell. In a ripped-off world they contribute more to purchase time on the media to assail and assault their brethren than they do the pagan and heathen forces which threaten to engulf us all. It is no longer true that we wrestle not with flesh and blood. In many places the weapons of our warfare are carnal. The sword of the

Spirit is dipped in fratricidal gore as if that was the very reason why God had placed it in our unworthy hands.

We have Paul to thank for telling us what is wrong. We have not grown up, and we are still carnal. We are walking as natural men and not as supernatural men. We are living like pagans rather than as children of a common and loving Father. The blatant voices calling for fragmentation are carnal voices. The journals seeking to promote strife are carnal journals. The hearts of those who edit them are not right with God. The hearts of those who hearken to them are the hearts of babes in Christ.

It is time for those who have grown up to demonstrate it by healing the breaches, repairing the rents, and proclaiming peace. It does not require much knowledge to bite and devour one another. A cannibal need not be educated. Indeed, people who are insane can engage in such activity. Men can destroy a mansion who cannot build a doghouse. There is no particular honor due to spiritual vandals who wreck the house of God and set the living stones to hurling themselves at one another.

We live in a different age than the raw frontier culture which helped to spawn our divisions over music, cups, colleges, classes, and all the rest of the motley horde of opinions and interpretations which grew into traditions and made void the law of God against strife and division among the saints. It is no honor to stick to the decaying carcass of dead policies. God's children are not flies. They are not vultures.

We must renounce division as having any power to promote peace with God or with our brethren. We do no honor to the unity of the Spirit when we cannot even maintain the bond of peace. It is time to receive one another as we are. God did not wait until we all agreed with him before he reached down from heaven to take us in his arms. Nor can we wait until all see everything alike before we receive his other children. There is only one unity available to brethren possessed of rational power,

men and women who think, and that is unity in diversity. It is silly to look for any other. It is either such unity or none!

Schism in the body as a means of promoting purity is as dead as a Dodo, and as out-of-date as picking your teeth at the dinner table with a Bowie knife. It is time to get the first-century faith out of its nineteenth-century garb and introduce it to the twentieth century. It is time to grow up!

Queen of Epistles

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

The congregation of God is something quite different. It is the company of people whom it has pleased God to call into the fellowship of His Son. Its members are chosen by Him, not by us, and we have to accept them whether we like them or not. — The Household of God, by Lesslie Newbigin.

If you are the “gung ho” type of reader, this article which is the first of a short series, may turn you off like a faucet in the kitchen sink. I could jump off the journalistic diving-board and start paddling for the other shore but I prefer to take you behind the scenes, and let you see what happened to firm up my resolution to write about part of one chapter in the Ephesian letter. If I ramble around a little in this too lengthy introduction you can either take a nap or two along the way or climb the fence and cut across the lower forty and meet us three or four pages down the road.

Almost a year ago I spent a long evening talking in a dormitory room with three young brethren on a university campus. You couldn’t have picked a more unlikely looking foursome. I was approaching sixty-five, as evidenced by my thin gray hair, a non-intellectual wholly devoid of an educational degree, having barely gotten out of Topeka High School through the grace of God, with the added assistance of Miss Carmi Wolfe, an unclaimed female blessing who was a speech teacher

like no other I have ever met. May she rest in peace!

In addition, I was the only one in the dorm room who gave evidence by his dress that he was part of “the straight world.” I had a tie on and was wearing an Arrow shirt which I had purchased on the bargain counter of “irregulars.” The other fellows were wearing jeans, and their heavy shoes which looked like combat boots sent a stray thought flickering through my mind that I was in an underground meeting with some of God’s paratroopers.

One of the men looked like my idea of the ship captain who pursued Moby Dick. He had a bushy beard which would have made the writing prophets green with envy in 500 B.C. The other two lads both had moustaches. One of them had trained his to make him look as fierce as any pirate who ever climbed up the deck of a ship with a knife held between his gleaming incisors. But we were absolutely at ease. They accepted me as being about their age and I accepted them as being about mine, and since “generation gaps” only exist inside of people, if there is no internal gap there can be no external one.

Our talk was serious, although punctuated by some of the sharp wit which is a part of the refreshingly open era in which our lot has been fortunately cast. I had spoken four times on campus that day, starting at a continental breakfast before daybreak. Three times I had made myself vulnerable by inviting questions from the audience, and I had gone the full round, discussing humanism, existentialism, the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred scriptures, the concept of life beyond, and the authority of the moral and ethical values as expressed by Jesus in word and deed.

At the morning meeting these three came to ask if they might meet with me after the last session of the day and “rap” awhile. I am not a philosopher and I haven’t got as much sense as Elton Trueblood who heads for the motel room to rest and

meditate every evening at 10:00 o'clock. That is about the time when things start moving on the campus. So I allowed these three personable activists to "con" me into meeting with them in a session which finally broke up with a prayer about 2:00 o'clock in the morning.

They were all interesting, but then I have never met a person who isn't. They had been through some pretty hairy escapades which were calculated to curdle the blood of a staid old codger like myself, but I am resolved never to be surprised by anything which humans do, and if I am, never to let them know it. The boy with the buccaneer-type moustache had been "busted by the fuzz" about two years before, to employ the language which is the jargon of the one time Beats. He had been inhaling a joint when the long arm of the law reached out and plucked him from a park bench. When they searched him they found his little sack of expensive "Acapulco Gold" and they put him through the legal wringer, giving him a pretty rough way to go.

He now looked upon the occasion of his arrest and detention as an exhibition of God's providence, because one of the Jesus People who was working the jail, and who had formerly been on the real hard stuff, sought him out and told him "the Way was a Who" and also told him who the Way was. Now all three were members of the Church of Christ although it was touch and go as to whether they could stay with it and keep their sanity. It was a little like being back in the detention ward. They were not under grace but under law! That was one reason they wanted to talk with me. They knew I had not "flown the coop" or tried to set "the chicken house" on fire!

I had been brought on campus by a crew of young Christians who wanted to throw down the gauntlet of faith in the pagan arena and have a direct encounter with the forces of raw skepticism. The only group in the city that kicked up dust about my coming was the Church of Christ. The preacher came down

to the college class on the Sunday before and warned the students not to attend my meetings. He fulminated at length and breathed out fire about my laxity on fellowship, telling the kids how I did not hesitate to speak where they used instrumental music. But he made the mistake of telling them I was probably one of the best thinkers around, and spoke and wrote so cleverly that I could make black look white and vice versa. So all of them came, every one of them, and quietly slipped up and told me they wanted to see my magic color trick. We had a great time in the Lord! They were terrific!

Before the talk fest was very far along I learned that the others were really serious about study of the revealed word. They were engaged in a weekly investigation of Ephesians in one of the dorms and were enthused about it. When they learned it was one of the books which really turned me on we discussed it at length and I told them that for years I had bandied about the idea of writing a whole book on Ephesians 4:1-16. They urged me to do it. I pointed out that I could never fulfill the dream because I had so much else going, but I might deal with it briefly in the paper.

I requested each one to write down how he classified the Ephesian letter. Here are some of the answers of these perceptive men with sharp minds. "Ephesians is the dessert served up with God's free smorgasbord." "It is the minimum daily requirement of all truth caught up in a single one-a-day capsule." "The jewel covered handle of the sword of the Spirit." They did not know it but they were expressing in contemporary vernacular what heavy minds of the past had said.

William Barclay calls Ephesians "the Queen of the epistles." He says it is "Paul's supreme letter." Hugh Grotius, who died in 1645, said, "It equals its sublimity of ideas with words more sublime than any human language ever possessed." Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it, "The divinest composition of man." Once, while teaching a class years ago I referred to it as

“the central diamond in the regal crown of divine disclosures.”
At the insistence of my young friends I want to share a few thoughts about it. What I say will neither be new nor unique. I only trust that it will be refreshing.

RANDOM COMMENTS

Although my purpose is not to give an exegesis of the Ephesian letter, but to discuss only a part of one chapter as it relates to the intent of God in creating special functionaries for the community of the reconciled ones, I believe certain preliminary statements are not out of line. The letter is one of “togetherness” and the key word is together. It appears in such statements as the following. “God hath quickened us together in Christ. . . . and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And again, “Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”

All of this is in harmony with the divine purpose, pleasure and will, which is to “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him” (1:10). The letter is a great dissertation on unity. And unity is to be found only in Jesus. The expression “in Him” sounds like the staccato blows of a power hammer as the apostle beats out a rhythm of oneness. We are chosen in him, in him we have redemption, in him we have obtained an inheritance. He is the center of life. Whatever does not proceed from him has no authority. He is the circumference of life. Whatever does not lead to him has no validity. He is everything! He is all!

After we trusted in him we were sealed with the Holy Spirit who had been promised (1:13). We were quickened or made alive after being dead in sins and trespasses. We not only owe God our thanks for an inheritance but we are indebted to him for life. Really the inheritance is life! So this letter speaks of those who were apart from God being brought back into unity

with him by reconciliation through his marvelous grace.

It also deals with those who were alienated from one another. The Gentiles were regarded as being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. They were foreigners according to the covenant upon which the promises were based. They had no hope. They were in the world without God. They were held in contempt by the Jews. It was a common saying that, "Gentiles were made as fuel to keep the fires of hell stoked." To touch a Gentile was to become unclean. To enter a Gentile home was to be defiled. So bitter was the hostility that if a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, the parents of the boy held a funeral service for their son. Intimate relationship with a Gentile was the equivalent of death!

But Jesus swept away the hatred. He did not force the Jews to become Gentiles, nor the Gentiles to become like Jews. Those who were far off were brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. It was the blood that reached out and drew them in. He abolished in his flesh the enmity. He reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the existing hostility by it. I am thrilled by this! I know now that the secret of unity is not to kill each other off in debate. It is not to vanquish opposers at all. It is to remove the hostility that exists between us. It is not to straighten up everything so we can start loving. It is to start loving so we can straighten up things. It is to love that we may live, for it is better not to live than not to love.

The Jews continued in their circumcision. The Gentiles continued in their uncircumcision. What the blood did was to render both of them unavailing in the divine-human relationship. The only thing really important to that relationship is a new creation in Christ Jesus. That is why I repeatedly affirm that I shall allow no opinion, idea or interpretation of sincere brethren in Christ to become of greater value than the blood of Jesus. I shall not sever the red cord with which God has bound us by the sharp blade of controversy.

We do not become one by attaining harmony. Peace is not a pact but a person. He is our peace. We are made one. Our unity is an act of God, not an attainment of man. Read it again! “He is our peace, who hath made both one.” I do not need to accept the views of another. All I do is accept Jesus, and that puts me in a position to accept everyone whom God accepts. I do not accept a man because I agree with him. I accept him because God accepts him. If he is circumcised I do not uncircumcise him. If he is uncircumcised I do not circumcise him. The only circumcision which counts is that made without hands. It is an operation of God and not an act of man. It is the faith he has in Jesus, and not his conformity with a theological position I hold, which brings a man into Jesus.

It is easy to talk about how the cross renders the entire hassle over circumcision invalid. We no longer have that problem. For one thing, not one community of saints in a thousand has a single Jew in it. It is no longer “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” It is now to the Gentile first and last, and not at all to the Jew. Most brethren think the gospel cannot save the Jew now, so they do not bother taking it to the Jewish community.

Our contemporary problems are basically the same in nature. But they are over different issues. The Bible does not mention our issues, so we never think of applying the recommendation as to circumcision to them. We are just not bothered about eating meats or observing days, and we have no trauma over circumcision. The faith has now become a white Anglo-Saxon, middle-class American export. It is our bag! We even talk of sending “missionaries” to England and Canada. They are not a part of the United States of America so they are areas for foreign missionaries to try and reach “where the gospel has never been preached.”

I am no longer a party to the sectarian spirit. I have been delivered from the partisan treadmill. All of our “issues” avail

nothing so far as I am concerned. Instrumental music avails nothing and non-instrumental music avails nothing in so far as our relationship with God through Christ Jesus is concerned. Bible classes avail nothing or lack of them avails nothing. The same is true of one cup or individual cups, orphan homes or no orphan homes— all of them are like circumcision. If a man wants to be circumcised but does not regard it as essential to my salvation and does not try to bind it as dogma upon my heart, it is his business. It is between himself and God. The same thing holds true for instrumental music, cups, classes or colleges. Just do not try to bind any position upon me as essential to life with the Father, for I do not believe it. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life. That is where I stand, and there is where I intend to allow others to stand.

I intend to receive every person who has been immersed into Christ Jesus upon the basis of his faith, just as God received me. And I do not intend to be catechized, cashiered or calibrated by men. I no longer represent any splinter or segment created by men. I belong to Jesus. I intend to stand with Him. I will not be moved. I do not belong to Jesus because I belong to a special set of brethren, but I belong with all of His brethren because I belong to Him. If God could accept me into his fellowship when I was ignorant about so much I will have no trouble accepting others who are ignorant about so little. Fellowship is not conditioned upon one being right about all things, but upon being in the right one at all times.

I may disagree with a saint the rest of my natural life. I may discuss our differences every time I see him. I know that I will if he brings them up. But, if he has gained access by one Spirit unto the Father, I'll receive him as my brother, and I will not look upon him as an alien or foreigner. We are not begotten again by musing on music or by a position on praise, but by a loving Father. It is the blood of Christ which makes us one, not a correct understanding of every opinion. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is not

a good work to destroy or deny his workmanship. If you are good enough for God to receive, you are not bad enough for me to reject.

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

I could write about the Ephesian letter from now on until the death angel flutters outside my window, and the gray specter knocks the pen from my nerveless fingers. Every statement in the book is like a cup of cold water to my parched and thirsty soul. Every sentence is sweeter than honey in the honeycomb, sweeter than a lollipop handed to a longing, wide-eyed child. But I must shoulder my expository pack and get going. If I never introduce the fourth chapter I will never arrive at the place where special functionaries are identified and placed in proper perspective. I hope that you are not too tired with what you have already read to trail along with me a little while longer.

Please remember that our real purpose is to learn God's secret for the edifying of the body, that marvelous synchronization, the glorious organism, composed of living parts. I have the honor of being one of them. I'm overjoyed that the teaching with which I am concerned is pitched on a field of unity. This is the soil in which service must grow if it is to grow at all. It is God's will that the disunity seen in every part of the fragmented universe be resolved in Christ Jesus. His design is that it shall be effected by the body. My task is to become an instrument for the sacred oneness, an earthen vessel bearing the message of unity, a channel through which grace may flow to produce singleness of heart.

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3).

These words logically fall into three divisions— a plea from prison, a presentation to practice, and a position to protect. They define the responsibility of an organ in the spiritual body. They speak of a call, a walk and an endeavor. Unless we understand the meaning and implication of the terms we will probably mill around contributing to the confusion rather than promoting the peace.

It is not a mere dramatic gesture which prompted the apostle to remind us he was a prisoner. Certainly one who was shackled to a Roman guard, awaiting death, would not waste his time writing trivia. There is something impelling about words written in prison with the gray shadow of death moving stealthily closer. Witness the impact of the writings of John Bunyan and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. From the dungeon of the Mamertine prison in Rome these words come with a special passion. We dare not deny their urgency.

To walk is to progress in a given direction, and it is to progress with regular and consistent steps. Vocation is the word for calling, so that literally, the saints are urged to walk worthy of the calling to which they are called. This is universal rather than specific or limited. The religious world has long had an idea that God calls certain men to preach or to be missionaries. There is nothing in the Word upon which to base this. The fact is that all of us are called to the side of Jesus to share in subduing the world to him. This is our vocation. Paul's vocation was not tent-making. That was the means by which he supported himself while fulfilling his calling. Our call is to serve, and to walk worthy of it is to behave consistently and to act responsibly.

The worthy behavior is here described by five great terms. Barclay calls them jewels. He says they are basic to the Christian faith. With most of them he deals in his book *Word Studies in the Bible*. I believe they are absolutely essential to the maintenance of unity among fallible beings like ourselves.

Lowliness is a word which owes its existence to the Way. It describes a virtue which the pagan society looked at with disdain. It was regarded as ignoble and inferior. Our best current translation is humility, which the heathen social culture regarded as cringing and servile. It was never regarded as a worthy approach to behavior by those outside of Jesus.

Yet it is the person who stubbornly insists upon having his own way about everything, the one who regards the world as “his oyster,” and who will stoop to anything to gain his point, who is the real threat to unity. Almost every congregation has someone who acts like “a spoiled brat” in the divine family, throwing a tantrum or indulging in a spell of pouting if he does not get his way in a business meeting. Sometimes such individuals, in their egotistical spirit, try to bludgeon others into agreement by coercion and threat of leaving or withholding their money. Such unscrupulous persons always blame those who will not kow-tow to their dictatorial demands as causing the trouble when no group can continue to function while it is dominated by such high-handed tactics. They are “flies in the apothecary’s ointment” and they cause it to stink.

Lowliness is not feeling sorry for oneself. It is not a cringing, cowering attitude. Rather it results from an honest and fair evaluation of self. It is the result of taking off our mask and getting a good look at self in the mirror of real life. It is what happens to character when we start living and quit putting on an act. I doubt that anything else ever shook me quite as much as the startling realization that what I thought of as being “loyal” to Jesus by debating my brethren, was actually a tool for furthering division. And the tragedy of it was that I liked it. Incredible as it seems, it was almost as if I were glad that divisions had come so I could prove my valor.

Notice that the apostle enjoins “all lowliness and meekness.” These are not characteristics to be adopted in business meetings or when a public assembly is discussing a

subject. They are not jackets to put on when the weather changes, or external wrappings to be donned to face crises. They are not just a way of life but the life of The Way. They are not to be partial but complete.

The original word for meekness was used for an animal which had been trained to obey and which could be guided by the bit and reins. Once when I was out west, I stayed with a man who trained horses. The first day I was in his home I made the error of referring to it as “breaking horses.” He quickly corrected me. He thought of a spirited horse as a noble creature. He refused to break it. He told me that what he did was simply discipline an animal to respond to a superior authority, the will of a master.

When the Spirit plucked this word out of the vocabulary bag and dropped it in here as Paul was writing, He had this same thing in mind. Meekness is not weakness. A horse is as strong while guided by reins as when it roamed the plains as a mustang. But his strength is now channeled for constructive use. The Anheuser-Busch Breweries with headquarters in our city, maintain a stable of huge Clydesdales which annually win prizes for the floats they draw in such spectacular pageants as the Rose Bowl parade. They are not weak, but they are disciplined, and they work together in harmony at the touch of a master’s hand. That is meekness as the word is here used.

God may break our hearts but he does not crush our spirits. A broken and a contrite heart he will not despise, because it is divested of false pride and that frightful bloated egotism which wants to do its own thing. But soldiers need vibrant spirits to endure hardship. Music cannot be made from strings that sag or hang loose. We must respond as one when the Master strikes the keyboard and the symphony of life is being played.

The next term essential to the fulfillment of the divine ideal

is that of long-suffering. The Latins used it for the indomitable spirit. It described the man who would never give in. Beaten down, he would never surrender. I recall a boy like that when I went to a little rural school. Most of us fought everyday although it was strictly forbidden. That is probably the reason we did it. It doesn't take much to start a fight when you are eager for the fray and would "rather fight than switch,"— or study, either. We had a routine to follow when we got a victim down where we could pound on him and work him over. He had to say "calf rope" before we would let him up!

I have no idea where the term originated, nor what it meant. It was a country expression and I suspect was a term of surrender indicative of what happened when a running calf was roped and snubbed to a halt. But the lad to whom I referred would never say it. Even when a bigger roughneck sat on him and beat the daylight out of him he would not give in or give up. I talked to his mother about it and she told me that when he was small she undertook to make him say he was sorry for some misdeed. She wore out two peach tree switches and whipped him until she got out of breath and had to stop for fear of getting a heart attack and leaving a stubborn orphan. He did not flinch during the beating, and like a sheep dumb before his shearers he opened not his mouth.

That was long-suffering among the Romans. They cultivated it to such a degree they would never make peace under defeat. If a Roman legion was backed against a wall they would die to a man without giving in, and the final survivor would die swinging the sword while it grew slimy in his grip from his own gore pouring from his wounds.

But the new covenant scriptures were not written in Latin. They were written in Greek and here the word had a wholly different bearing. It referred to that spirit which rejects retaliation and puts up with men who are bitter, recriminating and malicious. Chrysostom called it the spirit which had power

to take revenge, but which never does so. All of us have seen congregations of saints ruined by those who sought to “get back” at someone because of a slight, sometimes real, but often fancied. Peace will never dwell in a family or in a congregation where members allow wrath to be coddled and nurtured in sick minds.

Francis Bacon wrote, “In taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior.” He said in the same essay, “A man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.” I think there is a tremendous spiritual value to be gained from a knowledge that you could step into the arena with one who is flinging taunts and insults at you and slap him into the top tier of bleacher seats, but you refuse to do it and get your hands dirty. It is hard to fling tar without getting a little of it on yourself. No one with good sense should fight a skunk with a short stick, and it is unlikely you’ll accomplish much by poking at a rattlesnake with a ballpoint pen.

Preachers must really cultivate long-suffering if they love the cause. Many congregations have someone in them who was born in the objective case and the kickative mood. When such an attitude is coupled with a suspicious mind and a long tongue it not only kindles a fire but it keeps throwing brush on it so it will not be extinguished. A confirmed busybody is not only a big nuisance but a genuine source of difficulty. There must be a pretty intensive desire to use the shelter of the pulpit to tell such people off, but there is the possibility that they are a little off before you tell them. Restraint is better than revenge. There is a Spanish proverb which says, “No revenge is more honorable than the one not taken.” The poet Juvenal, who wrote about the time John was on Patmos, said that, “Revenge is always the joy of narrow, sick and petty minds.”

Probably religious editors are worse offenders than most. Every sect seems to rally around a journal. The field of journalism is not exempt from men who crave notoriety by

snapping and snarling at every person who differs with them. If there are no issues they contrive one, as they have no other reason for existence than that of agitation. When brethren who are attacked are a little sensitive it is hard to keep from fetching an editorial kick at the tormentors but to do so does not contribute to peace. It involves one in an effort which demands time and energy and which forces truly important things to suffer from default. It does not seem like good judgment to let your car run off into the river while trying to swat a mosquito who thinks he is a hummingbird. The best way to deal with an attack upon you is to write a stinging rejoinder and throw it in the wastebasket without publishing it.

Forbearing is a good word, closely allied to the preceding expressions. To be forbearing is to be tolerant, and to make allowances for others. Unfortunately, the discussion about fellowship the last few years has made a lot of brethren as nervous and jumpy as a mother kangaroo in a room full of pickpockets. They are upset and edgy, and the cold sweat breaks out on them at the dire thought that they might mistakenly regard someone as a brother who did not trim his sails by the orthodox wind. No one is more jittery than those who have to sort out everyone who is going to heaven and save God the trouble.

To them *tolerance* is a dirty word. But it must be remembered that tolerance is not the endorsement of anything that is wrong. It is merely enduring one who thinks it is right. And we are positively told that we must make allowances for one another in love. If we make no allowances for others none will be made for us. And we are going to be in dire need of mercy. Not all ignorance is deliberate and one can be mistaken without being a rebel. There is something sadly askew in an imperfect heart which demands perfection in all others except itself. Fortunately, the final judgment must be left to God and not to the brethren. If it had not been so arranged there would have been no use for heaven and hell would have been bursting at the

seams. It is obvious that anyone who thinks of himself as going to glory must realize that God will have to overlook a whole lot of ignorance and some pretty seamy behavior.

Our real problem is in the love department. As human beings we are not only inclined to be selfish and childish, but we are that way. We want to love only those who love us, and we want them to be first. We flatter our ego by feeling very close to those who are like us and who see things as we see them. We're afraid we'll waste a little love where it will not be appreciated, and as low as some love tanks are there is a chance they will run dry before we get around. What we do not realize is that love is of God. It is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given unto us. Of course, He cannot pour it out or pour it in if we hold our hand over the spout. Some brethren are so jittery about the Spirit they do not want him to pour anything on them, in them or about them! They don't want to be "withdrawn from."

Our divisions did not come over "issues" at all. And they will not be settled by debating issues. If we argued every issue to a frazzle and then argued the frazzle off, new issues would spring up and factional souls would wave them as factional banners and there would be new divisions and new heartaches. No one is more divided or bitter than those who split off to keep the Lord's church pure. We did not divide when issues were introduced or for a long time afterward, but we divided when we quit loving one another. The way to overcome division is to resume loving each other.

I mean start loving one another where we are and as we are. It is downright silly to wait until people see everything as you do to show your love for them. Just about the time you get things patched up one of you may learn something new and if you do that will upset the unity apple cart again. It would help a lot of brethren, especially preachers, to start being honest about love. Every time you mention it as the unifying dynamic they

interject, “I have always loved everyone.” If they love them like some of them do me, God help everyone! Who needs enemies as long as he has some brethren?

It hardly seems very loving to me to misrepresent your brethren, but I suspect a lot of folk have a warped idea of what love is all about. Love is from *agape*. It is the essence of God, the divine nature. It was difficult to capture this in a human word. Words are vehicles of thought and the concept of the divine essence was so magnificent there was no vehicle adequate to convey it. The Spirit adopted an unusual word, a strange one to the common Greek, and invested it with a sense it never had before. Even yet the spirit infused into it is so tremendous we are always whittling it down or deflating it to fit into our puny souls.

When some partisan defender derides or sneers at love as the only dynamic which can fulfill the very purpose of all law and bring peace to a fragmented world, he does not realize that he is belittling the very essence of God and asserting it is incapable of restoring order in a disorderly universe. *Agape* is unconquerable and indestructible benevolence. It is that active and benevolent good will which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object.

It is not a fluctuating emotion at all. It is an act of will, the admission of the divine essence or nature into the human personality and the projection of that nature— healing, restoring and recovering broken relationships. I have been accused of believing that love can solve every problem on earth. I gladly plead guilty to the charge. I not only believe it can do that, but I believe it is the only force in the universe that can. It is not love or something else. It is love or nothing else. Without love gifts are nothing. Without it sacrifices are nothing. Without it we are nothing.

It is one of the most difficult assignments of the Spirit to forbear one another in love, that is, to make allowances because

of sheer love. This kind of love is not for frightened, pussyfooting, wire-walking members of an institution who are trusting to their mere membership to save them. To know this love one must die. He must count all of his past attainments as garbage. He must throw them on the refuse dump. It is impossible to have *agape* without a cross— your cross.

A lot of good people will never be able to see how love can conquer division while differences exist. That's the only time it can conquer it! It is no problem to me. I simply esteem my brethren as being of more value than my opinions or ideas. I will not allow something for which my Lord did not die to come between me and my brother for whom He did die. Nothing that Jesus has not purchased with his blood is as important to me as someone he has bought with it. Once I could not see some of my brethren for a piano, now I cannot see a piano for my brethren. That does not cure the difference but it does cure the division, and the Bible does not say that difference of opinion is a sin but it does say that division in the family of God is a sin. The way to unite is to unite, not to debate about it.

I am not commanded to love my brother's ideas. I am told to love my brother. The Bible does not say to let "idea love" continue but to let brotherly love continue. I intend to do that because one who does not love his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life. You cross the frontier from death unto life because you love the brethren. He that does not love his brother abides in death. That is not a pleasing prospect for me.

God does not limit my love of brethren to those in the restoration movement or any other movement. We do not become brothers by enrolling in a movement or by identification with a faction, but by being born again. And I am going to love all of God's children wherever they are. I do not want to love merely in word or speech but in deed and in truth. I do not intend to sham it, fake it, or make a pretense. I am going to love

my brothers for real and I am going to show it!

I shall recognize them, share with them, go among them, labor with them as far as they will allow me in whatever enterprise appeals to my conscience as being scriptural. I shall make allowances for them in love. You do not have to be forbearing with someone who agrees with you on everything. My brethren need not love me for me to love them. *Agape* is love for the unloving and unlovely. It is unconquerable good will toward those who count themselves as our enemies. Jesus came from heaven to earth because he loved and I want to go from earth to heaven for the same reason.

THE BOND OF PEACE

We are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Keep means to guard, protect, preserve or maintain. Unity is from the Spirit and of the Spirit. Peace is also a fruit of the Spirit. Unity is not seeing everything alike. The United States is composed of a number of states, but they do not all share the same philosophy. There is a great difference between Georgia and New York, or between North Dakota and North Carolina.

Unity in Christ is not something that we shape but something in which we share. We do not achieve it, we appropriate it. It is a creation of the Spirit and not a coalition of man. It is called the unity of the Spirit because it originates with the Spirit and is ministered by the Spirit. It is the Spirit dwelling within which binds us to God and to one another. If the Spirit dwells in me and the same Spirit dwells in you, we are together in Christ whether we admit it or not. I'm in unity with every person on this earth in whom the Spirit abides. I do not care where they are.

In the old covenant peace was associated with salvation and this meant to be made whole, to restore to the original state of wholeness. It meant more than cessation of hostilities or a

time when war was not being actively waged. A man once told me that he knew the most peaceable couple in the community. They never exchanged a cross word. Neither ever interrupted the other. They were this way because they were not on speaking terms. Peace is not quietness based on hostility or contempt.

The word *eirene*, the word for peace can be best defined in terms of relationship. The bond of peace is the tie that binds me in proper relationship to my brethren because I am in a proper relationship with God. Peace grows out of an inner consciousness of acceptance with God, a sense of justification by faith or trust in the righteousness of Christ.

In a world of war I am called to wage peace. I will be blessed only if I am a peacemaker. I will also be called a child of God. So I must proclaim peace, plead for it and press it upon men. I must not be deterred by those who seek strife and ensue it. No task is nobler than to attempt to mediate peace in God's fragmented family. Frequently nothing else is more misunderstood.

Knowing this, Benjamin Franklin wrote a letter to John Adams, on October 12, 1781, in which he said, "I have never known a peace made, even the most advantageous, that was not censured as inadequate, and the makers condemned as injudicious or corrupt. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' is, I suppose, to be understood in the other world; for in this they are frequently cursed."

Peace will never be restored by universal conformity. The minds of men can no more all think alike than their faces all look alike. Peace was never ordained upon uniformity of opinion, ideas or interpretation, but upon faith. And faith rests upon facts and not upon deductions from the facts. That is why our walls will not be broken down by metaphysical debate but by love.

Recently I read a statement made in a speech by a French priest, Msgr. Chevrot, who could see that creeds and dogmata were losing their power over the minds of men. He said, “The ramparts behind which men protect themselves from each other seem able to defy the centuries: but they are not safe against erosion. A day comes when the mortar crumbles, the stones come apart, and the walls of the citadel collapse. My brothers, we are separated today; if we have not got ladders long enough to climb the walls which separate us, we have a force that can undermine them, the force of our love. Let us love one another as Jesus loved us, and he, our Christ, will throw down these impassable walls.”

Simple Trusting Faith

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed. It is not necessary that the whole universe should arm itself to crush him— a vapor, a drop of water suffices to kill him. But though the universe should crush him, man would still be more noble than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies, and the advantage which the universe has over him. —Blaise Pascal.

A few years ago I wrote a book which I called *Simple Trusting Faith*, and which is now out of print. It grew out of what I felt was a necessity. As I went about holding “rap sessions” with college and university students, a lot of young people asked me where they could secure a book which would provide a fairly adequate expression of my views. Since I did not know of such a volume I sat down and wrote one of my own.

I dealt with the concept of the existence of God, as well as with the incarnation of the Word and the virgin birth. I also considered the problem of the supernatural as evidenced in miracles and concluded with a chapter upon eternal life as a new dimension of existence available now through a relationship to God by the Holy Spirit.

I wrote the book easily and the arguments appearing in it seemed to me to be valid. The terminology I employed was not forced. I did not adopt a vocabulary for the occasion. I am not a

scientist and the professional scientific vernacular would have been as far out for me as it would have been for most of my readers.

It came, therefore, as a real surprise to me when I began to receive letters from all over saying that the book was helpful but was very far from being simple. Some folk wrote that if this was an expression of simple trusting faith they would be hard put to read a book on profound trusting faith. Of course, many of those who wrote were like myself, quite lacking in formal educational attainments. Real scholars no doubt thought of the book as quite superficial, and if they read it all, they did so as light literature before retiring at night.

But I learned something from my experience. A lot of folk who accept the Bible sincerely, as containing a revelation of the divine mind, could not build a logical case for it at all. Actually, such a structural foundation, piling up syllogisms like building blocks, would leave them cold. They would be dangling on the literary ropes before they had read six pages.

This has caused the faith to become a butt of ridicule by some who are sophisticated, and by a great many others who think they are. It is assumed that a majority of Christians are gullible, basing their hope on traditional views and childhood fantasies left over from Sunday school. This has sparked a reaction upon our part and driven us to think that we must validate the faith by carefully constructed argument which can be typed out in a format so convincing that it will knock unsuspecting skeptics and atheists for the proverbial loop when it is read in their presence.

I am all for a rational approach. I do not mean by that a view which is wholly outside the realm of experience and emotion. I have read books presenting the case for Christianity which were as cold as a frog on a dissecting table. I have also listened to learned lecturers who could deal with apologetics as

masterfully, and about as concernedly, as an Irish bricklayer. If God is not real to me in my daily life, and if the Spirit is not my Comforter all of the time, what I produce in my study will probably be as dry as sawdust and about as palatable. There are not many of us who live in an intellectual penthouse. We have to get faith down on the street level. We cannot soar around over town like a glorified Batman. Jesus did not say "Feed my giraffes." He said, "Feed my sheep!" We have to get the fodder down out of the trees and in the trough.

Shall one wait for faith until he has examined, scrutinized, and evaluated the formal evidence and digested it? If so, a lot of folk will never be able to attain to faith. I doubt that very many are led to the faith once delivered by erudite argument. I once knew a very perceptive lawyer who thought he was safe by claiming to be an agnostic. I liked him and he liked me and because we could make mental sparks fly we were frequently together. He deliberately posed questions to probe the ability of faith to defend itself as in a court of law. This suited me! Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and I have paraphrased that to read, "The unexamined faith is not worth having." It seems to me that faith must make itself vulnerable in the marketplace, or it may be merely prejudice.

After we had mentally sparred vigorously for more than a year, my friend asked me to baptize him one day. I did so, inwardly rejoicing (God forgive me!) that I had vanquished his precise arguments and won the battle of wits. He soon disabused my thinking when he said there were many points about the rational structure which were not yet clear and he even thought I was a little muddled in some of my arguments. The thing which had finally won him was patience coupled with genuine love. He had come to feel that Jesus was who He claimed to be because of the quality of His presence in the inner life of those who had accepted him.

The strange thing about this is that what I regarded as my

strongest arguments did not get through to him, or, if they did, they did not appeal to his rational powers. But my life, which I regarded as my weakest proof, impressed him. It came to me that we will probably never be able to work out a systematic sequence of syllogistic proof which will overthrow skepticism. It is altogether possible that God never intended for us to try.

Cardinal Newman once wrote, “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.”

I think there is beauty and utility in apologetic structures erected by word architects of rational premises. I stand amazed at the knowledge displayed by those who have covered the field of defense. But many admire great buildings who could not describe them, much less explain their construction. We look at cathedrals but we live in homes, and many of the faithful must remain in the suburban area of rationalization. They are so busy eking out an existence, and life is so short and the hours so crowded they cannot make an adequate study of evidences.

The ever-recurring seasons, the orderliness of the universe, the glory of the planetary system and the regimentation of the mysterious hosts of heaven— all of these speak to the soul in a quiet whisper which stifles doubt and stimulates faith. It is not so much an arrangement of a proper line of thought as it is the agreement of the whole. Reports of archaeological finds reported in the newspaper, discoveries such as those of the scrolls at Qumran, all of these bolster the inner sense of conviction in hearts which know nothing about the laws of evidence or of the scientific method.

Perhaps the faith has a built-in logic of its own. This in no

sense declares that formal proofs are irrelevant and unimportant. Nothing that is true is without importance in a universe where all truth is harmonious and there is no discord with the Creator. But minds must believe which are without knowledge of logic and its classification of fallacies. If the voice of nature speaks to the remote forest dweller and confirms in his inner being what the missionary has told him in simple language, then let us praise God that this becomes his primary apologetic.

The incidental evidences which might even look foolish if set down in a book of formal logic, are eloquent to the unadorned hearts which find in them a confirmation of the deep yearning which strives for expression in life and deed. Faith has its difficulties, whether grounded in logic or in the universal voice of conscience, but the incredibilities of unbelief are so vast that their very existence constitutes an argument for the Christian faith. How thrilled I am that God has adapted the faith to all, whether it be a pin-headed pygmy in the jungle or a Princeton professor in the asphalt jungle and the intellectual tangle.

One Body in Christ

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[Abstract]

To confess Jesus Christ is to affirm the abolition and end of division and hostility, the end of separation and segregation, the end of enmity and contempt, and the end of every sort of ghetto. Jesus Christ does not bring the victory to the man who is either on this side or that of the fence. — Markus Barth in The Broken Wall.

The fourth chapter of Ephesians starts with our calling. That calling is our vocation. It is not how we make a living, but it is our life. And it is every facet of our daily life. Elton Trueblood in *Your Other Vocation* says that the exciting idea behind the New Testament use of “calling” is that our world is God’s world. He adds “The way in which we grow potatoes is as much a matter of God’s will as the way in which we pray or sing.”

What has happened, and it staggers imagination, is that God has called us to his side to work with him. We have heard the call and responded to it. So the life of God, eternal life, is now ours. It is not something in the “sweet by and by” but it is here in the “sweet now and now.” The goal of God has become our goal. The purpose of God is now our purpose. We have been reconciled unto God, and now we are his reconciling community. We have made peace with God and now we are peacemakers. We are the children of God. This is our calling, living in Christ and with Christ, and we must walk worthy of it!

But we simply cannot labor together with God in uniting all things in Christ, that is, things which are in heaven and things which are on earth, unless we recognize the unity of the Spirit. Unity is not a human attainment at all. It is a divine attribute. It is bestowed upon us as love is bestowed upon us. We do not achieve it. We accept it. We do not accomplish it. We acknowledge it. Unity in Christ Jesus is a condition created by the Spirit. It is not a state we sponsor or a position we project. It is sharing in the divine oneness.

Unity is not subscription to a creed nor subservience to a concordat. It cannot be arranged or arrived at by an association nor created by a convention. Unity is life. It is the life of God, made available to us through our Lord, the Messiah Jesus. It is the life of the called ones, the new creation, the new humanity. Our task is to guard it and keep it in the bond of peace.

The unity involves seven items. It is these which define and describe our calling, and which give it reality. We are called into *one body*. We are called by *one Spirit*. We are called unto *one hope*. It is actually designated “the hope of our calling.” We are called to be slaves under *one Lord*. We are called by *one faith*, that which demands a supreme act of trust. We are called to obey in *one baptism*, the surrender of all that has been ours for all that is His in us. We are called to be children of *one God and Father*. He is superior to all, yet He shows His majesty through all and shares His glory in all!

The number seven is significant. It was the number for perfection in creation. It is the number for fullness or completeness in the new creation. The unity of the Spirit reaches its full complement in these seven. Not one can be slighted. Not one dare be left out. Any concept of unity which eliminates one of these is not the unity of the Spirit. Any concept which projects the idea of more than one in any of them is not the unity of the Spirit.

I am going to consider them separately but with a full sense of their relationship. They are not separate entities but parts of a whole. They are seven ingredients which make up one loaf of fellowship with the divine. They are seven plies which make up one cord, seven strands woven into one rope binding us to God and to one another. Each contributes strength to the whole and each derives strength from the others. We may consider them individually but only as parts of that wonderful unity— the unity of the Spirit!

THE ONE BODY

I shall say some things about the one body with which many of you will not agree. I will say them because I must be honest with myself and true to my own convictions. I must give account for my own thoughts and my own words before that great judgment seat. I must stand or fall to my own Master. If you cannot concur with my views I will love you just the same. I cannot claim the freedom to do my own thinking and deny that freedom to you. You are my brothers and sisters. I cherish you in Him. But I do not forget that while you are my brothers, you are not my judges! “But to me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man’s day” (1 Corinthians 4:3). We sometimes forget that when we think we are judging what a brother says we are actually only judging ourselves. We are sitting in judgment upon our own hearts!

To save my critics, of whom there are many, a great deal of trouble, allow me to acknowledge that I have changed my thinking about the one body since I was “a boy preacher.” I no longer regard that body as a faction centering around a partisan point of emphasis, whether that point be right or wrong. I do not regard it as a denomination bearing a specific or official title and meeting behind recognized signs all stamped out with a metal “cookie cutter.” I do not think of the one body as a sect existing to exploit some theological deduction or religious philosophy.

I cannot be true to God and remain consistent with my own previous sectarian stance. I must choose between God and my own sectarian past. I have made the choice. I am going to be true to what I believe my Father would have me believe and write, just as I was true to what I thought when I was the leader of a factional school of thought that conditioned fellowship upon agreement with us.

There is one body! **It isn't that there ought to be one body. It isn't that we are striving toward one body. There is one body! There is one body exactly as there is one Spirit, or one Lord. And if that body is the called-out community, there is only one such community. There has never been another and there never will be another. All of the called are in that body. It is composed of all the elect of all the earth. The one body is a divine creation, not a human contrivance. Man can no more create another body than he can create another Spirit or another Lord. There will never be another body to siphon off some of the called-out ones. The community of the reconciled is one.**

The one body is not a sect. The very word sect implies more than one. No sect of believers in Christ is old enough to be the one body. No sect is large enough or comprehensive enough to be the one body. The Holy Spirit never created a sect and no one was ever baptized into a sect by the Spirit. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." This was written to a group of saints who were fractured by schism and separated by the sectarian spirit. They could not even eat the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit put them into one body. They separated themselves into parties. They were members of one body separated by schisms and rent by prejudices. The apostle did not deny that they were members of one body. He simply condemned their partisan alignments which made it so difficult for the unity of the Spirit to shine through.

Just as the one body is not a sect, so it is not a coalition of sects. All modern sects are post-apostolic. The one body

preceded them so it could not have been composed of them. If all modern sects came together in a federation, that federation would not be the one body. It would simply be one society of many sects. Sects serve no purpose except to divide. They are demonstrations of a work of the flesh. We should not be laboring for their union but for their death. They are fungus-growths and parasites. They should be chloroformed, not combined. They claim to exalt Jesus but they exalt opinions and seek to parcel Jesus out. They confine consecration to creeds, and insist that everyone survey the wondrous cross through their theological knot-holes. Let creeds be cast to the moles and bats, and let the sects which have crystallized around them wither and die. The one body is the work of the Holy Spirit, sects are the fruit of the party spirit!

The body of Christ is not a conglomerate of congregations, all of which are stereotypes and often sterile reproductions of one another. Congregations in apostolic days were not all alike. Their unity was in Christ. Jesus was their pattern. The seven congregations in Asia Minor were all different from one another. If they had not been, one letter would have sufficed for the lot. They were different in problems if not otherwise.

Some of them were pretty scroungy but they were all God had in a pagan culture, and although the light shone dimly Jesus did not snuff it out. These congregations did not constitute the body of Christ in Asia, because the one body is not composed of congregations. There were members of the body in every one of them and these were to walk with Jesus in white. You might as well try to unite all of the sects with a written creed as to try and unite all of the congregations with an unwritten one.

God's temple is composed of stones. The only kind of house he has on earth is a rock house. It is built on a rock which he laid as a sure foundation. It is built out of rocks he has called to life with him. They are living stones. But the stones will differ from one part of the earth to another. God has to use the rocks that

are at hand. A rock house in the Ozarks is likely to be made out of field stones. There are plenty of them. One in Indiana is likely to be made of Bedford limestone. But they are both stone houses.

The living stones God employs in Africa will differ from those he uses in Asia or Australia. Their culture will be different. Some of the living stones in Africa may get up and stomp around and clap their hands while they praise God, while in Texas they may sit in the corner of the pews and doze while the preacher cranks away at “the five items of worship.” But whether they wake or sleep, whether they jump or tiptoe, if they are living stones, they are builded together as a habitation of God for the Spirit!

Even in the United States the congregations that are made up of “lively stones” are not all alike. Some are more lively than others. I know, because I visit them all. I go to some places where a lot of the stones have university degrees and sing the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel’s *Messiah*, or “O Sacred Head” from Bach’s *Passion According to Matthew*. I also go where some folks, like myself, had a hard time getting through high school, and they sing “An Empty Mansion” from *Joyful Songs*, or “Farther Along” from *Starlit Crown* by the Stamps-Baxter Music Company. But I love them all, whether they are Johann Sebastian Bach or Albert Brumley types. They are my brothers and sisters. I’m thrilled they love my Father even if they are not all alike! I do not head for the door if some of them close their eyes and lift up holy hands while they are singing. They all sing what is meaningful to them whether its meaningful to anyone else or not.

The body of Christ is not composed of movements in history, although it is affected by them, because it exists in the time-space spectrum in which historical movements operate. We are a pretty good example of what happens when you confuse a movement with the body of which Jesus is the head. Most of us are heirs of one of about sixteen restoration movements. A lot of

them started about the same time, and all of them splintered and shivered into fragments. Many of them divided over the very same problems and at the same time in history. Some of them did not get to first base and others exploded on the way to second. When they came down they thought it was home plate and made the mistake of thinking they had arrived and everyone else had departed.

The body never died and it did not have to be restored. Good Presbyterians like Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Warren Stone and Walter Scott, thought there must be a better way to please God than by splitting a splinter off every time someone came up with a new theological slant, so they inaugurated “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” They failed to unite all of the Christians, because of what Alexander Campbell called “creed parties” in the sects. But we came along and argued that what they had done was to restore the church, and there were no Christians left in the sects to unite. Those who were Christians came with us, and those who did not come with us were not Christians. Thus, the restoration movement was transformed into “the Lord’s church” by our semantics. We fooled ourselves into believing that. We did not fool the Lord. I doubt that we fooled the Baptists when the “Reformers” pulled out of the Mahoning Association, after having previously left the Redstone Baptist Association because of rejection of the plea!

The one body is not the restoration movement and the restoration movement is not the one body. The body is bigger than any movement. It is greater than all of them put together. God knows how great it is, but no one on earth does. You can number the Disciples of Christ party, the Christian Church party and the Church of Christ party. You can compare figures and even gleefully juggle them in a kind of suppressed hostile rivalry, but you can no more count the redeemed on earth while they are scattered than you can in heaven when they are all together. John said, “After these things I looked, and behold, a

great crowd! And no one was able to count it— out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues!”

It doesn't bother me that I cannot count that high. I do not need to know who they all are. The Lord knoweth them that are his! Once I knew all who were saved. It wasn't a big job back in those days. The kingdom of heaven wasn't very large. It centered mainly in the midwestern part of the United States. That was because that section of the world was fortunate enough to have us in it. I even helped put out a directory of “faithful churches.” It was one of about a dozen such directories and there were no duplications in them. Ours was always being “gummed up” by congregations being persuaded to “leave the faith” and “apostatize,” which meant going over with some of the others. Of course, we captured our share and messed their directories up also. Being faithful had nothing to do with really pleasing Jesus. It was parroting the party line!

What a relief it is now to be free from all of that and to belong only to Jesus. What a privilege it is to be allowed to stand or fall to your own master and to let everyone else do the same. I grew up in a factional world where preachers of the word were constantly being called to referee congregational dog-fights, or coming from far and near to examine, catechize or tighten the screws upon someone who had learned better and was changing his mind. I was a part of such inquisitions and I am ashamed of it. I know now that the party always skims off the brains from the top. Only the thinkers are driven out! The bland conformists who either do not reason, or play politics and keep their mouths closed, stay in and become the party greats! Actually, it has come to the point in a lot of places where the best recommendation you can have is that the local congregation has excluded you!

Jesus did not die to purchase a party to oppose support of the Herald of Truth. He did not die to purchase one to promote it either. He did not shed his blood for an instrument party or a

non-instrument party, for an “organic” faction or an “inorganic” faction. Jesus did not suffer and bleed for a Sunday School faction or an anti-Sunday School faction. All parties which are exclusivistic are cooked up by men. They are brewed from unwritten creeds and simmered in opinions. All of them put together would not constitute the one body. That body has many parts, but no parties. And I am no longer interested in any party, promotion, schism or sect. I am interested in Jesus and I am willing to share that interest and my life (which is his) with anyone who exalts his lordship!

THE BODY CONSTITUENCY

The one body is composed of individuals. “Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). The parts are persons. Every saved person on this whole earth is in the one body. There is not one redeemed saint outside of it. God has set them all in the body as it pleased Him. He has tempered the body together. It is not a human organization but a divine organism.

The body is God at work in the world, in space and time, as he was at work in Christ. As the living word became flesh then, so now the revealed word becomes our flesh, and God is now in us reconciling the world unto himself. We are his reconciling agents, his earthen vessels, filled with his fullness, and serving the divine purpose for the divine end. I am an organ of God. My fleshly body is an arm of God, or a leg of God, or a tongue for God.

Every child of God in the world, every son and daughter of the Lord Almighty, is in the one body, and is my brother or sister. I am one with all of them. But I am only one with them through Him. Our unity is in Christ. Even though others who are in Him do not recognize their oneness with me, I recognize it with them. I did not arrange it. I simply accept it. When God

received them I received them. If he took them in with their hostility toward me I will take them the same way. It is not necessary that they recognize me. It is only necessary that they accept him. If they do that we stand together in him whether we stand together on things or not.

I am not so concerned with what they have in their minds as I am concerned with who they have in their hearts. The Holy Spirit can dwell in some pretty ignorant people. If He cannot it will be “Katy, bar the door” for a lot of us, and we will be standing outside in our ignorance looking in, instead of standing inside in our ignorance looking out. None of us know too much, and if we brag about what we do know, we prove it! “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. But if anyone thinks he knows anything, he has not known anything as he ought to know it” (1 Cor. 8:1, 2).

The apostle adds to that, “But if anyone loves God, he is known by him.” Praise the Lord! The one body is not composed of those who have scored a passing grade on a theological comprehension test. It is not made up of those who have attained a certain intellectual status. It is not how much you know but who you know. “And this is life everlasting, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Everlasting life is a personal relationship. It is not a memory feat. You can be a member of the body and not know one letter of the alphabet from another. You can be a member of it and not be able to write your own name. Cheer up! If you know him like I know him your name will be written down in glory where the Lamb keeps his book of life.

I refuse to allow any sectarian wall to debar me from any of my brethren. Such walls are not real. God did not construct a one of them. They are monuments to human pride and arrogance. They stand because of vain traditions which love the praise of men more than the praise of God. They are all artificial. They are all superficial. But they are not there for one

who ignores them. There are no sectarian walls except in human hearts and my heart has been purged from the party spirit by the crimson stream flowing from Immanuel's veins.

God does not want great lawyers, but grace-filled lovers. "The law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." If I follow Jesus my task is not to lay down the law but to take grace and truth to men. My only principle of action is the Spirit of life. To take that spirit to men I must leave my comfortable little heaven and make myself vulnerable. I must go where I would rather not go because that is where he leads. I must drink of a cup which I would rather have pass away, because that is what he did. I cannot wait until men see things as I do or agree with me. On that basis he would never have left heaven and come to earth. I must go among my brethren, all of them, for if I refuse to do that I will be guilty of the works of the flesh, and the fruit of the Spirit will wither and die. I want my watchword to be, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and tumult and evil-speaking be put away from you, along with all evil-hearted feelings, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God forgave you in Christ."

I think that when one changes his view of the one body as I have changed mine, he ought to be frank, open and explicit. He should be willing to bear the brunt of attack which will be directed toward him. He should steel himself inwardly for false accusation and expect his motives to be maligned. Satan does not easily surrender one who has been steeped in the party spirit. Freedom is never cheap and liberty has its price. But I want to be understood. I have no desire to equivocate, no intention of concealing my views.

There is one body! It is composed of every sincere immersed believer on earth. Every person who believes with all of his heart that Jesus is the Messiah, and God's Son, and is immersed because of that faith, has been baptized into Christ.

His sins are forgiven and he receives the Holy Spirit as God's gift. Every such person is a member of the one body by an act of God. If he suffers I suffer with him. If he rejoices I rejoice with him. The one body is not circumscribed by the limits of the non-instrument Church of Christ. It is not restricted to any one of its two dozen parties, nor to all of them put together. The body of Christ does not appear in the list of religious organizations in the United States Census Bureau report. It will never appear there!

I believe in the restoration principle and ideal. I am convinced that renewal must come as it has come in other periods of history. It can only come through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. The position held by the twelve apostles was unique. They still hold it. They have no successors to their office. They were envoys of the King and their writings are authoritative in my life. God set them in the church first. The foundation they laid is the one upon which I shall continue to build. I have neither time nor respect for any theory which sets aside the new covenant scriptures as the basis for my whole life. But I know the difference between the restoration movement started by good men and the one body created by the living God.

For me the revelation of God is complete. I hold no brief for modern prophetic utterances, whether given by Joseph Smith or my own brethren. The new covenant scriptures are perfect for their purpose and their purpose is to make us perfect — unto every good work. They are not a written code of legal requirements, but a collection of love letters for believers. They do not so much represent the will of God imposed as the heart of God exposed. They are not an indication of the Father cracking a whip but extending His hand to help in time of need. Reading the apostolic letters I am able to think God's thoughts after him. I can draw nigh to him so that he can draw nigh to me. And he never fails to do so!

Yes, there is one body, and there is only one! God is its

creator, Jesus is its head, the Holy Spirit is its life, and all who are sanctified and justified are its members, its organs in the world. Jerusalem which is above is free and she is the mother of us all. We are children of promise and not of a slavewoman. We are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. *As many!* Every person on this earth who was baptized into Christ Jesus has put him on! The extent of the body is determined by the number of those who have put on Christ Jesus by being baptized into him. I am convinced there are multiplied thousands of them of whom I have never heard. But I will see them in the grand reunion, the great festival of the home-going! What a gathering from every nation, clime and tongue!

The saints have put on the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created that new man. They are the elect of God and they are complete in the fullness of him who is the head of all rule and authority. I am one of that number, a sinner saved by grace which is so startling that I have not begun to understand it. I want to be found in him, not knowing my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God which is by faith. I want to know him and the power of his resurrection.

It still seems almost unbelievable that He stooped down and took me up in the everlasting arms along with all the rest of you who have set to your seal that God is true. But I thank him and praise him, that unworthy as I was, he came looking for me and did not stop calling until I answered and he found me. There is room in the body for all of us who love him. It is the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the community of the reconciled ones, and may all of us who are in it be reconciled to one another as we have to Him. Let us be drawn closer by the atoning blood which flowed for all!

The Ultimate Design

Mission Messenger (July 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

A few years ago I was summoned to a hospital to see a brother who had been involved in a highway accident. He had fallen asleep at the wheel and “totaled” his car. I stood by his bedside praying with the family that the concussion he had sustained would not prove fatal. After what seemed an interminable wait, he opened his eyes and stared at the unfamiliar surroundings. Then he asked the first question sparked by returning consciousness, “What am I doing here?”

That is the question of multiplied thousands in our world today. They are caught up in the wreckage of a social structure which has undergone three major conflicts in this unfinished century. They have read of the holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald where malign forces sought to practice genocide and six million lives were snuffed out in a frightful experiment designated “the ultimate solution.” They know of the massacre at My Lai and are aware of the suffering endured by prisoners in “tiger cages.” They have seen a reversal of what men call evolution and an enthronement of devolution.

They also know that with the cracking of the atom and the release of nuclear energy, science brought the material universe to the place where hope and despair are balanced on the sharp cutting edge of the knife of destiny. Two days before Albert Einstein died, there was read in Caxton Hall, London, the

Manifesto drawn up by Bertrand Russell and himself. In it they appealed “as human beings, to human beings; remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of everlasting death.” It was tragic to know of these two humanists appealing to humanity to create a Paradise when it was humanity that created the hell of which they warned.

It is quite obvious that science does not have the answer to the question the world is asking. The scientist is no longer a god. He is hardly a hero. His feet of clay are not qualified to support the image conjured up for him at the outset of the century. He is now more likely to be thought of as a kind of watered-down Frankenstein or a mad engineer vainly pressing buttons to try and direct technology which Alvin Toffler, in his book *Future Shock*, describes as “that great, growling engine of change.”

In *Technopolis*, Nigel Calder writes, “The apparent inability of the human species to make discriminating use of science induces a sense of helplessness. The impression is that we are passengers in a runaway train . . . there seems to be no one driving in the cab.” Ralph Lapp says, “No one— not even the most brilliant scientist alive today— really knows where science is taking us. We are aboard a train which is gathering speed, running down a track on which there are an unknown number of switches leading to unknown destinations. No single scientist is in the engine cab and there may be demons at the switch. Most of society is in the caboose looking backward.”

In a time of cosmic upheaval, what is the reaction of modern men and women? I have always been intrigued by the news reports from the Cyrenaican front during the North African battle in World War II. The Axis and Allied forces were shelling each other in the desert so close to Alexandria that the sound of the guns and the “whump” of the shells could be heard. But inside the city the night life went on unabated. Men and women were drinking and dancing, gambling and fornicating, as

if they were phantoms prancing on the periphery of perdition. Their fatalistic philosophy had made them giddy. “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die.”

The same heady wine seems to intoxicate Hugh Hefner and the human moths drawn to the bright light of *Playboy Magazine*. Hefner is a hedonist, one who believes that pleasure is the sole good in life and that moral duty is fulfilled in the gratification of pleasure-seeking instincts and dispositions. The hedonist is not opposed to religion. Gratification is his religion. How deeply this fatal venom has been injected into the bloodstream of our social corpus can be understood only as you listen to brilliant young people argue heatedly on the campus that “If it makes you feel good do it, because it is good!” Or, “What does not make someone else unhappy cannot be evil for you!”

The modern world nurtured on the “spiked pap” that God is dead, that the supernatural is non-existent and there is no message from above or from outside, has no answer to the question, “What am I doing here?” The scientist has no answer! The humanist has no answer! The hedonist has no answer! In a fragmented, twisted, distorted cosmos severed from its creator, there is no sense of direction. The hand of the compass does not point. It merely whirls. Gilbert K. Chesterton pointed out that the opposite to belief in God is not belief in nothing, but belief in anything!

To dismiss God is not to straighten out your thinking, but to corkscrew your mind. It is but to scramble your brain. It is not to become free but to become fickle. I *know* why I am here! I do not have one wavering doubt about it. It is not to make money, accumulate treasure, bask in beauty, or pursue pleasure, although none of these are sinful except as they banish God from the throne room of my heart and usurp His dominion over my life and being. They may even be good so long as they are windows through which I can see His blessings and not curtains which shut out the sunlight.

What am I doing here? Ask what I *should* be doing here. Why was I created? Why do I dwell in a clay tenement, or inhabit a frail tent? How shall I order this wonderful span of time called life, so the night of death will not simply fall upon a desert waste where are found only the newly-made graves of faith and hope? The answer is simple but sublime, easy to evolve but eternally involved.

Let all nature tune its ear to hear! Let no alien sound interfere with the announcement! Let the birds of the air cease their cheerful song. Let the wheels of industry halt their humming. Let angels pause in flight and men bend their earthly frames in homage. The supreme purpose of man in the intricate universe, the design of his very origin and ultimate in his attainment is *to glorify God*, the creator and redeemer. He who glorifies God justifies his existence, he who does not forfeits his right to eternal life with rational beings. He is dead even while he lives.

To glorify is to magnify, to praise or to exalt! It is the work of the whole man to glorify God, and not of the spiritual remote from the natural. “Run from fornication. Every other sin a man can commit is outside his body, but a fornicator sins against his own body. Do you not realize that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Spirit who is God’s gift to you? You do not belong to yourselves; you were bought with a price. That is why you should glorify God with your body and spirit. They are His.”

Sex employed as God ordains it glorifies God. A purchased slave of God does not abstain from pre-marital or extra-marital sex because he is afraid of contracting a venereal disease, or because she is afraid of becoming pregnant, but because abuse and misuse dishonors God. Marriage is honorable in all. It is whoremongers and adulterers whom God will judge.

We have lifted the glory of God out of the world of reality and floated it off into a world of fantasy until we equate it with

stereotyped performances at stated intervals in places we have tried to consecrate with humanly-devised dedication ceremonies. We think of glorifying God as achieving the divine purpose in comfortable pews lined up like in a theater, as we sing age-old hymns which have come to us as a heritage from simpler yesterdays. We glorify God on Sunday but feel the tug of the world at other times when stained glass windows do not filter God's sun in vari-colored flecks upon the backs of our hands.

But none of this is part of God's plan or purpose! Every word we speak and every deed we do is worship when done under the Lordship of Jesus. We do not go to church. We *are* the church and it is the church which does the going. We do not attend worship, it attends us, every day and hour. It is within us, the bowing down and prostration of the spirit before God. There are no "acts of worship" for the Christian, for the simple reason that there are no acts that are not worship. We glorify God not only when gathered with the saints whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, but when scattered to our tasks. One of the greatest truths we can learn is that Jesus came to remove the barrier between the secular and the sacred.

We glorify him in our bodies. The husband and wife who love one another deeply and honor their commitment to each other achieve more than sexual gratification in their conjugal embrace. They glorify God and their love is sanctified by the word of God. The woman who devotes herself to her family, wiping noses, changing diapers, washing dishes and sweeping floors, glorifies God. It is not necessary to leave home with a stack of dirty dishes in the sink to go out and "witness for Christ." Sometimes the best witness you could give that Jesus is real in your life would be to wash the dishes, clean up the mess in the closets and sweep under the beds.

Neglect of daily responsibility is not compensated by formal expression of praise on the first day of the week. It is not partaking of the Lord's Supper which makes our life acceptable

to God, it is our life which makes partaking of the Lord's Supper acceptable to God. More important than a "calling night" once per week is a "calling life" every day. "Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." The litany of the lawnmower or the vacuum cleaner may be as sweet in the ears of God as singing in the choir, if it is accompanied by a thankful heart.

Our motive should be to praise God and not to receive praise. Only the deed done without expectation of remembrance, remuneration or repayment has any real value. It was this Jesus had in mind when he said, "Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men; if you do, no reward awaits you in your Father's house in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). He said, "Like a lamp you must shed light among men, so that, when they see the good you do, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven." Good works bring help to the needy and praise to the God of all mercy.

We should strive to glorify God by the way we die as well as by the way we live. Paul said, "I eagerly hope that I shall have no cause to be ashamed, but shall speak so boldly and openly that Christ will be magnified through my life, or through my death" (Philippians 1:20). That is my own hope. I say that in all humility and weakness. I do not want to be ashamed and I do not want to shame him. Praise his wonderful name! I hope to glorify him in life, for I have been raised to life through him. My life lies hidden with him in God. He is my everything, he is my all. When he is manifested I want to be manifested with him in glory.

It is easy for us to be turned aside from the thought of glorifying him through death. We no longer appear before Roman tribunals and refuse to declare that Caesar is lord. We are not called upon to salute his statue and burn the pinch of incense which recognized him as one of the pantheon of deities.

Paul had his head severed from his body by the swift stroke of the sword of the royal headsman and executioner. He could fill up in his body what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ. But death does not seem very heroic to us.

When William Tyndale was sentenced to be strangled and burned he went to the stake without flinching. His last words were, "Lord, open the eyes of the king of England!" He glorified God in his death!

When Hugh Latimer, the Protestant martyr, was condemned to be burned at the stake with Nicholas Ridley, he turned to his companion and said, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, for today they shall kindle a fire in Britain which shall never be put out." His burning flesh was incense in the nostrils of heaven. He glorified God through his death.

When Robert Ferrar was burned in the market place at Caermarthen, on March 30, 1555, he watched his own hands burn off and held up the blackened stumps. When Richard Jones, a knight's son, lamented at such suffering Ferrar said to him, "If you see me even stir in the pain of burning, then give no credit to the doctrine I have taught." He continued to pray audibly while the flames seared his flesh and tissues, until Richard Gravell, who could stand the sight no longer, struck him on the head with his staff and his body went down to be consumed to ashes in the flames. He glorified God in his death!

But how can one do that today in a sterile hospital in the intensive care division where a member of the family can come in only five minutes of each hour? Is not all dignity removed from dying when one is unconscious and forced to exist by machinery fastened to his frame and needles sticking in his veins? When one's lungs cease to function and are made to expand and contract like a rubber balloon by the rhythmic pulsation of a machine, is he really alive, or is he a mere extension of a cleverly-contrived apparatus? Does his life exhibit

the image of God or the invention of a laboratory? When his heart muscle lies flabby and is only energized by electrical impulse is he living, or is he like a light bulb or an egg beater? Will he stop when you pull the plug from the wall socket?

Death under these conditions seems everything else but heroic, and yet I know of no alternative. Medical science being what it is and the moral status of society being what it is, we will no doubt continue to phase out departure and prolong farewells, until parting becomes not the “sweet sorrow” of the poet, but the agonizing, emotion-draining, bone-tiring experience of those who have to remain in the hospital lounge until a trained professional comes out to inform them that the spirit has wrenched itself free from the clay envelope.

But I have found a solution for myself. It may not be meaningful for you, but it certainly is for me. I think most people fear death because it is a new experience. They have never gone through it before, so it is strange and a little frightening, as new experiences always are in anticipation. They do not know how to die, but the reason they do not know how to die is because they do not know how to live. The way to learn how to die is to learn how to live. If you live in the Lord you can die in the Lord. The blessings you had with the Lord in life you will then have in death. John actually heard a voice from heaven saying, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”

I have concluded that if I allow Him to live in me, which really means to love all men through me, for that is what life is all about, I can magnify and glorify him by my death. The other day I was reading about Jesus and Peter, especially when Jesus said to him, “And further, I tell you this very truth: ‘when you were young you fastened your belt about you and walked where you chose; but when you are old you will stretch out your arms, and a stranger will bind you fast, and carry you where you have no wish to go!’ He said this to indicate the manner of death by which Peter was to glorify God. Then he added, ‘Follow me.’”

Of course, I will not be able to glorify God by being crucified head downward like Peter was. That is not my “manner of death.” But I have a deep feeling that if Peter had not heeded the added instruction to “Follow me,” it would not have made any difference how he died. It would not have glorified God. On the other hand if I do follow Jesus, it does not make any difference what manner of death I have, it will glorify God. I am quite convinced that when I am old I may stretch out my arms and a strange ambulance attendant will bind me fast and carry me where I have no wish to go. When that happens I trust that I will be rational and commit myself into the hands of Jesus as I prepare to die as I have sought to do while I am able to buckle my belt about me and walk where I choose. I have eternal life now in Jesus. I shall have eternal life then with Jesus!

It is Jesus who makes life glorious and it is Jesus who makes death glorious. He puts life here in the proper perspective and makes life over there a blessing.

Even the problem of suffering which seems so out of place in a universe created by God has no particular concern in my heart. If God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and I am convinced that He was, I shall expect to share what He experienced here in order to experience what he shares over there. Fellowship is the sharing of a common life, and to be in fellowship with Jesus is to share everything with Him. Listen to this, “When we cry, Abba, Father, that is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, heirs along with Christ; if only we share his suffering in order to share his glory too. For I judge that the sufferings of this present time are not worth considering in comparison with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

The wonderful thing about what I am saying is that you do not have to wait until after you die to share the life of God. By being faithful to the task that comes to hand you can experience

glory here and now. I think the best illustration of this I have ever read was in the book *It Will Be Daybreak Soon*, written by one of my favorite authors of yesterday, Archibald Rutledge. I am going to conclude with this excerpt from his pen.

On a day memorable to me, I boarded a tiny tugboat I used often on a southern river and saw that we had a new Negro engineer. He sat in the doorway of the engine room reading the Bible; he was fat, and black, but immaculate and in his eyes was the splendor of ancient wisdom and peace with the world. I noticed that the characteristic odors that had always emanated from the engine room were no longer there. And the engine! It gleamed and shone; from beneath its seat all the bilge-water was gone. Instead of grime and filth and stench I found beauty and order. When I asked the engineer how in the world he had managed to clean up the old room and the old engine, he answered in words that would go far toward solving life's main problems for many people.

“Cap’n,” he said, nodding fondly in the direction of the engine, “it’s just this way: I got a glory.”

Making that engine the best on the river was his glory in life, and having a glory he had everything. The only way out of suffering that I know is to find a glory, and to give to it the strength we might otherwise spend in despair.

I’ve got a glory, too!

One Spirit

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

As I look back upon it, from this ever-increasing distance, I do not think the church of my boyhood ever thought a great deal about the Holy Spirit. He was not the subject of our conversation except in a negative sort of way. We were not so much opposed to the Spirit as we were ignorant of his nature and work. That is not all about which we were ignorant. In our pitiable little mining village there were a lot of people who could not read. Many of them were my relatives. Like other illiterate folk they were very superstitious. Life was inhibited and made miserable by fears of the unknown and unseen.

They believed in ghosts, haunts, signs and portents. Almost anything that happened was a sign of “bad luck” and a lot of good people carried a “buckeye” to ward off rheumatism, and a rabbit’s foot to bring good fortune. That always impressed me as being foolish because the rabbit had four feet and they did not bring him luck. All of this did not interfere with our religion. It enhanced it. Those who read the Bible every day also consulted the signs of the zodiac in the *Lydia E. Pinkham Almanac* with the same fervor.

The essential thing was to get the unknown into a position where you could handle it. You had to control it or it would control you. If you could find just the right charm or dig up the proper amulet you could ward off malign influences or even

control those which were beneficent. We shut the Spirit up in a book. We could then carry it in an overcoat pocket or place it on the shelf by the Seth Thomas clock. As long as the Spirit was bound in black leather and stamped in gold he was fairly harmless.

We were caught up in the proof-text fallacy. We reasoned that since God's revelation was perfect we could find a passage somewhere to cover every contingency. It took a considerable amount of hammering and whittling and arranging to make some of them fit, but I do not recall a single failure. We were enslaved by what a good Texas brother calls "pattern theology" which means in its final analysis, searching the scriptures until you find something that will justify what you think, or what you are doing!

Our text for putting the Spirit in his place was John 6:63, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." That took care of it. The Spirit was words. The more passages you could quote the more Spirit you had. No one ever questioned this explanation. We never really examined the context. The verse contained the word spirit. Another verse said there was one Spirit so that was that. We were never guilty of taking things out of context like Methodists and Baptists.

Taking things out of context was a vicious circle trodden by sectarians like a blind mule at a sorghum mill. You were a Methodist because you took things out of context, and you took things out of context because you were a Methodist. The only people in the village who did not take things out of context were those who went to "The Church of Christ" which met in the former saloon building they had remodeled. Some of them did not know what "context" meant, but whatever it was, you did not take things out of it if you were loyal.

It took a long time before I outgrew our error about the passage and realized that Jesus was contrasting the bread of life

which he dispensed, with the manna which Moses provided through God's power in the wilderness. "Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, but still they died . . . he that believeth in me has everlasting life . . . the words I speak unto you are spiritual words, producing life."

One reason we were skittish about the Holy Spirit and shied away when he was mentioned was the way our neighbors carried on who claimed to be guided directly by his influence. There were not too many of these "holy rollers" as we always kindly and generously referred to them, but they made up in noise what they lacked in numbers and education. Most everyone went to bed at the decent hour of half-past seven in the autumn, but the Pentecostals did not really get wound up and on a high lonesome until the unearthly hour of 9:00 p.m., and when they got under the power they carried on until midnight and you could hear them a mile away if the wind was in the right direction.

One night they undertook to cast a demon out of a fifteen-year-old girl, a pitiable slatternly creature who had been "playing around" with some of the men in the group. Apparently the demon was one of the tough kind. After surrounding her and praying for almost an hour at the top of their voices, the group decided to beat the devil out of her. She almost died before the neighbors summoned the village constable who was delayed because he couldn't find his pipe in the dark. The Ku Klux Klan set a bunch of switches against the front door of one of the leaders and burned a makeshift cross in his front yard. That cooled "the Spirit" off for a few months and the noise subsided until everyone caught up on his sleep.

It was my respect for the revelation of God which finally prevailed to lead me into a closer walk with Jesus through the Spirit. There were too many scriptures which would not fit into the expository crate we had constructed and nailed together out of traditional slats. I began to develop a kind of honesty which

the factional spirit always quenches and the fear of man destroys. We always had two mental cans into which we sorted the things said of the Spirit. One bore the label "For the apostles." The other was tagged "For us." Anything we did not understand or which was emphasized by "the sectarians" went in the can "For the apostles." Whatever was left over went into the can "For us."

The apostles' can was full of things. It was hard to cram them all in. Our can was almost empty and you had to turn it upside down and beat on the bottom to get a little blessing to fall out. It was as if the Spirit had dumped all he had on the apostles and didn't keep much back for anyone else. Of course, I still believe that the Spirit bestowed much upon the envoys of Jesus by reason of their special function as ambassadors. But I also know he has ample blessings for me. In fact "my can runneth over."

There are a lot of things about the Spirit I do not know, but I'm finding more every time I study the Word. I'm a fairly practical down-to-earth sort of person and I do not soar off into space and blame the Spirit for it. I'm not "too hep" on closing my eyes and holding up my hands and shaking my head, and I do not have dreams, or hear voices, or get the weak trembles and goose pimples. I think the Spirit helps me in every phase of life to act more rationally, and keep my cool a little better. Best of all he makes it possible for me to really love my enemies, and even the brethren, without having to sham it!

The Holy Spirit dwells in me. My body is his temple. I am not my own. I have been bought with a price. The Spirit was one of God's birthday gifts to me when I was born from above. He has lived in me ever since although I have grieved him a lot of times. But he did not become aggravated and pack up and leave and slam the door shut! He patiently waited and endured my tantrums and ignorance until I could at least partially grow up!

I have not yet received the inheritance which is in my Father's will, even though it has my name-tag affixed to it. He sought me and bought me and adopted me. I've got the promise that with the redemption of the purchased possession— my body — from the grave I will know the ultimate Joy. But while I am waiting to go through the Shadow the Holy Spirit dwells in me, marking me out as his. He is a seal of ownership. He is also the guarantee that when I have met the last enemy at some disputed barricade, and overcome him through the power that raised Jesus from the garden tomb, I will stand in the presence of the glorious Light, the Lamb of God.

The great blessing now is the utter loss of any sense of loneliness. Jesus said when he got ready for the upward trip, "I will not leave you orphans." He promised he would ask the Father and he would send another Helper. The word means "One to stand beside another." He did not forget and the Father honored his request. It does not make any difference how dark the night becomes, I am not alone. When storms rage, and the wind howls and rain hurls in gusts against the windows, I am not alone. Jesus said the other helper would be with us and in us! That's closer than any earthly friend can ever come!

I never walk alone! I've got someone to laugh with me and someone to cry with me! I've got someone who understands what I would like to tell others but cannot, or dare not tell them! He is my real helper when I get too weak down inside to couch my deep longings into words, when I run the scale of human vocabulary and learn that man has not yet developed a language that is great enough and deep enough to capture and confine every emotion and wrap it up in a neat linguistic package and hand it to God. There are groanings which cannot be uttered.

There's no use trying to convince me by subtle argument that Jesus did not mean what he promised and that all he gave me was a book. If that were true I would still be an orphan. An orphan with a book is still an orphan. An orphan needs

someone. He needs someone who understands and someone who cares. The Spirit prompted men who knew Jesus to write love letters to those whom they cherished. Those letters which were originally scattered were finally collected, argued about, fussed over and compiled in a book. I love it! I read it with an absorbing passion. It is my guide. I shall never forsake it!

But it is precisely because I believe what it says that I am sure the Spirit lives in me, dwells in me, abides with me, and strengthens me with might in the inner man. The book is the book of the Spirit. It is a gift from God, just as the Spirit is a gift from God. I believe what the book of the Spirit says about the Spirit, and I intend to go on believing it until I meet my glorious Lord!

I am not going to get into a big dither about how the Spirit works. A lot of good brethren get so uptight and argumentative and develop such an attitude toward those who disagree with them that the Spirit couldn't work in them or through them. I am just going to let him have his way with me as the song says. I do not intend to let anyone else try to live my life for me. I do not intend to get hooked on little exercises they have worked out to prime the Spirit like a rusty pump. The Spirit and I are friends, close friends! I suspect that is why I sometimes hurt him and grieve him. And that's why I'm so sorry and could kick myself when I do. I don't like to hurt any of my friends or disappoint them. But it is your best friends you usually hurt the most.

The Spirit and I walk together all of the time. He is as interested in how I mow the lawn or drive my Ford as he is in how I sing when the saints come together. He wants me to love Nell and my children and grandchildren. He may want me to help with the dishes when I have eaten a hearty meal at home, and show my appreciation in that fashion rather than heading for the living room couch to sleep off the effects while others clean up the mess I have made. I lost a lot of men right there!

I am sure the Spirit is interested in this article and is helping me to write it. I do not mean he is sitting on my shoulder whispering words in my ear. But he is very close to me and I sense his presence in all I do or say that is to the glory of the Father and the exaltation of Jesus who sits at the right hand of God. You will have to forgive me if I do not jump up and click my heels together, and clap hands and do a spiritual jig. I do not think it is necessary to fall on the floor and roll my eyeballs around and kick with my heels. Instead, the Spirit encourages me to be calm, patient and consistent. It isn't easy for either him or myself. I know he is thrilled there's only one me, and I know I am happy there is only one Spirit. That one Spirit is the Spirit of oneness, and we will never have the spirit of love until we have the love of the Spirit!

One Hope

Mission Messenger (August 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Eternity is the divine treasure house, and hope is the window, by means of which mortals are permitted to see, as through a glass darkly, the things which God is preparing. — William Mountford.

It was Thomas Carlyle who wrote, “Man is based on hope. He has no other possession than hope.” In the Tate Gallery in London hangs the painting by Frederic Watts, simply called *Hope*. It portrays a wistfully beautiful young woman sitting on a globe. There is one lone star in the sky but the girl cannot see it because she is blindfolded. In her hand she holds a harp on which all of the strings are broken but one. She is gently plucking that string. Her head is inclined to hear its sound. Hope never surrenders even though blinded by circumstances until it cannot see a star. So long as there is one string left on the lute, hope refuses to believe there will be no more music.

Hope is joyous anticipation. It is desire and expectation compounded in exact proportions. It is as if an angelic cookbook said, “Take one cup of desire and mix well with one cup of expectation.” If one does not desire a thing he will certainly not hope for it. If he has not even the remotest expectation of receiving it he cannot hope for it. There is more to hope than merely wanting something.

I think the one hope is hope in the ultimate degree. It is the

majestic and transcendent hope. It is the hope which allows you to be free from panic because you know there is a way out of the labyrinth, a secret door which will open when you are trapped by circumstances and there is no way to turn, no way to escape or evade. If I am correct, the one hope is victory over death at the very moment it looks like death is the victor. It is using death which appears to be the key that locks you in as the key that lets you out. It is knowing you cannot lose the final struggle!

I suspect I was afraid of death for a long time. It was what you might call a mortal fear. Death was treacherous. It was sneaky, creeping up on you when you did not expect it. Once it got in its fell blow there was a finality about it. The ties of the flesh were rudely severed. The relationships of earth were rudely broken up, remaining only in the hazy realm of memory. But that was before the real significance of His death and resurrection blasted away my fears.

Once it seemed to me that no one could get out of this mess alive. Now I know that I am not going to get out of it dead. The hope of life has led me into a life of hope. I no more have to be frightened by death than I need to be afraid of a shadow across the highway or a curtain on the stage. I'm going through death exactly as I drive through a shady valley. And I am coming back out into the sunlight. If death was the end of life, I would not be living at all. I would only be dying!

I like the way the writer of Hebrews puts it. His purpose was to encourage his readers to have the faith and patience exhibited by ancient worthies who inherited the promises. He points out that hope is grounded in the immutability, the absolute unchangeableness, of two things— God's promise and God's oath! The promise would have been enough, but men had developed a tradition of confirming their pledges and vows by taking an oath in something greater than themselves. God had no one greater than himself so he took an oath in his own being and nature. "As I live, saith the Lord."

“That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (6:18-20).

The cadence of these majestic phrases resounds in my heart like the tramp of marching feet of an unconquerable army. Of course I cannot see through the veil, but I know Jesus has gone through it for me. He is there and my hope is there with him. I cannot see the anchor nor the Rock in which it is fastened firm and steadfast. But I can feel the tug and strain on the cable of faith. I have fled to Jesus for refuge, and I mean fled! Nothing is going to shake me loose from my mooring. Nothing! I have not one tiny doubt in my heart about the conquest of death. I do not have any fear of my coming victory either.

I like the way Paul started his first letter to Timothy. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.” My hope is Jesus. He is also my peace. He is my sanctification and redemption. He is my wisdom and power. Jesus is not simply the answer to life. He is the life. He is also the way and the truth. My hope is a living one!

This is the way Peter, the one-time fisherman, put it. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” That’s terrific! God’s mercy, so free and abundant, would not leave us hopeless, hapless and helpless. We have been begotten anew to a living hope. The resurrection of Jesus put it all together.

There is absolutely no sense to the universe if you eliminate

the resurrection. Without it evil triumphs over good, wrong gains the victory over right, and death becomes stronger than life. Take away the resurrection and redemption is a farce, while reconciliation becomes an empty dream, a fantasy rather than a fact. *By the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* That is the foundation of faith, the basis of belief and the condition of confidence. And I am staking my life on it, not as a gamble but as an investment.

I know all about the skeptical accusation that this is mere wishful thinking and mental image projection. So far as I am concerned you can tell that to the birds! My hope is the result of faith which is based upon the facts of history. The testimony to these facts is not only credible but it is so valid and rational that if I rejected it I could not believe in anything which happened before I was born or which I did not personally see.

The facts which undergird my hope grow upon you the more carefully you examine them. Take for instance the case of Frank Morison, a brilliant jurist in Great Britain. As a university student he reached the conclusion that the history of Jesus rested upon very insecure foundations. He was deeply affected by German Rationalism and by the so-called scientific dictum that “miracles do not happen.” He decided to write a book about the last seven days of Jesus and strip the story of his life “of its overgrowth of primitive beliefs and dogmatic suppositions.”

He ended up writing *Who Moved the Stone?* In his preface he calls the book “essentially a confession, the inner story of a man who originally set out to write one kind of book and found himself compelled by the sheer force of circumstances to write quite another.” He tells why in a statement which ought to affect every honest skeptic. “It is not that the facts themselves altered, for they are recorded imperishably in the monuments and in the pages of human history. But the interpretation to be put upon the facts underwent a change. Somehow the perspective shifted — not suddenly, as in a flash of insight or inspiration, but slowly,

almost imperceptibly, by the stubbornness of the facts themselves.”

The stubbornness of the facts! And these facts are stubborn. They are tenacious and persevering. They changed the course of the world when announced by simple fishermen, slaves and social outcasts. They flooded the earth with shimmering rays of hope when it was sick and sorry, tired and jaded, and choking to death upon its own idolatry. And they will change the world again if we will proclaim them joyously, gloriously and resolutely. If we will get over our infatuation with opinions and our intoxication on creeds, and proclaim the resurrection, hope will return and darkness will once again flee away.

There is one hope, and it is unitive not divisive. It is the common hope of all who trust in Jesus. It is the golden thread woven into the unity of the Spirit on the loom of everlasting life. I am not sure whether I captured that hope or whether it captured me, but it has flooded every nook and cranny of my soul with its penetrating rays. It has caused me to lift up my eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord.

I am no longer hopeless. Now I am hopeful in the true meaning of the word, full of the happy anticipation of what is yet to be. My life is not ending. It is getting ready to begin. I want to share the gladness of this with every person on this whole wide earth. Jesus was resurrected! Jesus is real! Jesus is reigning! Jesus is returning! And the fingers of my heart are reaching out to Him to clasp on the realization of the glorious promises which sustain me now in expectation as they will then by their consummation.

My hope will not be extinguished by the chill wind of death blowing across my fevered brow, nor by the cold created by the shadow when I walk toward the Jordan and feel “the fog in my throat and the mist in my face.” I shall recall the words of

Shelley in his *Ode to the West-wind*, “If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” When a Christian dies, he does not leave home — he goes home!

One Lord

Mission Messenger (August 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Jesus is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of all human progress. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever ruled, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth like this one solitary personality.— S. A. Stuber in Treasury of the Christian Faith.

One of the most thrilling chapters in the compilation we call the New Testament is Revelation 19. Every verse pulsates and throbs with dynamic action. But no part is more majestic than the review of the celestial horse guard of glory. John was permitted to witness the parade of the white horses and even his verbal description is enough to make goose pimples rise on your flesh. From the moment he writes, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse,” the Bible lover knows he is in for a great experience.

Riding at the head of the heavenly cavalry was one whose eyes penetrated the universe like a flame-thrower. Balanced on his head were diadems indicative of cosmic conquest. His flowing cloak was dyed red with the blood in which it had been dipped. His words issued from his mouth, scintillating and piercing, like a sharp sword. Those words cut to the heart of the false pride and political ambition out of which the nations of the earth

spring. Those nations were to be governed by a power so firm and unrelenting it was best described by an iron scepter.

The conquering hero of heaven would judge and make war in righteousness. Universal justice and equity would prevail. The evil and iniquitous were to be cast into the winepress of the world, the winepress of fierceness and the wrath of Almighty God. The face of God is against them that do evil. Sin cannot stand in the presence of one who is ultimately good, who is The Good as well as The God of all creation. It will be consumed in a flash like a moth flying headlong into livid flame.

The leader was called *Faithful and True*, symbolic of fidelity and integrity like pure gold, purged by the refiner's fire of all dross and weakness. In the final analysis faith and truth are not mere characteristics of men, or even of angels. The ultimate faith is a person. And the ultimate truth is a person. Let aspiring philosophers, mentally masticating their meaty morsels of thought, learnedly announce there is no absolute truth. I know better. Absolute truth and absolute faith are found in a person. I know who he is. And because I know I have eternal life, the life of God. And I have it now!

His name is called *The Word of God*. He is called Faithful and True, but his name is called The Word of God. Absolute faith and absolute truth are identified with the living Word. The living Word is not something said by God but the one who says it. And that which is said or written, although it is the word of God and the word from God, can never equal or exhaust the living Word. No biography can ever capture a person. No painting can ever portray a person. A biography and painting can present a *likeness*, one with the pen and the other with the brush, but there is as much difference between a portrait and a person as there is between an architect's drawing and a building teeming with living workers. There is a greater difference because both the drawing and the structure are human. The living Word is divine.

Read it again! His name is called the Word of God! God is *theos*. Word is *logos*. His name is called *theos-logos*, the theology of heaven. Theology is a person. He is the man on the white horse “and the armies of heaven followed him.” That is why I am no longer concerned with the distillate of men’s minds, caught and bottled and labeled and put in rows on seminary shelves. It is silly to talk about the theology of God, the theology of the Spirit, or the theology of salvation. It is sillier yet to listen to the professional jargon couched in such terms as the pneumatic theology, eschatological theology, or soteriological theology. In reality there are no such things!

Not satisfied with fragmenting man and compartmentalizing him until he can no longer meet the demands of the culture in which he exists, we must now put theology on the dissecting table and use the scalpel and saw until faith and truth are no longer integrated. When the “rationalists” get through kicking around their views and ideas in a modernistic seminary classroom they are so confused they could not tell anyone how to be saved if they thought there was such a thing as salvation, and in their muddled, mixed-up minds a lot of them think there is not!

Well, I think there is! And I know theology. My theology is Christ Jesus! Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God! Anyone who believes that with all his heart and mind, his being and intellect, believes all that is essential to be inducted into that glorious dimension of peace and power called eternal life. His name is called Theology! The naked aborigine in the Amazonian jungle who trusts with childlike simplicity in Jesus Christ as the very source of life is a far more profound “theologian” in the sight of God than the immaculately-attired professor who grinds away at the dry powdery grist of “systematic theology” while often casting doubts upon the reality of revelation.

Theology is not a course I have studied. Theology is my elder brother. Theology was made flesh and brought his own

tent with him and lived among us. Theology died for my sins and rose again for my justification. And his biography, written by four of his good friends who were his companions during his Earth-visit, even though penned under the guidance of the Spirit that is divine, does not exhaust his being or personality. They could not even record all that he did in a little more than three years on this planet. They said that if they had written it all down the world would probably not have contained the books. Think of what he has done since before the world began, and of what he is still doing!

The reporter of the heavenly scene did not stop until he wrote, "On his robe and on his leg was written, King of kings and Lord of lords." Faithful, True, The Word of God, King of kings, Lord of lords. There is one Lord and he is Lord of all. That is what Peter said in Acts 10:36. I believe it. I accept it unconditionally and without reservation. You need not sweeten it up or decorate it. Never mind the contingencies. I will take it like it is. God raised him up and made him both Lord and Christ. I believe it assuredly.

Jesus Christ is Lord! That is the confession every tongue must make. It will be on the tongues of angels, of men and of demons. Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. I have already confessed it. I have pledged my allegiance to him. I am sure that Peter meant he was Lord of *all men*, Jews and Greeks, bond and free, rich and poor. But he is also Lord of *all things*. And I know that Lord means ruler or master. It has to do with authority and power. It refers to one who governs or controls.

That is what I want Jesus to do. I want him to be lord of my whole life. If I try to be lord of my own life, that will make two lords, and there is but one Lord. I want him to be Lord of every facet of my existence and of all that I do. I want him to be Lord of my lawnmower and leaf rake. I want him to govern my ground and my garden. I want him to control my car and my cash. I don't ever want to just go and sing a few songs to him one

day per week and then dismiss him for the rest of my time. I do not want to make a flunky or celestial errand boy out of him when I want something or need something. He is Lord of all and I intend to allow him to be.

“Take my life, and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee!” Not just part of it. Not just a remnant of it. All of it. When I read the Bible, I want to see Jesus at work in time and space. When I read the newspaper I want to see him at work in history. When I read the star-spangled canopy of the heavens at night I want to see Jesus at work sustaining the universe. All things were created by the power of God’s word, all things are maintained by the word of God’s power.

Jesus is Lord of light, life and love. He is the companion of my walk, the coordinator of my work and the center of my worship. It is said that upon a steep and forbidding precipice in the Alps there is a marble cross. On its outstretched arms are engraved the words “Jesus Only.” The daughter of a prominent family slipped from the steep slope and plunged to her death in a yawning crevice opening up beneath the place. Her parents, stricken with uncontrollable grief tried everything to assuage their sorrow. They traveled to distant places seeking comfort in new scenes. It was all to no effect. Then they decided to cast themselves wholly on the Lord and they found inner calm and peace. They erected the white cross with the inscription “Jesus Only.” I have a cross with those words erected in my heart as I write this.

The purpose of the apostle in this context is to direct our minds to the unity of the Spirit and to define the context or composition of that unity. At the heart of it is the fact that there is one Lord. He is the magnetic center toward which all of us are drawn. Unity is not understanding everything alike. There are varied views in Christ Jesus. There always have been and always will be. Unity is not agreement upon opinions and interpretations. It never has been and never can be. It is not

esteeming days alike. It is not having the same view as to eating of meats.

The unity of the Spirit is togetherness in Christ. We are one in him and not one in opinion. We will still be searching the written word long after we have become one in the living word. Faith can embrace the Lord of life while the intellect grapples with problems of understanding. Eternal life is not knowing all about the Bible, but knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. Salvation is being made whole in Him and being one with all others in that wholeness. Isn't that great?

One Faith

Mission Messenger (September 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

I believe that each one of us must eventually face the real issue, which is quite simply: do I believe after adult examination of the evidence that Jesus Christ was what he claimed to be, or am I prepared to assert quite definitely that he was wrong in his major claims, and that, though much of his teaching is beautiful, he himself was a self-deceived fanatic?— J. B. Phillips in “God Our Contemporary.”

The life in Christ is a life of crisis. It is so by its very nature. The Christian has enlisted as a soldier, and a man in God's army should not expect to be free from conflict. Sometimes the areas of conflict are without, but because we are in the flesh they are sometimes within. The primitive saints were called “The Gamblers” by the pagans, because they risked everything including earthly life itself. Crises are good. They add zest to living but they also inspire confidence when they are met victoriously.

In spite of all this I should like to avoid what I am going to write today. It is not that I have a doubt about its validity, for I have none. It is rather that I would prefer not to disturb some of my friends. But I cannot evade the task I have set for myself and be honest before God. So I shall write my sincere convictions and say, as I have often said before, that if you cannot concur I shall love you just the same. I cannot forget how perturbed I

would have been a few years ago if someone I respected would have written these things.

What is the *one faith* which is intended to secure the unity of the Spirit, to be maintained in the bond of peace? Let me first tell you what it is not! As shocking as it will be to my many dear friends in the Roman Catholic tradition, it is not Catholicism. Modern Catholicism is that synthesis called *Thomism*, worked out by Thomas Aquinas as an amalgamation of Aristotelianism, Judaism and Christianity. This is not the one faith. It can never be that faith.

The one faith is not Lutheranism. It is not Calvinism or Methodism. It is not an “ism” at all, and for that reason, it is not Church of Christism. This is a grievous expression to the sensitive ears of my brethren. They deny there is such a thing but their denials are born of wishful thinking. They are pipe dreams. Church of Christism is that bundle of views, explanations, and traditions which have been moulded into a set of beliefs, to which all must subscribe in order to be received into and recognized as communicants in “The Church of Christ.” It is the unwritten creed of “The Church of Christ.” It is the exclusivistic set of teachings alleged to be the exact meaning of divine revelation. It is the criterion by which loyalty to the party is measured.

Church of Christism is not the one faith. It can never keep the unity of the Spirit. Its real basis is not the indwelling Spirit at all, but a compilation of judgments, decisions and verdicts handed down by men as precedents. It is as one of our widely advertised books blatantly admits, “The Voice of the Pioneers.” The gradually accumulating unwritten creed must be acknowledged as valid and official even in violation of personal integrity. One who no longer accepts that creed is a heretic, an apostate, a liberal.

Church of Christism can never preserve the bond of peace.

The best proof of this is the divided state of the Church of Christ. It is fragmented and splintered into more factions than any other contemporary movement. Its adherents engage in debates and carnal strivings with one another more than do those in any other religious group in our generation. They assail each other via the communications media, and there are more than two dozen parties, each of which claims to be the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of God upon earth. It is absurd to expect Church of Christism to keep the bond of peace. The members cannot even call upon their brethren to pray to God.

Let me go a step further. The one faith is not composed of twenty-seven books. It is not that magnificent compilation of biography, letters, history and prophecy, which we mistakenly call the new testament, or new covenant. Let me be quite clear. These documents contain the revelation of the divine mind. They were composed by men under the direction and motivation of the Holy Spirit. They contain God's will for my life. I love, respect and cherish every word of them. I intend to be guided and governed by their disclosures. I read them hungrily and avidly. I study them diligently and fervently.

But the one faith was here and embraced by the called-out ones long before one word of the new covenant scriptures ever flowed from the reed pen of an apostle. Of course, we read about that faith in the scriptures since both that faith and the scriptures came from God. We also read about the one body and one hope in the scriptures, but the body and the hope are not the scriptures.

Certainly the letter addressed to the saints in Ephesus and to all the faithful in Christ Jesus is not identical with the one faith. The apostle wrote that letter to identify that faith as one of the essentials to the unity of the Spirit. They already had it and were exhorted to keep it. The one faith was in possession of the Ephesians before they ever received the letter. It was not their understanding of the letter which produced in them the one

faith, but it was a need for understanding the one faith which produced the letter. The one faith would have been there if the apostle had never written. That faith existed in many hearts which never saw an apostolic letter and did not know there would ever be a collection of such letters.

Few other errors have worked the mischief that has resulted from confusing the faith with the letters of instruction, admonition and exhortation to the people of God who had embraced the one faith. It was that which made them the people of God. Because of this error there has grown up that curious postulate which makes a specific degree of knowledge of doctrinal deductions essential for acceptance into “the fellowship.” All sorts of creeds, both written and unwritten, have thus been devised, and are now expounded as if creed-making was the will of God for preachers and elders.

Almost every point of scriptural instruction has been debated and elevated as the center around which a new faction has crystallized. Issues have separated brethren from one another, which have no relationship, either pro or con, to our unity in Christ. The one faith is not and never can be conformity to a legalistic formula which gives kingdom caste or status to twentieth century “Gnostics” who boast of a superior knowledge, or whose power of deductive reasoning lifts them above their more humble fellows.

It is not heavenly, but diabolical, to take the one faith which was intended to draw men together and interpret it in such a manner as to drive them apart if they refuse to be intellectual robots. That faith was intended to bring out the best that is in men. As it is often interpreted it brings out the worst. It substitutes coldness for charity, callousness for concern, and cavilling for candor. It becomes a religion of the hot head and the cold heart, rather than of the cool head and warm heart. It makes men carry a chip on the shoulder instead of a real burden for the lost.

When I seek to define the one faith I bow before the eternal throne and confess my inadequacy. The thoughts which flood my soul seem woefully lacking for the task. The words which flow from my pen inhibit rather than enhance. Yet I must testify to my conviction in spite of my ineptitude and incompetence.

The one faith is acceptance of the reality of the divine crashing of the prison gates of sin by the One from outside. It is the human response to the heavenly strategy for setting the captives free. It is unqualified trust in the fullest implications of the statement, "But as it is, he has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the sacrifice of himself." It is accepting with joy the fact of delivery.

Trust is not just an element of faith. Faith is elemental trust. It is positive trust that in death and by death, Jesus opened up a new and living way through the curtain of his own flesh. He opened it for us. We can make our approach to the God of the universe, the Lord of the cosmos, in sincerity of heart and in full assurance of faith. Our guilty hearts have been sprinkled clean. Our bodies have been washed with pure water. Our faith is a firm confidence. It is an unswerving conviction.

The faith is pinpointed in history. The record specifically says "Before faith came" and "After faith came" (Gal. 3:23, 25). Man had faith before this. The father of the faithful lived long before this. A great list of men of faith is given in Hebrews 11. The writer did not exhaust the list. He said time was too short to detail the faith of others. But there is a difference between men of faith coming to God and the faith of God coming to men.

"Before this faith came we were close prisoners in the custody of law." We were shut up and fenced in. We were kept in confinement. All we could do was pace the length of our cellblock. The sign at each end read, "This far and no farther shalt thou go." All we had for comfort was a promise of God. It was a promise that the seed of Abraham would come. Blessing

would attend his coming. It would free us from the curse of the law. The promise of God alone sustained mankind. It was a star of hope in the darkness of a night of sin.

There was no life in law. “If a law had been given which had power to bestow life, then indeed righteousness would have come from keeping the law.” If righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing. Paul wrote that and he should know. No one can be justified on the basis of keeping law. One who expects to make it by perfect performance of precepts pronounces his own doom. He signs his own death warrant. He builds his own scaffold.

The law was a custodian to bring us to Christ in whom we are justified by faith. Now that faith has come we are no longer under a custodian. Most of our brethren do not really accept that statement. But we must make our decision. It is either justification on the basis of faith in Jesus or upon the basis of law. You cannot have both. I have made my choice. I am no longer under law but under grace. My brothers are not “brothers-in-law” but brothers in love. What a difference!

Law says, “Do this and you will live!” Grace says, “You live, so do this.” Don’t be silly. They are not the same. There is all the difference there is between the world since He came, and the world before He came. In the first, you start with law and try to achieve life. You are whipped before you begin. You have lost the race before you hear the starter’s gun. If God could have given a law, a written code, which could bestow life it was an act of monstrous iniquity to send Jesus to die.

Since faith came we start with life, not with law. He that hath the Son hath life. You even start with eternal life, the life of God. As John wrote, “This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life. It is addressed to those who give their allegiance to the Son of God.” That’s wonderful! Forget all the silly twaddle about people in Jesus not keeping his commands. One who gives

his allegiance to Jesus, and who has the life of God throbbing inside of him, is going to do always those things that please Jesus. He will not have to have a heavenly motorcycle policeman — an elder or preacher— riding around issuing him a ticket.

Let's get right down to the nitty-gritty of the matter. When you have skimmed off all the theological wranglings and interpretations, and strained out all of the gnats, the opinions and deductions of men, the one faith is Jesus. He is the center of it. He is also the circumference of it. And that goes for the gospel as well. Jesus is the gospel personified. The faith for which we are to contend is the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). The gospel is good news and faith is trust But the good news is news of what God has done for us in Jesus. Our faith is the response to the news in absolute surrender and unreserved trust.

The gospel consists of seven facts about a person. Those facts are the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification of Jesus. Three of these are saving facts. These seven constitute the one faith. They are summed up in the grandest proposition of the ages, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the prophets and the Son of God. When these facts are announced and the human heart accepts them in joyous acclamation, that heart lays hold upon the one faith. It is this one faith which, through its implementation or expression in one inductive act brings us into the glory of a relationship which will culminate in a relationship of glory.

The gospel is not the collation of apostolic writings forming the new covenant scriptures. The gospel is the glad news about a person, while the apostolic letters are composed of commendations, exhortations, warnings and criticism, sent to those who have accepted that person as Lord. The gospel is to be proclaimed to every person in the world. The apostolic letters are written to those in Christ. Certainly those who are in the one faith will read, study and obey the injunctions of the scriptures, not as a source of life, but because they have life. One does not

eat bread to obtain life but to maintain it.

When Jesus was upon earth there were those who thought that eternal life was contained in the scriptures. They thought it was something to dig out rather than something to be handed out as a gift. But Jesus said, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but they are they which testify of me. And you will not come unto me that you may have life." Jesus did not condemn searching the scriptures. He revered them and frequently quoted them. He recognized their authority. But he knew that life was a relationship with him. It is a gift of the Son and not a result of research. The faith is not Jesus pointing us to a book, but a book pointing us to Jesus.

Life comes not from giving assent to what the Book says, although that is very important. It comes from believing into Him who is the object of the testimony and of our faith. He is the pioneer and perfecter, the author and finisher, of our faith. The record is not written to give us eternal life but to tell us we have it. The life is in the Son.

But does not man live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? Of course he does. Jesus said so when tempted to command stones to be transformed into bread to allay the pangs of hunger. One lives by eating bread but bread is not the source of life. The word sustains the same relationship to the spirit as does bread to the body. Neither of them gives life. One is begotten by a person, not by a bagel. He eats bread to sustain life and he studies the revealed word for the same reason. If life came from a book there was no use of Jesus dying that we might have life. God could simply have sent us a book.

It is the gospel by which one is begotten. This is the primal message. It is the incorruptible seed, the proclamation of heaven, the *kerygma*. It is the word of God about the living Word of God, who is the Word of life, the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifest in the flesh. When one is begotten and

born into the family of God he must feed upon the word. If he does not do so he will starve and die. One who comes into him who is the truth obligates himself to accept all of the truth as he learns it but he has life and is as much a child of God from the day he is born as he will ever be.

While on this theme I should like to clear up a general misunderstanding of Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

I once quoted this as if Paul referred to the whole of the new covenant scriptures, the completed textual canon. I freely used it in debate to challenge brethren who supported colleges and other institutions to point to such things in the word of God or admit they were accepted without faith. I then lifted another passage completely out of context and concluded that because these were not mentioned they were sin. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” I was wrong in my understanding of both.

A careful study has convinced me that Romans 10:17 is talking about the gospel proclamation. It is true that all of the scriptures are a word from God and are the word of God. It is also true that they should be believed and accepted. But Paul is writing of the good news of Jesus. It is difficult for those of us who have a copy of the collected epistles bound under one leather cover to realize that Paul did not. There is no indication he even knew that some of his writings would be collected later on and compiled. We tend to read back into what he wrote our own experience, knowledge and understanding based upon a perfected revelation which has undergone nineteen centuries of research and investigation. We forget that the Romans to whom this was written had neither a copy of the scriptures, nor a Cruden’s Concordance or Clarke’s Commentary.

The theme of Romans 10 is that Christ ended the law as a means of attempting to arrive at justification. This brought to an end a futile struggle, for “by the works of the law shall no flesh

be justified.” Righteousness is now by faith in Christ Jesus. It requires no one to ascend into heaven or descend into the abyss to make Jesus available. We do not need to see him. The word of faith, that is, the announcement of justification by faith is near. It is as near as our hearts and our ears. It requires no remote journey. Men have been commissioned to bring it. Their sound has gone throughout the Roman Empire. Their words have gone out to all the world.

“How welcome are the feet of the messengers of good news.” These were the words of the evangelical prophet. Paul borrows them for this great occasion. “But not all have responded to the good news” (*New English Bible*). “But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings” (W. E. Vine). The King James Version reads, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” With a completed Bible in their hands, my brethren have concluded that the faith which justifies is a correct understanding and interpretation of the new covenant scriptures. And a correct interpretation is the authorized and orthodox one projected by the particular party. Paul certainly had no such idea. The new covenant scriptures were not yet written.

The faith which justifies is faith in the proclamation about Jesus. The message is the gospel. *The New English Version* reads, “We conclude that faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ.” W. E. Vine renders it, “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” He aptly adds, “The phrase ‘the word of Christ,’ which is supported by the majority of MSS., signifies ‘the word concerning Christ.’”

The one faith has nothing to do with being either right or wrong about instrumental music in the public praise of God; the millennial question; the charismatic movement; classes or colleges. People in the one faith are on all sides of these issues and many others. These may or may not affect their final destiny

depending upon how they treat their brethren because of them. None of them are as important to God as they are to us.

The one faith is the human response from the depth of an anguished heart to the greatest news ever announced on this planet. “Jesus has come and calleth for thee!” *Jesus has come!* This earth will never be the same again. This is the visited planet, and the one faith is acknowledgment of that supreme fact! It is the ground of hope.

One Baptism

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

But the grandeur, sublimity and beauty of the foundation of hope, and of ecclesiastical or social union, established by the author and founder of Christianity, consisted in this,— that the belief of one fact, and that upon the best evidence in the world, is all that is requisite, as far as faith goes to salvation. The belief of this one fact, and submission to one institution expressive of it, is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the church.— Alexander Campbell in “The Christian System,” page 130.

The above quotation occurs in a discussion entitled “Fundamental Fact.” I am deeply indebted to it for enlightenment which I cherish. It has helped me to envision the magnificence of the divine purpose and plan. It struck the shackles of sectarianism from my boastful heart at a time when I was enslaved under the mistaken view that I was free. It helped me to receive God’s children as he receives us all, without questioning the content of the mental baggage which they bring with them on their journey from the realm of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

At the risk of proving to be a little boresome I want to allow Alexander Campbell to elucidate what he meant by the above.

“The one fact is expressed in a single proposition— *that*

Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah. The evidence upon which it is to be believed is the testimony of *twelve men*, confirmed by prophecy, miracles, and spiritual gifts. The *one institution* is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Every such person is a disciple in the fullest sense of the word, the moment he has believed this one fact, upon the above evidence, and has submitted to the above-mentioned institution; and whether he believes the five points condemned, or the five points approved, by the Synod of Dort, is not so much as to be asked of him; whether he holds any of the views of the Calvinists or Arminians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists or Quakers, is never once to be asked of such persons, in order to admission into the Christian community called the church.”

Whew! Isn't that something! People who hold views of the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists, are to be accepted, and immersed upon the basis of their simple faith in Christ, regardless of what they believe about these other things. Even those who hold odd views of the Baptists! If Alexander Campbell were to return from the dead he would not be allowed to preach in a half dozen congregations in Texas. He would be hailed as a liberal and brethren in San Francisco would bomb Pepperdine College with broadsides if they called upon him to pray in chapel. As good old Brother J. D. Tant used to say, “Brethren we have drifted!” If I recall correctly Brother Tant had drifted also!

There is one baptism. On this matter there can be no question. If you accept the apostolic letters as authentic and authoritative, as I do, that matter is settled. And so far as I am concerned that one baptism is immersion in water of a penitent believer in my Lord. I feel quite certain that is the way the expression would have been understood by the Ephesians. It is the way I understand it, and I see no reason to change my mind.

It really doesn't make much difference whether anyone

else agrees with my view or not. Truth is not determined by a majority vote. It is the truth if no one casts a ballot for it. But it makes me feel a little better if scholars, of whom I do not have the honor to be one, occupy the same position as myself. In this instance quite a number of them do.

William Barclay, who admits to being a fairly liberal Presbyterian, not only recognized baptism as the initiatory act into the fellowship but calls it “the gateway to the Christian church.” In his book *Turning to God* he specifically states that baptism was not by sprinkling, but by immersion, and says it was the means whereby the forgiveness of sins was personally appropriated and the power of the Holy Spirit entered into the convert.

In modern religious circles one who holds as I do, that allegiance to the King is pledged and personal faith is validated by immersion in water, is regarded as kind of an oddity. This does not upset me. I am not bugged by it at all. Snide remarks and derogatory statements about baptism do not move me. My faith is firm in the right of Jesus to order my life and just as firm that no one else has the right to do so. I never ask what is the popular position. I could not care less about that. All that interests me is the will of God. I am concerned only with what the Holy Spirit teaches.

On that ground there is not too much controversy. Jesus began his personal ministry by being baptized in a river. He ended it by telling the apostles to baptize every person who believed the news they were to broadcast about him. You cannot proclaim the life of Jesus without telling about baptism. When a former deacon of a prominent congregation was invited to share the vehicle of a pious government official, he began with a scriptural prophecy and “proclaimed unto him Jesus.” Nothing is said about him mentioning baptism, but the foreign politician asked, as they were passing a body of water, “What is to hinder me from being baptized?”

There was never any question among the primitive saints as to what constituted the one baptism. There was no unimmersed person among them and it was inconceivable that anyone would oppose something ordained by the Lord and commanded by his holy envoys. It was only when men ran the faith through their theological meat-grinders, shredding, shaping and moulding it by speculation and rationalization that they evolved all of the finely-honed arguments to pamper the sophisticated and confound the simple. They messed up what God straightened out!

I want to be numbered among the childlike disciples of the master, and while erudite men argue about all of the ramifications of a command I shall just go on and obey it. I would rather do what my Lord tells me to do than to spend my time discussing all of the angles. You might run out of life in which to do it. I could no more obey Jesus without being immersed in water on the basis of my faith in the Lord Jesus than I could fly to heaven without wings. Others must make their own decisions, but that is mine. Anyone who tries to “con” me into weakening my position on what Jesus has said is barking up the wrong tree.

I do not think that “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” or in the Holy Spirit is the one baptism. It never was. I am quite aware that in one Spirit, and under the influence and mediation of the Spirit we are all baptized into one body, but that baptism is immersion into Christ Jesus who is the head of the body. The baptism which brings us into the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was to be administered by men, and men cannot administer the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is the prerogative of Christ. I know all that because the Holy Spirit left the record which says it, and I believe what the Spirit has recorded.

The Holy Spirit operates upon the heart of one who is an alien to the rule of heaven, in and through the good news, the

gospel message concerning our Lord. The gospel is the glad tidings of what God has accomplished for us through the Word who was made flesh, and who brought grace and truth. When the full impact of this is brought to bear upon the honest heart, regardless of how seared or scarred by sin it may be, an aroused conscience becomes unbearable until the requirements of the Spirit are met.

I do not hold that “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” is available today, not because God’s power is in any sense lessened, but because his purpose in respect to it has long since been served. That purpose was never to endow men to speak in tongues, dialects or languages which they had not studied or with which they were not conversant. That they were empowered to do so upon one occasion to enable them to address foreigners in their native tongues, and upon another occasion to convince skeptical members of the kingdom of heaven that they were equally worthy of citizenship had nothing to do with the divine purpose of “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” These demonstrations were secondary to the purpose of the baptism, and were to accomplish another design. That they were given in conjunction with “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” has little to do with it, since many others received the gift of tongues who were not baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a one-time experience for the formation of the spiritual body of Christ as a new creation, just as immersion is a one-time experience for each individual who becomes a new creation. After the spiritual body was formed, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was never again mentioned. It is not once referred to in any epistle addressed to the saints of God. It is conceivable that many who had letters from the apostles never even heard of it. The idea that those who come into the new divine-human relationship when immersed into Christ are subsequently baptized in the Holy Spirit is as foreign to the new covenant scriptures as purgatory or extreme unction. Not only is no mention made of such a thing but there is

not even a hint of it when the sacred scriptures are read without presupposition.

I am always glad when someone who has been nibbling around the edges of the faith is convicted of the sin of an unfilled spiritual life, and gets on serious terms with his Maker. I am thrilled when such men and women get down on their knees and agonize about their apathy and uselessness. I want them to “zero in” on the throne of mercy. And I am not surprised when, in the throes of genuine confession and commitment, they experience traumatic phenomena they have never known before. I would be surprised if they did not! I am not even upset when they get on “a high” and go into “a spiritual orbit” and testify to things that happened to them which have never happened to me, and probably never will. But they are mistaken when they equate that with “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” of which the Spirit spoke through the writers of the word.

Not even that mistake upsets me like it does a lot of my brethren. If you are not free to make mistakes you are not free at all. And I am not about to make a bigger mistake and hound brethren out who credit a change in their very life-style to the baptism of the Spirit. I am glad they changed. I have changed. I am glad they are happy. I am happier than most of them! I know a lot of other brethren who ought to change and be joyful. I will not serve the best interests of the King of glory by making a test of one’s loyalty to Jesus or relationship with the Father out of an experience to which he testifies. I will not do so by allowing one to test my faith by his own experience either. “Hast thou faith? keep it to thyself.” How about doing the same with your experience? My creed is Christ, not a personal experience with him. No one will ever sell me on another creed. I mean no one! I belong to Jesus and I shall continue to do so!

Since I am wound up I might as well tell you what I think about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If you cannot buy my view, and most of you will not, praise the Lord anyhow. You need not

agree with me to be loved and revered. I simply think there were two occasions of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, because these two fulfilled God's purpose for that baptism. I do not recall seeing the term used upon any other occasion.

The secret of God's will was according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself. That will was that when the fullness of times was worked out, he would unite in Christ, everything in heaven and on earth. Mankind was divided into two great groups. On one side of a yawning prejudicial gulf were the Gentiles in the flesh. They were uncircumcised, separate from Christ, strangers to the community of Israel, outside of God's covenants and the promise that goes with them. Their world was a world without hope and without God.

On the opposite side were the Jews. One of their own described them in these words. "They are the people of Israel, theirs is the right of sonship and the glory, the bonds and the giving of the law, and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and of their race is Christ in his human nature" (Romans 9:4, 5). These were the ones who were near. The others were afar off.

Between these two, like an impregnable barrier, stood the wall of hostility, bolstered by the law with its rules and regulations. The incredible task which God set for Jesus was to break down the wall and annul the written code, the very action of which was to promote and preserve segregation, to keep those who were under it aloof and separate from the others. Jesus offered his person as the peace. From the two frighteningly divergent strains he created a single new humanity in himself. "This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity."

Fifty days after the cross the situation was unchanged. Hearts were still filled with bigotry and hate. The atonement had been made. It was time for the Spirit to be poured out as

confirmation that Jesus had been elevated to the right hand of God, and was sovereign in authority. “Therefore, being lifted up by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you see and hear.”

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit did not fall upon all of the Jews. A select number received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and they announced the good news to all who were present. Those who believed the message were told to reform and be immersed upon the firm conviction that Jesus was now both Lord and Christ. Those who did this were to be granted forgiveness of their sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Many of the Jews mistakenly thought the kingdom of heaven was but a fulfillment of Jewish dreams. They concluded that one could only be accepted among the called-out as a proselyte and must be circumcised. They had not yet learned that *the truth* of the gospel, that is, the foundation, core or kernel of the good news was justification by faith. It did not come by works of the law. So the “circumcision party” was very strong among the believers.

At this juncture, Jesus administered the baptism of the Holy Spirit unto the Gentiles, the uncircumcised ones. The time had come to demonstrate that those who were afar off were to join with those who were near. The family of Cornelius was chosen to receive the baptism as indicative that the Gentiles were to be admitted on the same terms as God accepted the Jews. Simon Peter, a kosher Jew, who had never in his life entered into a Gentile home or eaten with an uncircumcised person, was selected to take the gospel to them.

Even before the emissaries arrived to request him to come, God had to ready him for the task by giving him a mystifying vision while he was hungry. He was ordered to go with the Gentiles without a question. But with all of this, he still took six

other Jews with him as witnesses. The reluctance with which he came into the Gentile home is evidenced by his words.

But as Peter began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on the uncircumcision to the utter amazement of the Jews who were present. When it dawned upon Peter that these were to be accepted of God he commanded them to be baptized in water as a pledge of their allegiance unto Christ. Word of the event seeped back to Jerusalem where “the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.” When the “circumcision party” in the congregation called Peter “on the carpet,” he rehearsed to them the matter from the beginning. He informed them that “the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning.”

This announcement silenced the objectors in the congregation. The Jewish brethren gave praise to God saying, “This means that God has granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles also.” The gospel was God’s dynamic to save all who believed its message. It had now been proclaimed to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Upon both occasions the baptism of the Holy Spirit validated the event. Jew and Greek were now drawn together by the proclamation of the cross. They were no more twain, but one body. A new humanity consisting of both had been produced. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is never again mentioned.

Any Jew who trusts in the Lord Jesus can now be saved. Any non-Jew who trusts in Jesus can also be saved. There is required no further divine demonstration of acceptance. The eternal purpose of the ages is a reality. Any person can share in that reality of oneness with Christ. We have been raised up together. We have been made to sit together. All that God has prepared for His children is now our heritage. Every child of God receives the Spirit at the time he is born into the family. The Spirit lives in him as in a temple and provides for him all that the Father has designed for us while we are in the flesh.

There is no such thing as a child of God who does not have the Spirit of God. It is true that there are many unconcerned, indifferent, worldly-minded children of God who stumble along through life until a crisis is faced, and then they must face up to the real choice of whether they shall truly follow Jesus. Some of them, in an agony of reproach for their past, throw themselves upon the mercy of God, and in their time of deep need find that God is near. He has always been but they have never truly called upon him before. Many who find inner peace and real joy and relief, imagine, in the ecstasy of the moment, that this is “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

I do not think it is so at all. But if they mistake their experience for “the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” I shall not fight or argue or debate with them. I have given you my own personal understanding derived from my study of the word of the Spirit. I do not intend to bind it upon any person nor to discredit any experience or change in life-style. Praise God for such changes!

Let me repeat that the one baptism is immersion in water of one who sincerely believes with all of his heart that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Every person on this whole wide earth who submits to the act upon the basis of that faith is God’s child and my brother. I do not care who instructed him. I do not care who immersed him. Jesus ordained as a response to the good news concerning himself, belief of the facts announced therein and baptism. I have no power, inclination or desire to alter, amend or change those terms. I accept them exactly as he stated them.

Because I believe what he said I shall not set up other criteria related to degrees of knowledge, understanding or intellectual apprehension. One is not forgiven of his sins because of doctrinal attainment but because of his faith, his absolute trust in Christ Jesus. One is not justified by baptism but by faith. Yet it is faith that acts, and baptism is the God-ordained act by which faith reaches out to lay hold upon God’s promise. It

is faith that grasps the promise of divine grace, marvellous as that grace is.

Never would I go through life without being immersed into Christ. Never would I advise, counsel or suggest to anyone else to do so. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” I am glad both of those sentences begin with “for.” There’s a reason *for* it! We are children of God. We became children of God through faith. We exhibited that faith by baptism into Christ. In that act we put him on like a garment. He is still my garment, my shield and buckler.

The older I get, the longer I live, and the more I study the revelation of God, the more convinced do I become that baptism is an irrevocable part of the divine plan for our entrance into the unity of the Spirit. No one can ever slight it and still do justice to the testimony of the apostles. Because of my faith I simply accept what the word of God says. I trust you will do the same!

One God

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Volume 36

[Abstract]

There is one God. The apostle was not trying to prove there is a God. He was not writing to people rescued from atheism but from idolatry. It was not the existence of God but his uniqueness which called forth the statement. Incongruous as it may seem it was the Christians who were branded as atheists in the Roman Empire simply because they refused to recognize the genuineness of pagan deities.

Tertullian in his tract *De Corona Militis* relates how the saints scorned the sacrifices of heathendom, and turned away with abhorrence from its banquets and gaities. Tacitus the pagan historian says they were convicted of “hatred to mankind” because they refused to participate in the popular games and festivals. Everything in the pagan world was done as a tribute to the pantheon of gods. Whatever the Christians did in word or deed was done in the name of Jesus to the glory of the Father.

There was no meeting ground for the two. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in

them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

“What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is sacrificed to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partaker of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:19-21). “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians that there is one God he was addressing the saints in one of the centers of idolatry. Here was located the temple of Diana, the many-breasted goddess of fertility. The original temple was burnt down on the night in which Alexander the Great was born in B.C. 355. The arsonist was an obscure seeker after fame, Erostratus. Because the citizenry mistakenly thought that a fallen meteor was the goddess of the moon come down to earth, all Asia Minor joined in rebuilding the temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

There were 120 supporting columns, each one the gift of a foreign prince or potentate. More than 220 years were devoted to construction of the temple and its accompanying theater which had seats for 24,500 people. Both the temple and theater are mentioned in a stirring account in Acts 19:21-41. The business agent for a local union of craftsmen affirmed there that “all Asia and the world worshipped” at the shrine.

Paul began his list of the seven planks in the divine unity platform with “the one Spirit.” This was logical since the unity which was to be maintained was the unity of the Spirit. He closed with “the one God” because this is the capsheaf with which to crown all the rest. It is in him “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). He does not dwell in temples made

with hands. He is not supplied by men's hands as though he needed anything. Instead, he gives to all life, and breath, and all things. He is the bestower, not the beneficiary.

It is God who made the cosmos a functioning unit. There is a sense in which every atom is dependent upon every other atom. Nothing in nature is independent. The planets are a symphony. The seasons are a harmony. This is a universe and not a multi-universe. The sovereign purpose of God is to bring all things together in Christ. The Greeks had a multitude of gods warring with each other. We know there is one God. Let us consider carefully what is affirmed concerning God.

The one God is the *Father* of all. This statement breathes a divine *concern*. God is not indifferent. He is not a God afar off who cannot be touched by our infirmities. God is love. This very love is unitive. And it is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. It unites us to the Father but it also unites us all to one another. He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. Everyone who loves is begotten of God, and knows God. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son for an atonement for us. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

We know that we have crossed the frontier from death unto life because we love the brethren. The Fatherhood of God creates the brotherhood of the saved. The sonship in him creates the fellowship of the ransomed ones. Regardless of what men may say, regardless of their cavilling and minute distinctions to split and splinter, all those who are in Christ Jesus are in the fellowship to which we have been called. They share together a common life, the life of God, eternal life. There is one God and he has made his children one, all of them!

One of the most beautiful revelations ever given is that God is our Father. The very word speaks of tenderness and compassion. It is a "family" word and it implies sons and

daughters. It also implies an inheritance so magnificent that the finite mind cannot grasp it and we will have to await the time when we shall see him as he is, and our vile bodies are changed and made like his glorious body. It is certain the Greek world had no concept of a God like this.

When the apostle declared there is one God *and Father*, he gave hope to millions of nameless slaves, deprived of all hope of identity, treated like things and bought and sold like chattels. But he also gave hope to me. What a thrill it is to be adopted into a family circle where the indwelling Spirit makes it possible for me to cry “Abba, Father.” I would not exchange my status in Jesus for all the money or fame this world has to offer. God is my Father.

The one God is *above* all. This speaks of divine control. The creation was not just set to spinning and left to itself. God is adequate. He is not outmoded by the scientific and technological breakthrough of our day. He is not frustrated by our space exploration nor upset by our discovery of nuclear fission. He is above all nature including “fire, and hail, snow, and vapors, and stormy wind fulfilling his word” (Psalm 148:8). He counts the stars and calls them all by their names (Psalm 147:4). Nature holds no fear for one who trusts in God. “We need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea” (Psalm 46:2).

God is above all *history*. He calls the things that be not as though they were. He sees the end from the beginning. No event sneaks upon him unawares. He is never surprised by a sudden turn of events. All the people in the world are nothing in comparison with him. They are but a drop in the bucket, and dust on the scales. That is what the prophet says, and he adds, “All the nations are as nothing to him, in his eyes they are less than nothing— mere emptiness and froth” (Isaiah 40:17). He does not need to subpoena tapes to reach a judgment. He can read what has been erased.

He is above all of his *children*. I know because I am one of them. Do you recall that beautiful benediction Paul used for his Jewish brethren, his relatives in the flesh? “Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” But God is not just over the Jew. “For the scriptures tell us that no one who believes in Christ will ever be disappointed. Jew and Gentile are alike in this respect, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Romans 10:11, 12).

He is above all human attempts to capture him and put him in a box contrived by human wisdom. He is not just “the ground of being.” He is the being who made the ground. He is not just the “voice within.” He is above all!

The one God is *through* all. This has to do with both *communion* and *communication*. It is because the same God works through all of us, sharing our lot, and sending us out, to achieve his transcendent purpose, that we should be one. In the Gentile world there were “gods many” and “lords many” as Paul stated it. Each people had its own god and these gods regarded each other as rivals. The political intrigues upon the brow of Olympus exceeded those of mortals at its base. The people were divided by their very gods.

The jealous passions of imaginary and artificial deities were transferred to men so that the earth was kept in turmoil and peace was unknown. A belief in monotheism erased all this and provided a philosophical and rational basis for universal tranquillity.

God works through all in *proclamation*. The message of hope is to be carried to a hapless world by every follower of Jesus. Every believer is a priest and every child of God a minister.

God works through all in *preparation*. The ultimate goal of

life on earth is to prepare for life that is not on earth. We now bear the image of the earthy but we shall bear the image of the heavenly. God wants all men to be saved. He does not want any one to be lost and he has no favorites.

God works through all in *performance*. Not one single organ or member of either the physical or spiritual body is useless. God made no mere appendages. Each member has a responsibility to fulfill. All are related. The head cannot go where the feet do not take it. The feet cannot go where the head does not direct them. No one can do the work of another. Each has his own work and God has no part-time eyes and ears.

God works through all in *production* of spiritual fruit. He has no purely ornamental trees. God maintains an orchard. He is not the manager of a park. He prunes us that we may bring forth more fruit.

The one God is *in* all. This speaks of *companionship*. Jesus promised when he went back to heaven that he would not leave his disciples orphans. He said he would come to them, and he made it clear that his coming would be through the presence of another helper, the Holy Spirit. The world could not receive the Spirit. It did not know him and could not see him. But the disciples could know him because he was to be with them and in them forever, that is through the age of the absence of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God. The Spirit dwells in my body as a temple. I am not a hollow shell. I am not a vacant tabernacle. My own spirit is not alone. It has the companionship of the other helper. I am one Spirit with the eternal one. He does not simply walk along with me as a friend outside. He abides in the room of my heart.

God dwells in me to *strengthen my weakness*. I do not know what to pray for as I ought but I can be sure that all of the deep inexpressible longings of my soul will be translated into

intercession. The pull and tug of the world is great but I have the assurance that greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.

God dwells in me to *supply my wants*. The inner cravings are greater than the outer desires. I desperately want to grasp his grace, share his sufferings, and glimpse his glory through the eye of faith. His closeness to my spirit provides insight and incentive, meaning and motivation.

God dwells in me to *share my worship*. He is not worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything. Worship is the prostration of the heart in his presence and since he is ever present, whatever I do in word or deed is worship. I do not go to a temple. I am a temple. I do not pay a pilgrimage to the place where God dwells. I am a place where God dwells. It is not that I bring him things. I simply give him me! And he gives me himself. That's worship!

Functioning Gifts

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[Abstract]

Do you know what a metronome is? The word is a combined form of the Greek *metron*, measure, and *nomos*, law. A metronome is a device to measure time, especially in music. Perhaps you have seen a little triangular case sitting on a piano, with a waving pendulum which can be seen by an amateur player, who can develop a proper sense of rhythm by timing his beat with the sweep back and forth of the arm. I mention this because the word *metron* occurs in the original of Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

This is an important statement. It is important not merely because it originated with the Holy Spirit. It is significant because of its content and meaning. The theme of the chapter is the unity of the Spirit. We have just learned of the seven things which create and make possible that unity which we are told to guard within the bond of peace. The word for bond is *sundesmos*, that which binds together. It was used for a rope to bind limbs together to be carried home for fuel. It was also used for the chain with which prisoners were linked together. Peace is the chain which holds us all together. It is our heritage when we are justified by a faith which binds us to Jesus. The unity is the gift of the Spirit. Peace is the result of forgiveness which makes hostility no longer necessary.

So we have seven things in common. But in addition to these things provided by divine love, each of us receives grace in a special way. We are one body but we are individually members of it. Each of us is given grace to enable him to function in his capacity. The arm must receive grace to function as an arm. The eye must receive grace to function as an eye. All of the members are essential. No one was added to the body as a mere afterthought. No one is a parasite.

We have one Spirit but he dwells in each of us. The gift of the Spirit is to every person who is in Christ, but it is because every one has the Spirit that we have him in common. There is one faith but we embrace it as individuals. There is one baptism but we submit to it personally. There is a grace that is common to all but it is because each of us is given grace.

The word for grace is *charis*. It is from this we have *charisma*, which refers to a grace-gift, that is, a gift which one cannot earn or secure by effort or practice. Any gift freely bestowed by God is a gift of the Spirit, regardless of how it is communicated to the recipient. That is why I object to designating any period of time “a charismatic age.”

There is no such thing as a charismatic age, for the simple reason that there is no non-charismatic age. There has never been a time when the will of God was not enhanced and promoted by gifts of grace. A gift is not charismatic because of its nature, method of reception, or effect, but because of its origin. It is charismatic because it is a gift of *charis*, grace. In Romans 12:6-8 is given a list of gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us. These gifts are called *charismata* in the original. They include gifts of prophecy, administration, instruction, exhortation, liberality in giving, supervision, and succoring the afflicted and needy.

The man who has the enviable gift of understanding and relieving the needy is “charismatic” as surely as one who has the

gift of prophecy. The one who can give cheerfully and freely as his contribution to the work of the saints is “charismatic.” So is the gifted teacher or exhorter. In view of this, I am not turned on by such expressions as “The Spirit is working again in our time.” The Spirit has never ceased working. Any theory which conveys the idea that the Holy Spirit was “on the ball” for a few hundred years, and then started relaxing and laying low for a few centuries is a mistake. The Holy Spirit has always been active in the universe. He is not more so now than he has been in the past.

Our problem is that the church, which gets out of tune with God, periodically becomes so dead, sterile and unfruitful that the constituents die on the vine. They are so dehydrated and dried up on the inside that even a crusade or rally does little good. The people who “rally” are the ones who never miss anything. They are busy all of the time. When the folk get to the end of their tether and begin to agonize internally and call upon God and throw themselves upon his mercy, and commit themselves unto him in desperation, something starts happening.

What happens is confused with “the power beginning to flow again.” This is a little ridiculous. The same thing could have happened in any age since Jesus sat down on the throne. The power has been there all of the time. No one was plugging into it because they were trusting in their own power. When you plug in the percolator and it begins to perk it is not necessary to conclude that a divine electrician has just turned on the energy by pulling a master switch at the heavenly power plant. The power has always been there.

The gifts of God are varied. Paul wrote to a congregation which came behind in no gift and told them that the ability to restrain sexual passion, making marriage unnecessary was a *charisma* of God. But he also implied that the gift of sexual need which could be gratified in marriage was a *charisma*. “I would that everybody lived as I do; but each of us has his own special

gift from God— one in one direction and one in another” (1 Corinthians 7:7). It is quite evident to me that my gift is not in the same direction as was that of Paul.

I rather suspect that it is a gift of God to be able to divest yourself of all earthly possessions and give the entire proceeds to the poor. Perhaps the same is true of going cheerfully to the stake and giving your body to be burned. Certainly these two are listed in conjunction with the gifts of tongues, prophecy, knowledge and the faith which can move mountains (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). If they are *charismata*, the one who can vow to remain in poverty should not expect every other person to do so. Nor should the one who uses the things of this world, not abusing them, look down upon those who disclaim a need of them, and even renounce them. I would hope that a man who has the gift of giving every bit of his goods to feed the poor while living in a tent with a dirt floor, would marry a girl with the same gift.

I really doubt that there is such a thing as a non-charismatic member of the one body. If I am correct, it is not necessary to run around and tell everyone you are charismatic. “To everyone of us is given grace.” Note that it is always given “in accordance with the measure of the gift of Christ.” *Weymouth* renders this, “measured out with the munificence of Christ.” *The Authentic Version* reads, “And to each one of us there is granted some favor, corresponding to the extent of Christ’s bounty.” *The New English Version* has it, “But each one of us has been given a gift, his due portion of Christ’s bounty.”

The record in the verse under consideration says that “to every one of us is given grace (*charis*), according to the measure (*metron*) of the gift (*dorea*) of Christ.” W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says of *dorea* that it “denotes a free gift, stressing its gratuitous character; it is always used in the N. T. of a spiritual or supernatural gift.” In this passage, he says, “the gift is that given by Jesus Christ.” The

whole point Paul is making is that Jesus is a Lord who bestows gifts. He did not just give himself, but he gives of himself, of his bounty.

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Ephesians 4:8).

This is a free translation of Psalm 68:18. The expression “he saith” can better be understood if we read “David said,” or “The scripture said.” Paul lifts the quote to apply to three actions of Jesus— he ascended to the Father, he led a multitude of captives in his train, and he bestowed gifts upon men. At this juncture the apostle inserts a parenthetical statement identifying Jesus as the one who first descended into the lower parts of the earth and then ascended up far above all heavens. This he did that he might “fill all things.” This means that both the descent from heaven to be with man and the ascent into heaven to be with God were essential to the qualification required to supply every need and furnish every gift required for the growth and perfection of all.

NATURE OF THE GIFTS

We now come to the gifts he bestowed. Those gifts were special functionaries supplied to meet actual needs. These special servants were given to the called-out community by the Lord. They were his gifts to the body to bring it to the ideal of God. Because of the reading of the King James Version a lot of good brethren have been misled. In their interpretation they have missed the whole point. That version says, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”

Recently I heard a brother on the radio who was sawing away at the traditional explanation which has, in some places, become a part of what may be properly called “Church of Christism.” This is the collection of opinions, deductions and

explanations which have become so much a part of the dogmatic declarations of members of the Church of Christ, that it is accepted as being the will of God, and any contrary opinion is regarded as heresy or “liberalism” in the quaint and eccentric vocabulary adopted or invented by our brethren.

The brother was bent on proving that what he called “the age of miracles” had passed away. He was especially zeroing in on the gift of tongues. He insisted that Ephesians 4:11 taught that some “miraculous gifts,” as he referred to them, were given to apostles, some to prophets, some to evangelists and teachers, until we all come to the unity of the faith. The faith was God’s revelation. The unity of the faith was the completion of the apostolic writings. Therefore, when the new covenant scriptures were completed the gifts passed away.

This constitutes a prime example of what happens when men desperately strive to validate an opinion and make it “scripturally sound.” The brother was wrong on every count. He couldn’t have missed it farther if he had been blind-folded and fired at random. The faith, in this context, does not refer to the scriptures at all. The unity of the faith is not the completed canon after it had been argued about for a century or so. The gifts were not given to the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets were the gifts that were given.

Of course, we must not conclude that the translators appointed by King James I to prepare a revised version which he could authorize to be read in the Church of England, said that Jesus gave some gifts to apostles, some to prophets, etc. They did not put that in the passage. It remained for our brethren, caught up in the proof-text syndrome, to put that kind of slant on it. Such explanations do not so much depend for their effect upon the knowledge of the exposition as upon the ignorance of the auditors. I think it is a good thing for a lot of us that we live among spiritual illiterates. In the land of the blind a one-eyed man can be king!

I have remarked before, and I repeat, that any argument which depends for its force and validity upon only one version should probably be suspect. That is why by the simple expedient of reading more than one rendering of a passage one can often be spared from making an egregious error. I just threw that “egregious” in because it means “conspicuous for its bad quality.” I guess all errors are bad enough, but some of them are worse than others, because they have been used to hound brethren out who were nearer right than the “hounders.” Here is the way the passage under consideration appears in some other renderings.

“And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.” (*The New English Bible*).

“And He Himself appointed some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (*The Modern Speech New Testament*).

“And he has given some men as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as shepherds and teachers” (*The New Testament in Plain English*).

“And he it is who gave to the Church apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers” (*The Twentieth Century New Testament*).

“And he gave some to be apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers” (*American Revised Version*).

“And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (*Revised Standard Version*).

“And he gave to the Church some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and

teachers” (*William Barclay*).

Whatever else may be involved, this passage does not refer to bestowing “spiritual gifts” upon apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc. For that reason it has not one thing to do with the cessation of those gifts. Whether they ceased or whether they did not is not alluded to in this verse. Some brethren are so uptight about the need for proving spiritual gifts have been abrogated that every time they see the word “gifts” they latch on to it and work it into their sermon outlines. At that, it may not be much farther off than some of the other things they include in those outlines.

The called-out community was created to enable every person to develop to the fullest potential in service to others. This meant that training was required. Accordingly, Jesus bestowed upon the community, as his gifts, special functionaries to equip and develop all of the members of the body, so it could be edified or built up “by the effectual functioning of every part.” M. R. Vincent says in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, “Christ’s ministers are gifts to his people.”

There were four categories of special servants bestowed as gifts. The record does not say, “He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors, and some to be teachers.” He gave some to be pastors and teachers. The word “and” is from an original which joins two words, the latter of which defines or explains the former. We should read, “He gave some to be pastors, even teachers.” The pastors are the teachers. They are the elders, or bishops, and their duty is to instruct and train the gathered flock, to feed the sheep of God as shepherds. Do not forget that these offices are not positions. They are functions.

APOSTLES

The word “apostle” means one sent, that is, on a mission.

Four things are implied: a sender, the one sent, the ones to whom he is sent, and the message or mission to the latter. There are three kinds of apostles mentioned. There are apostles of God, of Christ, and of the congregations of saints.

Moses was an apostle of God under the old covenant. His commission is found in Exodus 3:10, “Come now, and I will send thee.” Jesus is the apostle and high priest of our profession (Hebrews 3:1). “He was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all God’s house.”

There were twelve apostles of Christ. They were his special envoys, first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and then to the whole world. They are unique and referred to as *the twelve*. They sit upon twelve thrones. Judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). There are only twelve thrones and there are only twelve apostles. Their names are engraved upon the twelve foundations of that great city, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). They are “the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” In spite of some modern teaching to the contrary, there are no modern apostles of Christ Jesus, no new ambassadors.

Any person sent forth upon a special mission by a congregation was an apostle of that congregation. This is true whether he was designated an apostle or not. Several such persons are named in the scriptures. In that sense, of course, there are apostles today. Our word “missionary” is applicable when such a person is sent on his way by others.

PROPHETS

A prophet, in the new covenant usage of the term, is one who speaks forth under divine impulse. He is not necessarily a foreteller, but a forth-teller, as the name indicates. The prophet received revelation (1 Cor. 14:3-9) and declared the counsel of God, using his gift to speak unto men for edification, exhortation and comfort, which means to build up, stir up, and cheer up.

The position of the prophets in the divine arrangement was next to that of the apostles. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, etc.” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Sometimes we are asked why, if we have evangelists and teaching pastors in the body now, we do not have apostles and prophets. We do! What was said by Paul in a wholly different context may well apply here. “For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” We have the same apostles and prophets the reconciled community has always had, else we are a temple without a foundation. As surely as Christ is still the chief cornerstone, that surely the apostles and prophets are still in the foundation. And it is a living foundation!

The office is still there, but the apostles and prophets had no successors, for the simple reason that they fulfilled their function. They were the recipients of God’s revelation. That which was a mystery, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5). The mystery consisted of three parts, all related. The Gentiles would be fellow heirs. They would be members of the same body. They were to be partakers of the divine promise in Christ by the gospel, the good news of God’s magnificent redeeming act. When that was fully revealed and the final triumph of the rule of heaven was assured, there was no further need of other apostles and prophets.

God is not still laying the foundation. He is now building upon it and has been for centuries. To postulate that there are still apostles and prophets living among us is to imply that the mystery, the glorious secret, has not been fully declared. But Paul said it had been “now disclosed, and through prophetic scriptures by eternal God’s command made known to all nations, to bring them to faith and obedience” (Romans 16:26).

Even by the time Peter wrote, the function of prophets was being displaced by that of teachers or instructors. “But there

were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you.” There were prophets. There shall be teachers. If the office of the prophet was to continue why did the apostle make the distinction? W. E. Vine, in his *Notes on Thessalonians* (pages 196, 197) writes thus: “With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, 1 Cor. 13:8, 9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet. Compare the significant change in 2 Peter 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophets was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures.”

I do not believe there has been a single new truth revealed since the day that John wiped the ink from his reed pen on Patmos. The revelation of God was completed by “the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, which he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John.” There is much truth yet to be discovered, but discovery is not revelation. Discovery is the result of man’s probing. Revelation is the result of God’s providing. I am content to build upon the foundation. I shall not attempt to add to it and I will resist the attempt of any other man to do so.

EVANGELISTS

The taking of the good news to succeeding generations will always be required and thus the function of evangelizing will never be fulfilled until our precious Lord comes. Revelation is complete but the fact of reconciliation must continue to be announced so long as there is one person remaining who is “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him.” The word *evangelist* means “a bringer of good news.” The word for “preacher” in the new covenant scriptures is the word for herald. The herald was the town-crier, the one who announced the news before the day of the newspaper. He was the

runner who bore news of the battle to the anxious people.

There is nothing in the original word for *preaching* to indicate whether the news was good or bad. A herald might bring tidings of defeat and rout of the home forces. But the news to be announced or proclaimed about God's program was inevitably good and glad. So the word evangel was adopted. The evangel is announcement of victory in Jesus. The gospel is not a law. It is not a code of ethics. It is not a bill of particulars to regulate the conduct of life. It is not a compilation of things we are to do for God. The gospel is the good news of what God did for us, when we were helpless to do anything for ourselves.

It is the declaration of the divine breakthrough. The Word became flesh. He brought his own tent and shared our pilgrim lot. He died for us. He was laid in a cold dark sepulcher. He arose again on the third day. He conquered the dread foe. He extracted the venom of death from the fangs of the serpent. That is the gospel. It is this which saves us if we keep it in memory. Praise God!

The evangelist was essentially an itinerant. He took the news to those to whom it was news. It really isn't news when you've heard it five hundred times, even if it is given a different title to keep you awake until you find out it is the same thing with only the label changed. Good news is exciting, exhilarating, effervescent, and world-shaking. There is not too much overwhelming joy in a diatribe on "Why We Sing and Do Not Play."

When people enlisted and pledged allegiance to Jesus, the evangelist gathered them together, taught them, trained them, and developed them until men of stature in their own number could shepherd and feed them, then he moved on to new fields to repeat the process. That is no longer the way we do it since we have "restored the Lord's church." We now have three kinds of preachers. They are evangelists, missionaries and ministers. If

we happen to be members of the Christian Church we're liable to call these last "pastors." Some of them are so far afield they even call themselves that!

In our day *evangelists* are men who travel around and hold meetings in the United States. Does anyone know what it means to "hold a meeting"? I had a letter from a good brother who is a "located evangelist" whatever that is, and he wanted to know if I could recommend a place where he might "preach a meeting"? What in the world is that? *Missionaries*, in our vernacular, are men who are sent to heathen countries like Canada and Great Britain, and supported by money from Texas. They might even be sent to North Dakota or Idaho. These are foreign countries to some folks who live in Tennessee.

Ministers are men who are hired to serve a congregation. Sometimes there are five hundred people in it, who are unable to feed themselves and must secure a professional to throw down the fodder. Ministers must be subjected to a try-out in which they contest for the prize against others who are also vying for the job. In some places, the one who gets the job is the loser, and the one who does not is lucky. Ministers are to visit the sick, conduct funerals, listen to complaints, referee dog-fights among the sheep, and try to keep in good with the wives of the elders, so they do not have to move on down the valley. Most of them are not too successful and their theme song is the dirge "We are going down the valley one by one!"

What we have now is Church of Christism. It is related to the primitive *ekklesia* and the ancient order of things in the same manner that the spirit of the United States in this generation is to the Declaration of Independence. We have what one good brother calls a "pattern theology." We have developed a pattern, made up of traditional interpretations and opinions, partly borrowed and pilfered from our sectarian neighbors, and we have stretched and warped the scriptures to cover it. Worse than that, we've got two-dozen different patterns, everyone of which

is faithful to the Book, and no two of which agree.

It is amazing how, after we drummed up our modern complicated scheme, we discovered that God had anticipated it all nineteen hundred years ago just like we created it. I have sad news for you. We have developed a first-class, dyed-in-the-wool, Grade-A clergy system. We will deny that, of course, until we die. But we have painted ourselves into a corner. We have been caught in our own snare. We have tripped over our own invention. And wonder of wonders, we now have evangelists evangelizing saved persons. It is enough to make angels weep and strong men bow themselves in shame, to see the corkscrew methods by which we try to validate something which God never revealed and no apostle ever conceived.

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

In a previous issue of the paper this year I demonstrated that the bishops were to be the pastors in the divine plan. In the modern mixed-up religious complex a bishop is often regarded as a single individual over several churches, whereas, in the scriptures, he is always regarded as one of several individuals over a single church. Our best current word for bishop is superintendent or supervisor. A bishop is given the privilege of overseeing the work of a local congregation by the constituency of that congregation. He has absolutely no authority to act in the affairs of any other congregation.

Bishops are pastors because of the nature of their relationship to the saints under their care. The word literally means “one who tends a flock, a shepherd.” In the imagery of the Near East in which God’s revelation was given, the people of God were always spoken of as sheep. Those entrusted with their supervision have accordingly been regarded as shepherds, or pastors. In order to understand the function and responsibility of spiritual shepherds, one needs to know the work regarded as

essential to the natural shepherd in the Oriental mind.

Fortunately, the revelation of God makes both casual and direct reference to the responsibility of the shepherd in the natural and figurative settings. A good example is found in Jacob's protest to Laban, his father-in-law, who was a desert sheik in the land of Padan-aram. Of particular interest is the statement that for twenty years he endured the heat of the sun by day and the chill of the frost by night, and often went sleepless (Genesis 31:40). The welfare of the flock took precedence over his own ease and comfort.

I suspect that Ezekiel 34 should be required reading for every bishop who is to shepherd God's people. This remarkable chapter shows that the shepherds are to encourage the sheep and not exploit them. The flock must not be regarded as a source of personal gain. Shepherds must feed the flock and not feed on them. The diseased are to be strengthened, the sick are to be healed, the broken bound up, that which is driven away brought back, the lost searched for and found.

The charge made against the shepherds that they ruled with force and cruelty (verse 4) might well be made against many bishops in the Churches of Christ today. Men who are jealous of assumed authority make arbitrary decisions, create unwritten creeds of their opinions and decisions, and ride roughshod over those saints who seek to stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ made them free. Despotism takes the place of loving concern and guidance. Ignorance and arrogance sometimes go hand-in-hand. The saints of God are reduced to the status of serfs under feudal lords. The congregation becomes a fief.

A good example of this is before me as I write. It consists of a letter of charges and accusations made against a man and his wife, humble saints in a congregation whose house of meeting they sacrificed to help erect. The letter is drawn up in cold

legalistic language even while professing a love for the souls of the accused. They are promised no opportunity to present their defence before the saints with whom they have met for years. The case has been judged and the verdict reached. They are summoned to come forward and make a public acknowledgment of sin under penalty of being read out of the congregational association, or, as the letter so quaintly and unscripturally puts it, “the fellowship of the church will be withdrawn.” Contained in the official document of censure is the threat that a copy of the action taken will be mailed to every other “loyal church” in the area.

What are the grave offenses of which this rather aged couple are adjudged guilty? What are the heinous crimes they have committed? You will be inclined to disbelief when I tell you. One of the accusations is that the couple held Bible studies in their home without first consulting the elders and gaining their consent. Another, and I suspect that this is the crux of the matter, is that they passed copies of *Mission Messenger* along to some of the brethren. The funny thing about this is that two of the “official party papers” are kept in the tract rack in the foyer for any and all to pick up!

No greater honor can come to a person than to be excluded by such a sectarian group because they would not submit their minds to the tyrannical imposition of men. To be set free from such a system is to be promoted in the kingdom of heaven. To submit to such injustice through craven fear is to be less than a disciple of Jesus, for a follower of Christ can acknowledge but one Lord.

Having said this, I must add in all fairness to such elders, that they also are victims of “the System.” The restoration movement, losing its way and forsaking its ideal, has now fractured into a bevy of little sects. This is especially true of those who renounce the employment of instrumental music in conjunction with their public praise. These parties have little in

common except a mutual adherence to immersion as essential to entrance into the fellowship and a mutual rejection of the instrument as essential to remaining in it. Each party has hoisted its own standard around which its members must encamp. The duty of the elders is to guard against erosion of the unwritten creed which is the official loyalty test, the term of communion or fellowship. The chief concern, therefore, is not for persons but for the status quo. Persons are valuable and worthy only as they support the party position.

This is the price to be paid for losing the marvelous concept of a divine family consisting of brothers and sisters, and substituting a hardboiled institution or organization made up of dues-paying constituents who must come through under penalty of hell. In such an arrangement the love of the flock gives way to the law of the pack. The overseers cease to be encouragers by example and become enforcers by authority. The love letters of the Spirit are no longer a staff upon which to lean during the pilgrimage but a policeman's truncheon with which to batter into submission those who insist upon personally digesting their pasturage.

Will the situation ever change? Of course it will. Such things always work their own rebuke. Already there are signs everywhere that revolution is taking place in the hearts and minds of men. Tomorrow is going to be brighter than today. The young men and women of the now generation who have caught the ideal of love will be the leaders of tomorrow. They will change things in God's good time. That is why I am content to labor and to wait!

Equipping the Saints

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[Abstract]

In the very midst of a wonderful discussion on the unity of the Spirit, the apostle Paul injected a statement about the descent and ascent of Jesus (Ephesians 4:9, 10). The translators appointed by King James I thought it was parenthetical and so indicated. I am not so sure that it was. The immediate concern is that Jesus is a gift-giving Lord. He is free and lavish. Every one of us receives grace, measured only by His bounty. No one is left out. No one is forgotten. Every person in Christ is a recipient.

Jesus descended as the greatest gift heaven ever bestowed. When He ascended He gave gifts unto men. When He came it was in a body of flesh. Every member of that body functioned to enable Him to carry out the divine purpose. He walked, talked and spoke to suffering humanity. His eyes looked upon the cringing woman taken in an adulterous act. His hand touched frightened lepers existing in the isolation of a living death. But the ultimate design of God could not be fulfilled while he was in a body of flesh.

To fill all things, to reach out to the universe He had to ascend. In doing so He left a spiritual body to carry on His mission among creatures of the flesh. Every organ in that spiritual body has a function. The body is not edified or built up by being ministered to, but by ministering. It is the whole body which must be appropriately joined together. Every joint must

supply something. There must be an effective working in every part. This guarantees “the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (verse 16).

The body is not one with ministers, but a body of ministers. It is not a kingdom with priests but a kingdom of priests. Every child of God is a minister. Every called saint is a priest. Every one is obligated to “show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Turn to that verse and read it. Meditate upon the word “that” until its implication in this passage floods your consciousness. It is a tragic commentary upon the ability of man to confuse and corrupt to behold what he has done to the body of Christ. He has manipulated and moulded it after his own image. He has defined and confined it, organized and disorganized it. He has debated and argued over its area of service and responsibility, and sought to control it by claiming the authority to speak for its head.

Nothing is sillier than to talk of “the social gospel” as if there were another gospel. Nothing is more ridiculous than to withdraw the salt from the putrefying mass and put it into a theological salt shaker on an ecclesiastical shelf. It is a sin to put the light under any bushel, but the sin is compounded when the basket used to hide it is the church. Members of the body of Christ must touch man physically, morally, mentally and spiritually, as the Master did. And like the Master they must leave their lovely heavens and go where men live, and suffer, and agonize and die. Whatever Jesus did for men while in a body on earth, the body of Jesus while on earth can do for men. It can never be wrong for the body to minister as did the head.

All of this is interesting to me. I just had to say it. I admit it was only secondarily the theme of Paul in Ephesians 4. He was interested primarily in showing that Jesus left no stone unturned in providing for the functioning of the body when He returned to heaven. If He had not gone away the enabling Spirit could not

have come as the other Helper. In order to fill all things, Jesus gave special gifts to the gifted body. In our issue for last month we learned that His gifts to the body were special functionaries. There were four categories of these— apostles, prophets, evangelists and teaching shepherds, or pastors. In this present issue we are to learn the divinely ordained function of these in the community of the reconciled ones.

As a proper approach to this I entreat you to stop right now and read Ephesians 4:1-16. I wish I were in your home or office where we could read it together. I deplore the limitations of cold print. But please read it and underline in the text the words “in love” in verses 2, 15 and 16. We must make allowances for one another in love. We must speak the truth in love. The body must edify itself in love. Love is the answer to impatience, harshness and decay. Love must regulate our mutual association, our speech and our contribution to the upbuilding of the majestic body. Because we are in a culture hooked on the success motif, a capitalistic society where often “the Madison Avenue man in the gray flannel suit” dreams up gimmicks and promotions to mesmerize the public, we are often betrayed into thinking that if we could just hit on the right commercial we might lead the public to our trough and soon outgrow “the other sects” in number. This is a vain hope. It is a fragile fantasy.

Programs can be dreamed up and drummed up by very unloving people who regard others as statistics and so many scalps on the partisan totem pole in front of the orthodox tepee. But the only dynamic which will change this world is love. I mean love for the unlovable, love for persons whom you cannot like. You would not need to be forbearing in love if everyone saw things exactly as you do. If you love only those who love you, you would make a first-class publican according to Jesus, but you would not truly be a child of the Father.

Every gift must be exercised in love. Love validates every

gift and sanctifies every sacrifice. You can have the faith that moves mountains like anthills, but without love it would amount to zero. You could surrender your body to be reduced to ashes by the flame at the martyr's stake, but it would be a useless gesture without love.

What was the real purpose of Jesus in bestowing evangelists and instructional shepherds upon the body? Was he creating a special caste to be trained and put up for hire as the ministers of the flock? Millions think so, or their actions belie their thoughts. I deny that this was the intention of the Father as judged by His wonderful revelation. I am going to make some statements which are emphatic. I make them now so you can decide whether you want to read further. I have no desire to have a captive audience. It is possible to walk out on one in print as it is when he is personally present. But whether you continue to read or not, remember that your disagreement with my thinking will in no sense militate against my love for you.

If there is any hostility it must be in your heart toward me. I feel absolutely none toward you. My love is not conditioned upon your seeing these things as I do. I accept you as my brother because the Lord accepted you as His child. My love for you is based upon the Lord's love for us. "Beloved, if the Lord so loved us, we ought also to love one another." It is just that simple with me. I shall express my honest thoughts. If you can agree, praise God. If you cannot agree, praise God anyhow!

1. Every gift bestowed by God, whether conveyed naturally or supernaturally, mediately or immediately, is designed to be used for the good of all and for the edification of the body.

2. The community of the saints is a fellowship created for the purpose of enabling every disciple to develop to the fullest degree of his potential in whatever area he is endowed of God.

3. Any system which operates in such a manner as to

inhibit or sublimate the use or development of any gift of God is detrimental to the cause of Christ and can never restore the primitive order to the *ekklesia* of God.

4. The training and developing of a special class or caste to minister to the *ekklesia*, or for the *ekklesia*, to the exclusion of the development of every member of the body as ministers, is foreign to God's purpose and plan. It can never have the divine sanction or approval. Every organism on earth is strong only in proportion as it is able to carry out the purpose for which it exists. The fact that it may be successful in accomplishing something else is no indication of strength at all. If a school is known for the beauty of its architectural structure but its students are uneducated and helpless to face the world, that school is a failure. If the human body has one organ which has shown prodigious development while the others are all weak and decrepit, the body is not strong, but weak. A man whose arms and legs are paralyzed is not strong merely because he is a good talker and has eyes with unimpaired vision.

So that I may not be misunderstood, let me be very explicit! The practice of hiring a man as *the minister* of a congregation of saints is without scriptural warrant. It creates an office unknown to the revelation of God, try to justify it though men will. The very concept of putting up a sign reading "Church of Christ— John Doe, Minister" is sectarian and unscriptural. It will not make it any less so to childishly put "Vocal Music" in parenthesis under "Church of Christ."

Why not put *John Doe, Priest*, upon our signs? If every Christian is a minister, and every Christian is a priest, and one can be hired to be "the minister" for the ministers, why can he not be "the priest" for the priests? I hope that you will not want to hang me when I say that the average professional minister of "The Church of Christ" actually is more of a priest than he is a minister. Our liturgy or ritual is different than that to which our Roman Catholic friends are subjected, but whatever it is it is

conducted by “the minister.” He is the front man until the elders fire him and he must remove to another diocese.

The congregation is no longer a family of brothers and sisters gathered around a thanksgiving table of the Father. It is a convocation of communicants or parishioners, gathered before an altar, a sacred desk. When all are seated the man of the hour comes in and issues a priestly summons to worship. He intones the prayers, reads from the sacred volume, delivers the homily, and thus fulfills the role for which he is reimbursed. This is not a social gathering of saints at all but an organizational approach. Is there no place for an evangelist? Is there no place for teaching shepherds? Of course there is! They are the gifts of Christ to the body and God never gave a useless gift. But we can divert gifts from the purpose intended by the donor and this is what *The System* has done. If a father presents a car to his son as a gift so that he may more easily attend school and the son uses the car for an immoral purpose it does not argue that there is anything wrong with the car. What has happened is that we have used the gifts of God to the body in a way which Jesus did not intend.

But *The System* has so cleverly disguised itself that we now confound it with God’s revelation. It has substituted tradition for the divine purpose and insinuated itself into our thinking until we have been intellectually drugged by it. We are addicts. We cannot survive without it. And we dare not experience the withdrawal symptoms. Our brethren have been converted by *The System* and they have been converted to it. We would be much more honest if we would just admit that we are hooked. But like any addict we are bitter toward any person who accuses us of addiction, and especially hostile toward one who tries to rescue us from our state or condition.

If you are still with me, I’d like to have you do me a favor. Turn again to Ephesians 4, and by the side of each verse from 11 to 16, put down these captions as guidelines for our discussion. By verse 11 write “Special Functionaries.” By verse 12 write

“Specific Purpose.” By verse 13 “Scholarly Stature.” By verse 14 “Safety From Deception.” By verse 15 “Speaking Acceptably.” By verse 16 “Serving the Body.” Of course Paul didn’t give “book, chapter and verse” as a lot of our brethren caught up in the proof-text syndrome refer to it. Sometimes the versification is arbitrary. Certainly my verse labels are so. They are merely handles with which to grasp on to thoughts in an unbroken sentence. In the King James Version these six monumental verses are contained in one sentence.

Jesus gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be instructional shepherds. Why did He give them? What was the purpose of these gifts to the body? The answer is “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” But if prizes were being given out for verses most often misunderstood, this one would certainly win a ribbon.

What does it mean? Look at it again. Note that the word *for* appears three times. But the first word is not the same as the last two. It comes from *pros*, a term which implies implementation of purpose. Probably the very best rendering here is “with a view to.” The gifts of Christ, the special functionaries, were given with a distinct view or purpose in the divine mind. The word “perfecting” is from *katartismos*. Originally it meant to restore something to its proper place. From this it took on the connotation of properly arranging and putting things in order, and finally, making complete and functional. A good translation here would be training, qualifying, adapting or fitting. The evangelists and shepherds are to train the saints.

Work is from *ergon*, the word for employment or task. Ministry is from *diakonia*, the word for service of any kind. W. E. Vine points out that here it is “not in the sense of an ecclesiastical function.” No one can determine by seeing the word ministry in the sacred scriptures what kind of service is

implied. This must always be defined by qualifying and explanatory terms. The same word used to describe the work of Timothy is employed to describe that of Martha, who applied to Jesus to draft Mary as an “associate minister” (Luke 10:40). One who mows the lawn surrounding the meetinghouse is as much a minister of God as one who stands in the pulpit.

The word “for” here is from *eis*, as it is in the next and last usage in this verse. It signifies unto or into. “For the work of ministry” simply means unto the work of service. Edifying is building up or strengthening. Verse 16 shows that the body is to be self-edifying. It is built up by being fitly joined together through the effectual working of every part. It is not that someone comes in to build up the body, but rather, what is in the body builds it up. A physical body may have an occasional shot in the arm, but it is the exercise of all the members which really builds it up. The same is true of the spiritual body. It is consistent spiritual growth and not an occasional “revival” which makes a strong congregation. You revive something that is dead, and that which is living, functioning and working properly, would not have time to attend a revival. I am sure what I say here will not be popular!

THE ENABLING GIFTS

Now we are ready for what Paul is teaching about the gifts bestowed by Jesus when He made His ascent to glory. Remember that his gifts were special functionaries. “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some teaching shepherds, with the view that these should train and equip all of the saints to carry on the work of service, so that the body would be built up by the efforts of all.”

I doubt that any of us who honestly and objectively survey the fragmented restoration movement today can say that we

have restored this concept of carrying on the work of ministry. God's method is to equip all of the saints to function to the highest degree in the exercise of their gifts. Ministry is not the work of one man or two. It is the responsibility of every member of the body. The arm is to function as an arm. The ear is to function as an ear. But it is by the cooperative work of every organ that the organism grows.

The System has betrayed us into struggling along on our own until we can accumulate a sufficient amount of money to hire someone as "our minister." If he is successful in increasing the number enrolled upon our roster we think in terms of hiring an associate, or assistant minister. As these develop in skill and acumen through use, the other members grow spiritually flabby through disuse. Eventually as "familiarity breeds contempt" and the personality of "the minister" fades or palls, we let him go and look for a new face to grace "the pulpit." Brethren are always seeking a minister instead of seeking to minister.

Most of us do not know that the word "pulpit" is a transliteration of the Latin *pulpitum*, a stage for actors. Our British brethren are correct when they talk about "the speaker's platform" but never about "the pulpit." The very idea of a pulpit determines the attitude of those who gather with us. When one attends a theater he does not go as a participant in the drama. He pays admission and attends as a spectator. He waits nervously for the show to begin and when it is over he heads for the parking lot to try and beat the traffic jam.

It never occurs to him to take a place in the spotlight. He is a watcher, not a worker. He is an observer and sometimes an objector. But he is not one of the players. We are losing the battle because we have changed the purpose of God from a well-trained army in the battlefield to a content group in the bleachers meeting to watch a gladiator thrust at an unseen and sometimes imaginary foe.

Regardless of oratorical ability, if an evangelist or an elder does not train the saints— all of them— to minister according to their gifts, that evangelist or elder is not doing what God expects of him. He is not fulfilling the purpose of Christ in bestowing his function upon the body. You do not train soldiers by lecturing to them but by allowing them to use their weapons under proper supervision. Soldiers cannot always train with wooden guns or cap pistols. They learn best when under fire. Saints should be taken out on field trials and taught to meet the opposition face-to-face.

Suppose that an elder not only cannot train the brethren under his care but is himself untrained and helpless. What should he do? The answer is simple. He should resign. He should not have been ordained in the first place. The scriptures specify the qualifications for a bishop. It is wrong to violate and ignore those qualifications and deliberately appoint someone who does not have them.

It is a sin to put men in to “fill a vacancy” or to conform to humanly-contrived by-laws, when the brother is not able to discharge the duties of his function. An elder must be apt to teach. He must be able to exhort and convict the gainsayers. If he cannot do so he should step down. One does not need to be a bishop to be a Christian, but he will be held accountable for accepting a responsibility for which he has no qualification.

But I am told there is no scripture for resigning. Of course not. The word of God assumes there will be no one ordained as a bishop who is not qualified. If one is gifted as an administrator and can meet the other divine requirements he should exercise his gift. He should do so willingly and not under constraint or pressure. If he is unable to meet the requirements he ought not to retain the place. A bishop does not occupy a political office. He fulfills a function. He does not qualify because he gets votes but because he meets God’s specifications.

There is no such thing as an *elder emeritus*, or a *minister emeritus*. Such designations are dreamed up to pamper human pride, of which some preachers have more than their fair share. They are bestowed to make men my age feel good and appreciated so they will not think they have been laid on the shelf to be replaced by younger men who have a lot of hair. But you couldn't run fast enough to pin a title like that upon me. *Emeritus* indicates someone who has served out a term and then retired with a title corresponding to that he held in active service. But I am a minister for life. My term will end in death. I enlisted for the duration. God made me his minister the day I was born into his family. I may not always minister in the same way, but I intend to serve my Captain until the waves of Jordan take me under and sweep me over to the other side. I want no special titles! I just want to serve Him whose call I heard echoing over life's hills when He found me.

A lot of folk become incensed when I talk about training every saint for "the ministry." Even my brethren who are preaching feel uneasy and inwardly upset by such talk. They immediately jump to the conclusion that I am implying that every person would be trained to "make talks" on Sunday morning. Actually, that is probably the easiest thing to do and the least effective form of ministry in the church. I know one preacher who says he "gets up his sermons" while on the golf course. After listening to some of them I am sure he is correct. If he cannot hit the ball any better than he does the mark, he needs a computer to keep track of his score. But when people are sick, discouraged, frustrated and depressed, they do not need someone to "earn his salary" by getting up and "delivering a sermon" on the sin of supporting Herald of Truth, a pretty effective radio and television program of the "Churches of Christ" opposed to use of instruments in conjunction with the public expression of praise to the Father of mercies.

The primitive saints did not gather to hear a sermon. The word isn't in the scriptures. The idea is not there either. They

met as a family to sit down at a thanksgiving memorial service. They came to share their sufferings and the account of their persecutions and to recite their victories. They came to petition the Father to grant them boldness in the face of brutal adversaries. And Paul said they could all speak one by one, that all might be comforted, and all might be built up. He declared that those who spoke did so to build up, encourage and cheer those who needed it. What a gathering it must have been when brothers and sisters tearfully embraced.

They did not hold services, they rendered them. The service did not begin when they met in a third-floor loft or tenement for a communal meal, but when they gave each other a holy kiss and went back out into the raw and bloody pagan world. One of my favorite historians writes: "There is scarcely anything said in the history of the second and third centuries of Christians who could, in any distinctive sense, be called missionaries. The trader on his journey, the soldier in the camp, the slave in the house, the philosopher among his disciples, as well as the friend among his friends and the mother among her children: these all did their part in diffusing the knowledge of the truth which they felt to be of God, and to which, they were assured, God would give the victory."

At first the church had no "missionary program." It was God's missionary program. The saints did not send out missionaries, they were missionaries. If there were those who went to regions beyond, those who remained behind helped them in their needs, but those who went were no more missionaries than those who remained. The saddest commentary on our modern state is that brethren no longer have a sense of mission to the world. They support programs rather than becoming involved. And because they are frightened to go out into the big world which God has made they create their own little worlds and mill around in them and thus salve their consciences. The fact that we now draw up charts depicting various departments — evangelistic, benevolent and missionary— speaks volumes

about what has happened unto us. We have not only fragmented human personality but we have fragmented our approach to life.

BECOMING A FAMILY

Equipping the saints for carrying on the work of ministry means far more than holding public speaking classes. It might include that, but again it might not. The first thing we must do is to forget the concept of “church” in its modern connotations and become once again a family. There is nothing more stagnating than institutional churchiness with the stuffiness of those who maintain it. In a church you are a member of an organization. You are a statistic, a name in the card index to be filed under the proper letter where the secretary can locate you. There isn’t too much warmth or human compassion about being a member of a church.

In a family you are a brother or sister, not because of the way you dress or talk but because you have been born again. You are accepted, not because you have a lot going for you but because you came to Him when He called. Churches are hung up on structures, drives for money, fights over the color of the rug on the pulpit, and squabbles about whether you should kneel for prayer in “the sanctuary” or stand as stiff as a ramrod.

I hope you’ll not become too aggravated at me for what I am going to say. I doubt that we will ever be able to train for service to dying humanity in our so-called “church buildings.” We have sanctified our brick and stone. We have dedicated them, and in the very act of doing so we created an artificial setting where we cannot act naturally. We have stained glass windows to filter light in a kind of ghastly type of flecks upon the pages of the hymn books. We have lights that are manipulated from a console so they can be brightened or dimmed to affect our moods. Home was never like this!

Even if you were having a good time in the parking lot,

that is squelched as soon as you hit the front door and enter the foyer. As one mother said to her little freckle-faced kid, "Wipe that smile off your face. You're in church now!" I suspect our best training for service will come in the homes of our pagan neighbors, at the shop-bench where we work, or in the hospital where children are screaming and older folk are quietly weeping in their pillows from fear and pain.

But we are victims of our past! Tradition has shot us down! We have been taken by the Goths who deposed rulers and imposed architecture. We somehow feel holier when we are in "the Lord's house." We forget that we are the Lord's house and He is in us. Not long ago a sister who went over on Wednesday evening to clean up the house, wash the dishes, sort and put things away in a house where a young mother had died that afternoon, confessed that she felt guilty because she had to miss prayer meeting. She was a prayer meeting! I imagine the angels were laughing and clapping hands in glory as they looked down and saw prayers translated into soap suds and detergent.

Now all of this brings up some real questions. For instance, what about a young lad who goes away to school to "study for the ministry" as we so oddly phrase it, and then is "hired" by "the pulpit committee" of a congregation which does not want to be trained, adapted or fitted? Many congregations have no intention of ministering. They do not come to minister. They come to be ministered unto. That's one way in which they differ from Jesus. There are a lot of other ways I will not mention.

Such congregations are composed of runners who do not intend to run. They are composed of soldiers who do not intend to fight. They are spectators. They came to see the action and not engage in it. They do not want to take the sword of the Spirit. They want to watch a sparring match once a week. And they are not going to pay someone to disturb the status quo. They are not going to come out of the grandstand and get into the arena.

When congregations hire a man they want to own him. In that personality-eroding rivalry experience called “the trial sermon” a man is sized up not because of his ability to put the saints to work, but because he appears to be a good mixer, and one who is “safe.” He will not disturb things. He will be content to work in the morgue without trying to get the cadavers to rise and walk. Congregations like this hire men to enhance “the community image” of the church. Remember that congregations do not hire prophets. They hire priests. And priests are defenders of traditions. They do not rock the boat. They only miss it! Congregations which create images always end up worshiping them. And to try and change the image is like attacking a god, an object of adoration and praise.

Can such places really be changed? I doubt it! Those who compose them did not enlist to fight the good fight of faith. They did not sign up to fight at all. Many of them came in under emotional stress. In highly-charged situations they were impressed with a burden of overpowering guilt. Those who were young and plastic manufactured guilt out of purely normal human feelings. They were baptized not so much to live for Christ as to be able to live with themselves. There was never a thought of getting into a fray where one might be battered, bruised, persecuted or even massacred. They had no thought of full-time service. They were caught up in a crusade, or driven in with a drive!

Many such persons live in a state of peaceful co-existence with Satan. They do not like him and they resent him, but they have no strategy to develop where they can engage in a toe-to-toe slugging match with him. They come unstrung when their children grow up and start “running with the wrong crowd” and drop out on Sunday and Wednesday nights, and grumble about having to get up and attend on Sunday mornings. They have a momentary heart-flutter when they learn that a family from “the Lord’s church” has started attending with the Baptists. But they rationalize that the family was never very stable anyhow

and the wife was always asking disturbing questions about why we do things as we do.

Shall the preacher quit and go somewhere else? Shall he opt out and get a job teaching school or selling life insurance? Neither of these would be wrong. One does not “leave the ministry” when he gets another job. He is as much a minister as he ever was. The only way to leave the ministry is to forsake Christ. But suppose that one wants to continue working with the brethren directly. Shall he “resign” and look for a new pasture? Where will he go?

The institutional image is well nigh universal and while some places are successful in holding a huge crowd, and in promoting a large building program in the suburbs, this does not mean that such a place is a more valiant company of combat troops. They will be fortunate if they do not end up tomahawking each other over the new building. It is easier to lose yourself in a large congregation. You can go through the motions without becoming involved. You do not really have to know the others, and hopefully they will not get too thick with you. In large congregations you can be socially polite without being warm. You can be attached to the place while being detached from the people. You must quit evaluating size with strength. There is a lot of difference between muscle and blubber!

I'd like to suggest an alternative. It is based upon the facts of life. It recognizes that the condition with which we are confronted is not ideal. It simply faces up to things as they are and not as we would like to have them. It is not original with me. Few things are! I have seen it hinted at in various books but I really got “zapped” with it while reading the fascinating biography of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who was born May 26, 1700. During his lifetime this man was famous wherever Christ was named. He was deeply loved by slaves in the West Indies, Eskimos in Greenland, Indians in Pennsylvania,

Hottentots in South Africa, and Negroes in Surinam. I mean that! Philip Doddridge called him “that blessed herald of the Redeemer.” John Wesley wrote to him and asked him to pray in his behalf.

Perhaps there has never been a more ardent worker for unity of all believers than this man, who wrote, “All fellowship which is only based on agreement of opinions and forms without a change of heart is a dangerous sect.” The prayer of our dear Lord for all of us to be one became a passion, almost an obsession with this wealthy nobleman.

Early in his lifetime, probably from the Pietistic movement, Zinzendorf caught the concept of *ecclesiolae in Ecclesia* (little churches within the Church). In every congregation there is a majority which is satisfied, immobile and stuck. They are legalistic and formal. But in every group there are also those who “sign for Jerusalem.” Their hearts are tender and open. They seek a closer relationship with the infinite. This is not only true of congregations in a specific movement but it is true of the whole range of believers in Jesus in every denomination and sectarian group.

The greater number in a congregation is like a backlog in a fireplace. You can strike matches and hold them against it until you are worn out, and no flame will be kindled. But if you will apply fire to God’s kindling wood and then push it against the backlog you may be able to start it burning. In practical application this means that while one is carrying on his “routine work” in a congregation he must ever be searching for those whose spirits “pant for God.” In small groups in homes these must meet to pray, train themselves in the Word and develop a strategy for capturing the minds of men and bringing their thoughts into captivity.

They must come to regard themselves as shock troops. They are God’s Minutemen. They are commandos for Christ as

I wrote in my book on that theme. They must not desert the army whose members helplessly mill around in the mess hall. If they flake off or flack out they will never reform them. No reformation is ever affected from without. All reformations are wrought by those who stay in. Commandos fight apart from the regular army but always as a part of the regular army. There may only be three or four in a large congregation willing to endure the rigorous training essential to well-honed combat forces. Let them train! God has always worked with remnants. He does not need a majority. He saved the whole world of mankind once with eight persons. A yeast cake does not have to fill a dishpan in order to motivate the dough to do so!

Did you read this statement by Elton Trueblood? “The more we study the early church the more we realize that it was a society of ministers. About the only similarity between the Church at Corinth and a contemporary congregation, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, is that both are marked to a great degree, by the presence of sinners. After that the similarity ends, for we think it is normal for one man to do all the preaching, while the others are audience, whereas, in Corinth, many did the preaching. ‘When you come together,’ reported their most famous visitor, ‘each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.’”

SCHOLARLY STATURE

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Here is the divinely-ordained goal of the equipping ministry. It is the ideal of the Father for all of His children. The original for “till” does not necessarily relate to time. It may designate the summit or peak, the highest point reached. But the word which must be emphasized in this verse is *all*. “Till we all

come.” This is the reason for training everyone.

An army is not strong just because it has a handful of outstanding fighters. A football team is not likely to win if only the quarterback and fullback have received coaching. The function of evangelists and shepherds is to train a team, to adapt the saints to the work of ministry so that all will be welded together as a unit in faith and knowledge of the Son. In his book *The Church and The Churches* W. E. Vine writes, “The ‘we all’ signifies all believers as a body, the complete company.”

It is not enough to have a few leading citizens in the kingdom of heaven who are conversant with the dynamic of faith and living in conformity with the character of Jesus. It is not enough to have a few branches in the vine bearing fruit or a few organs of the body functioning properly. A perfect man is a mature man, one who is capable of performing adequately and skillfully in any field in which he may be called to serve. It takes every member of the body to make a complete man. God has no plan for non-functioning members in the body. Complete development is defined as “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

We have developed false standards of measurement. Sometimes we measure by the number of people who enter our structures for “the body count.” Sometimes we gauge strength by the amount of “this world’s goods” in the congregational bank deposit. Sometimes we use as a measuring-rod the number of men in the mission field whom we support. None of these are the criteria of God. Only our growth toward the stature of the fulness of Christ really counts. In attaining this every person contributes the share made possible by the divine gift. How we employ our gifts in ministering determines the strength and vitality of the body.

SAFETY FROM DECEPTION

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Here is another reason for training every saint, for establishing every one in the faith, and instructing every one about the character of God’s Son. The untrained and ignorant, the immature and untaught, become the victims of deception. We are to be like children in some respects, but in understanding we are to be men. Knowledge is the best armor against delusion, the best weapon against error. To send our brethren into the world untaught is to send them forth naked against the sophisticated wiles of the wicked one.

It is not a sin to be ignorant but it is a sin to remain thus. It is not wrong to be a child but it is not right to continue to be one when you could grow up. The term “tossed to and fro” was applied by the Greeks to ocean waves. Anyone who has stood on the beach and watched the breakers knows the instability and restlessness which characterizes them. There are individuals who are victims of every passing fancy and fad. They are influenced by bizarre doctrines and fanciful opinions and speculations. They are not really “here today and gone tomorrow,” because sometimes they are not even here today!

The expression “carried about with every wind” was used to describe a ship without a helm, in a storm at sea. Such a vessel cannot keep a definite course. It is at the mercy of every gust sweeping violently over the ocean. Doctrines are referred to as wind because they have power to move men in a certain direction. They can carry the minds of men along with them. Albert Barnes says on this passage, “No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire confidence or be happy, and the first aim of every convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth.”

Children are often governed by whim or impulse. Their

attention span is very short and extremely limited. Every fleeting thought sends them off on a new track. One of the reasons for developing the saints is to give them a foundation upon which to build and to protect them from being swept from their moorings. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare wrote, “He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat.” Faith that is as fickle as fashion will accomplish but little toward the stability of mankind.

The word “sleight” is extremely interesting. It is from *kubeia*, a cube, and refers to dice used in games of chance. It is intended to condemn the idea of regulating actions, conduct or life by opinions which result from chance. Human behavior cannot be decided by drawing straws, or by rolling dice. Men who seek the guidance of God by opening the Bible at random, rather than through diligent study and prayer, should give thought to the implications of this statement. There is an English proverb which says, “The best throw of the dice is to throw them away.”

“Craftiness” is from *panourgia*. This is a combined form consisting of *pan*, all, and *ergon*, work. It is literally “all-working.” It refers to one who works all of the angles, one who knows all the tricks of the trade. There are cunning men who seek to make merchandise of souls. Such men have a field day when they move into an area where people are emotional without being too rational, and where they make up in enthusiasm what they lack in knowledge. An informed congregation is a safer congregation. Charlatans shy away from those who know the Book and are trained for spiritual combat. The truth can make us free only when we are not free from the truth.

SPEAKING ACCEPTABLY

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all

things, which is the head, even Christ.”

The first six words specify an action, *speaking*; a subject, *the truth*; and an attitude, *in love*. The next eight words specify the object of the action, the result to be achieved. The truth must not be bottled up or kept in a mental container. It is to be shared. Silence is not always golden. Sometimes it is yellow. The philosophic Amien said, “Truth is not only violated by falsehood; it may be equally outraged by silence.” Emerson declared, “The greatest homage we can do to truth is to use it.”

I think that, in this context, the truth is used in contrast to the winds of doctrine, the decisions of chance, and the frantic activities of cunning craftiness. The last word in verse 14 is *deceive*. It is said that some “lie in wait” to deceive. This means they conceal themselves and their true motives. The alternative to this is openly to speak the truth. Only when we substitute truth for deception can we help our brethren grow. Years ago I read from the pen of someone and copied down for my own meditation these words, “Error always addresses the passions and prejudices: truth scorns such mean intrigue, and only addresses the understanding and the conscience.” Unity must be based upon reality and verity, which is what truth meant to the Asians whom Paul addressed in this letter we call the epistle to the Ephesians.

Of course, truth must be spoken in well-chosen words, and in kindness and concern. But I do not think that is what is meant here. Love has to do with the condition of heart rather than with the choice of words. Love is the realm in which God’s children operate, the kind of a life into which they have been called. In view of this they should speak the truth in love for each other. One does not deceive those whom he loves.

Verse 13 treats of spiritual manhood. Verse 14 deals with unnatural and prolonged childhood. The transition from one state to another is a matter of growth. Sometimes growth is

lopsided. There are those who grow in some areas while in others they are deficient. God's design is that we advance in every department of life and in all things. We have already learned that our goal is the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is Jesus who must be our constant pattern. "More like the Master," should be our song and our dream.

We should not forget that this entire treatise of the apostle has to do with the "edifying of the body of Christ" (verse 12). It is for this all of the saints must be trained, fitted, adapted or equipped. It is for this that every gift has been given. No gift is to be used in solitude. No gift is to be used in isolation. All individual growth is for the purpose of encouraging body growth. But the body has a head, and it is that head into whom we must all grow up. Growth apart from Jesus is useless. The head is perfect, but we are not! The head is mature, but we are not! It is as we keep Him in mind and seek to reproduce His life that we constitute the body and contribute to the growth of this divine organism. No one who reveres Jesus will show disrespect for the body. He loved it and gave Himself for it!

SERVING THE BODY

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Study that verse carefully! It is the divine formula for body growth. It is God's recipe for the increase of the organism for which Jesus shed His blood. It can be stated as an equation. *Unity plus togetherness plus work plus increase equals edification.* The apostle starts with the whole body. It is true that we are joined to Jesus individually, but being joined to him, we are one body. I am one in Christ with every saved person on this earth. I am not joined to Jesus because I am joined to my brethren, but I

am joined to my brethren because I am joined to Jesus.

We are not one because we share the same opinions, ideas, views or insights. We are one because we have been joined to one Lord. William Barclay writes, "A church where social and class distinctions exist is no true church at all. A real church is a body of men and women united to each other because all are united to Christ." Again, in another connection, he says, "We ought to realize that we need each other. There can be no such thing as isolation in the church. Far too often what happens is that people in the church become so engrossed in the work they are doing, so convinced of the supreme importance of the side of the work to which they have given themselves, that they neglect or even criticize others who have chosen to do other work. If the church is to be a healthy body we need the work that everyone can do."

Lesslie Newbigin writes in his book *The Household of God*, these words, "The unity of believers with Christ and with one another in Him is of a far deeper nature than intellectual agreement. It is not in its essential nature an intellectual agreement at all though necessarily it involves a certain amount of intellectual agreement about truths which can be expressed in propositional form . . . Within that unity a vast amount of intellectual disagreement is possible, though such disagreement will never be other than painful. It is never to be acquiesced in, and believers must always be seeking to convince one another of the truth as they see it, and learn from one another. But it can be borne when the Holy Spirit binds believers together in love, and it is made bearable by the assurance that one day we shall know as we have been known. The true character of this union of believers with one another in Christ is disastrously distorted when it is conceived of essentially in terms of doctrinal agreement. The effect of such distortion is to break the Christian fellowship into rival parties, each based upon some one-sided doctrinal formulation."

Another modern writer, an Oriental possessed of a keen analytical mind, whose name is Kokichi Kurosaki, in his book *One Body in Christ*, writes, “However, the reformers did not stop with separation from Rome; for having broken free from its bondage, they made their own institutional church. Then, almost immediately there appeared differences of opinion among them, and having learned well the lesson of sectarianism from the mother of that spirit, they now believed themselves to be the defenders of the true faith. Their only recourse to difference of opinion was separation, so there started an endless principle of division.”

It is the whole body that is joined to the head, and not merely one faction, party or sect. If one is in Christ he is in the one body regardless of what else he may be in. And I receive him not because he has joined something else, but because he is joined to Christ. God joins men to the divine organism and sometimes they join themselves to something else. I deplore the “something else” regardless of what it is. I do not receive any person because of that to which he belongs, but because of the One to whom he belongs.

“Fitly joined together.” This is from a word which originally meant to sew together, as one would take pieces of a dress or coat and fit them into their proper places and bind them to each other. It was used of ancient cabinetmakers who could join pieces of wood so skillfully that inspectors could hardly detect the line of juncture. It was often applied in the classics to musicians who played together in harmony. Harmony cannot be made by sawing away at a fiddle with one string. Harmony is produced by divergent instruments tuned to play in unison. An orchestra, like a congregation of saints, is an example of unity in diversity, the only kind of unity available to the created universe, as the critics of it aptly demonstrate.

“Compacted” is from a term which literally means “knit together.” There is a difference in knitting things together and in

sewing them or pasting them together. A lot of brethren are merely stuck together. When problems arise they come unglued. Knitting requires interlacing or interlocking in a sense of interdependence. I am not merely tied to my brethren. I am knit together with them. If I pull away from them I might unravel the whole fabric of fellowship to which God has called us. My task is to strengthen our hold upon one another, regardless of how weak or frayed the thread may be.

Since I no longer receive people because they agree with me, I have been delivered from loving only those who are in a certain faction, or do things a certain way. Admittedly some of them are difficult. Every family has problem children. God's family has a lot of them. But they are real tests of the genuineness and sincerity of the relationship. When brethren write me up, and some of them do almost every week, I read carefully what they say. If it is true, I make corrections in my life so I can be more like Jesus. If it is not true, I forget it and go on and love them anyhow. It wasn't too long ago that I was bitter and factious, and thought I best served the Father by being hostile to His other children. Martin Luther said, "Give men time."

Congregations will not be held together by preachers and elders. Even some elders cannot hold together. If the brethren do not love one another more than they revere their opinions and speculations and interpretations, all of the preachers on earth cannot keep them together. They will sacrifice what they love least for what they love most. If they love their brainchildren more than they love God's children, they will kill God's children to protect their brainchildren. *Joint* is from a word meaning to bind, fasten or secure. The body is knit together by that which *every joint* supplies. Every Christian is a joint, a supplier of strength and solidarity.

Working is the Greek *energeia*, our English word energy. The energy is in every part, every organ of the body. If there is

an energy shortage in the body it is because some of the brethren are “laying down on the job.” No member is useless. All are necessary. Every person who has had the patience to read this far, and who is not asleep, must realize that he is a vital part of God’s program for conquest of the world. I confess that I do not have a brother or sister I can afford to lose. If they are in Him, they are where I am. And I love them, even if they cannot love themselves.

Increase of the body! What a glorious thought! *Edifying of itself in love.* What a transcendent principle! Please forgive me for quoting again from the pen of William Barclay. “Jesus Christ is no longer in this world in the body; and therefore if he wants a task done for him, he has to find a man to do it. If he wants a child taught, he has to find a teacher to teach him. If he wants a sick person cured, he has to find a physician or surgeon to do the work. If he wants his story told, he has to find a man to tell it. Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do his work, feet to run upon his errand, a voice to speak for him . . . Here is the supreme glory of the Christian man— he is part of the body of Christ upon earth.”

If it doesn’t bore you too much I would like to close with a statement from Elton Trueblood. Read the last sentence carefully. It may form the basis of what I write about in the next issue.

“The notion that the professional minister’s main job is that of the conduct of public worship is something which we must destroy if we are to get ready for a larger and more fruitful team ministry . . . We must understand that, whereas public worship is important, it is important only as the beginning of a total process. The matter of chief importance is the steady continuous ministry of all the members, and the chief function of the pastor is to help people get ready for this ministry . . . The congregation must, accordingly, be reconstructed into the pattern of a small theological seminary with the pastor as

professor.”

Time for Change

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[Abstract]

I suspect the hardest thing for most of us to do is to change. It is easier to stay in a rut than to get out of it. When I was a “boy preacher” in North Missouri there were no hard-surfaced roads. The soil was gumbo, which meant that it literally rolled up in the wheels of a Model-T Ford, until you had to stop periodically and dig it out with a spade, or it would make progress impossible. When a heavy rain came, or the spring thaw began, no one even thought of going to town until after the mail carrier had made his run and cut a rut. You could then get in that rut and go to town almost without steering. The only thing that took your mind off your grocery list was the need for constant prayer that you’d not meet some “eager beaver” who didn’t know enough to stay home until the weather cleared up.

I remember one “character” whom I knew as a lad. One reason I recall him so vividly is that he scared the living daylights out of us. He was a big red-faced, raw-boned country type with a black handlebar moustache. We didn’t have policemen with which to threaten the children in those days so they threatened that he would get us if we didn’t watch out. We watched out! He was a tyrant to his family. He browbeat his haggard and bedraggled looking wife who had long since reached the conclusion that resistance was impossible.

His son ran away from home at an early age. The two

daughters eloped and married when each was barely sixteen. Once, when the schoolteacher could no longer bear the thought of brutality toward the family, he risked going to the man's home to talk with him about changing his attitude. He got nowhere. He reported that the man said, "I don't want to change. I intend to have my way and go on just like I am until I die. You live like you want to live and I will do the same." He did just that! One morning when he did not come in for breakfast his wife went to look for him. She found him slumped into a heap at the back of the barn. His nerveless fingers still gripped the handle of the revolver with which he had blown out his brains. He committed suicide rather than make a change.

If it is hard for an individual to alter his course, it is even more difficult for an institution to do so. Traditions grow up which throttle it. Men become entrenched in power. They feel that they are indispensable. Influence blocs, chiefly concerned with monetary support, develop and successfully resent all reformation. If an intrepid crusader arises, he is quickly squelched. He is branded as a liberal, identified with all kinds of ideas which have "shock value" to keep the manipulated masses from ever reading what he is really saying. Party hacks take the platform to assail him from the safety of a rostrum to which he has no access, and thus assure that no original thinking is ever brought to bear upon the sect.

Few of my readers within the so-called "restoration movement" would deny the validity of what I say when applied to what they quaintly refer to as "the sectarian world." They know these charges are true when applied to Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Methodists. They deplore the fact that these structural organizations cannot be altered to become like "the Lord's church," a term they love to chew on like bubble-gum, and which they fondly apply only to themselves. But they bitterly resent any person who dares to imply they are equally guilty, and in dire need of making radical changes to become what Jesus intended for His spiritual body to really be.

I not only intend to *imply* that. I want to openly, frankly and candidly say it! We may even be the worst offenders. A non-sectarian sect is often the worst in the litter. We took a noble concept, enunciated by brilliant, peace-loving men, mostly Presbyterians, and we have mauled and hammered it into a conglomerate of narrow, intolerant factions, all of which we lump together in *The System* which we fondly call the “Church of Christ.” Not one of these parties rallying around its tribal standard is the body of Christ, and all of them put together do not constitute that body in its fulness. There are members of the body in all of them, for which I praise God. I also praise God that there are members of the body who are in none of them.

I no longer confuse *The System* which we have envolved with that marvelous spiritual organism which He created and for which the Son shed His blood. Each of our parties is composed of those who elevate some concept of truth above relationship with Him who is the Truth. Each faction has argued, debated and emphasized some aspect, opinion or deduction, into such prominence, that it has become the party totem, and the spiritual integrity of men is judged by their willingness to bow the knee to the decisions and delineations of the factional “powers that be.” Each party has its own “somewhats” and these call the shots, determine the policy, and ruin those who will not “play ball.” There is really no exception, because this is the fruit of the party spirit, and all parties are created by that spirit.

This is not to say that every faction in “the restoration movement” operates in the same fashion. In some parties the leadership is blunt, brutal and arrogant, exercising dominion through blatant threat and innuendo. In other factions the leadership is smooth, suave and political, manipulating the masses by cleverness and sweetness. The net result is the same. The party is resistant to change. It is under the domination of men who can pull the strings and get anything they want. Under a false facade of “local autonomy” the non-instrument Churches

of Christ are really dominated by powerful leaders who have been elevated into prominence by being directors of all kinds of related institutions. Our brethren are not a theocracy or a Christocracy. They are governed by *editorcracy*— rule by editors! They are forced to goosestep to the tune banged out on printing presses in party headquarters, and woe be to him who marches to the sound of another trumpet!

I trust you will not allow your dander to rise or get in a big dither, and tell me I have done a grave injustice by creating a stereotype. I know there are exceptions to the rule in every one of our two dozen factions. One reason we do not know how many there are is because they have to stay underground. If the party ever gets the idea they are “liberal on fellowship” the roof will fall in on them. There are faculty members in all of the schools who have a vision beyond our narrow pale. There are preachers in many pulpits whose spirits chafe because they must conform to dogmatic and arbitrary elders, some of whom are still living in the nineteenth century milieu.

I also know there are congregations, God be thanked, which have resolved to be free in Christ Jesus. They can listen to anyone they wish to hear. They can even invite me to come and speak. When they do, some of the “local autonomy folk” in other congregations come over and tell them that they are making a cruel mistake, and will end up divided and split to smithereens. They tell them I have divided churches all over the country and have taken a post-graduate course in how to fracture factions. They always end up admitting they have never met me, heard me, or read a thing I have written. But their last preacher warned them against me and told them I had gone off the deep end and would “fellowship anyone.” Some of our preaching brethren cannot be trusted to report correctly the views of those with whom they differ. You have to take what they say with a twenty-five pound block of salt. A grain of salt won’t do.

There is nothing that hurts a partisan preacher more than

to have someone else invade his private bailiwick, but there are more groups of brethren all of the time who are shaking off the yoke which neither they nor their fathers have been able to bear. There are still thousands of places playing in their own backyards, and kicking up dust in their own corrals, who could not even call upon a brother to lead songs or pray to God until he first went through the party customs and immigration service and received clearance to proceed. A lot of elders scrutinize your mental baggage pretty carefully to see that you've not brought along any original thinking to be used on your pilgrimage among them. Original thinking is a dangerous weapon to the party spirit. And a lot of elders think they are watching the sheep when they are merely guarding the sacred cows!

All of this boils down to the fact that reformers are in for "a heap of trouble." The situation, however, is no worse among us than it is in other segments of the religious complex. The reason is apparent. The hard core institutional *status quo* always results from the same spirit. What the members of the institution designate it does not change its origin or nature. And the defenders of the party seldom acknowledge they were wrong in launching it and never reverse their course. Thus division is sanctified, hostility is justified, and the faction becomes petrified.

It would seem that attempts at reformation are useless and wholly wasted. This is not true. Reformation must continue, not because ponderous institutions can be changed in a lifetime, but because there are always persons in every one of them who love truth more than party shibboleths and who will catch the vision and continue the task. I was caught up in the party spirit. I was a debater for and defender of tests of fellowship which were artificially contrived to give the party being. I was wrong. It was sinful. I am sorry!

I changed. If I learn other truths I will change again. All growth involves change. You cannot learn truths you did not know without growing in grace and knowledge and you cannot

grow without changing. I have a real feeling that those of us who are heirs of what we fondly regard as “the restoration movement” need to make some real changes if we expect to survive and have any impact at all upon this intellectual age. God has not promised to keep enough people ignorant so we can “maintain our numbers.”

The fact is that every segment among us is losing its young people who are fleeing from the party image in droves. The ones who get fed up are not the careless and indifferent, but the more brilliant and perceptive. Bringing in a new professor to “parrot the party line” will not hold them. They have outgrown that kind of thing, and they do not forsake Christ. They simply resolve no longer to be confined in structures erected by men. They are all for the faith of the fathers but not too hep on the fathers of the faith. They seek to walk in the steps of the Master and are more open to the Spirit. I hold that our real hope lies with these young people who love truth more than tradition, and revere integrity more than factional fidelity.

1. *We must change our vocabulary.* Alexander Campbell knew this. He placed it at the very top of his list of goals for reformation. It is not enough to speak where the Bible speaks. We must also speak as the Bible speaks. We must make a distinction between *the gospel* which is a message to be proclaimed to an alien world, and *the apostles’ doctrine* which is a course of instruction for those who have responded to the gospel, and thus enrolled in the school of Christ. The gospel is to be announced to every creature. The doctrine is to be explained and expounded to those creatures who have “obeyed the gospel.” We are brought into the fellowship of the Father and Son through the gospel. In that fellowship we grow in grace and knowledge of the truth as we study and learn. But we do not grow up overnight, either in the fleshly or the spiritual realm. Fellowship is the fruit of faith, growth is gradual transformation in the realm of that faith. Fellowship can never be based on conformity in knowledge, and can only result from faith in and

surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord.

We must distinguish between the new covenant written on the heart by the Holy Spirit, and the new covenant scriptures written with pen and ink by apostles and prophets. As God looks at it, and as we ought to look at it, the new testament does not contain twenty-seven books at all. The new testament which the apostles ministered was not written with ink, “but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on fleshly tablets of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3-6). The “books” are not a part of the new covenant. They are love letters addressed to individuals and groups of individuals, all of whom were already in covenant relationship. They do not constitute a written code, but are directives and guidelines. Our principle of action is love, not law. We are not under law, but under grace!

2. We must change our view as to the utility of so-called church buildings or religious structures. **The primitive saints had no place uniquely dedicated to the carrying on of religious exercises. They would never have thought of erecting such a building in which to preach the gospel and try to convert the pagan world. They knew the difference between going into all of the world and trying to talk part of the world into coming to them. There is no sin in a congregation owning a house in which to gather if that congregation has a proper view of its use. There is no sin in not owning such property either, and the idea that a group can never really be “a church” until it appoints trustees and goes in debt for “property of its own” is a little bit silly.**

Meetinghouses are to be drill-grounds for the soldiers of Christ, not a battlefield on which to meet the enemy. They are to be arsenals to which we come and replenish our ammunition when we have expended all of our available firepower against the enemy. The way in which most people fight the devil a box of spiritual cartridges will last a lifetime. Meetinghouses are to be development areas for the runners in the race and not the arena in which the race is run. The arena is the world and the

spectators are not the other saints but the pagans. The Christians are not in the grandstand but on the track.

Such structures are filling stations where we come to get our batteries charged and our starters tuned up. They are places where we can get our tanks filled, although most of them have only “regular” and you cannot get a shot of high octane. You will be lucky in some places if there is no water in the regular. It is hard to put the “Go” in gospel when you are burning sermon-outline kerosene.

Our meetinghouses are company mess-halls. Here the troops gather to sit down at the table and eat and drink in memory of the Captain of our salvation. The early saints met to pray and the building was shaken. They came together to recount their victories through the Spirit and the Roman Empire was shaken. We need more meetings in which encounters may be recalled and gains consolidated. No army can ever be made an efficient fighting force by listening to weekly lectures of a lieutenant. We have confused training the force with entertaining the troops. Putting on a show at headquarters with singing and old jokes interspersed with sundry admonitions is a good way for us to become weaklings.

3. *We must revise our thinking about ministry.* Every child of God is a priest. Every disciple of Christ is a minister. This is the purpose of God. It deserves more than sickly acquiescence and pallid lipservice. To regard one man in the congregation as *the minister* is to discourage every other man from thinking of himself as a minister. If we are going to place the name of the ministers on the sign in front of the building, we ought to inscribe the whole congregational roster on it. For years we have been projecting ideas we never intend to implement. We have been espousing causes we never plan to launch. One who claims to believe in the ministry of all the saints ought to insist that he be given no special prominence. If every Christian is a minister there will be no need of getting new letterheads every time a

preacher is sent packing and a new one moves in. That will help a little in these days of paper shortage. The fact is that a lot of brethren actually believe in a special clergy system. They want to be clergymen and they want to think of the other saints as their “laymen.”

When we talk of ministry, we should include every function of every member of the body. Visiting the sick, caring for orphans, mowing the lawn, sweeping the floor, repairing the roof, singing, praying, giving to relieve needs, baking cookies to take to the children’s home— all of these are ministry and those who do them are all ministers. Whatever is done in word or deed in the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of the Father is ministry. Please put the emphasis on that *whatever!* This means there are “women ministers” in the church. In fact there are no women in the church who are not ministers.

What we have come to call “pulpit ministry” in our unscriptural jargon, may be the least effective ministry in this modern age. When I compare a lot of talks I make with the very real service being rendered by others in service stations, hospitals, homes for the aged, and other places, I feel a little ashamed. But I thank God for everyone who in any manner ministers to this ripped-off world in ways that I cannot. The man who delivers groceries may sometimes do more good than the one who delivers sermons. However, all of us must minister in every way we can and allow God to put it all together!

4. *We need to change our thinking on fellowship.* This word, which literally means “to share a common life,” as it is so aptly rendered in *The New English Bible* is too majestic and profound to be kicked around as it has been in the two dozen hostile factions of the restoration movement. Fellowship in Christ Jesus is not something we extend or withdraw. It is a state or condition created by the Holy Spirit in which we share through the amazing grace of God.

It is not to be equated with endorsement. We are in the fellowship with many who think and do things we cannot condone. We also endorse things done by many with whom we are not in the fellowship. But if God and Christ can be in the fellowship with us while we are learning, growing and changing, surely we can be in the fellowship with others caught up in the human predicament, whose ideas and opinions cut across our grain. It all depends upon whether we love our ideas more than we love our brethren. With me it is not a question of whether I shall hold to my opinions or my brethren. I intend to hold to both, and I trust my brethren will do the same.

We are in the fellowship because we are in Christ, not because we are in agreement upon everything. To postulate fellowship upon conformity is to make it impossible for human beings. It is to lay the foundation for division rather than unity. A century of sordid strife should be enough to demonstrate that the prescription for oneness we have advocated was not written by the Great Physician. We have had only one remedy when differences arise and that is debate. We have had only one recourse when debate fails and that is division. But both debate and division are condemned as works of the flesh by the Holy Spirit. After a hundred years of debating we have just as many factions as we have always had. We have never debated a faction out of existence.

5. *We must change our emphasis on the motto we have proclaimed.* We borrowed that motto from a philosopher who lived centuries ago, but we have battered it into a meaningless mass by our carnal and ungodly wranglings. There is merit in repeating, "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; and in all things, charity." The first two have relevance for promoting harmony only when considered in the light of the third. Though I meticulously distinguish between faith and opinion, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Not all things are matters of faith. Not all things are matters of opinion. But all things must be dealt with in love for those who hold them, or this

motto is so much poppycock. Not only must I deal with things of faith and opinion in love, but I must also do the same with the earnest attempt of every individual to relate matters to these categories.

Love will not allow me to impose my concept of faith upon another man's realm of opinion. The moment I attempt to do that there is at least one thing in which love is not my arbiter. I thus change the rules of the game to suit my own thinking. Even in gambling it is not considered fair to load the dice. What this means, of course, is that I must be forbearing with one who does not share my view about some of the distinctions. But I am commanded to do that. I am to be forbearing of others in love. Forbearance simply means to make allowance for another, so making allowance is the way of love. This means I must be tolerant of those who differ with me in opinion, and even as to what is a matter of opinion. Tolerance is not the endorsing of anything that is wrong. It is simply the enduring of one who thinks it is right.

If I hold the opinion that a thing is a matter of faith, and another holds the opinion that it is a matter of opinion, love will not allow us to divide from each other. If we do we will not divide over a matter of faith, but over our opinion as to whether it is a matter of faith. We must at least remain together until we can both decide into which category it must be placed. If we do so we will never divide, for if we reach agreement we will be in unity. If we never decide we can continue to discuss it and work together until Jesus comes. Then everything will be made plain. But if we are like the unrighteous servant who began to abuse and beat his fellows because his lord delayed his coming, we will have no peace now, and will have none then.

Our relationship to God is individual. I must determine for myself what is a matter of faith and what is a matter of opinion. I must do this by personal application of my mind and heart to the revelation of God. I cannot surrender my right or freedom to

interpret the Bible for myself to any creed, clergy or clique. I am a firm believer in the right of private interpretation of the scripture. If I must answer for my thinking up there I will do it down here. No man or group of men on this earth will formulate my conviction. I will live with my conviction and according to it, and not allow it to be dictated by any party, segment or sect. I intend to be motivated by love for truth as I formulate my way of life under the lordship of Jesus, and motivated by love for all others who do the same.

I have mentioned changes which I consider long overdue in the particular movement of which we are heirs. Will that movement change? Will the splintered, fragmented, ripped-off, non-instrument Church of Christ change? There is no way of changing it as a unit because it is not a unit. Although each of the two-dozen or more parties has a loosely-regarded headquarters— a school, an editorial base, or a propaganda center— there is no national or international headquarters. Praise God for that! The Church of Christ is both congregational and partisan. The only way this modern complexity of factional cells can change is as thoughtful men in each party are changed.

That is happening! Brethren are being forced to examine anew the dogmatic and authoritarian structures in which they are trapped. Popery always works its own rebuke, whether manifested in a universal pontiff or on a local level by despotic preachers and power-hungry elders. The various parties in the movement have been often dominated by petty tyrants, but these are fast losing control. Perceptive professors in the colleges, promising preachers in the pulpits, and more erudite students are taking a new look at our concoction of “Church of Christism” and they can no longer defend it as the will of God. They know that whether you spell church with a little “C” or a big one, it can be composed of some very unlovable characters.

It is my own candid opinion that “The Church of Christ”

in its present organizational or institutional sense cannot survive. There is no real reason why it should. Each part or faction in it prays for the demise of every other, and it just could be that all of their prayers will be answered. As it exists today, it is an organizational amalgamation of dissident groups which mistook a nineteenth century activity for a first century creation of the Spirit. But the body of Christ will survive. It is eternal and it cannot die as long as the Head is alive. He has already conquered death.

What will probably happen is that there will be a reformation of the restoration. The values that have been recaptured will be retained. The traditions which have accrued will become less valid and valuable. We will be purged and purified, and more attuned to the needs of this secularistic society with its multitudinous problems. Our brethren have contributed much to the recovery of truth. They have made the world conscious of the divisive nature of creeds. They have caught the view of the proper response to the good news. It is true that succeeding generations have not recognized the value of their heritage and have tended to erode it away, but much will remain that will be helpful in the future.

The basis of all sectism is fear. As we lose our fear and begin to cross over lines and ignore barriers, we will help to change the minds of men. The contacts will also operate to change our minds. This will be good. Perhaps all of us can some day bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ.

A Personal Visit

Mission Messenger (December 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

As I write this I am aware that we are preparing to begin our 37th year of publication with the next issue. It will be our last year. One year from now the final number of MISSION MESSENGER will be deposited on the dock of the main post office in Saint Louis and I will return home without having to read proof for the next month. It does not mean the end of my articles. The editor of another journal has asked me to write the story of my uneventful life and it will appear in monthly installments for the next couple of years. More on that later. I hope to emphasize what made me change my views about fellowship.

We will be ceasing our own publication at the height of its circulation. Almost every month in 1974 has set a new record. The paper has readers in all fifty states of our Union and goes to every continent on earth. More than 500 copies each month are sent to subscribers in far-off regions. In view of this a great many good friends write asking why we plan to stop. There are a great many reasons. I shall mention only a few of them.

1. When I began to write on fellowship and to encourage the unity of all believers in Christ, I set certain goals and planned to attain certain objectives. I knew that peace would have to be waged as others wage war and this requires a strategy. The goals I set for my own editorial life have been

reached and surpassed. I do not want to publish a paper merely for the sake of publishing. Nothing seems more useless than that. I refuse to clutter up the mails with a journal which has no purpose except to furnish entertaining reading for some brethren. The goals I now have will be better reached by writing books and by personal encounter, especially on the university campus. I am actually working on seven books!

2. There is a danger that editors will think of themselves and their journals as being indispensable. They wonder how God made it before they arrived on the scene, and how he will survive when they have crossed the Great Divide. I have no Messiah-complex. I desperately need the Father but he does not need me on earth, nor does he need MISSION MESSENGER. A lot of editors have rendered great service for a number of years and then grew older and wrecked all they had accomplished in a few remaining years of senility. They sometimes died ten years before they were buried. It was in that last ten years of editing they undid all the good of their former years. It seems to me that a wise man is one who knows when to step down and submit what he writes to other editors for their evaluation.

3. The burden of producing and processing the paper becomes ever greater. I have no secretarial help and have never had. I answer hundreds of letters every month. In addition, I fly multiplied thousands of miles annually to participate in all kinds of meetings. In the last year great new doors have been opened up which make it possible for me to share my witness in areas I never dreamed of penetrating. But Nell must work many hours each day of the week, including Saturday, just to keep abreast of things. We wrap, address, sort and prepare for mailing both books and papers in our own home. In less than a year we sent out more than 1500 copies of *The Question Box* and more than 500 copies of *Thoughts on Unity*, as a free gift to college and university students. Emily, our daughter-in-law helps wrap the single papers, and in recent months Ted and Pearle Ratliff have helped Nell sort and address the zip codes. As the number of

subscribers increases the work becomes heavier and the financial problems greatly augmented.

4. History reveals that reformatory attempts have always ended in the creation of another party. When I began writing on fellowship after more than five years of wrestling in prayer with my own inner conviction I knew what I would say would demand a reform in all of our hostile factions. I prepared to avoid formation of another sect by refusing to make the two errors which had become characteristic of previous attempts at unity within the framework of our sadly fragmented groups.

First, I refused to leave the brethren with whom I had previously associated. I did not join another group. Today I am working with the same congregations of saints in the Saint Louis area with which I have always worked. There was no split and no division. All of us made changes in our thinking and are still doing so. But we have grown together. When I made the startling change from being a recognized debater for a faction to become the advocate of receiving and recognizing all of God's children regardless of their opinions, it created a trauma for some of those with whom I had labored across our nation.

Some of them, especially the older ones, regarded me as a traitor. I was called a renegade and a Benedict Arnold. Brethren who had stayed in our home and eaten at our table felt that I had sold out to Satan because I resolved to treat all of God's children as my brothers and sisters. They did their best to sow discord among the congregations with which I was associated and sought to divide the very brethren to whom I had previously introduced them.

I outlived some of them and outloved the others. I refused to engage in debates and harangues, or to be drawn into bitter written controversy. I simply printed what they wrote, replied to it lovingly, and let my readers form their own conclusions. I loved all of those brethren then and I love them now. They

considered love as the most detrimental approach to division and I regarded it as the only dynamic to produce unity. We did not divide when problems arose. We divided when we quit loving one another. To restore unity we must recapture love.

Younger brethren in all of our factions have not generally exhibited the fierce and inflexible attitude toward sincere saints who honestly differ with them. It is my feeling that better days lie ahead of us when these brethren become leaders of thought among us. The death of some of our factional leaders and editors will herald a lessening of tension and the gradual dissipation of that form of hatred which has too long screened itself behind a facade which brethren call "love." The grave has swallowed up a lot of bitterness.

Secondly, I urged brethren to remain where they were when they learned new truths or gained new insights. This is a difficult thing to do. But to pull out and join a faction whose members already advocate the new truth, is to leave where that truth is needed and go where it is not. That is like taking the yeast out of the dough and huddling the yeast cakes together on the top shelf of the refrigerator. If one cannot love all of his brethren from where he is, he will probably not be able to love them from somewhere else. One is not factional because he is in a faction. He is not sectarian because he is in a sect, any more than he is a Russian because he is in Russia. One is sectarian because of his attitude toward truth and toward those who are not in his faction or sect.

I do not think one leaves people that he really loves. Of course if he loves only those who agree with him, every time he learns a new truth, he will have to love a new group, and hate the ones with whom he has been affiliated. But if one becomes convinced that instrumental music is not justified by the scriptures I see no reason why he should join an anti-instrument party and start assailing and attacking the brethren who put him through school and endured his ignorance until he learned

better. If a young man becomes convinced that the division over the support of the Herald of Truth propaganda medium is artificial, ill-advised and unscriptural, he neither has to join the Herald of Truth staff, nor start bitterly attacking his former teachers and professors. One can still believe a thing is without scriptural warrant and oppose forming a faction or sect over it. I think this is the position of a lot of perceptive young people in our generation. God has delivered me from the factional spirit and made it possible for me to belong only to Jesus. This is wonderful because I no longer have to persuade anyone to leave his faction and line up with one I am in. All I need to do is to lead people to Jesus. He is my everything! That is not true of any faction or segment among us.

There is always some wag who jumps up in an open forum and declares that he cannot see how I am going to promote unity by encouraging everyone to stay where he is. You certainly are not going to do it by trying to get them to come out and band together and start a “loyal church.” The quickest way to fill the earth with “unfaithful churches” is to summon the brethren to come out and start “faithful churches.” That is what got us where we are now and we have twenty-four or more loyal “Churches of Christ” whose members will not even speak to one another when they meet in the post office.

What such a “logician” overlooks is that we are already divided. We must remedy an existing situation. We simply cannot continue to divide over every opinion, for we will divide ourselves out of existence as we have already divided ourselves out of influence in many communities. Our plea for unity of believers is a big joke to our contemporaries. We must stop dividing somewhere. But we cannot correct a situation overnight which has developed over 150 years. There are too many emotional angles connected with it. We cannot look at the matter rationally because our emotions get in the way!

I propose that we freeze our division by refusing to form

another party. I have promised my God that I will never promote another party or faction. I want to be blessed and to do so I must make peace and not pieces of the body. By staying where we are and loving brethren who differ with us we will learn something we have not learned before, that is, how to maintain unity in diversity. This is the only kind of unity available to people who think. It is the only kind available to people who don't think, but because they don't think, they don't think so! The only way to have unity in conformity is for everyone to check his brains at the door and be subject to a pope. If there is no pope present, the local preacher will do in such an emergency.

But if we all stay put and love even those who do not love us, this will erode away our factions and decrease their number. Not one of the things which divide us could ever have done so until it was argued and debated into a prominence it did not deserve. For instance, it is silly for children of God, ransomed and redeemed by the blood of God's dear Son, to be split into hostile parties over the method of financing a television or radio program. They would never have become so divided if champions had not arisen, flung out challenges, devised clever and intricate schemes of legalistic argumentation, and come to regard each other as enemies of all righteousness. When the leaven of love remains in both factions, they will be tempered by it and the hostility will be abrogated so that brethren can work together in many areas even when they cannot do so in all.

I do not want MISSION MESSENGER to stay around long enough so that it comes to be regarded as a mouthpiece for a "school of thought." I do not belong to such a school. I intend to do my own thinking and I intend to let all of my brethren do theirs. I expect to answer to God for what I think and not to any person on earth. I am afraid of schools of thought because they attract too many who do not think. So we will gently chloroform the paper at the apex of its strength and let it expire gently in the arms of those who gave it birth and nurtured it through good

times and bad.

We have been besieged by brethren who want the paper to continue. Several have volunteered to “take it off our hands” if we will give it to them. A few have offered to buy it. It will not be given away and it will not be sold. I guess I have never really thought of it as a paper. It is more like an extension of the life of Nell and myself. When we began, our children were still at home. We gathered around the dining room table and addressed the two hundred copies by hand, dividing the task between the four of us. Now we have three grandchildren in university and another finishing high school, and their grandmother addresses more than eight thousand copies every month on an Elliott System addressing machine. And we still feel as close to our readers as we did when there was a mere handful of them.

The paper is just not for sale, and neither is the mailing list. It is a great one, containing names of brethren in every segment of the restoration movement at home and abroad, and scores of names of avid readers in other religious backgrounds. The paper is read by Catholic seminarians and by Baptist seminarians. It is read by men prominent in the Mennonite and Methodist parties. But I would as soon sell the names and addresses of my grandchildren as the mailing list. We regard it as a sacred trust. Brethren appear on it because they subscribed for MISSION MESSENGER and not something else! If they want something else they can subscribe for it personally.

We will face our greatest financial crisis this year. The paper must be mailed out every month but there will be little income since most subscriptions will have been paid in advance. It would frighten some of you to know how much it costs to print and mail the paper each month. But we are going to keep the rate at one dollar per year. I want to finish the thirty-seventh year knowing we have never raised the price of the paper.

One dollar does not even begin to pay for getting the paper

to a subscriber for a year. It has not done so for several years. But we have never ended a year in debt. As I write this all of our bills have been paid and we are ready to enter 1975 without owing a cent. This results from regular and occasional sharing of saints who believe in what we are doing. They contribute generously to share with us. We never print their names. They are known only to the Father in heaven and to Nell and myself on earth. I fervently pray that their generosity will be rewarded by the God of all grace. Without their assistance we could never have survived.

We have never taken one cent of subscription money for our own use. We employ surplus funds to send free books to college and university students. In the past few years we have mailed out more than 2500 such volumes, even paying for the wrapping and mailing costs. It is our hope that after we are gone, men and women will be able to take down from their library shelves the books we gave them when they were in school, and recall that they were sent as a token of our love.

If your subscription will expire before next December we hope you will send a dollar now and guarantee that it will continue to the end. We will not be able to notify you of expiration dates as in the past because it is too costly a process. If you send a dollar now you will have no worry. If you send more than that we will seek to use it to the glory of God. It might be a good idea to put your children and grandchildren on the reading list for the last year of the paper. Perhaps you'd like to subscribe for a group of brethren at a dollar per year. If God allows us to live we guarantee that you'll receive the paper for twelve months, although it is understood that if either Nell or I depart to be with the Lord, the paper will cease. Neither of us could publish it without the other!

The subject for 1975 will be *One in Christ*. At the end of the year all of the issues will be bound together in a beautiful clothbound volume under that title. There will only be two

thousand copies of the book available and they will not last long. We do not know what the price will be but we promise you it will be as low as we can make it. If you want to reserve one or more copies in advance you may do so and we will enclose an invoice with the books. We urgently suggest that you not wait too long to make your reservation, for these books will become more valuable as time goes on.

It is my intention to write on unity and fellowship with a sense of urgency and destiny. In a fragmented brotherhood this is imperative. You need not concur with what I write to be revered and loved as a brother or sister in Him “whom having not seen we love.” But I do hope you will read what I say. I will write honestly and freely. I will love you whether you can concur or not. I am convinced that what I shall write is true. Some day the partisan spirit will be dissipated. What we are saying now will be generally accepted then. I am content to leave the verdict to history.

We are deeply grateful to those who have held up our hands in the year that is now fading away. We could not have made it without your help. It is just that simple. We eagerly trust that God will bless and enrich you for the sacrifice you have made. What a thrill it is to be a part of the majestic family with all of you. Please pray for us!

In a very few weeks the book *Pure Speech* containing every issue of the paper for 1974 will be ready for mailing. If you have not ordered yours we trust you will do so now. As soon as it is ready we will mail your copy and you can then return the enclosed invoice with your check. A good many brethren feel that what was said about the clergy system is worth reading again.

Another Gospel

Mission Messenger (December 1974)

Volume 36

[Abstract]

Recently, while driving home at night I was listening to one of the brethren on my car radio. His theme was based upon Paul's concern for the Galatians who had so quickly turned away from the one who called them by grace, unto a different gospel. The brother labeled every concept which differed with the unwritten creed of his particular brand of Church of Christism as "another gospel." It was apparent that the faction to which he belonged constituted the only group left on this planet who had not perverted the gospel.

In a distant state where I was conducting an open forum three men showed up recently to try and create a little havoc. They accused everyone else who was present for the occasion of preaching another gospel. Those who used instrumental music in conjunction with their public expressions of praise were preaching another gospel. Those who interpreted Revelation 20 to imply that Jesus would return before the millennium were preaching another gospel. Those who testified that they had received some special gift of the Spirit were preaching another gospel.

I am getting quite used to that. When I was in California not too long ago a good old soul came to see me and plead with me to use my influence to rescue those who used individual containers in conjunction with the Lord's Supper from thereby

advocating another gospel. I have a letter here now from a brother in Oklahoma affirming that I ought to come out from among those who have Sunday Schools, and touch not the unclean thing, because the Sunday School is another gospel.

All of these brethren, regardless of their sincerity, demonstrate a special kind of ignorance not exhibited in any other part of the religious realm known to me. They are ignorant of the nature and content of the gospel of Christ. They are ignorant of the situation in Galatia to which Paul addressed himself, and they are ignorant of what he meant by the term “another gospel.” When I use the term ignorant I am not trying to be especially critical or recriminatory. I state it merely as a fact, in passing.

The gospel is good news. The good news announced to the Galatians by the apostle was that “the blessing of Abraham should in Christ Jesus be extended to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (3:14). It was this which delivered them from the written code of the law and set them free from the galling yoke of slavery. When Paul speaks of “the truth of the gospel” in this letter he is not referring to the veracity or integrity of the message. *The truth* means the basic, elemental, foundational principle upon which the gospel is predicated. It is the core, the center, the kernel of the gospel. It is what makes the message gospel. The context shows that *the truth* of the gospel is justification by faith.

Justification, as Paul uses the term, is not by faith and something else. It is by faith in Christ and nothing else! But there were “sham-Christians, interlopers who had stolen in to spy upon the liberty we enjoy in the fellowship of Christ Jesus” (2:4). These could not stand the message of righteousness by faith in Christ Jesus. They had to bring the believers under law. They insisted upon circumcision so they could glory in the flesh. Paul said, “These men wanted to bring us into bondage, but not for one moment did I yield to their dictation!”

The gospel is a definitive message. It is the good news of what God has done in reconciling and redeeming us, proclaimed to an alien world to bring men into a rich relationship with God through the Spirit. Certainly the Galatian letter was not part of the gospel message. By the time it was written the Galatians had already accepted the gospel and turned from it. They had received the Spirit by believing the gospel message (3:2). The letter was written not to bring them into relationship with the Spirit but to encourage them to continue to walk in the Spirit “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (5:25). Acceptance of the gospel brings the Spirit as God’s gift to dwell in our bodies, guidance by epistles such as the letter to the Galatians enables the Spirit to direct our course.

Being circumcised was of no consequence, and not being circumcised was of no consequence. “Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is new creation” (6:15). That is not all that counts with a lot of brethren. With some being a new creation doesn’t count at all. The question is not “What think you of Christ?” but how do you stand on Pat Boone? One did not hold another gospel merely because he was circumcised. He advocated another gospel only when he affirmed that circumcision was necessary for justification, that is, to assume a right relationship with God. “Now certain persons who had come down from Judea began to teach the brotherhood that those who were not circumcised in accordance with Mosaic practice could not be saved” (Acts 15:1). That was another gospel. It predicated salvation upon another principle than absolute trust in Jesus Christ.

One can be mistaken about a lot of things without perverting the gospel. Faulty understanding of some point of doctrine, a warped view of interpretation of an apostolic passage — these in no sense constitute another gospel. One does not preach another gospel by expressing an opinion in favor of the use of instrumental music unless he hinges salvation or justification upon its use. The same thing holds true for an

opinion relative to charismatic gifts or the millennium. Whatever view you hold about cups, classes, or colleges, has nothing to do with the gospel. Those who are not free in Christ to make mistakes are not free at all.

Men upon both sides of all these issues we have mentioned have obeyed the same gospel. They all proclaim the same gospel. To accuse one of advocating another gospel because he disagrees with your position upon one of these items, or all of them, speaks much more forcibly about your ignorance than about his. The one who is in danger of projecting another gospel is the one who makes fellowship dependent, not upon our relationship to God through the Spirit, but upon agreement with his faction upon some point of theological deduction. The gospel of “an anti-instrument position” as the hope of righteousness is as dangerous as a gospel of circumcision for the same reason.

We have all kinds of modern “circumcision parties” which say, “Except ye do this” or “Except ye do that” you cannot be saved. It is the binding of such exceptions which creates a perverted gospel. My position was best enunciated by a former president of Harding College. “I am resolved to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.” I want to be with all who are saved, and I expect to be. I care not one thing for any partisan flag waving over an exclusivistic rampart. My hope is in Christ Jesus. I began in the Spirit and I have no intention of trying to be made perfect in the flesh.

Many of my brothers in the Lord Jesus are mistaken in some of their deductions and opinions. They obviously feel that I am also. But we are not proclaiming another gospel. We proclaim faith in Christ Jesus who is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is time that we all outgrew our petty childishness based upon traditions received from our fathers. The world has no place for bickering sects and fighting factions. It is time to close ranks and get on with the real job for which

the new creation was created!

MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS (1975)

Volume 37

One In Christ

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The Longest Prayer

Mission Messenger (January 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

I am sure you will think the poorest way in the world to begin a new year of writing is with a confession. So I am starting 1975 in the poorest way in the world. I confess I had no intention of writing this article. Mentally I had decided on my theme for the year, *One in Christ*, and had developed a vague idea of the format. This article was not part of it. But every time I prepared to write, the prayer of Jesus which John recorded intruded on my thoughts. Finally I gave in and here I am writing on the longest prayer recorded in the new testament scriptures.

It seemed to me, as I meditated, that John 17 was the proper launching pad from which to get my thought capsule on unity into orbit. With the shadow of the cross falling over his pathway, Jesus prayed for the oneness of all who believed in him. He conditioned the acceptance of his divine mission by the world upon the unity of those who had accepted him. The frightful cost of our division is a lost world. We must decide whether we can continue the luxury of disunity and pay the price of a lost world which he loved.

There was another thing which prompted me to write. For years I put that glorious prayer through our partisan meat-grinder, pulverizing and molding it to suit our own trivial factional ends. I mistakenly equated the oneness which comes from the belief of apostolic testimony about Jesus with

conformity to our opinions, interpretations and theological hangups. Looking back I can see that I actually promoted strife while proclaiming peace, and severed the bond created through his blood, by debating brethren who were as belligerent as myself. The fact that I am ashamed of the kind of ignorance which made variant views in Christ more important than the relationship created by Christ needs to be told lest others fall into the same condemnation.

John did not divide his record of the Word who became flesh into chapters and verses. But the chapter which we call seventeen begins with these words:

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made."

This beautiful petition was not isolated from life. It followed naturally after other words which Jesus had spoken. He had conversed with his disciples about his coming death and assured them, "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace." To the Jewish mind the word *shalam*, peace, meant oneness, wholeness, completeness. It was the result of harmonious relationship. The purpose of Jesus in speaking to those who loved him was to convince them that wholeness of personality is achieved only in him. The man outside of Jesus is like a jig-saw puzzle with the parts missing. His moral conduct may be excellent. His filial associations may be commendatory. But there will always be a flaw which will not permit the picture of life to be perfected until that which is lacking is supplied. No one who is not conscious of God's forgiveness and declaration of

guiltlessness ever knows true peace. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” By faith! Through Christ!

Jesus said, “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Tribulation is from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. It is the flail which separates the chaff from the wheat. Jesus did not promise the faithful they would not undergo tribulation. He promised them they would. Every apostle of his, except the writer of this record, suffered cruel death for his faith. The writer was subjected to brutal punishment and eventual exile. Our good cheer comes not from our ability to escape persecution, but from consciousness that we are in one who is triumphant over the alienated world which inflicts it. We shall overcome because he has overcome. If you believe that, be of good cheer!

It is in this frame of reference Jesus utters this remarkable prayer in which he says so much about the relationship of his followers to the world, and then petitions so earnestly for their relationship to one another in him. Our unity is important not as an end in itself, but because we are in the world. The world hates the disciples of Christ because they are not of it, even as Jesus Christ is not of it (verse 14). If the disciples exhibit lovelessness toward one another, the world accepts them as being of it. The world will never believe until we exhibit before it a oneness in spite of our human propensities and predicament, which transcends all frailties, weaknesses and differences.

Jesus has handed the world a measuring-rod and said, “Take this and use it to judge those who claim to be my disciples.” The world has a right to wield that yardstick. The criterion is not one of superior knowledge or of doctrinal correctness. It is simply love for one another. If we love only those who love us we are no better off than publicans or social outcasts.

For years I read this majestic chapter without noticing the emphasis upon glory. The word “glorify” appears five times. The word “glory” appears three times. The glory which God gave Christ he gave to the disciples so that they could become perfectly one. There is a relationship between glory and oneness. I did not know that. It was not part of my sermon outline. I am glad I know it now. There wasn’t a lot of glory in the way I taught it.

The hour has come! It had not come when he did the first of his signs at Cana in Galilee (John 2:4). It had not come when they sought to arrest him personally and prematurely (7:30). It had not come when he openly taught in the temple treasury (8:20). But when certain Greeks came and said to Philip, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,” he knew it was near and spoke of a grain of wheat dying that it might produce much fruit (12:23). Now he begins this prayer to the Father with this simple announcement.

It would have been incongruous for anyone else to speak of glorification in connection with a cross. To the Jew crucifixion represented a curse. To the Greeks it was a frightful scandal. Only Jesus could be glorified by this instrument of torture, the most degrading one man has ever invented. He turned a badge of shame into an emblem of honor. Every nation awards to its heroes a cross as a symbol of valor. Institutions of mercy emblazon it upon their banners. Religious groups crown the spires and turrets of their cathedrals with it. Men and women wear it as an ornament. Constantine declared that he saw the words “*In hoc signo vinces*” (In this sign conquer) flashing in the skies, and the Roman eagle gave way to the cross.

The hour had come to turn apparent defeat into victory, disaster into triumph, and shame into glory. Jesus asked to be glorified, not for himself, but that he might glorify the Father. He did not seek justification or vindication. He had already been given power over all flesh. Man, in his frailty, weakness, and fear, had been placed under the authority of the Son. And the

Son would glorify, exalt and magnify the Father who was the source of all authority by giving eternal life to all who had been given unto him.

There follows the divine definition of eternal life. In my childish ignorance I thought of eternal life like an old-line insurance policy which one had to die to collect. I know better now. Eternal life is not so much a quantity as a quality of existence. It is trust rather than time, dedication rather than duration, and consecration rather than mere continuance. It is life more abundant, not life simply extended. It is not measured by years but by yielding. What is eternal life? Listen to Jesus! "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

To *know* in the Bible sense is more than intellectual perception by familiarity with facts. It is to enter into an intimate relationship in which personalities merge or blend. "And Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and called his name Cain." This knowledge was more than recognition. It was a union which made them one flesh and resulted in a new life. "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:17). A new creature results from this union.

Eternal life is experiencing God through spiritual union. Just as one can read books and even lecture about marriage all of his life and never become one flesh with another, so he can read the Bible all of his life and never become one Spirit with the Lord. Eternal life is the life of God, and fellowship in Christ is sharing that life. It is not sharing the life of the only true God to the exclusion of the Son, but it must include Jesus Christ whom the Father sent. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

It is a matter to cause us to think seriously that Jesus voiced his prayer for oneness of believers against a background

of divine glory and eternal life. How tragic it is that we have dragged that plea from such majestic heights and wallowed it in the dust of partisan debates over trivia. It is a commentary upon our plight as creatures of the dust that we would ignore the beauty of the setting in which it was planted, to use it as the ground for wrangling over matters of opinion, speculation and fallible interpretation. Perhaps we should abandon our worm's eye view just once and seek to look at the unity of the believers in the Son as the angels must see it.

Jesus glorified the Father upon earth. He did it by accomplishing the work the Father gave him to do. Is this not the way we glorify the Father also? In view of the fact that it is peacemakers who are to now the bliss of being called the children of God, should we not glorify him by making peace among the fragmented, strife-torn, ripped-off segments of our brethren? Can we accomplish the work we were given to do by slighting, ignoring, or manifesting unconcern for God's other children? Do we glorify God by division when Jesus prayed for oneness? Do we glorify him by forming hostile parties or separating into warring tribes, and acting worse than aliens?

Because Jesus glorified the Father by completion of this mission on earth, he asked to share in the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the world was made. One cannot accept this statement and deny the pre-existence of our Lord. He cannot accept it and doubt the Deity of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the old covenant scriptures the glory of God signified the presence of God. It was God making himself known, entering into the sphere of human knowledge and experience. It is significant that Jesus asked the Father to "glorify me in thy own presence." This does not mean "in thy sight" or "before thy face." The word is from *para*, with, and it means to share with God all the glory that is involved in the Eternal. That we also shall share in that splendor after our suffering is over is a thought of such magnitude as to stagger human imagination.

Think what such a contemplation will do for a cancer victim. “Our very suffering works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

PRAYER FOR APOSTLES

“I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they believed that thou didst send me. I am praying for them: I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine; all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them” (verses 6-10).

The apostles were chosen, called and commissioned as ambassadors to an alien world. Their position in the rule of heaven is unique and unchallenged. The arrangement which would result in their sitting upon twelve thrones in the period of regeneration was of the Father. While Jesus summoned them directly they were God’s men and were given to the Son by the Father’s disposition. To manifest God’s name was to exemplify his nature, attributes and characteristics. The word name in scriptural usage means much more than a designation or title. It includes all that is involved in the personality of the one named. Thus “to believe into the name of Christ” is to be identified with him, literally, to pledge allegiance unto him.

The response of the apostles to the divine manifestation was fidelity to the word of God as it related to Jesus. They accepted the words of God about the Word of God. What the Living Word exhibited in the flesh was from God. They knew it was bestowed from above and they accepted the truth about its heavenly origin without doubt. The purpose of the testimony was to convince men that Jesus came from God. He came only

because he was sent. This fact the apostles knew in truth, that is, in verity. This was essential if the world was to be led to believe through their testimony. Jesus said, "They have believed."

There is a great gulf fixed between the world and those who belong to Jesus. The world is composed of that great body of mankind which refuses to recognize the right of God to govern in their lives. It is the whole cosmic arrangement under the domination of evil, and in rebellion against God, living only for the Now and pampering every desire of the flesh. The world is creation adrift from its Creator, facing the storm of death without a compass, too drunk to steer by the stars, and too giddy to avoid stumbling into the abyss of darkness and misery and despair. It is the domain of false gods, perverted passions and wicked walks. Jesus did not here pray for the world, not because he was disinterested or unconcerned. He declares in this same prayer that he will send the apostles into that world. But his immediate concern is for the representatives whom God gave him out of the world. All depends upon them. If they fail or prove unworthy the cause is lost. "If the salt ever loses its strength, then how can the world be salted?"

The closeness between the Father and the Son is exhibited in the declaration that "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." W. E. Vine points out that many of us might declare that all we have is God's, but only one person ever lived who could say, while in the flesh, "All thine is mine." If Jesus was glorified in those given him out of the world, who received the words of God, believed implicitly in the testimony related to him, and showed unquestioned fidelity, will he not be glorified in us under the same circumstances? I trust you will not ascribe it to unworthy ambition or fleshly pride when I say that more than anything else in this whole vast universe I want Jesus to be glorified in me. I want to live to his glory and I want to die to his glory. I eagerly hope that I will not be drugged into insensibility when the Great Adventure comes and my spirit strains and tugs to loose itself from this envelope of clay cells in which it has been housed. I

want to be conscious of the magnificent confrontation. I want to sense the victory at some “disputed barricade.” Of course, we cannot choose how we shall die, but I can choose how I will live.

FULFILLED JOY

And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves (verses 11-13).

It has been a good many years since I read that large book written by A. B. Bruce, and first published in 1871 under the title *The Training of the Twelve*. I have just taken it from the shelf and opened it to note how I underlined many passages which struck home to me. In the lengthy chapter entitled “The Intercessory Prayer” I must have been deeply impressed. Bruce points out that the prayer begins with the word “Father” and this term of address is repeated six times. He observes, “He speaks to God as if he were already in heaven, as indeed he expressly says he is a little further on, ‘Now I am no more in the world.’”

That statement begins this section. Jesus knew what it was like to be in the world. He knew the trials and the testing, the turbulence and the temptation. He knew the suffering and the sadness, the sorrow and the shaking. For him all that was soon to be over, but the apostles were to remain. He places them in the hand of the Father, pleading with him to keep them. The word “keep” means to guard, protect and sustain. To keep them in the name of the Father was to hold them to his person as if the very reputation of Deity was at stake in their preservation.

When one leaves on a journey he wants to be certain that his valuables are put in trust. It is an indication of the regard Jesus had for his disciples that he would not leave without assuring their protection. It is likewise significant that he was anxious for them to be one as he and the Father were one. I shall later show that this had nothing to do with opinions or concepts. It would be absurd to expect fallible minds to be like infallible minds. Imperfect beings cannot exhibit the same degree of knowledge as perfect beings. The oneness here has to do with unity of purpose and effort.

Disunity among the disciples would frustrate the ultimate plan of God as much as a loss of faith. That Jesus would pray for the disciples to be one upon the eve of his cruel betrayal and tragic death is indicative of the value heaven attaches to that oneness. That it has meant so little to us is proof of our carnality and childishness. You can tell how much unity is valued by the saints when you consider the things for which they are willing to forfeit or discard it. The depth of one's love for his wife can be determined by the thing which prompts him to break up his marital union. Love is sometimes very shallow indeed!

In the flesh, Jesus guarded the disciples. He kept them in the Father's name, providing protection and supplying their needs. The only one lost was the son of perdition. This probably does not so much refer to the destiny of Judas as to his manner of life and course of conduct. He was not chosen to make him this kind of person, but because he was this kind of person he was chosen. I am interested in the regard of Jesus for the scripture and the fulfillment of prophecy. I cannot understand how one who professes to be a follower of Jesus can make light of the scriptures.

I have no intention to belabor the point and I cheerfully grant that what I am here saying is secondary to my real purpose. But I want to make it clear that no one can parade as a follower of Jesus while undermining the sacred scriptures. The

approach of Jesus to questions of controversy was, “What saith the scripture?” Men may question interpretations placed on the sacred volume and a lot of them need to be questioned, but the legitimacy and authenticity of the scriptures must not be subjected to erosion. I want to make it clear that the scriptures are holy in my sight and they must be fulfilled.

The things Jesus spoke while in the world were to convey the fullness of this joy to those who heard them. There is no real joy obtainable except through him. His first advent was announced with tidings of great joy, and his second advent will bring joy to those who await that magnificent triumph. Jesus spoke in the world filled with sin, despondency and depression, but his speaking was to bring fullness of joy and happiness unbounded. Knowing Jesus is knowing joy!

SANCTIFICATION IN TRUTH

I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated to truth (verses 14-19).

I have given them thy word! Jesus is talking here about the message concerning himself and his identity. This is made clear in verse 8. Jesus had given them the words of God, they had received them, and because of their reception the disciples knew two things. They knew that Jesus came from God, and they knew that God had sent him. It is this which makes the difference, and which calls one out of the world and separates him from it.

If Jesus came from God, this is the visited planet. Someone

from outside the human predicament created by sin has come to share our human lot. Not being touched or tainted by sin, he can point us back to reality. Sin is abnormal and it has made us all unreal. If God actually sent Jesus, then God is interested, concerned, and willing to be involved, not philosophically, but personally. No one can believe these sublime truths— really believe them— and ever be the same again.

How does one arrive at these two great scintillating facts until he “knows truly” as Jesus puts it, or experiences reality? The answer is simple. He receives the words of God. He believes the testimony. Our transformation from the state of abnormality created by sin to the reality of righteousness in Christ Jesus is predicated upon faith, and that faith is the natural result of an honest heart receiving the words of God. I think there is a great difference between hearing words and receiving them. I know people who have repeated words for years which they never *received* in the sense in which Jesus used the term.

It is this reception of the words of God, driving us to the side of the Word of God, which separates us from the world. Jesus is the “Great Divide.” The world hates those who are not of it, for the world is the realm of the flesh, and that is the realm of selfishness, bitterness, hostility and wrath. The world hates them because their love condemns its lovelessness, their unity condemns its disorder, and their purpose condemns its aimlessness. Jesus did not pray that the disciples be removed from the world. Light is needed in darkness. Purity is needed in impurity. Love is needed where hate abounds. The leaven is needed in the lump.

Jesus prayed that his disciples should be kept from the evil one. It would have been strange for him to talk to the Father about the evil one, if there was no evil one. Jesus was not bogged down in theories about the origin of evil. He had no hangups about the malignant spirit, active and intelligent, who opposed all the works of righteousness. He knew that if he did not snatch

his disciples out of the world they were in danger, and he knew that behind that danger was one who was a malicious and diabolical schemer. I do not buy the sophisticated explanations of the intrusion of evil, which are cooked up to explain away the existence of the devil. In fact, I think the cleverest trick he ever pulled was to convince a lot of folk that he doesn't exist. Many who think there is no hell spend a lifetime raising it, and most of those who doubt the existence of the devil prove the mistake of their theory by acting like him most of the time.

The way we are preserved from the evil one is by sanctification. Men who get out in the bush in their thinking and become all tangled up in the theological thicket talk about this as "a second work of grace." They have an idea that divine lightning strikes once and regenerates you, then zaps you again and sanctifies you. I am afraid you'll have to excuse me from such nicely-timed computerized distinctions which have been dreamed up to bolster a well-planned set of opinions which, in the final analysis, are filmy fantasies.

The apostles were to be set apart from the world in which they lived by being in the truth. To be in the truth while in the world is to be different. That is what holiness or sanctification is all about. A sanctified person is one who is different. The thing that makes him different is that he belongs to God. He is consecrated. The table of shewbread in the tabernacle was sanctified, not because of its construction, material or design, but because it was God's table. It was consecrated to God's service. Sanctified people are not holy because they are in the world, but because they are not of it.

Of course, every word that God has spoken is true. God never uttered a falsehood. It is impossible for him to lie. But when Jesus talks in this prayer about the word which is truth, he is not talking about the thirty-nine books of old covenant scripture, nor the twenty-seven books of new covenant scripture. The latter had not been written, and he was asking the Father to

sanctify the envoys then, so that when he was no longer with them to keep them, they would be safe against the evil one.

The word about which he spoke, which would set them apart, was the word he had given them (verse 14). It was the truth about himself, his divine origin and commission. It was this which severed them from the world. It was this in which they must be kept. The term good news, or gospel, is applied to this word. It is the good news about Jesus and what God has done for us through him. The gospel can never be separated from the person of Jesus. He is the good news just as he is the truth. To receive the gospel is to receive Jesus. To be committed unto the truth is to commit one's life and being to him.

PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me.

This was not an admonition to men on earth but a prayer to the Father in heaven. It is an indication that heaven is deeply concerned about our oneness. In view of the magnitude of that concern we should analyze carefully what Jesus said and determine our responsibility in helping to answer the prayer.

The desire of our Lord is that all who believe in him be one. This precludes any attempt at creating a coalition of so-called "world religions." Wild ecumenical dreamers who think of uniting all men under an umbrella of fellowship, allowing them to maintain their speculative philosophies in denial of the uniqueness of Christ have no right to quote this prayer as if it gave any credence to their fantastic theories. Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the dividing line across which men must come to be a part of this prayer.

Belief in Jesus is the response of the honest heart to the apostolic proclamation. That proclamation is the gospel, the good news, the announcement of the historical facts about the Word who was made flesh. As Paul said in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, “And we bring you the good news that what God had promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” The apostolic word which led men to believe was that God had fulfilled his promises in the person of Jesus.

In view of the fact that the apostles wrote some of the letters addressed to communities of saints and individuals, I once thought in my partisan heart, that Jesus had in mind the whole scriptural canon which later evolved through God’s grace, when he spoke of believing in him “through their word.” As a result, I considered those who did not see everything in those letters as we did, as being unbelievers. Regardless of how firmly one believed in the Sonship and Messiahship of Jesus, if he did not denounce as sinful such things as instrumental music or orphan home institutions, he was not a believer, and there was no way in which we could express oneness with him.

As I regard this childish and immature rationalization from more sober heights attained by intense prayer and study, it seems incredible that I ever entertained such ideas, much less mouthing them publicly. The apostolic doctrine was not written to make believers. It was written to those who were believers. Not one apostolic letter was ever written to those out of Christ, although, as Dr. James Macknight points out, the Roman letter was apparently to be read to and shared with some of the citizens of the capital of the great Empire. We do not believe in Jesus because we read the apostolic letters. We read the apostolic letters and apply them to our lives because we believe in Jesus.

We are one in Christ, and it is the word which brings us into Christ which makes us one. That word is the gospel. When

we come into him who is the truth we obligate ourselves to accept all truth as it becomes known unto us. But we are not made one by the amount of truth to which we are exposed or which we can assimilate. Unity can never be achieved by conformity to or knowledge of a certain level of doctrine, for no two people on earth possess the same degree of knowledge. We become one by faith predicated upon historical facts and not by doctrinal attainment. Jesus is our peace. He has made us one. He raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places.

One is not an unbeliever because he disagrees with me about music or the millennium. He is an unbeliever when he denies Christ. A believer may disagree with me about many things, but his inability to share my deductions, opinions or interpretations does not negate his faith in Jesus. The prayer of Jesus is not for the oneness of those who share the same doctrinal insights but for those who believe in him. Faith in the testimony concerning Jesus brings us together. I refuse to destroy that togetherness by setting up another creed. Jesus Christ is my only creed. I am in Christ with every other person on this earth who is in him. I am in Christ with some who eat meats and some who will not. I am in Christ with some who esteem one day above another and with some who esteem every day alike. I am in Christ with some who hold that Jesus will come before the millennium, with some who think the millennium will come before Jesus, and with others who couldn't even spell millennium without looking it up in the dictionary.

We must face up to the fact that oneness must be viewed from two different aspects. There is the unity derived from God and a demonstration of it arrived at by us. The first is unity impressed upon us by the Spirit, the second is unity expressed by us through the Spirit. The first is invisible, the second is visible. It is this for which Jesus prayed, because it is something that can be seen by the world and which will lead the world to believe

that God sent Jesus. Here is where we have miserably failed. We have allowed our views of things to become more important than belief in the Son. The world has seen this and formed a very shallow view of the importance of faith. A faith which will not cause men to adhere to one another when differences of opinion arise is wholly unsuited to men in the flesh.

I must confess another error of which I was once guilty. If you think I am doing a lot of confessing, please remember I was wrong about a lot of things. I still am, of course, but I will change as I learn better. Jesus prayed for believers to be one “even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.” When I was factional and equated as faithful and loyal only those who saw partisan issues as we did, I construed this to mean absolute doctrinal conformity. I reasoned that Jesus did not disagree with God about any matter. God and Jesus were both amillennial, and both lined up unequivocally against the missionary society and instrumental music, while favoring multiple cups in the Lord’s Supper and classes for teaching the Bible.

I would feel even more humiliated with my former ignorance if I did not now realize that this is a necessary fruit of the party spirit, whether the party is political or religious in nature. I knew an old man down home who thought that God was a Republican and only allowed Democrats to get in office like he sent the Assyrians to punish Israel for their sins. In our faction I suspect we thought that Indianapolis occupied the same status under the new covenant as Jerusalem did under the old. I shall never forget the shock I felt when I learned of those who thought of Nashville or Abilene the same way. I thought the kingdom had been captured by aliens.

Of course, I still believe there are no differences of “opinion” between the Father and Son, because they do not operate on the basis of either faith or opinion, seeing they both possess perfect knowledge. It is absurd to make a comparison between finite and infinite minds and expect the first to conform

in knowledge because the latter is able to do so. We show our finiteness by contriving such irrational ideas. There is no difference of opinion between God and Christ simply because they are omniscient. Although it may come as a surprise to some, our brethren in the flesh are not all-seeing, all-wise and all-knowing. If you think they are, ask their wives!

As human beings apply their minds to God's revelation there will be differences in their deductions and they will never see everything alike! Never! God has made us with diverse mental powers and characteristics as varied as our facial features. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. Any person who postulates unity in Christ upon uniformity of opinion, interpretation or doctrinal understanding is disseminating division and sowing schism. The only unity possible for men on earth is unity in diversity! There never was any other kind! There never will be any other kind! It is sheer demagoguery to hold out a hope that your faction will some day line up every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that men and angels will cast their crowns down and surrender to the party chieftains.

Jesus and the Father are individuals. The unity for which Jesus prayed was that of individuals. Every believer should be joined to every other believer in this whole wide world as the Father and Son are joined to each other. Ours is not an organizational unity at all. We are not joined to Jesus because we are in the church. We are in the church because we are joined to Jesus. To condition our fellowship upon partisan alliance is to be guilty of a work of the flesh Jesus did not die to establish a faction to promote a certain millennial view. He did not suffer on the cross to create an anti-instrument party, or an instrument party either. He is not head of a Sunday-school faction or of an opposing huddle. He is the head of the whole body, the called-out ones, and every saved person on this earth is in that body. I am one with all of them. In spite of their hostility, antagonism and divergent views, I am joined to them by the love

shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit. I want the world to judge me on the basis of my love for the brethren. I want to use this as the criterion of my discipleship.

Jesus and the Father are one because they possess a divine nature. I do not think men can ever be one as the Father and Son are one until they become partakers of the divine nature. So long as they are under the influence of the lower nature they will gratify the desires of the flesh. They will follow “enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit and envy.” It is only when they have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires that they will know “love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” But cheer up! Do not be discouraged!

The divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. All of this is through knowledge of Christ who has called us to his own glory and excellence. By knowing Christ we have life. By experiencing him we have godliness. All of this is the result of a divine power grant. Every contingency is covered. Nothing is lacking. There is no fine print. We are called to share in his splendor. We are called to share in his excellence. But there is more, much more.

The divine grant is even broader in scope. Listen! “By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.” The fellowship of the divine nature! Sharing the common life of the divine nature! What a mind-boggling thought. But that is the way those who believe in Jesus through the apostolic testimony can become one as the Father and Son are one!

That they also may be one in us! I praise God for this revelation! The only place we can ever be one is in Christ. We will never be one politically, economically, or philosophically.

We will never be one racially, socially, or nationally. The only way we can be one is to be in a state which transcends all of these, that is, to be in a realm where all of these exist but where none of them make any difference. Every political, economical or philosophical scheme to produce unity is doomed to failure. Every racial, social, national or international program to achieve equality in the flesh will come to naught. Only when men put on Christ, only when they are in him, are they one. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27, 28).

This does not mean there are no Jews in Jesus. There are many such. The writer of the letter to the Galatians was one of them. It does not mean there were no Greeks in Jesus. Certainly there were both slaves and free men in Jesus. There were males and females in Jesus. But such distinctions had no relevance. No one was accepted because he was a Jew, no one was rejected because he was a Greek. Racial, social and sexual differences amounted to nothing. There is unity in Christ because here every person in the flesh meets on a common level. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The master and the slave are sinners. The man and the woman are sinners. The Jew and the Greek are sinners. All of them must be baptized into Christ. All must put on Christ. The only real oneness there is on this earth is in Christ. *One in Christ!* What a theme!

Such unity is wonderful. Its overt expression is glorious. But it is not an end in itself. Unity of believers is a means to an end. It must never become the ultimate goal. The purpose of oneness in Christ is to lead the world to believe in him. Back about 1860, John Harris, an Anglican, wrote in *The Divided Church Made One*, these words, "Having implored the unity of his disciples as essential to the final success of his Gospel, we cannot expect the end independent of the means, without impugning his wisdom, and hope that his prayer may be

forgotten.” We must find a way to express our unity or settle for a lost world. The world will be won to believe in Christ, when those in the world who believe in Christ are one! It is just that simple!

We can do something about the divisions inherited from our fathers who lived in days more crude and cruel than these. We need not perpetuate strife. We need not keep old feuds aflame by heaping new fuel upon them. Let us cross back and forth over the artificial barriers men have thrown up. Let us ignore the walls created by fear and cemented with hostility. There are no obstructions for you except those which you allow to grow in your own heart.

Do not be a pawn for a party, to be moved and manipulated by men for selfish gain and unwarranted pride. Let love be your arbiter. Let the indwelling Spirit be your strength. This is no time for craven cowardice. Be a bold adventurer for the freedom for which Christ set us free. Do not change your allegiance from one party to another party. Do not confuse association with endorsement. Think for yourself! Speak for yourself! Act for yourself! But think, speak and act under his lordship to whom you must give an account. Allow no other person to be the lord of your life and do not seek to become a lord over the life of any other person.

There is a crying need for peacemakers. Do not expect others to do what you are unwilling to attempt. Peace is not an accident. It has to be made. Match your prayers with your effort. Do not just read the prayer of Jesus for oneness. Start to answer and implement it. Regardless of what it costs you to labor for peace, it will cost you infinitely more not to work for it!

The Common Life

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[Abstract]

“The union of Christian hearts is founded on a kindred being and a kindred life which has come to them through the Father. Home is the chief school of human virtue. There the fountains of love are unsealed, and the lessons of trust and mutual forbearance are taught, and thus the church when it touches its highest ideal is a home. Our personal life can only be fully developed in an environment of personal relations, and hence the value of the communion of the saints. As in every moment of our existence we are dependent on others, clinging to them for sympathy, and leaning on them for strength, so in the divinest relation of our life, we seek the fellowship of others who share in the same hope and are heirs of the same destiny.”— Robert P. Downes in Pillars of our Faith (1893).

As I look back upon it, I think my life was typical of that of thousands of others in the Church of Christ. The magnificent dream of “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects” had faded by the time I came along, and the movement which grew out of it had splintered and fragmented. Each faction thought of itself as the restored church. Each regarded those in every other party as either sectarians or extremists. Each narrow segment was a “brotherhood” of its own and this exhibited itself even in the language employed. Those who parroted the party line were always addressed as “Brother.” One from another party was carefully introduced as “Mister.” This very distinction was an eloquent proof of the narrow and

bigoted attitude to which we clung as proof of our “faithfulness to Christ.” When we spoke of “the brotherhood” we never thought of including the thousands of others who had received Christ but were in other factions than our own.

Many of our attitudes were cultural rather than spiritual. We were a frontier movement and the emotional overtones which framed the pioneer settlements helped to orient our thinking. For one thing we were a people of fierce loyalties, clinging together for mutual strength and support like settlers in a fort or blockhouse. Anyone who did not wholly agree with our every interpretation was regarded as a threat to our imagined solidarity. He was an object of suspicion to be isolated and not allowed to speak in our tribal councils.

As a group, I suspect we were anti-intellectual. This is characteristic of movements which had their roots in the rural life of that day. I doubt that we could have escaped being so. It was a natural thing, given the factors which helped to produce us. We were in doubt of preachers from “big city churches” and agreeably surprised when one of them proved to be “as common as an old shoe.” Too, we were reluctant to read anything which was not written by one of “our brethren” and that narrowed the field of our reading greatly. The “loyal brethren” did not write much and what they did write we already knew, since, if they had written anything else, they would not have been “loyal.”

All of us took the brotherhood paper, another term for our official party organ. The editor was our factional watchdog, barking when he saw danger approaching, and sometimes growling when he did not, to let us know he was still on the job. Anyone who threatened his control could be slapped down with a well-directed journalistic blow. If the challenger was not popular he had to “fold his tent like the Arabs and as silently steal away.” If he was a well-known preacher, his fans rallied to his defense and another faction resulted. The recognized journal exhibited the power of negative thinking.

I would not want you to think the various groups were composed of wicked people. On the contrary, they were good neighbors, willingly helpful in any kind of tragedy or emergency. It was only when they were inside their religious structures that they became like the Pharisees. In the marketplace they were kind and polite, deeply considerate and compassionate. It was only when they hung up their hats in the meetinghouse that the milk of human kindness clabbered and their disposition soured. I have often wondered what there is about a “consecrated pile of brick and stones” which stifles human concern and turns frequenters of “the sacred premises” into such stern and implacable judges. Preachers who are warm and outgoing when eating in a “Burger Chef” palace, turn as cold as an iceberg when inside of their holy place.

I have reached the conclusion that the building is a symbol. It constitutes the temple of the illiberal sect. It is a fortress which must be defended at all cost. As always, the priests are the front men, the guardians of orthodoxy, the gladiators of gracelessness. Without a designated priesthood, we relied upon preachers and elders to repulse invaders and we came to regard their aloofness, braggadocio and downright boorishness as indicative of faith and courage. In truth, they were indicators of a deep sense of fear and insecurity. To question the validity of the concepts which gave the faction its being was to threaten the position of self-appointed guardians of the ramparts, and the brethren react as all practitioners of pride react when their power is challenged. Outside the bailiwick men can act rationally. Inside of it they are caught up with all the emotional tides which flood their souls as they look at the pews. They must act like Peter with his finger in the dike, like Horatius at the bridge, or Leonidas at Thermopylae.

The party spirit inevitably freezes ignorance at a certain level. All creeds, written or unwritten, are actually shackles put on the mental powers to make possible control by others. Creeds which are not enforced are useless as factional manipulative

tools, so every faction must have an enforcement squad, a contingent of partisan Minutemen, ready to ride hard at a moment's notice and "head them off at the pass." In Churches of Christ these were never selected by a college of cardinals or a convention of delegates. They were achieved by dynamic personalities, always fluent, sometimes flamboyant, and were perpetuated by "Godfathers" who passed on control to fawning sycophants upon whom they had put the finger for future control.

Sometimes the governing power rested in the editorship of the paper, and family dynasties kept themselves in power by the simple expedient of inheriting the official mouthpiece and owning the linotype machine. The editor defined the boundaries beyond which the thought-process must not penetrate, so original thinking was stifled, and questioning of the partisan position was taboo, resulting in banishment or exile for the careless and thoughtless soul who indulged in it. Each little faction was under its own incipient pope, surrounded by a palace guard whose members could be summoned to cut down any intruder, with trained replacements for the elite corps being regularly turned out by "the loyal schools."

This worked well and functioned smoothly as long as membership was still being drawn from a relatively rural and village social culture. But the brethren made the fatal mistake of educating their children, and education results in mental growth which can only produce change. One of the traits of the enlightened mind in its honest search for truth is to question the *status quo*, not necessarily to reject it, but rather to determine its validity. It is a foregone conclusion that one who seriously examines our factional muddle must develop grave doubts. No sane person could seriously argue that our mixed-up mess results from God's will or is a production of the Holy Spirit. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." Brilliant young thinkers who refuse to gulp down everything that is spooned out or dipped up from traditional kettles sometimes

find some strange ingredients upon closer examination.

It is axiomatic that every faction always skims the brains off the top while leaving the unstudious and unthinking mass undisturbed. It is only the thinkers who are driven off or thrown out. Conformists who never question, continue to huddle together, proudly congratulating each other upon their fidelity to the party and glorying in the fact that they have not changed in twenty years. A century ago such parties could survive. They were attuned to the life of the world from which they drew their constituents. The man who had a college degree was looked at askance. Now that world is gone! It will never return. We are living in an intellectual, sophisticated and technological era. It is this world we must reach or utterly fail in our mission for the Master.

Many of the brethren do not realize it, and many will resent my saying it, but from the very moment the first man stepped out of a space capsule, to leave his footsteps on the gray ash of the moon, any purported relevance of our narrow factional approach to relationship with the infinite Creator of the universe was wiped out. It was as if a giant hand had reached down with a wet sponge and swiped off the blackboard of religious history all that we had ever written in our partisan contentions.

As I sat in our living-room on that fateful Sunday night and watched a human being walk on the surface of one of the planets in the second heaven, I suddenly recognized that my whole life purpose had been altered. The struggle for men's minds in the computer age had been elevated to a higher plane. The battle had entered a new phase. It had been transferred to another field. Never again would debates over such trivia as classes in the congregation, multiple cups in the Lord's Supper, or the method of support of radio and television programs have any relationship to the world in which we live. All these disputes about methods, means and mechanics belonged to the old world

of spiritual intrigue and partisan political maneuvering. Suddenly we were in a new world and time was running out. No longer can we engage in the luxury of exalting opinions or fending over fantasies. Once again it is either Christ or chaos. We dare not continue to contribute to the chaos!

I know what my brethren say when someone writes thus. I know because I once said the same things. I stood where they stand now. Those who are accustomed to judging allegiance to the Lord of life by one's stand on "the controversial issues" always conclude that one cannot be true to Christ until he lines up with the party. I disagree! One cannot be true to Christ who does line up with the party! The party chalkline is not the spiritual lifeline. I no longer represent any faction, fraction, sect or segment. I belong only to Jesus. I have no other Lord. I never intend again, so help me God, to allow anyone to lord it over my faith. The issues which divide us are controversial only because it is easier for carnal men to fight their brethren than to love them. They are no longer controversial to me because the Holy Spirit has made it easier for me to love my brethren than to fight them. But it took the Spirit to do it!

I know we have to be practical. Just because we are heirs of "the restoration movement" does not mean that we need to continue to be impractical. Our parties will perpetuate themselves for a long time. The papers will continue to grind out their exotic grist. More people will subscribe for them and fewer will read them. College lectureships will import "hatchet men" to try and frighten the student body with all kinds of rash charges, but fewer will be impressed by political hacks. The more brilliant thinkers will endure their surroundings and tolerate the teaching until they are awarded the degree and then will free themselves from serfdom. The fearful and less perceptive will still kick up dust in the party corral under the mistaken notion that they are "going into all the world."

After the project to unite the Christians had been

inaugurated by erudite Presbyterians, and became a movement, the forces of history which helped to produce the Civil War, also divided it, and because of the nature of the developing philosophy it tended to center a great deal of its strength in the South. It is a little naive to brag that this was the only religious movement which did not divide over slavery, when the truth is that the brethren were already so busy tomahawking one another that a little matter such as the buying and selling of human beings like cattle did not mean too much.

We were divided by the passions which produced the struggle between the Blue and the Gray. As the King James Version so quaintly puts it, “my hap was to light” in one of the northern parties. We always felt spiritual hostility toward the brethren below the Mason and Dixon’s line, and they returned the feeling with true Southern fervor. When I went to Arkansas to hold a series of studies I was attacked before I arrived by radio, newspaper and letters. *Firm Foundation* carried a desperate warning under the heading, “Ketcherside Invades the South.” The brethren declared a temporary moratorium on their own heated squabbles to rally together to plug up the hole through which I was able to infiltrate. It was humorous to me at the time. It is even more so now that the brethren have resumed their squabbles where they left off.

Insofar as the non-instrument shard of the shattered vessel is concerned, it became primarily a white, rural, middle-class Southern-flavored institution. Congregations of blacks were segregated. In some places when Marshal Keeble held a “gospel meeting” the huge tent had a rope stretched down the center aisle. Whites sat on one side and blacks on the other. When people “came forward” at the invitation, a white preacher received the whites, while Brother Keeble received the blacks. Of course there was a lot of second-class sham about the whole thing on the part of both groups. But Brother Keeble had to constantly teach the “boy preachers” he took with him from his institute, to learn the Bible, and what was just as important “to

stay in their place.” So that you will not forget let me remind you that until recent years *The Gospel Advocate* had a special little section on next to the last page for reporting the news of “Colored Churches.” And *Where The Saints Meet*, which is published by *Firm Foundation*, under the supervision of Brother Reuel Lemmons, has the notation “(col.)” after congregations of black saints. If you don’t believe it glance your eye down the list of Texas congregations in the 1972 edition. The term “Nigger Heaven” did not originate with the theater but first designated the rear pews in church buildings where “the colored folks” sat when they drummed up enough nerve or interest to attend.

When I left the Lutheran communion in which I was reared, to become “a Christian only” there was only one “Church of Christ” around our area. The Christian Church did not count. We had arrived and they had departed. We always “Mistered” them while “Brothering” those who had the right sign on their buildings. I was amazed when I found out there were about two dozen other kinds of Churches of Christ, and even more so when I found out that their members actually entertained the illusion they were going to heaven while being just as convinced that we were not. The first time I went to Georgia to preach I was regarded as a missionary from another country. After being there a few days I became convinced that I was. It would not have surprised me to have seen the caption “Yankee Go Home!” scrawled on the meetinghouse door.

A lot of our brethren will drag along, attacking forts long since abandoned and jousting with windmills which they mistake for giants. They will confuse walking in the old paths with wallowing in the old ruts. But this too shall pass away! The clouds of darkness will be wafted away by the fresh winds of deeper faith. Dogmatism will surrender to mutual sharing, and fears will be supplanted by association across our silly artificial barriers. It will not be accomplished in a day, but it will be accomplished! Slowly but surely we are being driven by the Spirit into the reality of our day, and we can praise God.

Primarily because of lack of qualified material I was thrust into a role of partisan leadership. I became a recognized champion, a debater and defender of our factional interpretations, deductions and opinions. I would not have you think this was against my will. I liked it. Gladiatorial combat was “right down my alley.” I firmly believed that our group was the kingdom of heaven upon earth to the exclusion of all others. We were the people of whom Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had spoken. The disciples of Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb and James A. Harding were enemies of the cross. R. H. Boll was so far out he wasn’t even in it. I felt this way before I ever read a thing that either of them wrote. In fact I felt that way a lot more than I did after I read what they said. We could always select from their writings the little nuggets in which they agreed with us and use them to show that even the worst of men are sometimes right on some things.

It was great to know that you were in the congregation which had restored “the new testament faith and practice” without addition, subtraction, or modification. You were with the only people on earth who really spoke where the Bible spoke and remained silent where it was silent. It was thrilling to realize that if Paul came back and could locate us, which would take some doing, he would worship with us in a sense of deep contentment that things had not changed one iota since he wrote to the Thessalonians. We were willing victims of what a genial Texas editor calls “pattern theology.” We had restored the pattern. No one else had. If you were not with us you were not with the pattern.

All we had to do was to continue as we were, holding a fall meeting after the crops were gathered in and baptizing the children that had “attained the age of accountability,” and some day Jesus would come and separate us from the goats down South and say, “Come ye blessed of my Father!” We could watch the surprised look on the face of the “Bollites” as we politely referred to the brethren who were premillennial, as we

marched by them on the way into the pearly gates. So we sang with gusto, “We’ve a home prepared for the saints above, just over in the gloryland,” and if there were any strangers present we sang “There’s an eye watching you!” There were a lot of eyes watching them. We knew who the saints were that were going home to be with Jesus. They were the ones who had individual cups and classes and opposed colleges and kitchens in the basement of the meetinghouses. The saints were those who were always on the right side of the wrong things!

THE GREAT AWAKENING

Then my little paradise caved in! The Holy Spirit bombed me out of my little air-conditioned, two-by-four heaven. Before it happened I thought that we were rich, and increased with goods and had need of nothing. Then I saw that I was blind, and miserable, and poor and naked! And I mean miserable! I groped for the mental eyesalve and rubbed it on. And I began to see. For the first time in my life I really began to see! And it was frightening. I dug into the revelation like never before. Every passage I had used to justify division I had misused. I had applied them to situations which the Spirit of God had never intended. I had used the written word to undo the very purpose of the Living Word. I had attempted to bind God with the commands He gave to bind me.

In their proper context these passages made real sense. They came alive. They were beautiful, appropriate, pertinent and correlative. Romans 16:17, 18! 2 John 9, 10! Amos 3:3! 1 Corinthians 1:10, 11! Finally I saw why I had wrested these from their context. I needed them as prooftexts, and what I was trying to prove was not in the text. It was a presumption. I was wrong about the divine concept of fellowship. For five long years I studied the divine ideal as revealed in the scriptures before I ever wrote a word on the subject of fellowship. Then I sat down and wrote the book *Thoughts on Fellowship*, followed a few years

later by the volume called *The Twisted Scriptures*.

I was driven to the conclusion that the fellowship could never be confined to the members of a single faction, and that I was in the fellowship with those in every faction who had been born of the water and of the Spirit. At first, as I began to wade carefully out of the shallows in which I had always paddled around, I think I secretly hoped that I would find fellowship confined to the non-instrument wing growing out of the aspirations of our mostly Presbyterian forefathers. It is easier to receive those whom you have always regarded as “brothers in error” than those whom you have arrogantly branded as sectarians. Most of us choke to death on our nomenclature.

But God did not let me stop and settle down on my own sectarian lees. He kept pushing me further until, driven by the Word, I had to realize that the body of Christ is greater and more majestic than any movement within it. And that includes the restoration movement! Now I know that wherever my Father has a child I have a brother or sister. He has many children who never heard of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. He has children who are wholly ignorant of our historical restoration movement. The one body contains every saved person on this earth. I am in that body with everyone of them. *One in Christ!* What a mind-blowing, heart-throbbing, breath-taking, soul-purging thought!

We are not one because we have catechized, analyzed and synthesized every truth. None of us know it all! All of us have much yet to learn. We will always be disciples, and none of us will graduate while in the flesh. We are united, not because of what we know, but because of whom we know. It is not being on the Dean’s List but being in Jesus that counts. Some who are in Christ are quite ignorant but they are one with those who are educated, not because of what they have in their minds but because of Him whom they have enshrined in their hearts.

I would like to share with you again some of the things I have learned about fellowship. It is these things which have altered my life. Our word fellowship is a translation of the Greek *koinonia*. So rich in meaning is the Greek word that fellowship is inadequate to express the deep content of the original. It is further hampered by the restraints and restrictions imposed upon it by well-intentioned but misguided partisans. No single English word is expansive enough or full enough to exhaust the meaning of *koinonia*. In the revised version commissioned by King James and authorized to be read in Anglican churches the term is variously rendered. It is translated communication 1, communion 4, contribution 1, distribution 1, and fellowship 12. *Koinonos* is translated companion 1, partaker 5, partner 3, have fellowship with 1.

The root is the word for common, and *koinos* is so rendered seven times. The suffix “ship” is added to nouns in such a manner as to form another noun to signify a state or condition in which a joint interest is sustained by persons. Occasionally I get letters asking such questions as “Do you fellowship instrumental music?” or “Do you fellowship Sunday schools?” With all due respect for my querists I must say that they reveal an ignorance of the nature of fellowship, which may be more tragic than the matters about which they write. Fellowship is a relation sustained with other persons and not with things, as the word “fellow” indicates.

“Fellow” is from the Old Norse *felagi*, comrade. No one writes to me asking “Do you comradeship Ford cars?” I have never had a letter asking, “Do you friendship huckleberry pies?” But that would be just as appropriate as to ask “Do you fellowship kitchens in the church basement?” When someone writes me like that, I know he needs to do a lot of studying first before he begins to set himself up as an authority on fellowship.

Fellowship in Christ is not related to instrumental music. It is not related to Sunday schools. It is not related to such items

as have kicked up a storm or created controversy among the brethren. Those in the fellowship may, and undoubtedly will have varied views about them and scores of other matters. But such views will not affect the fellowship unless some make their views a Savior instead of Christ, and make union with the party more important than unity with our precious Lord.

Others make the same kind of error when they ask “Do you fellowship persons who use instrumental music?” No one ever asks, “Do you companionship your wife?” or “Do you partnership your associates?” Fellowship in Christ is a state or condition or quality of being in which you receive, acknowledge and recognize as brothers and sisters all others who are in Him. Of course I am in that state with some who use instruments in conjunction with their expression of public praise, and with a lot of others who do not. I am not in the fellowship with them because they use instruments, or because they do not. I am in the fellowship with them because they are in Christ. Fellowship based on any other consideration is too niggling, piddling or insignificant to concern me.

The fellowship about which I write is a state created by God and into which he calls us. This is what the Bible reveals and I believe it. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Every person who has heard the call and responded to it is in the fellowship. Every person who is in our Lord Jesus is in the fellowship. We are called by the gospel, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is plain that every person who properly responds to the gospel, answers the call, and is in the fellowship.

The response to the good news is belief of the greatest fact ever announced to sinful men, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and the Son of God, and immersion in water in validation of that faith. Every sincere believer on the face of this earth who is immersed because he believes that one great and

magnificent proposition is in the fellowship, and I am in it with him.

Fellowship is created by the gospel, the call of God! It has nothing to do with whether I am circumcised or uncircumcised. It has nothing to do with whether I am a conscientious vegetarian or can freely eat all things. It has nothing to do with whether I esteem one day above another or esteem every day alike. It has nothing to do with whether I think Christ is coming before the millennium or the millennium is coming before Christ. It has nothing to do with what I think about the method of supporting the *Herald of Truth* program. Fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ is not and cannot be created or maintained by doctrinal conformity. It is possible only through the gospel and it is found only in Christ with whom we are called!

Fellowship has not one thing to do with whether a person is in one or the other of the two-dozen parties of the non-instrument Church of Christ, or the Christian Church, or in any other historical development, but with whether he is in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one church. It is the body of Christ. Every saved person on this earth is in it. All of the arguments and debates about this faction or that faction, this paper or that paper, this issue or that issue, are useless insofar as fellowship is concerned. Fellowship is a creation of the blessed Holy Spirit. Every person on this earth in whom the Spirit dwells is in the fellowship, even if he never heard of the “issues” which have become factional and sectarian “geiger counters.” Fellowship results from the Holy Spirit. Factionalism results from the party spirit.

Since those who are in the fellowship will never see everything alike while in the flesh and caught up in the human predicament, there will always be areas of disagreement and matters in which not all can jointly participate. No one must be forced into doing that which his conscience cannot condone, but the mere fact that one cannot participate in some things does not

argue that he should not participate in anything. The conscience which will not allow me to share in thoughts and actions related to time must never destroy the fellowship in the timeless. In the physical family, if my brother smokes cigarettes of which I cannot approve and in which I will not indulge, this does not mean that I cannot help him paint the house, put up the storm sash or sit down together at the Thanksgiving table in our father's home. It would be absurd to conclude that because we painted the house together I thereby endorsed his habit of smoking.

In the spiritual family the one whose conscience did not allow him to eat meat, certainly could not do so with the brother who did, but they were still brethren, although he had to decline participation with the other in those features of which he could not partake. He dare not judge him! Each man has to be fully persuaded in his own mind. Each will give an account of himself to God. He is not accountable to or for his brethren. He should not play God with their lives nor allow them to do so with his. The word of God clearly teaches that men can do to the Lord what they cannot do together (Romans 14:6).

For years we made the tragic mistake of equating fellowship with another with endorsement of his opinions, views and doctrinal interpretations. We wrongly concluded that if we sanctioned what he did that was right this automatically made us endorse what he thought that was wrong. This is an absurd and childish position. Certainly it is right to pray to God but if a man from another faction attended one of our meetings we did not dare to call upon him to pray for fear that by this gesture of brotherly recognition we would be openly condoning his dissenting views. This made for a good deal of sham and hypocrisy. It promoted arrogance and rudeness of almost unbelievable quality among those who professed to be followers of Jesus.

Certainly Paul did not endorse the actions of Peter at

Antioch. He said he opposed him to his face because he was clearly in the wrong. Did he disavow being in the fellowship with him? If so, the foundation of the apostles and prophets had a big crack in it and was hardly suitable as an underpinning for the temple of God. The brethren at Jerusalem did not agree with “some of the Pharisaic party who had become believers” (Acts 15:5), but they did not deny the validity of their faith nor refuse permission for them to speak in the assembly.

Paul did not agree with the Corinthians about many things but he did not think of them as being outside the fellowship. He said they were “God’s people at Corinth, dedicated to him in Christ Jesus, claimed by him as his own.” He called them brothers. He said they were God’s garden and God’s building. He said, “I am not writing to shame you, but to bring you to reason; for you are my dear children.” He said, “I shall come to Corinth . . . and I may stay with you, perhaps even for the whole winter, and then you can help me on my way wherever I go next. I do not want this to be a flying visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”

It was the attitude of Paul toward the congregation at Corinth which had such a profound effect in changing my own attitude toward the congregations I knew. If one could sigh for and long to visit and labor with a group like the Corinthian congregation with all of its faults, frailties and fallacies, surely I should not wash out on the brethren I knew. The letters to the Corinthians stand as a monumental rebuke to the foolish idea that fellowship implies endorsement. What a chance Paul would have had to attack these brethren, to refuse to visit them, and to warn others against doing so. Instead, he wrote, “Our whole aim, my own dear people, is to build you up.”

I have never known a congregation with even one-third of the problems of the saints at Corinth. The worst congregations I have ever seen in my life could not even compare with Corinth. Yet Paul wrote, “Here I am preparing to pay you a third visit . . .

I will gladly spend what I have for you— yes, and spend myself to the limit.” When I think of my own cold, callous and contemptible feeling in the past toward brethren who differed with me I could weep bitterly over my littleness and bigotry. Never once did Paul question that he was in the fellowship with the ripped-off saints at Corinth. Not once did he suggest dividing them. Not once did he intimate that some of them should split off and start a “loyal church.”

As long as the letters to the Corinthians remain in the sacred scriptures they will act as a sharp slap across the faces of those who have created a faction of separated brethren over such matters as the method of financing radio and television programs intended to inform our pagan culture that Jesus has come. Let me be plain with you! If brethren in the Lord in Abilene, Texas, want to receive funds for financing a program which they have designated Herald of Truth, whether I agree with their project or not, they are my brothers, and I am in the fellowship with them. If brethren in Florida oppose financing the program, whether I agree with their position or not, they are my brothers, and I am in the fellowship with them.

But get this! I am unequivocally opposed to the division and fragmentation of the believers over such an inane question. I am opposed to pumping hot air into this issue until it balloons out of all proportion and negates the relationship created by the shed blood of God’s dear Son. I refuse to believe that any opinion held by the saints of God in Abilene or Lufkin in this century is as important as what happened at Golgotha in the first century. To elevate every dissident notion of men to equal importance with all that God has revealed is to make nothing important, and will make the cross of Christ of none effect in the minds of men.

To make tithes of mint and anise and cummin have the same value as justice, mercy and faith, is not to increase the value of the mint and anise, but to devaluate justice, mercy and

faith. Every one of our tragic parties is a living proof of our distorted sense of values. Not one is an indication that we approach divinity, but they all exist as open monuments to the worst features of our fallen humanity. “Can you not see that while there is jealousy and strife among you, you are living on the purely human level of your lower nature?” (1 Corinthians 3:3). Do not forget that this was addressed to a congregation which should have divided into a dozen groups on the basis of our contemporary factional rationalization! How many different “Churches of Christ” do you think would have been in Corinth if the people had possessed the same distorted and warped views which have plagued the heirs of the restoration movement?

Fellowship in Christ Jesus does not even imply endorsement of the ideas, concepts, interpretations, deductions and opinions of those within it. It never did and never will. Fellowship is a creation of the divine mind through the Holy Spirit. Endorsement is an action of the human mind by which one sanctions the thought of another human mind with which he concurs. We are in the fellowship of the heavenly Father. Obviously He does not endorse all that we think, say or do! But He does not throw us out of His fellowship because of our mistaken views and silly speeches. If a divine being can tolerate our ignorance, inaccuracies and bewilderment, surely we, as mere human beings, ought to be able to endure one another with a little more grace. Although it is frequently said that we play God with one another, it might be a little more factual to say that we play the devil with each other. God is infinitely more tolerant with us than we are with one another, and if we played God we might be more loving and kind than most of us have been.

At one time in my life I was brainwashed into thinking that fellowship in Christ Jesus was contingent upon everyone arriving at a certain degree of knowledge at the same time. The degree was always determined by our own factional attainment. The party “somewhats” determined what constituted matters of

faith, matters of opinion and matters of indifference. They sorted out “the musts” from “the maybes.” If you agreed with them on the sorting arrangement you were “in” but if you did not you were “out.” You did not really need to worry about thinking. That was done for you. Fellowship with us was a package deal. You had to take the rotten apples with the good.

Of course, the truth is that no two people on earth reach the same degree of knowledge at the same time. To predicate fellowship on such a far-out, farcical and fantastic notion makes fellowship impossible. You cannot freeze the level of knowledge. What you do is merely establish a plateau of ignorance. If someone comes into the faction and does not stop thinking, he will attain a higher degree of knowledge, and when he does he will be thrown out. This does not hurt him. It merely frees him to go on thinking. But it hurts the party by making it more ingrown, moronic and imbecilic.

All knowledge is built upon association, environment, research and mental ability. That ability involves retentiveness and rationalization. No two persons on earth have had identical experiences. No two have the same mental capacities. Our mental faculties are as diverse as our facial features. We can no more all think alike than we can look alike. We are not going to heaven in a clump. We are strung out along the road. Some of us are pretty far back. That doesn't bother me. If you are on the right road and facing in the right direction I praise God! I trust you'll not be looking back over your shoulder to see if the others are keeping up. If you are you are looking in the wrong direction. You might run into one of God's telephone poles and knock yourself out cold.

Uniformity of knowledge can never be the basis of fellowship. There are three reasons this is so. All of them are set forth in 1 Corinthians 8, where we are informed that it is love and not knowledge which builds up, and brings recognition from God. First, all human knowledge is relative. “If anyone fancies

that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of knowing” (verse 2). Second, knowledge is not universal. “But not everyone knows this” (verse 7). Third, all knowledge is affected by our past association and attainment. “There are some in whom the consciousness of the false god is so persistent, that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration.” Anyone who is brash enough to state that he knows that point of knowledge which all in Christ must attain to remain in the fellowship of God and Christ proves that he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

I must say, in closing, that I think the matter of gravest concern among us is not the division and the fragmentation which has occurred. It is rather the attitude into which we have been betrayed by Satan which has served to cause our schismatic condition. All sectarianism is born of fear and pride. Ours is no exception. We have built walls around ourselves to protect what we believe is vital to keep others out. But we have forgotten that it is those inside the walls and not those outside of them who are in prison. It seems high time that we awake out of sleep and assert again that freedom for which Christ set us free. If perfect love casts out fear, it will also destroy the party spirit which gives it birth. Love is the answer to all our problems. It is the fulfilling of the law.

The Sharing of Life

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[Abstract]

A consideration of the scope, or design, which the inspired author of any of the books of Scripture had in view, essentially facilitates the study of the Bible: because, as every writer had some design which he proposed to unfold, and as it is not to be supposed that he would express himself in terms foreign to that design, it therefore is but reasonable to admit that he made use of such words and phrases as were every way suited to his purpose. To be acquainted, therefore, with the scope of an author is to understand the chief part of his book. The scope, it has been well observed, is the soul or spirit of a book; and that being once ascertained, every argument and every word appears in its right place and is perfectly intelligible: but if the scope is not duly considered, every thing becomes obscure, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be.— Thomas Hartwell Home in An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

I am indebted to John for a great deal I have learned about the real meaning of fellowship. I'm speaking about the son of Zebedee who was a fisherman until Jesus came walking down the beach and put the finger on him to enter training for an ambassadorship in the only kingdom that will survive the wreck of this world and last forever. John made good in the position and his official correspondence has the key to what it is all about.

One reason I am so thrilled with it now is because it

contains the secret of the divine-human relationship like nothing else I have ever read. Of course the secret was all there all the time, but we were not. For years I read the new covenant scriptures through jaundiced eyes. After we waved the magic wand and converted “the restoration movement” into “the Lord’s church” it was but one easy step to assume that all of the apostles were members of our particular faction, and the Spirit inspired them to confirm our opinions, deductions and interpretations, so we could point to ourselves and say, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

It was not too difficult to conclude that those who did not concur with our views were out of step with Jesus and His holy messengers, and had denied the faith and were worse than infidels. We were staring at every thing through clouded glasses ground by partisan optometrists. We looked at things “slaunchwise” as an old woodsman and tie-hacker down home used to say. That is the way I read what John wrote and I came up with some weird notions. That is why a dozen different factions had preachers who held forth on “The Way That is Right and Cannot be Wrong,” and yet they all had a different way. They could not even call upon one another to lead in prayer.

No one ever said more about loving the brethren than did John. He did not condition that love upon conformity of opinion or uniformity of understanding, but upon the fact of God’s love for us. We knew that, I suspect, but we also thought that 2 John 9, 10 wiped it all out. “If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed, for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.” What we did when we turned that into a gnarled club to batter out the brains of dissenters from our puerile positions is an inglorious commentary on the frightful effect the works of the flesh can exercise in the lives of frightened factional followers.

We applied it to things of which John never dreamed and at which the Holy Spirit never hinted. Each faction had elevated some matter of opinion or deduction to the place where it became “the maypole” around which the partisans danced in proof of their loyalty. Whatever that thing was it became the criterion for measuring faithfulness. One might differ with the party on almost anything else, but if he was to be recognized as “sound” he had to be able to give the party password. If he did not do that he did not bring *this doctrine*, and he was not to be received or given a greeting. He was to be treated with such reserve and coldness that he would know he was in the “out” group.

If the test of fellowship was having only one container for the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper, that doctrine became “this doctrine.” If the party was created to oppose the Sunday School that doctrine became “this doctrine.” If the faction formed to oppose the method of financing the Herald of Truth program that doctrine became “this doctrine.” Regardless of how much a person loved Jesus and sought to walk in the Spirit, if he did not endorse the party taboo he was left out in the cold. *This doctrine* was the twentieth century distillate of men’s minds around which an exclusivistic clan gathered, and unless you could pass the eagle-eyed inspection of prying editors or preying preachers you were left on the outside looking in through the chinks in the blockhouse!

I seriously doubt the apostle ever had in mind the danger of our becoming partakers in such *evil deeds* as having individual containers to pass the fruit of the vine, or of having classes in which to discuss the revealed message, or of sending a check to Highland congregation in Abilene, Texas, as a contribution to the propaganda medium called “Herald of Truth.” Anything becomes evil to one who wants to borrow it as something to which he can object and build his little party around the objection while blaming the thing to which he objects as responsible for division. All things are unclean to him who is

unclean. But the fact that men have split the body into smithereens over such inane and innocuous trivia shows how little they regard the faith that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The fact that they quote 2 John 9, 10 to justify their cold and callous treatment of God's other children demonstrates that the party spirit will stoop to any level to protect its fanatical regard for opinion.

It was a great day for me when I learned that John was writing about the majestic historical event upon which our blessed hope rests, and had no reference to our little partisan hangups. These are the mental toys over which selfish children squabble and fight. They cannot possibly mean as much to a loving Father as His children mean to Him. What a difference it made when I laid aside my "Church of Christ" bifocals and saw the epistles in their proper perspective.

I am now quite convinced that the community of the redeemed has always had to battle against two grave dangers—legalism and philosophy, the wisdom of this passing age. During the first century both of these tried the mettle of the faith. The untiring struggle of Paul won the day against "the Pharisees who believed" and the message was freed from the codicils and amendments tacked on it by those who preferred the security of law to the liberty of grace.

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman legions under Titus scattered the "salt" out of its original shaker and dispersed the saints abroad. It was, no doubt, divine providence which directed John to Ephesus at the very time when it was fast becoming a center for the dissemination of the most dangerous propaganda which ever threatened the hope laid up in Christ. There has probably never been another such potential for disaster as Gnosticism. Many factors contributed to make it so, not the least of which was the fact that it was a synthesis of the very kind which contained a magnetic attraction for the Greek mind.

Just as in the days of Paul it appeared that the saints might fracture into separate bodies composed either of the circumcised or uncircumcised, so Gnosticism threatened to split every congregation on earth over whether Jesus actually came in the flesh. By the time John arrived in Ephesus “many false prophets had gone out into the world,” and the aging apostle identified those whom he so labeled. They were men who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh. His three letters, as well as his belated gospel record, were written to counter the ever-increasing effect of this deadly system.

Even the casual student of Gnosticism knows that its adherents were divided into hostile parties although one basic and underlying idea was common to all of them. It was not new, but had been around a long time. That idea was that all matter was inherently and irretrievably evil. It was when Gnosticism came face to face with the fact of Jesus it met its greatest challenge. If Jesus was the Son of God come in the flesh, this one historic event forever knocked the whole theory into the proverbial “cocked hat.”

The amazing thing, and I take a lot of secret comfort from it, is that a number of Gnostics embraced the faith. This means that the historic facts were so positively established and the testimony so incontestable they were irresistible. The tension must have been great. Long since the Gnostics had concluded that God could not have directly created the earth for that would have been to accuse Deity of deliberately producing evil. The problem was resolved by assuming that Deity had sent out emanations in ever-widening circles of influence and these crystallized into creative intelligence, aeons or demi-urges. When one of these was far enough from Deity as a center so that Deity could not directly come in contact with matter, the demi-urge brought the material universe into existence.

This little background cannot possibly do justice to the system. Hopefully, it will be sufficient for our purpose. If we are

to understand John's letters, however, there are a few facts we must not forget. Let me briefly mention them. Gnosticism was widespread. It was the accepted explanation of the origin and nature of the universe throughout much of the Greek world. The theory takes its designation from *gnosis*, knowledge. It had a real tug at the Greek intellect for the Greeks sought after wisdom. To be a Gnostic was to be sophisticated, to gain admission to the company of the intellectually elite, the inner circle of wisdom. The Gnostic was superior, the rest of humanity illiterate and barbarian. Only those could truly know the secrets of the universe who had made contact with the esoteric and been initiated into the Mysteries.

Any converts to the faith in the Greek intellectual world would more than likely have been steeped in Gnosticism. To them it was the only logical explanation of the world in which their lot was cast. That world had been conceived in the *Logos* of God. The *Logos* was the divine reason and word. It was this power which had conceived the means by which emanations could proceed until a creaturely world could be fashioned and set into whirling motion. To accept Jesus as a historical figure, declared to be the Son of God was one thing. To explain Jesus as having had pre-existence with the Father and having *come* in the flesh was a wholly different matter.

By the time John arrived in Asia, Gnosticism had taken two forms in its attempt to explain Jesus. There were the Docetics who took their name from the Greek term which meant "to appear, to seem." It was their idea that Jesus was not real at all. He merely seemed to have a body of flesh and blood but was actually only a phantom, a spirit, or as the Greeks would say, a pneumatic personality. Advocates of what James Moffatt called "the doctrine of seemism" did not deny the personality of Jesus. They merely affirmed his immateriality. Some of them wrote that when Jesus appeared to walk on the surface of the earth he left no visible footprints in the dust.

There was also the Cerinthian brand, named after its chief proponent, Cerinthus, who lived in Ephesus at the same time as John. A good deal of traditional material has been preserved about their personal encounters. The Cerinthian gnostics taught that Jesus was begotten by Joseph and conceived by Mary. When He was about thirty years of age and at the time of His baptism by John, the *hagios pneuma*, the Holy Spirit, descended upon and invested Him and it was this *pneuma* which was given recognition as the Messiah. Since it was reasoned that God could not be killed and the Spirit could not die, it was taught that Jesus yielded up the *pneuma*, and it was simply a man who died, not the Son of God.

It seems a little incredible to us that the doctrine which denied that Jesus came in the flesh could have gained such headway, but we live in a wholly different social culture. The faith has been debated, defined and refined during twenty long centuries of conflict and while there are pockets of what might be called “neo-gnosticism” our foes are of a different breed. It is important, if we are to understand what John is saying, that we put his writings back in the framework in which he wrote them. When we do this, we will at once gain some deep insights into what he is communicating.

For instance, we learn that many of the Gnostics had been in the redeemed community but they left the saints. John regarded their secession as proof that they never were really one with the brethren who accepted the reality of the incarnation. He says “they were not of us.” He brands them as liars and antichrists, and defines a liar as one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, and an antichrist as one who denies both the Father and the Son (1 John 3:22). In spite of their defection from the body the Gnostics still attempted to seduce the brethren (3:26).

John exhorted the beloved not to be gullible, but to test the spirits whether they were of God. That the Gnostics were numerous is indicated by the fact that the apostle declares that

many false prophets had gone out into the world. A false prophet was one who refused to confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Such a one was not to be admitted to the house. No greeting was to be given to him on the street. There was a great gulf between the Spirit of God and the spirit of antichrist. Nothing must be done or condoned which would leave even a suspicion that there was any agreement. All hospitality was to be denied to the wandering Gnostic teacher. Even the customary civility was to be avoided. The whole Christian faith rested upon the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. There was no meeting ground with one who denied this great fundamental truth. He was to be met at the door of the home and refused admittance.

Having said this much it is my hope that my readers are prepared for that to which the preceding is prologue. It is my intention to share with you my analysis and explanation of the first chapter of 1 John. In doing so I want to emphasize the nature of the fellowship of which we are partakers. I want to lift it out of the pitiable state to which it has been subjected. In our partisan zeal we have squeezed the spiritual life out of the relationship God has created. In some places the very word “fellowship” has been so abused by men who claim the authority to manipulate it that it is a hiss and a byword.

FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

This was not mere rhetoric. It was not written as an attention-getter. It was penned to saints who were under attack by a clever and designing philosophy. It is the opening salvo of spiritual firepower intended to devastate a Christ-denying doctrine and to reinforce the morale of believers. John is writing a letter to certain ones on a specific problem. But it does not

begin like a letter. The faith is at stake and John has been brought in to save it. That is why he takes no warm-up tosses but whips a strike across the plate without indulging in the customary wind-up or salutation.

That which was from the beginning was the *Logos*, the Word who was with God and was God. He was the creative agent by whom all things were made. And it was the Word which was made flesh. It was not that the *Logos* invested one who was flesh, or came to one who was in the flesh, but the *Logos* became flesh. And He was the Word of life. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. It was not simply that He was alive, but He was the source of life. Life originated with Him. Do not forget that with John life is light. The life was the light! I shall expect to show that John uses three great words— life, light and love. In his context they are all the same. In this marvelous attack upon an insidious denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh there was a real reason to affirm that “God is light” and “God is love.” These are not different things at all. They are the same. This becomes apparent to the perceptive student.

The Docetic theory that Jesus never had a human physical body of any kind, that the Word of life could not have become incarnate, had no appeal to John. He knew better and he knew upon the best evidence in the world. If a body is composed of flesh and blood and bones, it is capable of being apprehended by the senses. Its presence and substance can be verified by the organs of sight, hearing and touch.

John was one of the chosen witnesses. He was present with Jesus from His baptism at the hands of John until He was received up into glory. He did not just hear about Jesus, he heard Jesus! Jesus spoke with human tongue. He employed human words. John saw Jesus. He makes it clear that those who saw Him did so with their eyes. It was not a dream or vision. It was not a phantasy. Cerinthus denied that men could see the divine Christ with the physical eye. John declares that he and

others did that very thing.

He looked upon Jesus. This is more than merely seeing a person or thing. One could do that with a passing glance and it might be argued that his eyes deceived him in establishing identity. But this word means to gaze or scrutinize. William Barclay says, "The idea is not that of a passing glance, and a quick look, but of a steadfast searching gaze, which seeks to discover something of the meaning of the mystery of Christ." It was the term which would be used to describe the action of a researchist or laboratory technician who sought to understand the object of his examination.

John said the witnesses had *handled* Jesus, that is, had touched him and felt His flesh. It was Luke, a physician who examined the eyewitnesses, who recorded that Jesus said after His resurrection from the dead, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Under ordinary circumstances, the testimony of eye and ear would have been the highest form of witness, but for John's purpose the sense of touch was most important. He knew Jesus was truly man!

John did not rely upon visionary or hallucinatory evidence. He had auditory, visual, perceptive and manual proof of the reality which was affirmed. The term "Word of life" as used by John is so charged with significance that I find myself enthralled with it. To understand why I am so moved you will need to know that about the time Jesus was born, Philo, a brilliant Jew, was also born in Alexandria. He became a great student of Greek philosophy, especially that of Pythagoras and Plato, while holding to the divinity of the Jewish law as the basis and test of all true philosophy.

In trying to bridge the gap between the Jewish and Greek concepts, Philo taught that God was a Being without attributes, so exalted above the world that an intermediate class of beings

was essential even to establish a point of contact. These beings were ideas emanating from the infinite one, and the ideas were active powers employed as messengers. Philo said they were the beings called demons by the Greeks, and angels by Moses. These intermediate powers he called the *Logos*, and man was a creation of the *Logos*.

It was Philo, at the very height of his popularity at the time Jesus summoned John to leave his nets, who had given such impetus to Gnosticism which the German writer Graul called “the gigantic serpent which lurked by the cradle of the infant church.” The *Logos*, said Philo, was one of the *aeons*, far enough removed from God that He could create a material world. To the Docetics He was an idea, a *pneuma*, incorporeal and spiritual. John’s first sentence ripped the speculation to shreds. The *Logos* was not an emanation or reflection. He was in the beginning. He was not given life or being. He was the *Logos* of life, and had been made flesh. He could be heard, seen, examined and felt. Anyone who denied this was a liar. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” (1 John 2:22).

ETERNAL LIFE

2. *For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.*

The word manifested is used twice in this verse. The original is used nine times in this short letter. That it was important to John in conveying his message can hardly be questioned. The verb is *phaneroo*, and *phan* means to shine. Thus the word means to make visible or clear. W. E. Vine says the true meaning is to uncover, to lay bare, to reveal. The life was exposed to sight. It was made visible. It was subject to examination.

But life as a quality, or essence, cannot be seen. No one has

ever seen a soul as a vitalizing principle. We see life only as it is embodied. For life to be manifested it must be incarnated. No one knew better than the Gnostics what John was saying. They also knew that if John's little children, as the saints are called in these epistles, believed the aged witness, the days of speculative philosophy were numbered. They would be "weighed in the balances and found wanting."

The life that was manifested was eternal life. Eternal life is the life of God. It is the abundant life, the divine life. It is as unending and undying as God is. The fact that it was manifested in such a manner as to be susceptible to the senses is proof that eternal life can dwell in men of flesh upon earth. It is a relationship with the divine and one who has the Son dwelling in him has eternal life.

God gave a record of His Son, and he who believes on the Son has that witness in himself. "And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11, 12). One reason John wrote his letters was to assure the saints that they have eternal life because they have the Son. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

I have eternal life. I have the witness in myself. I praise God that I know the life in the Son. It is because of this I live in the hope of the glory of God. I'm standing on the promises, not just sitting on the premises. John experienced the manifested life. He saw it in bodily form. He testified to it. He demonstrated or showed it. I accept without quibble that eternal life was manifested in the body of Jesus. I do not doubt that it is present in my fleshly frame. I believe implicitly what John wrote.

FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

3, 4. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

John states two reasons why he wrote about the personal experiences of the apostles with the incarnate Word of life. He declared these things to enable his readers to share in the fellowship with the eyewitnesses, who shared in the fellowship with the Father and the Son. He wrote the letter so that the joy of the saints would be complete and fulfilled. Fellowship is from *koinonia*, a word which means “to share a common life.” It is so rendered in the *New English Version*.

The common life we share is eternal life, the life of God. When the Word of life was manifested He made it possible for us to share in the divine life. This is the fellowship into which we are called by the Father (1 Corinthians 1:9). We enter that fellowship by accepting the apostolic testimony that Jesus came in the flesh. It was what John saw and heard about the manifested life in the Living Word which was declared that we might have fellowship.

This immediately places fellowship on an exalted plane. If God and Christ have fellowship with men in the flesh, in their humanity, that fellowship cannot be based upon equality in understanding or knowledge. It cannot be founded on absolute conformity of the participants. If God does not condition His fellowship with us upon such criteria, we dare not set up such conditions for our relationship with the saints. The only way God can be in the fellowship with us is by being merciful, tolerant and longsuffering. Thus, the fellowship revealed in the scriptures is one which demands such characteristics.

This fellowship is not something to be extended or withdrawn by men. No man can bestow upon you a share in eternal life. No group of men can take away your share in

eternal life. Men cannot touch your fellowship with God and Christ. They can put you out of their synagogues. They can persecute you, revile you and say all manner of evil against you. But if you accept the testimony of the apostles concerning the manifested life, and have pledged your allegiance to the Lord of that life, men cannot touch your relationship to God. They can kill your body, and even think that in so doing, they render a sacrifice to God, but you are beyond their power to harm in regard to the fellowship of life.

Any fellowship which does not involve the common sharing of eternal life is too mundane and trivial to be concerned about. It is merely a participation in organizational or institutional association. It is like being a member of a country club. If you attend and keep your dues paid and do not question the policy of the board of directors you are regarded as “a member in good standing.” It is like being a member of a fraternity where you can be blackballed if you do not conform to the rules imposed by the controlling clique.

Do not misunderstand me. Organizations of men have a right to draw up rules and regulations to impose upon their adherents. They can decide how many meetings you must attend in order to be recognized. They can decide upon structures which you must help to build and maintain, and they can assess you, or hound you for the financial means by which to secure the *status quo*. They can also throw you out of the organization on charges they have trumped up when you start questioning the “powers that be” which were not ordained of God.

So-called “church fellowship” is generally of this nature. It has no real relationship to the fellowship of the Spirit. It is of the earth earthy, as are those who created it. There is a great difference between sharing in “church life” and sharing in eternal life. There are as many different kinds of “church life” as there are “churches” and you could get dizzy trying to share in all of them. Anything that men extend or withdraw is not too

important. To cut one off from an organization does not particularly harm him. It may free him to serve Jesus, to think, speak and act upon a higher plane. Obviously, if one is in the fellowship of God and Christ, he will recognize his relationship to all others who are in that glorious fellowship. He will receive them all, every one of them, as God and Christ received him. That is real fellowship!

It is recognition of our sharing in eternal life through the enfleshed Word which brings joy in its fulness. Pause just for a moment, and let the thought of what it means to share in the actual life of God, seep into the moral fibers of your being. Unfortunately, we tend to confuse joy with pleasure or happiness, to which it may be related. But one's relatives are not himself, even though of the same stock. Joy is from the Greek *chara*, but our English term pleasure is from the Latin *jocundus*. Pleasure is produced from any or every object, and may be the result of gratification of our senses. But joy is derived from exercise of the affections. It is a vivid and more lasting sensation in the soul. It is contemplation of our sharing in eternal life which fulfills our capacity for joy. When the Spirit pours out the love of God in our hearts, and the never-disappointing hope floods our inner being we experience a degree of joy which no circumstance, not even death, can dim. This is the fruit of the fellowship which is sharing the common life of the divine.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

5, 6, 7. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth, but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

At the very outset, let it be noted that John is not talking

about the basis upon which we, as human beings, have fellowship with one another. His theme is the foundation of our mutual fellowship with the Father. If you will read this carefully you will see that the expression “we have fellowship one with another” refers to God and ourselves sustaining fellowship with each other on the basis of our walking in the light to the degree that He is light. That we will have fellowship with others who walk in the light is a foregone conclusion, but it is not the subject of this section of the letter.

John gathers up the revelation of the Word who was made flesh in one grand statement. “The message we have heard of him,” does not mean the message about Christ, but the message which Christ announced or proclaimed. That message was that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Light can be a symbol of many things. But whatever it represents, darkness is the opposite of that thing or quality. If light represents knowledge, darkness represents ignorance. If light represents moral purity, darkness represents impurity. If light represents prosperity, darkness represents adversity. If light represents happiness, darkness represents unhappiness or despair.

It is especially important that we ascertain what John means by light, because we must walk in that quality to the same degree that God possesses it. It is upon that condition that we have fellowship with God and receive continual cleansing by the blood of His Son. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light *as he is in the light . . .*” If light is knowledge we must know as much of God. We cannot be ignorant of anything. If light represents moral purity we must be as pure as God. There must be in us no impurity of thought, speech or deed. If light represents happiness we must be as free from distress or despair as is God.

All of these may be ideals toward which we should strive, but if they represent the light which God is, we must attain them perfectly in order to share the common life with him. I doubt

that a single one of my readers would affirm he has reached such a state. Certainly Paul testified he had not done so. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after” (Philippians 3:12).

The fact is there is only one thing in which we are to be as perfect as God. That thing is love. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). When Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” He was talking about love. He was urging His disciples on to unlimited and unrestricted love “that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:43-48).

Now it is my conviction that light is love in the context of John’s letter. Let me tell you why I hold this view. John writes, “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye heard from the beginning” (2:7). What was the message heard from the beginning? Listen! “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that you should love one another” (3:11). The command to love one’s neighbor or brother was not a new one at all. It had been taught before Jesus came. He pointed this out. “You have heard it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.”

But John goes on immediately in the very next sentence. “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (2:8). Jesus is the true light and Jesus was love incarnate as we shall soon see. The old commandment included hate for your enemy, but with the coming of the true light hate and hostility toward those who were enemies was abrogated by the death of Jesus. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by

the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8, 10).

This is what the love that is light and life is all about. “Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9). The new commandment is true in both God and ourselves. Jesus makes this abundantly clear in Matthew 5:44, 45. And John says in this letter, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (4:11). Something happened when Jesus came that added a whole new dimension to love, and wrote a new commandment. The darkness of hate was gone. The light of love now shone. But does John identify love of the brethren with life? Does he equate hatred of the brethren with darkness? Hear him!

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” Love for a brother is abiding in the light! If light is love, darkness must be hate. Now read this. “But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” Nothing so blinds one as a heart filled with hatred. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (3:14, 15). “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now” (2:9).

God is light (1 John 1:5). God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” That is, “if we say we share a common life with him, and hate our brother, we lie.” “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar” (4:20). 1 John 1:6 mentions walking in darkness. 1 John 2:12 identifies walking in darkness in the context of this letter as hating a brother.

Walking in the light as God is in the light is loving as God loves. If we do this God and ourselves have fellowship with one

another. I share a common life with God if I love as He loves. Everyone who loves like this is born of God and knows God (4:7). “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (4:12). “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (4:16).

When we share in this common life of love, the wonderful blood of Jesus Christ His Son goes on cleansing us from all sin. To share the life of love does not mean we are sinless. We are in the flesh. We are still caught up in the human predicament. Our faith is in the clouds but our feet are in the clay. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us. Sinlessness is not a condition of fellowship. If it were there would be no fellowship this side of heaven.

Recognition of sin, admission of it when we realize it, and confession of it, will always be a necessary part of our earthly plight. But God is faithful. He is just to forgive us our sins. Eternal life is not granted to the sinless but to those who are in the sinless One. It is not accorded because we are in the flesh but because we are in Christ. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). I know Him! I am in Him! And I know that I have crossed the frontier from death unto life because I love the brethren (1 John 5:14). Praise His wonderful name!

This is the secret of fellowship! It is the intimate, abiding relationship with my Father, the sharing of eternal life, which makes my cup run over with gladness. My joy is full! My hope is real! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord! Heaven came down and glory filled my soul! The darkness is past! I am no longer groping my way along. The true light now shines! God dwells in me and I dwell in Him! He is my everything! He is my all! That is the fellowship of eternal life. That is the fellowship which I know and experience. And no one

will ever take it from me.

THE PURPOSE OF JOHN

Why did John write this letter? Why did he fill it with admonitions to walk as the Word of life walked? Why did he lay such stress upon eternal life? Why did he literally fill the letter with the need of love for the brethren?

The answer is plain. This was John's prescription to the saints to enable them to stand against a foe which threatened the very foundation of the temple of faith. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you" (2:26). The word seduce is from a term which means to lead astray. In this case it means to entice men to renounce a belief in the incarnation of the Word and to leave the faith that finds reality in the person of Jesus.

These wandering Gnostic teachers were false prophets (4:1), antichrists (2:18), and liars (2:22). They were deceivers (3:7), were of the world (4:5), and motivated by the very spirit of error (4:6). Nothing is more important when the very life of the body is threatened than for the brethren to love one another. When danger from without is imminent the flock should huddle closer together. To become scattered is to invite disaster, to become divided can only mean death. It is a time to allow that which was heard from the beginning to abide within (2:24). It is a time to remember that "this is his commandment. That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave commandment" (3:23).

A recognition of the true nature of the fellowship is essential in time of crisis. Satan uses such circumstances to divide and conquer. If he can get the brethren to hating one another, or to act as if they do, he can use them against each other. The devil does not care who does his work, although it is more effectively done for him by professed followers of Jesus

than by those who are not. In view of this I want to direct attention to one of the most abused passages in the new covenant scriptures. I refer to 2 John 9, 10. "If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work" (Revised Standard Version).

This was addressed to a lady and her children whom the aged John loved in the truth. It is probable that a congregation of saints met in her house. John rejoiced that he found some of her children walking in the truth. He begged her to remember the commandment they had from the beginning, "that we love one another." He said, "This is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love."

The apostle warns that "many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." Then occurs this statement: "Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son." The doctrine of Christ as here defined is that which one must hold in order to have God. It is that which makes possible the maintenance of the relationship with both the Father and the Son. The expression "One who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ" is a perfect description of a Gnostic teacher. It describes Cerinthus, the Ephesian leader of Gnosticism with exactitude.

The Gnostic claimed a special wisdom to which those who depended upon a mere understanding of revelation could never attain. He went above and beyond what was said by God and reveled in a superior knowledge reserved for one who was an initiate into the Mysteries. E. De Pressence in *The Early Years of Christianity* writes, "Thus we see that by its exclusively intellectual tendency, gnosticism abandons the noble banner of

Christian spirituality, and returns to the dualism which was the curse of the ancient world. We shall observe how faithful it was to its principle, and with what treacherous art it revived the old errors which had brought to ruin the most brilliant civilization of the world. From this primary and purely speculative character, there resulted the haughty esoterism which reconstituted *the aristocracy of intellect*, and placed its barrier in the way of the young and simple-hearted.”

Cooper, in his book on the *Free Church of Ancient Christendom* calls Gnosticism, “that yeasty product, thrown up by the working of the gospel leaven upon the dead mass of heathenism, which it was evermore powerfully striving to penetrate and quicken.” What is the doctrine of Christ in which one must abide to have God, and to have both the Father and the Son? John writes, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God” (1 John 4:2, 3). Again he writes, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father” (1 John 2:23).

This doctrine about which John writes is the teaching that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Denial of that great primal and foundational truth severed one from God. It made him the deceiver and the antichrist. But we have been subjected in our generation, twenty centuries this side of John, to a new brand of more childish, eccentric and extravagant brand of gnosticism, claiming special wisdom which goes above and beyond what is written, and finds grounds for separating and dividing saints over every conceivable opinion and deduction which deviates from factional creeds and partisan orthodoxy.

Does a party exist to oppose individual cups as an anti-scriptural innovation? “If any man come and bring not this doctrine, *receive him not into the house.*” Does the party exist to oppose classes in which to study God’s revelation? “If any man

come and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not.” Does the party exist to oppose the current method of supporting the Herald of Truth program? “If any man come and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not.” Does the party exist to oppose singing praises to God, accompanied by musical instruments? “If any man come and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not.”

My brethren, this is Church of Christism at its worst! It is the sectarian spirit gone to seed. To take an apostolic warning written to debar one who denied that the Word became incarnate, that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and was the Son of God, and apply it to an honest opinion held by one who confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Lord of glory is almost as wild as you can become in the reckless and profligate mishandling of the apostolic teaching. To even suggest that a sincere opinion about cups, classes, colleges, music, money or the millennium, constitutes the kind of evil deeds in which John forbids participation is the height of absurdity.

And yet, I used to do this very thing! It seems incredible that I was ever so brainwashed by our partisan traditions that I would allow myself to be used and manipulated to arrogantly affront God’s other children. In our intense fanaticism for the party position, if one came who disagreed with our unwritten creeds about colleges and other things, we glibly quoted, “If any come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house.” With this quotation we washed our hands of him and consigned him to hell. I was wrong, sinfully wrong. Any attitude which has to be maintained and justified by such reckless abuse of the scripture can never be right. To quote a passage referring to one who denied the Lord and use it to denounce a precious child of God who loves Jesus as much as you love Him is a blatant insult to God who received him and cherishes him as His own.

One is not a deceiver because he sees no harm in using individual cups at the table of the Lord. One is not a liar who

sees no sin in having Bible classes. One is not an antichrist because he sends a contribution to Highland congregation in Abilene, Texas, to support Herald of Truth. One is not an apostate who believes he can praise God in song accompanied by musical instruments. Whether these things are right or wrong, those who claim that such children of the Father are deceivers, liars, antichrists and apostates, only reveal their own ignorance and become false accusers of their brethren. I abjectly apologize for my own former littleness and bigotry which tried to un-Christianize some of the finest people on this earth. I am ashamed of my one-time arrogance which was a clear proof of the party spirit, the spirit of sectarianism!

Our brethren have always been better than their creeds. The passage does not say, "If any man come and bring not this doctrine, receive him not." It says *to receive him not into the house!* I have never yet known one of the brethren to stand in the door of the meetinghouse and turn away one who could not see the harm in individual cups, Bible classes, support of Herald of Truth, or instrumental music. They receive such into the house and run half way across the auditorium to hand them a songbook so they can join in the praise of God. They give them a greeting when they come and when they leave.

I challenge those who quote this passage as the basis for their boorish attitude toward others to bar entrance to those whom they claim do not bring *this doctrine!* Until they do they are not obeying the command of John. I do not believe they have the courage to carry out the implications of their own interpretation and application of this passage. They will have to squirm and twist and make "into the house" have some kind of spiritual or mystical interpretation. This is the policy of all legalistic minds! If the book plainly says *receive him not into the house*, what about those who come and bring not *this doctrine?* In our mixed-up mess and messed-up mix the brethren will have to "withdraw from themselves" to be consistent with their deductions. All of this illustrates what happens to a people

caught up in the bonds of exclusivism!

I have never read a sterner indictment of my former factional position than the one written by Frederic W. Farrar in *The Early Days of Christianity*. Farrar was a Fellow of Trinity College at Cambridge, Canon of Westminster, and Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen. His book was published in 1874. In dealing with 2 John 9, 10, he writes:

There is something distressing in the swift instinct with which an unchristian egotism has first assumed its own infallibility on subjects which are often no part of Christian faith, and then has spread on vulture's wings to this passage as a consecration of the feelings with which the *odium theologicum* disgraces and ruins the Divinest interests of the cause of Christ. It must be said— though I say it with the deepest sorrow— that the cold exclusiveness of the Pharisee, the bitter ignorance of the self-styled theologian, the usurped infallibility of the half-educated religionist, have ever been the curse of Christianity. They have imposed 'the senses of men upon the words of God, the special senses of men on the general words of God,' and have tried to enforce them on all men's consciences with all kinds of burnings and anathemas, under equal threats of death and damnation. And thus they have incurred the terrible responsibility of presenting religion to mankind in a false and repellent guise. Is theological hatred still to be a proverb for the world's just contempt? Is such hatred— hatred in its bitterest and most ruthless form— to be regarded as the legitimate and normal outcome of the religion of love? Is the spirit of peace never to be brought to bear on religious opinions? Are such questions always to excite the most intense animosities and the most terrible divisions? Is the Diotrophes of each little religious clique to be the ideal of a Christian character? Is it in religious discussions alone that impartiality is to be set down as weakness and courtesy as treason? Is it among those only who pride themselves on being 'orthodox' that there is to be the completest absence of humility and

justice? Is the world to be forever confirmed in its opinion that theological partisans are less truthful, less candid, less high-minded, less honorable even than the partisans of political and social causes who make no profession of love? Are the so-called 'religious' champions to be for ever, as they now are, in many instances, the most unscrupulously bitter and the most conspicuously unfair? Alas! they might be so with far less danger to the cause of religion if they would forego the luxury of 'quoting Scripture for their purpose.'

This is but the first paragraph of several pages in which the eminent author expresses himself. He writes: "But there is too much reason to fear that to the end of time the conceit of orthodoxism will claim inspired authority for its own conclusions, even when they are most antichristian, and will build up systems of exclusive hatred out of inferences purely unwarrantable. It is certain, too, that each sect is always tempted to be proudest of its most sectarian peculiarities; that each form of dissent, whether in or out of the body of the Established Churches, most idolizes its own dissidence. The aim of religious opinionativeness always has been, and always will be, to regard its narrowest conclusions as matters of faith, and to exclude or excommunicate all those who reject or modify them."

The time has come for me to repeat again what I have often said before. I believe that the doctrine of which John writes is that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and that He was the incarnate Son of God. I believe this because of John's own statement in the brief letter written a faithful sister. It is established contextually and historically. One who came and brought not this doctrine was to be refused access to the house and turned away without a greeting.

But I receive all who receive Christ and all whom Christ has received. I receive them on the same basis that Christ receives them. Wherever my Father has a child I have a brother or sister. If one is in Christ, I receive him and welcome him. And

I receive him regardless of his opinion about cups, classes, colleges, music or the millennium. We are not one in opinion and we never will be. We are one in Christ, and I make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We are not one because we are in agreement but because we are in Christ Jesus!

I am thrilled to be counted worthy to share in the common life which was made manifest. Eternal life! That is what fellowship is all about and I am in that glorious and majestic fellowship with every person who has “set to his seal that God is true.” What a blessing to know that one has fulness of joy, that he is “filled with the fulness of God.” What a thrill to have the hope that never disappoints because the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

The Legal Tangle

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[Abstract]

Any person who writes as I plan to write in this article is going to be brought under journalistic attack by his brethren. They will call in the big guns and zoom in on him and try to blast him out of the restoration movement skies. It may appear to some of you that I am acting foolhardy, like a farmhand hitting a hornet's nest with a hoe handle. You could be right. But I have some ideas which I believe need to be expressed. I will say them and take the consequences. I do not expect others to state what I am too cowardly to say myself. Really, what happens to an individual on this earth is not too important. What happens to truth is very important!

I do not think I have a martyr complex. I hope I do not have. I know a brother who does and he never intends to have a happy day or allow anyone else to do so. He feels that fate has conspired against him and he shows it in every lineament of his drawn features. Every time you see him he looks as if he is just coming down with a severe attack of "the uglies" and gives the impression of an accident going somewhere to happen. Even if he meets you on the street he will buttonhole you and entertain you with a list of the latest disasters, if you do not see him coming and duck into the nearest Woolworth Store. I do not want to be like that.

It doesn't "bug" me that some of my brethren oppose my

position. It would disturb me if they did not. When they write me up I know that I must be writing pretty clearly. If they ever start commending me I will re-examine what I am saying and try to discover my error. I will know that I am wrong somewhere. I am not too thin-skinned and I do not think I am being burned at the stake merely because someone holds my feet to the fire. The only way to truly avoid criticism is to say nothing, do nothing and be nothing! It is too great a price to pay!

I am dedicated to the task of pleading for oneness in Christ. I think it will be very difficult to express for the simple reason that most people want you to be one in something else. A lot of them want everyone to be institutionally one, and they want it to be in their institution. This is especially true of groups which exist on a legalistic basis. Before you go off half-cocked let me tell you that when I use the term “legalistic” I am not speaking derogatorily of adhering to the commands of our Lord. I intend to keep them as meticulously as I know how. That is the only way I can overtly demonstrate to others that I love Him.

A legalist is one who thinks that we are under a written code and relate to God because of our subservience to it. To such a one, a righteous person is one who lives up to the law, and who both attains and sustains righteousness on that condition. I do not believe that. We are not under law but under grace. No flesh can ever be justified by law-keeping and one might as well seek to reach heaven by a Hindu rope trick as to attempt it. Justification is by divine declaration. It is upon the basis of faith in the Son of God. You can no more earn it or work it out for yourself than you could dip the ocean dry with a stainless steel teaspoon.

For fifteen hundred years God sought to keep His people together by a written code. He put them under bondage to law and shut them up under it so He could deliver them to Christ. Then He made a new covenant. It was not like the former one

which was made at Sinai, or Horeb. “The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Many people would change this to read, “The law came by Moses, and another one came by Jesus Christ.” Unwilling, or unable to trust in grace, and anxious to prove their own righteousness, they think that Jesus nailed one written code to the cross and handed another one down. That is not true. God did not send another law. He sent grace and truth.

Law is a principle of action. The principle which governs us is called “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” That is our law, our rule of existence. That is why we are not under condemnation. If we were still under a written code and seeking to be justified by it we would be under condemnation and our state would be hopeless. We would be of all men most miserable. But we are not under law, we are in Christ. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). We have not simply swapped legal masters. We have been set free!

A great many casual readers, frightened and insecure because we are no longer under a written code, attempt to forge the love letters constituting the so-called new covenant scriptures into such a code. They ask me, “What is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus?” Because the word law occurs here they think it consists of the compilation of the biographies of Jesus, the account written to a Greek city-state official by Luke, the twenty-one letters and the apocalyptic account by John. But these letters had not been written and even after they were it took more than a century before they were collected, collated and compiled. The primitive saints had no law-book. They had Jesus. Their law was what Paul said it was, “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” That’s my law, also!

The written code was weak through the flesh. Every written code, without exception, is weak for the same reason.

God did not send another law. He sent His Son. “For what the law could not do, being weak in the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Under law man was condemned. In Christ sin is condemned. I do not avoid sin simply because it is forbidden by law. I hate it because Jesus condemned it, and he did so in the flesh. Sin killed the dearest friend I ever had. It was my sin that did it, not his. He died to redeem me and I am in Him. He bore my own sin in His body on the tree. You do not need to pass a law condemning sin. I deplore it, hate it, and detest it. I am not dead in sin, I am dead to it. There is no life in law. “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Galatians 3:21). “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” I am off the treadmill.

Anyone who seeks to convert the new covenant scriptures into a written code by which a man must be justified makes them simply another law of sin and death. Written Code Number Two can no more produce life or righteousness than Written Code Number One. In that beautiful treatise on the difference between the old and new covenant, contained in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul points out that we are the real letter from Christ. The apostles were the penmen and divine postmen. That letter is not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the loving God. It is not inscribed on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. He says, “Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.” I believe that with all my heart. And it is in my heart the new covenant is written.

It shouldn't take a lot of profound reading to determine that the apostolic letters were never intended to be an enactment of *corpus juris*. A little plain, old-fashioned, down-home common sense is all that is requisite. Take, for example, the letter to Philemon. Certainly it is not a compilation of statutes. It was written by an inmate of a Roman prison, and addressed to a

brother in Christ, with his wife and son. Their slave, whose name was Onesimus, “went over the hill” and hitchhiked to Rome where he was picked up by the local police and clapped into jail.

Here he was led to Christ by the prisoner, whose name was Paul, and he was persuaded to return to his master. To make it easier for him, Paul sent along this letter in which he promised personally to pay off any debts which the slave owed. He also made a request. “Prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be granted unto you.” You might as well incorporate a personal promissory note or a request for a room reservation at the Ramada Inn in the State Constitution as to try and make this part of a written code of legality.

The letters to Timothy are no exception. They are personal and not statutory. They were written by an aged campaigner to a younger son in the faith. They mention the mother and grandmother of the younger man by name. They tell what happened to a group of associates who “flaked off” and went to different places. They request Timothy to pick up a topcoat which was left hanging in the closet at the home of a man named Carpus, and bring along some books, but especially writing materials. What would you do if you were reading the Statutes of the State of California and you hit a spot which read, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”?

Of course, nothing I have said will make the slightest impression on a first-class Grade-A legalist! He is going to be under law if he has to make one up. Regardless of what God says about the new covenant being written on the heart, he must get it down on paper. Even though God declared the new covenant was not written with ink, he is going to get twenty-seven books into the new testament, and bind them in black leather stamped with gold. This must be the law-book, the book of statutes.

That way the preacher can lay down the law. This is much easier to do than to live up to love. He can memorize “the statutes and judgments” and reel them off, and give “book, chapter and verse,” and if he is a clever enough lawyer he can make them apply to things of which the original writers never even dreamed. He will become especially adept at creating precedents out of things not even in the same category as that which he is currently condemning. I know what I am talking about because I constantly hold forums which legalists sneak away and attend. Nothing upsets them more than someone who is really free to love all of his brethren in Christ Jesus. Any man in bondage has it in for one who is free. You can tell how freedom “bugs” them by the questions they ask. I’ll cite a few of them to show you what I mean.

If the new testament scriptures are not the new covenant, why do you quote from them to validate your position and refer to them as authority for what you say?

The answer to that one is simple. These scriptures were written by people who were in the covenant. They were in it long before a word of the new covenant scriptures was written with ink. Every apostolic letter was written to people already in the covenantal relationship. The covenant is actually Jesus. It is not a code, but the Christ. The covenant is a person, not a precept. God said, “I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes of them that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness” (Isaiah 42:6, 7).

The apostolic letters were written under the guidance of the Spirit. They reveal to us the nature of the covenant. I regard them as the sharing of the thoughts of God. The scriptures are for instruction, edification, correction and reproof. They reveal to us how Jesus would have reacted to certain situations which arose, and how He would have responded to circumstances. But they are no more the divine-human covenant than a marriage

manual is the marriage covenant. People can be married who cannot read a word in a marriage manual, and they can be married to Christ and not be able to read a word in the new covenant scriptures. My paternal grandparents could not even read their own marriage license, and my grandfather had to make an “X” where his name was written in by another, but they had a wonderful life together. They knew what a covenant was even though they could not read the marriage license.

It is from the scriptures I have learned that the new covenant is written on the heart by the Spirit. It is from the scriptures I have learned that we are not under law but under grace. It is from the scriptures that I have learned that Christ is the end of the law for justification to everyone who believes. It is from the scriptures I have learned that the law was a custodian to bring us unto Christ, and once faith came we were no longer under a custodian. I happen to believe every one of these things. These statements are valid to me. I do not employ casuistry to turn them into a written code and thus seek to circumvent them. I must confess that I once thought the new covenant scriptures were given as God’s law. His written code, to our particular segment of the Church of Christ. As good lawyers, we warped them into a compilation of Church of Christism exactly as the Jews created Judaism as an admixture of the Torah, their interpretations and traditions all whipped up together.

I do not derogate the scriptures now that I refuse to make them something God never intended for them to be. No one frustrates the grace of God by placing His revelation in its proper perspective. The problem is that we still have too many Pharisees who think they have eternal life in the scriptures and they can attain it by memorization of whole sections of it, or by making a passing grade in law-keeping. Jesus said, “You search the scriptures, because you think you have eternal life in them, but they are given to testify of me, and you will not come unto me that you might have life.”

It was not wrong to search the scriptures. It is right to do that. The wrong lay in the false concept that you could find eternal life in them. The scriptures became a substitute for the Messiah, and the Jews were so involved in “Bible study” they did not come to Jesus. The faith is not Jesus pointing us to a book, but the Book pointing us to Jesus. We can end up worshiping the book instead of the Lord. That would be like a girl so entranced by the love letters of her sweetheart that she couldn’t stop reading them long enough to marry him. I respect the love letters of the apostles but I certainly do not regard them as conferring life through my reading and understanding. Life is in the Son!

If we are obligated to obey the commands of Christ what difference does it make whether we regard them as a written code of laws or not?

It makes a great deal of difference. I will mention some of the differences in four different areas. (1) Every constitutional law requires an authoritative interpreter. When the interpretation is rendered by such a supreme judiciary it is that interpretation which becomes the law. The Roman Catholic Church is a legalistic institution and it eventually developed a papal system, investing a man with infallibility in order to have an enforceable code of laws to which all must be subservient. Regardless of what the Spirit meant by what was revealed the interpretation of the pope became the dogma.

The United States of America has a Supreme Court and the decision of this judicial body becomes the law of the land whether the citizenry likes it or not. The Churches of Christ have developed into a legalistic organization postulating the hope of salvation upon law-keeping rather than upon relationship to God through Christ by simple trusting faith. Since these churches claim to be autonomous, each congregation makes its elders a board of official interpreters who determine what “the law” means. From this decision no appeal may be

made. Generally, a dissident or dissenter has no opportunity to even present his case before his spiritual peers. The elders are the plaintiff, prosecutor, bailiff and judge rolled into one. The individual is charged and must either subscribe to the ruling of the elders or he is thrust out!

The same spirit manifested by the pope on a universal level is characteristic of such elderships on a local level. The difference is one of degree and not of nature. But the fact is that we are not under a legalistic system at all and such tyranny has been drummed up to perpetuate *The System*. The letters of love were addressed to all of the saints. Each one is free and even obligated to read them for himself. The only court of decision is the individual conscience. There is no authorized interpretation. God has arranged for no official interpreters since grace requires none. No man can bind his understanding upon another person in Christ Jesus. He can state his opinion and share his conviction but he cannot make a dogma out of it. What one man cannot do a body of men cannot do. Each man must stand or fall to his own master!

Let me be specific about this, so you will not misunderstand what I say! Elders cannot interpret the meaning of the Word of God for others and make the meaning they derive a creed by which to coerce others. The right of private judgment in reading the word of God must never be abridged by any man or set of men. No one can mediate between you and the Father except the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. It was John Locke who wrote: "It becomes all men to maintain peace and the common offices of friendship in a diversity of opinions, since we cannot reasonably expect that anyone should readily and obsequiously quit his own opinion and embrace ours with a blind resignation to an authority which the understanding of man acknowledges not."

(2) All laws must have an enforcement agency, and such agency must be empowered to command obedience to the law or

assess a proper penalty for infraction or non-compliance. In order to force such obedience the Roman Catholic legalistic system invented purgatory and made the priests and hierarchy official enforcers with power to pardon and to punish.

The Churches of Christ, which also predicate life upon conformity to statutes, seek to impose enforcement by threat of excommunication on earth and torment after death. Fellowship is manipulative by men who can, through interpretation, decide upon the terms of its extension or withdrawal. As a legalistic institution the “Church of Christ” currently resembles a police state more than the prophetic kingdom of heaven. It employs police state methods in some places, with informers, spies, tape-recordings, intelligence agencies, and any other means for securing information, against one whom it considers to be detrimental to the continuance of the organization. It uses “carnal weapons” and reacts as a “kingdom of this world.”

This should not be thought of as strange. It is an inborn characteristic of legalistic establishments. One should expect elders and preachers to react as a Federal Bureau of Investigation, gunning down those whom they regard as subversives and keeping a tight control on the thought-processes. That all of this is utterly foreign to God’s design can be ascertained by those who read the scriptures without partisan bias. Few will do this, however, because to think for oneself is regarded as traitorous in any organization built upon a closed-in view of scriptural interpretation.

I am thinking now of a former elder in a congregation in a northern state. As he began to read this paper a few years ago he became convinced that what was being said made sense. He started gradually making suggestions about fellowship based upon faith and not conformity of opinion. The other elders served notice upon him that this type of thing would not be tolerated. Although he was as much an elder as they were, it became apparent that he would have to knuckle under or stand

up and fight. Against the pleas of his wife he decided to resist.

The other elders subjected him to the “third degree” and when he admitted that he thought there were Christians in other bodies, they publicly charged him with heresy and announced that unless he repented, on a certain day he would be excluded from the congregation. He respectfully asked for an opportunity to state his position before the brethren who had chosen him for elder but was denied the privilege. He was “railroaded” out. This kind of action disturbs many people, but it should not. It is the natural reaction of those who are caught up in a web of legalism and who regard themselves as the guardians of orthodoxy and keepers of the gate.

(3) If the new covenant scriptures are regarded as a written code, one who violates them, even unintentionally, is regarded as a lawbreaker, or criminal. The old aphorism “Ignorance of the law excuses no one” will be repeated and made applicable, regardless of circumstances. Since all legalistic institutions must, for their own preservation, resist and punish any criminal element, the concept of penal exaction automatically intrudes itself. The law must be vindicated. The criminal must be punished.

But if we are not under a written code, one who misunderstands, or steps aside is not a criminal. If we are a family consisting of sons and daughters of the Lord almighty, and maintained by the bond of love, one who falls short of the demand of love is not a criminal. He is a mistaken brother, one who has been overtaken in a fault. The remedy is not to “lower the boom on him.” It is not to “throw the Book at him.” If he makes an unspiritual judgment the requirement is clear. “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourselves, lest you too be tempted” (Galatians 6:1, 2).

In our legalistic approach there are no honestly mistaken

brethren. There are just two classes— ourselves and false teachers. A false teacher is one who does not agree with us on “the issues” which have been exalted and inflated into divisive standards or criteria for fellowship. The expression *pseudo-didaskalos* only occurs once in the apostolic letters. It appears many times that often in one paragraph of some modern religious journals edited by men “who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others” (Luke 18:9). Peter made use of the term when he wrote, “But false prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them.” He goes on to speak of their licentiousness, greed, exploitation with false words, and certain condemnation and destruction.

Those who are branded “false teachers” by radio preachers and front men who constitute the “palace guard” of the Churches of Christ are not like that. If a man does not think that instrumental music is as important as a lot of people make it he is a false teacher. If one does not think that the congregation becomes digressive if it has Bible classes he is branded a false teacher. If he refuses to get all lathered up over the support of Herald of Truth radio and television propaganda, and will not denounce Highland congregation in Abilene, Texas, of which he is not even a member, he is a false teacher, a compromiser, a liberal. One wonders just how silly we will get if we keep on drumming up new laws and new creeds with each passing decade.

One may be mistaken about instrumental music, cups, classes, or the millennium without being a false teacher. Not one of us knows all there is to know. As Will Rogers, the Oklahoma humorist put it, “We are all ignorant, but just about different things.” If being mistaken about some scriptural meaning makes one a false teacher, we are all false teachers, and our vociferous brethren are but examples of a lot of pots calling a lot of kettles black.

In view of our own human failings and shortcomings we would probably be better off if we were a little more understanding and tolerant and made allowances for one another as the scriptures teach us to do. Since I have learned we are not under a written code of law but under the demands of grace, I can be a little more gracious and a little less legalistic. I am not disturbed when other saints do not see everything as I do.

I recognize and respect the freedom of others in Christ Jesus. One who is not free to be wrong about some things is really not free to be right in anything. One who is not free to make mistakes is just not free. I cannot take away the freedom of brethren to think for themselves without forfeiting my own right to do the same thing. My brethren are not lawbreakers or criminals just because they do not concur with my opinions about instrumental music or the support of Herald of Truth. I am not one of God's motorcycle policemen whose duty it is to zoom around on a Harley-Davidson and "chew everyone out" and give a ticket to those who do not share my position. I am not a "divine clearinghouse for ideas" but a sinner saved by grace.

Sometimes I am asked, "But how do you regard one who worships where they have instrumental music?" I wish all questions I have to face were that simple and easy. I regard him as a brother in the Lord who worships where they have instrumental music. One does not become my brother because he is opposed to instrumental music, but because he is God's child. He does not cease to be my brother because he endorses instrumental music. We are not born of a position about music but of the water and of the Spirit. Since we are not under law but under grace I shall allow the grace of God to take care of the situation. I am not God's patrolman and I carry no heavenly "billy-club" to batter my brethren into submission to my thinking.

(4) If we are under a written legal code we are doomed to a

life of fear, dread and insecurity. We can never be sure that we know all of the law we ought to know, nor that we are living up to what we do know to a saving degree. We can never have the assurance of salvation and hope will be more anxiety than anticipation. It seems incredible to me now, but when I was under a written code, I actually was afraid to say that I was saved. I thought that such conviction was arrogance. The only thing you could be certain about was your uncertainty. To be decisive was to be unfaithful to the Book!

It is an amazing thing that brethren who can be so positive about everything else cannot even tell whether they are saved or not. Characteristic of our casuistry in those days, we would always come up with a pat little slogan. "I know I am safe but no one knows he is saved." We thought you had to wait until the resurrection and judgment and find out whether you had made a passing grade on law-keeping or flunked out in your finals. If there was something you didn't know that you should have known, or something you should have remembered that you forgot, the recording angel would blot your name out of the book of life.

No wonder with that kind of an attitude we were all "recording angels" and blotting out the names of brethren "who did not live up to their responsibility." If they missed three times straight without being able to give a good and sufficient reason, like getting a leg cut off in an automobile accident, we withdrew from them. It never occurred to us that they were fed up with a diet of corn flakes every Sunday morning, served up dry and without the sweetening of love and the milk of human kindness. I am glad all of that is over for me. I think it was good that I waded through it and tried to hang on because now I can appreciate what a blessing it is to be in the everlasting arms.

I know now that I have been made a partaker of the divine nature. I am dead and my life is hid with Christ in God. I "worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no

confidence in the flesh.” I have been set free from sin and become a slave of righteousness. I am a willing captive, drawn by His immeasurable love and power. “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (Romans 7:6). The new life of the Spirit is not only contrasted with the old written code but it is contrasted with any other written code, old or new. I am glad that I found that out. Once I thought God wanted me to be a good lawyer, and I studied hard and majored in law. Now I know he wants me to be a great lover, and that’s my major. It is the more excellent way! I know. I have tried them both!

I want to be like Paul. I want to gain Christ. More than anything else in this whole universe that is what I want. I want to “be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Philippians 3:9). Read that again! It is a description of the ground on which I have pitched my tent. There are two approaches to righteousness. You can try to have a righteousness of your own, based on law. It will not work. You do not have what it takes. You can never be good enough by law to make it. You can have the righteousness of God that depends on faith. It will not fail. It is founded not upon what you do for God but upon what He has done for you.

Yes, there is a difference between being guided by the abiding principle of love and being under a written code, a compilation of laws, where you are treated like a child or a slave (Galatians 4:1-3). Never forget that any written code upon which justification is suspended is a law of sin and death. If you convert the new covenant love letters into such a code you doom yourself to die. You build your own scaffold. You knot your own noose. You sharpen your own dagger. If the inheritance is by the law, or by any law except the principle of faith in Christ Jesus, it is no longer by promise!

If the apostolic letters are not intended to be a written code, why were they written at all?

Since they are personal letters and were written to different communities and individuals they were written for different reasons. If you have several married children away from home you do not always write the same things to all of them. Some of what you say applies to all and in that respect one letter is like another. But you deal with each situation as it requires. The same thing holds true with the apostolic letters. They were penned to meet needs, to encourage in times of stress and persecution, or to command actions that were worthy. The circumstances existing determined the purpose of the letters. Our problem is that we hardly think of them as letters. We regard them as so many parts of a book of statutes and we thus destroy the love that should shine through everyone of them.

Paul's first letter to the saints in Corinth was prompted by a report conveyed to the apostle by the family of a Christian woman whose name was Chloe (1:11). He wrote, "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children" (4:14). This was his method of dealing with a rather sticky case of division within the group. Another part of his letter was a reply to one addressed to him and carried by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote" (7:1).

The letter to Philippi was one of thanks to brethren who had sent to relieve his need in prison. It was intended to reassure them of the recuperation of Epaphroditus who had almost died in bringing their gift to Rome. "I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (4:18).

The first letter to Timothy was to inform him of the way one should behave in the household, that is, the family circle of

God. If Paul could have seen Timothy the letter would not have been written at all. “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God” (3:14, 15).

The first epistle of John was written that the recipients might share in the common life which the eyewitnesses of Jesus shared with the Father and the Son, that their joy might be full and that they might know they had eternal life. “And we are writing this that your joy may be complete” (1:4). “I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13).

It was never intended that those who wrote the letters dominate the faith of the saints. “Not that we lord it over your faith, we work with you for your own joy” (2 Cor. 1:24). Those who have converted these timely letters into a legalistic code with which to force brethren to goose-step to their orders and will have completely missed the spirit of the revelation of God.

If we are not under law, why does Paul speak of the law of faith?

In Romans 3:20, Paul affirms that no human being can be justified by works of the law in the sight of God. Actually, he says, law brings knowledge of sin. It does not bring relief from it. But now the righteousness of God is manifested apart from law. It is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. This makes boasting impossible.

Obviously, if one could attain to a state of righteousness through law-keeping he would have something about which to brag. But since we are justified by His grace freely, that is, as a gift, and not through our own efforts, there is no room for boasting. The *King James Version* reads, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith

without the deeds of law” (Romans 3:27, 28).

The law of faith is not the new covenant scriptures. They were not yet written. The apostle was contrasting two principles upon which man might predicate justification. One was by perfectly keeping law. The other was by absolute faith, or trust in the righteousness of Christ. He shows that the first was impossible for man in the flesh. The only hope was by grace as God’s gift. The *Revised Version* conveys the correct meaning in the rendering, “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.” Another good translation is that of Richard Francis Weymouth in *The Modern Speech New Testament*. “Where then is your room for boasting? It is for ever shut out? On what principle? On the ground of merit? No, but on the ground of faith. For we maintain that it is as the result of faith that a man is held to be righteous, apart from actions done in obedience to Law.”

There is no indication that the apostle Paul ever thought of the letters he was writing as part of a written code of law. It remained for us, after these letters were gathered up and compiled into a single volume, to read back into them the idea of a code of jurisprudence. Grace is so difficult for us to accept, simply because it is a gift without strings attached that we feel more comfortable if we devise a system by which we pay God back for what He did for us. Because of this tendency toward “legalism” every time some brethren see the term law they automatically think: it is speaking of a written code.

But did not Paul say he was under the law of Christ?

Indeed he did, and I am also under the law of Christ, exactly as he was. Paul was talking about adjusting to various categories of individuals for the sake of the gospel that he might by the employment of all means save more. He was free from all

men, but he made himself the servant of all men, in order to gain the most men possible for Christ (1 Cor. 9:19). He knew that in order to do this it was necessary for him to share the life and circumstances of those he met. He did not ask them to become like himself. He became like them. He adapted himself to their customs, recognized their hangups and made allowances even for their prejudices.

He said, “Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.” Paul respected the traditions of the Jews. He conformed to them while among the Jews. Although he regarded every creature of God as good and not to be refused as food if received with thanksgiving, he would not violate the dietary laws of those among whom he labored. He valued men more than his own freedom and would not allow his liberty to become a stumblingblock to others. When one has a passion for souls other considerations are always secondary.

“To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law.” Paul did not seek to bind upon the Gentiles any of the ceremonies or requirements of the Mosaic law. Paul was circumcised, but had no qualm about eating with brethren who were not. He circumcised Timothy, who was a half-Jew, as a matter of expediency, but he did not suggest this as a rule for others of mixed parentage. He did not deliberately flaunt his Jewishness. As Albert Barnes says, in his comments upon this passage, “Nothing is ever gained by provoking opposition for the mere sake of opposition. Nothing tends more to hinder the gospel than that.”

But Paul was not lawless! He was not an antinomian. He was not an outlaw among those without law. He recognized the sovereignty of God. He sought to live, even among the Greeks, in such a manner as to demonstrate respect and reverence for

God's rule. Jesus was not just someone for whom Paul lived. He was Paul's life. "It is not I that liveth, it is Christ that liveth in me." That is exactly the way I feel, and although I cannot begin to imitate His life as did Paul, I want to do so "as much as in me is."

For years I sought to be good by law. But law operates by fear. It does not bring inner calm, but trepidation. It causes you to measure yourself by dogma rather than devotion. It even inspires rivalry and jealousy. But I was delivered from my childish concept of God as head of a universal bureau of investigation, composed of angels reporting back to him as chief. I came to know what it meant to be a child in the family of God. What a difference it made. I am not only under law to Christ, but Christ is my law. My law is personal. It is unthinkable to me, the way I feel about Him, that I would not respond to His wishes, and keep His commandments.

What a blessing it is to have no rivals! You are yourself and God loves you as you are. He doesn't want you to be someone else or even try to be. This frees you from the frightful trauma of thinking you are a failure because you cannot accomplish what another does. It also delivers you from the terrible wrong of trying to make everyone else over in conformity with your own scarred image. You can listen to what others say about you and read what they write about you, and rejoice and be exceedingly glad. You can even laugh out loud when they lie about you, and feel sorry for them, rather than yourself!

No one is going to disturb my relationship with Jesus. No one is going to displace me or replace me. I'm the only child of the Father who is like me, and there are no substitutes for me. There are no substitutes for Him either. No one else has to think like me, talk like me, or write like me! They probably would not want to do so. But I do not have to think, talk or write like anyone else either. You're right, I don't want to! To let Jesus be

your law does not mean that all of God's children are stamped out with a divine cookie cutter. It does not mean they are a row of sanctified Kewpie dolls lined up on the shelf of the heavenly den. If you have any growing ambition to convert me into being like you, forget it! I am clay, but you are not the potter! You are another lump of clay. And there is nothing sillier than a couple of clay pots engaged in a knock-down-and-drag-out fight about whether the Father will swipe one off the shelf for supporting a television program.

Those of us who are heirs of our particular "restoration movement" which was launched by godly and devout Presbyterians with the help of others, are running out of steam and effectiveness in this generation. We have never made peace in the church. We have only made pieces of it. Even now, while others are thinking in terms of repairing breaches and binding up wounds, a lot of our brethren are in a frenzy of withdrawal, driving humble saints out from among them, breaking hearts and homes, cutting and slashing as if the sword of the Spirit had been given them only for the purpose of massacre in the family. The day for such "blood-baths" and political purges is gone. The saints are getting fed up with authoritarian assumption. They are tired of mere human beings throwing their weight around and "lording" it over God's heritage. The fullness of times has come for a change.

The "church" is composed of individuals. It can only be changed as individuals are changed. And individuals are changed as their thinking is changed. We are today exactly where our thinking has brought us. We will be tomorrow exactly where our thinking takes us. If we would be different tomorrow than we are today we must change our thinking before tomorrow. You do not change the thinking of an organization. You change the thinking of those within it, but you must start with yourself. Please allow me to make a few suggestions I think may help restore to sanity a movement which is tearing at its own flesh, and ripping itself to shreds.

1. Begin to regard “the church” as a family, the whole family of God. Think of it as the entire collection of the ransomed and redeemed. It is not limited to those who have a correct understanding of certain doctrinal points. It consists of all who have been born again. It is the community of the whole creation. Every saved person on earth is in it. All who have committed themselves to an obedient life under the Lordship of Jesus are a part of it. If you must judge others, do so by their fruits, and not by their intellectual ability or attainments.

There is a difference in being a member of your father’s family and in belonging to the Farm Bureau Association or the Parent-Teachers Association. It is true that the constituents of the latter organizations can get together for a Christmas party but it is not like having the family present on Christmas Eve. Our problem is that we have allowed the family feeling to erode away and the warmth has gone out of our association. Sometimes we are even “bugged” because we have to go to a meeting and we are afraid to take strangers for fear they will be assaulted verbally by impolite and boorish guardians of the ramparts. We must allow the Spirit of God to change our hearts until we regard each other as beloved brethren.

2. Put the new covenant scriptures back into the proper perspective. They are not a compilation of laws under grace, but a collection of letters written with deep affection to the children of God in Christ. You are not a law enforcement agent, or a political officer. You are a sinner saved by grace. You are not one of God’s police squad, but a participant in divine mercy.

The new covenant scriptures are a recipe book for life. They are not the Way. Jesus is the Way. He is also the truth and the life. The letters are a road map to show you how to follow the Way. They constitute the white lines on the edges of the highway, and the yellow line in its center. Do not get uptight when someone does not see everything like you do. You will not be held accountable for what another thinks or does. Above all,

do not “lay down the law” for others. You are as human as they are. Show them “the more excellent way.” It is never inappropriate, and never out of place.

3. Think of the particular restoration movement of which we are the fortunate heirs as a historical reaction to disunity and fragmentation of the saints of God. Do not confuse that movement, or its crystallization into its present form or image with the “Lord’s church.” It is sectarian to build an institution around any concept, even one as great as unity, and designate it as “the church.” This means that we must stop thinking of any of the two dozen different Churches of Christ, or all of them put together, as being the body of Christ exclusively.

That body has members in the world who never heard of “our” Church of Christ. It has members who meet behind various and divergent signboards. They are not God’s children because of where they are, but in spite of where they are. One is a child of God because he is in Christ Jesus and Christ is in him. He is not a person who is right on everything, but one who is in the right Person with everything, including his mistaken ideas and notions. We are not a people of the united notions, but a people united in Christ.

4. Begin to quietly enjoy the freedom wherewith Christ has set you free. You do not need to engage in oratory or flag-waving to be free. You do not need to set off fireworks in the local congregation. You do not have to beat a drum and shout in the Bible class. But remember, you are not free so long as your life is regulated by other men and you are motivated in what you do through fear of what others will say or think.

A good way to commence to be used by God as a humble peacemaker in this divided complex is to resolve to visit other groups who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to see for yourself how they express their praise unto God. I suggest that you resolve to visit a new place one Sunday night per month.

Scare your neighbors by telling them you would like to attend with them on a certain Sunday night. It will probably cause them to think you are coming unglued, and losing your marbles, seeing that you have always refused their invitation with a kind of self-righteous arrogance before.

If your intentions are misunderstood and you are regarded as a “potential joiner” make your self clear. Tell them frankly, but smilingly, that you are satisfied with who you are and where you are. You are not seeking either personal identity, or “church identification” (whatever that is) but you are simply seeking to understand their approach to your Father, and you are interested in them as you are in all who love your Lord.

What you see and hear will probably “turn you off.” You may develop a feeling of pride and superiority and sit in the seat of the scornful thanking God that you are not as other men are. Do not let this happen. If you do, Satan has turned your good intentions into a personal destructive force. Search for the things you can commend as well as seeing those you cannot commend. But each place you go, enter with a prayer, “Lord, if there is someone here who needs me, lead me to that person. Let me touch his life, or hers, in such a manner that Christ, who is the Reality can shine through me.”

If you have been reared in “The Church of Christ” you may have a real trauma about even going to another place for a visit. This is a part of the legalistic approach, and it affects us exactly as it does a devout Roman Catholic, and for exactly the same reason. Of course, on that basis Jesus could never have left heaven and come to earth, and even had He done so, He could not have associated with those among whom He moved. All sectarianism is based upon fear, and that includes our sectarianism as well as any other brand.

If you are afraid to go listen to others for fear you may be misled, your real problem is not what they may advocate, but

what you believe. You are afraid that your shield of faith may be penetrated, or that your sword is incapable of saving you in certain encounters. The tragedy of all this is that what you call faith is merely your prejudice, and it is true that mere prejudice can never stand up in encounter. If the sword of the Spirit is not able to resist some enemies it is not able to resist any! I grant you that your use of it may be inept, but if that is the problem you ought not to be too cynical and critical of your religious neighbors who are not too well-trained either. In our sheltered monastic existence, where we send out knights, whom we dub preachers, to battle dragons like the Jehovah's Witnesses, the rest of us couldn't kill a mouse in the castle with a broom. But Socrates said, "An unexamined life is not worth living," to which I offer my own paraphrase, "An unexamined faith is not worth having."

All attempts at reunion of the people of God must begin with association, not for debate but for mutual understanding. This is not easy for those who have been taught that segregation from others is proof of fidelity to God, and any association on a friendly plane is compromise. Any reversal of policy is difficult when the traditional procedure is assumed to be the will of God, but we must change if we are to be used by the Spirit. In my own life I have developed a personal strategy. I call it the ART of peacemaking, because it involves three things— Association, Recognition, and Teamwork. Let me explain.

I am resolute in my determination to inaugurate and practice association with all who regard Jesus as the Messiah and God's Son. Since this is my only creed, it is a good foundation upon which to stand with another while we try to explore the implications and demands of our mutual faith. In addition to mere association, I will *recognize* as a brother in Christ anyone who has been born of the water and of the Spirit. I will receive such a one as God received him— and me!

I do not receive one because he is a Baptist, a Methodist, a

Mennonite, or a Church of Christ. To do that would be sectarian and I am opposed to all sectarianism, which is, in essence, simply the party spirit expressed. I receive him because he is in Christ. I am not so much concerned with what he is in. I am concerned with who he is in and who is in him. Since I must rely upon human judgment, as well as upon the word of God, I realize that I may make a mistake. But I would rather accept as a brother one whom God has not accepted, than to reject as a brother one whom God has accepted. That is but another way of saying that I want even my ignorance to be slanted toward mercy rather than the other direction.

In addition to *association* with all who believe in Christ as Lord, and *recognition* as my brothers of all who have become a new creation in what I believe to be the divinely authorized response to the good news about Jesus, I am driven to go one step further. I will engage in any work with others which I believe to be in harmony with the principles of righteousness. In plain simple terms this means that I will put my shoulder to the wheel and help in one particular with others with whom I cannot assist in anything else.

Let me be explicit! In case of a tornado tragedy, if the Mennonites are on the ground and alleviating distress in a well-organized fashion, I see no reason for me setting up a "Church of Christ Depot." I will serve in the soup kitchen and the clothing dispensary with the Mennonites. If the Presbyterians develop a good program for handling drug abuse among high school young people I will go into the schools with them, and appear on television with them, and throw my support behind them. I will engage in teamwork with anyone who seeks to exemplify the spirit of my Lord, even though I may think he is quite ignorant of a lot of things in the scriptures.

Disaster, hunger, drug abuse, cold, and age, are not "Church of Christ" problems. They are problems of the human predicament and all of us are caught up in them. I want to fight

sin, and that means I must fight its effects. The human predicament is part of those effects, and anyone who seeks to openly fight them is fighting the effects of sin, whether he knows it or not. I fully realize that I may be labeled a “heretic” for my position, but that does not bother me one bit. The heroes of today were the heretics of yesterday. I am perfectly aware that all of the reforms ever carried out were the work of *heretics*, and I shall feel in good company.

There is one thing you must remember, however, as you read this. I am telling you what I think and how I propose to work. You need not think as I do and you need not work as I do, for me to love you. I am doing what I think my Lord wants me to do and saying what I think He wants me to say. I will be glad to see Him and find out if I was right about it, but I respect Him to the degree that no one else will ever be Lord of my life! God bless you all!

The Art of Peacemaking

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[Abstract]

To suffer for Christ also means to embrace the cause of unity within the body of Christ over against all forms of sectarianism and denominational prestige. It means carrying on our hearts and in our prayers the scandal of our divisions and working to remove them wherever possible.— Suzanne de Dietrich in Toward Fullness of Life.

I suspect that most of our readers know by now that I am a great admirer of the Greek language in which the new covenant scriptures were written. It was divine providence which gave us the revelation at the very time when this versatile tongue was the medium of verbal exchange throughout the Mediterranean world. It was a style of dress best calculated to adorn, exhibit and enhance the message from on high. Will Durant says, “It was a noble tongue, vigorous, supple, melodious, as irregular as any vital speech, but lending itself readily to expressive combinations, delicate gradations and distinctions of meaning, subtle philosophical conceptions, and every variety of literary excellence.”

To pick a favorite word from such a glorious army would be like trying to select one gem from a truckload of precious stones, yet I am sure that any small collection of mine would certainly include the word *eirene*. This word occurs ninety-one times, in 88 of which it is translated peace. Once it is rendered

quietness, and once rest. Our feminine name Irene is a transliteration as is our English word irenic, which means peaceful or conciliatory.

It is one of the great terms used by the Holy Spirit, appearing in every one of the books of the new covenant scriptures, except 1 John. Paul uses it in combination with grace in the salutation of all his letters, using the additional word mercy only when writing to Timothy. When Greeks met, the customary greeting was “Grace.” When Jews saluted one another it was with “Peace.” Thus the apostle embraces both Jew and Greek at the very outset of each personal letter. Frequently he closes his epistles with a repetition of “peace.”

The corresponding Hebrew word was *shalom*. It conveyed the idea of wholeness, completeness or perfection. It has a variety of renderings, but generally there is a sense of completing a work, clearing away a charge by payment or restitution, or bringing a difficulty to a conclusion. It is in such a framework the Jews in an audience addressed by Paul would have understood peace.

We limit peace, as we do many other words, when we think of it as a mere cessation of hostilities, or a lull between battles. Peace is a state or condition in which a proper relationship is maintained so that tranquillity prevails. I once knew a husband and wife who lived under the same roof for three years and never exchanged a harsh word. They did not exchange a kind word either.

They were not on speaking terms. They slept in different rooms and avoided each other as much as possible. Their house was one of quiet, but not of peace. It was the quiet of the morgue or the cemetery. Just because they were not shouting or shooting at one another did not indicate peace. Both were churning with inner turmoil.

I am writing about peace because I think that our sectarian squabbles are a disgrace to the faith which we profess, and our divisions are a scandal of the deepest dye. The very existence of our warring factions and belligerent parties is proof of how far we have forsaken the ideal of “the Prince of peace.” In one Texas city I visited nine different kinds of “Churches of Christ.” As we talked in the offices it was obvious that the constituents of each group knew nothing about the others. I was the only man who had ever made it a point to visit all of them. I saw brethren in the Lord who lived in the same block and had never met.

There was not even a “restoration brotherhood” (whatever that is) in the city. There were nine separate and distinct “brotherhoods” and the members treated each other more like “hoods” than like “brothers.” Imagine men getting into nine different pulpits in one day in one city, all of them behind signboards bearing the name “Church of Christ” and bitterly assailing other children of God whom they had never met and to whom they had not once listened. Surely the devil has manipulated us into doing his destructive work. Why should he personally labor to destroy the children of God when all of them are paying men a salary to use their facilities with which to do it so effectively?

All we have done for a hundred years is to prove to the world that we cannot get along with one another in Christ. We treat those who have never made a profession in Jesus with greater politeness than we exhibit to a saint who differs with us over some minor point of opinion. Brethren who ate and drank together at the same table for years become victims of “clerical con men” who use the pulpit for rabble-rousing and turn them against each other until they begin to hate one another as a proof that they love God. Homes are broken up, families are ripped off, friendships are severed, and congregations shivered to bits over false tests of loyalty dreamed up and drummed up by front men who often profit financially from exploitation of human

misery and anguish.

Our tragic divisions affect the whole world. Each faction, in a kind of unholy rivalry, sends “missionaries” to other lands, whose real mission is to line up adherents on some American-born issue. Natives who got along well as heathen learn to fight one another with gossip, innuendo and false accusations when converted to Christ. Exportation of our factional hangups and unwritten creeds poses a threat which will disrupt the whole Christian purpose. Surely such things ought not so to be!

What can be done? Because the situation is so seriously mixed up there are those who simply throw in the towel, throw up their hands, and give up! They feel frustrated and futile in any attempt they make. They have seen previous efforts come to nought and are convinced nothing can be done. I deny that kind of pessimistic prediction. I refuse to be discouraged or frightened. I am not only convinced something can be done, I am persuaded something will be done.

When schism is rampant peacemakers are needed. Peace is not an accident. It does not just happen. It does not result from chance. Peace must be made. It must be waged as war is waged. This calls for a strategy of peace as others develop a strategy of war. The word *peacemakers* occurs only once in the sacred scriptures, but there is a blessing attached to it. Jesus pronounced that blessing, so peacemakers operate under divine benediction. They are called the children of God. Those who set up divisions are sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 19). Those who promote peace labor with the Spirit, not in opposition to Him. Let me suggest a few essentials to the strategy of peace.

DEFINITION OF PEACE

1. The first essential is to have an understanding of what we seek. To attack a prepared and defended position with no clear understanding of the objective to be gained may prove

suicidal. Peace is not negative but positive. It is not passive but active. It is not lack of something, but something to fill a lack. It does not result from conformity of opinion or interpretation. It is not sterile or lifeless. It is a dynamic which provides power for united effort in the cause of righteousness.

It is not simple peace of mind, but “the peace of God which passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). It is not peace such as the world provides with pacts, programs, agreements or concordats. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give it to you” (John 14:27). It is a fruit of the Spirit along with love and joy. Peace is the composure which comes from companionship with God, the calm begotten by closeness with the divine, the contentment produced by conquest of care. Peace is the inner conviction that one is a new creation, cleansed by the blood of Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and justified by faith in Jesus. It lifts the one who has it above the fret and worry about earthly things where he can accept himself as he is, because God accepted him thus. He has no rivals. He is unique. He can accept others where he finds them, standing with them on any truth they may hold and using it as a basis for leading them to a closer walk with God.

2. All peacemakers must begin with themselves. Since peace has to do with wholeness, completeness or maturity, a well-integrated personality must first be achieved. Sin fragments, explodes and disintegrates. Only Jesus can put us back together again. He alone can unscramble our brains, disentangle us from the thicket and put the pieces into the pattern of God’s design for us. One who has no peace within can never help others have peace without! The would-be physician must first be healed before he can help heal others!

In their commentary on Thessalonians, Hogg and Vine assert that peace is the result accruing from justification. I think this is correct. Paul says that “being now justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Justification is the act by which God treats us as guiltless. We are not guiltless and we can never become so. But our absolute trust in and reliance upon the blood of Jesus places us in such a position that God can declare us free from guilt. This is not because of any work of merit upon our part but because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

A realization that God does not count our sins against us, nor impute them unto us, brings a freedom from guilt-consciousness. We recognize the restoration of a right relationship with the Father, and a sharing in eternal life. In such a state we can see the glory and majesty of a closer walk with God, of unity with the divine. With the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we crave for everyone a sense of unity and closeness. The disturbed and distorted community of believers needs to see an example of love which transcends artificial barriers, triumphs over differences, and is able to receive all of God's children without reservation.

3. Peacemakers must see division among believers for what it is— a sin against the authority of God as expressed in the word of God. We should not be one merely because of policy. We should not be united simply because of the effect it will have upon others. We should be one because it is commanded of God. Our schisms exist in defiance of divine authority. They are works of the flesh like adultery, drunkenness and idolatry. We should no more continue in division than we should in these things.

Division is an intolerable state. To condone it will condemn us; to defend it will destroy us. Nowhere does God's word pronounce a blessing upon division among the saints. Every time it is mentioned it is deplored and castigated. One who is a peacemaker in the kingdom is not merely trying to create a more amicable state of affairs. He is opposing an immoral, God-defying, Christ-denying situation. The devil has manipulated us into thinking that it is God's will that we come out from among

the brethren as He told us to come out from among the heathen. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Peacemaking is often a thankless task. Men prefer to be divided. It gratifies ego and pampers pride. It provides an excuse for hostility toward others under a guise of faithfulness to God. It makes possible all kinds of discrimination and defends it as “the best way” to do the will of God. But it cannot be defended honestly. It is a sin, a tragic betrayal of the body of Christ, and a frightening commentary on human perversity.

CULTIVATION OF CONFIDENCE

4. Peacemakers must carry on their effort with undaunted faith. Faith is confidence, trust or assurance. One who is easily discouraged, or who allows the barbed shafts of criticism to get under his skin will never succeed in restoring order in the kind of situation which we face. There must not only be a strong and powerful conviction that unity is the will of God, but also that the Spirit working through us can alleviate the condition we face.

We must believe that no heart is too dirty for the blood of Christ to clean up, and no human mess is too bad for the power of God to straighten out. Actually, what this means is that the true peacemaker will see with an eye of faith a united church. There can be no creation that did not first exist as a mental image or concept. The one who accomplishes God’s purpose is the one who looks not at things that are seen, but at those which are unseen.

I have an inner vision of the saints working together in unison. It does not embrace a picture of every one under the same roof or of the same opinion. But it does include a recognition of all who are in Christ Jesus, working together, praying together, and sharing in the dissemination of the truths concerning Jesus. I refuse to allow any circumstance to dim that

hope. No one can throw enough cold water to extinguish the fire in my heart. I shall die before my dream is fully realized but I shall work as if it were going to come to pass tomorrow. One reason I do not become uptight about it is that I am seeing it work now on a minor scale in many places. The party spirit is eroding away.

So there is no use of you trying to discourage me. The indwelling Spirit of God has erased the word *discouragement* from the wall of my heart. Satan's graffiti has been expunged. I do not intend to be turned aside by anything. The purpose, pleasure and will of God is to bring all things together in unity in Christ. I am involved in that purpose, pleasure and will. I do not intend to be deterred by falsehood, threat or innuendo. If you are sitting in the shade waiting for me to grow tired of trying to promote fellowship across our silly lines, you might as well get up, mop your brow and get with it! I am more convinced today than I have ever been of the rightness of my plea for the unity of all believers. I am not about to give up. Really, I am just starting!

I am fully persuaded that God's will should be done and I am absolutely convinced that it will be done. God is not the author of confusion but of peace. He does not want His children clawing and fighting one another. Whether I labor to fulfill His will is up to me. My hope of life depends upon me doing that will, but His will does not depend upon my life. I want to be a peacemaker because peacemakers are on God's side. They are called the children of God. I praise the Father for the lessening of every tension and the triumph of every irenic gesture or overture.

5. Peacemakers must be persons of prayer. And they must pray without doubting. They must never become cynical or skeptical. They must never allow external circumstances to drain away their trust or to dilute it to the degree that it is no longer dynamic. I have seen many people who started out to

work for reunion among the saints give up the fight, fold their hands and quit. When I first began to plead for real restoration of the new covenant unity in Christ a great many young men tried to tie their own strings to the MISSION MESSENGER kite. When they found out that I was not the least bit interested in forming another faction they faded out of the picture. I never hear from them anymore. I am not a cat's paw to pull partisan chestnuts out of the fire for any group in the church. I belong only to Jesus Christ who is my Lord.

My own interest has not flagged. I place the outcome in the hands of God and leave it there. My task is to plant and water. God will give the increase. If the opposition throws up a roadblock I go around it. If an insurmountable impediment bars the way in one direction, I go another route, never losing sight of my real objective which is to achieve the purpose, will and pleasure of God— the unity of all things in heaven and on earth in Christ.

I pray without a question about God's hearing. And while I am tremendously strengthened by the ever-increasing number of those who pray for me, I would still go on if I had to stand alone. It is not a matter of my indomitable will, for I am weak, but my conviction that it is His infallible will, which keeps me pressing toward the goal. His purpose has become my purpose. His will has become my will. His pleasure is my pleasure.

Lately I have been immersing myself in the content of the letter addressed by Paul to "God's people at Colossae, brothers in the faith, incorporate in Christ." I am not one of God's people at Colossae. I am one of God's people in Saint Louis. But I am a brother in the faith and I am incorporate in Christ. I accept this letter, therefore, as speaking to my life and my needs. On this basis I ask God that I may "receive from him all wisdom and spiritual understanding for full insight into his will, so that my manner of life may be worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him." I also ask that I "may bear fruit in active goodness of

every kind and grow in the knowledge of God.”

I have especially been led through study and meditation to entreat God that “he may strengthen me in his glorious might, with ample power to meet whatever comes with fortitude, patience and joy.” The apostle encouraged the saints “to persevere in prayer, with minds awake, and thankful heart.” It will do little good to persevere in prayer if one has a mind asleep or closed. It will do no good to pray with an unthankful heart.

We are divided strife-torn and ripped off because we have faced every newly arriving situation with minds asleep. Every such situation has been elevated to a crisis condition. We have not so much acted upon such conditions as we have reacted to them. Frequently we have reacted first and thought about it afterwards. I want to face each development, not upon the basis of a previous traditional slant or stance, but in the light of the scriptures. That we have developed certain presuppositions as a part of our historical development can hardly be denied. Even when we affirm that “we speak where the Bible speaks” we do not always speak as the Bible speaks. We speak as the words are filtered through our “restoration movement” screen.

This creates several tragic problems. First, it stifles original thinking, and creates an atmosphere of stagnation. Men become afraid to express themselves about their real views and either keep still or drop out. They must play politics in *The System* or they will be driven out and ruined. Every person who is “in on the know” can cite numerous cases where Church of Christism has operated to produce spiritual “blood purges” and brutally treated some of the finest people who were part of the movement.

Secondly, the closed-mind status freezes ignorance at the current level. I hold that God revealed to man all of the divine thought essential to human welfare, happiness and wholeness. I do not think we have probed the depth of that revelation or

completely exhausted the mother lode. It is an unenviable species of arrogance for any generation to feel that “we are the people and wisdom will die with us.” It is hypocritical to urge everyone to study the Bible for himself and then shoot down those who do so and learn something we have not before discovered. I suspect you may say that with me the decision has been firmly reached as to the authenticity and genuineness of the sacred scriptures, but I am open to investigate any deduction drawn from the scriptures, which includes review and reinvestigation of my own fallible understanding.

I intend to continue to pray that the Father will help me properly relate to all of His children in a manner which is for their edification and growth. I will move among all of them regardless of their hostility toward each other. If I am reviled I shall try not to revile in return. I will not seek revenge but always leave a place for divine retribution. I am resolved not to pay back evil for evil, and so far as it lies within me to live at peace with all men. In the *New English Bible* translation occurs the beautiful gem of truth: “The wisdom from above is in the first place pure; and then peace-loving, considerate and open to reason; it is straightforward and sincere, rich in mercy and in the kindly deeds that are its fruit. True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace” (James 3:17, 18).

The wisdom from above is first pure! Brethren with whom I grew up actually used this statement to cancel out everything that James wrote in this gloriously irenic passage. They interpreted it to mean that anyone who did not agree with our partisan projection was offering an *impure* doctrine, and since it was not pure *in the first place*, we should not seek even to try and be at peace with him. Instead we should challenge him, debate him, and even attack him verbally from the platform, allowing him no opportunity to present his own defense.

I do not believe the God of all grace was intimating that we

should not be “peace-loving, considerate and open to reason” with one who did not see the millennial question, the instrumental music question, or the issue of cups, classes or colleges as we did. We sucked that kind of meaning out of our factional thumb. One does not become impure in doctrine simply because he does not see everything as we do. We are not infallible and our interpretation is not infallible. To lift out a statement about the heavenly wisdom first being pure and then use it as justification for boorish and unprincipled treatment of a brother who honestly disagrees with us is about as sectarian as you can become. But as Canon Farrar has pointed out, “Even out of this strong condemnation of contentious dogmatism, the universal misinterpretation of scripture has extorted an excuse — nay, an argument— for intolerance.”

The “wisdom from above” is contextually contrasted with wisdom that is “earth-bound, sensual and demonic.” The passage begins with a question, “Who among you is wise or clever?” James declares that real wisdom is manifested by wise behavior and a proper attitude. “Let his right conduct give practical proof of it, with the modesty that comes of wisdom.” He then zeroes in on the man who thinks he is clever and who resents others. “But if you are harboring bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, consider whether your claims are not false and a defiance of the truth.”

This is plain! Regardless of how much wisdom one thinks he has amassed, if it leaves him bitterly jealous and selfish, instead of modest and humble, he needs to review his claims to see if he is not off the track. The kind of wisdom which produces jealousy and selfishness, does not come from above. It is earthly in origin, sensual and demonic. James puts his finger on the basis for most disorder and schism when he writes, “For with jealousy and ambition come disorder and evil of every kind.” I am persuaded that more of our divisions are promoted and prolonged by preacher jealousy and selfishness, and by clerical ambition than by any other factor. If these could be utterly

eliminated most rifts would be healed and we would all be working together before the year ends.

In contrast with earth-bound wisdom which produces jealousy and selfish ambition, is “the wisdom from above which is in the first place pure.” That is, it produces pure and wholesome motivation, untainted by base selfishness. The first thing such wisdom does is to purge the heart of earth-bound considerations of greatness and power, of sensual desires and lust for control, of demonic struggle for eminence and dominion. Although it is true that the wisdom from above would be doctrinally correct and infallible, the consideration here is the motivation and attitude which it creates.

One who would be an instrument of peace must first be pure or free of political considerations, “and then peace-loving, considerate and open to reason.” I thrill to the description of heaven-sent wisdom of which James writes, “It is straightforward and sincere, rich in mercy and in the kindly deeds that are its fruit.” That is beautiful! It spells out what I would like for my weak and unworthy life to be. But it is the next sentence which makes my heart palpitate with real joy. It defines true justice, and in these days especially that clarification is needed.

“True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace.” There must be proper seed, a proper spirit of planting, and a reaping time. The seed of peace brings forth fruit and the harvest that is gathered in is true justice. The implication is that only peacemakers will fill their baskets with such fruit because they alone will plant the seed. I would like to go up and down the land like a new Johnny Appleseed, leaving the seed of peace deposited wherever I find a place. And I would like to know that long after my departure, others will gather the fruit of true justice.

We will not get too many peacemakers. The field is not

crowded. There is room for another. There is room for you. Start where you are, make peace with God, make peace in your family circle, make peace in the community, make peace in the congregation. Resolve never to create another faction. Do all you can to alleviate the distress caused by those already started. To be a peacemaker is to be called a child of God. I eagerly pray that you will become such a person today!

The Spiritual Eclipse

Mission Messenger (May 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

A few days ago I was reading from the translation of apostolic letters made by that versatile Anglican, J. B. Phillips. I suspect I am favorably influenced toward his version to some extent by the fact that when Phillips had finished his rendering of the letter to Colossae he mailed a copy of it to C. S. Lewis. That literary worthy not only encouraged him to persevere but supplied the title “Letters to Young Churches” which Phillips adopted for his compilation of the epistles.

I am somewhat moved by the final statement in the “Translator’s Foreword” written in 1958, when the new covenant scriptures had been collected into a single volume bearing the title *The New Testament in Modern English*. Phillips writes, “Not the least of my gratitude is evoked by the assurance that has grown within me that here in the New Testament, at the very heart and core of our Faith, Christians are far more at one than their outward divisions would imply. From this unquestionable evidence of fundamental unity I derive not only great comfort but a great hope for the future.”

I like to read the letter to the Christians at Ephesus as Phillips translates it. It is especially good in dealing with “the divine secret” which had been “hidden to past generations of mankind.” As Phillips puts it, “The purpose is that all the angelic powers should now see the complex wisdom of God’s

plan being worked out through the Church in conformity to that timeless purpose which he centered in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (3:10, 11). Even the most unemotional reader cannot escape being stirred by such poignant terms as complex wisdom, timeless purpose and centered in Christ.

Really, there are few of us who think of the church today in any such categories. Most of the brethren have no consciousness of angels looking over the ramparts of glory and observing what we do in working out the complex wisdom of God’s plan. The way we act it will take the angels a long time to get even an elementary education, and they need to be careful and selective because a lot of what we do is not at all a part of the wisdom of God’s plan. I’m not so sure that a lot of us think of ourselves as proceeding in conformity with a timeless purpose. We are too caught up with all of the nitty-gritty and trivia which belong to the things that are seen and which will pass away! What has happened to us?

I did a lot of preaching in the dust bowl area of the midwest during the days when cruel driving winds relentlessly eroded away the topsoil from fields which should never have been put to the plow. One day I stepped from the train “away out west in Kansas,” when the dust in the air was so thick that visibility was not even a hundred feet. As I stood on the station platform and the train began to move away, a figure appeared out of the gloom and introduced himself. It was the brother with whom I was to stay. He proved to be quite a wag, and when we got in the old Jalopy and headed out into the haze, he said, “What do you think of the eclipse?” “Eclipse?” I asked, wondering if I had overlooked some planetary phenomenon. “Yeh,” he replied, “the earth is coming between herself and the sun.”

That is what I think has happened to us. The church has come between herself and Christ. We have obscured the sun of righteousness, and reversed the prophecy so that “they which sat

in light have seen great darkness.” In many places God’s purpose is no longer conceived of as centered in Christ, except in sermonic platitudes. It is centered in the organization we have contrived and pass off as the church for which Jesus died.

All of you have no doubt heard of the man who formed a company to probe for oil. The company spent a million dollars and drilled one hole to prodigious depth, but when they installed a shiny modern pump they got just enough fuel to keep the machinery operating. We have programmed, planned and promoted the church until now we have a sophisticated institution selling salvation at a pretty high financial rate, and most of the finance is spent keeping the machinery running. In many places the church exists chiefly to keep itself in existence. It is the perpetuator of tradition, the promulgator of the *status quo*.

We do not know what heaven has going for us. We are unaware of “the magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians, and how tremendous is the power available to us who trust in God” (Ephesians 1:18, 19). A couple of years ago the news media carried a story about the discovery of the corpse of a woman in a dingy tenement in New York. The people in the community knew her as a recluse. She was always attired in rags which she apparently never changed. They saw her, dirty and unkempt, salvaging items of food from garbage cans in the rear alleys behind stores and restaurants. When they did not see her for several days they reported her absence to the authorities.

When the police broke down the door they were greeted with an almost unbelievable sight. Old newspapers, dusty and musty, and yellow with age, were piled in rows as high as one could reach. Only a narrow passageway led to the back of the room where the pitiable figure lay dead upon an old army cot. The mortician who prepared the body for a cheap casket found concealed in the tattered clothing, bank deposit books with more

than a half million dollars recorded. Search of the premises revealed fifty dollar bills stuffed at random between the newspapers with no apparent order or system. The woman was an heiress whose developing sense of greed and fear had driven her to a lonely death.

The church today is surrounded by the news. The glad tidings of heaven, the triumphs of yesterday, the demands of the present, these are all piled about us. And we are heirs. "Here is the staggering thing, that in all which will one day belong to him we have been promised a share" (Ephesians 1:11). But we can withdraw from the teeming world about us, and we can die in our loneliness, subsisting upon scraps, and dreaming of what it once was, what it used to be like.

Certainly we had no idea that in our huge building programs and in our devising of promotional apparatus we were going to chain ourselves to places and things until we could not move even though where we were and what we were doing no longer had any relevance to life. And the very upkeep would throttle us when changing patterns of life left us stranded, cast up on the beach and deserted by the very patrons who once went along, apparently just for the ride.

Recently I read of a man who acquired a baby leopard. The cub was so cute and playful that neighbors brought their children over to pet and fondle it. But it grew larger and had to be restrained inside an expensive enclosure. The cost of meat made it almost prohibitive to feed it, but the zoo would not take it. One day when the owner went inside the pen, the big cat went berserk. He was barely able to fight it off after claws and fangs had cruelly lacerated his flesh. Of course, the church is not like that, but what started out to be a harmless experiment has sometimes become an organizational giant which it is difficult to feed and nourish.

I think we become victims of our own traditions. We

confuse these with God's will and stubbornly resist change, fearing that to alter our way of doing things would be to forsake the will of God and walk in the path of perverseness. This causes us always to treat symptoms and not the disease, to pick out pimples and neglect the cause. The story is told of an elder, who announced one Sunday morning, "There's been a lot of grumbling lately that we are in a rut and ought to change things. All right, today we are going to change. Instead of having three songs before prayer and one after, we are going to have two songs before prayer and two after. I hope that will stop the complaining that we always do everything the same way."

I know of a body of men who spent thirty minutes in a sober hassle over whether they should start at the back of the auditorium, or the front, in passing the plates to collect the offering. In attempting to settle that momentous question they took almost as much time as the president did to deliver his state of the union message to the joint houses of Congress. It is possible that most of us cannot realize how inconsequential some of our "major decisions" seem in the ripped-off world where our lot has been cast.

I was listening to my car radio not long ago and tuned in to a daily program sponsored by a local Church of Christ. The speaker began in a vivacious manner. "Welcome to a program that is different! It may be the only program to which you will listen today that is truly distinctive. Do you know what makes it unique? Undoubtedly you would discover it for yourself, but let me tell you in advance. The gospel songs to which you will listen will be sung without the use of instrumental music. You will admit that this makes the program different, really different from any other. And that makes it scriptural!"

I had just listened to a speaker from a Baptist background who had taken the words of 1 Peter 1:18-21 and expounded them with compassion mixed with deep conviction. With a sense of directness which spoke to my heart he conversed about the

redemption achieved not by material wealth, and about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that our hope and faith might be in God. I felt a real sense of relationship to the one “who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for us.”

As I listened to my brother talk about the tremendous distinctiveness of singing *a cappella*, I wondered what hope would be conveyed to those in the ward of the cancer hospital from which I had just come. It is possible that we are concerned with defending our distinctiveness and proclaiming our peculiarities, until we have no time for, and little interest in sharing the grace of God. Perhaps we are in an eclipse and the church has come between the new creation and the One who created us unto good works that we should continue in them!

What Lack We Yet?

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[Abstract]

This is the title of a book compiled by J. D. Thomas, and consisting of forty-seven manuscripts presented by invitation of the editor. The “we” in the title designates what Brother Thomas in his preface refers to as “the brotherhood,” and the brotherhood embraces only Churches of Christ which do not use instrumental music in conjunction with the public praise in song. However, that brotherhood is obviously composed of various factions, parties and segments, since men representing divergent groups who regard each other as apostates, liberals, traitors, and other things too numerous to mention, appear within the same covers.

I hail the attempt of Brother Thomas to provide a forum for men of various views to express their opinions. It is refreshing to see someone with such a degree of fairness. And it is great that men who would not sit upon the same platform with one another can appear between covers of the same volume. It is interesting that every person, without exception, would be branded as a “brother in error” by someone else in the book. And they would all be right! So the book may be a little more revealing than was intended by the editor.

There must be a lot wrong with a “brotherhood” if it requires 320 pages to tell what it yet lacks. And if it can be a “brotherhood” with such widely divergent views as are

expressed, it is obvious that unity in diversity is the “in thing” at last among a people who have always practiced it as ardently as they have denied doing so. I have another question. If we are the people who “speak where the Bible speaks” how does it happen that we lack so much? How much can we lack and still be what some of the writers fondly call “the Lord’s church”? When do we lack enough to cease to be that church? Who determines what we can lack and what we must not lack?

It is quite apparent that our lack does not involve mere “spiritual peanuts.” A respected brother who taught eight years in Lubbock Christian College, and who has preached extensively in Texas and Oklahoma, writes that we lack a proper understanding of sin, of the person of Jesus, of how Jesus saves, plus some other pretty basic things. If he is right, we are not much better off than “the denominations” as our brethren tag other folk who hide behind “unscriptural signboards” but may not lack as much as we do.

Unless we read such volumes merely to re-arrange our prejudices I think they ought to make us a little more humble. Of course, a lot of brethren will not read the whole book but will only turn to the “loyal brethren” to see what they have to say. Those who do that lack a lot more yet than they realize. I suggest that some of our gung-ho radio performers tread lightly. If they get the dander up on some Baptist preachers, they are liable to get up and read this book on the air and show how far off we are by our own admission.

We have been challenging, debating, attacking, going to Christian colleges, attending lectureships, reading brotherhood journals, and generally bragging that we are the one and only “New Testament church,” established in 33 A.D., with Jesus as our head. If we still lack a book full of things, we probably should be a little more charitable to other honest folk who also lack a few items. This is part of the theme of Roy Osborne in the volume. As usual, he gets the real message across.

I am part of the “we” of Brother Thomas, but I am also part of a bigger “we” than that. I no longer confine my concept of the body of Christ to the fragmented non-instrument “Church of Christ.” The latter does not have the former in its organizational box. Every person on this whole wide earth who has been born again is in the “we” I am in, and we all lack a lot. That is the reason all of us need the grace of God in order to make it. Praise His name!

Discerning the Body

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[Abstract]

There are two places in his letters where Paul seems to place extra stress upon the fact that there is one body. He mentions it in other connections but not with the emphasis he employs in Romans 12:4, 5 and in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In both cases the subject is introduced in a direct context of spiritual gifts, or *charismata*, a matter which we will examine later.

We do not ordinarily employ what he wrote for the purpose which he had in mind. In post-apostolic times another condition has arisen which we deem to be more pressing than the one with which Paul dealt. I am not too certain our judgment upon this is unassailable, but that is the way it is. As a result we use the apostolic affirmations concerning the one body to bring under condemnation the fragmentation into various sects of those who claim faith in the testimony that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and the Messiah of whom the prophets spoke.

It is true that Paul was confronted by both schisms and heresies (or sects) in Corinth, but the problem was different than it is now. In his day, the parties, while exalting leaders around whom they crystallized, still came together in one place, although their factionalism made it impossible for them to eat the Lord's Supper in the true sense, seeing it was intended to be a public demonstration of fellowship. In spite of the rifts over

leaders it was still possible to distinguish the body of believers from the pagan world.

The historical development which complicates our own times has presented a wholly divergent problem. We are no longer an underground movement, at least in the western world. When the faith won the victory over political powers, and then sought to promote itself by political methods, great changes were wrought for the worse. The substitution of the miscalled "Holy Roman Empire" for the pagan Roman Empire was a tragedy. The substitution of that empire for the kingdom of heaven was a catastrophe.

It was inevitable that revolt occur, and it is altogether probable that God, who watches over our affairs, raised up Martin Luther to effect the divine purpose and begin the process of renewal. It is no problem for me to regard the monk of Erfurt as an instrument in the hands of God. Revolutions not only upset the existing order but they establish a precedent and even lay the groundwork for succeeding protest movements. Political revolutions often result in the formation of new nations, states and governmental entities, and religious revolutions frequently produce new sects gathered around their peculiarities and distinctives.

I think there is a difference between a cult and a sect. A sect is composed of those who tend to hold to foundational truths upon which the Christian faith is predicated. There may be a distorted sense of values in which undue emphasis is given to a fact, or an opinion relative to a fact, but sects, as we know them, and particularly as our fathers knew them, accept the basic and elemental truths as enunciated in God's revelation as normative and authoritative.

This is not the case with the cults. Because of the nature of religious division, and also because they draw their constituency primarily from the sects, there is, of course, a tendency for cults

to exhibit some of the characteristics of the sects. Likewise, a great many of the sects demonstrate some of the attitudes particularly attributive to cultists. Still I think there are real differences between Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists (for example), and Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians.

For one thing, the cults all have a source of authority additional to the sacred scriptures. The Mormons hold that the Bible is full of errors, and have God saying in the quaint frontier language of Joseph Smith, "Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written" (2 Nephi 29:10). So the Mormons have come up with three more volumes of "sacred books" including *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. I have read them all and that is more than some Mormons can say.

The Christian Scientists have *Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures*, about which someone has said, "It is like Grape Nuts, neither one nor the other." Influenced by Phineas P. Quimby, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy, to give all of her husbands proper acknowledgment, came up with the volume which launched that highly authoritarian structure known as "The Christian Science Church."

The Jehovah's Witnesses will deny to high heaven that they have any other source of authority than the Word of God, but anyone who has carefully read their *New World Translation* knows it is not an objective rendering of the sacred text into the English of our day. It is a prejudiced, warped and twisted production into which *The Watchtower Society* has intruded its peculiar ideas, to be palmed off on the unsuspecting and spiritually illiterate as the will of God.

It will be objected by some of my readers that the creeds of the various sects constitute another source of authority

additional to the revelation of God. Because Alexander Campbell and his contemporaries inveighed against the creeds of their day, and rightly so, we have reared up a generation of heirs who repeat the strictures without knowledge of what they oppose. Most of the written creeds and formal confessions of faith were never regarded as an extra source of authority at all. They affirmed the completeness and authority of the new covenant scriptures.

The greater part of them echo the sentiment contained in the *Discipline of the United Brethren in Christ*, which says, “We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the word of God; that it contains the only way to our salvation; that every true Christian is bound to acknowledge and receive it with the influence of the spirit of God, as the only rule and guide.”

Our pioneer fathers opposed creeds because they were divisive in that they crystallized opinions and froze research, and created parties and factions which became inflexible. The Latin *credo* means simply, “I believe.” Any man who believes anything has a creed. The sin lies not in writing out one’s personal creed, but in ceasing such writing. One who continues to study and grow must change in his apprehension of divinely-revealed truth, and must not be chained to errors in his past opinions.

When Alexander Campbell debated N. L. Rice on creeds, the proposition read, “Human creeds, as bonds of union and terms of communion, are necessarily heretical and schismatical.” That is true.

It is human creeds imposed as a basis of fellowship which creates parties and schisms. We are now living in a wholly different age than the one in which that debate was held. The various sects of our day seldom make a human creed either a bond of union or a term of communion. The problem which we face is not so much one of authoritative opinions, as of spiritual

illiteracy. There are some signs that we are moving into a new era of Biblical study and examination, and this will herald the decay of rigid sectarianism.

We need to make a distinction between the cults which create an additional source of authority, called by the German writer Hutten “a Bible in the left hand,” and the sects whose members respect the Bible as the revelation of God, but who, because of culture and circumstances, are ignorant of its teaching. Our indiscriminate and intolerant accusations of and our actions toward our religious neighbors will not work the glory of God. I propose to go anywhere that God opens up a door of opportunity through the Spirit and share my feeble insights with any who love my precious Lord. And I shall go in love, not “breathing out threatenings and slaughter.”

THE PLACE OF JESUS

Another difference between the cults and the sects which have arisen among believers is that the former inevitably devalue Jesus, as the Christ, and as our sole mediator between God and man. Mormons hold that Adam was God, and Eve was one of his celestial wives whom he brought with him into the Garden of Eden. As Brigham Young stated it, “He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days . . . He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do.”

As to Jesus, James Talmadge writes in *Articles of Faith*, “Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are junior.” John Henry Evans in *An American Prophet* writes, “As for the Devil and his fellow spirits, they are brothers to men and also to Jesus and sons and daughters of God in the same sense that we are.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses are no better! It is their position that Christ was the first creature produced by Jehovah and was his Chief Executive Officer. Previous to his coming to earth he was

identified as Michael, and in Jude 9 the reference to Michael was related to Jesus in his pre-human state. Jehovah's Witnesses, as is well-known, deny the physical resurrection of the body of Jesus. Judge Rutherford speculated that God may have hidden the body away to exhibit to people in the millennial age. The Witnesses teach that Jesus has now again taken the name of Michael, and that he exists as a spirit creature.

If that sounds a little far out, tie into Christian Science and see if you can make heads or tails out of it! Mrs. Eddy wrote that Christ was an idea. "The Virgin-mother conceived the idea of God, and gave to her ideal the name of Jesus." It is a little difficult for me to believe that the angel of God appeared to Joseph and told him to take Mary and her idea and flee into Egypt. But perhaps we should remember that Mrs. Eddy said, "The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as material manhood, was not Christ."

I am opposed to both cults and sects, but I know the difference between those who deny the elemental truths of revelation and those who cling to them while allowing themselves to be fragmented and segmented into parties over the interpretation of some peripheral matter. I do not believe that any party or sect is the church of God, and I do not believe that the church of God is a sect.

Sects were formed when men exalted opinions and deductions of and from the scriptures above the scriptures themselves. Brilliant and devout men who read the Word reached conclusions about implications or inferences and propounded these with such force and regularity that men began to plead allegiance to these things and exalted them to terms of communion or fellowship, and parties were formed to propagate, protect and preserve their views. Sects are not created by propounding the scriptures but by promoting distinctives and peculiarities. All sects are historical developments which have arisen in time as men gained

prominence by emphasis of certain ideas.

It is believers in Christ who are separated into sects and that there are Christians among the sects I have not the least doubt. One may be in a sect without being sectarian, and he can be sectarian without being in a sect. Sectarianism is a spirit or attitude toward truth and others, and a man is sectarian before he forms a sect. If he were not he would never form a sect. Sects divide those who ought to work together and labor as a unit for advancement of the rule of heaven over the domain of human hearts. They set those who should be an advancing army against one another and fracture into warring tribes those who should conduct themselves as brethren.

Wherever my Father has a child I have a brother or sister, and I intend to recognize as my brothers and sisters all of God's children regardless of the theological corral in which they are caught up. I think there is a way in which we can all exhibit that oneness which is a divine gift to us in Christ, without giving up a single truth we have ever held. I would not unite with any person upon this earth if the terms of such union required the surrender of any truth, or of any principle which I sincerely regarded as truth. Conversely, I would not demand of any person that he relinquish anything he deemed to be truth in order to be one with me. Any person who would sacrifice one thing he held to be truth in order to be one with me, would prove thereby that he would prefer my favor to the blessing of God.

I must be as eager in defending the liberty in Christ for others as I am in demanding it for myself. If I deny the right of another to approach the revelation of God for himself, I make my insistence upon that right for myself a farce. But if I urge another to study the word personally and then deny him the right to reach his own conclusions, I make liberty a laughing-stock and imagine my own interpretation to be infallible and binding upon everyone.

As I view it, no historical movement in our time embraces all of the saved who are in Christ Jesus. Calling such a movement “Church of Christ,” “Church of God,” or “Christian Church,” does not alter the fact. There are a number of parties designated “Church of God” and they do not even recognize one another. The same thing is true of those using the designation “Church of Christ.” The segment of the historical reform movement which does not employ instruments of music in its public praise service is one of the most divided on the contemporary American scene. All of the warring factions are composed of good men and women, but their plea for unity in the religious world has no appeal except to those who are ignorant of their own frightful fragmentation.

One cannot long be a Christian only if he subscribes to the exclusivist particularities of any sect or party. The very act of becoming a defender of such peculiarities as terms of union or communion, or as tests of fellowship, makes him a particular kind of Christian. In my own case, caught up in the beauty of the plea for all men to be merely Christians, and Christians only, and thinking at the time that the church had to be denominated or named, I cast my youthful lot with “The Church of Christ.” I soon learned all the tricks such as spelling church with a small “c,” but I also learned that I was expected to be a “Church of Christ Christian,” which I now realize is as sectarian as claiming to be a Baptist Christian or a Mennonite Christian. Hyphenated Christians are the inevitable result of the party spirit, regardless of the matter around which the party coalesces.

I thank God who has delivered me so that I can be what I always wanted to be, a Christian only, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. This presents some problems to those “Christians only” who think that only those who gather behind a certain signboard can qualify. But I praise God that I now trust in the Savior and not in one of the official “signs of the times.” I have not changed my mind about the convictions I held. I still hold them. But I have changed my mind about the extent and

constituency of the family of my Father. I have certainly changed my thinking about fellowship and brotherhood.

We are fortunate to live in a day when creeds are losing their hold over men. Religious formulae no longer command implicit allegiance. Traditions exercise no real power to hold men confined in partisan structures. This is a propitious time to plead for renewal through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. One whose only creed is Christ has an open door to enter in and plead for unity based upon the apostolic testimony.

I am firmly committed to going anywhere that the Spirit opens up an effectual door to share my faith, hope and knowledge. If a Roman Catholic convocation does not want to hear me, its officials had better not invite me. If the World Council of Churches does not want to hear my views, they should not issue an invitation. I will not only go and speak, but I will go and listen, for learning is never a one-way street. I will cut across sectarian barriers, climb over sectarian walls, and batter down sectarian obstructions.

I am opposed to all sectarianism. I am opposed to our own party spirit as well as that of others. I want not only to be in Christ but I want to be identified with Him. I want to proclaim peace as He did. I want to proclaim it to those who are afar off and to those who are nigh. With me, Jesus is Lord. He is Lord of all. He has broken down the walls. He has removed the partitions by His blood.

Let the religious parties cease to call themselves churches. They are not churches at all. There is only one church. There never was but one. There never will be another. The church is the community of the called out ones. Every person on this earth who has been called out of the dominion of sin is in the church. Every saved person on earth is in it. There is no such thing as the Baptist Church. There is no such thing as the Methodist

Church. There is no such thing as the Presbyterian Church. There is no such thing as a Church of Christ, existing as a separate party and not containing all of the ransomed and redeemed. No exclusivist organization is the *ekklesia* of God. The body of Christ is not an earthly organization. It is a heavenly organism.

In this strife-torn world of ours the children of God are scattered. There are Christians in the sects, divine offspring separated and severed from each other by dogmatism, tradition and teaching. I love them all. I deplore their division. I detest the Great Deceiver who has driven wedges to split us. But our condition is post-apostolic. The twelve did not face it, and while they expressed principles of unity they did not directly regulate our conduct and action in such a situation as we confront. We must prayerfully study and carefully apply the principles, always realizing there is no ideal solution which will immediately erase centuries of coldness and unconcern.

Before I leave this phase of my discussion I want it known that I am resolved never to be a party to, or encourage another division among the saints. It is silly to think we can unite by dividing. It is absurd to argue that we can best serve God by acting contrary to His word. It is ridiculous to stand up and plead for one body while trying to create others composed of men and women who exist in haughty arrogance apart from God's other children. My approach will be that stated by Alexander Campbell in his "Debate on Human Creeds" with the eminent Presbyterian, N. L. Rice. I think it is one of the most significant statements I have ever read, and I make no apology for quoting it.

"It is not the object of our efforts to make men think alike on a thousand themes. Let men think as they please on any matters of human opinion, and upon 'doctrines of religion,' provided only they hold *the head* Christ, and keep his commandments. I have learned, not only the theory, but the fact,

that if you wish opinionism to cease or subside, you must not call up and debate every thing that men think or say. You may debate anything into consequence, or you may, by a dignified silence, waste it into oblivion. I have known innumerable instances of persons outliving their opinions, and erroneous reasonings, and even sometimes forgetting the modes of reasoning by which they had embraced or sustained them. This was the natural result of the philosophy of letting them alone. In this way, they came to be of one mind in all points in which unity of thought is desirable, in order to unity of worship and of action.” I heartily concur with this statement.

THE PURPOSE OF PAUL

I have taken a long route “around Robin Hood’s barn” in order to arrive at the place where I can resume what I started out to do. I shall say again that most of our brethren use the apostolic expressions relative to the unity of the body to draw a line of demarcation between their own religious community and what they refer to as “the denominations,” which have come into existence historically through other circumstances and by the efforts of other human religious thinkers and leaders. The passages were not written in such a context.

Paul was not contrasting “The Church of Christ” with other parties made up of believers in the same Christ. He was asserting that there is one body to encourage all who were in it to function in harmony and as a unit. Divergent gifts were not to be used without regard to other gifts. Each was to complement and supplement the other. Consider, for example, the well-known passage in Romans 12:4-8.

“For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use

them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

The use of the physical body to illustrate the nature of the spiritual body of Christ is a fortunate choice. Some of my readers will recall an article of mine a few years ago in which I took the position that nothing in the material realm can ever perfectly illustrate something on a higher plane. At the time I pointed out certain differences in the physical and spiritual bodies. But the Spirit selected an apt analogy for our edification in the area which Paul discusses.

The body of man and the body of Christ are both divine creations. Both were intended to fulfill a divine purpose. Both have been abused by man and often diverted from the intent of the Maker. But there is no more apt illustration of an organism functioning as a unit than the human body. It is a grand demonstration of unity in diversity. It has many members but they are diverse from one another. It has many gifts and many functions, but the gifts and functions are divergent. If there were no diversity there could be no body. This is the argument of the apostle himself in 1 Corinthians 12:19, “If all were a single organ, where would the body be?”

In one body we have many members. The word for member is *melos*. It occurs 34 times but is never once used in conjunction with an organization or institution in which one holds membership. I do not think the Greeks even had a word for such kind of membership. The word *melos* means a limb or organ. It is used to designate a functioning part of a living and vital organism. It is always employed in the scriptures in direct relationship to a body.

We freely talk about “members of the church,” but no apostle ever used such an expression. You will search your

concordance in vain to find even a semblance of “church membership.” As we use the expression, we generally think of the church as an organization in which one has secured and holds “membership.” My arm did not become a member of my body by applying for membership. My eye is not a part of my body because it has been placed on a membership roll. It does not appear under “e” in a card file. You cannot call up a secretary and say, “Run through the roster and see if my left leg is a member in good standing.”

If you will pardon me, I would like to suggest that it is sort of inane to ask “Of what church are you a member?” Such a question reveals two things. It demonstrates that you think there is more than one church, and it also reveals your own sectarianism. Moreover, it illustrates that you use the word “member” as no holy apostle ever used it. It appears that Alexander Campbell was right when he included in his “Synopsis of Reform,” the recapture of the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit.

Every time the word member is used it refers to an organ in a body, and the body of Christ embraces every individual on this earth who is in Christ Jesus. There is not a saved person in the world who is not in the body, and any group, segment or splinter, which does not embrace every one of the ransomed and redeemed is too small and restricted to be the body. The moment you admit that there are saved persons outside the group with which you are affiliated you admit that such a group is a sect. You may argue to high heaven that you are not in a sect but your argument will not alter the fact. This does not mean that you have to be a sectarian, although it could very well mean that it will be more difficult to not be one.

A sectarian is one who thinks the grace of God is limited to the party with which he is identified. He may think it was the grace of God which created the faction, and, what is even worse, he may think that the grace of God is now dependent upon and

mediated by that party. If he designates the party “The Church of Christ,” he will almost certainly feel that way. Trapped by his own semantics he will probably think that if you are not in a party which calls itself “Church of Christ,” you are not in Christ.

Members of such parties always resort to all kinds of tactics to help them ignore or forget their historical origin. Factions which had their birth a few years ago as the result of an unseemly public squabble will inscribe on the cornerstone of their earthly temples— Established 33 A.D. Sermon outlines cleverly ignore all that has happened for a couple of thousand years and go back and tie on to Pentecost and make a good case for the work of the apostles. The error is in the assumption that what we have evolved is identical with what the apostles planted. Many of the brethren have an idea that the one body was a train which disappeared in a tunnel in the days of Constantine and did not come out until 1809 when it again appeared chugging and puffing with good Presbyterians acting as engineer and fireman, shoveling in the coal to get up steam and keeping it on the rails until they could turn it over to us.

Nothing would surprise the apostles more than to be brought back and forced to attend at “The Church of Christ” some Sunday morning. They would not recognize it as having any relationship to any previous experience. Paul would probably get a bang out of a sign reading “Church of Christ— Romans 16:16.” At the time he wrote that “the Christian communities send greetings” there was no 16:16, and he never gave “book, chapter and verse.” If Peter and John went up to one of “our temples” at “the hour of prayer,” they might promise God that if he would forgive them for coming this time, they would never do it again.

All of this does not upset me the least bit. I can “discern the Body,” now that the scales have fallen from my eyes. I know that while it is the *ekklesia* of God it is not circumscribed in the

last quarter of the twentieth century by that indigenous American institution “the Church of Christ” which grew out of the attempt by humble Presbyterians to “unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Baptism is not a divine rite granted only as a term of admission to “The Church of Christ,” and God has not given a special copyright on it to our movement. “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,” but that body is not limited to a historic movement calling itself “The Church of Christ.” Church of Christ baptism, Baptist baptism, and Church of God baptism are all in the same category as far as I am concerned. I am glad that God ignores them all and receives into one body every sincere immersed believer who validates his faith in Jesus by this action, regardless of the sectarian intention of the human administrator.

All members have not the same function. But they all have some function. In the physical body there are no useless organs. God designed the body and He did not include any members which were parasites and just going along for the ride. I have lived long enough to see some pretty important changes in the thinking of anatomists and physiologists. When Darwin started “monkeying round” and wrote *The Origin of Species* in 1851, and *The Descent of Man* in 1871, he laid the groundwork for a lot of speculation. I hit town less than forty years after the last book and by the time I was in school a lot of people were trying to prove that Darwin was correct in reverse by making monkeys out of themselves. A lot of them were well qualified to start with.

I heard a lot about vestigial organs which were once essential to lower forms of animals but which had been outgrown by man as he further developed. Country surgeons would remove such organs at the drop of a hat if they could enter you in a hospital. That wasn’t easy because hospitals charged about four dollars per day. Things have changed. Modern medical science has determined that while we can exist without some parts of the body we cannot exist as well. And while a lot of anatomists are still evolutionists, and vice versa,

Darwin has been laid on the top shelf in the closet and pushed back into a dark corner. A lot of things which used to be blamed on apes are now credited to sin.

I don't think a lot of what Paul said about functioning members of the physical body has ever penetrated the consciousness of some of the members of the spiritual organism. If your arms and legs did not do any more than some of the Lord's arms and legs you couldn't even make it to the table. A lot of them do not. I am glad the members of my body don't whine, complain and take on about the others like a lot of members of the one body whom I know. If they did I would have to eat Bufferin like I now eat lima beans, one of nature's great gifts.

As the old covenant penman wrote, "Once I was young, now I am old," but I have never known one of my arms to become offended at the other one, and drop off on the way to the post office because it just could not stand associating with its companion. What if your tongue had to go to your feet every couple of weeks and quote scripture to them and exhort them to get up and get moving? Suppose one of my hands got miffed at the other one because it received mention in the bulletin, when everyone knew that the miffed one actually did more than the unmiffed one? What if one of my ears "unhooked and took out" as a rural brother expressed it when one of the elders went over the hill?

I recognize there is a difference. The members of my physical body function together as an organism because they are all directed by the same head. They do not pool their resources and hire the tongue to work out a program at which they can grumble, nor do they have to listen to that linguistic member lay down the law to them once a week in order to fulfill his contract. It could be that we have been so anxious to develop a system which will outshine that of the Baptists and Methodists down the street that we have organized ourselves for the sectarian rat

race, and a lot of our rats just don't want to run. Maybe we should get out of the partisan rat race altogether and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus.

Did you ever notice how Paul introduces the Roman passage dealing with the one body? He does it by urging all of us to think. He tells us how to think and how not to think. Unfortunately, a lot of us get the instructions scrambled and end up thinking as we ought not, and not thinking as we ought to. Since the instruction grew out of the apostolic grace we should get our eyes uncrossed and look at it again. "For by the grace given to me I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him." With this, he plunges directly into the subject of body function, with the words, "For as in one body we have many members."

The way to recapture the ideal of God is by thinking. It is not by having someone think for us, or for the body. Please note the two expressions "every one among you" and "each." It is good to have "rap sessions" and "sharing sessions," but if I want to supply what is lacking in my own life I am going to have to sit down and think through the situation for myself. I do this a great deal. Sometimes I do it while on a plane flight. Sometimes I do it while driving by myself. Many times I do it at night while lying in bed, or early in the morning before I arise. Thomas á Kempis wrote in *The Imitation of Christ*, "If thou may not continually gather thyself together, do it some time at least once a day, morning or evening." I like to gather myself together. It certainly beats "coming apart at the seams."

It is very important that I do not value myself too highly. All of the members of the body are valuable. The way to avoid schism or discord in the body is not to give special attention to the more presentable parts who do not require it. "But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior

part, that there may be no discord in the body” (1 Cor. 12:24, 25). I should not devalue myself, or undervalue myself, for that is no more correct thinking than to think of myself more highly than I ought to think. If I have a morbid air of disparagement I cannot work with others. If I have an exalted sense of personal importance they cannot work with me. An under-inflated balloon cannot ascend, an over-inflated balloon will burst. My role must not be to work people but to work with people!

The term for “sober judgment” literally means “out of a desire to act wisely or with prudence.” My thinking must have a goal as well as a motivation. A lot of people are like the statue of *The Thinker*. They sit with chin in hand as if carved out of rock but never get up and do anything. The purpose of thinking is to inspire proper action. It was the French writer, Paul Bourget, who said, “One must live the way one thinks, or end up thinking the way one has lived.”

Paul declares that each must think “according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.” We do not all have the same measure. The faith here referred to is not that which comes from hearing the word of Christ. It is not the faith which justifies or saves. Instead, it is the gift or assignment of God to enable one to use any gift which God has bestowed, whether we designate it a natural or supernatural gift. God does not make such a distinction.

GIFTS OF GRACE

Every gift of God brings with it a responsibility. No gift is purposeless. Gifts and functions are inseparable. Every ability must result in an activity comparable to that ability. Responsibility is simply the ability to respond. God not only supplies the gift, and through it assigns the function required of us, but He also supplies the power, the inner measure of faith required to fulfill that function. But the gift, function and power

must be voluntarily employed. All are available through God's grace, but that grace does not compel.

That is why each one of us must think. If God forced us into a pattern, or turned on the power and set our wheels in motion, we would be machines. But machines are both thinkless and thankless. That is why I am not too "hep" on folks who get in a big dither when everyone starts praying at once, and the confusion is punctuated by shouts, and they jump around and flutter their hands, and roll their eyeballs, and claim they can't help it. I've found out that a lot of them can be turned off when "the shouting and the tumult dies" about as easy as they can be turned on when the pump is primed and the chain is pulled, or somebody turns the crank. We need a lot of pretty sober thinking about our gifts and functions.

My physical body would not be serving the purpose for which God created it if I went into an emotional frenzy and jumped up and down as if I had a hornet up my pant leg, and all my members were quaking and shaking as if they had the Saint Vitus' Dance. My eyes serve their function, not by rolling around in frenzy but by seeing needs and taking them to heart. My mouth serves its function not by yelling, shouting and screaming like a banshee, but by speaking unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort. If the members of the body of Christ are to think in sober judgment, it is my judgment they will serve the cause better by acting like the members of the physical body of Christ when He was among us on the earth.

Although Jesus possessed the Spirit without measure, there is no indication that He shouted and screamed and frothed at the mouth, or lay down and kicked on the floor, or engaged in any kind of religious antics. Instead, "he went about doing good." I think the spiritual body of Jesus is to carry on the work He inaugurated while in the physical body. We are now His eyes, his hands and his feet on earth. We are to act in the spiritual body as he acted in a material body. His methods were so gentle and

unobtrusive that they would not break a bruised reed or extinguish smouldering tow. It was distinctly said “He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets” (Matthew 12:9). That means He did not yell until people outside the building could hear him. He did not even take a brass band along “to get their attention,” nor wear them out with “special music” until they were too tired to listen when He finally got up to speak. Maybe we ought to take to heart the admonition to “think with sober judgment” about some of the tactics that are used today.

There is a beautiful expression occurring in Romans 12:5. Paul must have liked it because he used it again in Ephesians 4:25. In the first place he employed it to emphasize that we are a unit because we are “individually members one of another.” In the second place he used it to encourage the saints to quit lying and to speak the truth “for we are members one of another.” There was about as much difference between Rome and Ephesus as there is between Washington and Los Angeles. But the colony of heaven in each place was the same. It was composed of the fellowship of the called-out ones, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

They were not only members of the body of Christ, but members one of another. They were not simply tied together but they were knit together, intertwined as members of a divine organism. No one belonged only to himself. No one could simply do his own thing. True, they were still individuals, but they were “individually members one of another.” I am not sure that those of us who have cut our eyeteeth on “rugged individualism” can even understand or appreciate the force of the word “another” in the expression “one of another.” We are so hooked on the “one” and so high on individualism that we cannot see the “another.”

There is an expression in 1 Samuel 25:29 which better dramatizes the relationship I sustain to others of God’s

redeemed than any other of which I know. It was used by Abigail who made an eloquent plea to David, “The soul of my lord will be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God.” God has reached out into the field of the world and gathered in the waving grain. He has bound me in the bundle of life with every other person in the universe saved by grace. So closely am I bound with them the world cannot tell us apart.

We are members of one body and members one of another. I am linked with the whole company of those who believe, regardless of where they are. This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in my eyes. I expect to demonstrate the oneness of the Spirit openly and overtly. I am not “a secret disciple for fear of the Jews.” I am for Jesus publicly and I intend to publicly receive and recognize every child of God. I am sick and tired of the whole sorry sectarian scheme of things and I intend to have no part in it, God being my helper!

I am glad Paul wrote what we designate Romans 12:3-8. I am thrilled that he told us we need to think, and informed us how to do it. I am happy that he made it clear that we have divergent gifts and functions. We are not all the same. We are not assembly-line saints. We are not products of a divine cookie-cutter. We are not robots or automatons. The fact we cannot do what others do is no excuse to evade doing what we can do. We are not called to duplicate others but to imitate Jesus.

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” This is the admonition given in Romans 12:6. The word for gifts is *charismata*. It is the word from which we get the term charismatic which has been so much in vogue the past several years. The *charismata*, or gifts of grace, are enumerated. Paul mentions seven of the gifts— prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, contributing, giving aid, and rendering acts of mercy.

It is for this reason that it seems a little silly to talk of any

era as “a charismatic age.” There is no such thing as a charismatic age for the simple reason that there is no such thing as a non-charismatic age. The body has always functioned through *charismata*, or gifts. I’m constantly running into someone who shows his ignorance by saying “I’m charismatic!” Aside from the questionable usage of the word, which I overlook for the moment, it is ridiculous to think because someone has a *charism* he is different from others in the body. Paul implies that “every one of you” has a gift.

It is sort of tragic that people get betrayed into limiting the terminology of the Spirit to a specific experience and immediately conclude that others who have not had the same experience are still in the spiritual woods and lost in the sticks. Most of those who identify themselves as charismatic are thinking of what is called “speaking in tongues,” although the saints in Rome would never have known from Paul’s list to them that this was one of the *charismata*. Even if he had mentioned it to them they would never have guessed everyone was to have it, since Paul said, “Having *charismata* that differ.”

I wouldn’t be surprised but what a congregation that busied itself using the *charismata* he did mention would be in fairly good shape. The seven items seem quite practical, and if the gifts were used in the framework of the rest of the chapter we could capture the community even if everyone spoke only English. I have no intention of denying, or even questioning, the experience of any of my brothers or sisters, but I want to go on record as saying that if it does not lead them to function in harmony with the other saints who prophesy, teach, exhort, contribute, extend aid and perform acts of mercy, they should take a second look at the experience.

It seems to me that if there was an obligation of those who had the seven gifts in Rome to use them, there was an obligation on the part of the congregation in Rome to provide a framework and atmosphere in which they could be used. It would seem a

little presumptuous upon the part of Paul to insist that “every one among you” exercise his gift and then condone setting up a system in which they could not be used.

I hold that the purpose of the congregation of saints is to encourage the development of every member to his fullest or maximum potential. Any congregation which stifles or sublimates any gift God has bestowed upon any person is acting in opposition to God’s purpose or design. To make any gift useless which God has given to use, is to frustrate the grace of God.

The congregation is not created to erect temples of brick and stone, or to make a name for itself. It is not created to save the world. The church is not a savior. It has to be saved. “Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Ephesians 5:23). The church is a fellowship, a family circle in which each person is to grow up to maturity in Christ.

When congregational shepherds meet together to discuss needs they should plan to utilize every gift possessed by the saints. This is the reason the apostle writes about the one body. He was not providing a club for restoration movement debaters to use in clobbering Baptists, Pentecostals, or Presbyterians. His thesis was that since there is but one body, and all are members of it, they should function together and in harmony.

The Baptists are not “another body” as Paul used the term body. The Presbyterians are not “another body” as he used the term body. The Mennonites are not “another body” as he used the term body. They are not bodies and they are not churches. They are sects and it will not serve God’s purpose to create another sect in the hope that we can make it bigger and better by arguing and debating everyone into it.

What we must do is to provide an opportunity for every child of God on this earth to develop the gift with which God has

blest him. We are not in the business of encouraging Baptists, Pentecostals or Presbyterians, but members of the one body. If there are members of the one body in these sects, and I certainly think there are, we must strengthen their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. But to do that we must be Christians only. I mean really and truly. There is a temptation to be Church of Christ Christians, but if the devil catches us on that hook we will be as sectarian and exclusive as any other sect.

The one body in Saint Louis contains within it every member whom God has added to it. I do not know them all. It is not necessary that I do, much as it would thrill me if I could. But “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” I do know that while the Lord added them to one body, a lot of them added themselves to something else. In our mixed-up and fragmented world it is difficult not to do that. There are always plenty of people around trying to “line you up” or get you into their partisan corner. The air is full of “Come with us,” or “Take your stand.” But I will not be moved by cries of “Lo, here” or “Lo, there!” I am not going to line up with any party or sect!

If we would all stay just where God placed us and never allow anyone to enroll us in a crusade to propagandize for some peripheral matter, regardless of our opinion about it, we would be better off. But there are some pretty shrewd operators around, writing tracts, speaking on radio stations, and plugging for converts to their personal campaigns. It is hard to stay out of their clutches and go down the freedom road.

We may be talked into thinking that the most important thing in the whole universe is to be right about “the thousand year reign.” Or, we may be conned into thinking that we must take a stand on the method of financing a television program, or having a kitchen in the basement of the meetinghouse. And when we take a stand and conclude that our stand is God’s will for us and every other person on this mundane footstool, we will conclude that those who do not see this earth-shaking question

as we do are outside of God's will, and have crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.

Our brainchildren are like our fleshly offspring. They are the most precious things on earth. Our fleshly children may appear spoiled brats to the neighbors across the street, and our brainchildren may seem like wild fanatical notions to other folk who prefer their own, but to us they are dearly beloved. I cherish my own thinking of course, but I would no more impose it upon others than I would dump my children on the neighbors.

I expect to keep my children to myself and I will do the same with my opinions. I may occasionally get out the pictures of the children and show them to the neighbors but I do not expect them to get them enlarged and framed to hang in their family rooms. When I express my opinions, as I have some of them in this article, it never bothers me if my readers do not hail them as the greatest writing since the days of Alexander Campbell. It would bother me if they did, but it would bother Alexander Campbell a lot more if he knew it.

I am going to be myself. I am going to belong to Jesus, and only to Him. I am not going to get uptight and lean out of the upstairs window and fire both barrels at some brother who looses a journalistic broadside at me. I am in the one body and that's enough for me. Our unity is in Christ. It never was anywhere else and never will be. I expect to live in that body while I live and die in it when I die. I am happy, contented, and overjoyed while I wait for the glory that shall be revealed. Why not come along?

No Discord

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[Abstract]

The best illustration, of the unity we have in Christ Jesus is that of the body, and the fullest exposition of this illustration is found in 1 Corinthians 12. This chapter is one of a remarkable triad in which Paul deals with the use and abuse of gifts bestowed by the Spirit. It is interesting to remember that if the Corinthian saints had not become hung up on gifts, especially the gift of various kinds of tongues, these three chapters would probably not have been written. If they had not been penned we would have been without the beautiful thirteenth chapter and would not have known that love is the more excellent way. None of us are glad the Corinthian disciples became embroiled in confusion but I am pleased that God took advantage of their chaotic state to reveal some of the most beautiful truths I have ever read.

The King James Version begins the section with the statement, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” The word gifts is in italic letters. This signifies there is no word for it in the Greek text. It was added by the translators because they deemed it to be essential to make good sense in the reading. I think the context justifies insertion of the word “gifts” but Paul is actually talking about “spirituals” and the term may apply to anything which God has bestowed through grace, and may include all of the information divulged about the body and its nature. The body itself is a gift from one

standpoint.

It is clear from Paul's preliminary statements that there are some things that are one, while there are other things that are varied and different. It is thus by the will of God and not as a result of caprice. There is only one Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit are diverse. There is only one God, but the workings and operations which He authorizes are many and varied. There is one Lord, but the services for which He empowers are many. There is one body, but the functions performed by its organs are not all alike.

Nature itself is one grand demonstration of unity in diversity. The human body, as the highest creation in the natural realm, is a showcase of this fact. The spiritual body of Christ is the most profound exhibition of all. Unity in diversity is the divine order in the whole universe. One who tries to inaugurate conformity in what God has made diverse, sins as certainly as he who would seek to separate and divide that which God has made one.

The Spirit manifests himself in different ways to different persons. Gifts are not given indiscriminately. They are bestowed upon those who can use them. And they are not to be used selfishly, but for the benefit of the body. We are interrelated and there must be a correlation of our efforts. We must follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Romans 14:19). "Let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification" (Romans 15:2). A gift without other gifts is virtually useless. The body without functional gifts is paralyzed and helpless.

The design of the body is to provide for the functioning of the gifts; the purpose of the gifts is to provide for the functioning of the body. The gifts are not the members, nor are they essential to the members becoming such. The gifts are enabling grants or powers providing for the easier and better fulfillment of the

functions to be performed by the members. When properly utilized they make possible the fulfillment of the divine responsibility accruing from membership in the body.

We live in a realm of the physical and material, and in that realm Jesus works through members who are physical. Without members there would be no body, and without a spiritual body there would be no meaning to the work of Christ in the world. Rival bodies would only multiply problems rather than solve them. The situation would be greatly aggravated if such rival bodies all thought they were created by God and truly represented the divine purpose upon earth. The tactics employed by purely political parties are bad but they would be worse if such parties held the view that heaven established them to bring everyone on earth under their immediate partisan influence.

God only created one body. Regardless of the diversity of gifts and functions, and the gifts and functions are so many and varied we have probably not comprehended them all, there is but one body. Research institutes are working day and night in all parts of the earth in an attempt to understand the human body. That body has been here since Adam, and still we do not know all there is to know about its constitution. The spiritual body of Christ, as the new creation, has only been here since Jesus returned to the Father. We no doubt have much to learn about it, and as true scientists, we should be humbled by our remaining ignorance.

But we do know there is only one body. Jesus is not a freak or monstrosity. He is not a head with several bodies. "For as the body is one and has many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). This does not say "So it is with the body of Christ," but "So it is with Christ." Christ and the body are inseparable and indivisible. When you see the body you see Jesus. When the body is at work, Jesus is at work.

It is, therefore, important that I discern the body and never forget that it is one. Satan will seek to influence me into thinking that the body is fragmented because of the parties and factions formed by men, but I must look beyond these and realize that what men do can never undo what God has done. Those who are joined to Jesus as head are one body, and they are one body because they are joined to that one head. And so long as they are joined to Jesus they are one body regardless of external circumstances created by historical developments.

There may be racial and ethnic problems which indicate division. There may be social distinctions which still prevail and would seem to belie unity. But we are one in spite of them. “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free— and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” Unfortunately, caught up in controversy over what is designated as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” we frequently become involved in the debate to the extent that we forget what the apostle was trying to prove.

Regardless of what is implied in the words, “by one Spirit we are all baptized,” there can be no disputing the fact that “we were all baptized into one body.” I take this very literally. I do not think that any person who is baptized under the motivation of the Spirit is ever baptized into anything except the one body. Those who immerse such a person may think they are baptizing him into a sect or party, but when one humbly and sincerely submits to the claim of Jesus upon his life, God overrides and overrules the sectarian intent and brings the earnest penitent believer into relationship with the head, even Christ. That is why grace is so marvelous and magnificent. It foils and frustrates the schemes of those who would divert a newborn babe into something less than the majestic family of God.

The institutional church which we have managed to create and regiment by our own human philosophy has a poor record in its history of dealing with racism. That is especially true of the

“church” in any land where human slavery was once a way of life, and the flesh of men and women was bought and sold on the auction block. Any people ultimately suffer for the crime of treating persons as things or chattels. When such action is justified by quoting scripture to sustain it, the crime is augmented. To make it appear that the God of the universe is a respecter of persons and sanctions our sin is to imply that heaven is on the side of iniquity.

God is not a God of the Jews only. He is not a God of the Greeks only. Neither is He the God of the free only, nor of the slaves only. God knows nothing about “black churches” or “white churches.” Only sinful men separate and segregate His children for whom Christ died. The Spirit introduces them all into one body and sustains them all. “All were made to drink of one Spirit.” We prove we have been drinking at another fountain when we make racial and social distinctions. We are one in Christ!

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?

It is impossible to conceive of a body which is made up of one great big eyeball. Even if you could concoct such a mental image such a body could not continue to exist. Without hearing it would be run over by a fire engine or struck by a train. Not one of the senses is expendable. Sight and hearing are both essential. So is the sense of smell. The organs cannot transfer their functions or gifts. If one “flacks out” the function ceases. You can no more do my work than you can hear with your eye or smell with your ear.

Fortunately, in the physical body the organs do not become jealous of one another. I have never had an eye sulk on the job or threaten to strike because I smelled a rose with my nose. Neither of my ears has ever picketed my body, or carried a sign “Unfair to audio members” because I put all my food into my mouth. It seems never to have occurred to them that I should put a peanut butter sandwich or a bowl of chicken noodle soup into my ears.

It is only in the spiritual body that members think because they are not allowed to do everything they should quit doing anything. They start grumbling and murmuring that the body is just for preachers. Some who are as ambitious as they are unqualified want to quit if they are not selected as bishops. They look upon the presbytery as an honorary political office rather than the hardest and most difficult function in the community of saints. They conceive of themselves as “running for office” rather than running with patience the race set before all of us.

I know men who are fairly affluent and who can buy about anything they want. The result is they want to be prominent among the saints and throw their weight around. They feel themselves about three rungs higher on the spiritual ladder than the rest of the disciples and they do not want to participate in what they consider menial tasks. They prefer to flaunt their talents and be acclaimed for exercise of their gifts. They are not so much concerned with walking in the light as they are with performing in the limelight. If they are publicly teaching they are all “gung ho” but if they are sitting in the class they yawn and look at their wrist watches periodically. It is all they can do to sacrifice their valuable time and sublimate their superior talent while humble brethren are trying to develop theirs. Men such as these need to go to the Great Physician and let him put them through the spiritual clinic. They need a prescription of equal parts of humility and long-suffering to be taken after each meal and just before retiring.

I have never had to pamper and brag on one of my eyes to keep it seeing. I have never had to pat an ear on the back and say, "That was a terrific job of hearing you just did, and you are every bit as good as my nose. I wish it could smell like you can hear." Neither of my hands has ever called me up on Saturday night to say, "I just wanted you to know I'll not be with you tomorrow." "What's the matter this time?" "Well, I don't feel like I'm really wanted. No one pays any attention to me. I work my fingers to the bone and I am ignored when the announcements are made. So I think I'll shop around a little and find a body where I feel more at home. Get someone else to take my place."

If the members of my physical body reacted like those in the body of Christ I'd "fall to staves." That is what is happening to many local manifestations (called congregations) of the body of Christ. Some of them consist of petulant, infantile, peevish and morose individuals who have never gotten past the spiritual incubator stage. They have to be petted, babied and coddled to keep them from throwing a whingding of a tantrum when things don't go their way. I know an old sister in Kansas who gets "bugged" every time she does some little trivial thing and the members do not all rush to the telephone and call her up and brag on her. Every time I see her she says, "I don't know what they'll do after I'm gone." Well, I know what they'll do, but I am not about to tell her!

But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is there are many parts, yet one body.

I love that statement. So far as I am concerned it knocks the theory of evolution off of its usurped throne and banishes it to the primordial ooze from which life was supposed to have struggled into being after a few hundred million years. We arrived either by creation or by chance. So far as I am concerned if we did not come by creation, the "chances" are we

would not have come at all. And if we did there's no telling what shape we would have been in when they knocked the side out of the crate and turned us loose.

This passage affirms design, order and arrangement. And it is divine! I like that "As it is!" "As it is, God arranged the organs in the body." That is why my ears stick out and my eyes are in sockets. If it had been left to chance my eyes might have stuck out where my ears are and when I cried I would have gotten the back of my shirt collar wet. Chance might have turned my nose up the other way and I would have drowned in the first rainstorm. I am glad God arranged it.

There were two creations. In the first man was made out of dust. In the second a body was made out of men. In the first men had members, in the second men were members. But in both cases God arranged the organs in the body and He did as He chose. That's a good thing. If he had left it to a vote like the Baptists used to do you might have lost out when they tallied the ballots and turned out to be an eye or chin detached from the body. There are many parts to the body but there are no parties in it. The Holy Spirit creates the parts but the factional spirit creates parties. There is as much difference between them as there is between Christ and Belial.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

This introduces the opposite to the picture painted in verses 15 and 16. There the members who felt inferior were

critical of those whom they deemed superior. They wanted to drop out because they could not function in the same way as others. Here those who are arrogant and supercilious deny any need of others whom they do not regard as essential to their welfare. But God says one *cannot say* to another that he is not needed. This does not mean it is physically impossible to verbalize such an idea. But the nature of the body as God has arranged it is such that there is an inter-dependency of the members which is so essential and unique that one member cannot divest himself of the need for others.

There are three kinds of parts mentioned for special concern— weaker, less honorable and unpresentable. In the physical body there are some parts which are always kept concealed or covered in public, some which are occasionally covered, and others which are exposed and not covered. Weaker parts are reassured in that they are designated as indispensable. They are not unnecessary because they are weak. The less honorable parts are actually invested with greater honor, while the unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty. One does not buy an expensive suit to cover his hands or face.

Do you think there is, at least a subtle condemnation of the growing tendency toward nudity in this argument of the apostle? Are we seeing a return to the heathen disregard for modesty and proper shame since we have become again a pagan culture in the western world? Is the cry of revolutionary youth to “let it all hang out” a symptom of the blatant disregard for the guidelines of ethical and moral conduct enjoined by the new covenant Scriptures? The apostle regards some parts and organs of the body as unpresentable, that is, in the social circle. Does not undue exposure actually deny this admonition to treat such parts with *greater modesty*?

I hope you will not get uptight about my little stroll down a bypath. Certainly I realize the apostle was not giving a dissertation on dress nor zapping streakers and other crazy

faddists. The real point is that no one in the body of Christ is unimportant and we must take special interest in those who think they are and bestow more time and honor upon them. This is probably the most difficult thing we have to do, and most of us utterly fail. We do not want to be around those whom we deem to be inept, bumbling, uncommunicative persons. They make us feel uncomfortable and ill at ease.

Generally we speak to them in passing and brush them off and hurry away to talk with someone whom we esteem to be brilliant, outgoing and able to enhance and polish our own image. In the analogy of Paul that is like powdering your face and forgetting to put your clothing on. The secret to avoiding discord in the body is to give greater honor to the inferior parts. If a top echelon associates together and ignores the “lesser members” the “lesser ones” will drop out, form an underground movement and plot how to get rid of the “big boys.” More congregations are split by forming cliques than anything else. This results primarily because we have ceased to be a family and have become “big business.”

In a lot of places if you are part of the “in group” you can do anything, but if you are not you can’t do anything. If you are one of the presentable parts you’ll get invited to play golf with the preacher and a couple of elders, if not, you can stay home and play tiddlywinks. But do not lose heart. When time comes to “make up the budget” you’ll suddenly become important and the brethren will visit you. I know one man who had never really been “accepted” until he casually let drop a hint that he was thinking of making a will and leaving his farm to the congregation. In the following three months he had elders dropping in to visit him that he didn’t even know were elders.

It really isn’t all that bad everywhere. There was a young couple of my acquaintance who were led to Christ in a large congregation. Not having been reared in the church, and not knowing how to act, they took Jesus seriously. Both the man and

wife had advanced scholastic degrees and they were not “dumb clucks” if you’ll pardon the description. One night they read where Jesus said, “When you give a dinner, don’t invite your friends or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they invite you in return, and you be repaid.” Then they read on, “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be paid at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:12-14).

They talked about that for a couple of hours before they retired and finally reached the conclusion that they had been given good jobs and a comfortable apartment to enable them to practice just what Jesus recommended. Out of this grew their own little private project which they came to call “sharing with the sheep in the shadows.” The brother explained it to me. He said that in a congregation such as theirs most of the people were always in the center of things, chatting and joking and back-slapping before and after the meetings. The ones who felt left out stepped in and sat down in a remote place or hovered on the fringes of the crowd.

They began to take these home with them. They did not fix anything elaborate because they never knew who would come, or if anyone would. She laughingly remarked that Jesus talked about “giving a feast,” so she thought of assorted cold cuts and potato salad as God’s feast. They evidently thought of me as a likely candidate for one who couldn’t pay so they asked me home with them on Sunday. They also had a couple of long-haired boys who had recently been found and rounded up by the Shepherd. There was also a woman from out of the city whose husband was in a local hospital, and an elderly widow who was virtually alone in the world. All of us were singularly blessed, although I got a bang out of the two boys who had never been around people like ourselves and unto whom “church talk” was sort of like an unknown tongue.

I know of a man whose only son was killed in an

automobile crash on his way back to college after a term break vacation spent at home. The father assuaged his deep grief by helping boys in the congregation to find themselves. He has become a real friend and counsellor to a number of them. They know they can talk anything over with him and they trust him because he never violates a confidence. Several whom I know would probably have become spiritual drop-outs but for his genuine concern.

I guess I am a little like Jesus in that I get “bugged” by self-righteousness more than by most other things. I do not even like my own brand. A short time ago a crew of ripped-off long-haired kids came into my life and I began to work with them. One by one they were immersed into Christ although every one of them had a history of former drug addiction. A brother who has had it pretty easy in this affluent society, but who still gripes about it, asked, “How are you making out with the hippies?” I replied, “I haven’t seen one since 1965. What are you talking about?” He said, “These long-haired, sad-looking specimens that you have been meeting with.” I said, “Those are not specimens, they are children of God. You are talking about my brethren in the Lord.” He couldn’t let it go by without one more thrust “They look to me like something the cat dragged in.” I couldn’t stop either. I replied, “They look to me like someone the shepherd brought home.” Anyone who can’t tell a cat from a shepherd ought not to be too critical.

God’s ideal is for the members to have the same care one for another. That is the real secret of harmony. You can deliver dissertations on unity from the sanctity of the pulpit until Jesus comes, and it will mean nothing until the saints start caring. The question is not what is the world coming to, but when is the church coming to? Our immediate task is not to get the world out of its chaos but to get the church out of its coma. I have seen whole congregations changed by one person who cared what happened to others. H. D. Ward wrote, “It is a truth which stands out with startling distinctness on the pages of the New

Testament, that God has no sons who are not servants.”

We show our concern for Christ by our care for one another. Regular attendance at religious exercises can never compensate for lack of exercise of genuine compassion. As Billy Sunday put it, “Going to church will no more make you a Christian than going to the garage will make you an automobile.” I do not recall who it was who made the wise observation that “We have too many saints in stained glass windows and not enough of them in shoe-leather.”

Perhaps there is no more poignant description of our mutual relationship in Christ than the statement, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” This is not limited simply to those whom we see and greet on Sunday mornings. Our relationship in Christ is not circumscribed by time and place. It is not external. It is not limited to those in physical or geographical proximity. It also includes those like Jesus “whom having not seen we love.”

If a member of the body is wounded in Vietnam I feel the pain in my own body. If a husband loses his wife in Great Britain I share his grief. We should never be disturbed or feel bothered and put upon because someone in the loneliness of his loss sits down and writes us page after page describing the former relationship and the passing on of his loved one. We should feel honored that he looks to us for a sympathizing heart and a compassionate outreach. In such an atmosphere of sharing, his sorrow is assuaged and he finds strength to go on. Suffering is easier borne if someone shares it with us. We should look for opportunities to help. There is a Chinese proverb which says, “It is better to do a good deed near at home than to go far away to burn incense.”

It is probably easier to share suffering than honor. In our human predicament, with selfishness not wholly crucified, we can shed a tear for one who is deprived of that which is dear to

him. In the case of special honor which comes to another we are liable to feel deprived ourselves and be led to envy rather than to rejoice. Such an attitude indicates that we are using the body relationship for personal gain and our motivation is all out of joint. We must pray for a sense of intimacy which will weld us together indissolubly so that we may not look upon our own welfare but upon that of others.

All of this sums up to the fact that we are one in Christ. We are one by an act of God rather than by our own personal action. We are in the fellowship because we have been called into it. We are together because we have been brought together. The body is not our creation, but God's creation. We best serve the divine purpose when we serve in harmony and strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "All your strength is in union. All your danger is in discord." In the dark days of the American Revolution Benjamin Franklin uttered the memorable words, "We must indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." Someone said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

In the one body we do not function together because it is the best way, for it is the only way. There is no other. Refusal of the members to work does not simply distress the body, it destroys it. I am glad that the apostle Paul used the human body as an illustration of the spiritual. We all have a body and we are all aware of what happens when members get out of joint or become paralyzed. If we truly love Jesus we will not become dissidents or drop-outs from the spiritual body.

We must all resolve firmly that we will never be a party to division in the body of our Lord, and we must all resolve just as firmly that we will work to repair those divisions which have already occurred. If we are to flow together the impediments

which separate us must be removed. It is possible for us to demonstrate to the world that we are one in Christ but it will require the efforts of all of us to do it!

A Startling Proposal

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[Abstract]

It was Thomas Carlyle, the famous “Sage of Chelsea” who wrote: “Reform like charity must begin at home. Once well at home it will radiate outward, irrepressible, into all that we touch or handle, speak and work, ever kindling new light by incalculable contagion, spreading in geometric ratio, far and wide, doing only good where it spreads, and not evil.”

Although many of my readers will doubt it, and some will even dispute it, I think the opportunities for promoting the oneness for which Jesus prayed, are greater than they have been for many centuries. We seem to be drawing closer to another “fulness of the times” and there is an air of expectancy beginning to manifest itself which betokens only good if we can fan it into flame. We need courageous and dynamic leadership throughout our land to act as a catalytic agent to bring the scattered forces of the faith together.

I should like to see “Churches of Christ” supply the incentive to answer the prayer of Jesus for the oneness of all believers with new and daring approaches which will capture the attention and imagination of our day and focus them once more upon Jesus as the Lord of the whole life, and of this shrinking world of humanity. There are reasons why I think the brethren may have a greater hope of success than any other group on the contemporary scene. Because this proposal may

seem so odd and far out as to provoke only laughter in some quarters, let me point out to you some of those reasons.

1. We began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects,” as Alexander Campbell stated it. To reaffirm the validity of this labor of love under God would represent no departure from our position, but a return to it. Of all the historic groups still extant we should have the greatest incentive to cross over lines, remove walls and ignore barriers. This was our goal. It was our hope and our aim. We, of all people, should be thinking, planning, promoting and practicing unity in Christ.

2. We have historic ties with many of the sects still in existence. It was Presbyterians who launched the restoration movement in Cane Ridge, Kentucky; and Presbyterians who led out in Washington, Pennsylvania. But there were Methodists, like James O’Kelley, and Baptists like Elias Smith and Abner Jones, who preceded the Presbyterians, and who began the tributaries which flowed into the mainstream of the restoration ideal.

Our ties with the Baptists were so close that Alexander Campbell called his first journal *The Christian Baptist*. The reformers actually became identified with the Redstone and Mahoning Baptist Associations. Contrary to popular belief, it was the Baptists who thrust out the reformers. Alexander Campbell wrote: “After the Mahoning association appointed Mr. Walter Scott as an evangelist, in the year 1827, and when great numbers began to be immersed into Christ under his labors, and new churches began to be erected by him and other laborers in the field, did the Baptist associations begin to declare non-fellowship with the brethren of the reformation. Thus by constraint, not by choice, they were obliged to form societies out of those communities that split upon the ground of adherence to the apostles’ doctrine.”

It would not represent a reversal of policy but a

resumption of it, if we sponsored another “Great Awakening” and sparked another “Cane Ridge Revival” in which men of divergent theological views could come together to proclaim the Christ. It was out of the very warmth resulting from the original Cane Ridge that devout and learned Presbyterians resolved to write *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, in which are included these words: “We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large.” Who knows but what, under the impetus and dynamic of the same spirit, other such testaments might be written which would gently consign other sectarian bodies to oblivion.

3. We do not need to secure permission from, or clearance by, a synod, central commission or hierarchy. Being congregational and autonomous, and not subject to control from any headquarters, each body of saints is free under God to propose and pursue any approach which is deemed scriptural and appropriate to resolving the problem of the sectarian spirit in its own community. Obviously, no one approach can be universally applicable, and brethren should prayerfully, fervently and eagerly implore the God of all grace, who is more interested in the unity of His people than anyone else, to give them insight into the course upon which they should proceed.

Groups of believers which have historic ties with “established churches” whether they be Roman, Anglican, or later Protestant associations, would find it more difficult to encourage unity on the basis of the sin of schism and the death of the sectarian spirit. The restoration movement has no real historic debts to “sects” or “isms” and the brethren are free to go forward without having to protect the rear or pay tribute to opinions which have crystallized into creeds.

Liberty can best be exemplified by those who walk in it, and it was liberty which helped to lead men from their confining littleness. Alexander Campbell wrote: “Such is the measure of light and liberty which I now enjoy under Jesus Christ, that I

could unite in all Christian communion and cooperation with all the *baptized believers* in all the sects in America, so far as their *opinions* are considered; provided only, that they hold *the head*, Jesus; believing all the *facts* attested concerning him, and are *obedient to his commands*. And farther than this, we humbly conceive *christian* union, communion, and co-operation can never legitimately extend.” (The italics are those of Alexander Campbell.)

4. Historically, our brethren already have to their credit the actual union of two groups into one. It represented a reversal of the divisive trend of sectarianism when the *Reformers* and the *Christians* came together at Lexington, Kentucky, on New Year’s Day in 1832. There were great differences between them, but they resolved to regard them as in the realm of opinion, and not to advocate them as conditions of fellowship. One prominent historian, M. M. Davis, writes: “Love was the leading element in this glorious consummation. The people first became acquainted with each other; this acquaintance ripened into friendship, and this friendship into love. No amount of argument and information and exhortation in the absence of love could have wrought such results. Pieces of steel thrown together will touch each other, but they will not unite: but melt them, and they become one common whole.”

Dr. Robert Richardson wrote of this union that “the world was stirred as it has not been since the days of primitive Christianity.” What would happen in our generation if the heirs of those who effected this wonderful demonstration of the power of God to unite men of divergent thinking were to become the real unitive force among all who believe in Jesus through the apostolic testimony?

We need to have “another Lexington” to give renewed hope to our own age.

5. We have recaptured many values which are basic to any

step toward uniting the Christians among the sects. Our people are not generally spiritually illiterate. The importance of the knowledge of the word of God has been stressed among us and we have a fair sense of recognition of the authority of Jesus over our lives on the basis of God's perfect revelation. Any unity which is brought about in answer to the prayer of Jesus must be achieved with those who believe on Him through the apostolic proclamation or word. We are in a better position than most religious communions to bring into any honest and open discussion of the problem of disunity among believers in Jesus a genuine scriptural foundation.

6. A sincere attempt to understand all believers and to promote a real thrust for unity may better come from us than from most others. We have been the most exclusive people in many communities, and have created an image of a hostile, arrogant and combative group with our hand against every man, and every man's hand against us. If we reverse our attitude and confess our error in allowing Satan to use us to divide rather than to unite, it will give the greatest impetus toward eventual unity since the days of Campbell and Stone. It will be a little like the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, whose radical change undoubtedly helped to bring about the spread of the Good News throughout the whole Gentile world.

7. In a few places the brethren have already demonstrated that it is possible to create a favorable atmosphere for further discussion with the entire religious community. I know of two congregations, both of them non-instrument Churches of Christ, which host monthly breakfasts for men of the community, particularly for the preachers. The sisters prepare and serve the meals and both meetings have been well attended by Catholic and Protestant clergy for several years. Although the discussion at both places is informally about the word of God, there has been no real investigation of what I am writing about, but the time may not have been ripe for that. I am not at all sure that "the clergy" will achieve a great deal in the field of real unity.

They may actually consider that it poses a threat to their financial security and that may be as true of “our clergy” as of others. No real movement for unity will ever be effective which does not involve the “grass roots” but the fact is that the “common people” in all of the sects, including our own, are sick of strife and saddened by schism and ready to “flow together” on the foundation of God’s precious word if permitted to do so.

There will, of course, be all kinds of objections to this bold suggestion that “Churches of Christ” actually take the lead in setting up meetings which will seek to involve the Christians in all of the sects, but most of these will result from traditional patterns of exclusivism, emotional hang-ups, or unnatural fears that truth will suffer in any encounter with error. But these are the very things which have created divisions and it is time to renounce them lest they perpetuate a state of affairs among believers which is intolerable to Him in whom we believe and “whom having not seen we love.”

1. It will be said that we should first settle our differences inside the restoration movement before we begin to project the dynamic of unity into the wider world of believers! Why? The restoration movement is not the body of Christ, and never was. Are believers in a movement which grew out of the consecrated thought and efforts of Scotch and Irish Presbyterians any more precious to the God of the universe than believers who grew out of the thought and efforts of Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley?

Is it not possible that our real problem has been that we have waded too long in the shallows fishing for crawdads when we should have launched out into the deep? Can we let the city burn down and be destroyed while we continue to rearrange the furniture in our own living-room? Perhaps in the wider discussion of those things which have caused the greater chasms we can find an answer to the erosion creating little ditches in our own backyard. We need to rejoin the human family in its search

for reality in Christ Jesus. As He came to bring the leaven of His presence for good to all, so must we.

2. It will be said that other believers will be suspicious of us and of our tactics and will regard any move we make as simply another ruse to gain access and proselyte. We must recognize the validity of this objection, regrettable though it is. Our approach to other believers in the past does not present a very creditable performance. We have openly and publicly attacked those who honestly differ with our understanding of the will of God for our lives. Sometimes the attacks have been crude and boorish. Our only approach to differences has been division and our only approach to division has been debate. We have no doubt driven from us as many as we have led to the Master.

But we cannot continue to act as troublemakers in a world which desperately needs peacemakers. While God is opening up a door unto us we must not continue to slam it shut in His face. It is time for a genuine reformation of attitude. We must be cast in the role of positive thinkers rather than negative. We have some real values to share and we should break the traditional bonds which enslave us and penetrate the whole religious complex with our witness.

3. It will be said that any attempt to relate to the whole sectarian world to inject a dynamic of peace will result in compromise. This need not be so at all. It overlooks the fact that the religious world is sick of its own sectarianism and is seeking a solution. It also represents a false concept that association betokens endorsement and that any verbal exchange of views must result in adoption of mistaken ideas. Our problem is that we have adopted and accepted a stance which is without scriptural warrant but which will condemn us to talk to ourselves about other people rather than talk to other people about ourselves, and the ideals which we hold.

We need to break out of our shell and assume the task

which God has ordained for us. The world will not be won to believe in Christ until those who believe in Christ in the world are one. We hold enough in common with other believers to use as a foundation upon which to stand as we communicate. There are millions who believe that God raised up Jesus from the dead and made Him both Lord and Messiah. Their confession of this momentous fact represents my only creed. I should be willing to meet with anyone to discuss the implication of this momentous truth and the implementation of the Lord's will for our lives.

I am personally convinced that "Churches of Christ" in many localities could spark the greatest renewal of interest in the kingdom of heaven that has been since the days of Martin Luther. Because of cultural conditions in our day, much more favorable than those in Luther's day, it is my conviction that any genuine reformation would sweep the whole religious world and result in one of the greatest triumphs for the King in the annals of the faith.

When I speak of the "Churches of Christ" in this connection I have in mind the congregations of believers which do not employ instruments of music in conjunction with their public expressions of praise. For reasons I need not disclose as a supplement to those already mentioned, I think these disciples are in the most strategic position of anyone on earth in this final quarter of the twentieth century to spark a movement which could rapidly spread throughout the earth.

I want to see the brethren who "sigh for Jerusalem" catch a vision of what could be done and "launch their Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea, nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key." We have wallowed long enough in the slough of despond. It is time to start once more the ascent of the mountains of faith. Our fathers who crossed the "Jordan" had "Jerusalem" as their goal, but their heirs mistook Jericho for the city of the Most High.

Let us again shoulder our packs and begin the trek toward God's ideal, proclaiming the only hope of renewal, that which comes from recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power! The nineteenth century restoration movement made great strides in its inception. If we are to have a twentieth century renewal movement we must hurry. Time is running out! Let us take the lead in touching the life of every person who loves the Lord Jesus! For this we have been called to the kingdom!

The Apostolic Commission

Mission Messenger (July 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

This is the final paragraph of the account of the Good News as penned by Matthew, a former imperial customs-officer at Capernaum, who abandoned his office and political appointment to follow Jesus of Nazareth. The quotation is as it appears in the *Revised Standard Version*, and it is an improvement over the rendering given by the scholars selected by King James to produce a revised version which he could authorize to be read in Anglican churches, of which he claimed to be the titular head.

The *King James Version* has Jesus saying, "All power is given unto me," but the original for power is *exousia* which properly refers to delegated authority. Universal authority belongs to the God of the universe. He bestowed it upon His Son when he was raised from the dead. The reign of Jesus is not timeless either as respects its commencement or termination. It

will continue only until he has subdued all his enemies. The last one to be destroyed will be death. “God has put all things in subjection under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:27).

“Make disciples” is far better than “teach” as found in the King James Version. The original is the word for enlisting, enrolling or signing up students. It was a recruiting word, a term for soliciting and securing students to be taught in a scholastic institution.

On the night before his betrayal, Jesus informed his disciples that after he was raised up he would go before them into Galilee (Mark 14:28). Accordingly, the angel at the empty tomb told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to inform the disciples that they would see him in Galilee. On the way, Jesus met the women and said, “Go tell my brethren to go to Galilee and there they will see me.”

The eleven went to the mountain in Galilee which Jesus had previously pointed out as a meeting place. We do not know why he chose to give his authoritative instructions in Galilee, but it was familiar territory for the eleven, all of whom were Galileans. Jesus was born in Judea, and the only Judean among the apostles was Judas Iscariot. The last word is a form of *Ish Keriath*, meaning “man of Keriath,” a city in Judea. Judas was no longer with them.

There are a lot of conjectures about what Jesus said to the apostles upon this occasion, and a good deal of hazy thinking, as I view it. It is generally designated “the great commission,” but no inspired writer ever so referred to it, and the expression is certainly unscriptural, although it is not anti-scriptural. It is almost universally assumed that it was given *to the church*, and that we still operate under its terms, but a little calm reasoning will show that this assumption is without warrant and groundless. The church could not carry it out if it had been given the responsibility.

The fact is that it was given to individuals, the apostles, and they completely fulfilled it during their lifetime, as special ambassadors to every nation under heaven. It was the second commission given to them. The first was also given in Galilee. It was limited in scope because Jesus was not yet in authority. He was operating under authority. Since he was sent “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24), he said to the apostles, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:5, 6). They accomplished that mission. “And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere” (Luke 9:6).

The second commission was given to the same group of men. The church is no more under it than under the first. The church had not even been planted when the apostles received the two commissions. Jesus had been raised from the dead before the second was given, and with universal authority he could direct his ambassadors to enroll disciples or followers from all nations. In order to do this they would need the ability to speak foreign languages which were new to them. God never commissions anyone to do a thing without empowering him to do it, so the ambassadors were empowered to address any people in their language.

Jesus associated intimately with the apostles whom he had chosen for forty days after his resurrection. He assured them they would receive the necessary power for universal testimony. He said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” This was spoken only to the apostles and never to anyone else. Accordingly, when the Holy Spirit came upon them they received the power to equip them to communicate verbally with and to enroll disciples of all nations. “Devout men from every nation under heaven . . . each one heard them speaking in his own language” (Acts 2:5, 6).

The command to the ambassadors was to “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” Mark, who according to Eusebius, the father of church historians, wrote “the memoirs of Peter” said, “And they went forth and preached everywhere.” Jesus told them to go, and they went. The apostles had to fulfill their commission during their lifetime or they did not fulfill it at all. I am as firmly convinced they carried out the second commission as I am that they carried out the first.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he affirmed, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.” Then he asks, “Have they not heard?” His answer is, “Indeed they have, for their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Romans 10:18). When he wrote the Colossians he specifically said the gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven (1:23). All the earth! The ends of the world! Every creature under heaven! This represents completion of the apostolic commission.

It had to be thus because Jesus declared that the gospel should be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” before the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish system of worship (Matthew 24:14). The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had selected Jerusalem as the center of His worship. The temple had been built at his authorization. His Shekinah, or glory, rested there. He was unwilling for all this to be destroyed by alien hands until every nation had ambassadorial notice that the rule of heaven had been established and the king had proclaimed, “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father.”

Jesus gave full instructions to his followers about what to do when Jerusalem was besieged by the Roman armies. In answer to the question of the apostles, “Tell us, when shall these things be?” he replied, “And the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”

E. M. Zerr in his commentary says, “The *end* means the end of Jerusalem, as the climax of the war. That event occurred in 70 A.D., and the Gospel was to have been offered to all nations of the (civilized) world by that time. Hence the great commission of the apostles was fulfilled in the first century.”

B. W. Johnson, commenting on the statement of Jesus, writes, “The gospel was preached throughout the Roman empire, the world of the New Testament, before A.D. 70.” He says the *end* refers to the end of the Jewish state. Albert Barnes calls it, “The end of the Jewish economy. The destruction of the temple and city.” J. W. McGarvey, in his *Commentary on Matthew and Mark* has an explicit note which you should read in full. He says the end referred to the destruction of the temple, and that the gospel had been preached in all the world before that event. This has always been my position since I began the study of Matthew 24. I have read nothing to influence me to alter it.

To summarize, let me repeat again that the commission under consideration was not given to the church, but to the apostles as individuals. We do not operate under it, because it was fulfilled by those who were charged with it. Only those who were empowered to speak all the languages of the earth could go into all nations and proclaim the good news. I am quite convinced that the apostles could speak in other languages than those they had learned, and that these were new tongues to them. I am just as convinced that no one today can communicate with people in all languages, dialects and tongues, directly and without assistance. The apostles were unique. They were ambassadors of the King and I respect their authority as received from Him. As a matter-of-fact I am built upon them as a foundation with Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

The Delivered Faith

Mission Messenger (August 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

For quite some time I have been wanting to write about the letter which Jude sent to “the called who are beloved in God, and kept by Jesus Christ.” My reasons have been varied and fluctuate from day to day as I meditate upon what is contained in the twenty-five verses into which we have sliced the letter like so many pieces of luncheon meat for sandwiches.

I suspect that one reason I wanted to write on the letter is that few others do so. It is small and squeezed in between the three letters of John and his account of the apocalyptic visions on the island of Patmos. Jude is sometimes treated like a little boy at a parade, pushed into the rear row where he has to peer between the big people to see the honor guard stepping it off. Actually, of course, Jude is one of the “big people” and deserves a lot better billing than he receives in a lot of places.

Jude needs to be studied because of the way in which he deals with a crisis situation. He implies that he had been quite eager to write another kind of letter altogether, and may have been doing that very thing when he was made aware of a situation which impelled him to write the one we now have. I’m not sure he ever wrote the other one, but it does not make a great deal of difference. The one he did write is a tremendous one and the four-fold appeal it makes to believers is so rich and full I cannot get it off my mind.

Letters which are written in the heat of circumstances which cry aloud for action must not be easily dismissed. Perhaps a mother sits down to write her son an account of what has been transpiring around the old homestead when she receives word that her husband, the boy's father, has been involved in an automobile accident and is in the hospital. The few words she hastily scribbles down are not at all what she had planned to write.

Perhaps a soldier sits down in his room in a foreign barracks on a Sunday afternoon to write the folks back home when the alert sounds and the shouting and fire of the enemy is heard downstairs in the street. His letter will be a different one than he originally intended. That is what happened in the case of Jude. His is not a serene little letter of thanks such as Paul wrote to the Philippians. It is an air mail, special delivery, with directions for dealing with an emergency.

I like to read it because it deals with the gigantic problems faced by the infant community of the redeemed. They make our little squabbles seem like heated debates over whether to use Dixie Cups to serve the Kool-Aid at a local farm club meeting. The early saints had to contend with massive attack by giant evils. We are in danger of being nibbled to death by ducks, or of being run over by snails.

The fact that we shift into high gear and "vroom" around the track so wildly over some of the petty and trivial issues occupying our attention is proof of how far we have fallen. The devil does not need to call in the heavy guns if he can bowl us over with cream puffs or knock us cold with ping-pong balls. Some of the things over which our brethren get excited and rush into print are about as important as arguing how many pinto beans you can get into a pint jar.

It was different in the days when Jude wrote. Satan signalled for the artillery to be brought up and the kind of

opposition which the saints faced was something else. A lot of our brethren are not really using the sword of the Spirit anymore. The kind of war in which they are engaged can be fought as well with a dull paring knife. A lot of sermon outlines are like chasing butterflies with a peashooter. They seldom hit anything and when they do, it doesn't make much difference anyhow. Many of the saints are hardly conscious that there is a war on. They are living in peaceful coexistence with Satan and are so busy clobbering one another they think of the preacher "as their enemy." Sometimes that is nearer right than otherwise.

I take a lot of genuine comfort from the fact that a faith which, in its infancy, could survive an attack of giants will probably survive a bombardment of dwarfs. It would seem logical to conclude that if a herd of shaggy mammoths could not trample you under when you were a baby, you will probably survive against a swarm of guinea pigs when you've grown up. And most of our attackers today resemble termites more than they do eagles.

In any event, if you do not have a special television show that you just have to watch in order to survive, I want to share with you some of the things which run through my mind when I read what Jude wrote. This time I will use the rendering in the *Revised Standard Version*. It seems to be as good as any other and a whole lot better than most. As you read what Jude wrote you will probably remember that his little letter had a difficult time getting into the canon of new covenant scriptures at all. It was kept dangling and its right to be included was argued and debated, and even until the fourth century it was classed among the "doubtful" books. Finally, it won its deserved place and that is why I can now analyze it with you.

William Barclay wrote, "There have indeed been times in the history of the church, and especially in the revivals of the church, when *Jude* was not far off from being the most relevant book in the New Testament." Of course, when Barclay uses the

word “revival” he is not talking about getting a high-powered evangelist to come in and shake the members and get them up and walking for a few months before they retire again. It is because I think the world could be on the verge of another great revival or reformation that I would like to study Jude with you.

A lot of folk think that I am a little balmy when I talk about another great reformation. They think that when Martin Luther and Alexander Campbell died, that the Holy Spirit said, “Well, that’s it!” and folded his tent and abandoned the scene. I don’t buy that. I am pleading for renewal through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. It is useless to dream of renewal upon any other basis. Our task is not to hew out cisterns but to return to the fountain. It is not to regale ourselves with thoughts of new sources of power but to return to the revelation of the Spirit. Unless we recover the dynamic of yesterday, we will not be able to face the demands of today, and for us there will be no tomorrow.

WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. May mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.

Jude identifies himself in two ways, describes the state of those he addresses in three terms and invokes a multiplication of three things upon them. He says a great deal in three dozen words. Jude was first and foremost a servant of Jesus Christ. That sounds good, but we have watered down the word “servant” until it does not signify the relationship Jude describes. We think of a servant as one who comes in the morning in time to wash the breakfast dishes, works eight hours and then goes home after having put the clothes in the automatic dryer, unless it is Thursday which is a free day.

But the word used by Jude is *doulos*. That means a slave. It

always speaks of a master-servant relationship, and not of an employer-employee situation. In a metaphorical sense *doulos* refers to one who surrenders absolutely and completely to the will of another. A household servant is hired, but a slave is bought. It is difficult to be a servant to another but it is infinitely harder to be a slave and know you can never “do your own thing.”

In the final analysis, the whole thing is a matter of will. A man can say to God, “Not my will but thine be done.” Or he can say, “Not thy will but mine be done.” He cannot say both. The first is the foundation of the obedient life. The second is the basis of all sin in the universe, starting with the first one. If one seeks to be his own master he has a fool for a slave. He who wills to submit to God must submit his will to God. Unless Jesus is the Lord of everything, He is the Lord of nothing in your life. I wish I had always realized that. You do not get Thursdays off if you are His slave. You do not get Sundays off either. The one who wants “off” has probably never been “on.”

Almost every commentator mentions that Jude is self-effacing and willing to be known by his relationship to his more prominent brother. Andrew was a little bit like that. Not long ago someone mentioned him as being a “second fiddler” to his brother, Peter. There is nothing denigrating about being introduced as the brother of one who is faithful to Christ. It is an honor to me to be associated with anyone who truly loves the Lord. I do not have to play on the varsity. I am perfectly content to be a “second-stringer” on the spiritual team or I will sit on the bench if I can just have Him for my coach. I will carry water for the other players if He will allow me to be on the field.

I like the way James describes what is involved in being a slave of Christ. Such a person is called. He is beloved in God. He is kept by, or for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the many paradoxes of scripture that we are slaves but free! We are called, cherished and confined in Christ. I never read things like this

without having an inner sense of exultation and genuine joy.

I am not here because I sneaked in under the tent. I was called. I heard the call and I knew I had to answer it. I came in through the front door. I know the very day that the call got through to me! I know how miserable I was until I said “I’m coming!” I know what a burden was lifted off when I came. All of this is important to me. I came because I was invited. I am not here because I was appointed to fill an unexpired term, or as the result of someone’s influence peddling. I was elected! I am not in interim service, but I am here for the duration. I’m not quitting until I graduate!

It was quite awhile before I knew that the word for “called” was used at least three different ways originally. It didn’t throw me when I learned it and I wasn’t upset by my previous ignorance. I didn’t go back out and ask heaven to repeat the call. I simply began to implement the divine purpose for my life as I learned it. I intend to do that until the “Great Call” comes through with such a clear channel that I will know it’s for me and I will start walking down into the shady valley. I know a boy who has been baptized three times trying to answer the call and he is not satisfied yet. Every time he gets a new insight he thinks it is another call. He has the telephone receiver mixed up with a yo-yo string, and he is trying to bounce himself into the kingdom.

Men were called to fulfill a special responsibility or render a service to the community in ancient Greece. The same word was used to summon a man as a guest to a feast or banquet. Finally, it was employed to call one to judgment, to appear before the tribunal. The Holy Spirit commandeered the term and invested it with a spiritual significance as He always does.

I realize that everyone who answers the call is volunteering for service. It is service for life. That is why it seems a little ridiculous to try to get some of those who have been called to

“volunteer for full-time service.” There isn’t any other kind. God has no part-time slaves, and no couple of days per week workers. No one is called as a decoration.

I am here to serve and I love it. I am also here for the feast and I love that also. The whole bit is one glorious good time, and I mean it. What a thrill it is to fork out a huge slice of love, garnished with the relish of joy and peace. I mean this is like Thanksgiving Day seven times a week. I’m glad I wasn’t out when the invitation was delivered. I never intend to be out again.

I’ve been called to serve and to share in a feast, but I have also been called to judgment. That does not worry me since I have learned that I do not have to dig around and take a briefcase of my own good deeds and dump them out on the judge’s desk as “Exhibit A.” I’ve got my identity card with my name engraved on it by grace. It is signed by the One who settled for my sins with His own blood. He is now my advocate, pleading my case. I am not trusting in my own righteousness but in His. I do not intend to reject Him, leave Him or stray from Him. I need a Savior and I have one— the only One!

I am beloved in God. That’s the basis for the call. And that one fact gives meaning to life. It accounts for all that is done. It explains the divine patience which is inexhaustible, the longsuffering which is incomprehensible except on the ground of an amazing depth of compassion. Leave the love of God out of it and life becomes a ball of knotted string which defies unraveling. Love is concern, a deep and vital concern for persons which assumes their burdens and appropriates their needs and freely gives to meet them without scolding or reprimand.

W. R. Nicholson says in his *Popular Studies in Colossians* that love is “the bond which holds all of the other graces together.” Ragnar Bring writes in his *Commentary on Galatians* that “love is the perfection of everything spoken in Scripture.” A. E. Brooke says, “Human love is a reflection of something in

the divine nature itself.” William Barclay writes in *The Letters of John*, “Love has its origin in God. It is from the God who is love that all love takes its source.” By being beloved in God I have been made a sharer in the very life of God.

I am also kept for Jesus Christ. The King James Version has “preserved.” Like a lot of words, the original term has an interesting history. It is *tereo*, which meant to watch. Out of this grew the idea of guarding from loss or injury by keeping an eye upon. It was not so much a matter of preventing escape, for which the Greeks had another word, but more a matter of maintaining or holding fast. To use a homely illustration, I can still remember my mother saying when someone brought us a quantity of fresh fruit, “I’ll have to make *preserves* out of it to *keep* it from spoiling.” Peach preserves represent peaches put into a condition in which they can be maintained for use.

That is what God has done for me. Left to myself I would become rotten and spoiled. But the care of God has been extended and I am preserved in love to be used by Jesus Christ. I am no longer in the natural state, the carnal state. I am now a partaker of the divine nature. I am on God’s pantry shelf and I bear His label. I have been plucked from the world’s berry farm and put in the divine container “fit for the Master’s use.”

Mercy, grace and peace! Mercy is the divine attribute which enables God to receive us in spite of the weakness and infirmity of our humanity. It is extended, not to those who deserve but to those who do not. Those who are perfect require no mercy and the fact that all of us require it is proof of our imperfection. It was mercy which put the robe around the shoulder of the prodigal and shoes upon his feet. It was mercy raised to the superlative degree which then placed the Father’s own ring on his finger. Mercy does not stop with merely making us comfortable. It also makes us rich.

Grace is not so much God giving us something to meet our

need as it is God giving Himself to share our lot. It is God moving into the earthly dimension, corrupted as it is by sin, and making life worth living by giving life worth. Grace is not paying us off or giving us what we have earned. It is handing out a gift which is so magnificent that it cannot even be contemplated in the realm of recompense. Grace is God opening up His arms and clasping us close, not because of what we are, but of what we can become in the everlasting arms. Anyone who talks about what we must do to merit grace reveals his ignorance of the nature of grace. That which is merited is not grace. Jonathan Edwards, the old Puritan proclaimer, said that “Grace is but glory begun and glory is but grace perfected.” He also said, “As grace is first from God, so it is continually from him, as much as light is all day long from the sun, as well as at first dawn or at sun-rising.”

Peace is the harmony with God which results from His bestowal of justification and our acceptance of it through faith in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the beating of the human heart in perfect time with the divine. It is being in step with God and in tune with the infinite. It is freedom from fear, walking without worry, and attainment without anxiety. Peace is not the calm which follows the storm, it is the courage which makes the storm impossible. Peace is the quiet spirit which can honor God by life or death, and is willing to live or die by His orders.

I want to share with you the best statement I have seen concerning the meaning of grace and peace. It is from the pen of William Hendriksen, former Professor of New Testament Literature at Calvin Seminary. He writes, “Grace is God’s spontaneous, unmerited favor in action, his sovereign, freely-bestowed loving-kindness in operation, and its result, peace, is the conviction of reconciliation through the blood of the cross, true spiritual wholeness and prosperity.” Perhaps you ought to read that again, and then lean back in your chair, close your eyes, and let it trickle and seep down into your soul.

I share with Jude the hope that these three magnificent qualities be multiplied unto you. I would not have them dispensed with meager hand or doled out as if they had to be measured. As he wanted them multiplied to his readers so I want them abundantly bestowed upon mine. In this day I eagerly trust that my readers will also be readers of Jude. It is far more important that you read what Jude said than to read what I say about what he said.

THE DELIVERED FAITH

Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

The term “very eager” has to do with diligent or earnest application to a task. That is why the *King James Version* renders it, “when I gave all diligence to write unto you.” Now this can mean that Jude had planned to write about the salvation which was shared by the called ones, and was actually engaged in doing so when he received information which caused him to alter his plans and write this letter to meet a desperate emergency.

William Barclay looks at it that way, and translates the passage, “Beloved, when I was in the midst of devoting all my energy to writing to you about the faith which we all share, I felt that I was compelled to write a letter to you to urge you to engage upon the struggle to defend the faith.” If this is correct, it will explain the urgency which the letter seems to fairly breathe out. There is a grave difference between a calm treatise about something which we share in common and need to appreciate, and a warning about impending disaster. This little epistle is like the break in a television schedule, made ominous by the voice of the announcer, “We interrupt this program to bring you warning that a tornado has been sighted ten miles west of this city and to urge you to take proper precautions.” There is the

same difference between the letter of Paul to the Philippians and the letter of Jude that there is between the chimes of the town clock striking the hour and the sound of the siren on the fire engine churning its way down the street.

Sometimes a crisis can change our whole way of life and the manner in which we react to that crisis may be more important than our original idea. When Ida Scudder was a girl in Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts she was emphatic in her declaration that she would never live and serve in a foreign country as her parents had always done in India. But before she graduated a letter came from her father informing her that her mother was seriously ill and asking for her to return to India immediately. In a single night there, three native men— a Brahman, a Muslim and a Hindu— came to knock on the door of the mission compound, each of them pleading for a woman doctor to save the life of his wife. These calls in the night drove Ida Scudder to become a doctor and to start the Christian Medical School which trained hundreds of young native women to become nurses.

In his address to the United Negro College Fund Convocation, in Indianapolis, Indiana, April 12, 1959, John F. Kennedy said, “When written in Chinese the word crisis is composed of two characters— one represents danger and the other represents opportunity.”

If Jude was engaged in compiling material about the salvation common to all in Christ Jesus, we do not know if he ever finished, or ever returned to it, but the little letter he did write has encouraged millions to resist the erosion away of the faith and to stand fast for it. I find myself thrilled that Jude was *eager* to write of our common salvation. A brother recently called to my attention how difficult it is to interest modern saints in conversation about spiritual matters. If three or four brethren are talking and you inject a serious note about the common salvation, they either clam up or quickly change the subject.

They will join in if you are criticizing a brother or finding fault with the congregation, and will chew on morsels of gossip, but there is no eagerness to continue exhorting or edifying one another.

Regardless of what else we share in our precious Lord we can be thrilled that we have a salvation which belongs to all of us. We might differ in ethnic backgrounds and in social status, but we are one in that salvation which is the gift of God by grace through faith. I am a lot like Jude. I am eager to write about that wonderful state into which we have been called by the Good News. It is my strength and my song. I am happy that you partake of it, like I do, as a recipient of His mercy. But if I am to review what Jude wrote I must follow where he leads.

His letter was an appeal. It was an exhortation. He uses the word *parakaleo*, which, in the *King James Version* is rendered beseech 43 times, comfort 23 times, exhort 19 times, entreat 3 times, and by a few other terms. The word literally means “to call to one’s side,” that is, to summon for a task or function. It conveys the idea of entreating or beseeching one to engage in an action or effort. I am fully convinced that when such circumstances exist as those confronting Jude, I am obligated to answer the call or summons he issued. I am one of the called and beloved. I share in that glorious salvation. I am obligated to answer the entreaty and so is every other person who is among the called ones.

For what did Jude entreat the beloved? The answer is simple. “To contend for the faith.” Since that is the duty of every one of us, what is involved in it? The original word is a big one—*epagonizesthai*. Do not let it frighten you. Notice that it contains the word “agonize,” which is from *agon*, a contest. We are now on a clear course toward understanding what is meant. The word was used to describe a wrestling match in the Greek games. When a challenge was flung out, someone stepped forth and accepted it, and the two of them grappled with each other

until one was vanquished. Sometimes the challenge was issued on the basis of integrity or civic pride and to refuse to fight was to surrender to shame or disgrace.

The saints are encouraged by Jude to pick up the glove flung down by a blatant challenger. To do so is to accept an invitation to a contest, not of skill but of perseverance and endurance. There will be no gong to end the struggle. It is a battle which must end in victory for one and defeat for the other. There will be no place for a truce or compromise, no cessation of hostilities. This is hand-to-hand combat. It is a struggle for survival. One does not “agonize” playing tiddlywinks or pitching horseshoes!

What is the issue? “The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” What is *the faith*? It is here that men have been guilty of tragic error, as a result of which they have engaged in deadly combat with the wrong persons, and have slaughtered friends instead of foes. Some have assumed that *the faith* consists of the compilation of new covenant scriptures and have postulated that one is not in the faith who does not understand as they do every minute point of doctrine. In the final analysis this means that to be in the faith is equivalent to being aligned with the particular party, faction or sect growing up around a specific deduction from or interpretation of some scriptural matter. Anyone who does not conform to the official interpretation is accused of being a liberal, a traitor to God, a heretic and an apostate, even though his life exhibits much more of the fruit of the Spirit than do the lives of his accusers.

The new testament canon does not constitute the faith about which Jude writes. The new covenant scriptures had not yet been written and certainly not compiled into a single volume. It would be three centuries before the very epistle Jude was writing would be given canonical recognition and win an undisputed place. The new covenant scriptures had not been “once for all delivered,” but the faith had. Those to whom Jude

wrote and who were beloved of God were in that faith before they ever saw an apostolic letter.

This in no sense denigrates the scriptures. It does not say anything derogatory about their authenticity, genuineness or authority. It never defeats God's purpose to place His revelation in proper perspective. Certainly the new covenant scriptures reveal the faith to us. We would know little about it without the scriptures. They are not the faith, but the window through which we see the faith. They are the vehicle through which knowledge of the faith is transmitted to us in this generation, but there is a difference between a vehicle and that which it conveys. When I was at the Palace of Versailles I saw the ornate carriages of the kings, but I did not think I was seeing the kings. Our faith is actually a person. Jesus is our faith as He is our peace, our wisdom, our sanctification and our redemption. Our faith is our absolute trust in Jesus as God's Son and Anointed, and the scriptures constitute the testimony of that faith.

Recognition of this distinction makes a great deal of difference, and it is lack of such recognition which has caused us to "fall out by the way," and become a welter of warring and bickering sects. Men erroneously think they are "contending for the faith" when they engage in heated debate over some scriptural passage or intellectual apprehension of a controverted matter. One is not contending for the faith when he engages in debate over whether instrumental music in expression of public praise is acceptable to God. He is not contending for the faith when he argues the pro or con of a method of supporting a radio or television program. He is not contending for the faith when he engages in an argument about the millennium or the charismatic movement.

Men may debate such questions all of their lives and never once contend for the faith, or they can contend for the faith all of their lives and never once debate about such subjects. One can contend for the faith once for all delivered and take either side of

such questions, for the simple reason that *the faith* has no relationship to such matters. In the days of Jude the saints in Christ differed about circumcision, the eating of meats and the keeping of days, but such discussions as they had were not confused with contending for the faith, until Peter got the two mixed up in Antioch. Such things are not a threat to the faith, troublesome though they may be, unless ignorant and unstable persons confuse them with the faith and substitute arguments about them for contending for the faith. Jude did not summon the beloved to debate one another over the meaning of his sentences or the implications of his statements. I do not think he ever envisioned the called ones clobbering each other and justifying it by quoting his statement to “contend earnestly for the faith.” We have come a long way when we take the letters intended to keep the saints from being divided over unscrupulous and unsavory characters and use those letters to split the body of our Lord into splinters and shiver it to smithereens!

We can tell what the faith is for which we are to contend by finding out what is espoused and advocated by those with whom we are to “agonize.” Any honest person who reads what Jude says can readily determine that he is not advocating that we belabor one another in Christ over opinions, interpretations, deductions and inferences from the apostolic writings. Nothing could do more damage to the peace and serenity of the beloved in God than to twist and wrest the statements of Jude to justify the partisan gladiators who seek publicity for their peculiarities in the forensic arena. The rag-tag wrestling matches to which we have been subjected over every little piece of trivia disgrace the very faith which we profess to defend.

The faith was delivered to the saints. It is not something they invented or concocted. It is not something they discovered or arrived at by research. It is not a philosophy, a compilation of laws or a compendium of ethical precepts. The faith came. It is historical. It entered into the time-space spectrum in which

earthly man dwells. There was a time described as “before faith came” (Gal. 3:23) and a time designated “after faith came” (Gal. 3:25). Faith came by the will of God. It came at “a time appointed by the father” (Gal. 4:2). Faith is both a gift and a response to that gift, and both the gift and the response are personal. Faith is news, good news, and that news was delivered, not in the form of a book, but in the form of a baby. The word was made flesh and dwelled among us. The faith was enfleshed and remains with us in our bodies, dwelling there as in temples of deity.

The faith was delivered once for all. It was a one-time experience for the world. It will not be repeated. The faith is unchanging. It is enduring. It is eternal. The event in which it was embodied, and the message in which it is to be conveyed, are not subject to recall, amendment or alteration. The faith was proclaimed fully and completely on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. Not a word was ever added to the faith. Each generation must re-affirm the event, but the event remains the very core of the faith. Each generation must re-proclaim the message, but the message dare not be altered to suit the whims of any culture or race. As Paul put it, “I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast.” The gospel is the same! The terms are the same! The salvation is the same! The gospel is the proclamation of the event. It is as unchangeable as the event. The faith was once for all delivered to the saints. The re-proclamation of the saints must never change!

THE SECRET INTRUDERS

For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Here we learn the reason why Jude wrote this letter under such pressure. The company of the saints was being infiltrated by fifth columnists who were bent on destruction of the faith. They were clever and avowed saboteurs whose objective was to undermine the whole plan of God and make out of it nothing but a smoking wreck. These men were not clever plotters on the outside. They were already inside scattering poison, planting incendiaries and getting ready for the take-over. And they had come in cleverly disguised to wreak their damage. Once when George Washington realized that some of those in his forces were sympathizers with the Tory cause he issued the order, "Put none but Americans on guard tonight." When the cause of Christ is in danger only those who are in allegiance to Jesus should be entrusted with grave responsibility.

The *King James Version* says these "crept in unawares." Barclay says they "wormed their way into the Church." *The Authentic New Testament* says they "managed to creep in." *The New Testament in Modern English* says "they crept in stealthily." Canon F. W. Farrar says "they slunk in." All of this indicates an undercover action. It was deliberate and intentional. These men knew what they were doing. The community of believers was fair game for their insidious mission.

The word for their means of gaining access is one of those intriguing Greek terms with a history connected with it. It is *pareisduein*, and it was used to portray a great many cunning and stealthy intrusions, generally with an ulterior motive. It was employed to describe the means by which an undesirable alien who had been banished or exiled, slipped back into the country under the cover of night while wearing a disguise. It was used to describe the action of one who infiltrated a political party with the evident purpose of creating chaos and fomenting distrust, much like the "dirty tricks" perpetrated before our last national election. It was also used to describe an agent or spy who intruded himself into a military camp of a nation to disrupt the morale of the soldiers and undermine discipline.

My reason for spending so much time on proper identification of those whom Jude regarded as enemies of the faith once delivered, is because of the childish and immature projections made by the brethren with whom I have always been associated. To them, every child of God who questioned any traditional partisan inference or explanation was an enemy of righteousness. The quickest way to become a heretic in their sight was to faithfully study the Word of God until you learned something new. Every honest and conscientious deviation from the factional norm was considered rebellion against God. In the extreme legalistic stand to which most of the heirs of the restoration movement finally gravitated every child of God on earth was regarded as a heretic by some other. To debate those who differed over some of the trivia which obsessed us was to “contend for the faith.”

It is absurd and silly to even suggest that sincere brethren who do not agree with us over some of the deductions we have made from the word are in the same class of persons about whom Jude wrote. We have been betrayed into a kind of self-righteousness which is more damning than the things about which we inveigh. We have reduced the kingdom of heaven in the eyes of many from the marvelous and universal reign of our blessed Lord into a minor fiefdom of narrow and intolerant individuals with whom “fellowship” can only be maintained at the expense of integrity and by abdication of the right to exercise your own rational powers. We have chosen foes worthy of our own mediocrity.

The infiltrators with whom Jude was concerned were the kind of men long ago designated for the condemnation which would be deservedly theirs. The word used was employed among the Greeks for a public notice warning certain characters they would not be allowed inside the city environs under penalty of death. It was used by the Romans for a public notice of proscription, which was affixed on a temple column or in the forum, and which specified the name of one who was being

banished and listed his crimes. Many of you have seen a replica of signs posted in frontier and border towns, warning horse thieves, card-sharks, bunco-artists, and known criminals that they would be summarily hanged if arrested inside the community limits.

Through the prophets God has posted ample notification that the kind of men Jude describes would not be tolerated. They would be cut off from among the people. Moreover, He gave a demonstration of divine judgment upon angels who sinned, the ante-diluvian population, and the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, to name a few. Those who fell in the same category could expect a like fate. This does not mean that long ago God determined that these individuals would become what they were, but rather, that any person who was that type would suffer condemnation.

What kind of men were these against whom Jude warned? They were ungodly men. And they manifested their ungodliness in two ways. They perverted the grace of God into licentiousness. This does not mean that they merely took advantage of the grace of God to practice vice. That would be bad enough. But they perverted God's grace itself into immorality. They not only suggested that grace condoned immorality but that by unrestrained sexual indulgence and deviation they fulfilled the purpose of God. Barclay uses the expression "blatant immorality" because he says the original suggests utter loss of a sense of shame and decency.

In addition, these denied the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. A great many modern commentators think that these vicious and harmful men were Gnostics because of their attitude toward license in the use of the body, and toward Jesus. It is easy to believe this is so because of the nature of this destructive philosophy and because of the method employed to insinuate its adherents into the camp of the faithful. If these were Gnostics we can understand more fully the urgent need to "contend earnestly

for the faith.”

Many older commentators tend to think Jude was referring to the Nicolaitans, a sect which apparently advocated that liberty constituted license to gratify lust and passion without moral restraint. This would present no real contradiction since the Nicolaitans seem to have laid the foundation in the congregations for the inroads of Gnosticism. It is not necessary that we know the particular brand-name borne by these men. We know what they promulgated and promoted and we know the danger involved.

The infant communities of believers were surrounded by threats upon every side. False accusations were hurled at them and they rested under a cloud of suspicion which could break out in frightful persecution at any time. Danger lurked so close that Paul could write that he died daily and stood in jeopardy every hour. In our day, and especially in the western world, the crude and barbarous attacks upon the persons of believers are barred by law. In the beginning it was often the legal authorities who led the persecutors.

The change in climate may lull us into a sense of security in which we conclude the faith is safe because we are. We may think that the enemy has retired because we have. Nothing could be farther from reality. “The wisdom of the passing age” as Paul refers to the specious philosophy which is always present and always dedicated to diluting and weakening the divine witness, is ever active. The danger to revealed truth may be more acute in a time when men are not required to die for the faith and thus not be called upon to make the supreme choice. Those who are deceived by relativism may think there is nothing worth dying for, and this inevitably leads to the conclusion there is nothing worth living for.

In a certain sense the Gnosticism of yesterday has been replaced by the Humanism of today. Of course there are

differences. Some of them are great. But there are also likenesses, and the effect upon the faith once for all delivered is the same. To deny the divine breakthrough in the flesh, to repudiate the atonement and reconciliation achieved by the cross, and to scoff at the thought of the resurrection which brings hope to men doomed to die, is a frightful and cruel thing, regardless of the guise under which the perpetrators appear.

Like the apostle of old I want to be “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16). It is the gospel of my salvation which enabled me to be sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, my guarantee of the inheritance until I take possession of it (Eph. 1:13, 14). That gospel is God’s dynamic to make whole every person who trusts in it with obedient surrender. The gospel is the historical fact of Jesus and what He accomplished for me, and will accomplish in and through me. I regard as an enemy every theory which ridicules the cross of Christ and every thesis which rejects the resurrection of my Lord from the dead.

I am summoned to do battle against every such foe at home and abroad, by tongue and by pen. I intend to wage relentless war on whatever ground the enemy chooses, because truth is never allowed the luxury of selecting the battlefield. It goes where the foe chooses to take his stand. I want to be in the thick of the fray, to hear the clang of weapons against each other, and to experience the sweat and grime and dust of the combat field.

That is why I have little time to devote to childish arguments among the king’s troops in the mess hall or lolling about in the shade. I have no time to chase brotherhood fireflies while the real enemy is at the gate. I can distinguish the faith once delivered in the presence of celestial angels from the opinions of those who have nothing better to do than irritate and aggravate one another by working out all of the angles.

We face a real enemy. It is not merely an enemy of “The Church of Christ” or any other historical party crystallized

around an ideal voiced by men, but an enemy of the faith once delivered to the saints. The faith itself is being assaulted, and the battle must be fought by all of the saints, by those who have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. I recognize no rivals among those who have been born again and are now a part of the new humanity. "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love . . . the former proclaim Christ out of partisanship . . . What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice."

Christ is proclaimed! In every way! No man who proclaims Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords in this universe is my enemy, although he may count himself as such. But the enmity and hostility will be in his heart. It is not in mine. There is no room for it! Anyone who, without reservation or qualm, subscribes to the once great mystery of the faith, expressed in the terms, "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory," is fighting on the side I am on. I will stand by his side while he contends for the faith once for all delivered.

The faith is historical fact. Therefore, it is not negotiable. There is no ground for compromise. No peace pact can be entered with those who deny it. When I meet with those who reject the advent of Jesus in the flesh, or who dispute His claim to be the Son of God, or His right to be Lord of the universe, I meet to fight and not discuss possible terms of peaceful coexistence. My oath of allegiance to the King makes me the sworn enemy of every system of thought which would topple Him from His throne or effect a coup for a take-over by any rebel force. I intend to slug it out with the enemy as long as my lungs can gasp air and my heart continue to beat. I want to die with the armor buckled on, the shield of faith held high, the sword cleaving to my hand, and my face toward the walls of the

New Jerusalem.

If God wills, I shall continue, in our next issue, with a discussion of the little letter written by Jude, which may be regarded as God's battle-axe flung into the faces of traitors seeking to storm the fort manned by the defenders of the faith. We hope you will again be with us as we make the exploration.

Yesterday's Wisdom

Mission Messenger (August 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

A number of years ago I delivered a series of radio talks which were later bound in book form under the title *Proven Proverbs*. The book is long since out of print, but I glance through it occasionally and am always reassured by the fact that its messages are as timely now as when I first gave them. I had been reading through the wisdom literature of the old covenant scriptures and meditating upon the gems of lore enunciated by Solomon, Hezekiah, and others, and copied down for posterity by the royal scribes. At the time I could not resist doing the radio presentations in which I demonstrated that the wisdom bestowed upon Solomon qualified him to become an adviser and counsellor of the ages. Wisdom does not die with its promulgator.

Solomon came to the throne in a time of change. The wars which had beset the land and exhausted its finances for so many decades had generally culminated under David and a period of peace had been inaugurated. With dreams of kingdom-expansion flooding his mind, Solomon resolved to make Jerusalem, the capital city, a showplace of the earth. He began an inner-city slum-clearance and civic face-lifting project and under his Works Progress Administration, built the magnificent temple with skilled craftsmen imported from other countries. They also constructed for him a downtown military museum in which the shields on display in the arsenal section were all of

pure gold.

As a part of his strategy he formed an extensive harem made up of princesses from the royal families of other nations, and for each he constructed a palatial residence where the gods of their native lands could be enshrined and worshiped. The king also formed the first Israeli navy and used the ships to promote an import trade which brought exotic Oriental items for sale in bazaars of Jerusalem. The international traffic required ambassadors, translators, business executives and diplomats which had never been developed in an agrarian society where the simple ideal of every man was to “dwell under his own vine and fig tree.” Under the impact of world trade a great transformation took place and the rural way of life gave way to an urban culture, a change which always produces certain characteristics and calls for a whole new approach to survival, which becomes threatened on every hand.

It is not at all far-fetched, as I view it, to think of the first nine chapters of Proverbs as a kind of orientation workbook prepared by the diplomatic corps for the initial preparation of young men applying for jobs in the Department of State. Beginning with chapter 10, you will read a collection of wise sayings, generally unrelated to each other and representing the kind of encapsulated philosophy with which kings of the day sought to instruct their subjects. The practice is still in vogue in the East as witness the little red book containing “the sayings of Chairman Mao,” proverbs chanted incessantly by Chinese Communist youthful militants and revolutionaries.

One of the interesting features of “the workbook” is its warning of dangers in the city to which an unsuspecting small-town youth would be exposed and in which he might become involved if he were not careful. The very first one deals with street gangs, consisting of muggers and young hoodlums who do not scruple to murder, and who entice by saying, “We will rip-off every kind of place and person and fill our apartments with

loot. Join up with us, man, and we'll give you an equal share in the swag" (1:13, 14).

Prostitution presented a real problem and was probably increased as the population of the city became more cosmopolitan and people came from far-off lands where sexual perversion and deviation were linked with worship of the gods. The young man who did not want to forfeit his dignity or lose his chance for advancement is cautioned to stay out of the red-light district and avoid passing the door of a harlot's house (5:8). The problem of the wife whose husband is a commercial traveler, and who becomes jaded and fed up with the monotony of city existence and who decides to go out on the town creates another hazard. As the *New English Version* puts it, "The prostitute can be had for the price of a loaf, but a married woman is out for bigger game."

The tendency to sleep late and to take the day off and stay in bed is given pretty rough treatment, and it is implied that one who turns off the alarm and snuggles down in the sack again does not have as much sense as an insect (6:6-11). Other things discussed are the need for keeping your cool and not blowing your stack under pressure, of staying off the bottle and not getting talked into becoming a social drinker, and especially of resisting the plea of another to co-sign his note for a loan at the bank (6:1, 2).

Because the book of Proverbs is so explicit and helpful I sometimes get the urge to do another book in which I again use its advice to zero in on some of our modern hangups. The Bible is not dated at all, but the one who does not read it or who disregards it, is dated. He does not know where it all is, and he is missing the real values of life. If you really want to get your head screwed on straight I suggest you use the divine lug wrench.

A Necessary Reminder

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Volume 37

[Abstract]

Last month I began an analysis of the brief letter penned by Jude to *the beloved*, as he addressed the recipients of it. It is my hope you will read what I wrote in my introductory article. If you do you will find that Jude was sounding a call to action, exhorting the brethren to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. The faith, which is the message about Christ, and actually the message which is Christ, was in danger from clever manipulators who denied “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

I am interested in the approach Jude made to the problem created by ruthless intruders who converted God’s grace into an excuse for vicious immorality while at the same time denying the very foundation of the faith, the historical identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He refers to God’s judgment in connection with three other historical events— the destruction of the Israelites in the wilderness, the casting down of the angels who sinned, and the visitation of wrath upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities. Let me share with you a few of the thoughts which I derive from this.

1. God is a God of history. He not only makes history, but He works in the context of history. He knows what is going on in the earth and He holds men responsible unto Himself for their conduct and actions. We require a constant reminder of this in

our messed-up age of humanism and relativism.

2. God is a God of wrath as well as a God of love. We need to take account of both the goodness and severity of God. Indeed, God's untinctured love of the pure and righteous must make Him hate evil. The greatest proof of how He regards sin is found in the price He was willing to pay to place his stamp of condemnation upon it in the flesh. The idea that God is an antiquated grandfatherly type saying "Naughty! naughty!" when His children engage in iniquity is a caricature with no basis in fact. God is not senile!

3. It is valid to refer to the accounts of God's actions in the world as described in the old covenant scriptures, as a warning to profligate characters in our generation. The idea that those scriptures are a compilation of Jewish folklore or a collection of myths is so much poppycock. It is as ridiculous as it is false. The regard of Jesus for the scriptures, and His endorsement of them, should provide the frame of reference in which the disciple of Jesus places those scriptures. I do not get red in the face, swallow hard, or gag, when someone asks me if I accept them. I have no hesitancy in saying that so far as I am concerned "holy men of God spoke as they were motivated by the Holy Spirit." I accept their testimony as true.

4. The fact that Jude employs three such drastic examples of divine judgment to illustrate how God regards those who deny the faith once delivered is proof of what a serious crime it is in divine sight, to reject the testimony related to the divinity of Jesus. The Israelites refused the leadership of God who delivered them from enslavement. The angels revolted against God who had exalted them. The citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah reveled in their sexual deviation and carnal abuse. Such refusal, revolt and revelry were all characteristic of the individuals with whom Jude was concerned, and he "lowered the boom upon them" as dangerous elements to the cause of God.

Now I desire to remind you, though you were once for all fully informed, that he who saved a people out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

Sometimes in our day, brethren are reluctant to remind us of those things with which we have been familiar for years. But we need to have our minds refreshed about matters of which we may be fully aware. It is possible for us to become complacent and indifferent and forget the lessons which things are intended to teach. Those who ignore the mistakes of others tend to reproduce them in their own lives. We may laugh at someone who makes an inglorious fall by tripping over a toy in the middle of the living-room rug, and later sprawl all over the place by doing the same thing. Peter declared that he intended always to remind the brethren of things they already knew even though they were firmly fixed in the truth they had received. He felt it was right for him to stir up their memory as long as he lived (2 Peter 1:12, 13). Jude felt the same way. He was not going to try out new and novel recipes.

I think it would be a good thing if every community of the redeemed would have a periodic mind-stirring course in what the apostle Paul called “the things which were written aforetime.” The ignorance of the old covenant scriptures is appalling. A lot of folk have been swept in on waves of emotionalism and subjectivity and much of what the apostles wrote has little impact because modern readers have so little knowledge of the examples they cite. I know people who can reel off the names of the players on their favorite baseball team and even give their current batting averages, but they couldn’t name the books of the New Testament if their lives depended on it. Certainly a magnificent chapter like Hebrews 11 will lose much of its power when read to those who know nothing about the characters to which allusion is made. I am glad Jude could say that those to whom he wrote were fully aware of what he was talking about. You need not be ashamed that you have heard it before if it is God’s word. No apology is needed for familiarity

with the message from heaven.

The case of Israel is a good illustration of the fact that God may deliver people from a state of slavery and yet destroy them when they become stubborn and rebellious against His will. The mere fact that He brings them out is no indication that He must bring them in if they revolt against Him. It is not enough to hear His voice calling us to leave an intolerable condition but we must continue to be under the divine will until we reach the promised land.

I've got some pretty good friends who think that a child of God cannot so sin as to be eternally lost. They are hooked on what debaters used to designate "Once in grace, always in grace." In more erudite theological circles it is called "the doctrine of eternal security." I think it ought to be dubbed "the dogma of eternal security," because, if you disagree with them they get all unstrung and think you are about two-thirds pagan. A lot of folk are that way about their deductions. They even love deductions on their income tax forms.

I don't accept their rationale, of course, but I am really not "bugged" by it too much. I am used to people getting red in the face and white around the gills, and regarding you as "a brother in error," if you don't buy their interpretations. If I had to make a choice I'd rather one would think you could not fall from grace and live up to it, than to think you could and be constantly trying to prove it. I know some who both believe and practice it!

But I think my friends I first mentioned are bothered about what happened to Israel. Here were God's people, saved by the divine hand and able to sing the song of deliverance and triumph, but still they did not make it to the promised land. I know the answers that have been contrived to explain it. I have listened to the verbal quirks, quibbles, turns and twists made in debates. Anyone who has a presupposition to defend has to squeeze out of some tight spots and is liable to be caught with his

hand in the cookie jar. In any event, I think that one who wills to accept Christ can will to reject Him, and if he does so he has had it. I don't think God puts a blow-torch to the human will or forces one to leave it on the front porch when he comes into Christ. His children are willing, but not will-less!

God will not save those who stubbornly resist or those who deliberately rebel. This was an important thing to be remembered by those to whom Jude wrote. To engage in a life of immorality and to deny Jesus is to walk contrary to all we have learned about faith and holiness. The ungodly men who had stealthily crept in were blatant revolutionaries against God. To follow their leading would bring divine retribution. The writer to the Hebrews, referring to the same occasion in the life of Israel, writes, "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). One who is saved by faith can never quit believing. To fall away from the faith is to fall away from the living God!

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day (verse 6).

The rebellion of Israel in the wilderness was akin to the revolt of the angels in heaven. Jude urges that this be remembered, indicating that the ones to whom he wrote were familiar with the circumstances to which he refers. In our own case we can only take the scriptural statements and fit them together and from them make certain deductions which seem best to explain and tie together the information available unto us.

There were angels who sinned (2 Peter 2:4). Their sin consisted of resisting God's authority and going beyond His will in assertion of their own. They did not stay within the limits of their proper authority but abandoned their dwelling-place.

When someone does not keep his own position, trouble is going to result. Battles have been lost and armies defeated because someone did not keep his position. Professional football teams have been trampled under by the opposition because someone did not keep his assigned position.

God did not spare the angels who did not keep their own position even though they were celestial beings. He threw them out of heaven and into Tartarus, an abiding place for unclean or evil spirits until the final judgment. Here they are chained or bound in darkness awaiting the great day of final doom.

Of course, there is more to it than this and the Jews of Jude's day had recorded lengthy traditions which formed the basis of interminable discussion. My own view is that the being who came to be called Satan or the Devil, masterminded a plot which was intended to take over control of the heavenly region. He enlisted in the attempted coup a number of other angels and war resulted. Michael and the angels faithful to God fought against the Devil and his angels and vanquished them. They were cast out and flung down to the nether region of darkness. A description of the celestial conflict will be found in Revelation 12:8, 9.

It is my personal view that this transpired before the creation of this planet. That the angels existed before the earth was made is evidenced from the fact that Job records they were present for the event and that they sang together and shouted for joy. Moreover, Satan was ready as soon as God placed man under the first restriction, to seduce the primeval pair to deny God and to enthrone self. Regardless of the paucity of the evidence available unto us there can be no question that when Jude wrote, the demons were bound in eternal chains awaiting their condemnation on the Great Day.

But why mention this example? To me the reason seems obvious. The malignant teachers of whom Jude wrote were lifted

up in intellectual pride and arrogance. They were wise above what was written. They were defiantly denying the right of God to exercise authority in His own universe, and challenging the faith once delivered in the person of the One made flesh. They were seeking to do on earth what the devil and his angels sought unsuccessfully to do in heaven. Just as Michael and the holy angels were called to do battle to vindicate the right of God to rule, so the holy people are called upon to contend for the faith which asserts the right of Christ to rule.

The conclusion is inevitable. If celestial beings were not allowed to succeed in their devious plan certainly mere man will not be permitted to do so. Thus, this is another basis for realizing that the judgment of such characters is certain. It was foreordained in the attitude of God toward angels who attacked His sovereignty and refused to longer be subject to His will and purpose.

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

It is at once apparent why Jude referred to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the nearby towns. You will recall that there were five cities located in what was then the lush plain of the lower Jordan. Zoar was spared because of Lot's entreaty for a haven in which to find refuge, but Admah and Zeboiim perished in the holocaust of divine vengeance which hollowed out the valley so that it became the site of the Dead Sea.

The area was a cesspool of vice. Homosexuality was rampant. When Abraham recognized the inadvisability of trying to continue with his nephew Lot with their increasing retinue of servants vying with each other, Lot chose the verdant pastureland upon which these cities were located. Peter affirms that Lot was a righteous man who was greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked. According to Peter, Lot both saw

and heard enough that “he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds.” When the stench of their immoral behavior reached the nostrils of God and the agonizing cry of urban crime became unbearable he sent two angels to inform Lot of impending destruction and to urge him to flee for his life.

The men were invited with characteristic Eastern hospitality to share the home of Lot rather than to sleep in some quiet corner of a deserted street where they were certain of being assaulted and ripped off. When their presence in Sodom was known the men of the city, both old and young, surrounded Lot’s house and demanded that the foreigners be turned over to them that they could sexually abuse them, much as perverted felons in prison attack a new prisoner thrust into their cells. When Lot refused to surrender his guests, the infuriated homosexuals threatened to break down the door and attack Lot himself as a foreigner who had come to dwell among them. The angels struck the men with blindness but even this did not thwart or check their attempt to gratify their carnal and unnatural lust. The record says, “They wearied themselves groping for the door.”

There are times when the mass is so corrupting that salt cannot affect it and must be withdrawn for its own preservation, while the vultures take over. There is nothing to be gained in allowing a candle to burn itself out when the pall of darkness is so great that the light shines only upon the candle. Peter tells about the rescue of Lot when God visited condemnation upon the profligate urban areas, destroying them with fire, and making them an example to the wicked of what will happen unto them. His words are reassuring to those who must live in a world which lieth in wickedness.

Jude says that Sodom and Gomorrah “serve as an example.” They certainly did to the Jews. Nothing else that ever happened made a greater impact upon the Jewish mind than the

cataclysmic destruction of those cities with fire rained down from heaven. Their fate is repeatedly alluded to by chroniclers and prophets as well as by Jesus himself. The horror of the scene is felt in the description of what Abraham saw. “He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace” (Genesis 19:28).

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the men about whom Jude wrote also “acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust” as is affirmed of the citizenry of the ancient cities. Certainly they perverted the grace of God into licentiousness (verse 4), defiled the flesh (verse 8), boldly caroused together (verse 12), and followed their own ungodly passions (verse 16). This provides an opportunity to lift up my feeble pen against the tendency in our nation, and even by some professed Christians, to water down and weaken the opposition against homosexuality and lesbianism in our day. Nothing can be more calculated to damn us to destruction than the kind of gobbledegook and garbage to which we are treated by some of the media. If the devil wants to flush America down the drain he can more effectively do it with the slime and hogwash to which we are being subjected than by any other means. That some who are disciples of the Master should be canned into keeping quiet, or even into speaking apologetically about the moral morass in which we find ourselves is almost incredible.

The word of God is plain. It warns us against deception, as if such a warning on such a subject is needed. “Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). Do you think they will? Do you think they might? If you do, you are off base and you have your head screwed on wrong!

Paul says that women who exchange natural relations for unnatural, and men who give up natural relations with women

and are consumed with passion for one another, commit shameless acts. There is a natural use of sex. Perversion of it is branded “dishonorable passion” (Romans 1:26). Such persons as engage in lewd and lascivious acts are given up by God “to a base mind and to improper conduct” (Romans 1:28). The fact that such a homosexual may pretend to be a preacher does not alter God’s view of either his mind or his conduct. To call such people “gay” is just about as silly as to talk about a pious devil. There are no *gay homosexuals* and no *happy hookers*. “The wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked” (Isaiah 57:20, 21).

The word of God decrees, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). The original Hebrew for abomination refers to something to be loathed or despised. Anyone who encourages or condones homosexual acts is encouraging an abomination. The Glide Memorial Church in California, composed of homosexuals and with a homosexual pastor is an abomination. It is a little Sodom dressed up with religious garb and decorated with ritualistic performances to make it respectable. But it is not respectable, it is a warped yardstick by which a crooked world measures itself.

A state legislature which enacts a statute providing for and licensing homosexual “marriages” between consenting adults is simply approving and licensing an abomination. Such a homosexual union is not a marriage and no amount of sophisticated reasoning can make it so. That we will fall for such panderer’s pap, and open such a Pandora’s box of sexual evils, is proof of how far the mighty have fallen, and how far down the road to hell the cocktail set has led our nation. That’s the way I feel about it and I just wanted you to know. On the university campus I am constantly hearing wild, pie-eyed philosophers who spout the humanistic, relativistic, non-moral approach to life. I say to you as I say to them, “No matter how thin you slice that, it is still bologna.”

Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

Peter calls these same men false teachers. He says they even deny the Lord who bought them and declares they presently occupy the same position formerly held by false prophets. In the old covenant scriptures the prophet was associated with "the dreamer of dreams" and the people were warned against such a visionary who would come and say he had a revelation from God in a dream and seek to seduce the people to go after other gods and serve them. The command to Israel was as severe as it was specific. "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God" (Deut. 13:5).

The saints in all ages have been plagued by flighty fanatics and fallacious fanciers who imagine God has singled them out in the universe to bring some special message to the world. Many of these are harmless rhapsodists who are mentally disoriented, but some are dangerous. These latter delude men by writing "other scriptures" and claiming an inspiration which they do not possess. The first deserve pity and compassion, the latter censure.

Since God has revealed his will for the kingdom presided over by his Son, and that will was announced by the twelve emissaries who were called, chosen and commissioned for the task, I do not believe he speaks to men today through dreams, visions and trances. So far as I am concerned the apostles were uniquely the divinely-authorized ambassadors to the world. I accept their testimony as being that of the Holy Spirit. I categorically reject as having any spiritual significance the mental meanderings of Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, or any other self-proclaimed prophet of our day.

The dreamers with whom Jude had to do were especially vicious, assertive and arrogant. They manifested this in three ways. First, they defiled the flesh. The Gnostic theory that all matter was inherently evil led to two especially dangerous extremes. Since nothing really mattered but the spirit, nothing that was done physically mattered. Thus, one could engage in any kind of sexual abuse and gratify physical passion without concern for control or moral inhibition. Again, it was argued that grace was manifested to cover all sin, and the more sin the greater would be the grace. Thus grace was converted into an occasion to sin. It seems incredible to us today to even think of this kind of senseless trash being dumped upon communities of the redeemed but that is because we no longer live in the world of idolatry and pagan philosophy with which the called out ones were once surrounded. At that, it was not much different than some of the claptrap which we hear today.

Secondly, the filthy dreamers who claimed to possess special knowledge unavailable to the common saints, rejected authority. It was because of their boasted superiority that Jude calls our wholeness in Christ “our common salvation.” The ungodly persons who perverted the grace of God into licentiousness claimed to be free from all authority, and rode roughshod over all restraints. They claimed to have insights reached by special knowledge not even vouchsafed to the apostles through revelation.

One historian says the Gnostic speculations developed in the second century “into the most monstrous system of philosophy so-called which the human brain has ever conceived.” Tertullian saw the danger to the faith which was once for all delivered, when he wrote, “Away with all attempts to produce a motley Christianity, compounded of Stoicism, Platonism and dialectics. Possessing Christ Jesus, we want no curious disputations; we want no philosophical inquiries, after once enjoying the gospel.” Anyone who claims to be “wise above that which is written” is a wolf at the door and a viper in one’s

bosom.

Thirdly, the infiltrators of whom Jude wrote reviled the glorious ones. The King James Version says, they “speak evil of dignities.” *The New English Bible* renders it “insult celestial beings.” *The Authentic New Testament* says “they speak slightly of dignities.” A footnote in the *Revised Standard Version* shows that the Greek word translated “the glorious ones” is literally “glories.” I am quite convinced that W. E. Vine is correct when he says the word refers to “angelic powers, in respect of their state as commanding recognition.” The meaning is that the false teachers actually poked fun at the angels and spoke derogatorily of celestial beings.

The Gnostic view that the angels were simply emanations from the divine energy, and that they (the Gnostics) were superior, as possessing a degree of knowledge to which the angels could not even aspire, caused them to speak slightly of them. It is especially appropriate for Jude to refer to this fact in conjunction with what he had just said about Sodom where the men of the city pounded upon the door of Lot’s house and demanded that the angels of God be turned over to them to humiliate and carnally abuse. It is bad enough to insult men who are our equals, but it is even worse to insult celestial beings. Peter says of these men that, “Bold and wilful, they are not afraid to revile the glorious ones.”

To show the consummate folly of mere men reviling higher beings Jude records that even Michael the archangel would not revile the devil, but turned him over to God to administer whatever reprimand his conduct demanded. In presenting this argument Jude does not quote from sacred scripture, but apparently draws upon an account in an apocryphal book *The Assumption of Moses*. Origen, who was born in Alexandria, Egypt, about 185 A.D., and whose name most of you will recognize, speaks of this book as being extant in his day. He says it contains this very account which Jude cites about the contest

between Michael and the devil over the body of Moses.

The word *apocrypha* refers to that which was hidden as to source, and therefore adjudged as spurious. It does not necessarily imply that everything about an apocryphal writing is false, but rather that it did not proceed from the proper source. *The Apocrypha* refers to a collection of books not regarded or recognized as belonging to the sacred canon of scripture because they could not be proven to have been produced under divine inspiration. Sometimes these were called “bastard books” because their father was not known.

I see no reason for becoming upset that Jude quoted from an apocryphal book and used an illustration from it to make a point. Certainly the esoteric Gnostics would be familiar with such books. There is some evidence that they produced a few of them. *The Assumption of Moses* relates how God delivered the body of Moses to Michael to inter in a valley in the land of Moab opposite to Beth-peor. The devil made an appearance and demanded that the body be turned over to him, basing his contention upon two grounds.

First, the body deprived of the spirit was matter, and since matter was evil, and evil was his domain or jurisdiction, the body should be surrendered to him, to do with as he saw fit. Second, he argued that Moses was a murderer, having slain an Egyptian who was quarreling with an Israelite, and it was knowledge of this homicide which forced Moses to flee into Midian. It is implied that if Satan could have gained possession of the body of Moses he would have enshrined it and used it as an object of veneration, thereby causing many to regard it with idolatrous intent. However, Michael did not give in, and the sacred scripture says, “No man knows the place of his burial unto this day” (Deuteronomy 34:6). I am glad they do not, or tourists would all be showing you little rocks they had picked up in the vicinity and lugged back home.

The essential thing for us to remember is that, regardless of the details as to the source for Jude's report, he is making the point that blatant blasphemers can take a lesson from Michael. Even though he was an archangel and the devil was a fallen angel, Michael did not speak evil of him or throw his celestial weight around. Remember that, in the heat of contention and dispute Michael did not lose his angelic cool and engage in a railing accusation. Instead he said, "The Lord rebuke you." If it is wrong for an archangel to speak derogatorily of a fallen angel, it is wrong for a human being, regardless of how proud he may be of his professed wisdom, to speak evil of any angel. I am sure there must be a lesson in this for some of us but I'll let you dig it out for yourself!

But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed.

Our English word revile is from a term which literally means to despise. It is easily seen that it is from *re* and *vile*, and it has come to mean "to assail with abusive and contemptuous language." We have a word in our language which is spelled *vilify*. It is from the Latin and means "to make cheap." This is what we do when we defame, malign or slander. We should be willing and eager to give proper value to every person, thought or thing. To cheapen high ideals in the marketplace of thought is to eventually undermine the value of moral and ethical conduct.

It is bad enough to degrade what we understand but there are some who drift into the habit of adverse criticism and negativity until their whole life is colored and tinged by such an approach and they slander things they do not understand. It was this accusation which Jude makes against the characters about whom he warns. It is especially interesting because the Gnostics were boasted "know-it-alls" who claimed to be on the inside as to the mystical and mysterious. Frequently such persons deride what they do not understand rather than to admit their

ignorance.

There are some things which we do not need to arrive at by reasoning or research. Such things we know instinctively, and in this respect we are like animals. These matters properly belong to the soul and not to the spirit. The soul, as here used, refers to the vitalizing or animating principle in the flesh, that which causes our lungs to expand and contract and the heart to palpitate. An animal has a soul but not a spirit, and rationality is a spiritual attribute.

The body (*somo*) makes one an animal, the soul (*psyche*) makes one a living animal, the spirit (*pneuma*) makes him a living human animal. Among the instincts which we share with irrational animals is that of the perpetuity of the species. This makes man a breeding animal. He possesses a sex drive in common with other living creatures. But because man can reason about what he knows instinctively he can fall lower than the other animals, and indulge in such carnality as no beast could or would imitate.

The sexual instinct is given to be creative and not destructive. We use the word “potency” which means power, to describe ability to engage in sexual congress and we label as impotent one who cannot exercise such ability. Power can be used constructively or destructively depending upon how it is employed. It is a commentary upon the so-called philosophers that they were ignorant of many things, and in those things they knew by instinct they destroyed themselves and those who came under their baneful influence.

Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error, and perish in Korah's rebellion.

Apparently those to whom Jude wrote were familiar with the old covenant scriptures. There is no intimation that the

events herein recorded were couched in myth and legend as some of our more modern “Gnostics” would like for us to think. Cain, Balaam and Korah were treated as real historic figures, a view about which I entertain no doubt. There is no ground for doubt since I know plenty of Cains, Balaams and Korahs myself. The originals merely attest to the fact that human nature has not changed.

Comparing the false teachers to these three does not say much about their nature. Cain represents the *practice* of sin through jealousy. Balaam represents the *teaching* of sin through covetousness. Korah represents the *encouragement* of sin through rebellion. The enemies of the faith once delivered were jealous, covetous and rebellious. They were graspy, greedy and godless. Cain was shaken by fear, Balaam was slain in conflict and Korah was swallowed by the earth. The way of the transgressor is hard. Jude says, “Woe to them!”

It is now time to reaffirm one of my purposes in engaging in this little analysis of Jude. In my initial article last month I pointed out that a great many of my brethren are seriously mistaken in their identification of *the faith* once for all delivered to the saints. Betrayed by the party spirit into almost rabid defence of the peculiarity which gave their faction birth, they confuse peculiarity with the faith and conclude they are contending for the faith when they are merely debating a singular deduction, opinion or interpretation.

Such people brand as “false teachers” every person who disagrees with their particularity. They cannot be wrong and are therefore never false. Actually, each faction among us assumes that it has an infallible interpretation and that it is endowed with wisdom possessed by no one outside of its pale. This species of self-righteousness is the most dangerous enemy to the spirit of humility and understanding which ought to prevail among all of the saints.

Frequently it happens that the most dedicated and serious followers of Jesus are stigmatized as heretics and liberals, and brethren become their avowed enemies on borrowed testimony who have never read a word they have written. Their only crime is that of thinking. Their gravest “sin” is a refusal to be intimidated by editorial “hatchet men” who use every United States mail carrier as an innocent purveyor of poison pen literature. All of this stems from a false philosophy coupled with ignorance of what is involved in the faith for which we must contend. Let me suggest a few things for the consideration of honest minds and hearts.

1. No man denies the faith who believes with all his heart that Jesus of Nazareth has been raised up and made both Lord and Christ. Any person who has reformed his life and conduct and been immersed in the name of Jesus Christ upon the basis of his acceptance of that transcendent proposition is in the one faith. He is God’s child and he is my brother.

2. No one denies the faith once for all delivered by taking a position either pro or con upon the partisan issues which have been elevated to such prominence among us. Whether one regards instrumental music as justifiable or unjustifiable, whether he is premillennial or postmillennial, or whether he concurs or disagrees with the present method of supporting Herald of Truth, has nothing to do with his relationship to the faith.

3. No man is contending for the faith once for all delivered when he engages in debate on any of the aforementioned issues, or on any of the other factional matters which have fragmented, splintered and shivered us. One may earnestly contend for the faith and never mention these opinions, deductions, or human interpretations, and a preoccupation with such matters may hinder his diligent contention for the faith.

4. No one is a false teacher in the context of the new

covenant scriptures simply because he may have formed a wrong opinion or given a wrong interpretation to some passage. He is a “mistaken brother” if the deduction he has reached is contrary to the tenor of God’s revelation, and in some respects all of us are in this category since we are limited by human fallibility. But no man is a false teacher merely because he expresses a view on instrumental music, charismatic gifts, the millennium, Sunday-school classes, or any other controversial matter in our feeble little circle of thought, even though such expression may be contrary to the dogma of the party “somewhats.”

More harm is done to the cause by labelling such saints “false teachers” than by any expression of their views, whether such views be correct or incorrect. Many brethren in the primitive congregations were seriously mistaken about a lot of things, yet the term “false teachers” is only used once by an inspired apostle. Peter said there would be false teachers among the congregations of the saints as there had been false prophets among the ancients. The word for false is *pseudo*, and the word *pseudos* refers to “a conscious and intentional falsehood.” A *pseudo-prophetes* is “one who, acting the part of a divinely inspired prophet, utters falsehood under the name of divine prophecies.” A *pseudo-christos* is “one who falsely lays claim to the name and office of the divine Messiah” (Matt. 24:24).

One cannot escape the fact that the word false as used in the sacred scriptures has to do with deliberate lying. It represents a conscious attempt to deceive by invention or fabrication. The only time the word “false teachers” is used, a description of their character is given. They were men who secretly brought in destructive heresies. They actually denied Jesus, the Master who bought them. They enticed many by their licentiousness. They caused the way of truth to be reviled. Because of insatiable greed they exploited the believers with false “words.”

To apply the term false teachers to humble brethren who disagree with some of our views and deductions is as sinful as it is absurd and ridiculous. It makes of us slanderers and false accusers. It causes us to speak evil of one another when we are specifically told that we must put away all “evil speakings.” The anomaly of the whole thing is that if being mistaken about the implication of a spiritual term makes one a false teacher, a lot of brethren are false teachers about “false teachers.” “They desire to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions” (1 Timothy 1:7).

We have been betrayed by the party spirit, a work of the flesh, into the mistaken view that we are the authorized interpreters of the sacred scriptures because we are “the faithful brethren.” But there are now more than two dozen “loyal” Churches of Christ, with no two of them recognizing each other. In our mixed-up mess and messed-up mix, the faithful brethren in one group are the unfaithful ones to every other group. Every person among us is a “false teacher” to someone, and every one is a heretic to someone else.

Much of this stems from the fact that we confuse *the faith* with the letters addressed to those who are in it. The faith is the proclamation of the divine relationship available unto us through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the action of God in human history by which reconciliation was made possible for those who were alienated through sin. The faith is not a written code. It is not a compilation of moral and ethical precepts. It is not even the completed canon of new covenant treatises and letters. These are all tremendously important and we could not live without them, but they are not the faith which came and delivered us from the child-conductor of law.

Certainly it is important that we search, probe and investigate the sacred writings.

We must embrace every truth contained in them as we become aware of it. No truth in the universe is unimportant. No truth that God has revealed can be unimportant. But all truths are not equally important. The body of truth, like the human body, is composed of many members, some of which are essential to being, and others of which contribute to well-being. The faith once delivered has to do with our relationship to Him who is the truth, as well as the way and the life. One can be in Him who is the Truth without comprehending every truth, else no human being could be in Him.

Until we come to a clear conception of this we will continue to divide and form a new sect to guard, protect, promulgate and defend every deduction which we make and which we regard as a truth to be bound on earth as we imagine it to be bound in heaven. It is always better to be right than wrong. It is never right to be wrong and never wrong to be right. But our life does not depend upon being right but upon being in Him who is the right one.

It is time that we daringly and boldly reassess both our stance and our slant. Surely we have more to contribute to the world visited by the Prince of peace than schism and division. If we are going to change for the better and sow the seeds of peace we should start now. Someone has said, "You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon may be too late."

William Barclay wrote, "A church can be torn in two about the color of a carpet, or a pulpit hanging, or about the shape or metal of the cups which are to be used in the Sacrament. The last thing that men and women seem to learn in matters of religion is a relative sense of values; and the tragedy is that it is so often dispute and magnification of matters of no importance which wreck the peace."

It was Gilbert Chesterton who said, "Truths turn into dogmas the moment they are debated."

Letters I Receive

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[Abstract]

It was Voltaire who wrote in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, back in 1764, that mail is “the consolation of life.” It is quite apparent that he did not receive letters like some that come to me. Which reminds me that Sydney Smith said, “Correspondences are like trousers before the invention of suspenders; it is impossible to keep them up.” Sometimes I get a hundred letters per week and some of them are not much consolation.

The ones I get the biggest bang out of are from brethren who have just read their first issue of the paper. Some thoughtful soul subscribed for them and they start reading out of curiosity. Before they have gone very far they get their dander up and by the time they read the fourth page they are convinced that I am the antichrist because I think there are “Christians in the sects” as Alexander Campbell so aptly stated it. They launch a barrage of three or four pages of single-spaced material pecked out on the trusty Smith Corona, thinking that I will be fried to a crisp when I read the scriptures they quote out of context and misapply, as if that is what God intended. But “none of these things move me and neither count I my life dear unto myself.” I have been able to weather the attack of some pretty high-powered brotherhood flame-throwers.

There’s a good old brother down in Texas who would

really prefer to like me if he was not afraid he would have to answer for it in the judgment of that great day. He writes about every six months. It takes that long for him to reach the boiling point because he operates on a slow-burning fuse. He reads everything I write and treasures it up against “the day of wrath,” but when I say something that falls like a spark in the flash-pan of his old spiritual muzzle-loader he points it in the direction of Saint Louis and lets loose a blast which rattles the windows and is intended to blow me to “kingdom come.” Like myself, he must have found learning to type a real chore, because he has apparently not learned about the shift keys and writes without ever using a capital letter. He operates solely in lower case. He is also very conservative in his use of paper and when he reaches the bottom of the sheet he keeps turning it back and typing over the last three or four lines. There isn’t an inch of wasted space on the entire page. It is completely covered with hieroglyphics interspersed with sundry admonitions and questions written in with a ball-point pen, such as “I dare you to read this!” and “Now, what do you think?”

Then, there is the leader of a small congregation of saints in the hills of Kentucky. A good many brethren in this generation claim to speak in an unknown tongue but he is the only one I know who writes in an unknown tongue. I always lay his letters back until I can wrestle with them at length since I am not possessed of the gift of interpretation. Ordinarily I can do a fair job deciphering and pretty well get the gist of the epistle so I can answer it, although occasionally I miss it as far as Mom did years ago when she let loose a rock at a stray dog in our backyard and killed our turkey gobbler.

If you think male critics are “tough cookies” you ought to read the occasional letters I get from some of my sisters in the Lord who think I have lost my spiritual marbles and gone off the deep end. They demonstrate beyond doubt that Rudyard Kipling was right when he wrote, “the female of the species is more deadly than the male.” Women have such a subtle and

gentle way of taking the hide off of you by saying such things as, "I have been praying that you would regain your mind and return to sanity before it is too late." Nothing bugs such a sister more than to imply that the party with which she is affiliated may not be "the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God on earth," to the exclusion of all others. It is even worse if she was a Baptist when she married and had to be "converted to the Church of Christ" in order to have any peace here, or hope of glory over there. I have learned never to argue with such a member of the distaff side of the human family by correspondence. You will end up writing a stack of letters a foot high and never make a dent. So I simply write polite acknowledgments and go on loving all of my sisters and turn them over to God who knows what makes them tick!

I suspect the best thing that ever happened to me was to learn that one does not have to agree with me to be received of God and recognized as a child in the majestic family. Right there and then I saw that I could receive people as God did and recognize them as my brothers and sisters whether they agreed with me or not. We are not brothers because we see everything alike but because we have the same Father. Brotherhood is based upon a common fatherhood. Fellowship results from mutual sonship. I resolved not to make anything a condition of fellowship which God had not made a condition of salvation. If one was good enough for God to save he was not too bad for me to tolerate. I will not put out those whom God has taken in.

I'll never forget the time I was meditating and mulling things over in an American Airlines plane, and the thought hit me that we are all brothers in error. That is the only kind of brothers there are. Not one of us knows it all. We are all ignorant but just about different things. Up to that time I had always regarded those in other factions, segments and splinters of our fragmented movement as brethren in error. If they had something we opposed they were sectarians. If they opposed something we had they were "antis." We were the faithful and

loyal brethren, dyed-in-the-wool believers, “the knowing ones.” It had been a comforting thought and a nice escape hatch when you wanted to avoid calling upon one from another party to lead in prayer. But when God slammed that mental door shut I had to re-think my relationship with my brothers in the Lord. I dropped the brothers in error fallacy like a hot potato. It was born of pride and self-righteousness, so I purged it from my feeble vocabulary. I praise God for the deliverance from that kind of ignorance and arrogance, although I have a whole great big lot to learn yet!

It’s great not to have to get uptight when someone writes and tells you where to get off, or where he thinks you should abandon ship. You don’t have to bail out just because someone draws a bead upon you. I never get upset or come unglued because brethren do not agree with my explanation or understanding of this passage, or that. I intend to do my own thinking “without benefit of clergy,” and I want them to do the same. I do not intend to impose my thinking upon anyone, and I do not intend to allow anyone to impose his upon me. There are a lot of things I do not know, but there is one thing I do know and that is wherever men are free to think there will be differences. Slavery and chains represent the price we must pay in order to have abject conformity.

I would not want to be in a fellowship of non-thinkers where you have to check your intellect at the door as you enter and reclaim it on the way out as you leave. A man told me recently that where he attended it was such a tight situation you did not need to take your brain with you to meeting, or if you did, you could unscrew your head and put it under the seat until time for the invitation song. If you are in a fellowship of people who think, all sorts of differences will challenge you. Our unity lies not in seeing everything alike, or in liking everything we see. It simply depends upon everyone being in Christ. He is our unity and our peace. The umbrella of his love is great enough to allow all of us who are God’s children to come in out of the rain.

There are a lot of saints who “take pen in hand” to ask if I’ve “gone off” with this group or that. Some of them lament that they cannot tell what segment I am with. Praise God! Our brethren have no real concept of being a “Christian only” and they have to categorize every person they meet. This is the result of trying to identify with God through an organization rather than through the indwelling Spirit. They cannot conceive of one being free from all human organizations resulting from the varied patterns which men have read back into the Book. Regardless of how often I say that I belong to no party, sect or faction, but simply to Jesus, it makes no dent in the thinking apparatus of many of our readers. It is like trying to describe an ice cream cone to a Hottentot.

I am not going anywhere. I do not intend to saddle up and ride off into the gloaming or gathering dusk with any religious posse. I do not belong to any special group of saints because I belong to Jesus, but because I belong to Jesus I belong to all of my brethren. I am still meeting with the same group of brethren with whom I have always met. I hope to continue to do so while I live. If I could not be free with them I could not be free anywhere. If I wanted to be sectarian, and I don’t, I could be sectarian where I am. What I intend to do is stay where I am and share with all of God’s children who will allow me to do so. I do not intend to impose either my presence or perceptions upon anyone. Neither do I intend to be told by men where I can go and where I cannot go. I recognize but one Lord, and he is at the right hand of God.

We can whip the problem of division! We can overcome it! But we cannot do so by dividing. The way to unite is to unite! You can talk about it, debate about it, and confer about it but you will never unite until you unite! Then why not start there if that is our goal? We can argue and discuss when we are united. The fact is I am already united with God’s children, all of them. When I united with Jesus I united with every person who is in him. My task is not to achieve unity. It is not to attain it. My task

is to demonstrate it!

Let me save you some postage. Some of you will be bound to write and ask how we can be one so long as some have instrumental music and others oppose it, or so long as some have Sunday schools and others oppose them, or so long as some have individual cups and others oppose them? That is easy! Quit making tests of fellowship out of them. Quit acting as children and quit yourselves like men. God did not make conditions of salvation out of these things, so quit making them conditions of union and communion. Hold your opinions but do not forge them into dogma. Do not violate your own conscience but do not measure others by it. “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself.”

Of course, on a very pragmatic basis, be careful of the preacher you have to hold your meeting. It was preachers who fragmented us in the first place, and it is to their interest in a lot of cases to keep us apart. Many saints, if they unite at all, will have to do so in spite of the opposition of the preachers in their faction. But if it is a sin to be divided and a blessing to be united, give up your division and unite! There will be problems in unity, as there are in marriage, but there is no problem love cannot solve! As Paul said, “Love outlasts everything else” and that includes our problems!

Wandering Stars

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[Abstract]

This is the third installment I have written as a kind of “down-home” type of analysis of the letter of Jude. No doubt a lot of you think I am spending too much time in a “creeping conversation” when you would prefer a “running commentary.” But I sort of like to visit this way about scriptural things and you’ll have to forgive me if you have itchy spiritual feet and would like to get on down the expositional road.

I am intrigued by the letter of Jude because he was writing to saints who were being infiltrated by Satan’s secret agents, and needed an exhortation to “contend for the faith.” The “filthy dreamers” who were causing the difficulty were not simply “mistaken brethren” who had developed some odd ideas as to how things ought to be done. They were not preachers who were on this side or that of something like “the Sunday school issue” or who were hung up on the support of items such as Herald of Truth or orphan homes. A lot of brethren get the majestic faith once delivered mixed up with every little argument about their deductions, interpretations and opinions, and anyone who disagrees with them has “denied the faith.”

Our brethren who differ with us about the motley collection of things out of which they have made dogmatic wedges to split the disciples into warring and hostile camps have not “perverted the grace of our God into licentiousness and

denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Regardless of which side they are on they are still in the faith and to imply they are not reveals as much about our ignorance as it does about theirs. The fact is that a lot of brethren do not know what *the faith* really is, and they confuse every little wrangle and rag-chewing debate with “contending for the faith.” They are gravely mistaken and serve to contribute to the confusion.

Once, when I was down in Texas, a good old brother drove a long distance to bring me some material he had written and put in print to prove that no congregation could be recognized as “loyal” to Jesus where the brethren did not use fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper. He referred to congregations which did not use it as “grape juice churches.” When I told him it did not make any difference to me and that I could honor the memory of Jesus with either Welch’s Grape Juice or Mogen David Wine, he whipped out a couple of propositions he carried around already signed by himself and offered to “contend earnestly for the faith” if I would debate him. I felt a sense of compassion for him as pronounced as my sense of regret that once I was in his same shoes and didn’t know what “the faith” was either. Before he left he said I was further gone than he thought.

The people to whom Jude wrote knew what the faith was. They couldn’t get it mixed up with the new testament scriptures because they didn’t have them yet. So they knew the faith was the fact of Jesus in history, calling us out of a world which lay in wickedness, and into Christ Jesus. The faith was “Christ crucified, a stumblingblock to Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” This was what was preached. This was the proclamation. And this is what was denied by the “ungodly persons” against whom Jude warned. They denied the only Master and Lord. They denied that Christ was the power of God. They denied that He was the wisdom of God.

These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly

carouse together, looking after themselves, waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved forever (verses 12, 13).

Jude borrows from the whole realm of nature to depict the erratic characters with whom he deals. His language is powerful and poignant. It is like flashes of lightning, illuminating the whole landscape, and bringing every object into sharp focus. For almost a century the communities of the redeemed ones ate together in many parts of the Roman Empire. The wealthier members brought hampers of food and all of the saints sat down together and shared as an exemplification of the tie that bound them together in Christian love. Masters and slaves ate together. Men and women ate together. Rich and poor ate together. The *Agape*, or love feast, was a proclamation to the heathen world of a dynamic which transcended ethnic, social and sexual differences.

William Barclay writes: “The Love Feast, the *Agape*, was one of the very earliest features of the Church. The *Agape* was a meal of fellowship, held on the Lord’s Day. It was a meal to which everyone brought what he could, and at which all shared and shared alike. It was a lovely idea that the Christians in each little house Church should sit down on the Lord’s Day to eat in fellowship together. No doubt there were some who could bring much, and there were others who could bring little. No doubt for many of the slaves it was the only decent meal in all the weeks.”

Dr. Charles Hase in his *History of the Christian Church* suggests that the love-feast grew out of a sense of ecclesiastical family life. It was as natural for the family of God to sit down at the table together as it was for any other family. Moreover, to eat together in the days of the apostles was an overt demonstration of trust and acceptance. Clement of Alexandria wrote, “The meal occurs because of love, not love because of the

meal, which is a proof of a generous and shared good will.”

When Jude wrote, the feasts of love were being invaded by the Gnostic heretics who used them as occasions for attempted seduction of the women who were present. Peter says, “They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.” The word rendered “blemishes” in Jude is *spilas*, which means a hidden reef, or a submerged rock, on which a ship can be wrecked. The men whom Jude describes were smooth and cunning, but they were deceptive and destructive. Their hidden motives were calculated to destroy fellowship and wreck the “ship of faith.” They turned the feast of love into an occasion for lust and used the kiss of love as an unholy thing. History attests that many followed their pernicious ways and caused the truth to be evil spoken of.

Bold carousing indicates open revelry, flouting every convention and ignoring all the rules of decorum and dignity. While this says something about the freedom and openness of the meetings of the saints, it also indicates something about the problems encountered in a pagan world. I have seen some tense situations during my lifetime but I have never seen a basket-dinner or a covered-dish luncheon, as we designate our modern love-feasts, taken over and disrupted by the kind of men whom Jude describes. I am sure there have been occasions when sexual perverts were present but I have never witnessed bold carousing by those concerned only with gratification of self.

I think this indicates that the faith has had an impact upon the social culture and the spread of Christian influence has offset raw and crude paganism. That is why it seems a shame when those who “look only after themselves” and are boorishly inconsiderate of others, flaunt the amenities of good behavior and want to act as if they had just crawled out of a cave. It is a tragedy when those who seek to be revolutionary leaders revolt against the wrong things. Even at that, however, our gatherings are more frequently disturbed by someone snoring during “the

sermon” than by noisy carousing.

The expression “waterless clouds, carried along by winds” is an apt description of the Gnostic philosophers. I have lived and worked in rural areas enough to know the baneful effects of prolonged drouth. I have seen farmers whose crops and gardens were seared, look with longing glance at every cloud arising on the horizon, only to register dismay when the wind wafted those clouds across the sky, and they disintegrated without shedding a drop of moisture.

The Gnostics were great on promises but short on performance. In spite of vaunted boasting they were spiritually empty and vacuous. The thirsty soul was never refreshed by them. The parched heart was saddened by further neglect. Once a man was brought under their subtle but malign influence, he was condemned to a life of speculation wholly devoid of reality. There was no refreshing moisture in these human clouds.

Jude describes them as “fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted.” When I was a lad entering high school we owned an apple orchard. It required a great deal of trimming and pruning to make it productive. Because of neglect by a previous owner, some trees had to be removed when we took the orchard over. We allowed them to stand the first season, marking those which bore no fruit and gave no return. In late autumn, when the season was past, we knew there were some trees which would never bear. They had been marked as dead in the past and were now seen to be dead in the present, with no hope of revival.

For the welfare of the orchard such trees had to be removed. The main roots were cut and a tractor hitched to the trunks and as the chain tightened the trees made a cracking sound and were slowly dragged out, leaving a gaping hole where they once stood. There is nothing sadder to see, in the eyes of an orchardist, than an uprooted tree, which could have borne fruit,

but became so infested with borers that the life was sapped from it. Those men who took up space and “cumbered the ground” in congregations of the righteous, while exuding poison and corruption had to be removed.

Perhaps you have heard of the deadly Upas tree which grows in Java, Sumatra and parts of equatorial Africa. It exudes a toxic substance which produces death to any bird or animal attracted to it. The poison is used by natives to put upon their arrow points, bringing sure death to any victim whose flesh is penetrated by the weapon. Those who deny the identity of Jesus, who will not regard Him as Lord and Christ are like this deadly tree, bringing death instead of life.

They are “wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame.” Perhaps because I was born so far inland, separated by a thousand miles from the nearest ocean, I am fascinated by the Atlantic and Pacific. I can sit for a long period of time watching the undulating waves roll in, reaching their fingers of spume up the beach, and then receding into that great green body which holds so many mysteries in its depths. As I meditate by the seashore I am constantly recalling what the sacred scriptures say about the sea. I never forget that John said, “The sea gave up the dead that were in it,” and three sentences later on said, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” It is difficult for me to think of a new heaven and a new earth, with no sea.

One of the things that impresses me about the sea is that, after a storm, every wave carries not only its white crest, but also a load of sediment, dirt and filth. When the foam begins to retreat you can trace its limit reached by the black line of finely-ground debris it has deposited. The content of the heart of the wave is thus revealed in the mark of its own activity. It was thus with the false teachers of Jude’s day and the false prophets of a previous era. They were wild, restless, stormy demonstrations of

the forces at work in the world of their day, and their very activity served only to reveal the shame of their motives and thoughts.

They were “wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved forever.” Jude thus calls upon all nature to testify to the character of deceivers. James Moffatt said, “Sky, land and sea are ransacked for illustrations of the character of these men.” The clouds scudding across the sky, the waves tossing on the ocean, and the planets out of orbit, bear testimony to the wavering course of emptiness and void in the lives of men who are guilty of rejecting authority and do not hesitate to “revile the glorious ones.”

Nothing is more orderly than the celestial system where suns and satellites move in such majestic array they are literally designated the hosts, that is, the armies of heaven. For a star to leave its plotted path and go wandering across the face of the heaven is a symbol of confusion and disaster of the worst kind. The word disaster is a combination of the Latin *dis*, from, and *astron*, a star. It was originally a misfortune thought of as resulting from an “unlucky star.”

Men who leave the faith once delivered, which makes us satellites revolving around Jesus, as the Sun of the spiritual universe, the center of light, write their own doom. The nether gloom of darkness awaits them. Nether means lower and “the nether region” was a term applied to the abyss, conceived of as a bottomless pit, thus a place utterly devoid of all light. It is interesting that Jude speaks in this fashion of the ultimate fate of those who professed to be purveyors of light. The Gnostic regarded those who trusted in revelation as ignorant of the greater mysteries of knowledge which came from inner light, and yet it was for those who made such claims that the gloom of darkness was reserved. They were waterless clouds! They were fruitless trees! They were wandering stars! They were empty, barren and erratic!

It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with his holy myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things in which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

This statement has been the source of great controversy among scholarly expositors. I have read reams of material on it. The contention centers around whether or not Jude quoted from an apocryphal book, and if he did, whether he sanctioned that book as an inspired piece of writing. That there is a *Book of Enoch* is a fairly well admitted fact. Its origin is obscure. There are those who think that it was in circulation in the day when Jude wrote. Perhaps the most logical presumption (and it is just that) is that it was written in the century before Jesus was born, and by a Jew who wanted to bring comfort to his people in a time of distress and persecution. He may have recorded tradition allegedly reaching back to Enoch, or he may have given his book the name of Enoch to gain for it greater respect and wider readership.

Actually, the book was not discovered until 1820, when it was found in an ancient Ethiopic version by Dr. Laurence of Oxford. In it occurs the quotation: "Behold he comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon them, and destroy the wicked, and reprove all the carnal, for everything which the sinful and ungodly have done, and committed against him." There is no way by which I know to prove that the book was in existence in the days of Jude, but if it was then in existence one could not prove Jude quoted from it. Both he and the unknown writer might have quoted from a common tradition.

As far as I am personally concerned, this is a matter over which theologians may feel free to wrangle at any length they desire. Regardless of the background from which Jude derived

the statement, whether it be a written document, an oral tradition, or a direct revelation, he affirms that Enoch made the statement and that is sufficient for me. When the lightning of argument passes away and the roll of the thunder ceases, the passage will still be there as it has been for centuries, and I accept it.

At the risk of being boresome by repetition I must remark again that the people to whom Jude wrote were familiar with the characters mentioned in the old covenant scriptures. Among the revered ones in the Jewish heart was Enoch, who walked with God, and was not to be found when men sought for him, because the Lord took him, allowing him to bypass the portals of death. By such faith he continued to testify of the value of walking with God even though he was dead.

Jude identifies Enoch as a prophet who foretold the Lord's coming in judgment upon the wicked. The divine judgment was to be universal. It was to be directed against deeds of ungodliness and harsh things spoken against Him. This kind of wrath would certainly fall with powerful impact upon those under censure by Jude. In both word and deed they dishonored Jesus and disgraced His name before the heathen.

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage.

In this stern indictment there are five accusations brought. They serve to show how disreputable were the characters of those who would stoop to any depth in their defilement. They were *grumblers*. In its verb form the original occurs eight times and is always translated "murmur" in the Authorized Version. It means to mutter or grumble in discontent. It is a term used to describe sullen complaining against God by Israel in the wilderness. Sometimes the Old English word "chide" is used to describe the attitude of those who rebelled against God's

leadership and providential care.

They were *malcontents*. The original is found only here in the scriptures. It is from a combined term which means to find fault with or to blame one's allotted fate. It describes a person who is never satisfied but blames circumstances for his condition. To such an individual nothing is ever good. He is always surly, disgruntled and down-in-the-mouth. He is convinced that today is bad but tomorrow will be worse. When he has a choice of two evils he takes both. To such a person every cloud has a sable lining. Someone described such an individual as one who feels bad when he feels good for fear he will feel worse when he feels better. Nothing can discourage a congregation of saints more than to have someone dump a truckload of gloom upon them every time they gather.

They *follow their own passions*. This means they were utterly selfish, inconsiderate of the rights of others, and concerned only about their own gratification. No one else counted. Others were put here simply to be used. Such an attitude will destroy any association. In the congregation to which Jude wrote some came to pray while others came to prey. The first sought to bend their wills to God while the second thought to bend God to their wills. One was motivated by love of compassion, the other by the lust of passion.

They were *loud-mouthed boasters*. The Authorized Version reads "their mouth speaketh great swelling words." The original *hyperogkos* is used only here and in 1 Peter 2:18, where Peter is dealing with the same men. All of us know men who are vacuous and empty-headed but who strut and parade around, loudly trying to demonstrate a knowledge they do not possess. A boaster has been described as a man "who every time he opens his mouth, puts his feats in." It is observable that those who brag the most generally accomplish the least and vice versa. There is no other sound in nature as sweet to the ear of a braggart as his own voice. He is loud, not so much to convince others as to

convince himself.

They flattered people to gain advantage. One compliments others for their own good, but he flatters them for his good. Flattery is obnoxious to all except the flattered. It is interesting that these men are described in one breath as loud, arrogant boasters, and in the next as fawning, cringing, servile camp-followers. They were like chameleons, changing their color to match their surroundings. Their description by Jude can be summed up by the words complainers, critics, callous, conceited and contemptible.

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

There is an indication here that the words of the apostles regarding the rise of scoffers were generally known. We cannot remember that which we have not heard or known. It is enough for us to have the general predictions as recorded in the letters and it is not necessary that we conclude that Jude was giving an exact quotation. Paul had told the Ephesian elders with whom he conferred at the maritime center of Miletus, "From among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

He wrote to Timothy that "in the last days there will come times of stress" and describes those who would be "treacherous, reckless, and swollen with deceit" and who would hold the form of religion while denying the power of it. He says "Avoid such people." He compares them to Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. In view of this the recipients of the letter from Jude should have expected the infiltration of the unscrupulous purveyors of deceit who came among them.

Peter says that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions.” He asserts they would ask “Where is the promise of his coming?” and would postulate continuity in the future based upon conformity and regularity in the past. He declares that they deliberately ignore the fact of the flood. All of this serves to help us understand the kind of men against whom the saints were to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

The scoffers who followed their own passions, and walked in their own ways, *set up divisions*. Division in the body of Christ is a sin. It is a shame and a scandal. It denies the purpose of God, the prayer of Jesus and the plan of heaven. Division of the brethren is not a remedy for sin, it is a sin. To set up division is the work of those devoid of the Spirit, for the purpose of the Spirit is to make us one. The party spirit *unties* us while the Holy Spirit *unites* us.

Division is a result and it is produced by a cause. It is not an accident but a consequence. The scoffers created division by their infiltration of the love feasts and the formation of cliques inimical to the fellowship of the whole body. Unfortunately, few indeed will ever admit to setting up divisions. Divisions are always caused by “the other side.” But divisions are primarily the results of attitudes. They exist in the heart before they do in the open. If you would eliminate division you must first purge the heart of the party spirit. As long as it lurks in the inner man it will find expression in the community of saints.

The term rendered *worldly people* is translated “sensual” in the Authorized Version. This is a significant expression because it means that those who considered themselves to be the spiritually elite were actually living on the animal level. The word is used as the reverse of the spiritual, and it is implied that those who set up or create division do so because they live and act upon a baser level than the spiritual. Those who justify and condone division ordinarily do so upon the ground of spiritual

correctness and closeness to the divine. The ones of whom Jude wrote were devoid of the Spirit.

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Here we have the four ingredients essential to the successful spiritual life. In the previous passage there is a description of the character of those who scoff at the way God has ordained. The word “but” indicates that we should expect a different character to be discussed. In my childhood days, when medical doctors were scarce, a lot of home remedies were used. Each autumn the children were subjected to a tonic made of a concoction brewed from various roots and herbs and which was to “build up resistance” against the encroachment of winter’s cold. The prescription Jude here administers is the divine formula for building up resistance against false philosophy.

1. *Build yourselves up on your most holy faith.* It is easily seen that faith is regarded as a foundation upon which the secure life is constructed. There are three bases upon which man can build his life— knowledge, faith and opinion. It is a demonstration of divine wisdom that our hope is not based upon either the first or the last. Knowledge results from the testimony of one’s own senses, faith results from the testimony of others to what they have seen or heard. Faith is based upon fact attested to by witnesses. When that testimony is found to be credible the honest mind is forced to accept it, or else, in order to be consistent, it must reject all testimony even though properly certified and authenticated. To do this would render the mind dishonest.

It is easy to see that any relationship based upon a unique phenomenon, a one-time occurrence which is non-repetitive, must be conditioned upon belief of testimony. It is dependent upon the experiences of those who were present and participated

in the event. The rational mind asks only about the character and qualification of the witnesses, and having been satisfied as to both, will accept the testimony as conditioned upon fact.

One who builds upon knowledge will always have an inadequate foundation because of the human predicament which is created by limitations of time and space. Paul affirms that “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up,” and adds, “If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:1, 2). Increasing knowledge only serves to prove the limitation of knowledge in the past, and acts as a warning that further knowledge will prove the insufficiency of that in the present. The inadequacy of opinion is recognized when one remembers what some wag has said. “An opinion is a vagrant idea without visible means of support.”

I have no problem in erecting my dwelling on faith which is a firm confidence as to the things for which I hope and a firm conviction as to “things not yet seen.” In fact, my whole life is governed by and ordered upon the principle of faith. I would have difficulty building myself up on anything else. Faith is not something I have contrived or created, but something transmitted. It is my natural and spontaneous response to divine revelation. It is not the result of someone’s fantasy, opinion, dream or vision.

We must not carelessly pass by the fact that Jude calls this *your most holy faith*. When I see the word holy applied to anything by the Spirit I immediately recognize that the thing mentioned is different. Actually, that is the implication of the word holy. A thing is holy because it is different, and it is different because it was dedicated or devoted to God. Under the old covenant the presence-bread was different than other bread, the table upon which it was placed in the sanctuary was different than other tables, the perfume used as incense was different than other perfumes, the robes of the high priest were different than other robes. All were said to be holy. This means that a thing

was sanctified or holy (for the words mean the same), not because of its nature or construction or character, but because it was consecrated to God.

Jude speaks of the most holy faith exactly as other inspired writers talk of “the most holy place.” That place was the inner sanctuary where God communed with His people from the mercy seat. And the most holy faith is the closest one can come to God while in the flesh. It is this faith which makes the individual heart the true sanctuary in which God dwells in this age. When men speak of an auditorium as “the sanctuary” they indicate that they are caught in the web of mingled Judaism and Romanism. They are speaking as if Jesus had not come and died to rend the veil of the temple.

The faith is holy because it is different from every other faith. It is not the result of man’s rationalization but of God’s revelation. It is not a glorified guess but a glorious gift. It is holy because it came from One who dwells in absolute holiness, the one who is wholly Other or different, and it is holy because it can transform a sinful man and make him holy. The most holy faith does not enable one to turn over a new leaf but to turn up with a new life. It caused God to become like man in Christ, and enables man to become like God in Christ. “Be ye holy for I am holy.”

Pray in the Holy Spirit. The secret of inner strength to resist evil is prayer. The reason why this is so is quite simple. As long as man relies upon himself he is trusting in a broken reed. Not long ago I asked a friend when he first realized that he was falling away from God, and his answer was, “When I quit praying.” In prayer we acknowledge three things—dearth of ability, dependence upon God, and desire for help. Phillips Brooks wrote, “A prayer in its simplest definition is merely a wish turned God-ward.” Archbishop R. C. Trench wrote, “Prayer is not overcoming reluctance; it is laying hold of his highest willingness.”

I must confess that for years I do not think I really consciously prayed in the Holy Spirit. I knew the admonition was there for I had read the letter of Jude. However, I suspect that I read the words without grasping the thought. But I knew very little about the Holy Spirit. He was the forgotten and neglected one-third of the Godhead, and was like a rich uncle in the family of which we had heard but had never seen. I am afraid that I recited prayers to the Father as a kind of religious exercise, in discharge of a solemn duty, or in fulfillment of “the law’s demands.” It was a kind of “pray or be damned situation,” so we prayed at the proper times.

Of course, it is no longer like that and I am glad. One big thing is that I have learned what it means that through Christ “we have obtained access to this grace wherein we stand.” And just as it was promised I now “rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” And to cap the entire experience is the marvelous truth that “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us” (Romans 5:5).

There is a big difference between a life of words and “the Word of life.” I recall when I used to quote Romans 5:1-5, and it seems now that I always did so to “slather into the Baptists.” If not them it was some other group whose constituents were high on what was termed “faith only.” I was always interested in proving someone else was wrong. I had a drawer filled with clippings on every group. I could go to the Mormon drawer and get out a handful of articles from their papers. I could go to the Methodist drawer or the Catholic drawer and both were crammed full of some pretty wild and pie-eyed statements with which to lambast their several adherents. I showed my love for them by clobbering them over the head under the excuse of correcting their errors. I rejoiced that they had nothing to reply because we had no errors upon which they could draw a bead.

I no longer read the precious word as if it were a divine

arsenal especially provided with shafts to hurl at specific organizations created by men in their bumbling attempts to please God by reading their own theological computer print-outs. I can distinguish between a loaf of bread and a baseball bat or a club with which to assail an opponent. And two things have happened. First, I am farther from being a Roman Catholic, Methodist or Baptist than I have ever been in my life. I no longer like even our own brand of sectarianism. Secondly, the sacred scriptures mean more to me than ever before in my uneventful life. I cherish this Book and it nourishes my soul.

“Access to grace” is no longer a phrase but an experience. “Rejoicing in hope” is not merely a quotation but a participation. “Sharing the glory of God” is not a lilting statement but a living hope. I know what it means to have God’s love poured out into my heart, and since that pouring out was the work of the Holy Spirit as God’s marvelous gift it is easy now to pray in the Spirit, and comforting to know that He helps my infirmities by making intercession for me with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. All of us realize that the love of God may be either His love for us or our love for Him. I do not think I need to try and keep His love for me from waning. Even if He decided not to love me, and He will not, I could do nothing about it. God’s love for me does not grow cold but there is a danger that my love for Him may do so. Jesus, in his prediction of the distress preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 said, “And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). The word for cold here is *psycho*, and literally means to cool by blowing upon. Just as a cold wind blowing across a vessel of warm food will cause it to grow cold, so exposure to evil and wickedness will cause the heart to grow cold.

The way for me to maintain the warmth of my love for God is either to stay out of the draft, or, if I am forced to come

into contact with the wind of wickedness, to insulate myself against it. Of course, it will help a little if I continue to throw fuel on the fire by study of the Word and keep the embers glowing by poking them up now and then. But if the wind gets to you it will cool you off. The word “keep” means to guard. I intend to wear the overcoat of grace and faith wherever I go so my love for God will not wane or weaken. I have seen too many people move to the city with a firm resolution to stay in the path of righteousness, only to allow themselves to become sidetracked and go to the devil before two years were up.

Wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. The most difficult thing for most of us to do is to wait. Although the poet said we should learn to labor and to wait, it is easier to learn the first than to learn the latter. People waiting for a bus pace up and down the platform like caged animals. Those who have an appointment in the dentist’s office are as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking-chairs. I think a lot of people have given up on life because they are tired of waiting. I am not one of them. My expectation is greater than ever and what I am expecting is worth waiting for.

I am fully persuaded that Christ must be merciful unto me, or I’ve had it! I do not expect mercy because I deserve it, but because I do not! Mercy is not extended to one who gets “straight A’s” on his report card, but to one who does his best even while realizing it is not good enough. One of the philosophers whose name I have forgotten said, “The greatest attribute of heaven is mercy.” I am inclined to agree, probably because of the recognition of my stark need for mercy. I read somewhere that “to sin because mercy abounds is the devil’s logic, he that sins because of God’s mercy shall have judgment without mercy. Mercy is not for them that sin and fear not, but for them that fear and sin not.”

The mercy for which I am waiting is *unto eternal life*. Eternal life is the life of God. It is life on the divine plane made

possible to human beings like myself through Jesus. We have it now, but not in its fulness. Because we are in the flesh we cannot experience it in a glorified state. All of my early life I grew up among people who argued that we do not have eternal life now. They thought of eternal life as an old-line insurance policy which you had to die to collect. I no longer believe that but I do not argue with someone who says he does not have eternal life. He is probably right!

John wrote, “He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life. I wrote this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” I have it because I accept implicitly what John wrote. I have the Son and He has me, so I have eternal life and have it now. Just being in the church does not mean that you have eternal life any more than being in a bank means you have a deposit in it.

I am a little bit like an heir for whom ample provision for the present is made in a will until time comes for possession of the enjoyment of the estate in its fulness. While I have eternal life I am limited in my enjoyment of it. God has more in store for me and the mercy of Jesus Christ will ensure my coming into it. Meanwhile, I am not going to scrap and fight with the other heirs about it until I cannot enjoy what I do have. I am living by grace now but grace will not exhaust itself on earth. There’s a great day coming, and I am getting ready for it. Thoreau wrote, “All good abides with him who waiteth wisely.” So I am waiting and it will not be in vain. I will take care of the waiting and He will take care of the blessing!

And convince some, who doubt; save some by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

I don’t mind telling you that translators have been beset with problems in this sentence. The Greek text is a little obscure

and uncertain. Barclay, after admitting this was so, says that he only gives what he believes to be the nearest to the sense of the passage. Despite his erudition I am not sure that his is an adequate treatment. Here is his rendering:

Some of them you must argue out of their error, while they are still wavering; others you must rescue by snatching them out of the fire. Others you must pity and fear at the same time, hating the garment stained by the flesh.

The *Authorized Version* translates: “And of some having compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

The *Authentic Version* has it: “Take pity on some, of course, and save them with eager resolution, snatching them from the blaze. Take pity on others too, but save them with repugnance, loathing even the tunic soiled by the flesh.”

In spite of difficulties encountered in ascertaining the correct rendering, some things are obvious. Not everyone can be approached on the same basis. Men in different degrees of guilt and of diverse temperaments and attitudes must be dealt with differently. According to the implications of the *Revised Standard* translation there are three classes which Jude mentions.

There are those who are in doubt, wrapped in uncertainty and hesitancy. They are undecided and indecisive. They must be convicted in their own minds before they take the plunge. It is essential to get to them in time to overcome their doubts with genuine faith.

There are those who must be dealt with abruptly as you would jerk a person out of flame into which he was backing unknowingly. Perhaps the picture is one of a volcano with a person walking too close to the edge or rim. It is certain that

many are ensnared by sin because they take undue chances with it. Drastic action must be taken to snatch them back to safety.

There are those whose garments are so corrupted and tainted that one must hate the garment. He does not hate the person in the garment for to him he seeks to show mercy with fear. But he cannot condone the wickedness of a life which is immoral and sensual.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

I never read or recite this ascription of praise without feeling that I am standing upon holy ground. It is filled with a blessing for the present and a promise for the future. Nothing can be more reassuring than to know that God our Father is able. It was this which sustained the patriarchs and prophets of old. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son . . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:17, 19). Faced with the sentence of death by burning, the three young Hebrew captives boldly said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:17).

The word able is the Greek *dunarnai*, inherent power. God is able. He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). He is able to subdue all things unto himself, and that power also belongs to Jesus. Our God is able!

He is able to keep us from falling. The word in the original is *aptaistos*, literally "unfalling." It is used to describe a beast of burden or a pack animal which will not slip on a steep trail.

Anyone who has watched the sure-footed mules working their way down the switchback trail into Grand Canyon can appreciate what is meant. God is able to keep us from slipping on the ski trails of life even when the slopes are icy and slick.

Not only is God able to make us stand but He is able to make us stand without blemish in the great presentation ceremony in the face of His glory. Peter refers to the false teachers about whom he writes as “spots and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings.” The word for blemish is *momos*, and the opposite of that is *amomos*, the word in our text. It means spotless, unstained or blameless. God is able to cleanse us from all stain in the universal detergent, the blood of His Son.

Generally Jesus is spoken of as Savior, but here God is referred to as Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is able to save to the uttermost. The word glory in both verses 24 and 25 is *doxa*. It appears in doxology, a hymn of praise. When God manifests His glory it simply means His presence, but when the creature gives glory to the Creator, that glory adds nothing to the Creator. That which is created gives glory by praise and adoration. He thus acknowledges the existence, nature and work of the Creator.

Majesty is a translation of *megalosune*. Most of us will at once recognize the first term in this combined form. *Megalo* is the word for big or great. One who is afflicted with megalomania suffers from a mental disorder in which he thinks himself great or exalted. To ascribe majesty to God is to recognize His greatness. It is to magnify Him in the eyes of others. The immediate form of the word is used only twice more in the new covenant scriptures, both times with reference to Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1).

Dominion is from *kratos*, strength or power. It occurs twelve times. Four times it appears as dominion, and six times as

power. It is found in such English words as democracy, autocracy or plutocracy, where it is easily detected as relating to rule or government. Our English term dominion is derived from the Latin *dominus*, lord, and thus refers to sovereign or supreme authority over a given domain. Involved in it is always the concept of government or domination, so that God is not simply the possessor of the kingdom, but the supreme monarch.

The word power in this instance is from *exousia*, a fact which has created some little consternation among students since it is applied to “the only wise God.” Generally *exousia* is thought of as delegated authority or responsibility, and how such authority could be delegated to the fountain or source of all power escapes some who make too rigid a distinction between *exousia* and *dunamis*. But *exousia* is first the freedom to do a thing, and then, the authority to do it. Barclay suggests that when the two are used in conjunction, *dunamis* is the power to do a thing, while *exousia* is the freedom to do it. I like my more homely illustration that the first is a keg of dynamite and the second is the right to strike a match to it.

Both the power and freedom of God are absolute. We cannot bind Him with the laws He gave to bind us. The source of all authority cannot be confined by the authority derived from or conferred by it. There is no inconsistency in the exercise of sovereign authority, for whatever it authorizes is consistent with its sovereignty. God gives power but He does not give it away. It is still His and returns to Him. In reality, the power He bestows is simply Himself acting through channels of His own creation. I intend to be one of them.

I am thrilled that Jude closes this brief letter, this little spiritual note, with such a magnificent benediction. A letter written to urge men to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered, needs to point us to the fountain of that faith. When the sweet singer of Israel saw the transgression of the wicked, he said, “There is no fear of God before their eyes,” and thus put

his finger squarely upon the reason for the prevalence of sin. Men are not deterred by fear of consequences when the fear of God is erased from their hearts. It is my very eager hope and fervent prayer that we may serve Him as our only purpose, remembering the words of Soren Kierkegaard, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.”

It was not my intention to bore our readers with this analysis of Jude which has taken us through three issues of the paper. It is possible to be too meticulous in our study and to become bogged down in our investigation of words, but that is not generally the problem with most of the saints. Rather, there is a kind of spiritual indifference to what God has said, which makes us easy victims of those who would impose upon us what He has not said!

Secular and Holy

Mission Messenger (October 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

One of the greatest accomplishments in the coming of our Lord in the flesh was the eradication of the distinction between the secular and holy. That is one barrier that was knocked into oblivion by the cross. The establishment of the divine-human relationship upon the basis of grace, as opposed to conformity to a written code, so completely transformed existence that it actually produced a new creation. We are a new humanity in Christ Jesus.

Jesus did not come to bring us a new religion. He came to make void “religion” as an approach to the Father. He said “I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” The only liturgy we have is the liturgy of life. It expresses itself, not in stated acts done in cathedrals or dedicated real estate, but in the sharing of life with the unfortunate as He shared life with all of us in the poverty of spirit caused by sin, and in maintaining purity in our contact with the world. On this the scripture is very plain. “Pure and unalloyed devoutness in God’s view is to care for the orphan and widow in their affliction and to keep oneself unsullied by the world.” If that is what devoutness is in God’s view it is what it should be in my view, if I intend to please God.

In Christ there are no holy days, no holy places and no holy things. All of these belong to the era of law by which no

man in the flesh can be justified. There never has been a law given and there never can be a law given in the form of a written code by which one can become guiltless. The fault is not in the nature of law but in the nature of man in the flesh. Grace does not change days, places and things, but people. Thus, in Christ, there are only holy people, and they are holy because they belong to God. They have been bought with a price and they are not their own.

God has no sanctuary upon this earth except a consecrated human heart. So long as men speak reverently of “our sanctuary” in reference to a place where light filters through stained-glass windows and men come to “perform acts of worship” they are still living B.C. lives in an A.D. world. The reason they speak that way is because they think that way, and their language is as wrong as their thoughts. The “language of Ashdod” betokens that we have lived too long as exiles and captives in a sectarian world. That is why we still act as if Jesus had never come.

There are no holy days for the Christian for the simple reason that there are no unholy days. There are no holy places for the simple reason that everywhere a Christian is, that place is consecrated. It is consecrated not because of where it is, or because of words spoken by priestly men, but because of who is there. If the presence of the Spirit of God sanctifies a place, and it does, then wherever I go is sanctified for me because His Spirit abides in me. If it was not holy before I arrived it will be when I get there. I do not go up to the house of God. I am the house of God. I do not visit a temple. I am a temple of the living God.

It is a little silly to talk about “five acts of worship,” which is why the sacred scriptures never use such an expression. Worship is the bowing down of my spirit, the prostration of my heart, the utter denial and abnegation of my self, in the presence of my God. Every act I do in Christ Jesus and in reverence to Him is an act of worship. The word worship in none of its forms,

and it has a number of them, is ever applied to anything we do when we assemble on the first day of the week. That is not because what we then do is not worship, but for the reason that everything else we do is also worship.

When Paul wrote to the saints at Colossae who were all hung-up on festivals, new moons, sabbaths, fasting and asceticism, he said, “Whatever you do by word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him.” I accept that just like it is. I am tired of running that “whatever” through institutional meat-grinders until you have it chewed up and pulverized so it will fit into some institutional patty-mould. I am tired of whittling and scraping it down so thin you can see through it. I am going to accept that “whatever” as big as God made it, and I intend, with the help of the Spirit to make every act and word of my life one of worship, adoration and praise, even if those around me do not see the connection. My father is interested in everything I do, and I am interested in everything He said!

What is Justification?

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Volume 37

[Abstract]

A Sunday Evening Talk at Oak Hill Chapel

Tonight it is my privilege and responsibility to speak to you on the subject “What is Justification?” This is the fifth in a series of Sunday night talks at Oak Hill Chapel entitled “Great Words From the Greatest Word.” There will be thirteen in all and they will be given by various brethren. Already men have discussed faith, repentance, baptism and grace. You are yet to hear about peace, mercy, hope, holiness, reconciliation, wisdom, joy and eternal life.

In the first presentation we learned that faith is the belief of testimony calling for commitment to the thing believed. From Teddie Renollet we learned that repentance is a change of mind preceded by remorse for guilt and succeeded by a reformation of life. From Jerry Ketcherside we learned that baptism is the immersion in water of a believing penitent as a participation in the drama of salvation—the death, burial and resurrection of our precious Lord.

One week ago tonight Ted Ratliff led us in a study of grace, the undeserved and unreserved kindness of our heavenly Father, and you will recall his testimony that everything good which had ever happened to him, or ever would happen to him in life, was attributable to grace.

The purpose of this series of explorations into the revelation for mankind is simply stated. We are endeavoring to know what the Holy Spirit meant by the words He selected to convey the mind of God. Words without meaning are like Confederate currency which is interesting to look at but valueless in the marketplace. Empty words are like empty vessels. They cannot quench thirst. Words to which we attribute a wrong meaning or to which we give a false value are dangerous. They are like counterfeit bills which bring disastrous results to those who try to pass them.

To be sure that we understand our purpose, let me remind you that we are not seeking the modern dictionary meaning of the terms we study. A dictionary does not always tell us the meaning of a word. It records the significance attached to it by popular usage in a given culture. Thus, if you compare a current issue of a dictionary with one of its predecessors of a century ago you will find a divergency in the meaning of many words.

We are not concerned with ascertaining the theological explanation of the words we discuss. Professional theologians, like professional attorneys, professional doctors, or professional pharmacists, have developed a specialized jargon which the uninitiated cannot understand. Nothing is more confusing to the average person than a book on theology filled with the pedantic and pompous gobbledygook which delights the professional clergyman. In ancient Grecian art the statues of Mercy, Justice and Grace were always clothed. But Truth was always naked, for truth is revealing and not concealing.

We still speak of “the naked truth” and of “bare facts.” Our aim is to strip the garments of human rationalization from the terms found in God’s Word so they will again be exhibited in their pristine simplicity and unadorned glory.

What is *justification*? I am thrilled that it falls to my lot to share with you my concept of this interesting and beautiful term.

I am glad also that my message follows immediately upon the discussion about grace. The two have a direct connection, for Paul writes that we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Romans 3:24, 25). This is a significant sentence. It connects the gift of grace, the redemption in Christ, the expiation by his blood, and the reception by faith of the offer of grace with our justification. Thus, no explanation of the word can ever be adequate which ignores either of these constituents.

Justification is directly related to justice, although this word is never found in the new covenant scriptures. In the days of the apostles the pagan world held that for every offence against the gods, payment had to be made. Sometimes the guilty person had to pay by forfeiture of his own life. They believed that the goddess of justice, who was called Dike or Nemesis, relentlessly stalked a guilty person until retribution was made. A good example of this is found in Acts 28:2-4, which records the shipwreck in which Paul was cast upon the isle of Malta. Luke records what happened. “And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said one to another, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, *Dike* has not allowed him to live.’”

It will interest you to know that this is the root of the original word for justification, so it is obviously connected with the divine sense of justice. Justice sternly requires that for every sin there must be a proper payment or recompense made by the guilty sinner. That is why we talk about “meeting the demands of justice.” Sin is an offence against the majesty of God. It is the dethronement of God in the human heart and the elevation of the ego to the chair of the sovereign. Sin is the supreme worship

of self, the culmination of conceit. It is like slapping the Creator or spitting in His face.

Sin destroys the relationship with God because the nature of the divine requires that He be clothed in absolute justice and impartiality. God cannot condone sin. He cannot wink at it. He cannot casually brush it aside and ignore it. Careless parents can be indulgent with the mistakes of their offspring because they have been guilty of the same wrongs. To condemn their children would be like assessing punishment against themselves. But one who is holy in the absolute must hate sin. Any feeling of lesser intensity would cloud His holiness and render it less than absolute.

This reveals what I have been pleased to refer to as “the human predicament.” Nothing is more clearly taught than the fact that we are all guilty before God. Paul states it succinctly. “For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, 24). There is no way for me to avoid this indictment. The fact of sin, the corruption and defilement of sin, the guilt of sin, and the penalty for sin, must be faced. I cannot laugh them off. I cannot run from them. I can only cry out in the dark night of introspection, like Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

I can never undo a single act I have ever committed. There is no way by which I can recall a deed. I cannot take it back. I cannot wash it out with my tears although I soak my pillow in their salty brine. I cannot remove it by my own blood, for even though I take my life in an attempt to escape the consequences, I only add one more act of sin and deepen the guilt. I must still confront justice at the judgment of the Great White Throne. Not even my death can avoid that.

I must be very honest with you. Like a caged criminal I tried to find some way of escape, some way to squeeze out

through the bars. Once I thought that by trading obedience for God's forgiveness I would then live so pure and good that I would earn heaven by the sheer exertion of effort. I studied the word as a plan, a blueprint, a revealed scheme of redemption, a method or design, showing all the right things to do as a key to glory. And I tried to do all the right things. I carried out what I thought was the prescribed routine of "religious exercises" and performed all of the required "spiritual acrobatics" and, of course, I was a lot better than I was before. But spiritual gymnastics are like physical ones. They make you breathe deeper, feel better and develop muscles. But you are still going to die!

I think that all the time I was trying so hard to win "divine approbation" and collect enough badges to become a heavenly Eagle Scout, I knew down inside that I wasn't going to make it by this route. I wasn't as good as I wanted to be. I wasn't as good as others thought I was. And I knew I never could become what God wanted me to be by reading the wonderful love letters of the new covenant scriptures as a written code of laws to which I must either conform or be damned. I became a good lawyer in the process, but I was a very poor lover. In spite of all my attempts to amass "brownie-points" I was tired of the treadmill, sick of my sins, and frightened by the future.

That turned out to be great! Sometimes we have to be brought to condemnation to be brought to Christ. When you are flat on your back you have to look up! When your back is against the wall there is only one way you can go— forward! Many a man dates his success from the day he realized he was bankrupt. So I discovered a great secret! I had been killing myself trying to live! I was slaving away like a fool trying to obtain what I already had. I was like a man, worrying and fretting about how to pay off the mortgage, and not knowing that he had fallen heir to a fabulous fortune.

The secret was justification by faith in Christ Jesus, not as

a reward, but as a gift, and a free gift at that! In your copy of the new covenant scriptures the word righteousness comes from the very same original as justification. The word for just is so rendered 33 times, but it is translated by righteous 41 times. Righteousness with God is not necessarily doing right things, or performing proper acts, although it would be incredible to think of one who was righteous deliberately and maliciously doing anything that was wrong. But righteousness is a right relationship with God, which manifests itself in a right relationship with man and all creation. Righteousness is justification, and that is why merely treating others well and relieving their needs may make one a philanthropist, but it cannot make him righteous.

But what is justification? Obviously, since it is connected with justice it is a judicial term. Let me get to the very heart of it. To justify one is to acquit or absolve him from guilt, to declare him guiltless. We must be very careful here. It does not mean that one is guiltless, for no one is guiltless before God. Justification never means to make one worthy, for no sinner can ever be made worthy. It always signifies to *judge* as worthy, to *declare* worthy, or to *treat* as worthy. I am no more worthy tonight than I have ever been, but the marvelous grace of God has *declared* me worthy. I am justified in His sight and according to His mercy. I have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and justified by that grace which raised him from the dead. As Paul puts it, “He was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

On what basis does God treat one as unworthy as myself as worthy? On what ground am I judged righteous? The answer is so plain and simple that it is overlooked or disregarded by those who try to make things complex and involved. The finite human mind is so awed by the thought of the infinite, it cannot accept the concept of a gift of grace so it starts in weaving an intricate pattern or plan which it deems to be worthy of an omnipotent Creator. The result is seen in the confusion and complication

which confronts us in our day, when a multitude of “in-groups” are talking to themselves while the world goes to hell.

My faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is counted to me for justification. It is reckoned unto me for righteousness. This is what the Spirit said through Paul. The word “reckon” in the original is preserved in our transliterated term “logistic,” which has to do with arithmetical calculation. It was a term used in Greek banks, counting-houses, and monetary exchange associations. When one rendered satisfaction for a debt it was entered on the ledger and the account was closed. But I cannot render satisfaction for sin. The song is right which says, “Nothing in my hand I bring.” It is also right when it adds, “Simply to the cross I cling.”

Once I was lost. I was helpless and hopeless. I was blind. But the grace of God saw my pitiable plight, the mercy of God took note of my frightful failure and the love of God became embodied as the Son came to share my state. I can never erase from my mind one sentence of holy writ. It burns itself into my consciousness in moments of meditation like a scintillating and searing bolt of lightning. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). I will never forget that. I have read it more than a hundred times, emphasizing every word in turn. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3) but in order to do that he was made sin in all of its loathsome nature.

What happened is that Jesus atoned for my sin. His death reconciled me to God. The recording angel dipped the quill into his blood and wrote in red letters “Paid in full!” The sin question was settled for me at Calvary. The fountain was opened at Golgotha. All I need to do now is to identify with Jesus, absolutely, undeniably and uncompromisingly. This identification is made by faith, by a trust that is so deep and unqualified that I am crucified unto the world and the world is

crucified unto me, so now I no longer live, it is Christ who lives in me.

Knowing Jesus as my life makes everything else I have called life, and everything in which I ever trusted, both insignificant and worthless. Everything in which I took pride is gone. Educational attainment, hope of worldly recognition, striving for power, love of money, clamor for attention, victory over my enemies, the cheers of the crowd— all of this has revealed itself to be garbage, a putrid mass of that which perished with the using. “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith” (Phil. 3:7-9).

“A righteousness of my own.” God forbid! “The righteousness from God.” Praise His name! What a contrast! It is the difference between life and death. It is the difference between blessing and betrayal. It is the difference between a destiny of desire and one of depression and despondency.

This brings us to the place where we can summarize what the scriptures say about our subject. Justification is an act of God. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies” (Romans 8:33). “God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised because of their faith” (Romans 3:30). The divine motivation for justification is grace. “They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). The blood of Jesus is the expiatory or atoning basis for our justification. “Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God” (Romans 5:9). The name of Jesus is the authoritative

domain in which we are justified. To the former homosexuals, adulterers, murderers and robbers, in Corinth, Paul says, “But you were washed, you were consecrated, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

The enabling response by which justification becomes our personal possession is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, “For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law” (Romans 3:28). Again, he writes, “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). I think it is unfortunate that believers in our Lord Jesus have allowed themselves to become embroiled in the theological donnybrook over whether we are justified by faith only, for if we were to look at faith as Paul looked at it, we are justified by faith alone. The faith of which he writes is a trust in Jesus Christ which embraces and includes everything involved in the life of sanctification and holiness. To Paul, good works were not an addition to faith, but an expression of it. We are not justified by faith and something else, but by a faith so universal and all-inclusive there is nothing else.

Someone is almost certain to raise the question of how we can harmonize the statement of James, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone,” with what Paul wrote. It was what he deemed a contradiction at this point which caused the brilliant, sarcastic French rationalist, Voltaire, to have such a field day in criticism of the scriptures. I am not brilliant, but I confess that instead of contradiction, I see confirmation.

Paul is talking about the basis on which a sinner, alienated from God, is justified from his sin. James is talking about the manner in which we exhibit or demonstrate the relationship we sustain in Christ. This is clear from both the question and the example with which he begins this section. “What does it profit, *my brethren*, if a man says he has faith but has not works?” The example is the need for providing necessities for bodily

subsistence to an ill-clad and hungry brother or sister.

He challenges those who separate faith from its practical manifestation to show their faith apart from their works. This is impossible. The only way another can judge my faith, which is internal, is by my external and overt deeds. Abraham demonstrated his trust in God by acting in harmony with God's requirements. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac." The fact of placing Isaac upon the altar was a positive evidence of display of faith. So James concludes, "You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works."

The faith which justifies us, and maintains our glorious relationship with God, is not inactive, but active. It is not inert but inspired. It is not dead, but vital. Paul affirms the fact of justification by faith; while James describes the quality of that faith which maintains the relationship with God. An inactive faith is like an automobile without an engine. You can sit in it all day long but you are not going anywhere. A faith without works is like a watch without works. It may look attractive but it will not do that for which it was created.

It was not James, but Paul, who wrote: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Let the little family circle here resolve that we shall take to heart this beautiful and glowing admonition. Let us share with others less fortunate than ourselves. Let us give to relieve needs. Let us imitate our Lord of whom it was said, "He went about doing good." We must love in word but we must love in deed; we must love in speech, but we must also love in reality. Faith without works is dead!

Killed By Attitudes

Mission Messenger (November 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

Back in the days when I was a “boy preacher” still in high school, I spent the weekends speaking at different congregations, visiting each place one Sunday per month. I went regularly to one small group which never grew either in number or zeal. Perhaps my messages were not calculated to motivate, but I do not think my ineptitude was wholly to blame.

The little band of saints was under the leadership of a stern and inflexible elderly brother whose wife was as unbending as himself. I stayed with them even though it made me as uncomfortable as the long woolen underwear we had to don each autumn. They were obsessed with the idea that the world was “going to the dogs” on a toboggan sled, urged along by the young people and their evil ways. So determined were they to “avoid the appearance of evil” that they would not even drink orange soda pop out of a bottle, lest someone passing along the street see them, and think they were guzzling strong drink.

One thing that bugged them was the style of dress. The elderly sister insisted on wearing a drab gray or black outfit with a skirt which reached to the soles of her high laced shoes. She was bitterly opposed to “low-cuts” as she designated oxfords. She was convinced they had been designed in the pattern-room of perdition to show off the ankles of women and serve as a titillating device of the devil to lure men into extremes of

passion.

When women first began to cut their hair, both thought it betokened the approaching end of the world, and expected Jesus to come soon and snatch them out of the whole sinful mess. Regardless of what part of the scripture the old brother was teaching on Sunday morning, he soon worked the lesson around to where he could belabor women and girls who trimmed their tresses as being in the same class with prostitutes and street-walkers. If a woman got up and stalked out during one of his dissertations he rejoiced that the word had lost none of its power when proclaimed by a faithful servant. If someone protested that surely the law, the psalms and the prophets were not all written simply to set forth a divine standard for hair culture, he said you could always tell the dog that was hit when you threw a brick into the pack. It was the one that howled. It made him feel good that he had not missed.

The congregation grew smaller each passing year, eventually consisting of those who had grown old and senile, and of a few others who endured it as an alternative to the outer darkness which would be the fate of those who did not “attend church” regularly. This did not trouble the old brother and sister. They took comfort in the fact that the way was both strait and narrow and “few there be that find it.” They were happy they were among the few. When they died the little group struggled along about three more weeks and then decided it was no use. The people of the community avoided the place as if the sign read “Smallpox” instead of “Church of Christ.” A padlock was put on the door and the house was abandoned to the mud-daubers which flew about in the musty interior.

The work did not die. It was killed. And the murder weapon was an attitude wielded as a club by those who thought they did God service. I have thought about the old brother and sister often and I have reached the conclusion they loved “the church” but they did not really love people. They loved the

church as a kind of mystical entity, a loyal institution, a faithful fantasy, a kind of heavenly conglomerate to which one belonged without being a part of the agonizing world from which its ransomed constituency was drawn. They were not only not of the world, but they were not in the world. The kind of world they envisioned did not exist.

A lot of things get blamed when our human attitude is the real culprit. I knew a preacher a few years ago who “took to preaching” because it was the easiest way to “make a living.” He was too lazy to work, so he traveled through the country subsisting off the brethren while he saw the scenery. The six or seven talks in his repertoire were not bad and a lot of congregations in rural areas and small towns accepted him when he wrote them and worked up an itinerary.

He had all kinds of quirks about eating and was a real problem to the good sisters in the Lord in whose homes he stayed, as they would have to prepare his food in a special way. I know of one place down in the Ozarks where the old brother who put him up also put him down. He took the preacher home with him after the night meeting and the next morning called him to come down for breakfast. He offered him coffee but he couldn’t drink coffee. He passed him the fried eggs but he couldn’t eat fried eggs. He passed him the bacon, but he couldn’t eat bacon. He passed him the homemade biscuits and gravy, but he couldn’t eat either. In desperation the head of the house said, “I’ve passed you everything we’ve got on the table but the pepper sauce. Have some pepper sauce.” No one made a move to fix anything else, so pretty soon the preacher allowed he would try an egg. He ate two and used a couple of biscuits as a chaser.

He always landed in a community with a suitcase full of dirty shirts, socks and underwear, and the first thing he did was to ask the lady of the house when she planned to do the laundry. Inevitably she would stop everything else she had planned and put out his washing. She would rather have put him out and she

always saw that her husband never invited him back. When he had about made the round of “the faithful churches” which was the kind I worked with in those days, he came to ask me what was the matter with the brethren that they never arranged for his return. Even when he wrote them, as he generally did, and told them he was coming through their area and would like to stop off and give them the benefit of his knowledge for a few nights, they either did not answer or “all with one accord began to make excuse.”

I suggested that when he went to a place he should eat like other folk or carry his pabulum with him and fix it himself. I also suggested that he get a pair of overalls, and put them on and go to the fields with the men and work with them, as most of us did in that day. If he did not want to do that he could at least hoe the garden, get in the wood, or take a scythe and cut out the growth in the fence rows. But he said he had a weak back, and besides that, he thought it did not look good for a preacher to come into a community and engage in menial tasks like that. He thought it might cheapen the gospel and he was afraid he might lose the respect of the brethren. He did not know that he was already being regarded as a “brotherhood tramp” and a kind of spiritual hobo. He was being strangled by his own attitude.

A few weeks ago I had a long distance call from a preacher who wanted to know what was wrong with the brethren. He said he was disheartened and discouraged but I think he was really disgruntled. He claimed that after a lifetime of service and sacrifice he was now being rejected and thrown on the scrap-pile. He was being turned out to pasture like a worn-out fire-engine horse. He had hoped to supplement his income from social security by “picking up a little preaching on the side,” but instead he had been “put on the shelf,” and was never invited to speak.

I have known him for a long time and he was not put on the shelf at all. He has been climbing toward that shelf under his

own head of steam for years. Dogmatic, arbitrary, and generally stubborn and cantankerous, he has been a source of trouble in every congregation with which he has ever associated. He does not just have problems, he is one! I know for a fact that he has gone in to work with several congregations where the brethren were fairly peaceful and cooperative and within six months of his advent they were at each other's throats and the church was in a turmoil and upheaval.

In spite of that, I feel sorry for him. I have the same kind of feeling for him that I do for one who is physically blind. It is sad when one thinks everyone else is wholly mistaken while he is holy and right. This brother is hung up on two or three little matters of interpretation which do not amount to "a hill of beans," but to him they are the most important things on earth. Wherever he goes he trots out his hobby and climbs aboard and rides it around while others grit their teeth. He has harangued and harassed the brethren until he has painted himself into a corner from which he surveys the church with baleful glance and jaundiced eye, still wondering what is wrong with everyone else but himself.

Can such a person change from a bitterly critical disposition to one of loving concern for and understanding of others? I am sure he can, but he must first become deeply convicted of the sinfulness of his present state. It is difficult for one who is proud and arrogant to realize his true state. When he equates kindness with softness, and concern for compromise, and feels called of God to be a swashbuckling, gun-toting sheriff to see that everyone else obeys the law, he is not liable to alter his unfortunate stance.

One can mouth the words of Jesus all of his earthly sojourn and never really allow them to filter down into his inner being and transform him. I suspect this is one of the real temptations of the clergy in any sect. The word of God is a commodity to peddle to others. It is something that you lay upon

the shoulders of your fellowmen without considering too deeply what the implication is for your own life. I think this goes for our own “clergy” even while they vociferously deny they are clergymen and protest to high heaven that they are the only people on earth who are not sectarian.

Of course you must not draw the conclusion that preachers are the only offenders, or even the worst ones. Fortunately, there are a great many of them who are loving, open and kind. They exhibit lives filled with the fruits of righteousness. Others would do the same were it not for the fact that they labor with and are financially dependent upon brethren who are often intolerant and even quite bigoted. They have subtle ways of conveying to the preachers that they expect them to “draw the line” against all who do not conform, and when they pipe the melody of factionalism, the one who does not dance to their tune will suffer banishment.

We have a tremendous message and a thrilling mission. It is regrettable indeed that we hamper both by our prejudice and unconcern, and by our apathy toward those who look to us for direction in their dire desperation. Perhaps nothing is quite so important in this age in which our lot has been cast as to identify with people in their sheer agony and to bring the dynamic of love into their shattered and tormented lives. We should remember that Jesus did not get people out of the state in which they were to love them, but He loved them and they came out of the state in which they were.

The kind of selfishness which manifests itself in Pharisaic disdain and indifference has no place in the lives of those who are followers of Him whom the Pharisees joined in condemning before the Roman procurator. Benjamin Franklin asserted, “There are no ugly loves nor handsome prisons.” Ill fares the congregation which restricts its love to its own membership for in so doing it confines those whom it loves to prison. Love needs to run free and unhampered, and when it does, it will free the

one who exercises it. It will also free the one who is the recipient of it.

The Party Spirit

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Volume 37

[Abstract]

I suspect most of us flatter ourselves that we walk by the Spirit, and this makes it possible for us to feel sorry, deep down inside our beings, for the unfortunate masses who continue to slog along through the swampy desires of the flesh. It is a commentary upon our aptitude for filtering out what we do not want to see, that we can read through the list of the works of the flesh, which Paul says are plain, and settle on those which do not particularly disturb us, while coldly ignoring those which we practice with such a degree of fidelity one would think they are commands of the Lord.

We sail through “immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry and sorcery” and skirt around past “drunkenness and carousing,” and congratulate ourselves that we belong to Christ Jesus and “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” But we touch lightly on jealousy, anger and selfishness. Most of us wonder about the inclusion of such items, which all of us have to fight off like mosquitoes, along with things like idolatry and sorcery. It is aggravating to those of us who have never been dead drunk and have avoided becoming bar-flies or bottle-jockeys to realize that we may end up with a bunch of such characters in Gehenna because we “fly off the handle” when we become irritated, or are consumed by jealousy until we make life miserable for ourselves and even more so for those around us. All of us can see the divine wisdom in condemning “big sins” of

which we are never guilty, but we cannot understand why the Spirit slipped in a bunch of things which most of us can only disavow by lying about them.

Take for instance, the work of the flesh which appears right after the one called dissension, and which is dubbed “party spirit.” Almost everyone who has this affliction denies it and tries to dress it up in a disguise so it will not be recognized. It is this carnal characteristic which has been responsible for ripping the cloak of Christian union to shreds, and making the plea for oneness of the believers a distorted caricature, a disreputable scarecrow in the neglected garden of faith.

We are not divided over the things which have been credited with disrupting us. These create problems, multiply areas of disagreement, and make tensions in the fold of the followers. We are divided because the party spirit has run rampant over the Holy Spirit. If we had not divided over the things which we blamed we would have divided over other things. We are divided because we thought division, practiced division and now defend it. We were divided because we had the will to divide. The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the party spirit is a work of the flesh. Where the Holy Spirit reigns men can labor together in spite of grave differences. When the party spirit governs lives men will fragment over trivialities and will fight one another after the division much harder than they fought the devil before.

While it is tragic to see the devastation wrought in the body of believers by the party spirit, the saddest influence is that wielded over the individual heart in which this malignancy fastens itself. The party spirit breeds hostility which destroys the most intimate relationships of life. Parents are turned against their children and the children against their parents. Brethren who have labored together for years become inveterate enemies when they are infected by this virus. There is nothing they will not say or do to defame character or destroy influence. They

treat one another more callously than the heathen world treats its foes. They bite and devour one another and are consumed one of another. The party spirit makes spiritual cannibals of men.

That spirit is the exact opposite of the spirit of love. Love is patient and kind, the party spirit is impatient, restless and impolite. Love is not jealous or boastful, the party spirit is insanely jealous and bombastic. It minimizes the significant attainment of its rivals while vaunting every trivial gain of its own as an accomplishment of the ages. Love is not arrogant or rude, the party spirit is dictatorial, imperious and insolent. No one else is ever as brash and domineering as one who is a party champion.

Love does not insist on its own way, the party spirit is convinced it is the only way. Everyone outside the party is either ignorant or dishonest. No one else can be accorded recognition or credited with ability to reason sincerely. Only those who pledge allegiance to the party flag can be trusted. They may be uncouth, illiterate and boorish in manner and behavior but they are the faithful remnant for whom Jesus gave His life. Love is not irritable or resentful, the party spirit is acrimonious and churlish. It cannot stand for others to advance or grow and always assigns the worst motives to those who do.

It is noticeable that a dyed-in-the-wool partisan always assigns the very worst designs to anyone who bursts the bonds of the sect, and outgrows the circumscribed limitations and inhibitions created by the traditions hallowed by debate. No one makes a change on the basis of his deeper investigation of the truth. When a young man casts off the partisan garb he is accused of falling for the scheme of a plotting heretic, or is selling out for popularity, or is revealing a tendency to wishy-washiness which he managed to conceal up to that time. He simply cannot have learned a greater or deeper truth, for the party has the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It

is the guardian of the truth, the defender of the truth, the preceptor of the truth. To leave the party is to forsake the truth. The most dangerous thing a partisan can do is to really start thinking for himself.

Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. The party spirit rejoices in the wrong. If a calamity overtakes the opposing party it is a cause for glee. It served them right. They had it coming to them. The only right in which a sectarian can rejoice is his own righteousness. He does not rejoice when members of the Catholic Church work in a frightful leper colony, or when Presbyterians establish a rescue clinic for drug addicts. It is right for a Methodist chaplain to counsel and help men behind prison bars but I know people who do not rejoice in it, because one must be right to do right, and no one can be right on anything who does not see everything as they do. To be right means to be in the right party. To a partisan it is better to be wrong in the right place than to be right in the wrong place.

I am convinced that the party spirit, which is the spirit of exclusion, ostracism and proscription, will shrivel the soul and sear the emotions. It is the spirit of arm's length rather than of the encircling arms. It shakes fists rather than hands. It carries a chip on the shoulder rather than a concern in the soul. If the Father treated His children as we treat our brethren love would disappear from the universe to be supplanted by hostility and despair. And do not forget that the Father's children are my brothers and sisters. I do not manifest my love for the Father by hating His children!

Perhaps one of the great evils perpetrated by the party spirit is the confusion of values and the overthrow of priorities. It is an indication of immaturity and childishness when one trades something for a mere bauble or trifle. One does not swap an expensive automobile for a pair of roller skates. To burn down a mansion to get rid of mice in the basement is hardly the action of a sane mind. But the ardent factionalist will destroy

fellowship and sacrifice the things for which Jesus died in order to defend some insignificant thing which has assumed immense proportions in his feverish imagination. To dissolve the harmonious functioning of the body of our Lord over some of the silly things about which our fathers squabbled borders upon the ridiculous. How the angels must weep when they behold the children of God forming rival clans and tomahawking one another.

I rather think that the first step in triumphing over the work of the flesh under consideration is to realize the magnitude of the divine provision for our salvation and spiritual development. The more one meditates upon the glory and majesty of God's revelation of the deliverance from the dominion of darkness and the transfer into the kingdom of his beloved Son, the less he is inclined to estrangement and hostility of mind. Jesus declared that if he was lifted up from the earth he would draw all men unto him. The cross, like the ark of the covenant in the wilderness, is the center around which we are all to pitch our tents, and the more precious the cross becomes the less significant will all else be.

We can conquer the party spirit just as we can overcome any other work of the flesh. In spite of its insidious nature we are no more doomed to continue in it than we would be to continue to drink to excess. It is as important that we divest ourselves of it as that we free ourselves from impurity, idolatry or sorcery. In order to do so we must want to be free from it. We must recognize it for what it is, a sin against God and a scandal against the bride of his Son. So long as we cloak this sin with the garment of respectability we will not escape from it.

We must apply ourselves to overcoming the baneful effects of the sectarian attitude by starting in to undo our errors. This means we must begin to associate with those from whom we were separated and commend our love unto them. This requires no change of position on the troublesome issues. It only requires

a recognition of our mutual brotherhood in Christ. Any repair of breaches in human relationships must begin with renewal of associations. There is no other way to effect the healing of a rupture between persons.

Peacemakers do not wait for others to come to them. Since peace does not just happen, but is made, the peacemaker moves into the situation actively. He begins to apply the healing balm of love and concern directly to the gaping wound. He is not troubled by false accusations made by those who would prefer that the laceration remain. Jesus came to the world to preach peace, but his own received him not. A world at war does not always want its walls torn down. But God wants barriers between brethren removed and this requires action as well as talk. It is time to practice unity as well as talk about it!

Hail and Farewell

Mission Messenger (December 1975)

Volume 37

[Abstract]

We will make converts day by day; we will grow strong by the violence and injustice of our adversaries. And, unless truth be a mockery and justice a hollow lie, we will be in the majority after a while, and then the revolution which we will accomplish will be none the less radical from being the result of pacific measures. The battle of freedom is to be fought out on principle.— Abraham Lincoln (May 19, 1856).

This is the last issue of the little journal you now hold in your hand. It is not dying suddenly or as the result of a whim. Its decease was carefully and prayerfully planned for several years. The time of its termination was announced almost three years ago. When it became apparent that the routine of editing was interfering with things I felt impelled to do before the Great Adventure, I began to petition the Father of all grace to guide me in making a decision which would be proper and profitable to the Cause which I love much more than life itself.

The answer came while I was praying in Grand Rapids, Michigan, one morning at two o'clock. The paper had served the purpose to which I had dedicated it. It had more than achieved the goals I had set for it. I would appoint a time for its discontinuance well in advance and give regular notice of it each passing month so that I would not cease publication owing anyone a refund on his subscription. As soon as daylight arrived

on that morning I reached the conclusion, I wrote the first notice that I would allow the paper to expire with the December issue of this year. The time has arrived for the farewell number.

It was my hope that the paper would be laid to rest at the height of its readership. That dream has been realized. More than 8500 copies of this one will go all over the world. The paper is read upon every continent. It goes to all fifty states of the union and to every province in Canada, our sister nation to the north. This wholly undeserved popularity is a cause for rejoicing and praise for the marvelous providence of God. Because the door is about to close on thirty-seven years of life it might not seem inappropriate to recount for you a little history of the paper.

The original name of the journal was MISSOURI MISSION MESSENGER. The cost of publication and distribution was underwritten by five brethren in the Saint Louis area, each of whom contributed the few dollars marking his share of the cost each month. It was sent to some three hundred readers without obligation and the addressing was done by hand. It was designed to be a tabloid-size newspaper conveying information of doings and happenings of congregations and individuals in our state, affiliated with the particular party or faction of which I was regarded as one of the champions. Although there were some twenty or more other kinds of "Churches of Christ" in the state it was proposed to ignore their activities and accomplishments unless they could be so related as to reflect glory upon our own party, or disgrace or dishonor unto theirs.

At the time I thought that our particular brand of Church of Christism was the only kind which would pass divine inspection and be stamped "Genuine" by the holy angels. It never occurred to us that the angels might not share our prejudices and opinionated hang-ups. So the paper was employed to report favorably everything we did, and

unfavorably all that was done by rival parties. In our ignorance we thought of their adherents as heretics and apostates, not knowing the meaning of such terms when employed by the Holy Spirit.

When division occurred in the faction, as it must inevitably come to every legalistic group, I dropped the name of the state from the paper since it was becoming recognized as a medium around which the “loyal” members could rally on a wider scale. Of course, I am now ashamed of the sectarian outlook I then held and promoted, but I sincerely thought our spiritual clan or tribe was the one holy, apostolic and catholic church of God upon earth to the utter exclusion of all others. Other groups were either extremists or sectarian. If they opposed something we had they were extremists, if they had something we opposed they were sectarians. We measured them by ourselves rather than by Christ Jesus and felt sorry for them in their ignorance.

Since I “progressed above many my equals” as Saul of Tarsus put it, I was thrust into the forefront of our segment and was widely regarded as one of the leading brethren. This was not so much because I had any outstanding leadership ability but simply that others had less. “In the kingdom of the blind a one-eyed man is ruler.” All who are imbued with the party spirit are ambitious for recognition as a consequence of that spirit, so I was involved in promoting most of the activities which related to our splinter group. As a defender of our particularities and peculiarities I became a debater at an early age, and engaged in formal public discussions with brethren of reputation from other groups who made a test of fellowship out of their opinions as we did our own.

I was scheduled for special meetings far in advance. My services were in demand all over the country and I was booked up for several years at a time. As a sectarian proponent the future looked bright and I was sailing high. During this time the paper reflected the narrowness of my spiritual immaturity and

served to perpetuate the walls and widen the chasms between ourselves and others of God's children. But God had other things in mind for my unprofitable life. By lifting me out of the environment in which I was reared, and sending me to foreign countries where the trivia which had caused our divisions and occupied the greatest amount of my time and study meant nothing, I was made to examine the faith from a wholly new perspective.

I suspect it helped to be in a world where decisions had to be made without recourse to advice of factional leaders and without fear of attack from bitter partisans. It is difficult to keep a straight course when one must run the race set before him while looking back over his shoulder to see if he is being pursued by his own brethren. The baying hounds of orthodoxy barking at your heels tend to interfere with clear thinking. In other parts of the globe one must view his life and thought in the framework of his relationship to Christ Jesus and not to a group created to preserve certain traditional ideas or positions.

For the first time I came face to face with the Son of God. It was a kind of "Damascus Road" encounter such as most sincere persons have at some time or other in their earthly existence. When I looked at my own accomplishments in the light of the ideals of Jesus and His sacrifice I was frightened by what I saw. With the trappings of pride and ambition stripped away I stood naked and shivering before the eyes of Him who was the Word made flesh. I have never been the same since that day. I will never again be what I was before.

I clearly saw that what I had evaluated as my greatest accomplishments in life were nothing. When I thought I was serving the divine purpose I was actually opposing it. I was destroying what Jesus had come to build and building what He had come to destroy. I had been hoodwinked by Satan into reducing the kingdom of heaven, majestically founded upon love, into a party manifesting coldness and hostility toward

other members of the divine family. I was sick of my own littleness. I was nauseated by my own factionalism.

Do not be misled into thinking it is easy to overcome the party spirit. It is a work of the flesh and all such works have a subtle attraction to those who are in the flesh. One realizes that he must face the scorn and contempt of those with whom he has been more closely identified and associated. He will be branded a turncoat, a heretic and a Benedict Arnold. The factional spirit is bitter, recriminatory and hateful. It will stoop to any depth to ruin one who no longer condones it. It provides no real trauma to be reproached by an avowed enemy but to endure the acrimony and bitterness of friends and loved ones is a trial in which few of us delight. Moreover, there is ever the danger of forming another party while trying to combat the party spirit. An anti-party party is as dangerous and reprehensible as any other.

I am not by nature or temperament qualified to be a reformer but any person who tries to lead adherents of an entrenched tradition into a new and better way of life is cast in such a role whether he acknowledges it or not. My fascination with history has convinced me that every revolution in the political, economical, moral or spiritual realm, was effective only when it was translated into a grassroots movement. Top level clergymen may talk to themselves about the need for reform until they die without achieving it, but if the masses grow tired of a condition they will effect a change. But this requires an educative process, and this is a slow and methodical approach.

The heirs of our particular restoration movement, launched principally by outstanding men of the Presbyterian persuasion, had developed a legalistic approach to God's revelation, and the fruit of such a stance is always division and fragmentation. Factionalism is inevitable under such conditions. To thwart legalism and recover the scriptural concept of covenantal relationship, conditioned not upon law, but upon

grace, is a long and tedious, as well as a thankless task. The road of an exodus is not always a short one. Man craves to be under law, for then the responsibility for making decisions is lifted from his heart. In the divine-human relationship he will cling to and defend legalism to the last ditch. It is his clothing, and man does not want to appear naked and open to the eyes of God.

In my own case I suffered real inner turmoil as I sought to free myself from the shackles I had helped to forge. I had been accustomed to debating my brethren. That was easy and I confess that I enjoyed it. Now for the first time I was locked in a life and death struggle within myself. I was not contending with others but wrestling with my own conscience. It involved long days of arduous research. It meant sleepless nights with the clock relentlessly striking each passing hour while calm repose avoided me. I learned to pray as I had never prayed before. I walked miles in the open each day, sometimes along rural roads, meditating and contemplating. The process of education is a difficult one but it is not nearly so hard as the process of re-education which requires the surrender of cherished ideas.

It was almost six years from the time when God pierced the armor of my sectarian shell before I wrote the first article "Thoughts on Fellowship." During those agonizing years my study led me to completely revised concepts. I became convinced that the party which I had defended and which had crystallized around certain opinions, deductions and interpretations was not the body of Christ in any exclusive sense, even though the deductions we defended were valid. The body of Christ is greater than any party or combination of parties. I was led to the conclusion that "The Church of Christ" which had developed out of a nineteenth century restoration movement was not the body of Christ in its fulness or in any exclusive sense, and that the body is greater than any movement within it, even a restoration movement.

This meant that I had to reform my vocabulary to express

my new thought patterns as I walked out of the gloom into ever-increasing and brighter light. The language of a faction is factional. The language of a party is partisan. It does not reveal truth but conceals it. I came to see that my brethren were not just those in a certain faction but were scattered through all of the parties which had been engendered by our attitudes and created by our human strivings. I had to recognize that the one flock embraced all of the sheep and these sheep were still scattered over the sectarian hills. Such expressions as “loyal brethren” and “faithful brethren” had to be thrown into the garbage dump where they belonged. They did not signify faithfulness or loyalty to Jesus but to our party. I had to rid myself of the arrogant term “brethren in error” which had been used to bolster our own partisan ego. The only kind of brethren on earth were brethren in error. There can be no other kind of brethren in the flesh. All of us are ignorant but just about different things.

When the scales of Church of Christ traditionalism fell from my blinded eyes, great truths began to become evident. They were there all of the time but I was oblivious to them because they did not fit into our sermon outlines. From Dr. George Campbell, of Edinburgh, whose writings so greatly influenced the youthful Alexander Campbell, I learned the distinction between gospel and doctrine as made by the Holy Spirit. As I delved into a deep investigation of this interesting and significant matter I found that Dr. Campbell’s treatise was reinforced from every side. From the more than fifty scholars who helped me on this matter, I want to pay special tribute to two. One was Dr. C. H. Dodd, Vice-Chairman and Director of the Joint Committee on Translation of The New English Bible. The other was his protégé, Dr. Alan Richardson, at the time Professor of Christian Theology, in the University of Nottingham. If the gospel brings us into relationship with God through the obedience of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, fellowship is created by the gospel and all who have obeyed the gospel are in the fellowship. And they are in the fellowship in

spite of their many areas of ignorance and mistaken concepts.

The very moment this truth penetrated my consciousness, a necessary corollary impressed itself upon my mind. Since there were two different messages from heaven involving kingdom relationship upon the earth, one of which was addressed to aliens to enroll them as citizens, and the other addressed to citizens to train them as soldiers in the army of the Great King, there must be two different actions by which these must be conveyed. One does not naturalize citizens as he trains soldiers. It was then I found that the method of addressing aliens was by proclamation of the good news, while the method of training disciples was by a lifetime educative process.

Once more I was led into an intensive study of the word of revelation. It soon became apparent that the gospel was an evangel, and that it consisted of historical facts. It was the glad tidings of what God had done for mankind in sin and alienation in order that they might be reconciled to Him. This message was to be heralded or announced. The very word for preacher or proclaimer was originally herald. On the other hand, those who enlisted under the banner were to be taught, and the doctrine consisted of precepts to be instilled in the heart, not by a herald, but by a teacher.

It was Alexander Campbell who probably helped me most in this matter, although I found that every one of our pioneer proclaimers had a fairly clear view of the matter. I shall never forget the first time I read the following statement from the facile and versatile pen of Alexander Campbell:

There was *teaching*, there was praying, there was exhortation in the Christian church, but preaching in the church, or to the church, is not once named in the Christian scriptures . . . We *preach*, or report, or proclaim news! But who teaches news? Who exhorts news? We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or to those who have received it.

An interesting thing happened once when I was in Ohio. Some four or five preachers representing a certain faction came to attend an open forum in which I was fielding questions from the audience and to throw it into confusion if possible. In reply to a certain question about gospel and doctrine I read the quotation I have just given from Campbell, without identifying the source. One of the preachers asked if he could speak for just three minutes. When I gave him permission to do so he arose and pointed a finger at me and warned the audience that I was the most dangerous heretic alive today. He said that there was no difference between gospel and doctrine, or between preaching and teaching, and that this was a new idea I had pulled out of a hat. He went on to say that no one ever dreamed up this distinction before I came up with it, and that they would do well to put their trust in the truth the brethren had held through the years rather than in these newly-invented ideas. It was obvious that he was wholly ignorant of the very basis upon which the restoration movement began. When I arose and said the statement was a verbatim quotation from the pen of Alexander Campbell, and that I wanted to second the suggestion of our brother that the brethren cling by the truths discovered by the pioneers, he took his hat and stamped out of the house. I have not seen him since that day, although I understand he is no longer engaged in the work of the Lord.

No less startling than the above quotation from Campbell was the poignant statement from him which I here record:

Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily, for the church and the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all protestant Christendom. The public heralds of Christianity, acting as missionaries, or evangelists, and the elders or pastors of Christian churches are indiscriminately denominated preachers or ministers; and whether addressing the church or the world, they are

alike preaching or ministering some things they call the Gospel . . . They seem to have never learned the difference between preaching and teaching.

I became convinced that anyone who sought to be a peacemaker in our world with its crazy-quilt pattern of division would need to cross over lines and ignore barriers. The barriers are not real. They exist only in men's hearts. They are fantasies. All restoration of broken relationships must begin with association. I resolved to go wherever God opened up a door. I found that peacemaking is a matter of positive action. You can talk about it for a lifetime and never accomplish it. I also learned that peacemakers do not wait for others to take the initiative. You must go to them. At first there was a great deal of suspicion. All factionalism is based upon fear and fear breeds suspicion. But I simply kept going and continued praying and gradually hostility was lessened.

As I began to move among adherents of the various parties they all began to speculate that I was becoming a convert to their peculiarities and would eventually join them. Nothing pleases a sectarian group more than to capture someone from another party. This is a feather in the factional cap. Most of them consider it a greater victory than to lead one to Jesus who never heard of His mercy. But those who reported in their journals that I was "leaning" in their direction were soon forced to abandon their illusion. I received persons and not their opinions. I did not receive them because of their opinions but in spite of them. Jesus did not die for deductions but gave His life for people. I still hold most of the views I have always held. I think they are valid. Certainly they are for me. I did not change my position on things but merely altered my views as to who constituted my brethren.

It is interesting to watch the machinery of sectarianism function. It is much like the machinery of politics. Perhaps it is the same machinery but merely installed in other institutions.

Those who are entangled in its gears do not scruple to misrepresent another. They frequently falsify his position. All sorts of reports of what I am alleged to teach have come to me. Most of the stuff I have never believed and certainly never said. A good deal of the misrepresentation results from ignorance rather than from maliciousness. The dyed-in-the-wool partisan is so attuned to the parroting of provincial phrases and the communication of clichés that he does not understand what one is saying who is not caught up in his semantical sub-culture. The result is that the accuser often repeats what he thinks he heard and projects it as your position. A lot of brethren never listen to what another says. They already know what he is going to say and regardless of what he says that is the way it comes through to them over the wires of the party propaganda projector.

I suspect the tendency to do this is more apparent in the patrons of a strongly-entrenched legalistic approach to the divine-human relationship. Such a philosophy seldom breeds a high degree of morality and integrity in interpersonal relationships. Those who are familiar with the non-instrumental Churches of Christ realize how unethical is the behavior of some of the more prominent lights. There is a reason for this. Faithfulness is measured by the consecration to the party standard and those who rally around the totem pole are counted as worthy even though guilty of gossip, vain talk and false accusation of others. When men judge loyalty to Jesus by attendance at a special location to which they come three times per week for the body count, what they do outside does not really count. They have already demonstrated that they are loyal by gathering in the structure.

My paper was altered in content to reflect my growing knowledge of such subjects as brotherhood, grace and fellowship. Only a very few of our readers dropped out because they could not stand to read such statements as, "I will make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation." Incidentally, I borrowed that statement from J. N.

Armstrong who was president of Harding College when he made it. Hundreds of subscribers took the place of each one who abdicated and the list grew until it became a real burden to keep abreast of it. A few wrote that they did not agree with me but they were going to hang on awhile and see how far I would go. Some of them have been hanging on for twenty years and are disappointed that I did not go where they wanted to consign me.

The fact is that I am in the calmest water in which I have ever sailed in my life. There are still a number of brethren who let loose a blast in our general direction but in most cases their opposition is a blessing. If they spoke favorably of what I was saying I would re-examine it in a hurry because I would know there was something wrong with it. I think that it was a “fulness of the times” for the advocacy of fellowship based upon faith in Jesus as the Lord of life and not upon opinions of this or that.

It has been interesting to watch the sectional or regional change in readership. At first, of course, Missouri led all of the other states in the number of subscribers. Gradually California began to creep up until it finally displaced Missouri, and held the pole position for years. During this time we were mailing a mere handful of papers to Texas, but soon the number began to increase. When the editor of *Firm Foundation* made a personal attack upon my position with an article titled “Blind in One Eye,” and then followed it with an analysis of my writing, he sparked a real prairie fire of interest. Brethren wrote for sample copies from places in Texas of which I had never heard. Some sent in a hundred subscriptions at a time with a check enclosed to pay for them. The result is that Texas has led the states in readership for more than five years. California follows, then Indiana, Ohio and Missouri.

From the very beginning the journal has been a family enterprise. It was started when Jerry and Sharon Sue were in elementary school, and each month Nell and myself with the two children would gather around the dining table in the evening

and divide the names among us for addressing. At that time the list was in a looseleaf notebook. We were finished within an hour. When Nell and I went to Scotland and England the first time, the children were in high school. Sharon Sue edited the paper during the months in which we were absent from home. When the children married the burden fell upon Nell and she has faithfully borne it through the years. There are now nine mail sacks filled with the papers every thirty days. In addition she has wrapped and mailed out thousands of books over the past few years. There have been 24,000 bound copies of the paper sent out, and these books are scattered all over the earth.

We are deeply indebted to brothers and sisters throughout the world who have held up our hands financially. We had no money with which to start or continue the publication. It was contrary to our conscience to send out letters soliciting help. We have always felt that if we were doing what God wanted us to do and doing it fervently He would supply the wherewithal to continue. To send out letters begging for assistance seemed to us a demonstration of lack of trust. I have never made a contract with a congregation, never made a demand, never set a fee, and never knew in advance what I would receive before going somewhere to share with the saints. If it appeared that I could help the cause I love I went without any arrangement about finances.

Eventually, the total cost of mailing out the paper approached ten thousand dollars annually. This meant we were losing on every subscription. Yet we always ended each year with every bill paid and we will close out this final issue with sufficient on hand to take care of every obligation. We never raised the subscription price. We began charging a dollar per year and as inflation began to take its toll and great publications were forced to cease or go into bankruptcy, we resolved to hold the line. This was done against the advice of friends who thought it was a little silly to be that stubborn. But we were meeting our bills and we were not editing the paper to make money. It may

be that with the death of MISSION MESSENGER the day of the dollar per year subscription will be over.

In the last six years, Nell has mailed out 3200 books absolutely free to college and university students throughout the world. Many have gone to colleges in Africa, some to colleges in the South Pacific, others to schools on the European continent. In addition to the cost of the books which was great the wrapping and postage alone has amounted to over a thousand dollars, but all of this has been covered by unsolicited contributions from those whose hearts were touched by the Lord to help. We thank both Him and His servants.

It is our intention, so long as the Father permits, to continue sending out free books to college students. I recall how desperately I yearned for books which I was unable to buy when I was young, and I can still recapture the thrill I felt when someone gave me a book for my meager library. I feel there is nothing else which Nell and I can do as we grow older that will have as great an impact as to provide reading material for youthful and vigorous minds. Currently we are sending a copy of my own book *The Parable of Telstar* to any college student in the world who requests it.

We have no words for adequately expressing our gratitude to those who have shared their substance with us. My vocabulary is too limited for that. We can only commend them to the God of all grace and thank them for their helpful concern and generosity. They have been a source of strength and encouragement and we are sure that He who notes the fall of every sparrow will not forget them.

I do not know what the future holds, but I shall continue to serve actively so long as I am able. I am scheduled more fully for next year than for any year of my life. I shall probably fly more than a hundred thousand miles into every kind of situation. A good deal of my work now is outside of our own movement and

consists of bringing the ideal of restoration to those of other backgrounds. I do not generally use the term “restoration” because it has lost its significance for this generation. Instead I plead for renewal through recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power. The religious world is not looking for restoration but it is looking for renewal. My theme is, therefore, *renewal through recovery!*

I am engaged, by request of our brother, Leroy Garrett, in writing the story of my life. It will appear in monthly segments in *Restoration Review* which is published at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201. The first installment will be in the January issue. Through the graciousness of Leroy I will be given space each month to inform you of speaking dates and other matters of general interest. I am thrilled at the possibility of sharing with Leroy and Ouida in the distribution of the message through the printed page. *Restoration Review* is one of the most exciting papers being printed in our day. You can send \$3.00 for a two-year subscription to the address above and thus be assured that you will not miss out on anything. You should hurry!

I shall, if the Lord wills, finish some of the books which I have started. As most of you know, my next one is titled *The Death of the Custodian*. It is scheduled to be released next month and the price will be \$2.95. We hope that a great many more of you will write in and ask to be placed on the permanent list to receive all of my books as they come from the press. Nell will mail them to you and enclose an invoice. She will include a copy of our latest book lists and any other free material that is available.

The bound copy of MISSION MESSENGER, containing all of the issues for this year will be ready soon under the title *One in Christ*. We are not yet aware of the price we must ask for it, but I promise it will be as low as we can make it in these times of inflation. There will be but 2,000 copies and these will not last long. We urge you to send in your advance order at once. Every

year, in spite of our urging, a number of people have delayed too long, and are without the books they wanted. There were more than 800 advance copies on the reservation list on October 1.

I should now like to share with you some of my views as to what we may expect in the future. I am not a prophet and have no gift of prediction. What I here say is based upon impressions received by rather extensive travel experience, and upon interpretation of trends which are evident upon all sides. I could prove to be utterly mistaken and future readers of this issue may laugh at what could turn out to be an ill-chosen piece of guesswork. However, there are certain portents which seem to point to the conclusions I have reached and which I do not hesitate to share.

I am optimistic because I can see signs everywhere of the disintegration of the case-hardened factional attitude. This does not mean that verbal violence has ceased or that unprincipled attacks have been terminated. So long as the Spirit of God is working to bring about a peaceful solution to problems of relationship, Satan will be busily engaged in trying to thwart all such efforts. The prince of this world is desperately eager to keep the children of God apart. He will cultivate the seeds of bitterness and hostility he has sown in their hearts, knowing that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

More and more congregations will throw off the yoke of slavish fear and will assert their autonomy and freedom under God. Men with a Messianic-complex who seek to dominate thought and tyrannize saints at large will have less and less influence. They may flourish for a little while like a green bay tree but they will be cut down. We are no longer a frontier movement composed of backwoods settlers. The crude and boorish tactics which created swaggering heroes out of debaters in the rough-and-tumble days of yesteryear will no longer attract thinking people in our day. A number of smaller parties will go out of existence as this generation passes away, because

the issues around which they formed will be seen to be secondary and not important enough to divide the blood-bought heirs of the magnificent family of God.

There are some factions now which have a tenuous existence. Those who compose them no longer desire to make tests of fellowship out of the things which once loomed so big. Brethren are tired of “majoring in minors” and are holding on rather than to offend those who are older and caught up in the fear of proving untrue to the traditions that have been handed down. The idea that these little factions contain all of the children of God on earth has long ago been given up intellectually by those who cannot bring themselves to say it out loud. It is still dangerous to do that in some cases where men are frightened at the thought of being branded and marked.

It could well be that our particular restoration movement, which was only one of many sparked by events in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has had its last major and widespread division. There is a great deal of doubt in the hearts of a lot of men who were caught up in the ferment within the non-instrument segment and which resulted in the open rupture related to the method of support of Herald of Truth and kindred matters, as to the validity of the cleavage. In the relative calm following the storm, brethren can see how they were manipulated and maneuvered into extremes which seem not to have been called for when viewed in retrospect.

In this particular schism I think the faction which was formed around the opposition has passed its zenith and will suffer from additional defections while being unable to increase its number perceptibly, because of attitudes. This does not mean the defectors will have changed their position on the issues but simply that they are sick of the carnality and immaturity which is basic to the formation and perpetuity of the party system. They are tired of elevating opinions and deductions into items of “faith.” They no longer want to be carnal and walk as men.

Their revulsion is the ground of real hope. The mortar of negativism cannot hold stones together interminably and a structure dependent upon it will eventually crumble. Wide cracks of dissidence are already appearing.

There are also real signs of lessening tension between those who use mechanical instruments in conjunction with their expression of corporate praise and those whose consciences lead them to oppose such. The problem is aggravated and prolonged because of emotional overtones engendered by public debates which always tend to harden hearts and stiffen resistance by pitting rivals against each other. The instrument has now become a symbol and this always intensifies feelings. To one group it is a symbol of freedom from human tyranny and they would as soon see Old Glory torn from her mast and ripped from her staff and trampled underfoot as to surrender this visible token of their freedom from the spirit of the "Antis." To the other group it is a sign of digression and treason and its use is looked upon as a gang of buccaneers hoisting the "Jolly Roger" while commandeering the old Ship of Zion.

In spite of this the brotherhood of the indwelling Spirit is becoming ever more widely recognized and brethren are able to join in cooperative efforts which do not call for a violation of conscience. There is every indication this growing sense of relationship will increase and the mistakes of our fathers in a time of bitterness will be somewhat mitigated by their children who live in a more fortunate era. It is not necessary that we keep alive the feuds which were kindled and set aflame in bygone times. We should not heap fuel upon the fires of hostility which should have been reduced to dying embers in our hearts years ago.

It is my very humble, but no less fervent prayer that, in the future when historians record the events of these times, they will find I have contributed a little to the appreciation of brotherhood across all of our unfortunate and humanly-

designed barriers. I was a militant partisan for so long I would like to believe I did something to undo the division I once defended. So thoroughly am I convinced that love is the only dynamic which can draw us together and hold us together that I want my life to be judged upon the degree to which I have advocated love for the Father and my brethren and exemplified it, in spite of my great weakness and many imperfections.

We will never debate one another into a state of oneness. Debates with brethren are tools of division, not of unity. Regardless of fine-spun reasoning to the contrary, the history of debating in the twentieth century is the history of division. Partisan debates engender the wrong kind of feelings. It is useless to argue that they need not do so. They simply do not produce the fruits of the Spirit, such as love, joy and peace. They cultivate works of the flesh. I have seen men become so enraged in debates that they wanted to fight. I came to recognize such discussions for what they were, instruments of the evil one thrust into our hands and hearts to drive the saints apart by encouraging strife.

Debates begin by rejecting one another. Partisan champions both start out on the theory that neither is of the other. They camp on separate hillsides as indications to the world that they are opponents. We must discover and adopt a dynamic which makes it possible for us to receive one another, in spite of our differences. We must receive one another as God received us. Our point of contact must be our mutual faith in Christ Jesus. We come together by coming to Christ. We come closer together by drawing nearer unto Him. A man may debate and prove nothing except that he possesses greater forensic skill than his opposite. Quoting scripture in a debate generally proves little because the representatives of both factions quote scripture. Often they quote the same passages from which they deduce different conclusions. This does not mean that one or the other is dishonest, but simply that they approach the revelation from different backgrounds and traditions. Both use the word of

God as a means of justifying a partisan standard of measurement. But the new covenant scriptures were not given to win battles for human opinions but to transform human lives by a renewal of the mind.

The greatest testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit lies not in crushing a human opponent, nor in making his honest convictions look absurd through witty rejoinders and wisecracks, but in two persons working together for a common faith in spite of differing views. The pagan world around us expects those who see everything alike to be able to function in unison. “Birds of a feather flock together.” Even those of the same political stripe can exhibit harmonious effort. Persons who do not even believe in Jesus can continue without division when they are conformists.

There is no honor to the Spirit bestowed by the world when a group of conformists carry on without fighting. But when those who make no pretense of agreeing upon every concept, and openly admit they do not, are able to stay together it has to be admitted that they are cemented by a mutual regard for some one or some thing, which transcends their varied views.

This in no sense means that our opinions are not important. It is here that shallow thinkers reveal the superficiality of their reasoning. I am constantly being treated to diatribes in sectarian journals accusing me of advocating that doctrine is not important, or that we should ignore all differences. That is silly! I never once said anything which borders on that. Certainly one's opinions are important— *to him!* My opinions and interpretations are important to me. That is why Paul urged, “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Nothing is unimportant about which I am fully persuaded. But to one who is not fully persuaded of it, it may not be so important. I hold a lot of convictions which are very important to me. I am fully persuaded of them. I could not relinquish them if I wanted to do so. I am not told to surrender

my opinions or convictions but to have them to myself alone. I cannot fully persuade one in his own mind against his own thinking. That is what the mind is for.

No one can ignore a difference. We must recognize our differences, and not try to sweep them under the rug or hide them behind the sofa. We must continue to discuss them as long as we live, or as long as we differ. But we must discuss them while united in Christ. Differing with brethren is not a sin, but dividing brethren is. It is a work of the flesh. It is a symptom of carnality. It is a mark of immaturity. Body life is more important than a disfiguration on a member. And it seems a little absurd to cut off a hand to get rid of a wart! Our divisions are not a tribute to our fidelity to Christ but a scandal we have perpetrated in His name. We are divided because we willed to divide against His will to unite. The will to separate the children of God is the result of separating the children of God from His will!

Differences will exist so long as men continue to think and to be persuaded in their own minds. But division can end now. It need not see the setting of another sun. We do not propose to encourage men to compromise their convictions but to see that brethren are worth more than human opinions. Jesus died for people and not for deductions. Little children, let us love one another!

This is easy to say, but how are we to accomplish it? How can one who has a decided opinion as to the validity of his understanding of a certain matter relate to one in Christ who simply does not see it as he does? The answer is found in the phrase "relate to one in Christ." To the extent that we emphasize the opinion we will be driven apart. To the extent that we exalt Christ we shall be drawn together. The answer, then, is to hold our opinions to ourselves and to glorify God together. Shall we allow our difference upon one thing to be greater than our concurrence upon many things? Are the only things that are

important those upon which we disagree?

Our problem is that we are trying to love in Christ as we loved out of Christ. But there is a great difference. When we were out of Christ our love was an activity of the fleshly mind. It might have been born of a high sense of human idealism but it was a projection of our carnal nature, which was all the nature we possessed with which to project anything. Such love is always mixed up with ambition, suspicion and egotism. We love those who love us. We like those who like us, and we may avoid or downright despise those who are not. We love in word and in speech, but not really in deed and in truth.

It was this way with the world of mankind until God used the cross as a hypodermic needle and injected a new and transforming presence into the realm of human existence. Paul says, "Our days were passed in malice and envy; we were odious to ourselves and we hated one another." It is a tribute to the power and influence of the devil that professed followers in Jesus still act that way. But such people have overlooked the advent of the Great Change! They missed the gift which was dropped from heaven in the divine "grace lift." "But when the kindness and generosity of God our Savior dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. For he sent down the Spirit upon us plentifully through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, justified by his grace, we might in hope become heirs of eternal life. These are words you may trust."

I do trust them! I mean I stake my all upon them. And it is because of this trust I recognize that the kind of love which enables us to be cemented together is a special kind of love. This is apparent in the statement, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). The subject here is not so much love as it is the kind of love which creates the relationship in

which fleshly men and women can be designated children of God. It is obviously this love which makes us brothers and sisters because it made us children of the same Father. It lifts our relationship out of the world in which our animal bodies exist and places it upon a plateau which can only be attained through the Spirit.

This love is not a difference in degree, but a difference in nature. It is not from the best interests or designs of our hearts, but from God. “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). It is the divine essence. When God loves He is personally entering into our situation. Love is not a mere quality that He possesses like power or wisdom. “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

The word *know* is not used here for intellectual awareness or mental conception, but for experience or identification with another.

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16). God has power, and God has wisdom, but God is love. Power and wisdom are qualities or attributes of God, but love is the divine nature. Only when we become partakers of the divine nature can we exhibit this love. Even then it is the divine nature which exhibits it and not ourselves, or our personalities in the flesh.

We partake of the divine nature through the Holy Spirit of promise who dwells in us. Justification, the declaration of guiltlessness, through and by faith, results in three magnificent and tremendous blessings: peace with God, access to the grace in which we stand, and the tremendous mind-boggling hope of sharing the glory of God. “And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

God loves through us! We do not have to work and fret in an attempt to develop love for our brethren. It is not a human achievement but a divine gift. If you are pouring water into a vessel, that vessel does not need to strain and toil. All it needs to do is to be open. And that is all I need to do. If I am open to the Spirit, the love is poured out into my heart. God does not give grudgingly. He is not a miser or a penny-pincher. He gives us richly all things to enjoy. The Spirit has been given to us to live in us, comfort us and strengthen us with might in the inner man, and love is a fruit of the Spirit.

A lot of folk are interested in how they should manifest or witness to their love in a community of saints which is becoming upset and coming unglued. I think that, most of the time, the best way is just to refuse to take sides and treat all of the dissidents with the same kind of loving concern. A perfume bottle does not have to dance around or make a noise. All it has to do is just to be present and remain open and the fragrance will be discernible, almost unconsciously. We are earthen vessels, God's clay flowerpots. The purpose of a flowerpot is to exhibit the flower and not itself. Just keep on loving, even those who cannot love themselves, and you'll do more than you will getting into the hassle with both feet.

The solution of our problem of division and strife is not going to be solved by human minds filled with knowledge in varying degrees, hammering away at each other until one is utterly vanquished and gives in or surrenders to the position of another. Really, the time will never come when one of our factions triumphs over all the others and emerges as the knight in shining armor. What we need is a cultivation of the relationship with the indwelling Spirit until all of us surrender unto Him. Then peace will come as fruit rather than a feat.

There is something about human pride which makes us want to defend ourselves. We must enter into the fray and frequently we disgrace the cause we profess to love by our

actions. No good is served by brethren cat-calling back and forth across an auditorium or taking sly digs at one another. This is the route of childishness and immaturity. Sometimes the Christian way is to suffer yourself to be defrauded. Our task is not to appear good in the eyes of men but to be good in the eyes of God. Occasionally keeping silent and refusing to engage in a controversial issue where a lot of heat is being thrown off is the route of real courage and manliness.

It is through the Spirit we are able to put to death the deeds of the body, or the flesh. Two of these works of the flesh are dissension and the party spirit. They should not be simply tucked away or put on the shelf to be used at a later date, but they should be killed. They are dangerous to anyone who tolerates them in his heart. All who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. If we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Our task is not to win arguments but to win souls.

It is the unity of the Spirit we are to endeavor to keep. The word “endeavor” shows where our human effort should center. The word keep means to guard or maintain. We guard what we already have. God bestows unity through the Spirit, and our task is to guard it in the bond of peace. It is not too much to say that our whole problem results from not knowing the Spirit. We have sought to exist on the human level, upon the plane of law and legal conformity. Disintegration is the inevitable terminus of that route. Divisions are set up by those who are sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 19).

Our most widespread and dangerous sophistry in the whole religious complex is what I call the “either-or” fallacy. The devil has tricked us into accepting this divisive weapon in place of the dynamic of love. The apostles, writing under direction of the Spirit, recognized that if the community of saints becomes impaled on the point of this fallacy, hatred and animosity will be the certain result. The entire fourteenth

chapter of Romans was written to show that two points of view could be entertained by brethren and two practices growing out of these divergent concepts could be indulged without breaking the relationship. It was not either condone eating of meats or get out, but either eat meats or not eat them and still stay in!

It was not either cease observing one day above another or leave, but either observe days or not observe them and remain. The same thing held true with circumcision, for “Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” So long as men do not make their opinions and deductions terms of justification, that is the establishing of a right relationship with God, we need not create an either-or dilemma. We must substitute the wisdom of “either-and” for the fallacy of “either-or” that we may exhibit, long suffering, forbearance and tolerance. These great virtues are never seen in a legalistic arrangement of conformity. Indeed, in such an arrangement they are ridiculed as weakness.

But as I must draw this issue to a close and prepare to bid a fond farewell to our faithful readers and supporters, I find myself turning to the words of the Spirit. And out of the marvelous treasure-house of God’s revelation I have chosen this as the best expression of my own feelings:

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience to the faith— to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Nell joins me in this benediction and in prayer for every one of you, without exception. We love you all very dearly in Him who died for the sins of us all!

ABSTRACTS OF MISSION MESSENGER ESSAYS

Main Menu

The following are abstracts of essays by W. Carl Ketcherside which were published in *Mission Messenger* from 1957 through 1975. They are in chronological order, and are linked to the essays to which they correspond. The abstracts were composed by the editor of this volume over a period of months from 2007-2008. They are designed to provide the reader with a concise overview of the principal concepts covered in each essay.

That They All May Be One (1)

[\[Essay\]](#)

First in a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist and of his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. The congregation is able to agree upon a sign that identifies their meeting place without sectarianizing or misappropriating a scriptural name of the church as its unique name.

Is the War Over?

[\[Essay\]](#)

Describes the state of unpreparedness of Christians for spiritual warfare due to compromise and a lack of commitment. Congregations act as if a truce has been signed with Satan. Too

many members just 'belong.' Satan has taken away our guns and given us cap pistols. The army is infested with people who do not know which side they are on. They are like little boys playing war with broomsticks and expecting Satan to fall over and play dead when they yell 'Bang!' We've placed diplomats in the pulpits and leave it up to them to explain the terms of compromise.

Statement of Fact

[Essay]

Prospects for *Mission Messenger* as it enters its nineteenth year of publication. Gives a brief background of the origin of the paper and an overview of its present purpose and financial status. Expresses gratitude to financial supporters and makes an appeal for help in acquiring additional subscribers. Notes that the paper is in need of a thousand new subscriptions this year in order to break even. In ten years 24,000 copies have been sent outside the U.S.

Law and Love

[Essay]

The restoration of man to his former guiltless state is the whole theme and purpose of divine revelation. Conformity to the spirit of that revelation will transform man and render him capable of walking in fellowship with God. Nothing can be so important as familiarizing ourselves with its content. The new covenant writings are our hope for a better world and a better life. Many miss the majesty of the design of revelation by viewing it legalistically while others disregard it entirely and invent new approaches to fellowship with God. More than

anything else is needed a wholesome, pure, and consistent attitude toward God's revelation.

Freedom in Christ

[Essay]

Innovations are never introduced into the church of God by an avowed enemy of truth, but good intentions will not necessarily protect against deviation from and destruction of the faith. We should carefully weigh what men say in the scales of divine revelation. We should not be led to question the motives of all who differ from our position nor assume they are dishonest simply because they disagree with us. All lack knowledge in some fields, all lack some knowledge in all fields. No good man will want others to follow him blindly. Good leaders should encourage others to read, think, and speak for themselves, thus exercising their freedom.

Grilling the Editor

[Essay]

Transcript of a recorded interview in which the editor replies to questions proposed relative to his views on current topics such as:

- the implications of his use of the term “restoration”
- whether “The Church of Christ” today is co-extensive with references to “the body of Christ” in scripture
- whether there are children of God in the sectarian bodies
- the editor's opposition to seminaries and the one-man minister system

- how he regards *Mission Messenger* as it relates to the things he is striving to achieve
- and others.

That They All May Be One (2)

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. Deals with how a brother who accepts instrumental music might accept and be accepted by a congregation that rejects instrumental music as acceptable in corporate worship.

The Sheep on the Hills

[[Essay](#)]

Describes the status of the Christian community as divided by sectarian interests. Lists factors which have produced sectarianism. Appeals for unity among all followers of Christ in response to Jesus' prayer and the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God. Unity among believers will convert the world to Christ and issue in peace among humankind. Warns those who would be divisive that the sheep are God's, not theirs.

That They All May Be One (3)

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a

congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. The evangelist goes about training men to become bishops and training the congregation to function independently in his absence. The evangelist sustains the relationship of a father to those he begets through the proclamation of the gospel. Explains that the modern “located evangelist” system is one of foster fathers which contributes to and perpetuates the immaturity of the congregation. Explains the role of bishops and deacons.

The Spirit and Liberty

[Essay]

Asserts the freedom of the human spirit before all men and the propriety of its submission only to God. Encourages the assertion of one’s freedom in Christ and decries the tyranny of leaders who seek to exercise mind control. In a less enlightened era physical torture was used to bring opinions in line with orthodoxy. In these days more exquisite means of torture are used such as ridicule, misrepresentation, lying, and boycott. Charity and sincerity are characteristics of true religion which must utterly disown bitterness and hypocrisy. Observes that error in thought is intellectual lameness. Suggests that we should treat such with the same care and consideration shown to one who is physically lame, not attempting to make him walk as we do by twisting and deforming his legs. Notes that one cannot force another to grovel and kneel before him without first losing his own dignity. One who feels God belongs exclusively to him reveals he does not yet belong to God.

To My Catholic Friends

[Essay]

Addressed to members of the Roman Catholic Church with whom the author holds many great truths in common. The question raised is that of the nature and identity of the church of God. Suggests that neither the Protestant churches nor the Roman Catholic Church were founded by Christ, since there were thousands of baptized believers in Jesus before there was a church in Rome and long before the first Protestant sect was formed. Since it was not the first, the church in Rome cannot be the mother of *all* churches. If it is admitted that the church in Jerusalem was a true church, then it must be granted that union with the Church of Rome is not essential.

The Clergy and the Church

[[Essay](#)]

The special clergy has been the chief foe of pure Christianity in every age. The system of “located evangelists” in “The Church of Christ” is simply the clergy system operating under an assumed name. The seminaries of these churches seek to turn out men who are “sound” in parroting the party line. Although not all of its “local ministers” are satisfied with this status and recognize that the office they occupy was no part of the primitive ecclesia. Many, however, honestly believe that the restoration has been completed and that “The Church of Christ” is identical with the church of God in the new covenant scriptures. Enumerates ten things about these churches which were no part of the primitive church. Asserts that almost every error in the history of Christendom has been injected and perpetuated by the clergy. Maintains that the clergy system will be the hardest of all innovations to overthrow due to prestige, power, and wealth.

That They All May Be One (4)

[Essay]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. At this time he presents a series of lessons on the eldership. He points out that God has ordained three organic institutions as a blessing to mankind: the family, civil government, and the congregation of the saints, and that government is an essential feature of each. In every dispensation of time, the rule of elders, or ancients, has been sanctioned by God as the most appropriate to man in his earthly state. No organized body can function as a body except through agents. No congregation of disciples has developed to the degree of spiritual maturity which God expects it to attain until of its own number it can select godly, capable, qualified men as overseers or superintendents.

The Name of the Bride

[Essay]

Response to a correspondent who asserts that the name of the church ought to be “The Church of Christ,” since the church is his bride and should wear his name: Notes that the practice of a woman wearing her husband’s name— which was not the practice in Bible times— is a fairly modern one. Furthermore, the name of the bride of the church is not “Christ” but “Jesus.” The word “Christ” is not a name for our Lord. It is *his office*. The community of saints has no official distinctive and exclusive name or title.

Wild Grapes

[Essay]

Building on God's lament in Isaiah that all his blessings on Judah had resulted only in wild grapes, briefly traces the history of reformation to the present. Then states that the vineyard is once again producing the wild grapes of hate, bitterness and the party spirit. Illustrates this with references to factionism in "The Church of Christ" over the elements of the Lord's Supper—whether or not the loaf is to be leavened; whether or not the fruit of the vine is to be fermented grape juice, and whether it is to be served in one or in multiple cups. Exposes the error in such division and calls for attitudes which will rise above the party spirit.

A Sense of Values

[[Essay](#)]

Jesus came to change the values of men to the values he modeled. Our exaggerated regard for human life is not a Christian value. We elevate physical life beyond that of the primitive church—fearing him who can kill the body more than him who has power over the soul. This results from a loss of faith in spiritual things.

Fear of Love

[[Essay](#)]

There are now more neurotics and insane than at any point in history. This presents an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate the nature of Christianity to the world, but they are generally lacking in love—its guiding principle. To be children of God implies growing in his likeness—which is love. But love is often ridiculed even by those who profess to be Christians. We are taught to love our group, church, race, etc. But Jesus taught

us to love our enemies. To restrict our love to those who agree with us is to deny the basic element of Christianity. No man can say he is like God if his love is partisan, national or racial. The lever which will move the world to Christ is love.

That They All May Be One (5)

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. Responds to seven questions about elders:

- **How old should a man be to qualify for the office?**
- **Can a man be appointed against his will?**
- **Can a man resign from the office?**
- **Why is there no scripture for a man resigning?**
- **Is it possible for one to get too old to serve?**
- **Can a congregation be scriptural without having them?**
- **Is a plurality necessary?**

The Power of Christianity

[[Essay](#)]

An overview of the impact of Christianity upon human society. Notes that Christ never created a single organization for social reform. Christianity is a revolutionizing power that works quietly through the power of unselfish love. It is a mistake, however, to view the purpose of the church as that of an organization designed to work overtly toward social reform. Such an idea has been a hindrance and an obstacle to effecting the divine purpose.

Class Controversy

[Essay]

One of the many factions within the disciple brotherhood contends that it is the faithful church because it does not have Bible classes for study. This is a position based on no rational argument from Scripture. Its leading proponents are largely deficient in scholarship and constructive ability. The contention is over a method of teaching for which God has not legislated. It rests on a misinterpretation (due to the fallacy of generalization from a specific) of 1 Cor. 14:31. It would be wrong, however, to disturb the peace of those who have agreed not to have classes.

That They All May Be One (6)

[Essay]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. As the evangelist labors to complete his task by training men for the office of bishop, he instructs the congregation in the distinctive terms applied to the office.

- **Elders and presbyters**
- **Bishops and overseers**
- **Shepherds and pastors**

Notes that the “Church of Christ” today has an unscriptural hireling pastor system exactly like the sectarian world about it.

Positive and Negative

[Essay]

Reacting to a booklet published by the “Church of Christ” bearing the title “A Church that is neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish,” discusses how the church of God is catholic and composed of protestants and Jews, in the literal and biblical meaning of these terms. Suggests that we spend our time telling the world who we are rather than who we are not.

Brethren in Slavery

[Essay]

Regards cigarette smoking as catering to a physical craving or lust and the smoker as ensnared in an evil bondage of his own making. Opines that a smoker should not be appointed as an elder. Describes the physical detriment of smoking and urges all smokers to pray for strength to quit, rely on the Holy Spirit for strength, and vow to God never to smoke again.

That They All May Be One (7)

[Essay]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. Discusses the functions of elders using the categories of activities listed in Ezekiel 34. Contrasts the proper function of elders with that of the hireling — the located evangelist. Maintains that the development of qualified bishops in the congregations of the saints is the greatest need in this age. The failure to do so has resulted in the hiring of a specialist in organization and congregation management resulting in a plague of unconverted members who seek to be

served rather than to serve.

A Sad Commentary

[[Essay](#)]

Commentary on a quotation from John T. Lewis decrying the practice of elders hiring an outside preacher to fill-in for the regular preacher when the latter is away holding a meeting. The author analyzes and comments on several key statements in the Lewis quotation. Makes reference to a personal conversation with Lewis while visiting in his home in Birmingham, Alabama. Concludes that Lewis himself was responsible for promoting the modern pastor system by not speaking out against it in the churches he had started.

That They All May Be One (8)

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. Answers ten questions from the congregation regarding the qualification and appointment of elders:

- **Is there general agreement as to the qualifications?**
- **Is there danger of interpreting the qualifications too rigidly?**
- **Must a man have all of the qualifications?**
- **Would this not require a state of perfection?**
- **If no man has the qualifications but several men taken together have them, can they be appointed?**
- **Should a man who shows a promise be appointed in**

anticipation of his developing the qualifications?

- **Should one be appointed who might be offended if left out?**
- **Should a man be appointed as a reward for faithful service?**
- **Do the qualifications come under various categories?**
- **Which classification will be discussed first?**

Notes that qualifications of elders fall into four categories: moral, domestic, intellectual and executive.

Disciples of Yesterday

[Essay]

Asserts that “The Church of Christ” in many places has degenerated into merely another narrow and intolerant sect. In contrast with the early restorationists, Walter Scott and Barton W. Stone, these modern inheritors of the restoration movement will not receive as brethren those who leave other sects and seek to join them unless the latter have been re-baptized by a “Church of Christ” preacher.

Peace Must Be Waged

[Essay]

Sets forth three principles that must guide the efforts of those who would work for peace among brethren:

- **Recognize the party spirit for what it is— a work of the flesh**
- **Actively engage in the promotion of peace**
- **Recognize that peace is not an accident**

Then states a few convictions as to what should be a part of a

strategy for peace:

- **Peace must be waged in love**
- **We must distinguish between the person and the thing he advocates**
- **No principle must be sacrificed**
- **We do not shoot men full of peace, rather we strive patiently with them in love**
- **Fair treatment of those with whom we differ does not imply endorsement of error**

We do not love each other because we are of the same mind; we come to be of the same mind because we love each other.

The Class Controversy

[[Essay](#)]

A response to letters (all from the southland) received in response to the article on “Class Controversy” (Vol. 19, No. 6). Observes that many of those who oppose him are not in agreement with each other. A debate, proposed by correspondents, is declined. States the issue in the words of one of his opponents, then responds to the statement. Concludes with a call for unity.

That They All May Be One (9)

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of articles which tells the story of a congregation planted by an evangelist, and his attempts to bring that congregation to spiritual maturity. Takes up the qualifications of elders in the moral realm:

- Blameless
- Vigilant
- Sober
- Of good behavior
- Not given to wine
- No striker
- Not greedy of filthy lucre
- Patient
- Not a brawler
- Not covetous
- A good report of those without
- Not self-willed
- Not soon angry
- A lover of good men
- Just

Smoking and Cancer

[Essay]

Takes issue with a statement by the editor of the *Gospel Guardian* in which little or no merit was given to the “moral aspects” of smoking. Describes the impact on families of the death of smokers. Concludes with an impassioned appeal to smokers to stop smoking immediately.

Must Elders Be Married? (1)

[Essay]

This essay builds on the last in the series of essays entitled “That They All May Be One” (Vol. 19, No. 9) in which the oral qualifications of an elder were discussed. This essay deals with

the domestic requirements for that office. The first question is whether a man must be married to qualify. Reviews quotes from numerous commentators on both sides of the question. Concludes that there is a great deal of contradictory material available on the subject and suggests that exegetes proceed with caution and humility. However, there is one thing of which all may be certain, says the author, and that is that the enforced celibacy of the Roman Church is contrary to the word of God.

Drawing the Line

[Essay]

Observations concerning what the author considers to be the improper use of the words “brotherhood” and “fellowship” by a fellow editor. Commends the editor on his recognition that differing degrees of knowledge entail differences among brethren.

A Serious Charge

[Essay]

Response to a challenge to the author’s earlier reference to “The Church of Christ” as a sect. Then proceeds to set forth ten statements (re boards, conventions, societies, propaganda, bureaus, schools, and headquarters) about “The Church of Christ” designed to demonstrate that “The Church of Christ” is not a restoration of the primitive church but a modern sect, although it is acknowledged that many “Churches of Christ” are not sectarians in concept or practice. Expresses doubt that “The Church of Christ” will ever repent and return to the original pattern.

Making Allowances

[Essay]

Observes that the position of a fellow editor on a certain issue reflects that loyalty of a congregation is determined by its subscription to several items of an unwritten creed, and not by its relationship to God. Notes that the party spirit results in a twisting of scripture to sustain the partisan position. The holding of differing views does not bring brethren under condemnation but the creating of a party around those views does. Observes that not a single one of the factions in the disciple brotherhood has perfect agreement among its constituents. They merely agree on the one thing which is the test of loyalty.

Our Plea

[Essay]

A list of five principles for which the author pleads, together with a list of five related things which he opposes.

Must Elders Be Married? (2)

[Essay]

Concludes that an elder must be married as a requisite for the office of elder and states the reasons for his conclusion— a position he did not hold five years prior. His conclusion is based on (1) the practice of the early Jewish Christians, (2) the general tenor of the apostle’s teaching about elders, and (3) the fact that the statement that an elder should “rule well his own house” would strongly imply the presence of children. States that while he could not conscientiously appoint unmarried men as elders

nor serve under such, he would not make an unwritten creed of his interpretation and divide brethren over it.

Report of a Trip

[[Essay](#)]

A report on a trip to Charleston, West Virginia, where the author met with ministers of several Churches of Christ, all of whom questioned whether the others were truly children of God. Relates his experience attending the Mountain States Christian Convention. Reports on discrepancies in the use made of the instrument and the argument made to defend its use (as an aid to singing). Doubts that any of the brethren in Charleston truly want real restoration.

A Wine Party

[[Essay](#)]

Comments on the divisive nature of remarks made by a correspondent who states his opposition to the use of non-fermented grape juice with the Lord's Supper. The author notes that the word "communion" is misused when limited in reference to the Lord's Supper. It is sinful to split the body of Christ into wrangling parties over the very Supper which the Son of God ordained as an expression of corporate fellowship.

Elders and Children

[[Essay](#)]

The last in a series of articles on elders— their function

and qualifications. Sets forth, in a series of questions and answers, his view that an elder may have one or more children and that those children must show evidence of being under subjection to their father, but not necessarily Christians.

What Is Heresy?

[Essay]

A response to a letter which tells of a church where a brother holding premillennial views was accepted by the congregation, but a visiting speaker told them that the brother held a dangerous heresy and that they should get rid of him. Points out that it was the preacher who was the heretic due to his party spirit— which is heresy. Although the author considers the pre-millennial theory to be a misinterpretation of Revelation 20, he would no more cast out a brother for mental astigmatism than for physical.

Thoughts on Fellowship (1)

[Essay]

We are called into fellowship by God. Fellowship is a state attained through grace. The prior relationship to God is one of alienation from his life. The Jewish system separated men from God and from each other. These barriers were destroyed by Christ— the veil of the Temple being torn in two. The Jews were told “draw not nigh” but we are told “Let us draw near.” The work of unity is credited in Scripture to Jesus— not to men. Unity is now achieved by the Spirit and is called the fellowship of the Spirit. The Spirit rests upon us as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle in the wilderness. Earlier men had to go up to God, now God dwells in us continually. Fellowship has to do

with sharing. We are in fellowship with each other only because we sustain the same relationship to God.

Church Autonomy

[Essay]

A warning against the forfeiture of congregational autonomy through the delegation of responsibility to others. Expresses concern for the practical outcome of large gatherings in a central location of those who think that they “represent” the brotherhood and attempt to tell others what position they must take on current issues. Editors occasionally seize power and assume the role of brotherhood “oracle” and their pronouncements become law. But there is no such thing as a “brotherhood paper.” One congregation cannot discipline the members of another, nor can the elders of one exclude the elders of another. One congregation cannot disfellowship another congregation. There are no diocesan bishops, no delegate conventions, no ecumenical councils of talented men, no convocations of preachers, and no ecclesiastical courts in the framework of God’s revelation.

Big Preachers

[Essay]

Response to comments of Burton Coffman in *Firm Foundation* regarding the need to keep big preachers in the big churches. Coffman lists the names of fourteen such men. Exposes double talk in terminology used and calls attention to the interests of these men and the financial nature of their work. The pulpit was unknown in the primitive church.

Religion of Fact

[Essay]

God's purpose is to unite men whom he created with different ways of thinking and different intellectual abilities. His plan is based upon the belief of testimony regarding facts— not abstract propositions. Anyone who believes the fact that Jesus is the Messiah of God and who proves his faith by being immersed is admitted into the fellowship of the Father and the Son. Men dare not make their opinions tests of fellowship. 1 Corinthians 1:10 does not require perfect agreement of all opinions nor can it refer to matters of personal judgment. It is just as sinful to call a party by the name of Christ for the purpose of segregating it from other believers as it is to call it by the name of Cephas or Paul. There is to be a diversity of minds for the church of God. God has ordained and revealed a religion founded upon facts, testimony and faith.

Thoughts on Fellowship (2)

[Essay]

Second in a series of articles on fellowship. Expounds on the meanings of the Greek word *koinonia*, the English word "fellow," and the suffix "ship." Notes that one cannot have fellowship with things (such as cups, colleges, etc.). Points out that fellowship is not synonymous with endorsement of everything the other fellow may hold. We are in fellowship with the Father and the Son, but this doesn't imply that our understanding of all things is equal to their divine knowledge. Fellowship is a state, whereas endorsement is a rational act. Tells the story of a preacher who refused to lead in prayer where the author was speaking for fear that his doing so would consist of fellowship with the author. States that "every baptized penitent

believer on this earth is my brother, and we are in fellowship because we are part of the brotherhood of Christ.” The church at Corinth was guilty of many wrongs yet Paul reminded them that they had been called into fellowship and that Christ was in them.

The Thing That Counts

[[Essay](#)]

Raises the question as to how to proceed in a hypothetical situation in which a new church is preparing to partake of the Lord’s Supper together for the first time, and one member of the congregation objects to the use of multiple cups in which to pass the fruit of the vine. Suggests that the objector is the weaker brother and should be treated with deference. To do otherwise would be to fail to walk in love toward that brother.

Is It New Doctrine?

[[Essay](#)]

A review of quotations by A. Campbell, M. E. Lard, T. Campbell, G. W. Elley, B. Franklin, D. King, D. Lipscomb, and D. Sommer in evidence of the fact that the author’s pleas for a restoration of the restoration are not new with him.

Our Attitude

[[Essay](#)]

A statement of the approach of *Mission Messenger* to the problems currently confronting the religious world. Affirms a

resolution to explore the Word of God for answers, not seek the agreement of all men, refrain from brutally attacking those who hold different views, maintain an open heart and open paper, refuse to compromise, and continue to plead for the unity of all believers in Christ and the restoration of a pure Christianity.

The Party Spirit

[[Essay](#)]

An exposition of the party spirit, referred to by Paul as a work of the flesh. Examines the symptoms of the party spirit: (1) reluctance to admit the truths held by others, (2) inability to rejoice over the good done by others, (3) unwillingness to hear both sides of an issue and (4) a tendency to abandon the search for truth and rest satisfied in present knowledge. Then looks at the effects of the party spirit: (1) breeds inconsistency, (2) shrivels the souls of men, (3) destroys the sense of proper spiritual values, and (4) produces legalistic extremes. Expresses a need for elders to cultivate a charitable spirit, a love for humanity, and a sense of a need for reformation. Exhorts, “Let those who have been more fortunate in inheriting truth discovered by others, exercise charity toward those who are still laboring to discover what we have.”

Thoughts on Fellowship (3)

[[Essay](#)]

A commentary on 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 in response to the suggestion by a correspondent that this passage supports separation from brethren with whom one finds himself in doctrinal disagreement. Demonstrates the absurdity of applying this passage to brethren with whom we differ. Acknowledges as

a brother every immersed, sincere believer in the Messiah—regardless of his ignorance of some of the blessings accruing from baptism or as to the time they were bestowed. Raises the question, What shall be my attitude toward unimmersed believers? Concludes that it should be that of a family toward an unborn child—rejoicing that it has been conceived by faith.

The Road to Ruin

[[Essay](#)]

While critical of the modern pastor system, observes that not all hired ministers are necessarily hirelings but tireless and self-sacrificing men, victims of circumstance. Notes that half a century ago the idea of elders hiring or firing a local minister was unknown to restoration minded churches. Asserts that every human institution to do the work of the church is a monument to the mistakes of the brethren. Briefly traces the development of the modern pastor system within restoration movement churches. Expresses doubt that the Church of Christ, with millions invested in human organizations, can ever return to the old paths without the sudden destruction of the structures of modern civilization. The proper response for those who weep over Zion is to make every disciple a minister through love for God rather than for gain and to train godly men as bishops—our greatest need. All Christians must oppose the clerical system.

Restoration

[[Essay](#)]

Reference to restoration does not imply the church disappeared at some point in history, rather it is the work of

uncovering the purity of the original ideal of God which was tarnished and covered over during the 1260 years during which the church was forced to flee into the wilderness. The work of restoration, begun by Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, the Campbells, Stone, Scott, Smith, and others, is not completed. The prayer of Jesus has not been answered— this must come through a restoration of the spirit and form of apostolic Christianity. The spirit of restoration must be restored to this age.

Not Many Fathers

[[Essay](#)]

Asserts that there is a difference in the content of the gospel and the apostles' doctrine. Men are begotten— once— by the gospel; they are instructed in the teaching of the apostles. The gospel is the good news and one does not teach news— he announces or proclaims it. Asserts that the evangelist who proclaims the gospel is father to those begotten through his proclamation. One is not a father because he assists at delivery (baptism) but because he begets. The fathers' task is to train (Paul was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel). Misconceptions have led to a system of foster-fathers (located evangelists) who attempt to train through sermonizing. Concludes with a lengthy quote from A. Campbell in which he opposes sermonizing.

Thoughts on Fellowship (4)

[[Essay](#)]

Responding to claims that Amos 3:3 teaches absolute unanimity of opinion as a requisite to fellowship in Christ, notes

that while we are obligated to accept what God says, we are not obligated to accept what any person thinks that God meant. Points out that the context shows that Amos was arguing from cause to effect. When you see two people walking together, it is as the result of an appointment to meet at a stated time. The original word relates to an initial engagement to meet, regardless of the purpose. If we wait until we get together upon all of our varying interpretations, we will never walk together at all. If God can walk together with us while we are learning, surely we can walk together with all others in Him who are in the same condition.

The Power of Prayer

[[Essay](#)]

The power of heaven is available to us through prayer. If it is not, there would have been no point in James saying that Elijah was a man like us (5:17, 18). Our house is wired for electricity but we burn tallow candles. We are self eclipsed, getting between ourselves and the light of heaven. Like Peter we take our eyes off of Christ and look at the water. During the Renaissance men re-made the world. We can do the same. Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer.

Instrumental Music (1)

[[Essay](#)]

The use of instrumental music in the public praise service of the saints (introduced into disciples churches in 1859 by Dr. Pinkerton in Midway, Kentucky) created a cleavage in restoration churches that is as great as ever. This division is

contrary to God's will and we must not become callous to that fact. While the instrument was generally introduced by the young over the objections of the old, it is now the old that resist any effort by the young to remove it for the sake of harmony. Those who disallow the instrument often no longer regard as brethren those who use it. This type of thinking has been fomented by the church colleges. But there are signs of change throughout the world. The problem must be worked out in love through further study.

Thoughts on Fellowship (5)

[Essay]

Asserts that our divided state is the chief deterrent to the subjugation of the world to Christ. A quote from A. Campbell refers to a few individuals who began to reflect upon the ways and means to restore primitive Christianity. A question is raised and answered as to the status of the heirs of this restoration effort. Concludes that the noble idea has been shattered into more than two dozen parties. This has been done in part through the twisting of scriptures such as Ephesians 5:11, for which an exposition is given to show that the works of darkness cannot have reference to those who differ on doctrinal issues. Many in Christian denominations are the innocent victims of birth and circumstances beyond their control; many love the truth and pray for unity. Our task is not to deny they are children of God but to get them to cease being partisans. We must not be partisans in our opposition to the party spirit. We must not create a party in the name of Christ. Nonpartisans (1) recognize sectism as a sin, (2) distinguish between the person and the party to which they belong, (3) have a rigid determination to be nonpartisan, (4) are patient and forbearing while men are learning, and (5) love truth for truth's sake.

Thoughts on Fellowship (6)

[Essay]

Summarizes what fellowship in Christ consists of and what it entails. Concludes that restoration churches could not be more divided if the Word of God had commanded it. This sad state is often justified by reference to 2 John 9, 10. An exposition of that text is the focus of the essay. Provides a brief summary of Gnosticism— which prompted the writing of the epistle— and concludes that John’s phrase “and bring not this doctrine” refers to the denial of the fact that Jesus came in the flesh.

Instrumental Music (2)

[Essay]

After reaffirming an interest in any problem linked either to unity or restoration, notes the shallowness of some of the arguments being used against the use of instrumental music in the public praise service, such as those based on Amos 6:5 and Romans 14:23. Notes, however, that the instrument was introduced on one basis but is now being defended on a wholly different basis. Expresses sadness over the division which has resulted due to the introduction of instrumental music and advocates tolerance— toward people, not things— as avenues toward unity continue to be explored. The remainder of the article is an exegesis of Psalm 87 and a critique of Given Blakely’s interpretation of the same as set forth in a recent article.

Thoughts on Fellowship (7)

[Essay]

Notes that the present view of how to solve the problem of disunity, which has plagued the disciple brotherhood, is not achieving the proper response— factions are multiplying, not diminishing. Proposes a simple answer which can revolutionize and revitalize the restoration movement: Fellowship in Christ is not the result of our agreement, but our agreement comes as a result of our fellowship. We are called into fellowship. Understanding is achieved through the exercise of our rational faculties. Fellowship is not a fruit of agreement but agreement is the fruit of fellowship. So long as we seek to achieve fellowship by agreement upon propositions we will divide every time someone learns a new truth.

Instrumental Music (3)

[[Essay](#)]

A summary of the author's reasons for opposing instrumental music in the public worship service of God: (1) it obstructs our efforts to promote unity, (2) it's introduction created division, (3) a restoration of the primitive order requires its exclusion, (4) it introduces an element into the worship unauthorized by Christ, (5) it constitutes ritualism and is thus a departure from the simplicity which should characterize followers of the meek and lowly one. Regards those immersed believers who oppose his views as brethren, but states that he cannot participate in the public praise service where the instrument is being used. Concludes: "If brethren wish to inject into the service that which will exclude us on the basis of conscience . . . the responsibility will rest with them."

A Sound Mind (1)

[[Essay](#)]

Soundness of mind has to do with that quality or state of intellect which enables one to think clearly and reason correctly in regard to those propositions which come within the sphere of personal experience or relationships. Since the chief aim of man is to search for truth, and since truth can only be perceived clearly by a well-regulated mind, and since such a quality of mental power must be cultivated, it is important to develop the ability to think clearly and reason correctly. Observes that our nation has been victimized by “easy living” and the spirit of “getting by.” The masses are not as able to comprehend profound thinking as those of a century ago. Compares the sermons of A. Campbell and B. W. Stone to backwoods audiences with the frothy utterances of modern preachers. Notes that just as a stomach constantly fed pre-digested food will soon cease to function, so will a mind limited only to “digests” containing that which is skimmed off by other minds. Only the cultivation of a sound mind will enable modern man to find a satisfactory answer to the greatest personal question of all, the reason and purpose of human existence. We are today where our thinking has brought us. We will be tomorrow where our thinking takes us.

Thoughts on Fellowship (8)

[Essay]

The word “fellowship” (koinonia) is used to describe the Lord’s Supper. Open communion is the first step to open membership. Brethren in Great Britain do not practice open communion. Asserts that whatever is set up as a barrier to admission to the Lord’s table is one’s creed and test of fellowship. But brethren are generally ignorant of the meaning of the word fellowship as used by the Holy Spirit. Many believe that calling on one to lead in public prayer would be to acknowledge fellowship whereas sharing the Lord’s Supper with

him would not be. The only test of fellowship imposed by God is belief that Jesus is the Son of God and immersion prompted by that faith. Baptism “for the remission of sins” is a proviso of modern Church-of-Christ-ism— not of God. When a man moved by faith is immersed, that act of immersion is for the remission of sins. We are saved by grace— not by faith in baptism for the remission of sins.

Reply to Brother Zerr

[[Essay](#)]

Response to criticism by E. M. Zerr to comments made in a previous article relative to fellowship and restoration. Contends that no sect is a part of the church of God, but there may be children of God among the sects. The one church is composed of all the saved. The question is not how much truth a group must know before it is a true church but its attitude toward truth as such. It is the truth about the sin of division that needs to be learned and shared, for division is the greatest scandal of modern Christendom. Toleration of others is not restoration but the only atmosphere in which it can be pursued. There is a more excellent way than the party road. As we become closer to Him who died for us we will become closer to each other.

Thoughts on Fellowship (9)

[[Essay](#)]

The Greek word *koinonos* designates a partner or partaker of something shared. Those who are partakers (*koinos*) of the Lord’s Supper have fellowship (*koinonia*) in that act. The brotherhood of Christ stems from the fatherhood of God. Every

person on earth who is a child of God is my brother. When we speak of the brotherhood in such a way as to exclude any of God's children we are sectarian. Many speak of the "brotherhood" in a limited way— limited to those who agree with them on certain doctrinal points and practices. Each has its paper whose editors and their cohorts constitute the brotherhood hierarchy, stifling individual thinking. We are participants with God because we share in the divine nature. We are one in him because of grace— not because of any personal attainment.

A Sound Mind (2)

[[Essay](#)]

A second article by the same title (*see* [Vol. 20, No. 8](#)). Observes that reason is one of several functions of the mind. A sound mind is one which is regulated by the principles which pertain to investigation and deduction which demands the application of positive factors and the avoidance of negative factors. Discusses pitfalls to be avoided and enumerates some of the laws governing the mental process in an effort to help all think clearly and reason correctly. Concludes that we should cultivate sound minds by refusing to form an opinion based on insufficient data, by weeding out the trivial from the worthwhile, by firmness of character which will not yield to every whim, and by being open to a review our position in the light of additional evidence. Notes that "When you slam the door of your mind to keep others out, you shut yourself in."

Christian Church Baptism

[[Essay](#)]

A response to remarks in *The Gospel Guardian* that “Christian Church baptism” is not the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Replies that the “one baptism” is the immersion of a believing penitent upon the basis of faith that Jesus is the Christ, regardless of who may administer the baptism.

A Sound Mind (3)

[Essay]

A third article on the discipline of the mind (*see* Vol. 20, No. 8 and Vol. 20, No. 9). Encourages the development of a “habit of undistracted attention” which is the foundation of all mental growth. Notes that a wandering mind accumulates little real knowledge. One must form the habit of attempting but one thing at a time, giving it undivided attention. Appeals to the young to avoid letting pleasure and entertainment take priority over duty and responsibility.

Thoughts on Fellowship (10)

[Essay]

While the Lord’s Supper is a public expression of corporate fellowship, we do not endorse another’s errors by eating with him at the Lord’s table. Fellowship is not endorsement. God holds no man guilty of believing something he does not believe. We have no right to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. It is misleading to teach men that all who believe and are immersed are introduced to all the privileges of citizenship and then change the rules after they have come in among us.

Thoughts on Fellowship (11)

Presents a summary of views expressed in this series of articles on fellowship. Notes that while it is God's will that all who believe in Him should be one, believers are in a state of division which is not the normal condition of the body of Christ. The answer to sectarian strife is a major one with many roots and there is no simple answer. The term fellowship has come to mean endorsement, but was never used in this way by the Holy Spirit. We must resolve never to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. We must recognize that a restoration must be preceded by a reformation of attitude, and that it can only go forward in love which knows no limit so far as humankind is concerned. Division did not come over night and unity will not be achieved in a day. We must regard each other as brethren while we discuss our differences in humility and seek a solution to our problems. We must wage peace as others wage war, praying for unity, then toiling to achieve it. Concludes with an appeal to allow the love of God to be shed abroad to our hearts as the motivating principle of our lives. We must love all men or perish. We must find the way to oneness or we may miss the way to heaven.

Thoughts on Fellowship (12)

Concluding article in a series. Observes that sectarian division has raped the church and pillaged God's sanctuary. Each division leaves no Christian untouched for it makes the task of unity an even greater one. None can be utterly free from a sense of shame while bigotry, intolerance, and factionism exist in the name of religion. We cannot simply wash our hands and be free of the guilt of the mangled body of Jesus so long as we have made no attempt to pour in ointment and bind up the

wounds of division. If the “salt of the earth” loses its strength the earth cannot be preserved. We dare not compromise truth or forsake principle, but we must find the solution to the problem of division. We must gather every grain of salt from the sectarian shakers if we are to apply it in force to the accomplishment of His will.

A Sound Mind (4)

[[Essay](#)]

The fourth and final article in the series: Directed primarily at youth to encourage the cultivation of a sound mind and to employ it in harmony with the laws of intellect and ethics. Inattention and mental fluctuation may result from attempting to do one thing while the mind is perplexed with doubt that it ought to be doing something else. The answer lies in developing a system and method which provide for the maximum good to be derived from time available. One should employ self-analysis and time study and then decide what use can be made of time which will pay the greatest dividends now and in the future. Having planned our tasks for today we should not worry about tomorrow’s assignments. As the sands of an hour glass must pass through the narrow neck one at a time, the tasks of life can only be fulfilled in the same way.

A New Conservation Corps

[[Essay](#)]

Suggests a need for a spiritual version of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) where the acronym stands for courage, commitment, and courtesy. Comments on each of these qualities.

Are You Loyal?

[Essay]

The terms “loyal” and “disloyal,” when used to identify churches, generally have reference to the particular doctrinal position that gives a group its identity (such as those related to missionary societies, classes, individual cups, etc.). For those who use these terms, what counts is what one opposes— not what he stands for. He may be loyal and be for many things that are wrong; but he must be against *the right thing that is wrong*. No one is recognized as loyal by all, and all are recognized as disloyal by someone. As God looks at us there are probably no loyal churches.

The Ebbing Tide

[Essay]

Every symptom preceding the downfall of great previous civilizations is apparent in the western world which has long believed it was invulnerable because of technical skills and scientific acumen. We stand on the brink of disaster. In the U.S. we have a national debt of staggering proportions. We help others not out of charity or altruism but out of political necessity. We cannot trust in armed might for survival. Our only hope lies not in atomic power but in the moral power of God operating through human hearts of faith. Why is it that a civilization based on the Christian concept is tottering on the brink of the abyss? This article and those to follow in the series seek to arouse thought and spur action leading to survival. Our greatest enemy is smug indifference born of complacency. Our greatest threat is not atomic power in the control of others, but lack of moral power as the controlling factor in our lives.

Address to Sincere Believers

[Essay]

A list of conclusions derived from a study of Ephesians, chapter two, relative to the unity of all baptized believers— how it was achieved and how it must be secured. Addressed to the “concerned ones,” for only they will study, search, pray, and labor to promote peace. Concludes with an appeal for prayer on behalf of the author.

Facing the Future

[Essay]

A statement of purpose and an appeal for financial assistance and prayer for *Mission Messenger*. The author affirms that he has never taken one cent of subscription money for personal use. Informs that the publication of announcements of those who send financial support will be discontinued and that such information will be kept in confidence. Asks for regular investment in “this campaign for spiritual peace and restoration.”

Our Drawing Power

[Essay]

The early church was made up mostly of slaves who owned no property. The greatest enemy we face is pride. When the church uses members with fame and accomplishments as drawing cards it stifles the Spirit. God’s children should not use the world’s methods to achieve recognition. Our task is not to

draw men. It is to lift Jesus up. Humility and simplicity were the strengths of the primitive saints. We need to re-capture the ideal of the simple life, characterized by self-denial and service.

Fractured Fellowship

[Essay]

An objection to the creation of special groups within the church, such as a “Youth Fellowship” on the grounds that it is something for which there is no scriptural authority. It destroys the real sense of our fellowship in Christ. The idea of restoring the ancient order is not the aim of most of the disciple brotherhood. They do not care to restore apostolic simplicity—they have too much money tied up in other things. Anything God wants done I can do in the fellowship of the whole church; whatever I cannot do in that fellowship He does not want done.

The Running Sands

[Essay]

Compares present conditions with the conditions of every nation of the past which has been overthrown at the height of its power, analyzing symptoms of corruption which undermined these nations and finds not one symptom lacking in U.S. culture. Notes that crime in our large cities is now syndicated. We live in a time when men are characterized by greed—the most dangerous philosophy that can infect a nation—placing emphasis on things in direct opposition to the doctrine of Jesus. Increased leisure time has not been used to strengthen our moral and spiritual resources. Lists eight principles to be elaborated upon in future issues of the journal relative to how the future of our civilization may be preserved.

Churches of God

[[Essay](#)]

Asserts that the followers of the church of God are catholic, baptist, methodist, presbyterian, episcopal, congregationalists, friends, disciples, brethren, Christians, united brethren, and an assembly of God. Acknowledges that these terms describe him but he is not a member of any religious party that uses one of these names to separate itself from others. (Notes that the very name “United Brethren” is employed to signify a division.) Asserts that it is wrong to take any scriptural term and elevate it as a party title to the exclusion of other terms given by the Holy Spirit of God.

Our Position

[[Essay](#)]

In response to criticism for publishing articles by those who disagree with him, the author states that his attitude toward his dissenters is one of love and that position will not change. There is no congregation on earth where all the members see everything alike, yet they work together. *Mission Messenger* is not a partisan journal.

Sunset in the West

[[Essay](#)]

Quotes from an article by Edith Hamilton in the *Post* in which she refers to the way in which the ancient civilization of Greece was lost due to a slackness and softness of the people.

Notes that every factor involved in their downfall is present in our civilization. Our luxurious way of life may have ruined our hearts for a restoration of the qualities needed to save us. Takes note of the crime, vice, poverty, and environmental pollution characteristic of our cities. Observes that the destruction of the small farm contributed to the downfall of Rome as it may also contribute to ours. Dole systems, resulting from mass migration to the cities, bring attendant immoralities which sap moral and spiritual stamina. The “concerned ones” must readjust their approach if Christianity is to become effective in our culture. Lists five suggestions as to what that approach might be: (1) face the situation unafraid, (2) recapture the spirit of cooperation and helpfulness, (3) adopt a sharing policy, (4) meet for an evening of scripture reading, and (5) recapture the idea of “leaven consciousness.”

Grace and Faith

[Essay]

There are two sides to salvation— God’s (expressed by the word grace) and man’s (expressed by the word faith). There are numerous expressions of grace— mercy, the blood, life and name of Christ, and the gospel. These are ordained channels through which grace was channeled. Faith is also expressed through works. Such works as required of man to appropriate to himself the blessings of grace are not opposed to faith. So any condition imposed by faith, or as a test of faith, is not salvation by works *versus* faith, but salvation by faith *at* work. We are saved not by faith and works but by faith which works. The gospel authorizes baptism as a condition of salvation by which faith expresses itself. Shows how James 2:14-26 and Romans 4:2 are not in contradiction. We are not saved because we work for God; we work for God because we are saved.

Straws in the Wind

[Essay]

Commends several reports of meetings of differing groups within the disciple brotherhood in which efforts toward unity were made. Recalls the time when he would have sneered at such meetings. Then comments on another article which recognizes no one as being in Jesus who is not in the party.

The Sword of Damocles

[Essay]

Another in a series of essays on the decline of western civilization and proposed correctives. After recounting the story of the Sword of Damocles, suggests that our status is also a precarious one. The only thing that can save our culture is moral force. Expounds upon the applications of Amos 6 for the ills of our society and suggests four steps to offset impending disaster: (1) we should develop a personal code of honesty, (2) young people should practice chastity, (3) we should make marriages work, and (4) women should make a resolution to dress modestly.

Acceptable Unto God

[Essay]

God has chosen in all ages to make His blessings available to man through positive ordinances. To speak slightly of any of these would be to sit in judgment upon the divine wisdom. Asserts that we are not judged by God on the amount of our knowledge and understanding but upon our affection for Him

and our attitude toward His will. It is our love that counts. Perfect knowledge without love would avail nothing! Love precedes the keeping of the word. Voluntary ignorance is a sin; involuntary ignorance is not. While the word teaches that we must repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins, when a man believes, repents, and is immersed on the basis of that faith, his baptism *is* for the remission of sins, whether he knows it or not. The highest motive for baptism is not a purely selfish interest in doing something in return for something else, but to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness—the motive of Jesus. We are commanded to be immersed unto remission of our sins, but we are not told that the validity of the act depends upon our understanding that what we do will enable God to do certain things on our behalf. His mercy is not made available to us on the basis of our knowledge, nor is His power limited because of our ignorance.

To Think About

[[Essay](#)]

Parties in religion stem from the vanity and ambition of men. Gifted men aspire to prominence and become puffed up. They become the authoritative interpreter for their fellows. Someone arises to challenge the interpretation of the recognized leader and is branded a traitor and driven forth. Those who follow him build a new faction around him. Each new party is “the true church” and each old party thrusts them forth to keep “the true church” pure. Asks what form of insanity possesses us that we suffer from visions of grandeur, and delude ourselves into thinking that the kingdom of heaven is limited by the party boundaries we have drawn?

Red Sky at Morning

[[Essay](#)]

Compares the “religion” of communism with Christianity. The outcome of the struggle between these two forces will affect all the earth’s inhabitants. The struggle is a spiritual one that requires moral power. We must reverse the process by which the standards of behavior which once checked immorality have been discarded. Much of modern Christianity is powerless to overcome the foe for it is not really Christian at all. It is divided, but there are signs that the tide is turning. It is the only force capable of defeating communism.

[Causing Divisions](#)

[[Essay](#)]

God’s revelation is not a factional handbook and no individual or group is its authorized interpreter. It is authoritative, but interpretations placed upon it are not. The party spirit substitutes interpretation for revelation, demands acquiescence, and disfellowships all who refuse. A right exegesis of Romans 16:17 will show that “the doctrine you have learned” does not have reference to every party shibboleth. Rather it was “contrary to the doctrine” to cause division over differing opinions. Fellowship is not endorsement nor is it arrived at by doctrinal agreement.

[The Use of Liberty](#)

[[Essay](#)]

While we are free in Jesus we must not confuse liberty with license. Liberty is the right to serve others. Love is the regulator of liberty. It expends itself in service toward its object. No one

who serves only those who agree with him is free. I must use my liberty to love, or lose it.

Pattern for Disaster

[[Essay](#)]

An analysis of the missiological, philosophical, and political impact of the West upon China, stemming from the sectarianism with which Christianity was introduced by Roman Catholic missionaries. Suggests that the failures of Christianity in China prepared the soil for the domination of Communism. Gives four suggestions as to how the U. S. should strengthen its defenses against communism in the U.S.

Making Allowances

[[Essay](#)]

The secret for living together in peace and harmony is in accepting life with humility and patience and making allowances for each other because we love each other (Eph. 4:20). Pride and impatience often produce frictions in the church. We need to learn that we cannot have our way about everything. Love is the golden key of fellowship in that it makes allowances for the shortcomings of others which are often due to a variety of circumstances of birth and ability. One is not necessarily dishonest because he disagrees with me. If I love him I will make allowances for him.

The Claims of Rome

[[Essay](#)]

Another in a series on the decline of Western civilization. Provides an analysis of and response to the claims of Roman Catholicism to be the authentic Church of Christ and the only viable alternative to atheistic communism. Contests the four marks upon which the Catholic Church rests its claim to authenticity— unity, catholicity, holiness, and apostolicity. Then examines the nature of the Catholic Church as the revival of Caesarism. Rejects that Catholicism is the only viable alternative to communism on the basis that communism may have based its strength and methods on the Catholic Church itself and is unsurpassed by the same in its blood purges of the past. Both systems are totalitarian and have utilized the same means for tyrannizing human thought. Clarifies that this essay is not in opposition to Catholics but to Romanism as a system.

Facing the Facts

[[Essay](#)]

A review and critique of the status and contributions toward Christian unity of restoration movement churches at a time when an ecumenical movement is on the march. Restoration movement churches are indifferent and filled with envy, jealousy, wrath, strife, and the party spirit. The Church of Christ continues in its exclusivistic attitude. Among several suggestions for restoring the spirit of restoration are: there must be repentance, transformation of thought, and reformation of life and heart, recognizing our factious nature, admitting we have been wrong on some things, recognizing all of God's children as our brothers, and discarding the idea that we have arrived at restoration.

The Protestant Picture

[[Essay](#)]

A continuation of a series on the decline of Western civilization. Asserts that the philosophy of dialectical materialism must be met and vanquished by a philosophy of spiritual strength and power. Considers our hope of survival to lie in adoption and implementation of the way of life exemplified, expounded, and embodied by Jesus of Nazareth. This essay raises the question as to whether Protestantism is now exemplifying the Christian way in such a manner as to exert a universal influence of sufficient power to offset the threat to our world. After an attempt to define Protestantism, surveys significant trends in modern Protestantism, listing five biblical concepts that have been recaptured by Protestantism. Concludes by rejecting the idea that Protestantism is the answer to the problem confronting us. Observes that the church of God was antecedent to Protestantism as it was to Roman Catholicism. While efforts by Protestantism that lead in the direction of restoration of the church of God are to be applauded, Protestantism of itself is no more the church of God than is the Restoration Movement.

What Divides Us?

[[Essay](#)]

The possibility of achieving unity among the various segments of the divided restoration movement fellowship will continue to be precluded as long as each one has the idea that it alone is “the faithful church.” The truth is that neither of the splinter parties is “the faithful church,” but pride and immaturity prevent our admitting such. The immature create fantasy worlds into which they retire, surrounded by walls of presumed perfection. Yet not every congregation in these days is partisan. Some have renounced the party spirit but others lack the courage to do so because they fear the hostility of those who once regarded them with reverence. The party spirit is a sin.

One could be right about all of the points of interpretation that have divided us and still be a sinner by manifesting the party spirit.

A Dangerous Reply

[[Essay](#)]

A response to a position expressed in this journal by Roy Loney to the effect that the church should make the use of smoking tobacco a test of fellowship. While the author decries the evils of smoking he rejects the idea that the church has the right to create conditions of fellowship which God has not imposed. Affirms congregational autonomy but asserts that we have no right to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

Turning on the Light

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of a series of essays examining the declining moral status of Western civilization and the search for the means by which the Christian way of life can be made universal in application. Looks at factors involved in the rise and division of the restoration unity movement initiated by the Campbells. Quotes Alexander Campbell to show that the movement received its impetus from the recognition that a united Christendom is a prerequisite to the conversion of the world to Christ. Cites Daniel Sommer's "Address and Declaration" (1889) as proof that the movement divided not over instrumental music but over other "innovations," although the break was not manifest until the 1906 statement by David Lipscomb to the Director of the U.S. Religious Census. Describes salient characteristics of the

major divisions within the “disciple brotherhood” then examines in detail the more liberal wing of the movement— the Disciples of Christ— their use of higher criticism and their practice of open membership as evidenced by the membership policy drawn up for the Christian Church at Florissant, Missouri. The author reproduces a list of ten objections to the statement of policy which, at the time, were publicly read and later published. Adds a disclaimer that the current essay is not to be regarded as a personal attack against any member of the Disciples of Christ, for whom he expresses love and respect.

Light and Fellowship

[Essay]

Response to a proposed discrepancy in the author’s contention that while instrumental music in worship is wrong, he considers those who use it to be his brothers. The question is raised as to how this can be consistent with 1 John 1:7. Asserts that his querist misunderstands the meaning of both “fellowship” and “light.” Fellowship is a state or condition to which we are called, which we enter by immersion. We do not enter into fellowship by agreement with each other. Shows how “light” is used by John as a symbol to mean “love” not knowledge of Scripture. To “walk in the light” is to walk in the love which God is. Agreement does not create fellowship and differences do not prevent it.

Living in Fear

[Essay]

Many who were reared in the confines of narrow partisanship are afraid of the privileges of being free in Christ.

Leaders of partisans fear the loss of followers and the loss of financial support. Others fear the church may lose its identity if proven wrong on some point of doctrine. The party spirit is tenacious but today there is a great tidal wave of love driving out fear. Love fills us with confidence which does not rest on our ability to devise the means for accomplishing God's purpose on earth.

The Conservative Party

[Essay]

Continuation of previous article in which restoration movement churches are examined as a possible instrument through which Christianity can be made universal in application. This article looks at the Conservative Christian Churches and their reasons for separating from the Disciples of Christ, categorized for discussion as evangelism, restoration, and freedom. Concludes that in all these areas conservative Christian Churches show themselves to be one more faction among many.

Schisms and Parties

[Essay]

Following a summary of this series of essays to-date, proceeds to examine the group known as the "Church of Christ" and its claims to be identical in origin, name, doctrine, and practice, with the church of the New Testament scriptures. Identifies the major factions within the group, at least eighteen in all, along with a brief description of the journals with which they are associated. Concludes that this group is one of the most divided movements of a religious nature in this generation, and

that it can never unite the world in Christ. All of its parties have lost the meaning of restoration since in their view, nothing remains to be restored. The “Church of Christ” desperately needs to be saved from itself as it persists in a course of partisan spirit.

Thoughts on Fellowship (13)

[Essay]

Provides a lengthy quote from Alexander Campbell’s 1833 article for the *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* on the history and aims of the Disciples of Christ in which he documents the point in time at which the Baptist association began to declare non-fellowship with the brethren of the reformation, marking the beginning of separate churches devoted to restoration of the primitive order. The author then examines a series of questions based on the fact that no group known as the “Church of Christ” was in existence at the time Campbell began his restoration movement: Where was the New Testament church? What name did it use? Who composed it? Did God have any children from the close of the first century to the start of the nineteenth? Was Alexander Campbell a child of God while in the Redstone and Mahoning Baptist Associations? If Campbell were alive today would he be regarded as a Christian by any group of “The Church of Christ” which exists as a result of his pioneer efforts? Concludes that we have confounded the Restoration Movement with the church of the New Testament, and we think of it as identical with the church of Christ.

The Revolution

[Essay]

As great changes are taking place in the religious world, many in the movement which originated to spark such changes are oblivious to what is going on. Having isolated themselves inside partisan walls they feel as secure as Rip Van Winkle asleep in the forest. However, the days of partisan alignment are giving way to the power of love.

Church of Christ Party

[Essay]

Continuation of a series of essays seeking a corrective to the moral decline of Western culture. Resumes his examination of whether “The Church of Christ” is a viable option for uniting the world in Christ. Gives specific reasons for his belief that it is a modern sect which has grown out of a non-sectarian attempt to unite believers in Christ through a restoration of the primitive order. Cites the gross inconsistencies of this group in its condemnation of other denominations for things of which it is guilty. Those inconsistencies involve the areas of division, the clergy, the pastor system, conventions, and others. Gives personal reasons for not abandoning this group in which he was raised.

Searching for the Answer

[Essay]

Continuation of a series on the failure of the Christian philosophy to stem the rising tide of paganism. This essay lays a foundation for a proposed remedy. Attributes the problem to the fact that the world has not been won to the sovereignty of God’s son because the enemy of righteousness has separated believers into warring camps. The attitude of the seriously concerned

must be one of complete dedication of life to the eradication of schism. Parties should not be allowed to be at peace. Our hope rests with the church, a divine organism composed of those who are related to God and thereby to each other, in spite of their differences. No existing party can claim exclusive right as the church of God. Believers are scattered over the hills of sectarianism. Supports his thesis from quotes from Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Moses Lard, Benjamin Franklin, David Lipscomb, and Daniel Sommer, all of whom believed that there are Christians in the denominations. Gives a practical description of how we might proceed in order to demonstrate an unsectarian spirit. Concludes with eight suggestions for transforming the world through love.

Harvest of Peace

[Essay]

Peace is an effect that requires an cause. Prayer, purpose, and persistence are the path to waging peace. It is achieved through the strength of the Prince of Peace.

Facing the New Year

[Essay]

An appeal for help in sharing the publication with others. The monthly financial shortfall continues to be met by contributors from month to month. Gives a description of the nature and purpose of *Mission Messenger*. Provides a preview of coming issues.

Clergy and Laity

[Essay]

Notes that the real strength of the primitive church was in the total commitment of all members. But the creation of the clergy reduced the status of the bulk of God's people to that of spectators whose chief contribution became one of money. The clergy stands as a monument to decaying spirituality. That which was started to strengthen the church of God has weakened it. We need to elevate all laity to the status of clergy and restore the ideal of the self-edifying, self-perpetuating church. God's plan is person to person, not parson to persons.

Developing Our Aim

[Essay]

Last in a series of articles. Continuation of the author's proposal as to how we may free ourselves from the labyrinth created by generations of partisan traditionalism. Suggests means by which change can come about. Calls for congregations to explore avenues of Christian unity. Lists five things that should characterize such efforts, but insists that no two situations are identical. Some congregations having the suggested outlook regard every sincere immersed believer as a child of God and welcome all such to their table of communion. Responds to twenty-one questions, mostly dealing with his position on instrumental music and Christians in the sects, gleaned from personal correspondence.

Pride and Shame

[Essay]

Describes the current state of "The Church of Christ" as

one in which values have been altered. Faith in God is supplanted by trust in organizations and the simple story of the cross is now embellished with all the trappings of the stage and theater. It has crystallized into a competitive sect, vying for popular favor, membership, and money. It now focuses on its pastor rather than on the spirituality of its members, and faithfulness is no longer equated with holiness but with doctrine. It should face the fact that it is not a reproduction of the primitive church of God. As long as it continues to brag about its symbols of spiritual deficiency and decadence (human organizations and professional clergymen) it will grow farther from God's ideal, for their pride is in what they ought to be ashamed of.

Size and Importance

[Essay]

The cosmic insignificance of earth is used by the learned skeptic to ridicule the probability of the Incarnation. Those who confuse liberty with license cannot stifle conscience until they suppress the cross. The argument of our relative unimportance based upon the size of our planet in comparison with the stars and moons is fallacious in that it makes material magnitude the sole criterion of worth. It is absurd to employ the scientific method in every other field of endeavor only to abandon it in an attempt to rid oneself of the idea of personal responsibility to God. Men saw the supernatural acts of Jesus and validated their testimony through a willingness to suffer death by torture rather than deny what they saw. To deny the Incarnation based on the size of our planet is simply to ignore the facts that prove it did occur.

A Spiritual Adventure

[Essay]

Introduces a new series of essays based on the presuppositions that: (1) the Old Testament books do not constitute the old covenant; (2) the New Testament books do not constitute the new covenant; (3) the New Testament books addressed to Christians are not a part of the gospel; (4) a proper response to the gospel is faith in Jesus and immersion to fulfill all righteousness; (5) the church of God is composed of all who have been born again. Ignorance of these truths has caused the restoration movement to flounder. Acceptance of the same will alter the entire structure of “fellowship.” One’s acceptability with God is not determined by knowledge of or obedience to a certain portion of the New Testament scriptures but one’s attitude toward the scriptures. Due to its nature, conformity cannot be a basis for unity. The new covenant is entered by birth, not by agreeing with others upon the meaning of a code of laws. We become children by procreation, not education. We have sought to make fellowship contingent upon that which was never intended to be its spiritual foundation.

The Road to Gaza

[Essay]

Contents that the meaning of the phrase “which is desert” used by the angel to instruct Philip to go south from Jerusalem to Gaza, has reference to the city of Gaza. Quotes from non-biblical historians to show how the prophecy of Jeremiah 47:5—that baldness would come upon Gaza— was fulfilled. Also responds to those who question the availability of sufficient water in that region for the eunuch’s baptism.

One Man’s Faith

[Essay]

Relates the history of a group of more than thirty saints in Valdosta, Georgia, founded by Christian Dasher in the nineteenth century. Tells how Dasher and S. C. Dunning (of Savannah, Georgia) found it necessary to immerse one another each time they discovered a new design for baptism. The author observes that they had not learned that an inductive act, transferring a proper subject from one state into another, introduces such a person into all of the blessings, rights and privileges of that state, whether he had knowledge of them at the time, or not.

The Covenant with Noah

[Essay]

God reveals himself in scripture as a covenant personality who bestows blessings in conjunction with ordinances. Examines God's covenant with Noah, noting that it was to last while the earth remains. The sign of the covenant was a reminder of God's faithfulness. The terms of the covenant were determined by God alone. Since God's revelation is ascendant in nature we do well to start a study of God's covenants by examining his covenantal relationships of the past. The purpose of the study of God's covenants is to eliminate the false concept that our covenant with God embraces the entirety of revelation and that fellowship with one another depends on a prior correct knowledge of all revelation.

A Law of Life

[Essay]

After observing that all living things are created with a purpose, applies the physical axiom that “that which does not function dies” to the spiritual realm. Notes that when disciples lose their saltiness by conforming to the world they fail to achieve that for which they were created. Notes specifically how disciples of Jesus are unable to resist the power of dialectical materialism and secularism due to the loss of inspiration and power. Indicates that the cause of this condition lies in the fact that disciples have hired others to perform the very functions for which they were equipped by God.

The New Humanity

[Essay]

Identifies the “new humanity,” then expounds upon the characteristics of its God’s chosen representatives. Notes that the essence of the new humanity is not to please self but to do the Father’s will. Observes that the confidence of many is misplaced in what they do not have rather than in having the Spirit of God. States that representatives of the new humanity are to be characterized by (1) humility of mind, (2) kindness of heart, and (3) mercy in action.

The Covenant with Abraham

[Essay]

Continues a study of covenantal revelation after the flood. Reviews and expounds upon the history of man’s wickedness leading up to Babel. Examines God’s call of Abraham and the subsequent covenants made with him— one fleshly and temporal, the other spiritual and lasting (notes that a confusion of these is the basis for a false philosophy underlying the major

sects of Protestant Christendom). Looks at the details surrounding “the covenant after the flesh,” then examines the divine purpose in that covenant. Observes that God’s purpose with regard to the seed of Abraham was to keep alive the notion of one God.

God’s Two Books

[[Essay](#)]

As man is both physical and spiritual, God has written two books— one of nature, to nurture creation, and the other of revelation, to instruct the new creation. Just as nature relinquishes her secrets gradually, so the book of revelation relinquishes its truths on an ascending scale. While the experience of yesterday becomes the foundation of today, those who challenge the perfection of the past will inevitably incur the wrath of its proponents. Although no truth is new to God, it may be newly discovered by man whether in the realm of nature or revelation. To pitch our tents around the shrines of those who discovered truths before us is to be unworthy of their heritage. No sect, denomination, faction, party, or segment, has any copyright on spiritual truth. There are mountain peaks of revelation still unchallenged by human thought.

False Tests

[[Essay](#)]

Observes that the carnal spirit, as seen in the church at Corinth, leads to the continuous judgment of others upon the test of party allegiance. The Corinthians went so far as to conclude that the apostle Paul was not “faithful” or “loyal,” accusing him of instability and compromise. The party spirit is

concerned more about a man's position than it is about his heart. It will not recognize anyone as being in Christ Jesus who does not condone its narrowness.

Flesh and Faith

[Essay]

Continued from a previous essay. Analyzes the dual nature of God's covenant with Abraham, noting that it was both national and universal, fleshly and spiritual, conveying a blessing both to his seed and through his seed. The ordinance of circumcision was given as a sign of the fleshly covenant. It was not the covenant but was essential to bring one into the privileges of the covenant. In order to become an heir of the spiritual covenant with Abraham one must come into covenant relationship with Christ by faith. Flesh and faith distinguish the two covenants made with Abraham. Asserts that baptism is not circumcision but the knife God has chosen to perform the operation upon the heart.

Our Special Mission

[Essay]

An appeal for the unity of all believers based on the premise that the only justifiable basis for which believers may separate themselves from other believers is for the purpose of doing a necessary work not currently being done by any other group. Asserts that no denominational distinctive is part of the truth that puts us into a relationship with God. Destroying those distinctives does no harm to Christianity. Holding only to the truth that saves would eliminate all partisan differentiations. The movement of which the author is a part is unique in that it

was born not as a coalition of sects but as an effort to unite Christians of all sects, thus decreeing the ultimate death of sectarianism by purifying the hearts of all God's children from the effects of the party spirit and inaugurating a reign of *agape*, love in their hearts. This was not being done by any existing party. However, its separate existence in that state must be temporary. It must eventually blend into the unity it promotes and lose its own identity in the homogeneity of the one body.

A Muddled Movement

[[Essay](#)]

Using the disciple brotherhood in Odessa, Texas, as a case in point, describes the state of division into which the heirs of the restoration movement have fallen. Using the terms “liberal” and “conservative” with some hesitation, proceeds to define these terms within the context of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Raises the question, “How can they unite the world in Christ, while carving his body into bits?”

Teacher and Disciple

[[Essay](#)]

Acknowledging a liability to err and a desire to learn, appeals to readers to share their analyses and criticisms of the views expressed by the author. Notes that it is dangerous for any fallible man to set up his reasoning as a criterion by which to judge the worthiness of any of his fellows.

The First Testament

[[Essay](#)]

After describing the way in which God showed himself to be superior to the gods of Egypt in taking a nation for himself, gives any overview of the inauguration ceremony for the covenant— the constitution of the new nation. Then examines the nature of the covenant, why it was given, what it embraced, and its bounds and limitations. Maintains that the content of the covenant itself was limited to the ten commandments only and that scriptures traditionally referred to as the “Old Testament” contain the history, literature, song books, and prophesies of the covenant people. Examines the components of “the old covenant”— its preamble plus four commandments pertaining to responsibility to God, and six that deal with responsibility to others. Concludes with five summary statements in support of his thesis that “the first testament” did not include all of the scriptures now called “old testament.”

The Bed of Procrustes

[Essay]

Just as the legendary Procrustes forced all to conform to the length of his own bed, religious partisans require all to conform to their tests of partisan fellowship and every faction has its own bed. We can no more all think alike than we can all look alike. Since fellowship cannot be conditioned on everyone seeing everything alike, partisans have selected points of doctrine to which they arbitrarily demand conformity as a condition to fellowship. If God has fellowship with us in our imperfect knowledge and behavior, who are we to set up a different standard for our fellows. God has established divine fellowship on the basis of faith— not on the basis of the amount of acquired knowledge of his revelation. He whose faith in one fact is validated by his obedience to one act is a child of God and is in the fellowship of all of God’s children.

A Good Question

[Essay]

Response to a brother's concern about the statement in a previous article that "if the church accomplishes its purpose it must eventually lose its identity." Asserts that the brother confuses a faction ("The Church of Christ") with the church set forth in the new covenant scriptures. Describes "The Church of Christ" as the offspring of a restoration movement which has crystallized into an organized party, contrary to the intention of the original design of restoration. Gives a practical example of how the Methodist Church and the Baptist Church might decide to lose their identity and come together as a single congregation with a written resolution of intent. Then asks what "The Church of Christ" in that community should do. Concludes that since our purpose is to restore the primitive order of things we should lose our identity as a distinct group and blend into the growing unity we claim to promote. However, the church of God will never lose its identity. Expresses the need for a restoration of the Restoration.

Indiana Trip

[Essay]

Relates two discussions with passengers on a recent trip by train to Sullivan, Indiana, where the author spoke to representatives of various segments of the disciple brotherhood on the topics of mutual ministry, individual responsibility, fellowship, and the unity of all believers. One passenger was a missionary to India with whom he discussed the exporting of western culture to the East by western missionaries. The other was an AMEZ bishop with whom he discussed matters concerning Christian unity.

Analysis of Legalism

[Essay]

A continuation of a study of God's covenants with mankind in which the contents of the covenant given to Israel through Moses is reviewed. Takes note of its legal nature, contrasting it with the Christian economy. Notes that while the covenant given through Moses was law, not all law given through Moses was part of the covenant. While the law of Moses was holy its essence requires unvarying conformity while inciting disobedience due to the nature of man as he is. Christians do not serve under any written code. The phrase "new life in the Spirit" did not include the book of Romans since those to whom it was addressed had already been serving in the new life of the Spirit before it was written. The Scriptures are to be searched in order to draw closer to the ideals of Jesus. Misunderstanding relative to the role of the new covenant scriptures in our relationship to God is the basis of much division. No law can bring men together. It is through the power of the indwelling Spirit that we are fitted for the eternal abode. The legalistic spirit first places an interpretation on some portion of revelation, then exalts the interpretation to the status of revelation. Gives examples of resulting division over the elements and distribution of the Lord's Supper and concludes with personal views regarding such division.

Cause of Concern

[Essay]

Reports on the condition of disciple churches in rural Missouri where the author was invited to speak. Recounts the sad history of how the division came about, then expresses

concern for how it weakens testimony to the world. Notes that the problem is now one of indifference. Maintains that while divisions have been inherited, they must not be perpetuated. Contends that no faction or segment is the “loyal church” to the exclusion of others. Suggests eight practical steps as essential and basic for seeking a resolution to situations as described earlier in the essay. States that the real test will be in praying for and laboring to help those who try to poison the minds of others.

Crossing the Frontier

[Essay]

Like refugees from the tyranny of communism, the Christian has also escaped from enslavement and terror. Evidence of one’s having crossed the border from sin into the spiritual asylum of life is that he loves the brothers. But some settle down too close to the border and are again captured and returned to slavery.

Stop, Look, Listen!

[Essay]

Responding to a reader’s lament over the author’s having started this paper, observes how a traditional pattern of thought leads to recognizing exclusively those who agree with us as the kingdom of heaven— the one body. Notes that fellowship is not the result of agreement; it is brotherhood in Jesus, and states that the walls we build cannot keep truth out— they merely keep us shut up and shut in. Concludes that the accomplishment of God’s purpose does not depend on the success of this journal. The walls we have constructed need to fall down. Calls for a crusade for unity.

The New Covenant

[Essay]

Introduces an examination of the “new covenant” with a list of seven of its characteristics. Notes that since it consists of God’s writing his law upon the hearts of those who know him, and since this involves the forgiveness of iniquity, all who obtain remission of sins are thereby brought into covenant relationship with God. Lists four phases of soul response to God’s call: (1) conviction of sin, (2) consciousness of grace, (3) crucifixion of self, and (4) culmination of compact. The latter involves the testing of faith through an ordinance designed by God for this purpose. Lists nine characteristics of the test, which is identified as immersion in water. Lists the ways in which baptism meets the nine characteristics of the test. Discusses at length the divine design of baptism as a test of faith. To condition the validity of baptism upon the recipient’s recognition that baptism is “unto the remission of sins” is to attach a human rider to divine revelation and to create an unwritten creed. Nowhere do the scriptures teach that the design of baptism is contingent for its fulfillment upon a knowledge of that design by the subject of baptism. Recommends against rebaptism of those who have simply matured in their understanding of its design and who become more conscious of their spiritual failures.

The Title of the Church

[Essay]

The covenant people in the aggregate have no official name or title. The terms used by the Holy Spirit to describe them, are merely common nouns. To select one of these as the exclusive title, discarding all others given by the same authority, and to

elevate that one as the recognized designation of a group is to sectarianize that term. To denominate simply means to name. To choose a title such as “The Church of Christ” makes of those doing so a denomination as certainly as such terms as “The Baptist Church” or “The Methodist Church” designate denominations. Any religious group wearing a specific name is a denomination in the true meaning of that term.

The Indwelling Spirit

[Essay]

Summarizes the basis of Christian fellowship and unity then observes that we are commanded to maintain, not create, the unity created by the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is his presence that defines both sonship and fellowship. Embarks on a study of the nature of the Holy Spirit, noting that recapture of the power and purpose of the early disciples begins with reaffirming the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Identifies the Spirit not as a vague influence or as the word of God but as a divine person, possessing the characteristics and functions of a person. Reaffirms the triune nature of Godhood (the term preferred over Godhead). Observes that the Spirit is received by believers as a gift bestowed by God upon his children and that he dwells in the mortal bodies of the saints as his temple, as a seal and a guarantee. Concludes that every person on earth who is immersed upon the foundation of faith in Jesus receives forgiveness and the Spirit of God moves into his heart, where Christ dwells by faith. Every such person is a member of the one body, regardless of acquired differences.

No Creed But Christ

[Essay]

The slogan “no creed but Christ” means different things to different people. While both the so-called ultra liberal and the so-called ultra conservative lay claim to the slogan, both operate under false pretenses. The legalist does have another creed, whereas the modernist does not have Christ. While the legalists claim to be building on Christ, he is not the basis of their fellowship. Fellowship for the legalist is based on a position on one or more things. Whatever is required to recognize one as a brother is one’s creed. We have substituted interpretation of scripture for faith in Jesus. Revelation is what God said in scripture. Interpretation is what we think he meant by what he said. Revelation is infallible, but we have no infallible interpretation. “No creed but Christ” entails crucifying every inclination toward the party spirit.

Opinions and Unity

[Essay]

The root of most sectarianism is the failure to understand the basis of unity. Every written creed is the crystallization of the opinions of great thinkers into a formal pattern. An opinion (or interpretation) is the result of finite rationalization based upon experience. Since the experience of each person is unique, no two people have exactly the same degree of knowledge. We can no more think alike than we can look alike. Opinion is, at best, speculation based on probable evidence. Faith, however, is belief in the testimony of witnesses to *facts*. Since no amount of speculation can alter facts, it is possible to be united on the basis of faith. Knowledge on the other hand is by nature accumulative. Consequently, in the realm of knowledge and opinion any unity must be a unity of diversity. Virtually every attempt at unity in the past has been on the basis of conformity in opinion or equal attainment of knowledge. Such a system is doomed at its inception.

A Sincere Offer

[Essay]

Provides a clear and concise summary of his thinking relative to fellowship and the current status of the restoration movement. Then sets forth a proposal for a three-session forum in which he is invited by any congregation in the U.S. or Canada to speak and submit to questions from a panel of informed men and subsequently from the congregation at large. Pledges to present his views in a lucid manner and agrees to issue a disclaimer in which to clarify that his views do not necessarily represent those of the inviting congregation. Pledges to conduct himself in a gentlemanly, polite, and kind manner and to exercise forbearance in love toward those who express disagreement.

The Helping Spirit

[Essay]

Asserts that the life of the child of God is lived by and through the Holy Spirit, the divine helper who dwells in us until Jesus returns. Shows how the Holy Spirit pours out God's love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), kills the deeds of the body (Gal. 5:17), testifies to our sonship (Gal. 4:1-7), and strengthens the inner man (Eph. 3:16). Observes that the indwelling Spirit is the secret to the satisfactory life. Through the Spirit we are enabled to conquer the flesh. However, we must recognize that the Spirit is a gift that must be accepted before it can be appropriated to personal use. We must pray for the Spirit and his work and fruit in our lives.

Old John

[Essay]

Calls attention to the fact that just as some have preferred prison life over freedom, many Christians prefer the security they find behind partisan walls to the responsibilities entailed in a life of liberty. Notes that sectism measures everything by the crystallized interpretations of the past, and thus stifles original thinking. Dissenters are hounded as heretics until, with passing generations, they are enshrined as martyrs of righteousness. But truth cannot be imprisoned behind partisan walls nor confined to human creeds. As prison makes a man unfit to compete in a world of freedom, sectism deprives a man of the will to be free. Sectism is motivated by fear of loss and is often characterized by pride and haughtiness. Freedom is a blessing of inestimable magnitude but it carries such responsibility as to frighten many.

The Sacred Quest

[Essay]

Contents that the noblest purpose of man is to pursue truth, but the party spirit is opposed to free investigation. None possess universal knowledge. He who closes his mind generally does so out of fear that what he already knows may prove to be not the truth. Those who love truth and mankind are neither egotistical or cruel. The first step to acquiring truth is to acknowledge truth regardless of where it may be or who may hold it. Spiritual greatness is characterized by an open Bible, an open mind, and an open hand. Often those who know the least object the loudest to learning more. No man is free who is shackled by inner dread.

The Horses of Glaucus

After echoing the warning against in fighting among brethren of Galatians 5:15, notes that he who hates his brother consumes that brother from without and himself within. No one can kindle the fire of passion and not be burnt. The ancient mythological King Glaucus fed his horses human flesh and was later devoured by them. The man who plants the seed of animosity must partake of the fruit of his harvest. Division is not accidental. Neither is peace. We cannot divide ourselves into unity. We cannot unite the world by dividing among ourselves. We need a crusade for peace. Let those who differ settle their differences in an atmosphere of love, respecting each other while they work together. We must find a way to peace or we will all perish.

The Divine Guarantee

Need for assurance that God dwells in us is provided by the indwelling Spirit. Lack of recognition of this fact creates distress and disillusionment. Those who seek to be justified by law can never be certain of their standing with God. A symptom of the legalistic heart is an attempt to explain away the indwelling Spirit. The only way to counteract division among God's people is to recapture the consciousness of the nearness of the Spirit. It is the "unity of the Spirit" that we are told to maintain. A few of the ways in which the Helper assists us to enjoy real living is by (1) encouraging our hope, (2) acting as intercessor, (3) guaranteeing our inheritance, and (4) producing fruit of holiness. The Spirit is the key to our problems.

Unity in Diversity

Introduces a treatise on the nature of unity and the means for attaining it. Observes that believers in Christ could hardly be more divided if they had been commanded to do so. Asserts that the “unity of the Spirit” is not agreement on matters of interpretation but a “unity of diversity”— the only kind of unity available to free men and the only kind desirable since any other would demand a surrender of liberty. Those who argue that there can be no unity where there is diversity nor diversity where there is unity confuse *unity* with *conformity*. The fact is that unity in practically any area is a state of oneness achieved by divergent elements. Romans 14 makes it clear that it is not required that we all believe alike about everything. But it is required that we all love each other in spite of our variety of views. Notes that those who reject the idea of unity in diversity bear witness to its truth by virtue of the fact that they do not agree with each other on every matter— just those specific issues they arbitrarily select as grounds for division by elevating them to tests of fellowship. The pursuit of unity must be based on (1) the absolute authority of the word of God and (2) the inalienable right of individual judgment. The unity of the Bible is “the common faith” in Christ signified by immersion into him and joined to each other in love.

Members of One Body

An examination of the nature and composition of the one body of Christ. After calling for a restoration of the original intent of the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit, notes that the word “member” is never used in scripture with regard to the word “church” but only with regard to the body. The phrase “member of the church” does not occur in scripture. The church

is an organism, a body, not an organization. Members are set in the body by God as it pleases him. It is a portrayal of unity in diversity, each ministering to the needs of all the others. Unlike the physical body, members of the body of Christ are all attached directly to the head, sustaining a primary relationship to the head and a secondary relationship to each other. Growth of the body is supplied by God, not by the efforts of men to “increase church membership.” To be a member of the body involves total commitment to the head. Members are dedicated to the purposes of the head. They live not for the church but for Christ to whom they are wholly dedicated. Concludes with a plea for recapturing the significance of the individual soul and a recognition as members of the body all whom Christ has received.

Queries to the Editor (No. 1)

[Essay]

Responding to questions gleaned from several sources, notes that his current purpose in *Mission Messenger* is to plead for the unity of all believers, since this is essential to the universal belief in Jesus. Observes that his current convictions rest on the conclusions that (1) the restoration movement is not identical with the church of God, (2) that fellowship is not endorsement, and (3) that the party spirit is a sin. States that he simply refuses to let *things* invalidate brotherhood. Asserts that his position does not necessitate compromise. Rather, it creates a proper sense of values and allows one to view brotherhood in a right perspective. Contends that his fraternizing with those with whom he disagrees does not constitute endorsement, any more than Jesus’ association with publicans and sinners. Notes that his opposition to instrumental music does not prevent his being in fellowship with those who use it, since he was put into fellowship with brethren on both sides of the issue by God, not

by his position. Observes that the only kinds of people with whom he is in fellowship are those with whom he disagrees—since there are no other kind— and he refuses to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.

Abuse of Scripture

[Essay]

A refutation of the misuse of Ephesians 5:11 by those seeking a scriptural basis for having no fellowship with those who differ with them on selected points of doctrine. Contends that the “works of darkness” are identified by Paul as immoral acts done in *secret* and cannot have reference to instrumental music, for example, which is played in *public* worship. Concludes that no man has a right to get out of the scriptures what God did not put into them.

Joint Participation

[Essay]

Asserts that the movement which was begun to unite the Christians in all sects is now the most divided in all Christendom largely as the result of a misconception of fellowship (*koinonia*). Defines fellowship as the *togetherness* of the saints with God and each other— a sharing experience, a joint participation in the Holy Spirit. However, many use their interpretation of fellowship to destroy fellowship. If fellowship is based upon equality in understanding and perfection in interpretation, we could not be in fellowship with God until we know as much as God. Brotherhood is not conditioned on agreement. Men may disagree on many things yet remain in the fellowship of the

Spirit.

Queries to the Editor (No. 2)

[[Essay](#)]

In response to a variety of questions, contends that of all the groups calling themselves “Church of Christ” none may be referred to as “the loyal church.” All are factions, existing because of emphasis upon one point or another which has been pressed to the extent of division. If one discovers truth he should remain where he is and share it with others. One can be in a sect and not be sectarian. If obligated to leave one must not conclude that those whom he leaves are not his brethren. To grow out of the factional attitude we need to resolve to regard nothing as a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition for salvation. But in our zeal to leave Babylon we should not run past Jerusalem and down into Egypt. With regard to his present writings, the author observes that many within the party in which he was formerly a leader consider him a traitor. But opposition has not affected the circulation of *Mission Messenger*. The majority of those receiving the paper are students of restoration. Reviews the manner in which he began introducing the changes in his thinking which began in 1951.

Unity and Identity

[[Essay](#)]

Those who voice a fear that the church will lose its identity if we recognize as brethren those who are members of other churches reveal that they are really members of a sect. Since they look upon their faction as the church, if all of God’s children were to become one, and thus put an end to their party,

that would be equivalent to the church losing its identity. If others are in a church at all they are members of the one body; if they are not members of the one body they aren't in the church. There are no "other churches." There is only one church, the one body which cannot lose its identity while the head still lives.

The Plea for Unity

[Essay]

A summary and re-statement of the author's desire and aim with regard to the unity of believers. First gives an overview of the rationale for his own efforts to address the problem while noting changes that are needed in the way we perceive the problem. Suggests we need a restored vision of a united people that does not compromise conviction on any point yet regards as brethren those with whom we differ. The author seeks to create an atmosphere for discussion, since we cannot argue ourselves into unity nor debate ourselves into peace. We must start with those things we hold in common. We must recognize that fellowship is a state or condition. The word never occurs as a verb. The term "withdraw fellowship" does not occur in the scriptures. Fellowship is the result of a common Fatherhood. Disagreements do not remove us from the family. We must learn to distinguish fellowship from endorsement. In God's circles of "light" and "darkness" he who loves his brother abides in light while he who does not abide in darkness. Gives practical advice on how we may practice non-partisan Christianity, making nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition for salvation.

Preaching Christ

[Essay]

Maintains that those who choose to ignore the complexities of division and “just preach Christ” are like a man selling insurance to a neighbor while his own house is on fire. While most in our land have heard of Christ, believers are divided, in opposition to the essence of Christianity. The question is, Dare we pray for men to believe in Jesus while we forget his own prayer for those who do believe in him?

The Human Factor

[Essay]

God has laid upon each of his children the solemn responsibility to do something about the problem of division in the ranks of the believers. This involves more than praying about it or simply reading the journal of one who is working to resolve it. It requires the expenditure of time, effort, and energy. He who would be called a child of God must be a peacemaker. We have developed a philosophy which is counter to God’s purpose. It is a common assumption that divisions are caused by deviations from a divine pattern, but the pattern is one of cohesion, not division. No man can prove his loyalty to Jesus by separating from his brethren because Jesus positively forbids it through the teaching of the apostles.

The Perfect Church

[Essay]

Many have the distorted view that the primitive church was perfect in every way— that a perfect pattern was immediately given and all immediately concurred in it without deviation. The fact is that the early Christians were Jews still worshipping in the synagogue and zealous for the law. Even

Peter failed to understand the implications of his own sermon on Pentecost with regard to the Gentiles. While the early believers were “of one heart and soul” they were not without problems, controversies, or differences of opinion. The perfect church is an ideal to which each generation must strive in the light of revelation.

Only One Church

[[Essay](#)]

After exploring the origin of the word “church,” notes that it designates all of the called of God, without a single exception. Terms such as “other churches” or “the church of your choice” are absurd in that there is only one body of people called out by God. One cannot choose, for example, whether or not to be affiliated with a church which receives colored people since God adds all to the same body, regardless of color. One can no more choose his spiritual brothers than he could select his physical brothers. The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, etc., are not churches but sects or parties within the realm of Christendom. No doubt there are children of God scattered among them, but they were not added to a sect by God. (The author notes that “He who suggests that I am favorable to ‘fellowship with the sects’ is wholly ignorant of my position.”) Since there is only one church there can be no such thing as a “faithful church” as this implies there is an unfaithful church. There may be diseased members but there is only one body, one church, and there can never be another.

Christians in Babylon

[[Essay](#)]

Answers the question “Are there any Christians in the religious sects about us?” by affirming that there are no Christians outside the body of Christ. However, those who denominate themselves as “The Church of Christ” have been conditioned to believe that the particular segment of the restoration movement with which they are affiliated is identical with the church of God and that all other believers in Christ are deceived and are not believers at all, but are to be treated as heathens and pagans. The idea that there are Christians in the sects is not a new doctrine but one taught by Campbell, Stone, Lard, Franklin, Allen, Lipscomb, and Sommer (as seen in quotations from each). No one demonstrates loyalty to the Father by refusing to recognize his other children.

The Higher Path

[Essay]

The “higher path” of 1 Corinthians 13 is the path of love—that fierce and unquenchable passion of desire for the good of all. It is the only hope of unity. We must love ourselves into togetherness. We must confess our error in thinking we could divide ourselves into unity or secure peace by compulsion. We must search the sacred oracles to find the “still higher path” and on the wings of affection surmount the walls and barriers of partisan prejudice.

Analysis of Heresy

[Essay]

The meaning of words is altered over time. In order to understand the revelation of God we must know the significance attached to the words used by the Holy Spirit. The unity of all

believers may actually hinge on our arriving at a correct understanding of the word “heresy.” Within the various “Churches of Christ” heresy is any view which differs with the position of the party. As the Holy Spirit uses the term, heresy has no relation to doctrine. The word “heresy” fundamentally means a “choice.” It is best translated “sect” or “party.” Heresy is the “party spirit” (Gal. 5:20). Thus one can be correct in doctrine yet be a heretic or a factious man. Any person who makes a test of fellowship out of anything God has not made a condition of salvation is a heretic. It was the pope who convinced the world that heresy consisted of “an opinion maintained with obstinacy against the doctrine of the church.” It was not until the fifth century that this meaning came to be accepted. No man who sincerely believes that God teaches a thing is a heretic.

Are They Apostates?

[[Essay](#)]

One of the “loaded terms” used to prejudice partisan followers against dissenters and non-conformists is the word “apostasy.” It is used twice in scripture and carries the idea of defection from the existing order based upon revolt against it. Today the charge of apostasy is hurled against every person who cannot subscribe to the partisan tests of fellowship. No person who is in Jesus, who loves the Lord and seeks to do his will out of a pure fervent heart, is an apostate. Apostasy is a deliberate revolt against Jesus and his authority, a falling away from faith. The word “faith,” however, should not be taken to mean the unwritten body of “infallible interpretations” bound upon members of a party and constituting the test of loyalty.

Are We a Denomination?

[[Essay](#)]

While “The Church of Christ” asserts that it is non-sectarian and undenominational, its claims cannot be sustained. The primitive church had no title or proper name, although numerous names are used to designate its various relationships. To fasten upon one of these and make it the specific name of the church and declare it “the scriptural name” when the scriptures use them all, is to sectarianize that designation and denominate the church. To denominate is to name, and if those who call themselves “The Church of Christ” insist on that as a title they are a denomination by their own admission. We need to think of ourselves as being Christians only, but not regard ourselves as the only Christians.

The Greatest of These

[[Essay](#)]

Love is the foundation of the Christian system. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul shows that love is indispensable (vv. 1-3), invincible (vv. 4-7), indestructible (vv. 8-10), and immortal (v. 13). Love is the power motivation that cements us together. But to know love is not merely to know about it. It is to personally and genuinely experience it. Love is not a way of life but life itself.

Restoring Restoration

[[Essay](#)]

Starting with its inception in 1809, documents the principle and spirit upon which the restoration movement was founded and raises the question as to whether the present-day heirs of that movement have forgotten its goal and gone aground on the rocks of party strife. Concludes that the movement is now the

most divided in the contemporary American scene as the result of two great errors: (1) confusing the restoration movement with the church of God and (2) failing to distinguish between gospel (which is to be preached or proclaimed to the unbeliever) and doctrine (which is to be taught to converts). Quotes Alexander Campbell as saying “We preach the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians.” Including all of the new covenant scriptures as part of the “gospel” and requiring that one believe the gospel in order to be saved makes uniformity of doctrine (what the party says God meant by what he said) the foundation for unity— the rock upon which every restoration movement in history has run aground, including the present one. It is time to restore the spirit of restoration.

A Great Abuse

[[Essay](#)]

The history of our brethren demonstrates that they have been as lax in respecting congregational autonomy as they have been loud in proclaiming it. Two sources account for this neglect: the first occurs when elders arrogate to themselves prerogatives which were not theirs by right of appointment; the second when preachers or others outside the congregation seek to interfere in decisions of the congregation or when one congregation attempts to dictate the policy to be pursued by another congregation. The problem is aggravated by the fact that every faction has an official journal whose editor wields a sway over the party platform. No congregation has a right to bind a decision on any other.

False Teachers

[[Essay](#)]

Every party places an “infallible” interpretation upon the word of God and then substitutes the interpretation for the word of God, leaving no room for honest difference of interpretation. Every sincere person who expresses a contradictory view is referred to as a “false teacher.” However, this term, which occurs only once, in 2 Peter 2:1, carries with it the idea of deliberate and intentional falsehood. Such a one is not only lying but is conscious of the fact that he is lying. No man who loves God and earnestly seeks to serve him to the full extent of his present knowledge is a false teacher, even if he is mistaken in some of his views.

Background of Restoration

[[Essay](#)]

An overview of the events, experiences, and forces that operated in the life and thought of Thomas Campbell that led him to act as a champion of unity. Recounts the events in the life of the author which led him to enter into the labor of Thomas Campbell. Concludes by expounding upon five factors which contributed to the inception of the restoration movement: (1) it was launched by men dissatisfied with the *status quo*, the result of a restless conscience; (2) it was preceded by reformation; (3) it was kindled by wholehearted commitment to a search for truth and an unreserved dedication to follow wherever it leads; (4) it sought the approval of God while ignoring the reproaches of men; and (5) it was born of a heart filled with God’s love.

Adventures in Religion (1)

[[Essay](#)]

Jesus left us no legal code with all contingencies spelled

out, since in these last days God does not deal with us as children. We must ascertain those principles which governed our Lord and apply them to the best of our ability. A few of those principles include: (1) recognizing that not all of God's commands are of equal weight; (2) the relationship with a brother takes precedence over any formal act of religious service; (3) the ultimate expression of religion is doing good to needy mankind, and (4) the ability to love may be in proportion to a recognition of the need for forgiveness.

Restoration Astray

[Essay]

An examination of the underlying causes contributing to the rise of factionalism within the disciple brotherhood in an effort to determine when it abandoned its original aim. While the Restoration movement was not inaugurated to launch another "church," when it ceased to be a means to an end and became the end, it became merely one more religious organization among many. The current generation has forgotten the goal of the Restoration which was to unite all Christians upon the basis of faith, not upon doctrine— which is impossible. The example of Aylette Raines is given as a reminder of how brethren of differing doctrinal backgrounds were able to unite upon the basis of their common faith. Stone and Campbell united in spite of the fact that Stone was not a Trinitarian. The heirs of this noble movement have substituted their interpretations for the authority of scripture and have made them the criteria of judgment. They have lost the distinction between the gospel and doctrine and have allowed such things as one's understanding of Christ's return to become a condition for fellowship. We must once again make fellowship in Christ of greater significance than orthodoxy.

Adventures in Religion (2)

[Essay]

Jesus taught that (1) man creates the standard by which he will be judged, (2) that reciprocal love is no proof of a righteous life, and (3) that the will of the Father is sovereign. The man who makes no allowances for others will find none made for him. While Jesus said that love sums up the law and the Prophets, he was not referring to reciprocal love, which is grounded in selfishness. True love is selfless. Just as the farmer in Jesus' parable had a right to show his generosity by paying his workers the same amount, although some had worked fewer hours than others, we ought not to bind God by a law which He has given to bind us.

A Brighter Day

[Essay]

There are signs that men are beginning to rise above intolerance to break through walls designed to keep brethren apart. This could become the prelude to a real restoration of the Restoration spirit. But the only way to avoid starting another party is to refuse to succumb to the temptation to love only those who agree and separate from those who do not. The Restoration movement began in the spirit of *epieikeia*, one of the most important terms in the sacred scriptures to the renewed restoration spirit. Translated "magnanimity" in the NEB (Phil. 4:5), *epieikeia* is a quality which the Greek language implies is "better than justice." But as we became more sectarian we became legalistic. We need to rise above the letter of the law, without lowering its requirements, and operate in the realm of the spirit.

The Growth of Division

[Essay]

Findings from research into the development of the spirit of factionalism which led the heirs of the Restoration unity movement to become one of the most divided religious classifications in America. States that previous research into this question differs from the current in that previous researchists (1) sought justification for the party spirit, (2) concluded that we have divided over things or innovations, (3) have been guilty of over-simplification, (4) began with a false premise about the nature of fellowship, (5) treated developments in isolation from their frame of reference, (6) imply that our present divided condition is incurable. Expounds at length on each of the above. Includes a brief account of the introduction of Restoration principles into Missouri, and a summary of factors which militated against advocacy of instrumental music by the restoration pioneers. Part of a series on the rise of factionalism within the disciple brotherhood.

Adventures in Religion (3)

[Essay]

Expounds upon three principles considered very important in the concept of righteousness enunciated by Jesus: (1) the ideal of a completely unified life, an existence wholly integrated and not separated into various departments; (2) while all righteousness wells up from within, it has to flow out— there are no ornamental trees in God's acreage; (3) goodness is never static but ever changing and amending character for the better.

Rejecting and Returning

Part of a series of essays exploring the factors that led to the rise of factionalism within the Restoration movement. Notes the cyclical and helical nature of reformatory movements, then examines the nature of reformation. Alexander Campbell best defined the objectives of the Restoration movement as rejecting (reformation) and returning (restoration). While Campbell at first rejected the use of missionary societies (1823), he became the president of the first disciples missionary society (1849), a change in Campbell's objectives and position which probably doomed the movement to failure and led to the first real cleavage within its ranks. Observes that (1) the society was introduced out of honest motives; (2) Satan exploits our disagreements to engender the party spirit; (3) human organizations are usually self-perpetuating; (4) innovations are justified by succeeding generations upon a basis other than that upon which they were introduced; (5) the character of the founding members of a religious movement often gives way to pride in organizations and institutions; (6) organizations usually enslave rather than serve; (7) those who divided over the missionary society have continued to divide; (8) the creation of the missionary society possibly marked the end of the movement's original purpose. When we create our "own" societies we declare our distinction from others and thus our sectarian nature.

Incendiary Instruments

Chronicle and commentary on the attitude that first produced division within the disciple brotherhood over the introduction of instrumental music into their corporate worship. Since there was complete rejection of the instrument in the earlier years of the restoration movement, the author observes

that its eventual introduction required both a change of attitude toward the instrument and toward the brethren, which he documents at some length with quotes from Pinkerton, Lard, Christopher, McGarvey, Allen, Franklin, and Garrison. Concludes that the social, political, and historical circumstances of the times were significant factors that allowed the instrument to precipitate division. Calls for a re-study of brotherhood and fellowship in the light of advanced knowledge. Our predecessors declared that a state of brotherhood no longer existed between themselves and those with whom they differed, but they misunderstood the implications of fellowship as the Holy Spirit used the term. We must restore the spirit of restoration by recognizing each other as brothers, based on our faith, and then seek ways to work out our differences. Pledges never to make a test of fellowship out of anything the Lord has not made a condition for salvation.

Adventures in Religion (4)

[[Essay](#)]

The greatest adventure of which one can be capable in the flesh is to break through the curtain of the flesh and to become identified with Christ by entering the realm of the spirit, allowing Him to dwell within. To do this we must break through the artificial and the superficial which have prevented us from penetrating but slightly into this magnificent realm. To identify with Jesus is to identify with his purpose— to bring many sons to glory. What we, in our simplicity, call “churches” may hinder, rather than help, through their false standards of loyalty and spurious tests of fellowship.

The Unequal Yoke

[[Essay](#)]

Many have interpreted 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 in such a partisan way as to divide brethren and thus contradict the very purpose of God. The text is applied to sincere brothers in Christ who hold different opinions on a variety of tests of fellowship. If having a mistaken idea makes a man an unbeliever there are no believers on earth. The “unbeliever” in this passage was an idolater, and the “unclean thing” had reference to the lewd practices of pagan temples.

The Sand Creek Address

[Essay]

Part of a series of essays on the rise of the factional spirit within the Restoration movement. Discusses at length the Sand Creek Declaration (the “Address and Declaration” written by Peter P. Warren) of 1889, providing an historical overview of its development and noting the significant influence of Daniel Sommer and David Lipscomb in its acceptance and implementation. Attributes the subsequent disintegration of the movement to the factional method of dealing with doctrinal differences set forth in the document. Notes that the Sand Creek meeting was a delegate convention and its Declaration sounded the death knell for local congregational autonomy. It laid the foundation for brotherhood based upon conformity in matters of interpretation and practice rather than the result of common fatherhood. It proposed formal division as a solution to problems among brethren— something never authorized in scripture. Essentially declares that non-conformists are to be disinherited from the family of God and no longer regarded as His children. Dismisses the use of Matt. 10:34-36 and James 3:17 to justify division as a grave misunderstanding of these passages. Concludes with a pledge to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition for salvation, noting that our peace is a person, not a plan.

Basis of Authority

[Essay]

While members of “The Church of Christ” are sincere in their contention that the word of God is our only source of authority, they cannot distinguish between revelation (what God has said) and interpretation (what men think he meant by what he said). We are bound to recognize revelation as our source of authority, but we are not bound to recognize the interpretation of any man as authoritative. A faithful church is one that is drawn together by love, not driven together through fear.

Brothers at Law

[Essay]

Part of a series of essays on the rise and growth of the factional spirit and its effects on the Restoration movement. Provides a detailed account of the court battles (the Hammond case and the Sand Creek case) that ensued between the so-called “Progressives” and “Antis” in Illinois following the signing of the Sand Creek Declaration. Takes particular note of the Illinois Supreme Court decision in the Sand Creek case in which the court clearly recognized the nature of the disagreement. Concludes that division came about as the result of a decay of love and the rise of the factional spirit which chose division for preserving doctrinal purity, resulting in a brotherhood based upon conformity. To declare that others who have been born into God’s family shall “no longer be regarded as brethren” is both unscriptural and antiscritptural.

Adventures in Religion (5)

[Essay]

The Bible paints a picture of the believer as a man of action impelled by an inner compulsion that allows no time for rest—a soldier engaged in deadly warfare. Yet modern Christianity has little relationship to the kind of life which was characteristic of Jesus and the primitive saints. We need to recapture the sense of personal adventure in the religion of Jesus, who taught men to live dangerously, implying it is better to lose through use than to fail through fear. Life must be lost *for his sake* and not undertaken for our own benefit.

The Two Spirits

[[Essay](#)]

Factionalism is a demonstration of the spirit which motivates us. Our divisions are fruits of the party spirit whereas love and peace are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. People who have the Spirit simply do not divide and sever themselves into parties. In our legalism we have marked out our own little distinctive trail in scripture resulting in a kitchen stepladder approach to salvation in which the Holy Spirit has been confined to a book rather than allowed to live in our hearts. In the absence of the Holy Spirit the flesh enslaves and produces the party spirit. The secret of unity is the temple image where all grow together, bonded in love and held together by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Factional Flames

[[Essay](#)]

Examines the nature and results of that philosophy of brotherhood which has become basic Church-of-Christism in our day. Notes that the Sand Creek Address and Declaration

established “separation” as the official means of opposing error (party alliance). However, separation is condemned in scripture, and determining whom we shall regard as brethren is a divine prerogative which we are instructed not to usurp. It is apparent from history that the arbitrary decision to dissolve brotherhood was made with a view to justifying use of the civil courts in property suits. Divisions over a variety of issues were multiplied not because of interpretations of the word of God but as the result of the philosophy of “preservation by separation” adopted in 1889. Provides a brief analysis of the origin and nature of that philosophy then reviews and analyzes the results of its implementation. Asserts that an unhealthy attitude toward scripture, inconsistency, and the development of insular exclusivism created a multiplicity of factions in which intolerance is counted as a virtue and forbearance is reckoned as a sin. Supports his thesis with numerous quotes from the Sommer-Armstrong debates (1907, 1908) over the existence of Bible colleges. During the first part of the twentieth century factionalism came into full flower with all of its shameful consequences.

Adventures in Religion (6)

[Essay]

There really is no point to much of what passes for Christianity these days. Our lives are too shallow. We have lost the sense of adventure of the spirit. We must resolve to reproduce the life of Jesus on earth to the fullest extent. That life will be characterized by (1) love for others that is not based on reciprocity, (2) an association with others based upon their need for compassion, (3) a renunciation of the worship of things, (4) a willingness to forgive, and (5) freedom from concern about the physical and sensual aspects of life.

This Is Life Eternal

[Essay]

The whole purpose of Christianity is to free man from guilt of the past and fear of the future by enabling him to experience eternal life as a present reality. Jesus took our past upon himself by being made sin, by assuming our guilt so that we might assume his righteousness. The Son of God became the Son of man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God. The grave is not the end but the beginning of a richer experience. A Christian does not leave home at death; he goes home. We are protected because we are in him; we are powerful because he is in us.

Decline of Factionalism

[Essay]

A review of the signs of the times that indicate a decline in factionalism both within and beyond the disciple brotherhood. The undeniable facts are that (1) God will not allow his purpose to fail; (2) the power of the cross is sufficient to unite God's people, for (3) God has already demonstrated his power for unifying Jew and Gentile; (4) Jesus would not pray for an impossible conditions; and, (5) many of us can testify that the factional spirit can be crucified. Crumbling walls of factionalism may be explained by (1) a growing sense of shame over our divided state, (2) a realization of its futility, (3) an increase in the level of education in the art of thinking, (4) a depreciation in the value of things that are credited with division in the past, (5) a sense of urgency about the world situation, (6) a recapturing of the vocabulary of the spirit, and (7) a loss of importance of traditions that have supported our divisions. The signs of hope are evident: (1) a restored vision of unity, (2) dissatisfaction with

the *status quo*, (3) an increase in brotherly love, (4) a maturity that rejects public debates, (5) a favorable climate for unity throughout the religious world, (6) a correct estimate of our problem, and (7) an increase in meetings where men are striving to discover solutions to the problem of disunity.

The Hands of Folly

[[Essay](#)]

Just as folly destroys the house that wisdom builds, every attempt at unity among believers has resulted in the formation of a new party. We may avoid the mistakes of our predecessors by (1) regarding division as a sin against our brethren and against Christ, (2) becoming more conscious of the rule of the Holy Spirit in our lives, (3) refusing to recognize denominational lines of division, (4) remaining open to those who have shut us out, (5) avoiding the “loyal church” fallacy and remaining where we are, among those who need us most, and (6) grasping the true significance of brotherly love.

Adventures in Religion (7)

[[Essay](#)]

True life, which is timeless, lies in possession of the kingdom of God. And while the spirit is temporarily imprisoned in the flesh— which cannot possess the kingdom of God— it may rise above the flesh and repose in God. Just as there may be movements of ecstasy in a physical relationship, those who have become one with Christ spiritually may also have exceptional moments of encounter with the Spirit which constitute a foretaste of the delight which awaits us after death. To one who enters into intimate fellowship with God in a transcendent

spiritual experience it is like living a thousand years in a single day. The secret of the mountain-top experience of communion with the divine presence is the utter loss or surrender of self and complete identification with God in the service of others.

Explaining My Position

[Essay]

A rehearsal of the author's position on what constitutes spiritual fellowship, specifically as it relates to endorsement of interpretation. Notes that fellowship is a state or condition into which we are called by the gospel and which comes about as the result of our response to that call. Notes that the gospel consists not of abstract propositions but of *facts* calculated to prove that Jesus was the Messiah of God. Belief in that fact and obedience to one act (immersion) puts one into the fellowship with God, although he may know little of scripture and be wrong about much of what he knows. It is both unscriptural and impossible to condition fellowship upon the attainment to a certain degree of knowledge, since no two people on earth are identical in the degree of knowledge possessed. Freedom from error is not a condition for reaching heaven. We have no right to make anything a condition for fellowship which God has not made a condition for salvation. Revelation consists of what God said in scripture; interpretation consists of what men think he meant by what he said. Each individual has the right to approach scripture for himself. No man can authoritatively interpret the word of God for another person. Our problem is that we have completely missed the basis of our fellowship.

The Common Life

[Essay]

The term “fellowship,” as used by the Holy Spirit, always involves the idea of sharing and is used to designate our participation in the divine nature and in the society of the redeemed. We are made to share in this common life by coming into the family of God through birth. Anyone who predicates fellowship upon unanimity of understanding lays the foundation for the dissolution of all fellowship. The Holy Spirit is not bestowed on a factional basis. We have been deluded into equating fellowship with our petty arguments over cups, classes, colleges, etc. The fact is, we are all brothers in error, and those who say they are not make the biggest error of all. Fellowship is infinitely more than sharing in activities, such as the Lord’s Supper, Bible study, and a song service. It is sharing in the divine nature, joint participation in the Holy Spirit, the gift of God to all his children. It is not something we can extend or withdraw.

How Far Is Too Far

[Essay]

While often accused of having gone “too far” in his acceptance of those who differ with him over matters of interpretation, the author raises the question, “how far is too far.” Observes that in each instance those who make the statement are willing to go along with much of his teaching on “fellowship” provided they can retain the party of their allegiance intact and undisturbed. Yet the one who goes beyond the party limits goes too far. Asserts that his detractors simply cannot conceive of how any man can love those who differ with him, so they consider that his love is not genuine. But no man can go too far in recognition of his brothers when he goes only as far as God goes. God recognizes all of his children as children. We cannot go too far when we regard all of them as brethren. No one can go far enough until he removes all artificial barriers

erected to exclude brethren from brotherhood.

Adventures in Religion (8)

[Essay]

The spiritual sterility which passes for religion in these days has resulted in the development of two sets of religious attitudes— one for public services and the other for all other times. To recapture the significance of the transforming power of the Spirit in our lives we must be willing to run the risk of faith. But the quality of our faith does not depend on the magnitude of the problem being faced. There is a raw recklessness about genuine faith which makes it border upon madness to the casual and indifferent.

Getting Untangled

[Essay]

We are a people splintered by a slogan. We advocate unity “in matters of faith” and liberty “in matters of opinion” (and in all things charity). But since the scriptures do not tell us which matters are of faith and which are opinion, we are divided over our *opinion* as to which matters fall into which category. In the final analysis we differ in our deductions as to the meaning of certain passages of scripture. Proposes that we solve the problem by (1) accepting each other as brethren, (2) regarding each other as honest, and (3) continuing to talk to each other as we work toward resolving our differences. This does not require compromise of conviction nor geographical relocation but a recognition of brotherhood as greater than our views on any of the things that divide us. None of us is free from error, and we must not equate wrong notions with rebellion against God.

Christ and the Church

[Essay]

The very common incorrect evaluation of the church causes men to trust in the wrong source for salvation. Denies that saving power is invested in the church. The shepherd is greater than the flock, the creator is superior to the created. When we honor the church to the same degree as we do Jesus, we are in error. We are not saved through the church nor by the church. We *are* the church and we are saved by Jesus, its head. Our task is to preach Christ and him crucified. Since God is not bound by his own authority he is free to deal however he wishes with those who are uninformed or helpless, although we are not free to offer them hope other than what is revealed in scripture.

Adventures in Religion (9)

[Essay]

Observes that while God wishes to deal with us as sons, we demonstrate a preference for the slavery of legalism. Consequently, we have converted the grace of God into a law and imposed our interpretations upon others as the divine intent. The ordinances of God, designed to convey a blessing, have become battlegrounds of partisan hatred. Suggests it is time for a thorough examination of “the pattern concept” of orthodoxy.

The Basis of Faith

[Essay]

Proposes to show why the nature of man required just such a revelation as God has vouchsafed to him. God has subscribed to the criteria adapted to and accepted by man as essential to the integrity of testimony. Thus any requirement by God based upon belief of testimony will conform to the recognized laws of evidence. The Christian religion, being uniquely historical, rests upon the scope of knowledge of its witnesses and the integrity of their character. The four gospels were not designed as biographies but as a record of those things what convinced them that Jesus was the Son of God. Examines the methods of Luke in establishing evidence for the virgin birth and raises the question as to what manner of confirmation would be required to convince those who question the divinity of Jesus. Jesus recognized the nature of the evidence required to prove his claims and was willing to meet the logical requirement for confirmation of those claims. The core of Christianity is the gospel message, not doctrinal propositions.

[The Ignorance of Wisdom](#)

[\[Essay\]](#)

Expounds upon the meaning of Matt. 11:25, 26 in the context of modern skepticism. Notes that while the message of God is complete, the discovery of what it contains is not. But some cannot understand the revelation of God because of the blindness caused by their wisdom— the wisdom of this world. Babes, unable to explain what they do not understand, must exhibit trust in him who leads the way. Our faith must rest either in the demonstrations of God or in the explanations of men! Critically examines the explanations offered for Jesus' feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. There is a constant conspiracy of "the wisdom of the world" to rid the world of a belief in the foreknowledge of God. This is reflected in the implications of the so-called "higher criticism" of the old

covenant scriptures for which a critical review is provided and to which objections are enumerated. The false premise of the “wisdom of the world,” upon which much research rests, is the result of a philosophy of naturalism which denies supernaturalism and thus closes the door to the only light that can illuminate in the realm of revelation—the light of the Spirit.

The Basis of Authority

[Essay]

While almost every Protestant sect claims that the scriptures are their one and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, “The Church of Christ” labors under the impression that they are the only ones who are truly honest in their claims. Upon close examination this proves not to be the case. Rather their failure to distinguish between revelation and interpretation and between gospel and doctrine has allowed partisan traditionalism to replace the authority of scripture. The Church of Christ in the United States is a conglomeration of factions, many of which are ruled by editors of party periodicals. The basis of authority for each faction is not the revealed scriptures but the official interpretation sanctioned by the editors. A little reflection will show that this differs from the papal system only in degree.

Problems in Attitude

[Essay]

We could hardly be more divided if Jesus had prayed for disunity and God had commanded it. Two ideas which support the will to divide should be re-examined: (1) the philosophy that purity of doctrine must be maintained by separation from

brethren, and (2) the philosophy that brotherhood is secondary to personal conviction and in any conflict between the two, the latter must always be defended at the expense of the former. Notes that no apostle ever encouraged the members of any congregation to leave it in order to plant “a faithful church.” The “loyal church fallacy” is one of our greatest errors. Observes that unity does not require geographical proximity—we are all in the same *person* whether or not we are all in the same *place*. To predicate fellowship upon doctrinal attainment is to destroy all hope of oneness. Jesus did not condition fellowship with himself upon attainment to the same degree of spiritual knowledge which he possessed. And we must receive one another just as he has received us (Rom. 15:7).

Sectarianism

[Essay]

Sectarianism originated with a serious misconception of *the nature of the ekklesia*. The body of Christ is composed of individuals, not divergent sects. Consequently, no coalition of sects can ever become the one body. All sects are useless to the accomplishment of God’s purpose. It is not their multiplication but their abolition which will best encourage the progress of the Way. Sects are produced by rivalry and are wrong in origin. They drive the sheep apart and hold them aloof from each other. Sectarianism is a work of the flesh and is engaged in war with the Holy Spirit. Our task is to bring each person who is dominated by the party spirit to that place where he can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We shall not be able to overthrow the party spirit by legalism. It is not by law but by love that God proposes to offset the works of the flesh.

The Real Jews

To fully understand the true nature of the church of God we must grasp the significance of the affirmation that the church of God is both catholic and protestant and composed entirely of Jews. It is catholic because there is only one body— one church — and every person on earth in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is a member of that body. It is protestant in that it is a witnessing community consisting entirely of laity, all of whom are God's priests, called to offer spiritual sacrifices and to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them. It is composed only of those who are Jews inwardly— the real Jew— who have the faith of Abraham and who have experienced spiritual circumcision in the act of immersion in water.

Adventures in Religion(10)

Eternal life is defined as knowing the Father and the Son. To know God and Christ in the sense of having eternal life is more than knowing about them. To know Christ is to be joined unto him. Legalism, on the other hand, is the stone given to him who asks for bread. Legalism stems from a misunderstanding of the relationship of the written word to the Living Word. The new covenant is not written with ink. To take the word of grace and convert it into a law to bind upon men as a written code of acceptance with God is to doom them to certain death. Law cannot produce life. Men had the new covenant written on their heart years before the apostles wrote the first word of the new covenant scriptures. The scriptures point not to a book but to Jesus, who gives life. God did not “throw the Book at us” but He gave his Son for us. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus. Jesus did not come so much to take us to heaven as to bring heaven to us. The great adventure is the mastery of self through

allowing Jesus to enter the open portals of your very being. He did not come to bring a new religion to the world but that we might have life.

War in Heaven

[Essay]

In the final day there will be but two classes of people: those who have said to God “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, “Thy will be done.” Heaven will be full of the first and hell will be full of the second. Hell is the final abode of the untamed will. Many attempt to storm the portals of heaven by asserting their own worth or importance. But the religion of our Lord is one of a broken heart, of free men who are all slaves — at liberty to serve after the fashion of Jesus himself whose love motivated him to divest himself of all his prerogatives and privilege to become a “slave by nature.” One of our greatest temptations is to believe that we do the will of God when we live to please ourselves.

The Times of the Stork

[Essay]

Examines the trichotomous nature of man as body, soul, and spirit. Notes that while man shares in common with other animals both a body and a soul (the animating principle of the body), it is the spirit of man which exalts him above the rest of creation. Asserts that man who denies God is actually worse off than the lower animals. While the later— who possess no rational faculty, and thus no moral consciousness— cannot refuse the call of the creator through instinct, man is able to resist the call of God precisely because he is rational. The spirit

is the responsive mechanism by which intelligent creatures answer the call of God and his demands upon their lives. Thus the appeal of God to mankind is a rational and not an emotional one. The primary purpose of the human spirit is to respond to the light of truth through the eye of the intellect. The human spirit can be happy only when it has (1) freedom from the past guilt, (2) a purpose for the present which transcends self, and (3) hope for the future that transcends death. These are satisfied through faith (past), hope (future), and love (present)— the means by which one identifies with the needs of others and is thus enabled to live on a universal plane. Such love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.

War Bulletins

[[Essay](#)]

In no other area is there such flagrant disregard for what we affirm as there is in the doctrine of “local autonomy.” This may be observed most readily in the use of church bulletins in which the local ministry seeks to discipline and direct the affairs of other congregations, as if they prove their fidelity to God by dissemination of propaganda calculated to destroy the harmony of congregations whose members will not parrot the party line. This type of clerical authority differs only in degree with that of Rome. When something does not please the pope he issues a bull; when something doesn’t please our brethren, they issue a bulletin!

Ernest Beam and Unity

[[Essay](#)]

Reproduces “Seventeen Propositions to Promote Unity,”

by Ernest Beam, as they appeared in the *Christian Standard* of 1949. Beam, who began a paper called *The Christian Forum*, in 1950, held the same ideal and goal as the author, in spite of basic differences in the proposed methods to be employed in helping brethren throw off the shackles of the party spirit.

On Being Naive

[Essay]

Pleads guilty as charged to the opinion of certain college administrators that his approach to Christian unity is naive, as the word implies being free from guile, simple, sincere and ingenuous. Admits to having a sort of “down-home” directness in his plea that we recognize all of our brothers as *brethren* and treat them that way, thus applying the “golden rule” to brotherhood. Suspects that this appeal is so homespun and natural that a great many will overlook its potential. Given the fact that we all are in the same family and all have the same Father, it would seem like old-fashion commonsense to recognize each other as *brothers*.

Fear and Suspicion

[Essay]

In response to an assertion that the Christian Church is plotting to use the author’s influence to woo the Churches of Christ into the Christian Church fold, points out that it is very basic to his approach that each one remain where he is and share his newly discovered truth with those whom he knows best. States that he has no desire to unite “The Church of Christ” and “The Christian Church” and doubts that it could be done or that anything would be accomplished by doing so other

than to produce another sect. While often asked if those in the Christian Church are “brothers in error,” points out that the only brethren he has on this earth are “brethren in error.” Some are in one error, some in another, but all are in some error. Observes that he is not in complete agreement with any of the brethren and that if they receive him it must be upon the same basis that God receives each of us— in spite of our differences. Our years of factional teaching must give way to mutual tolerance— not the endorsing of things that are wrong but the enduring of those who think they are right.

What Is Heresy?

[[Essay](#)]

Since we are preconditioned by the scriptures to reject heretics, there can be no meaningful dialog between brethren who differ on doctrinal issues so long as we continue to mistake heresy with any belief at variance with the dogmatic norm. The word “heresy,” in scripture, is a sect or party formed for the purpose of separating some of God’s children from the rest. A “heretic” is one who is sectarian in attitude. Such are to be rejected. The current view of “heresy” held by the majority of members of “The Church of Christ” is without scriptural warrant and inimical to the peace and harmony of the body of Christ. It has resulted in every member of “The Church of Christ” being considered a heretic in the eyes of some other members of “The Church of Christ.” Provides ten points of reason essential to thinking ourselves out of our current status.

My Defense

[[Essay](#)]

Reports on an article published in the *Gospel Advocate* by J. D. Thomas entitled “Brother Ketcherside’s New Fallacy.” Provides copies of letters written to the editor, B. C. Goodpasture, requesting an opportunity to reply, and to J. D. Thomas, proposing a public forum in Abilene, Texas, in which to discuss the issues raised in the article.

Wishful Thinking

[Essay]

A plea for unity of believers is no more “wishful thinking,” as one correspondent opines, than a prayer for unity of believers by our Lord. While *actual* unity is a gift of the Spirit, *practical* unity must be maintained by the exertion of effort to make peace among brethren. We are not told to *achieve* unity but to *maintain* it.

Reply to Brother Thomas

[Essay]

Reply to an article by J. D. Thomas, published in the *Gospel Advocate*, entitled “Brother Ketcherside’s New Fallacy.” Notes that the term “full fellowship,” which Thomas uses some six times, does not occur in scripture and reflects a misconception of the term. Fellowship is a relationship in which we share as the result of a common Fatherhood. There is no partial state of fellowship. There are no half brothers or stepbrothers in the Lord, only blood brothers of the Lamb. Thomas refers to those who use instrumental music as “brethren.” If they are brethren, then they are in the fellowship and there is nothing we can do about it. Opines that the new covenant scriptures are not clear-cut in the matter of

instrumental music nor about most things which we make “tests of fellowship.” Denies that he wishes to “reduce all faith to being simply opinion,” but affirms that it is a matter of opinion as to which matters are of faith and which are of opinion. We cannot force others to categorize all things as we do. Argues not that “*full fellowship does not mean endorsement*” but that “*fellowship does not mean full endorsement.*” Notes that in spite of the numerous errors within the congregation of saints at Corinth, Paul considered himself to be in the fellowship with them, yet he never endorsed any of their misconceptions or misconduct.

Confusion of Tongues

[Essay]

It will be exceedingly difficult to restore a true sense of fellowship until brethren know what it is that needs to be restored. They confuse fellowship with a great many things to which it is not related. We must not only speak *where* the Bible speaks but we must speak *as* the bible speaks. The Holy Spirit does not equate fellowship in Christ with absolute conformity in interpretation. To do so would render fellowship impossible among finite and fallible individuals. Much of what is called fellowship in these days is not fellowship at all. Those who bitterly oppose the idea that all sincere immersed believers are in the fellowship will invite the whole audience to share in a “period of fellowship” right after the service. Does this mean they “fellowship” the unimmersed who remain and share in the doughnuts and coffee? Fellowship is a state of the heart, not of the stomach. To equate fellowship with coffeemakers and chocolate cupcakes is to profane the word and postpone the recovery of the spirit of the early saints.

The Making of History

[Essay]

In response to articles in the *Firm Foundation* directed against him, the author writes to its editor, Reuel Lemmons, requesting permission to state his views and to reply to the things being said against him which, according to the author, were a misrepresentation of his views. Provides copies of the exchange of letters between himself and the editor who ultimately declined to grant the permission he had earlier promised and returned the four articles which had been submitted.

The Scattered Flock

[Essay]

An essay rejected for publication by the *Firm Foundation*. Responding to the charge that he was fathering a new sect, affirms that he is dedicated to the destruction of all sects by grubbing out the root from which they grow— the party spirit. Notes that no sect is the church of God and the church of God is no sect. While acknowledging his heritage in the Restoration movement begun by Alexander Campbell, denies having any illusions about being “another Campbell” as accused in the pages of the *Firm Foundation*. Asserts that our present divided state is the result of a mistaken concept of fellowship. Affirms brotherhood with every sincere immersed believer. Denies pleading for “fellowship of error” and notes that fellowship is of the Spirit and is a relationship between persons, none of whom are free from error. To deny fraternity because of error is an insult to our mutual paternity.

Walking Together

One of four articles rejected for publication by the *Firm Foundation*. Responds to the accusation that his interpretation of Amos 3:3 is at variance with many of the best scholars. Notes that after extensive research he failed to find a single scholar of reputation who sanctions the interpretation current among our preaching brethren. Common experience teaches us that we can walk with those with whom we disagree. There is no congregation on earth in which all members agree on everything. Agreement is only required in those areas of interpretation that relate to the party test. Amos is referring to matters of cause and effect. Two people walking together in a desolate region is a clear indication that they have made an appointment to do so. Affirms that he will make nothing a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition for fellowship. States that “If they are good enough to walk with Him, they are not too bad for me to walk with them.”

The Concerned Ones

One of four articles rejected for publication by the *Firm Foundation*. Responds to the accusation that he is a hobbyist who is not in fellowship with all his brethren and that he advocates “compromise, amalgamation, and finally a loose federation with Christians of all denominations.” Discloses that he borrowed the expression “fellowship of the concerned ones” from Dr. Elton Trueblood. Denies that such are unconcerned about the “unconcerned.” Asserts that, contrary to the accusation, he advocates the destruction of all sectarian and denominational tendencies, and pleads for a *recognition* that there are Christians in the sects. Rather than expending our energies fighting believers with whom we should be united, we should sit down

and discuss our problems as *brethren*.

Receive Him Not Into Your House

[[Essay](#)]

An article rejected for publication in the *Firm Foundation*. Responds to criticism of his view of 2 John 9. Demonstrates, from a comparison of the first two epistles of John, that the “doctrine of Christ” of 2 John 9 is the doctrine rejected by the Gnostic antichrist— that Jesus has come in the flesh. Our mistaken brethren are not antichrists and the “doctrine of Christ” does not have reference to instrumental music, orphan homes, cups, classes, or the millennium.

Doctrine and Doctrines

[[Essay](#)]

The word “doctrines” occurs only five times in scripture but is never used with reference to divine revelation. There was a plurality of apostles but there was only one doctrine! In order to grasp the meaning of the thoughts of God conveyed through the Holy Spirit, the divine agent of revelation, we must discover and employ the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit has used no language suitable to convey an idea, it is evident that the idea itself was not revealed by God. We demonstrate our fidelity to God by respect for the doctrine of God.

The Unequal Yoke

[[Essay](#)]

An exegesis of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 in response to correspondents who cite the passage to justify their separation from those who differ with them about such things as cups, classes, or colleges. Demonstrates from the context that the injunction to “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” cannot have reference to brothers in the Lord separating from each other, and “touch not the unclean thing” cannot have reference to those points of doctrinal controversy over which brethren divide. Points out that the topic of Paul’s discussion has to do with the relationship of saints to paganism. Suggests that the “unclean thing” most likely refers to sacrifices made by the pagans to demons and the licentious practices in connection therewith.

Repairing Lines

[[Essay](#)]

A call for the repair of lines of communication between brethren. A reaffirmation of the author’s purpose and mission, and a pledge to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation. Promises to treat as brothers all whom God accepts as sons. Proposes to go wherever the Spirit opens up a door for sharing his thinking with others. Declares himself to be a slave of no man, but a servant to all men.

The Spirit and Unity

[[Essay](#)]

Starting with the premise that the Holy Spirit is a personality— not a mere influence or disposition— examines the responsibility of the Spirit in the divine imperative of unity and

the furtherance of the fellowship of the saints. Looks at the actions and the exercise of power by the Holy Spirit in the production, promotion, and protection of this fellowship. Observes that the Holy Spirit creates the fellowship by convicting the world in pointing out the true nature of sin and righteousness and the certainty of judgment based upon accountability. The Holy Spirit promotes fellowship by revealing unto us the true nature and status of Jesus and by transforming our lives, from one degree of glory to another on an ascending plane, to make us more like Him. The Holy Spirit providentially directs the affairs of the kingdom of heaven on earth during the absence of the King— perfecting and preserving the fellowship in spite of attempts by Satan to destroy it. Since truth is imperishable, the Spirit operates in and through revealed truth to effect the divine aim. He brings this about through the “leaven concept,” enabling the concerned ones to translate the word into living flesh among those with whom we dwell— affecting the hearts of all who love the Lord with a sense of fellowship, until all the one body may function together in harmony and unison.

The Church Speaks of Discovering and Unleashing Hidden Powers

[Essay]

A speech prepared for the North American Christian Convention. Notes that whatever God wants done in any generation he supplies the ability to do. Expounds upon three areas of neglected power: (1) the priesthood of all believers, (2) the sanctification of all believers, and (3) the unity of all believers.

Terms of Communion

[Essay]

Creedalism, which results from pride and fear, creates another system of justification, which amounts to setting up our own righteousness. It substitutes the interpretation of the party for the revelation of God. No man has the right to bind *his knowledge* of any point of apostolic doctrine upon any other person who does not so understand it. While we may help each other in the acquisition of knowledge of apostolic doctrine, no one can establish his own doctrinal knowledge as the measure of another's acceptability with God. Alexander Campbell noted in his Declaration and Address that "deductions from scripture are not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians further than they . . . evidently see that they are so . . . Therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion." That is to say, no other person can formally bind them upon him as a condition of fellowship, because no one else can read his heart and determine the degree of his responsibility. David Lipscomb wrote: "So long as a man really desires to do right, we cannot withdraw from him."

A Realistic Attitude

[Essay]

Suggests that a realistic attitude toward solving the problem of disunity is to recognize that the true cause of division does not lie in the things over which we divided but in the false philosophy that the way to preserve doctrinal purity is to separate from brethren. Things produce strains upon our relationship, but we separate when we quit loving each other. The answer to our problem is first to recapture a real sense of brotherhood. Unless we deny the unscriptural philosophy of brotherhood based upon conformity to a partisan interpretation of scripture rather than upon unity in Christ, we will continue to contribute more to the problem of disunity than to the answer of unity.

Facing a Dilemma

[Essay]

While the Christian world is now seeking to overcome the scandal of schism, the heirs of a project to unify the Christians in all of the sects are now in an embarrassing position: while those we set about to unite have started uniting, our brethren are still divided. Introduces an article in the same issue, “Some Thoughts on Unity,” by Reuel Lemmons.

Reply to Brother Lemmons

[Essay]

A response to an article by Reuel Lemmons published in *Firm Foundation* entitled “Some Thoughts on Unity.” Notes that while Lemmons maintains that “unity in spite of differences is not unity,” the only unity possible is a unity that recognizes diversity, else who would be the regulator of what free men think if not the pope? What Brother Lemmons means to say is that fellowship can only exist if we all walk in the light of his party interpretation. Our sinful schisms arise from mistaken views about fellowship. Fellowship is the mutual sharing in the life of the indwelling Spirit by every child of God. The apostolic commands to “be of one mind” and to “be of one accord” were written to people already in the fellowship— not for the purpose of creating fellowship, as Brother Lemmons would have it. What he is pleading for is not unity but for the sanctification and maintenance of our divisions until every person sees everything as does his party. He advocates that others abandon their private interpretations, but a man cannot abandon what he believes the scriptures to teach. Are we to allow Brother Lemmons to become the sole arbiter as to whose interpretations are in error? Who is to decide who must abandon what? Paul

says, “Your personal convictions are a matter of faith between yourself and God.”

Reviving Hope

[[Essay](#)]

Among the heirs of the restoration movement there are signs that our brethren are weary of strife and contention. We have reared a new generation that will not be content with the misuse of scripture to sustain factional aims. Their minds are sharp enough to discern between revelation and interpretation, between the will of God and party tradition. They no longer equate the faction in which they were reared as the kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of all others. They are tired of irresponsible journalism, censorship, and boycott. We are poised for a genuine breakthrough of the Spirit and for the penetration of the hard crust of exclusivism. The factional approach to Christianity is outmoded and outdated and can never accomplish the purpose of heaven.

Saying Nice Things

[[Essay](#)]

In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul refers to “all the nice things” he had said about them, in spite of the division, immorality, and beliefs by which they had been characterized a few months prior in his first epistle. While modern day heirs of the restoration movement would have urged the brethren in Corinth to divide in order to maintain purity of doctrine, Paul taught them to love one another in spite of their immaturity of mistaken views. He was able to do so because he differentiated between gospel and doctrine, endorsement and fellowship,

knowledge and love, and between the faith that justifies and growth toward maturity of one within that faith.

Reply to Brother Lemmons

[Essay]

Replies to an article by Reuel Lemmons in *Firm Foundation* entitled “Why We Did Not Run Ketcherside’s Articles.” Denies the accusations (1) that he courts the “Digressives” (a term he deplores), (2) that he insults non-instrumental brethren, and (3) that he has ever used the expression “The Disciples Brotherhood” in reference to heirs of the restoration movement. Notes that Brother Lemmons is still enraptured with the myth that only those who subscribe to the interpretations on controversial issues set forth by the *Firm Foundation* constitute the one body. Maintains that God’s people are scattered through all our factions. Denies that differences create sects. Observes that the writers of *Firm Foundation* do not create a sect every time they differ with each other. So long as we love each other as we should, we will not divide into factions.

Reply to the Foregoing

[Essay]

Replies to an editorial by Reuel Lemmons in *Firm Foundation* entitled “The Teaching of Carl Ketcherside Again.” Responds to specific questions raised in the article relative to the “sincere sprinkled,” the function of baptism, the point at which spiritual life begins, and the identity of those who constitute the visible church. With regard to the church at Pergamos (Rev. 2), notes that not one intimation is given that “the faithful” in Pergamos should come out and start a “loyal congregation,”

demonstrating that it is possible to hold fast the name of Christ (v. 13) and not deny the faith even in a congregation where some hold doctrines which Jesus hates and practice things which he deplores. Concludes with seven questions for Brother Lemmons regarding unity and fellowship.

The Optimistic View

[Essay]

There are good reasons for being optimistic about the prospect for a better relationship among the heirs of the restoration movement: (1) The hypocrisy of professing unity while practicing division is becoming recognized; (2) Our brethren are becoming better educated and resent the pat answers that do not furnish adequate solutions to questions being raised; (3) A realistic re-appraisal of our standing before God and the world of mankind is underway. Concludes that our whole problem comes from equating the church for which Christ died with the faction in which we have always lived. We need to cultivate a proper idea of fellowship and we need an example for our day of someone who is just a Christian and a Christian only.

The Manifested Life

[Essay]

An exegesis of 1 John 1:7 in which it is noted that the quality called “light,” which is identified with God in the absolute, is equated by John with love. To love one another is to be in the light. John is saying that if we walk in the light of love for our brothers, as God exists in perfect love for us all, we will not lie when we say that God and ourselves are in fellowship,

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son will continue cleansing us from all sin.

Answer to Objections (No. 1)

[Essay]

First installment of a reply to an article in *Firm Foundation* by Reuel Lemmons entitled “Objections Brother Ketcherside Does Not Answer.” The accusations are that the author (1) teaches that the grace of God is wider than the authority of Christ, and that many may be saved by the grace of God who have never submitted to the authority of Christ; (2) makes a distinction between gospel and doctrine which is foreign to the Bible; (3) teaches that after one has been made a child of God he may make all sorts of errors concerning doctrine, but none of these, regardless of how grievous, except for denying the Deity of Jesus Christ, can be a basis for withdrawal of fellowship. In response to each of these accusations the author claims to share a position in common with the restoration pioneers.

Reply to Foregoing

[Essay]

A review of an editorial in the *Firm Foundation* by Reuel Lemmons entitled “Hidden Poison and Body of Error” in which Lemmons revisits the objections he expressed in a previous editorial. The author responds by affirming (1) that he does not believe that our obligation to take the good news to all whom we can reach obligates God to damn all whom we do not reach; (2) that the gospel is to be preached to the whole *world* to make believers, whereas the apostolic doctrine was addressed to saints and faithful *brethren*; (3) that one comes into the fellowship by

accepting the Sonship and Lordship of Jesus and he leaves it by denial of that which he affirms to enter it. Notes that while God threatens to remove His candlestick from Ephesus, he nowhere commanded the brethren to remove themselves from the candlestick. Observes that despite all of the mistaken ideas and impure lives in the congregations mentioned in the new covenant scriptures, not one was ever commanded to divide, and no one was ever commanded to split the candlestick in any community.

Answer to Objections (No. 2)

[Essay]

Part two of a reply to an editorial in *Firm Foundation* by Reuel Lemmons entitled “Objections Brother Ketcherside Does Not Answer.” Responds to the accusations that (1) he teaches that every sincere believer in the Messiahship of Jesus is a child of God, whether he is ever baptized or not, and is now his brother or sister in prospect; (2) he teaches that there must be diversity of belief among God’s people in order for them to have unity; (3) he refuses to deal with the verb form of fellowship; (4) his idea that error in doctrine, except for that of the anti-Christ, should never cause us to break fellowship puts him in opposition to Gal. 1:6-9 and Eph. 5:3-12; (5) he teaches that sectarianism is a sin, but then urges complete fellowship of sectarians.

Reply to the Foregoing

[Essay]

A review and reply to part two of “Hidden Poison and Body of Error” by Reuel Lemmons, an editorial in *Firm Foundation* in which Lemmons revisits the objections (and Ketcherside’s replies) expressed in a previous editorial. In his

response the author affirms (1) that one is begotten of God when the Spirit quickens him through the gospel upon his belief that Jesus is the Son of God; it is by immersion that one is born into the family relationship; (2) that fellowship in Christ is not conditioned upon uniformity of opinion but upon oneness in Him; (3) that the passages cited do not obviate the author's position that fellowship is a relation between persons, but acknowledges the propriety of Lemmons' pointing out his use of the word "fellowship" as a verb in a previous issue of *Mission Messenger*, for which the author expresses regret. He denies that the unimmersed have entered into the fellowship, and he denies that he urges "complete fellowship of sectarians." Rather, he affirms that he is in fellowship with Christians who are in the sects.

Answer to Objections (No. 3)

[Essay]

Continuation of a response to objections raised by Reuel Lemmons in his *Firm Foundation* editorial, "Objections Brother Ketcherside Does Not Answer." Affirms that (1) the sons of God are all in the church of Christ, but the church of Christ is not confined to the restoration movement; (2) every sincere immersed believer is God's child and is in the fellowship of God's Son, some of whom may be in all the sects, all of whom are our brothers; (3) Since all of God's sons are brothers and constitute the brotherhood, and since only one Spirit dwells in all of them, producing *unity* of the Spirit and *fellowship*, these are the same in the sight of God; (4) although God is the author of fellowship, we can so act as to have God disinherit us, and those whom he rejects from his family we must also reject if we remain in the family status.

Reply to the Foregoing

A reply to part three of an editorial by R. Lemmons in *Firm Foundation* entitled “Hidden Poison and Body of Error.” The author (1) affirms the body of Christ is neither a sect nor a party, but composed of every sincere immersed believer who is joined to Jesus as head. It is not limited only to those who oppose instrumental music and certain societies; (2) Denies that there is any person in the fellowship who has not been immersed; specifically denies having contended that the sincere sprinkled or the pious unimmersed are in the fellowship; (3) affirms that the gospel is good news proclaimed by one person, while baptism is the act by which another person responds to it; (4) Does not deny the existence of “practical” demonstrations of disunity but affirms the “actual” unity conferred by the Holy Spirit upon every person in whom he dwells; (5) observes that Brother Lemmons mistakes his fallible interpretation of God’s word as divine revelation, and notes that while 2 Peter 2 does speak of “accursed children,” such are those having “eyes full of adultery”— not those brothers who sincerely differ in their views about instrumental music, cups, orphan homes, etc.

Reply to Brother Lemmons

Response to an editorial by Reuel Lemmons in *Firm Foundation* entitled “Further Considerations of Ketcherside Unity Movement.” Notes that (1) in contrast to the Ecumenical Movement, his plea is for a destruction of all factions, not their preservation; (2) differences do not destroy fellowship; (3) while it is wrong to disregard any error, it is right to have regard for our brothers in spite of their errors; (4) while one should not accept error anywhere, all of us are in error in some of our concepts; to accept one as a brother in spite of his erroneous

views is to do nothing more than God does for each one of us; (5) not all truths are equally important; God has conditioned life upon belief of certain facts, but he has not conditioned that life upon knowledge of all truths at a given time.

Reply to the Foregoing

[Essay]

Response to an article by Reuel Lemmons in *Firm Foundation* entitled “Love Will Not Whitewash Error.” Notes that the true restoration plea calls for all lovers of truth in all the factions to remain where they are, acting as leaven and gradually destroying sectarianism from within. If we love truth, we will love all of our brethren as that truth enjoins us to do, even those who differ with our concept about the things which have troubled the family. The restoration movement is long overdue a definition and an analysis of “matters of faith” and “matters of opinion.” Everyone agrees that in matters of faith we should have unity and in matters of opinion we should have liberty. But no two agree on what constitutes matters of faith and matters of opinion, so we know neither where to unite nor where to allow liberty. What Paul opposed was not circumcision but binding it upon the Gentiles *as a basis of justification* instead of personal faith in Jesus. Brother Lemmons is with those who say to the brethren, “Except you agree with us about the instrument *you cannot be saved.*”

The Relation of Baptism to Fellowship

[Essay]

The “fellowship” is that state or condition in which we have a joint participation with God and Christ and other saints

through the Spirit. It includes every person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. “Baptism” is immersion in water of a believing penitent. It is the enabling act by which a proper subject is transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Gives four reasons for regarding baptism as essential unto entrance into the fellowship. Regards baptism as a test of fellowship because God has made it a condition of salvation. The question is not what a modern dictionary assigns as a meaning of baptism, but what significance was attached to it by the Holy Spirit. When I speak of baptism I must mean the same thing Jesus meant when he spoke of it. Baptism is a positive ordinance (not a moral precept) whereby man reenacts in his own life those acts which Jesus performed for all mankind (death, burial, and resurrection). It is not an act we perform but one performed on us. Lists five objections to the idea that what is important is inward cleansing and that the outward symbol is of no real consequence except as an overt witness to it. It is not simply unity that we seek but unity *in Him*. Whatever brings us into Him brings us into the unity for which He prayed.

Our History and Our Division

[[Essay](#)]

Suggests five guidelines for facing up to our currently divided state: (1) Division is a sin for which we must answer in the judgment; (2) Our schisms are a sign of immaturity and carnality; (3) Our factionalism is a scandal in the mission areas of the world; (4) The spirit of exclusivism is a symptom of ingrown sectarianism and a smoke in God’s nostrils; (5) The branding of brethren with our own labels is uncharitable, unwarranted, and unholy. We have forsaken the ideal of the restoration movement. We would do well to re-examine its foundations as set forth in Alexander Campbell’s fifteen point thesis entitled “Synopsis of Reformation” (enumerated in this

article). The first is of particular importance: “The restoration of pure speech or the calling of Bible things by Bible names.” When the language of truth is smothered beneath layers of ecclesiastical linguistics it ceases to be a revelation and reverts to a secret unattainable to the man on the street. Modern gnostics jam the voice of heaven and scramble the message of grace until men weary of trying to unravel it. It is through our grasp of the words of God that we are able to lay hold upon the Word of God who is eternal life. To recapture the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit means embracing not only the form but the signification. A correct attitude toward the word of God will pave the way toward settlement of most of our difficulties.

There's A Difference

[Essay]

Compares the material circumstances and spiritual concern of yesteryear with that of today and wonders whether we may have sacrificed concern for comfort. The essay was prompted by a visit to an old abandoned meeting house followed by a tour of the new facility which replaced it.

A Redemptive Society

[Essay]

Examines the nature and purpose of the church. Observes that it is not composed of sects but of all whom God has called out from the world— individuals who are joined to each other only because they are joined to the same head. The church is a witnessing community, testifying not of its own works but of the works of God. That it is a redemptive fellowship defines its true nature and purpose. Its members are all sinners saved by grace,

by trusting in the righteousness of Jesus. It is a community where our selfish instincts are transformed into social interests, a fellowship primarily concerned with persons. Almost all disputes within Christendom have arisen as a result of a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the church—that it is (1) an authoritarian structure, (2) the authorized interpreter of scripture, or (3) a social welfare organization. But the church possesses no authority and the doctrine of God belongs to each child of God. There is no “official interpretation” of scripture. The individual conscience is the sole monitor for every true saint. But each is to be restrained by brotherly love, which forbids acting on the ground of superior knowledge. The very purpose of doctrine is to teach us how to be at peace with our brothers. Only as doctrine enhances brotherly love is it translated into a godly life. The church is a redemptive fellowship created to prove the transforming power of love.

Where Would Paul Attend?

[[Essay](#)]

The notion that we have restored the primitive order of things is reflected in the question “Where would the apostle Paul attend church in our town,” a favorite topic with many in “Churches of Christ.” The fact of the matter is that “The Church of Christ” is not actually a restoration of the first century church at all but a twentieth century party growing out of the abuse of a nineteenth century restoration movement. Most members of “The Church of Christ believe Paul would have to meet with them because of the “pattern,” by which they refer to the interpretation which their group places upon the sacred writings, that is, their opinions concerning what God means. All groups agree that the pattern is so plain that any person can understand it, but this is about as far as the agreement goes. Ultimately, the “pattern” we follow is primarily a concoction of

human judgment, sanctified by traditional observance and consecrated by partisan prejudice. To “study,” as used by partisan preachers, means to “search the scriptures” to work out additional arguments in defense of that for which the party contends. Spiritual principles are reduced to rigid formulas. We approach God by a rigidly prescribed set of stairs which we climb by our own power, rather than humbling ourselves before God that he may lift us by his power (James 4:10). We are saved by faith— not works— but we cannot be saved without works, by which faith is demonstrated.

Orthodoxy and Reform

[Essay]

Every movement to reform religious thinking and practice has terminated in the formation of another sect. The reason behind this tendency is analyzed. While faith must be expressed in forms adapted to each age, culture, and place, such forms tend to become inflexible and serve as a barrier to further reformation. Reformers are radicals and non-conformists and are historically rejected by their contemporaries, only to be revered by subsequent generations. Reformation is a continuous process. Consequently, every generation will witness the struggle between orthodoxy and reform. While the forms of expressing faith are an outgrowth of the anxious concerns of honest men for serving the needs of their generation, binding these upon men as the will of God is an unwarranted usurpation of authority. It is a mistake, however, for reformers to reject all current forms simply because certain ones confuse the will of God with those forms. The non-instrumental “Churches of Christ” have, for example, reduced all religious experience to simple formulas: “five steps to salvation” and “five acts of worship.” The wrong lies in binding these forms upon others as the will of God and un-Christianizing those of past centuries who never discovered

such formulas. While none of the so-called “five acts of worship” are ever referred to as such in the new covenant scriptures, to abandon such forms would merely render us helpless in our effort to express the will of God. The church of God must be adapted to meet the needs of those in all times and climes. While Jesus Christ is the same, the times in which we live today are not. Orthodoxy creates a new “faithfulness” with the passage of years. As a usurper of the throne room of the mind it has been the bane of all reformatory movements.

With Simple Joy

[Essay]

Religion, like a river, becomes tinged with the culture through which it wends its way, as may be seen clearly in the contrast between primitive Christianity and contemporary. Our pattern is a person, and we need to recapture the true sense of being in Him. We need to be a simple people, fashioned not according to the world, but refashioning the world. If we recapture the simplicity of the early church, we may help restore its unity.

Full Speed Ahead

[Essay]

As “Service” was the guiding star in the career of Harry Grattidge, Captain of the Queen Elizabeth, so must it be in the lives of those who have enlisted on the Ship of Zion. We must think in terms of vocation rather than vacation. By fragmenting and departmentalizing our lives (often making Christianity a one day a week proposition) we split our own personalities and lose the purpose and continuity of life. We are obsessed with the

idea of more leisure time and social security. There can be no retirement from the Lord's service. We must either wear the armor or give up the fight. The religious world is looking for leadership, but we cannot lead while plagued with division and schism. The restoration of the ancient order and spirit is not complete. We have not finished our task!

Prophet and Priest

[Essay]

While the early function of the priest was to assure correct observance of ritual, that of the prophet was to assure a correct attitude of heart. In the absence of the prophet we tend to adopt attitudes that lead to sterility. We need a "prophetic vision" for our day, as the current status of the disciple brotherhood will reflect. We share a common background of regarding ourselves as the only sincere religionists, concluding that only the unreasonable or imbecile would fail to see everything exactly as we did. With regard to those within our own movement with whom we differed, they were either hobbyists or sectarian, depending on whether they opposed what we had or had what we opposed. The "faithful church" fallacy constantly betrays us into trusting in our own righteousness. We are simply not identical with the church of the New Testament. The "Church of Christ" does not date back beyond the 1906 U.S. census. The primitive church had no name except a common noun reflecting relationship. None of us is identical in doctrine with the scriptures, otherwise all study should cease! Our distinctiveness relies not on revelation but upon our interpretation of that revelation. We need to recover not the particulars of the early church but the spirit by which it was animated. We will not attain to the ideal while in the flesh but we must press on while we trust in Him for our salvation.

Spiritual Insight

[[Essay](#)]

Regarding the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the written word, there are two extreme views: (1) that the Holy Spirit is merely a retired impartial observer, and (2) that the Spirit reveals new truths to individuals regarding pressing problems. Offers an alternative view relative to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Observes that many a man carries a Bible in his pocket who does not have Jesus in his heart. Eternal life does not rest in knowing the scriptures but in knowing Jesus. We must allow our hearts and lives to be involved in the spiritual until previously undiscovered truths burst upon our hearts with enlightenment that will permit exploration into treasures of wisdom and glory we have never before realized.

The Rim of the Wheel

[[Essay](#)]

Compares the relationship of Christians to that of a wheel — bound to Christ, bound to each other, and sustained in our diversity by love (Col. 3:14).

The Inaugural Address

[[Essay](#)]

The kingdom of heaven is the rule of heaven exercised by the Son of God. Its inception corresponds to the coronation of Jesus in heaven, announced by Simon Peter. In his inaugural address, Peter defined the nature of the kingdom and gave notice that a new dispensation had begun. This address must constitute

the touch stone by which the Kingdom is to be measured in all ages. The materials of Christianity are seven facts, the seven pillars upon which the Christian economy rests. Those who accepted these facts accepted *the faith*.

Preaching the Word in Writing

[Essay]

Writing allows each succeeding generation to build upon the foundation of previously discovered truth. While the restoration movement was promoted by the creative writing of Alexander Campbell and others, that creativity has been curbed and the movement has foundered in the literary doldrums due to a loss of its original reason for existence. The movement has become a monument, giving lip-service to restoration while practicing retroaction. Only free men can write freely and we are no longer free, since our father chose division as their solution to innovation, rendering our plea for unity ineffective. Yet that plea can be re-launched by writing if it is relevant to the people of our day. Such relevancy will come from a foundation of knowledge of God, a knowledge of the Holy Spirit, and of the revelation of God. Regarding the later we must not accept the word of men as the word of God (e.g., Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, etc.) or accept the word of God as the word of men (the sin of liberalism miscalled). We need men with the pen of a ready scribe (historians, writers of prose, playwrights, poets, commentators) to present the message of salvation to a neo-pagan world. We need men of courage and ability to storm and recapture the surrendered bastions of literature. We must bring into useful subjection to our Lord every legitimate skill of those who love him.

The Ultimate Conquest

Relates the story of the fall of the *geeardee* (a term coined from Rev. 12:3) from Ouranos as a result of a battle with Michael after the Prince attempted to usurp the privilege of occupying the Right Hand, which was ultimately reserved for the Logos. Tells how the Pneuma brought order out of Chaos and how He made the first and secondary images and placed them in Paradisia; how the *geeardee*, through the power of morpheo, seduced the two images, resulting in their being cast out of Paradisia, whereupon the *geeardee* proclaimed his sovereignty over Atmos and resolved to thwart HIS purpose, unaware of the power of Agape which HE was manifesting toward the images. Upon learning that HE had promised to send Logos to share the estate of the images, the *geeardee* set about to thwart that plan through the use of thanatos, a plan that ultimately fails. After the Logos begins his reign of conquest, the *geeardee* enflamed the Ekklesia with the spirit of Party, but Agape is eventually discovered to be the antidote against which the *geeardee* has no effective counter-measure, assuring Agape's ultimate triumph.

Pentecost

Pentecost occurred seven weeks after the Passover. At the time of the slaying of the Jewish passover lamb, Christ, our passover, was slain. Forty days afterward he returned to heaven to be *Christed* or anointed. On Pentecost, an announcement of his inauguration was made in Jerusalem by the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was the beginning of the Messianic Reign. It was the birthday of the church, and it was on the first day of the week. There will be no repetition of the Pentecostal demonstration, since it marked the gathering of the firstfruits and the first fruits

come at the beginning of the harvest— not scattered periodically through it.

The Three Births

[Essay]

To share in the salvation to be revealed at the end of time we must enter three domains— the natural, the spiritual, and the eternal kingdoms— each of which is entered by birth through the process of delivery— from the body of the mother, from the body of sin, and from the body of the earth, respectively. We thus come forth from the womb, the baptism, and the tomb. Life begins at the point of trusting faith, but there is a difference between life *through* Christ and life *with* Christ. The later is the state into which we enter through baptism. Ours is now eternal life in embryonic state. Our spirits have been redeemed but our bodies have only been purchased— they must be redeemed at the resurrection. To partake of the eternal life of Christ (which is to partake of his flesh and blood) we must be born again.

The Two Great Foes

[Essay]

The two great foes to the preaching of the cross in all ages are Legalism and Liberalism. Legalism is best seen in that advanced by the Judaizers of the first century. Liberalism in every century has been but Gnosticism attired in a garb attractive to the time and place. The most effective antidote to legalism is the re-affirmation of justification on the basis of faith and the possession of the indwelling Spirit as the basis of fellowship with God and his children. Gnosticism (for which the

author provides an overview) contrasted the God of the old covenant (a God of wrath) with the new covenant God (a God of love). Proclaiming matter to be evil, it rejected outright the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John, who wrote primarily to save the church from disintegration under the impact of Gnosticism, referred to those who deny the incarnation as antichrists. When the church is confronted with such teaching today it must reaffirm the testimony of the witnesses upon which faith is predicated. Eternal life is a person. The purpose of testimony is to produce fellowship, a correct understanding of which is the most important thing when the foundations of the faith are threatened. To walk in the light of love, as God is love, is to share in the common life of the Spirit. Legalism seeks to lift man up to the level of God by his own *bootstraps*, whereas Liberalism seeks to pull Jesus down to the level of man by its own *bookstraps*.

The Moment of Truth

[Essay]

Asserts that “the moment of truth” has arrived for the forces of orthodoxy, then files five specific indictments against “The Church of Christ” as it exists in the U.S.: (1) It has abandoned the purpose of the restoration movement. (2) It is out of touch with the spiritually intellectual climate of this generation. (3) It is a victim of its own parochialism, avoiding the ecumenical discussions of the day. (4) Its members profess to deplore creeds but are among the most creed-ridden of religious movements. (5) Every one of its factions claims to “speak where the Bible speaks” and denies that any of the others do. Asserts that a reformation of the movement is essential if it is to regain relevance. Charges that brethren in “The Church of Christ” employ the written word to defeat the plan, purpose, and prayer

of the Living Word. The battle to save the restoration movement from itself must be fought upon the ground of scriptural interpretation. Announces a plan to change the content for *Mission Messenger* in 1965 from “The Living Pattern” to “The Twisted Scriptures” in which to deal with those scriptures quoted and applied for the purpose of separating and segregating brethren from each other.

The Divine Provisions

[[Essay](#)]

In order to bring man into a fellowship perfected in love, God has provided him with an object of faith, a source of knowledge and a sphere of labor. The object of faith is a person — not a proposition. While many have difficulty distinguishing between the scriptures and the Savior, the purpose of scripture is to point to Jesus as the Life. While the new covenant scriptures set forth a new way of serving God, there are men in every generation who want to make them a “written code”— a new law as tacked on to Christ. The new covenant scriptures are not a law of God imposed but the will of God exposed. Their purpose is to help us develop that divine nature which will freely and automatically respond in every situation with the divine answer. God’s called ones constitute a new body. One need never join anything after God adds him to the church in order to function acceptably and walk well-pleasing before God.

The Peaceful Harvest

[[Essay](#)]

An exposition of Hebrews 12:11. Observes that it is unfortunate that “discipline” has come to have the connotation

of punishment since the word means training— instruction given to develop a well-balanced life. All true discipline looks toward the future. The sacrifice of present preference for future good is justifiable only because of the coming reward. Concludes that the approved life is “the disciplined life.” One cannot be a soldier for Christ and keep his civilian status.

Queries to the Editor

[Essay]

In response to queries from readers with regard to his plea for unity the author asserts that (1) the unity of believers is the condition upon which the world will be led to Christ; (2) our task is not to restore a movement but to recapture the ideal of God; restoring the spirit of restoration is to apply to ourselves the remedy recommended for others under the same circumstances; (4) the restoration movement disintegrated when our fathers attempted to maintain purity of doctrine by separation from brethren; (5) debates are divisive in nature, intensify party feelings, make objective search for truth difficult, proceed on the fallacy of “the loyal church,” and demonstrate their futility by their fruits; (6) serving God’s purpose, not “success,” should be our goal; (7) those who regard their party as the one body regard the author as a dangerous heretic; (8) every attempted reform in the past has resulted in another division; (9) urges that everyone stay where he is, thus avoiding the formation of a new party; (10) a cultural and intellectual transformation is taking place in the more extreme segments of the disciple brotherhood; (11) seminaries and parochial schools are supported to defend a partisan position which limits academic freedom and their leaders are hired to keep the schools in line with that position; (12) in God’s tomorrow unity will be realized.

Questions to the Editor

[Essay]

Responses to questions related to the pleas which the author has been making for the unity of believers: (1) what do you believe about the constituency of the church? (2) do you make a distinction between the church and “The Church of Christ”? (3) Do you consider that there may be Christians in the various sects? (4) Does the new testament ever imply that anyone who was a member of the church of Christ belonged to a denomination at the same time? (5) What must one do to become a child of God? (6) Do you regard as in the fellowship those who have been sprinkled under the sincere conviction that this is scriptural baptism? (7) Is it possible that a sincere person who is sprinkled in the belief that it is baptism is a Christian in essence? (8) Are you not inconsistent in drawing a line of fellowship at baptism? (9) How do you regard those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God but who do not as yet understand the necessity of being immersed? (10) Does not the word for “begotten” in 1 John 5:1 embrace the whole process of birth? (11) Do you think that one who has not been immersed into Christ will be lost? (12) Is this not the same as implying that God may save some in their disobedience? (13) Do you think one must know at the time of baptism that it is for the remission of sins in order for it to be valid? (14) Is not “remission of sins” the design of baptism? (15) Can one become a child of God who does not believe God’s word about baptism for the remission of sins? (16) What do you recommend we should do to restore a proper feeling of unity among the believers? (17) Is it possible to retain one’s spiritual integrity and participate in meetings sponsored by various factions? (18) Is this an indication that you have become “soft” and chosen the easy way out? (19) What do you consider to be our most serious problem today?

Another Gospel

[Essay]

Examines the manner in which Gal. 1:6-8 has been twisted to promote and defend schism and division among the children of God. Those who mistake unity with conformity and predicate fellowship upon endorsement, brand as “another gospel” every interpretation which is divergent from their own. Cites correspondence with an elder of the “Fifth and Highland Church of Christ” as a case in point. Then provides a thorough exegesis of the passage under consideration, noting that believers in the days of the apostles were in error on many points (and gives examples), but they were not charged with “preaching another gospel.” Freedom from error is not a condition of salvation, else all men would be damned. No honest opinion held by one who is in Christ and who respects his lordship is “another gospel.” To make one’s standing with God depend not upon surrender to Jesus but upon standing right on other things is dangerously near to perverting the gospel.

Gospel and Doctrine

[Essay]

The second in a series of articles designed to examine passages used to cause division in the family of God. Examines the word “gospel” from the standpoints of etymology, scripture, and scholarship. Quotes from Alexander Campbell and William Hurte in support of his conclusion that the gospel is always addressed to unbelievers, never to believers. Expounds upon the various Greek words used to refer to the proclamation of the gospel. Quotes from C. H. Dodd who, like Alexander Campbell before him, distinguishes between the facts proclaimed as the gospel and the ethical teaching designed for the instruction of

believers. The gospel consists of seven facts, epitomized in three — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Examines the use of Rom. 1:15 as an objection to the above. Also examines Rom. 1:17 which is also used by some to support the idea that the gospel contains all God has revealed. Notes that it is a tragedy to interpret the apostolic epistles in such a way as to negate the apostolic gospel. Concludes that our brethren need the grace to distinguish between things that differ.

Peace or Sword?

[Essay]

Responds to a correspondent who complains that in all his writings the author constantly stresses peace and decries division as a sin, whereas Jesus said: “I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Cites numerous biblical texts in support of the conclusion that division among brethren is wrong. Then examines the statement of Jesus in Matthew 10:34-36, noting that the context was a speech made to apostles prior to launching them into a hostile world. When a hate-filled world is confronted with the demand of Jesus for unconditional surrender, antagonism will know no bounds. Peace was not to be broadcast. It was to be the product of personal faith. Surely Jesus did not come to “sow discord among brethren” and thus become an abomination unto God. It is warped and twisted reasoning that prompts men to take comfort in our sorry, sinful state of division by making it appear that it was the mission of Jesus to create such a state of tumult, turmoil, and pandemonium. Concludes with a personal pledge to labor to expose every misuse of the words of the Holy Spirit as well as the ugliness of orthodoxy which proclaims unity and practices division.

Contrary to the Doctrine

[Essay]

An examination of Romans 16:17 as it has been twisted to create, condone, or continue division. Observes that when our application of the word of God produces the very opposite condition of what it was intended to produce there is something faulty with our application. This text is applied by partisans to every honest dissenter from their factional programs, whether they be Bible classes, individual cups, “The Herald of Truth,” institutional orphan homes, or instrumental music. In every instance the factional test is “the doctrine learned.” The context of the passage shows that “the doctrine” is the teaching that division among brethren is a sin. Anyone who disregards this doctrine should be isolated so his factional attitude cannot divide the body. Nothing in the commands “mark them” or “avoid” indicates public or corporate action at all. To employ this passage to project division makes us the ones to be marked and avoided. The author pledges to allow no one to control his thinking down here who cannot assume responsibility for it up there.

Not of Faith

[Essay]

An exegesis of Romans 14:23 and an examination of the manner in which it is abused in an attempt to prove the utter sinfulness of whatever one happens to oppose. Demonstrates that the word “faith” in this passage has reference to personal conviction (to be kept between oneself and God) rather than the faith which saves— that which is to be proclaimed and shared.

Are You a Liberal?

Examines the use of the word “liberal” by partisan leaders to frighten those who would be disposed to investigate beyond the limits of the party walls. Obviously if everyone is a liberal no one is. As a label the word has lost its power of distinction so that the one who uses it must define the word. The author proceeds to list seven “definitions” of what it may mean to be a liberal and pleads guilty to each.

Analysis of Apostasy

An analysis of the biblical use of the word “apostasy” and its abuse by partisans who apply the term to every honest non-conformist. Such partisans first confuse their interpretations *with* the scriptures and then argue for the authority of their interpretations *as* scripture. The Greek word is used only twice in the new covenant scriptures: (1) Acts 21:21, where it means “to fall away,” and (2) 2 Thes. 2:3, where Paul says the return of the Lord will be preceded by a “falling away.” The truth is that the Holy Spirit never once used the term with regard to any brother in the Lord. One is not an apostate simply because he cannot conscientiously concur with the orthodox position of a party. Men can be mistaken without being malicious. They can fail to understand without falling away from Jesus. Concludes with references to the current revolt against the sin of oversimplification which makes the adherents of one faction “the good guys” and everyone else “the bad guys.” The forces of reform place the relationship in Christ ahead of the things about which the children argue.

The Unrecognized Unity

[Essay]

The unity for which Jesus prayed might come and we would not recognize it, just as one cannot tell from observation when the kingdom of God comes. Perhaps it will be in us in a very real sense but free from show and overt demonstration. The unity for which Jesus prayed is not a project of conventions nor a product of councils. It cannot be voted in, voted out, or voted on. Unity will never come by legislation. It is a fruit of the Spirit and fruit grows naturally from the substance absorbed by deep roots. When hearts yearn for each other with a deep and abiding affection, when brotherhood is conditioned upon common Fatherhood and fellowship is recognized as the result of mutual sonship, unity will flow forth as a broad and tranquil stream—the unity of the Spirit! Such unity will continue although unrecognized by factional proponents who dogmatically insist that it must come only by surrender to them instead of to Jesus.

The Pervading Silence

[Essay]

The author reveals that his offer in the October issue of 1964 to appear on the college lectureship of any of the Church of Christ colleges to submit to questioning by the faculty remains unanswered. Expresses hope that the time will come when he will have the opportunity to set forth his own position and to defend it before audiences which have heard attacks made which were unfair and unjust.

Walking in the Light

[Essay]

An analysis of 1 John 1:7 shows that the “light” to which John refers is the “love” which God is. This excludes knowledge of or obedience to God’s will, since none can understand or do God’s will perfectly— which would be required for fellowship if light referred to knowledge or performance. Eternal life is not extension of time but expression of love. Love cannot be achieved— by human striving. It is a gift from God, poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, thus enabling the divine nature to become incarnate in us as it was in Jesus. One who loves as God loves abides in the light, demonstrates sonship, has life, is of the truth, enables God to dwell in him, is freed from the torment of fear. To be without that love leaves one in darkness, blinds one to the truth, shows the fatherhood of Satan, is still in the domain of death, is a murderer, and does not know God. Considers the traditional interpretation placed on 1 John 1:7 as one of the most dangerous ever palmed off on unsuspecting men and women. It is subversive of the Spirit and a scandal to the church of God. That interpretation makes fellowship contingent upon living up to the creedal interpretations of the party of which one is a member.

Ecumenical Encounter

[Essay]

Observes that in our day many leaders in sectarian circles deplore division and are engaging in dialogue toward unity. But the heirs of the restoration movement are conspicuous by their absence. They hardly know what is transpiring in the world immediately about them. We spend our time talking to ourselves about others, engaging always in monologue, never in dialogue. In 1866, David Lipscomb and Tolbert Fanning encouraged dialogue with Baptists in the hope of laboring and worshipping as one people. But if Lipscomb were alive today, he would not be allowed to teach in the school that bears his name. We have

become sectarian, factional, and frightened. We would not even let our “restoration fathers” in the door.

Receive Him Not

[Essay]

Provides an exegesis of 2 John 10, 11. Examines the factional interpretation of the passage as used to pry apart the living stones in the temple of God— an interpretation which makes unity impossible. It would have us insanely conclude that to greet a brother who differs with us about cups, classes, colleges, or collectives for the care of orphans is to become a participant in some “evil deed.” Reputable scholars all believe that John was writing to counter-act the effects of Gnosticism which taught that only those who could “go beyond” in insight into the mystical infinite wisdom of God could be delivered from the evil of the material universe. Gnostics denied the possibility of the incarnation. John identifies “this doctrine” as the teaching that Jesus is the Christ.” Those who apply it to controversial matters over which they differ with others, and by which their party is identified, are utterly inconsistent in their application of the text. They will welcome such a one into their assemblies (contrary to John’s prohibition) who they say brings not “this doctrine” yet refuse to call on him to lead in prayer, based upon their application of the same text. Such a position is senseless and preposterous. Under no circumstance should this passage be applied to those who believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Conformity or Diversity

[Essay]

If there is unity of any kind among free men, it must be a

unity in diversity. Not one of those who oppose unity in diversity is a member of a congregation where every person understands every scripture alike. Each party simply agrees on a factional test which it has made the supreme issue. Upon every other matter the greatest latitude is permitted. If unity were by intellectual agreement it could never produce the peace that *passes* understanding. Ours is a unity of the Spirit. Harmony is a fruit of unity, not the reverse. Oneness is not exact likeness. In the primitive church there was a diversity of gifts, functions, understanding, knowledge, customs and opinions or varied beliefs. Romans 14 is given over to showing that men should treat each other as brethren in spite of differing personal convictions. We need not agree with each other upon everything either to become brothers or to continue as such. Harmony does not consist of seeing everything alike on the *understanding* level but of receiving each other on the *faith* level. To predicate unity upon understanding is to sublimate faith to human knowledge. 1 Cor. 1:10 simply means to desist from factional identifications. Having the same mind refers to purpose (what they were to try to do), and having the same judgment refers to method (how to accomplish it). Toleration is not *endorsing* something you think is wrong. It is simply *enduring* one who thinks it is right.

The Baptism of John

[Essay]

Through a series of questions and answers examines the nature of John's baptism and its relationship to the re-immersion of those mentioned in Acts 19. Concludes that this passage does not furnish scriptural authority for baptizing a second time all whose knowledge of the ordinance, and the blessings accruing therefrom, was imperfect at the first. Observes that the men in Ephesus were likely baptized by Apollos at a time when he knew only the baptism of John. John's

baptism ceased to be valid at the time authority was transferred to the Son. Paul's question "Unto what then were you baptized?" demonstrates that he had no concept of "unimmersed believers" in the fellowship. It was being baptized under another name or commission which rendered baptism ineffective.

Our Abiding Heritage

[Essay]

An address to the World Convention of Christian Churches in which the author affirms the abiding nature of the word of God as revealed in scripture— authoritative for our lives. That Jesus is Lord is a fact, demonstrable by credible testimony. To accept him as Savior may be purely selfish; to admit his Lordship is an act of surrender. This is the reason that in response to the Good News both belief and baptism are involved. We cannot show that Jesus is Lord unto us unless we do what he says. Yet we cannot do what he says unless he has spoken and we know what he said. The scriptures are authoritative because they constitute the word of the Lord. If we do not accept them, we cannot affirm that he is Lord. This thesis of course is questioned by contemporary scholars who regard the new covenant scriptures as a collection and compilation of the traditions of the church, resulting from the work of the church. But it was the gospel— the seed of the kingdom, the word of God— which produced the church. Those who regard the new covenant scriptures not as the voice of the Shepherd but the bleating of the sheep use the rays of their own enlightenment to burn and destroy our greatest source of strength and hope. Our task is to steer safely between the Scylla of liberalism and the Charybdis of legalism.

Withdraw Yourself

Provides extensive historical background into the circumstances in Thessalonica which prompted Paul's command in 2 Thess. 3:6 to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." Points out that while this passage has been twisted and made to serve as a weapon in the arsenal of factionalism with which to hound honest dissenters out of every faction. Denies that what is commonly called "withdrawal of fellowship" is countenanced or even considered in this verse. The context clearly shows that Paul uses the phrase "walking disorderly" to designate the idleness into which some had drifted. The brethren are commanded to refrain from extending hospitality to such a brother— to take note of that man (individually, not corporately) and have no company with him. But he is to be counted as a *brother*— not as an enemy.

Statement of Aim

A re-statement of the author's aims and the methods by which he proposes to attain them. Proposes to (1) actively pursue the unity of all believers in order to bring the world into a state of allegiance to Jesus; (2) recapture the spirit of restoration— not restore the movement of predecessors; (3) work within the frame of reference of the restoration movement; (4) focus on splinter parties growing out of that movement; (5) recover oneness through affection, association, consultation, and consecration; (6) recapture a proper sense of relative values; (7) encourage the rejection of all false tests of fellowship; (8) seek peace and pursue it relentlessly wherever the Spirit opens up a door.

End of an Era

For reasons the author states are purely sentimental, he laments the demise of *The American Christian Review* after 110 years of publication. Provides a brief overview of the history of the paper, from its founder, Benjamin Franklin, to its last editor, Bessie K. Sommer. After undergoing two name changes, the paper eventually reverted to its original name.

The One Faith

While it is common to hear *the one faith* described as “the system of faith including the whole New Testament,” such a definition is nowhere to be found in scripture. The faith by which we are justified was fully proclaimed by Peter on Pentecost and nothing was ever added to it as a basis for justification. Not one apostolic epistle was written to introduce men to the faith or to induct them into it. The one faith is not a compilation of laws or letters. It is the firm conviction that Jesus is the Son of God and that he was put to death for our transgressions and raised for our justification. The term “like precious faith” has nothing to do with those *in the faith* agreeing upon every detail of understanding. The “faith once delivered” is not the entire body of new covenant scriptures but that which produces our common salvation. Faith is the foundation of the Christian life and love is its embodiment. Faith has to do with our begetting; doctrine has to do with our development. To confuse faith, which all must have to be in Christ, with knowledge of the word, which all must acquire as they grow in Christ, is a tragic error. The apostolic letters do not constitute the new covenant. The gospel produces the covenantal relationship while doctrine has to do with the conduct of those who are in Christ. The gospel was to make children of God; the

apostolic doctrine was to make the children of God better. The apostolic letters are not a pattern or blueprint. Our pattern is a person! Christianity is not Jesus pointing us to a book as a pattern, but a book pointing us to Jesus as our pattern. Since doctrine must be filtered through human rational processes, it cannot serve as a condition for fellowship or as a test of one's relationship to the Father.

Except They Be Agreed

[Essay]

Provides a background for the prophetic work of Amos, then examines the context of Amos 3:3. Points out that the day has come when the iniquities of both Israel and Judah and their judgment have met. Since this is the very nature of divine justice the prophet appeals to natural reactions to illustrate it. He reasons that for every effect there is a cause and the cause may be determined by examining the effect. Notes that the word "agreed" has nothing to do with the attitude, purpose or nature of two people walking together. Rather the agreement is to meet and walk together. The only unity possible on this earth to thinking people is unity in diversity, the kind of unity that exists between the perfect Lord and our imperfect selves.

Playing It Safe

[Essay]

Decries the actions of those who prefer to "play it safe" within the confines of sectarianism rather than risk everything for the sake of unity. "Playing it safe" is the very opposite of the nature of the Christian concept. He who restricts his sharing to those who see everything as he does and who refuses to associate

with those who disagree is not following Jesus at all. Saul of Tarsus suffered the loss of all things. He refused to recognize any creed but Christ or any test of fellowship except Christian character based upon faith. He held that all that was necessary to join us as brothers was just what it took to join us to Jesus. God needs preachers and elders who will not “play it safe.”

Keep the Door Open

[Essay]

A response to an editorial in *Firm Foundation* by Reuel Lemmons in which Lemmons decries division within the restoration movement, urges the use of dialogue as a tool to forge the bonds of unity, and expresses hope for the fruitful possibility of discussing points of difference with mutual respect for the conscientious beliefs of each other. Commends Brother Lemmons for the tone of his editorial but notes that he espouses the fallacy that the faction for which he is a chief spokesman is “the Lord’s church” to the exclusion of the other factions. Observes that while in 1962 Brother Lemmons wrote that “Brethren are united only when they see alike,” it is refreshing to hear him now say that it is ridiculous to think that differences of opinion indicate division. Proposes meeting for open dialogue with Brother Lemmons in a city of his choosing.

The Works of Darkness

[Essay]

Examines the use of Eph. 5:11 to lend sanction to strife and disunion among brethren. Observes that the whole tenor of the Ephesian letter is against such a forced interpretation, and that the apostle would not deliberately write an epistle to prove that

we are one body, only to splinter and shiver it to bits with one sentence. We have come to mistake our brethren for barbarians and cannot tell the difference between an honest difference of opinion and a barren work of darkness. We think every error is a sin simply because every sin is an error. The works of darkness in the context of Eph. 5:11 are the perverted practices of pagans — not the rationalizations of the saints. Works of darkness are the deeds of those who abide in darkness. The adjacent context describes those works categorically as fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. Those who acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus over their lives make mistakes, but they make them in Christ. They are imperfect in Christ— they are not in the darkness nor of the darkness. Concludes with a plea for men of integrity to examine anew every scripture which has been used to foster and foment division.

The Conflict of the Ages

[Essay]

The two great forces in conflict with each other in the moral universe are the kingdoms of darkness and light. This conflict began in heaven motivated by pride, and will continue until the utter defeat of one or the other. Man was created for the purpose of glorifying God, thus free to choose between moral alternatives. For man to glorify God he had to freely choose to be obedient, which required a test of his willingness. The test was a positive, rather than a moral one. Deceived by the Enemy, the animal man triumphed over the spiritual and man was thrust into the conflict of the ages. God determined to vindicate his right to govern the universe by means of the cross, which became the ultimate power struggle, the crossroads of history, and the crux of destiny. On the cross Christ subjugated the cosmic powers and authorities, bringing them under his authority. But they have not yet been annihilated. We must face

them in the war of the ages, but in Christ we are assured of victory. We have available to us the same transcendent power which raised him from the dead— the power of the unconquerable life. The devices of the devil cannot be overcome by natural power unaided. They require superhuman assistance. The great proof of the devil's existence and success is the fact that the majority of intellectuals do not believe he is real. In our day, even the theological world has hailed as deliverers those who, under the guise of rescuing us from outmoded expressions, have left the world suspended in mid-air by a rope which is not attached to anything above. God has been reduced to some innate principle which results in man worshipping himself. In the final analysis, both scientists and theologians and common folk must end up walking by faith. Where their walk will take them depends upon the direction of their faith.

Is God Dead?

[Essay]

Although some philosophers of our so-called post-Christian age have declared that God is dead, and certain clergymen have rushed to conduct a funeral service for the deceased, the author offers five reasons for his own belief in God: (1) *Purpose*. Posits the logical postulate for creation by intelligent design. (2) *Power*. Notes that the material universe is subject to universal power which is superior to all that constitutes the material. (3) *Plan*. A universe such as ours could never have originated except by application of intelligent design coupled with the necessary power to produce the design and start it operating in pre-determined harmony and synchronization. (4) *Putative*. Man deems there is a God because the demands of nature and reason cry out there must be a God. (5) *Personal*. Asserts belief in God because of personal experience with God. Relates the personal story of having

invited Jesus to come into his life.

The One Foundation

[[Essay](#)]

Every religious system has a taproot which serves as its anchor. Christianity proceeds upon the premise that at a certain juncture God revealed himself to man. Unlike Judaism, Christianity did not begin with a book but with a baby. It is not a revelation *from* God but a revelation *of* God. It is not a system of abstract truths arrived at by the power of logic, or by inductive or deductive reasoning. Instead it centers around the birth, life, and death of a person and our relationship to that person. The *fact* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, is the taproot upon which the Christian system rests. However, there is a great deal of difference in the revealed fact *of* Christ who is the foundation and the facts *about* Christ as a foundation. Jesus was anointed by God as prophet, priest, and king. All that is necessary to reconcile men unto God— to free from ignorance, guilt, and enslavement— is invested in these three offices. Belief in the proposition that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, brings about regeneration— an entirely new attitude toward God and man is produced in the hearts of all believers. That which undermines faith in the Messiahship or Sonship of Jesus sweeps away man's only hope and is destructive of man's eternal welfare.

Modern Man and Belief

[[Essay](#)]

Responds to the question, "Can modern man really believe in Jesus?" Maintains that all men, modern or otherwise, are led

to belief in the same way in response to testimony. To reject testimony one must (1) attack the character of the witnesses, (2) challenge the competency of the witnesses, or (3) show that the testimony is contradictory. Until “modern man” examines the testimony concerning Jesus and is able to give justifiable grounds for rejection of it, he proceeds wholly upon the basis of prejudice. We have a sufficient number of witnesses to establish the fact of Jesus. To reject those facts “modern man” must either prove them to be persons of perfidy, or that they were incompetent or that their testimony is contradictory. To reject Jesus on any other grounds is, in effect, to cancel all history from his life. Notes that the term “modern man” does not refer to a man in a certain era of history, but to a certain kind of man—one who is a man of science who professes to live by knowledge and without faith. Concludes with a personal apology for believing in Jesus, observing that when “modern man” rejects that which has been accepted for centuries upon the basis of evidence, there is as much reason for questioning the motivation of “modern man” as for being suspicious of the evidence.

The Divine Revelation

[Essay]

An essay on the meaning and nature of divine revelation. Examines the contention that the canonized form of scripture was produced by the church. Notes that Rome employs this reasoning to establish the absolute authority of the church, whereas Protestants use it to deny that there is any absolute authority for the church. Observes that the Bible was written to the church, not by the church. The books were *not* accepted as canonical because the church had produced them but because it had received them. Canonicity did not create authority or increase it, but simply recognized it. Predicts an increasing disregard and irreverence for the sacred scriptures as men

continue to confuse liberty with license. If Jesus and the apostles misrepresented the origin of the apostolic message, we cannot rely upon the content of it. The Bible is not an authorized collection of books, but a collection of authorized books. With regard to a “theory of inspiration” acknowledges *no exclusive* theory, but observes that one could be mistaken about the nature or means of revelation without affecting the fact of it. Asserts that the skepticism concealed behind clerical garb rests entirely upon the assumption that God has not revealed himself — either because he is non-existent or because he is powerless or indifferent. Concludes that if God could reveal his will but would not, he *would* not be God; if he would but *could* not, he could not be God.

Unity in Christ

[Essay]

A speech delivered at the Hartford forum on unity. From Ephesians 1:3-11 observes that unity is the purpose, will, pleasure, and design of God. Consequently, unity will come because the divine purpose cannot be frustrated. Concludes that the certainty of unity may be predicated upon rationalization, philosophy, or faith. Whatever God ordains as his will must be done as his will ordains— this is the divine imperative. What God *projects* as a design of divine purpose, he will *perfect* as a sign of the divine pleasure. God allows no abortion of his plans. While it is not ours to say how unity will be brought about, it will not be achieved by creeds, concordats or conventions. The unity we seek is the unity of the Spirit— produced by the Spirit. It must come!

Divisive Party Loyalties

[Essay]

An address to the Seventh Consultation on the Internal Unity of Christian Churches. Expounds upon three reasons why the party spirit is so heinous in God's eyes: (1) It supplants the cross of Christ as the force which makes unity possible and substitutes something else around which men must rally to be considered worthy. (2) It reduces the ordinances of God to mere functional rituals, making baptism the initiation into a party and rendering the table of the Lord a factional weapon of discipline. (3) It captivates the heart which should be the sacred citadel of the Holy Spirit, demanding allegiance to it as a test of loyalty to Jesus. Predicts that in this age of decaying values our future problems will not lie with brethren who have diverse convictions but with those who have none.

The Church of God

[Essay]

The Lord's church embraces every one of the Lord's people and its numerical strength cannot be ascertained. One becomes a child by adoption; he becomes a partisan by deduction elevated to dogmatism. Christian stature is measured by faith, whereas partisan attainment is measured by knowledge of the group requirements for fellowship. The real test of the non-partisan is his ability to ignore the artificial barriers and to associate freely with all his brethren.

The Life and the Joy

[Essay]

Expounds upon the joy that comes to those who share in the fellowship of the Spirit. The word koinonia means "sharing," not the sharing of things but of a common life. Whatever creates

that common life creates fellowship, for fellowship is that life. Whatever makes us a child of God brings us into the fellowship, into the life we share with the Father. Thus it is silly to talk about fellowship as something we can extend or withdraw. One cannot even put a living chicken back into an egg. How can he think of putting a child of God out of the divine family? The expression “withdraw fellowship” is not in the Bible. To share in the common life does not mean that all will have knowledge or understanding equal to that of God or of each other. Factions which have pressed the life out of the sharing hold that standing with God depends upon being correct about the one thing that really counts, but that one thing differs with each party. To make fellowship a relationship to things is to squeeze the life out of it. Then it is no longer the life but the things that are held in common. The party becomes a corpse without life and without joy. Those who band together because they share in the same knowledge actually stay together because they share in the same ignorance.

The Supreme Court

[Essay]

All communication requires interpretation on the part of the receiving mind. Interpretation of divine revelation is the application of the thought processes of the human mind to the communication from the divine mind in an attempt to determine what is meant. Revelation is what God said, interpretation is what we think he meant by what he said. In civil matters, the Supreme Court is the authoritative interpreter of the meaning of the law. But God has authorized no *official* interpreter nor interpretation of divine revelation. In such matters the supreme court is the individual conscience.

Approach to Authority

To reach a solution to the problem of division among the heirs of the restoration movement we must go back to the initial division and heal the primary breach. Rather than engaging in partisan debate based on differing presuppositions regarding a philosophy of interpretation of scripture— a philosophy of interpretation based upon interpretation— the author proposes that we recognize the fact that we are all in Christ and members of one body by the new birth. Entreats that we not bind our deductions upon others farther than their own knowledge commends acceptance of them. Maintains that while the authority of Jesus is absolute, no human theory of it based upon deductions from scripture need be so. Suggests that the first thing we must do to heal the gaping wound is to (1) restore the right of every individual to interpret the Word of God for himself without the benefit of clergy and (2) make effective the function of congregational autonomy. One need not sacrifice his personal conviction about a thing to have brotherly love toward those who do not share his views about it. Our fathers excommunicated one another making a test of fellowship out of something God has not made a condition for salvation. We will continue to be divided until we return to the place where we first defended schism as the way of righteousness and restore a genuine sense of brotherhood. Our obligation to love all our brothers is not based upon silence but upon the repeated assertions of the One who died for the sins of us all.

Introduction to Worship

An examination of the words in the new covenant scriptures which are rendered “worship,” especially in the King James Version. Notes that *proskuneo*, the principal word for

worship, is never rendered by any other word. Observes that (1) none of the words translated “worship” is ever applied to anything the assembled church does on the Lord’s Day; (2) the expression “the worship” is not in the new covenant scriptures; (3) the term “acts of worship” is not in the Bible; (4) Christianity has no sacred places, days or rituals. The very purpose of the teaching of Jesus was to show that every facet of life was to be worship rendered to God. True worship is when the spirit speaks to and meets with God. The place where God dwells is the human heart and he dwells in us in and through the Holy Spirit. The “many mansions” of John 14:2, 3 are the many hearts which have his commandments, keep them, and love him. True worship is the tuning of the heart to throb in harmony with the pulsation of the infinite.

Holy Places and Days

[Essay]

Any place where God touches human life is holy ground and no place is a sanctuary merely because it is a place. Early Christianity recognized that all one had was God’s when the heart was given to God. There was no “worship service” because all service was worship. Service to humanity, the relief of human suffering, the supplying of human need— this was the greatest expression of worship. Our compassion and mercy must be as full and free and as continuous as that of God. Nothing must ever become more hallowed than the provision for suffering humanity. The picture Jesus gave of the final judgment had nothing to do with liturgy, litany, rubric or ritual. Whether we have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, received strangers, clothed the naked— this is the real test of true worship, not the kind rendered at a certain mountain or in a certain city. In Jesus there can be no separation between secular and sacred. It remains, therefore, that the only thing which is

secular is sin! Jesus never ceased to worship God, nor should we.

The Church Christ Founded

[[Essay](#)]

Reports on an editorial in a Catholic journal in which a missionary in Japan told of being asked by an elderly man on a bus, “Whatever happened to that church Christ founded?” Notes that the Catholic editor showed how far short of the ideal of Christ is the Christian witness in Japan. The author lists four characteristics of the church that Christ founded: (1) Spirit-filled, (2) a community of daring adventurers, (3) vibrant with hope, and (4) a fellowship of the Spirit. Contrasts these characteristics with churches within the restoration movement. Closes with the words of the Catholic editor: “Christians today will not be known in any other way than were the first Christians about whom their neighbors were forced to exclaim: ‘See how they love one another.’”

Acts of Worship

[[Essay](#)]

Nothing we do when we assemble on the Lord’s Day is ever referred to as “worship” in the new covenant scriptures. The expression “the worship” does not occur in the Christian scriptures. There was no distinction between the spiritual and the secular in the primitive church. The whole body was offered as a living sacrifice and whatever was done in the body was worship. The breaking of bread was, at first, done daily and always as a part of a common meal. Gradually, over the centuries, the breach between the secular and the sacred widened and a special ritual supplanted the simplicity. Early

disciples had no procedural form for their meetings. Expressions of inner adoration by outward demonstration were spontaneous. (The new covenant scriptures do not support the ideal of congregational singing.) All of us may worship the same God but in different ways. All worship is individual by nature. Forms of public expression of praise may be as varied as there are individuals and cultures. It is not external conformity but the indwelling Spirit which is vital to the divine-human relationship. It is righteousness, not ritual, which joins us to the Lord. All that we do in word or deed, whether assembled or alone, when done to revere God, is worship.

Worship and Money

[[Essay](#)]

Worship is the prostration of the heart, filled with a sense of dependency, before the presence of God, the reaching out of the inner self to draw God close and to draw close to God. In one in whom Christ dwells there is no distinction between what is God's and what is his. The artificial distinction between what the individual may do and what the church may do is like arguing what the arm may do apart from the body. The three-part division of "the work of the church" is an arbitrary arrangement, as is the idea of a church treasury. In many places men are taught that they must contribute every Lord's Day, regardless of the frequency with which they receive their income. There are those who teach that all charitable acts must be done "through the church" so that "the church will get the glory." All of these rules have grown out of interpretations of 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, with other unrelated texts brought to bear. But (1) Paul states that giving was not a command; (2) those in Macedonia who were poor were not asked to give; (3) the church in Corinth was in existence for four years before asked to contribute; (4) it was a matter of congregational discretion as to

whether they would participate; (5) the gift was voluntary— not an exaction of law. Most commentators agree that the money was collected at home and kept there until delivered to Paul’s messenger. By no means can “giving” be construed to be an “act of worship” and no such act was ever an identifying mark of “the Lord’s church.”

Twentieth Century Witness

[Essay]

After observing the need to be better equipped to meet the intellectual challenges to our faith by being engaged with our culture, examines the “God is dead” theology of Thomas J. J. Altizer. Makes observations regarding the irrelevancy of the response of “Churches of Christ” to this and other questions confronting the intellectuals of our day. Suggests seven things Churches of Christ must do if they are to have an impact upon thinking minds on college and university campuses: (1) become relevant to the lives and conflicts of men and women in our present world; (2) recapture the vital unity of the Spirit; (3) seek new ways of demonstrating the workability of our plea for unity in diversity; (4) be forthright in our dealings with the world and quit using propaganda as bait with a hook concealed; (5) free our missionaries on foreign fields from sectarian restraints; (6) follow Jesus into the world by infiltrating the neo-pagan intellectual world of our day; (7) recapture the word “witness” in our confrontation with the world.

The Dynamic of God

[Essay]

Expounds upon the four dimensional power of love as set

forth in Ephesians 3:14-19 (from which the title of the bound volume of *Mission Messenger* for 1966, *Deep Roots*, was taken). Observes that God not only supplies a knowledge of what is required through his word, he supplies the strength to accomplish it through the power of the Spirit. That power is the power of Christ's own love. It is a love that is unlimited, that never stops to count the cost or to ask what the stakes are. One who knows this kind of love knows something that is beyond knowledge—it cannot be attained to merely by the study of books, not even a sacred book. It is irrational by every standard of judgment on earth. But to surrender to it is to have fulness of being. Love is the only power which can span the gaps of a broken fellowship. There is no limit to its faith, its hope, or its endurance.

Apples of Gold

[[Essay](#)]

An introduction to a series of essays to be published throughout the current year under the same title as this essay. Informs that the year will be devoted to a study of words used by the Holy Spirit. Further states that the design of the study is to edify the brethren by sharing with them the result of intensive research which seeks to lay hold upon the thoughts of God by grasping the words of God.

Example and Pioneer

[[Essay](#)]

According to 1 Peter 2:21, Christ left us an example after which to pattern our own lives. Each of us should measure our lives by His, not by another for whom we have admiration. In

Hebrews 12:2 we are told that Jesus is the *archegos* or “author” of our faith. He marked the path, put up signs to warn of danger spots, and left encouraging notes along the way. Thus it is that Jesus marked out the trail and finished the course, showing what it means to have real trust in God.

Aprons and Overalls

[Essay]

Short essay in which the concept of humility is defined. It is observed that the Christian is to wear humility like a garment, “clothed with humility.” It is our badge of subjection, identifying us as slaves in the service of Christ.

Strategy for Peace

[Essay]

In the interest of inspiring a definite strategy for waging peace, six guidelines are suggested: (1) Acknowledge our guilt for perpetuating partisan principles and positions inherited from our fathers; (2) Restore the cross of Jesus to the center of all Christian concern; (3) Recapture the local autonomy of the congregation in truth as well as in theory; (4) Recognize that fellowship is not endorsement but a family relationship produced by the indwelling Spirit in children of God; (5) Begin at once to recognize both privately and publicly all of God’s children and our brethren; (6) Substitute meaningful dialogue for debate. We can unite in Christ without any of us giving up any truth he has ever held.

Paper Curtains

Observes that for brethren within many segments of “The Church of Christ” the kingdom of heaven is circumscribed by their factional fence, and their factional journals are used as paper curtains to assure that the only light that reaches those within is filtered through the party organ. But this type of tyranny is not limited to editors. In many areas the minister of the local “Church of Christ” is the self-appointed umpire for the *index expurgatorius*. To reach those inside one must go over or around the preacher, otherwise they will never know anything except what he wants them to know. All sectarianism is alike in attitude. It always uses the same old weapons— censorship, boycott, and threat of excommunication. But better days are coming. The Spirit is mightily at work! The day of sectarianism is doomed.

Jealousy and Envy

Makes a proper distinction between jealousy and envy, which the careless student thinks of as synonymous. While envy is always sinful, jealousy may be either good or evil, depending upon its object. God is referred to as the “Lord, whose name is Jealous” (Exodus 34:14). To be jealous is to be struck full of passion, or to be inflamed with intense desire or longing. To envy is to look at from the wrong angle or from a contrary direction. Jealousy is always related to fear, frightened at the prospect of losing what it claims and cherishes. Envy is accompanied by suffering, pained to see another enjoy and experience what it covets for itself.

Carnal Weapons

[Essay]

Observes that men often misunderstand 2 Corinthians 10:5 in which Paul says “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” The false teachers at Corinth were charging him with a policy of double-dealing. His real conflict is not with men but with their deceptive fantasies, or sophistries. Our weapons must be adapted to the kind of war being waged. The opposite to deceptive fantasy is true knowledge of God and this must be the weapon with which we storm the ramparts and capture the fortress of human minds.

Through the Dust

[Essay]

The word minister (*diakonos*, from *dia*, through, and *konos*, dust) is never used in the new covenant scriptures to designate any specific or exclusive form of service. Rather it designates every form of service. Every Christian is a minister if he serves God and his fellows. One enters the ministry at baptism. We must recapture the primitive concept of the universal ministry or continue enlisting soldiers who never intend to fight. Any sign with the names of the ministers of a congregation should contain the whole roster.

Crumbling Wall

[Essay]

Not a single segment of the “Church of Christ” is escaping the spirit of reform. An enlightened membership is beginning to break the stranglehold of spiritual bureaucracy. Some are discovering that Romans 14 was written to tell brethren how to

treat one another in spite of differences. Some in the factions are starting to receive their brethren as God received them. Nothing will stop the great revolution that is now underway. There are already signs that the power of editors is on the wane, that the sheep on the hills are beginning to struggle homeward. Some day there will be one flock. That day is coming.

The Old Lady

[[Essay](#)]

Although The Church of England, often referred to as The Old Lady by the British, is regarded as being a little dodderly and senile, living in the past and with nothing worthwhile to contribute to the present, the church of God is ageless and timeless, speaking to men where they are and as they are. It is vibrant, rejoicing, exuberant, filled with faith and filling others with hope. While it is the fate of every sect to grow old, the one body can never die as long as its head lives. And anything for which men can now give statistics of membership is nothing but a sect. The church of God is composed of all the saved of all the earth.

The Fiddlers

[[Essay](#)]

Just as Nero fiddled while Rome burned, many of our brethren are focused on what is inconsequential and irrelevant to the burning issues of our time. Rather than being actively concerned about the men who are dying in the jungles of Vietnam or the multitudes of people who are threatened with starvation, most of our brethren are busy giving lengthy orations on things the world happens to be ignoring— such as whether

it's alright to eat in the meetinghouse or whether the Herald of Truth violated congregational autonomy.

The Baobab Tree

[Essay]

The legend of the baobab tree is that the devil picked it up and thrust its branches into the ground leaving the roots sticking up into the air. In a lot of areas this appears to have happened to the church, where things are the reverse of what they were in the beginning. The church will never turn the world upside down until we get the church right side up. If it claims to be like Jesus it must be willing to minister— not be ministered to— and willing to give its life in order to gain it. Many congregations are like the baobab tree, fat tubs, preoccupied with their own little rounds of trivia, living for self, loving their own concerns, leaving the world to flounder in a morass of problems, with no helping hand extended for fear of getting the robe of righteousness soiled and sticky.

The Headless Horseman

[Essay]

The “institutional church” in our day, like the fictitious headless horseman in the story of “Ewen of the Little Head,” has lost her head, yet is so designed, drafted, and departmentalized that she can function automatically, spasmodically and by reflex action, unaware that the Spirit has departed from her.

Combat Cooties

[Essay]

Like the bedbugs used in Vietnam to sniff out the enemy, many things considered at one time to be devices of Satan are now being used to arouse concern for the Christian concept and to whip Satan over the head.

Life's Final Star

[[Essay](#)]

Brotherhood derives from fatherhood. Fellowship is the result of mutual sonship. Of most importance to God is the maintenance of the family relationship. Making peace with a brother is more important even than bringing a sacrifice to God. Men have broken up God's children into warring clans. This is a sin of the deepest dye. It is a grave offense against heaven to make any opinion the basis of our recognition of one another and of our oneness in Christ. The recapture of the true meaning of brotherhood is the most important task of the fragmented church.

The Need for Reform

[[Essay](#)]

Noting the recent example of B. L. Wittenbrink of assailing his Catholic hierarchy for a preoccupation with relatively trivial concerns while ignoring human needs and injustices, observes that we in Churches of Christ are able to pass by on the other side, wholly oblivious to the frightful agonies which affect human personalities. Suggests that members of Churches of Christ pray for God to raise up reformers among us with the bravery of some within the Roman pale.

Quenching the Spirit

[[Essay](#)]

Decries the abuse and misuse of talent as brilliant and erudite members of the body are consigned to the role of silent spectators of a well-managed drama performed exclusively by one man hired for that purpose. Asserts that every gift is intended to be exercised and that it is the duty of the congregation to provide an opportunity for the growth and development of every member to his highest potential. Observes that it is by teaching that one really grows in all of his mental faculties. Notes that it is useless to pretend that we are interested in restoration of primitive Christianity unless we include a realistic return to the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of all the saints.

[Lapsing Into Latin](#)

[[Essay](#)]

Satan has deceived us into adopting the fallacy that purity of doctrine can only be secured by separation from brethren who differ with us. Our divisions are proof that we have denied the scriptural injunction to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are as divided as if God had commanded us to do so, and we willfully perpetuate our parties under the guise of fidelity to Christ. Anyone can see what the will to divide has done to us. *Res ipsa loquitur* (the thing speaks for itself)!

[The Realm of Truth](#)

[[Essay](#)]

Fellowship in Christ is the sharing of the life of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship is not endorsement or Jesus could not be in

fellowship with any of us. Neither is it perfect conformity or none of us could be in fellowship with Jesus. Our hope of heaven is not contingent upon our freedom from error but upon our attitude toward it. We must receive one another as He receives us all.

Moral Agency

[Essay]

The term “free moral agent” is redundant and unnecessary since by definition to be a moral agent is to have the freedom to choose between moral alternatives. One must exercise that right by using the power of discrimination which weighs alternatives and guides to decisions. Such decisions must be governed by an ultimate, however, if they are to become a guideline for life. All law, so far as man is concerned, is summed up in love— an act of will— directed toward God and man. To love God is to give him what he deserves— to reverence him. This doesn’t require a continual consciousness of God since God is served and glorified in every pursuit of life when we are wholly surrendered to him, having made him the supreme preference of our lives.

The Tether

[Essay]

Whatever one makes a test of fellowship becomes the center of his life and thought, and the rope of the party will allow him to crop the truth only so far. But a great transformation will come. Brethren will start pulling up their stakes and moving closer to our Lord as the only center of their lives— tethered to the stake which God drove down at Golgotha.

The only rope about our necks will be the invisible cord of love.

Beware of Gribbles

[Essay]

Our greatest danger in the restoration movement is not the frontal attacks of atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism but from “spiritual gribbles” (gribbles are marine crustaceans that gnaw away at underwater wooden structures until they weaken and fall). Many brethren have not caught the spirit of the Spirit and they bore away at controversial matters and build parties and sects around their views. The restoration ideal has not been successfully attacked by its enemies. It has only been made to appear ridiculous by its friends. The depth of a man’s love for God may be measured by the nature of the things which he allows to separate him from his brothers.

Facing Death

[Essay]

The apostle Paul found himself in a “strait” between two conflicting desires, having a desire to “depart” and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23). The word “depart” (Greek, *analuō*) was used by the Greeks to express (1) the act of loosing the moorings of a ship to set it free, (2) the act of taking down a tent after the battle to return home, and (3) the loosing of the yoke or saddle girth to remove the burden from the back of a pack animal. In death the loads of life are lifted, the burdens taken down, and the spirit is set free. We can readily see why Paul, writing from prison, would want to *depart*.

The Nature of Reform

A correspondent laments that prominent leaders will not acknowledge the contributions of Leroy Garrett and this author to the ferment of thought and allow them to speak at the ACC lectureship. The author notes that the history and nature of reforms remind us that one must be dead at least 100 years before existing structures acknowledge indebtedness to its reformers. Asserts that what is important is the cause. We are all expendable. Should we go to our graves “unwept, unhonored and unsung” it is of no consequence. The nature of reforms indicates that reformation will come, but it will come gradually and almost imperceptibly. Everyone will deny they are changing but all will be doing so. As Jesus becomes more important to us, so do our brethren. Suggests we not get perturbed about recognition for a couple of earthen vessels. Notes, “If we were to hold our peace the stones would cry out.”

Out of This World

It is the responsibility of each generation to work out its own technique for effective encounter with “its world.” Today we have an intellectual revolution. Higher education is the real battleground for the mind of modern man. While the strategy of many has been to withdraw and create artificial worlds of their own, talking only to each other and making the walls of their barricades thicker, the community of saints must recapture this territory from which it has retreated. We must (1) lose our anti-intellectual bias, (2) conquer our awe of degrees, and revere all men for their work of faith and labor of love, and (3) recapture the field of higher education for the Christian dynamic.

The Meaning of Grace

[[Essay](#)]

Many among us have made grace meaningless by legalism. They believe that the function of grace was to bring another law. They cannot distinguish between a written law and life in Christ from the indwelling Spirit. If we are to make grace meaningful we must restore to it the meaning attached to it by the Spirit after appropriating it from the Greeks and using it to describe God's giving of Himself in Christ. There are no conditions attached to grace. All one must do is to reach out and take it, but the reaching is not a condition attached. It is merely a means of appropriating it by the individual. But acceptance of it requires utter negation of self, which pride resists. While the grace that brings salvation teaches us, grace is the teacher, not the act of teaching nor the thing taught.

The Fulness of Godhood

[[Essay](#)]

Notes that the Greek words translated "Godhead" in Romans 1:20 (theiotes) and Colossians 2:9 (theotes) are not the same. The first refers to the traits of God which may be learned, while the other refers to his person which may be known. In theological terms, these refer to God's transcendence and to his immanence respectively.

The Power of Christ

[[Essay](#)]

Sets forth the opinion that the epistle called "Hebrews"

was addressed to Palestinian Jews, while the temple was still standing, (1) to counter the lure of defecting again to Judaism and (2) to show that in Christ we have something far superior to that which the Mosaic economy could offer, despite the pageantry and pomp of the temple. God's remedy against defection is to instill a proper understanding of our relationship to Jesus in which every aspect of life is brought under his lordship. To be in Christ is to be plugged into the very source of divine power. There are seven things affirmed about the status of Jesus which indicate the nature of his power: He is the heir of all things, the maker of the worlds, the brightness of God's glory, the express image of God's person, the upholder of all things, the purger of our sins, and he is seated at God's right hand. Here is the power to perform all that life demands of one.

Simple Solutions

[Essay]

There is an aspect of the party spirit that manifests itself in the glib answer to every human situation. Much of this stems from insecurity. Salvation depends upon being "right" on every issue. No one in the parties is in error. All of them have the truth and all disagree as to what it is. The sectarian must "pigeon-hole" everyone for its own security. Such a procedure avoids the responsibility of enlightened human contact and exchange. It is simple, easy and quick— too simple to be Christ-like and just simple enough to be Pharisaical. God never lumps people off. He deals with each person where he finds him. There are no easy answers, no simple solutions. However, security doesn't lie in having all the right answers but being in the right person. Rather than drafting decrees to cover every exigency we are better off if we relax in his arms and treat others as we would be treated.

The Spiritual Principle

[Essay]

Every institution is built upon a principle to which it traces its inception, which determines the nature of the institution. The community of believers is built upon the historical fact that God has manifested himself to the rational beings whose chief purpose in existence is to glorify Him. To that end divine disclosure was essential. It was afforded in three aspects—creation (the *power* of God), incarnation (the *person* of God), and revelation (the *purpose* of God).

The Mission of Wholeness

[Essay]

Heirs of the restoration movement seem to have a mistaken view of mission which has kept them from effective encounter with the world. Within our monastary walls we are insulated from the world. But fresh winds are creeping through. There is a revolt against making God a partisan ruler who is made to like what we like and hate those we hate. There is an uneasiness over the compartmentalization of life in which worship is reserved for certain times, places, and structures. Perceptive saints believe that every thought, motive, and act rendered in reverence is worship. There is a revolt against “phony charity,” which dubs as the “social gospel” any real compassion for human misery that never counts the cost or gain. The gospel of our Lord is not anti-social. When he ransomed man he delivered the whole man. As His body upon earth we must be concerned with every aspect of life.

Our Real Estate

Our concern in taking the world for Christ is often not to find where stark need exists but where we can find a building site. We cannot always retreat from reality to the affluent suburbs. We must go back into the world, some of which is messy and often bloody. To be effective in the inner city we must go there and get accustomed to the conditions on the ground. Often we are held back because we have no church building. But meeting in an apartment as a “church in the house” may be more appropriate. While it is not wrong for saints to own communal real estate we are at fault in our reasoning when we use the lack of church-owned real estate as an excuse for not penetrating an area.

The Restoration Principle

The restoration principle has been opposed as being inherently divisive. Proposes to define, outline, analyze, describe, and tell why it is a valid approach to unity. Restoration does not mean the reproduction in our day of any congregation mentioned in the new covenant scriptures nor the duplication of customs and conventions of a long-departed generation. Restoration involves stripping away the accumulation of philosophic opinion, metaphysical speculation, and theological interpretation which have obscured the message of heaven. While the current call for renewal by our religious neighbors is commendable, renewal requires a return to a previous state—the very thing that is condemned by many who are critical of the restoration principle. Renewal, however, can only come through a recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose, and power. The apostles were uniquely commissioned as ambassadors whose message is to be accepted as authoritative, since they spoke in

behalf of Christ. Their authority was not to cease with their death. The life of their message was permanent. Restoration means the recapture of the importance and relevance of the message from heaven. True unity is that given by the Spirit. It is not ours to discover a way to achieve it but to recover and receive it. Every person who responds in God's own way to God's own gospel is made a member of the one body, the members of which will be varied in degree of knowledge, temperament, disposition, social status, and race. Concludes with a list of seven items which are valid for recovery of the design of God for the community of believers in our day.

Two Unity Movements

[Essay]

Compares and contrasts the modern ecumenical movement with the restoration movement which began in the autumn of 1809. Both movements hold in common: (1) A conviction that schisms among Christians constitute a scandal to the church; (2) a belief that the prayer of Jesus for unity can be understood and answered; (3) an acceptance of the proposition that Jesus is Lord; (4) a goal of one church as the body of Christ, on earth; and (5) a relevance to our age, its culture and society. Areas of difference include: (1) The revelation of God is incomplete and open-ended; (2) the apostles simply recorded the struggle of a primitive people to discover truth; (3) man is free under God to experiment with religious structure upon the basis of present utility; (4) there is no definitive response to the Good News universally binding upon or demanded of mankind, but each man may surrender to God upon his own terms; (5) the essential thing being to hold up the light, the instrument for doing so is purely incidental and expendable. Concludes with the assertion that renewal must begin with a renewed interest in searching the sacred scriptures, noting that we must either

receive the word of the Lord, or reject the Lord of the Word.

The Bible and Reformation

[Essay]

Recounts the radical reformation of Josiah, king of Judah, and the impact upon his kingdom of having discovered the book of the law of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. Then observes that there has never been a religious reformation worth mentioning that did not result from rediscovery of the Word of God and its importance to life. Notes that a great revival was sparked by John Wycliffe's translation of the Word into English. And it was to scripture that Martin Luther made his impassioned appeal before the German emperor and the Imperial Diet at Worms. Observes that in his "Declaration and Address," with which the restoration movement began, Thomas Campbell proposes "to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express Word of God." Concludes that renewal will only come through recovery of the dynamic of God.

The Reconciling Community

[Essay]

Ours is a ministry of healing through reconciliation. If we are to speak meaningfully to the intellectual world we must (1) cease to identify with any sect or fragment in a divided Christendom; (2) project the community of saints as large enough and flexible enough to embrace all who have been received by Christ; (3) make it clear that the ordinances of God (baptism and the Lord's Supper) are not partisan administrations; (4) communicate to the world of our day the Message in a manner that is understandable and relevant. The

world is still open for a non-sectarian plea, but it is not receptive to such a plea made by sectarians.

A Non-Partisan Faith

[[Essay](#)]

In response to the question “Just what are you trying to do?” the author explains his mission and message, his view on baptism, his preaching, and his present aim— to get those in all factions to recognize that all of us are brethren and start treating each other as such. States clearly that he is *not* trying to get groups together, as that would do not good if their hearts were not changed.

God and Surveyor 3

[[Essay](#)]

With each scientific breakthrough the question is asked, “What does this do to the concept of God?” Such was the case with Surveyor 3 that landed on the surface of the moon. Notes that it should be expected that creative intelligence can produce a complex machine, but the complexity of Surveyor 3 can’t compare with that of man. Our concept of God should only be disturbed if Surveyor 3 were to make a man from the dust of the moon and give him life. While expressing support for space exploration, regards the space race as a little silly, indifferent toward world poverty, and sometimes careless. Expresses concern that we not make a garbage dump out of the moon like we have with the earth. While the Russians may be godless, God is not Russianless. While they may have defamed God by turning their cathedrals into museums, notes that we have done the same thing but we still pretend to “worship” in them. While

the Russian cosmonaut reported that he had not seen God up there, we should be worried if he had, and worried more if God had not seen him.

The Devil and Factions

[[Essay](#)]

After affirming a belief in the existence of the devil, considers the strategy he might use against “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” Then examines the schemes Satan has used to deceive the heirs of that “noble experiment” into thinking that the way to be faithful to their leader was to slash his body to ribbons. Notes that after a century of civil war a generation has arisen that is questioning the assumptions and influences upon which the party spirit has fed. Predicts that one day our brethren will be able to distinguish between the coat handed down by their fathers and the robe of righteousness handed over by the Son.

A Letter from Texas

[[Essay](#)]

In response to a letter objecting to the author’s teaching on fellowship, notes the inconsistency with which brethren categorize things as matters of faith, matters of opinion or matters of indifference. Calls attention to the absence of scriptural authority for asserting the prerogative of defining for others what constitutes matters of faith or matters of opinion. Points out that “the Christian Church” and “the Church of Christ” are not churches at all but factions which grew out of a nineteenth century unity movement. There is only one church. Consequently one cannot fellowship error, but those who are in

the fellowship of the Spirit are in the fellowship with every child of God on earth— all of whom are “brothers in error,” as there are no other kind. Notes that the faith that saves, which is to be proclaimed, is not the same as personal faith (Rom. 14:23) that is to be kept between oneself and God. Too many of us equate God’s revelation with our interpretation and conclude that because one is infallible the other must also be.

Liberty and Expediency

[Essay]

The divine purpose is not the selfish gratification of one, but the salvation of all. We must each examine our freedom and rights to assure that we do not violate the moral restraints imposed by God. Guidelines for interpersonal relationships are suggested: (1) There are values superior to individual rights; (2) No individual can insist upon his own rights to the destruction of the right of others; (3) The strong individual in Christ is the one who is willing to forego his personal rights for the common good. On the other hand, there are certain freedoms which should be cherished and defended: The liberty (1) to examine and search the scriptures personally; (2) to form conclusions and render judgments upon the basis of personal understanding; (3) to implement one’s understanding in his own life; (4) to be judged by conscience and Christ, to stand or fall to one’s own master; (5) to serve in a congregational capacity with those whose joint service appears most compatible to one’s understanding. But one must be restrained with regard to (1) binding his deductions as terms of communion; (2) making a personal interpretation a test of fellowship; (3) forming a party around his deductions; (4) placing a stumblingblock in a brother’s way; (5) imposing his thinking upon a congregation as a condition of recognition as brethren; (6) assisting any congregation in excluding any other.

The Clergy of God

[Essay]

Christianity was designed to penetrate a pagan culture, but Christians are a growing minority group. Our hope is in his helmet that guards the rational processes. We must recapture the secret of the electrifying results of the primitive saints. It was faith in a Message that was the dynamic to save. The primitive saints were living reproductions of Christ. They were characterized by service and giving. They had no concept of simply “going to church.” At their meetings they reported results of their encounters with the Enemy and went back to the battlefield to fight. Today we have been deceived into thinking of the body of Christ as the institutional church into which we gather as stockholders but do not go back into the conflict. The church has come between us and Christ. Current membership is made up of paying observers who did not enlist to fight. Our hope lies with the small pocket of concerned ones who are distressed by the difference between profession and practice. These, like leaven, must penetrate the masses at the expense of their own existence. We have been victimized by the Enemy into dividing our forces into clergy and laity. Such an idea is foreign to God’s program. We must make clergy of the laity. We must recognize that public proclamation of the Word is only one form of ministry— not the only form. The universal ministry of the saints is the dynamic which can change our modern world.

Belief and Unbelief

[Essay]

Rejects the notion that all who never heard of Jesus will be eternally lost. Observes that the foundation of faith is the belief of testimony. Where there is no testimony there can be no faith.

But intellectual assent is not the faith that saves because all intellectual states are involuntary. The faith which saves is an act of the will— a voluntary surrender or commitment of the whole being. One can only believe to the extent that he understands. Involuntary ignorance is never a sin and cannot be. Absence of faith is a mere vacuum, an unreality, and no one will be eternally doomed because of that which is unsubstantial. No honest intellectual doubt or distrust is the unbelief that damns. Such an intellectual state has no moral character. Disbelief or unbelief will no doubt damn because it is an act of the will. It is the rejection of truth. But there must be revelation before there can be unbelief. There can be no unbelief further than there is light. Where the gospel has never been heard there is no unbelief of the gospel as there is no belief of it, and there is no indication that God will damn those who have not heard and do not know. However, Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father except by me.” Any person who is saved will be saved by the merit of the sacrifice of Jesus. He is the only access to the Father. Those who are accepted because they are not responsible— infants, imbeciles, those born prior to Christ, and those who never hear the gospel— come under the blood, as does every responsible person who is saved!

Restoring a Movement

[[Essay](#)]

Every century has produced movements to restore the primitive order of Christianity. Historically such movements originate in reaction and revolution, and generally gravitate into other sects with their own institutions, organization, and vested interests. The search for truth gives way to the defense of traditional positions, and adherents fragment into parties, intensifying the very situation which the movement was created to alleviate. A sect creates its own little world and equates it with

God's big one. Historically no sect ever returns to a movement status. In the case of our own movement the hope of creating an exception to "the law of sectarian progression" lies in the renewal through recovery of the concepts and ideals which launched the movement in 1809. We must (1) once more become a unity-oriented people; (2) affirm that "the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one;" (3) make a clear distinction between the divine revelation and human interpretation of it. We can never be a genuine movement for unity so long as we postulate that oneness depends upon attainment to the same level or degree of knowledge.

Church of the Firstborn

[[Essay](#)]

In the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), the word "firstborn" is plural and has reference not to Jesus but to the saints whose names are written in heaven. God's children are so designated because God claimed the firstborn of Israel as His own. They were his by right of adoption. The Hebrews understood this so the writer had to make no explanation. When the word "church" is used properly in a universal sense it must embrace every saved person in the universe. When employed to designate the saints in a given city it must include every saint of God in that city. It is easy to equate the limits of God's grace with the boundaries of our acceptance. If, as John observed in his Revelation, the throng of those in heaven who have "washed their robes and made them white" was such that *no one could count*, it seems unlikely that the number on earth can be counted. The brotherhood of believers is as vast as God's redemptive love.

Thoughts on Repentance

Repentance involves (1) taking a second view of sin— a rational view— and then (2) changing the mind as a result. God's kindness, tolerance, and patience are intended to guide the transgressor to a change of heart, a change which is moral in character. Conviction of sin, consciousness of guilt or a recognition and fear of retribution are all passive states and thus cannot have moral character attributed to them. Repentance, for the same reason is not sorrow for wrongdoing nor grief for its consequences. They may cause one to take a second view of life and therefore lead to repentance, but they are not of themselves repentance. Repentance is an act of volition, a positive phenomenon of the will— a deliberate choice involving a complete change of purpose and intention made in the full light of intelligence. All life can be summed up in two terms— selfishness and selflessness. Repentance is the act of turning from the former to the latter by a surrender of the self to Jesus as Lord. Consequently the penitent loathes sin and recognizing that he cannot win the conflict by himself, places himself, through full commitment of self, in Him, where sin is not imputed or counted unto self, for he has no self. Self has been crucified. Impenitence is not the love of sin, it is an act of the will, a voluntary choice to pursue one's course, taken in full light of the consequences. It is rooted in the worship of self— installing self as usurper of divine prerogatives— an obstinate state of mind, determined to be served at all costs.

Speaking Unto Edification

While all we do should be done to glorify God, when the saints are assembled all activities should be aimed at edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Among the spiritual gifts, prophecy was

to be preferred, since it has as its objective to *edify*, *exhort*, and *comfort*. Edification means to build up, to instruct, to promote spiritual growth. Exhortation has to do with motivating or stirring up, inciting to action. Comfort has to do with encouragement, to strengthen. To build character, to stimulate the will, to strengthen the spirit— these should be the aim of the assembled saints.

The Denouement

[Essay]

In Colossians 3:4, Paul sums up the hope of the believers. J. B. Phillips translates his statement as “One day, Christ, the center of our lives, will show himself openly, and you will share in that magnificent denouement.” The word denouement (to untie a knot) refers to the final revelation or occurrence which clarifies the nature and outcome of a plot. The coming of Jesus will make all else in God’s program for the universe fit into place. It is the key to all of the mysteries of life through the ages.

The Progress of Reform

[Essay]

Quotes Alexander Campbell’s statement in 1938 that “the good cause of the restoration . . . is plead with increasing success and prosperity. . . .” Asserts that the same words may be used to describe the influence of a growing movement for renewal upon the splintered and fragmented body of restoration heirs. Gives examples from personal correspondence and recent events. Restates the “thoughts on fellowship” about which he began to write some ten years prior: (1) Fellowship is the sharing of the common life created by the indwelling Spirit of God, a state into

which we are called, not something to be extended or withdrawn. (2) Harmony is not essential to fellowship but is the goal of those in fellowship. (3) Fellowship is not the endorsement of another's position or views. God did not endorse a lot of things done by the saints in Corinth but they were in his fellowship. (4) Fellowship is not contingent upon unanimity of opinion. The only unity available to thinking men is unity in diversity. The unity of conformity must first reduce men to robots. (5) Equality of spiritual knowledge is not the foundation of fellowship. Jesus would be lonely if he eliminated all of his "brothers in error." Concludes by explaining how he has avoided creating another faction.

On the Rocks

[Essay]

The English word "scruple"— from *scrupulus*, "a small sharp stone in the shoe"— is used by J. B. Phillips to translate *dialogismos* in Romans 14:1. A scruple is the fruit of conscience which has been impregnated by doubt. The apostle uniquely enjoins that when two try to walk together while one has a pebble in his shoe, the one who does not may have to slow down voluntarily to walk with his brother. He who is free from scruples should never have contempt for his brother who does because (1) God has received them both, (2) both belong to a common master, (3) each must act according to personal conviction, (4) premature judgment of the other is playing God, (5) a thing which is right in itself is wrong for one who has the conviction it is wrong, (6) a brother must never be sacrificed to gratify self, and (7) all are to pursue things that promote peace.

Heretics and Reform

[Essay]

Rome's greatest error was to equate persistently held unorthodox opinions with heresy. Yet to seek to regulate men's opinions by threat, or to alter them by force or coercion, is to make hypocrites of the weak and martyrs of the strong. Every faction skims off the brains from the top and retains the mass of the unthinking below. Every protest movement throughout history began as a rebellion against intolerance and ends by becoming more intolerant than that which it abandoned. The persecuted of yesterday becomes the persecutor of today. Those who react against the power structure (e.g., Tertullian, Luther) act differently when they create a power structure of their own. The heroes of today were the heretics of yesterday. No generation ever recognizes its own prophets. There are two persons humanity can never tolerate— a man who lives too far below their standard, and the one who lives too far above it. They imprison the first and crucify the second. All the nails that ever fastened men to a cross came from a box labeled "Heresy."

Hippies and Missions

[Essay]

Highlights from a conversation with Matthew Ikeda, a young Japanese doctoral student, about the motivation behind the loss of young intellectuals to the drug culture, and about the attitudes and practices of many foreign missionaries, notably those who tend to confuse western culture with citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. Notes that we do not take Christ to Japan, for He has already been there.

Family Culture

[Essay]

A review of Alexander Campbell's book, *Family Culture; or Conversations in the Domestic Circle at the Carlton House*, published in 1850. In the book the reader is present during family devotions and Bible study which occur in the early morning and in the evening. The family is taken through a thorough study of the first twenty-two chapters of Genesis and discussions on Luke's account of Christ.

A Good Question

[[Essay](#)]

Responds to a question concerning statements in a previous article ([Belief and Unbelief](#)) and how they relate to 2 Thessalonians 1:8, which speaks of (1) those who “know not God” and (2) those who “obey not the gospel.” Points out that a man cannot decide to be under the Lordship of Jesus if he never heard of Jesus. Whereas the entire world of rational beings has testimony related to God in nature. When man, by reason, follows this clue to its logical end he will either acknowledge God or reject him. To act out of reverence for God in the light available unto one is to “know God” as the term is here employed. There is a vast difference between a refusal to acknowledge that of which you have heard, and involuntary ignorance which you cannot help.

The Community of God

[[Essay](#)]

Makes numerous historical observations regarding the geographical setting of Peter's great confession of Jesus as the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi. Concludes that it was the *fact* of the Messiahship that constitutes the “rock” upon which Jesus

promised to build his *ekklesia* which, it is suggested, is best translated by the word “community.” Goes on to explain the meaning of the word *ekklesia*, the origin and development of the word “church” and its use by the translators of the King James Version. Concludes by responding to questions raised by those who read the essay in advance of its publication.

The Reason Why

[Essay]

Declares that he wishes to be a Christian, and a Christian only, but does not wish to be a part of a “Christian only” party. Being a Christian only makes it possible to share in the truths of all other Christians without sharing in the errors that give them their distinctive, hyphenated identities. Considers himself to be a *catholic, baptist, methodist, presbyterian, episcopal, one of the brethren, one of the united brethren in Christ, a friend, part of the church of God as well as the church of God in Christ, a protestant, a conservative, and a liberal, in the true sense of each of these terms. Concludes that no sect is big enough to include all the truth or all of the saved. If men will be disciples of Christ Jesus it will be in spite of their parties and not because of them.*

A College Student

[Essay]

Observations concerning the rigidity of the sectarian system within the “Churches of Christ” which prompted a letter to the author from a graduate student who complains about the arrogance and dogmatism within the church in which he grew up. The author expresses sympathy with those in scholastic disciplines who are taught to think for themselves, and who find

that the one place they are prohibited from doing so is in the congregation. Encourages the student in his decision to “stay with it a little longer” and urges “all of our younger brethren” not to defect, predicting that we shall win the battle for returning sanity in a movement which has been tearing at its own flesh. Expresses confidence that one of these days we shall see fellowship in its true light and will be able to join hands with all of God’s children to bring a powerful witness in our neo-pagan world.

The Crisis of Change

[Essay]

The assumption that the community of saints during the lifetime of the apostles was a smooth-running organization of conformists is shown to be fallacious in light of history and the new covenant scriptures. The primitive saints were not conformists. One congregation differed from another. Jerusalem and Antioch were not alike. There were grave cultural differences which were bridged only by mutual love for the Lord Jesus. Therefore the real goal of restoration-minded believers in our day should be the recapture of the noble spirit of tolerance which preserved the one body from disintegrating under serious tensions and stresses. To love and revere those who differ because they are the offspring of a common Father, and to view the relationship thus established as more vital than the peculiarities of those within it is no task for little souls.

Absolute Proof

[Essay]

Reacts to a letter from a university student who insists that

if he cannot have absolute proof of the existence of God he is ready to abandon what he was taught as a child in order to maintain his “intellectual integrity.” Observes that while we must all eventually arrive at a personal and disciplined faith, there may be no absolute proof given the fact that the prover is fallible and all of his proofs must be relative. God is greater than any criteria we have by which to measure. It is a fallacy to assume that everything must be proven to be believed. If God is personal, the real proof of his existence must be person-to-person. To affirm the non-existence of God requires the possession of unlimited knowledge and infinite vision. But if man is powerless to present absolute proof of God’s existence, his powerlessness does not constitute absolute proof of God’s non-existence. No fact is affected by one’s ability or inability to prove it. No scholastic discipline can provide absolute proof of anything. Intellectual integrity is not conditioned upon demand for absolute proof in advance of faith but unprejudiced examination of data with an open mind to testimony which may appear subsequently.

A Personal Decision

[Essay]

While expressing appreciation for an offer to help dress up *Mission Messenger* and make it a little more appealing, states that the journal is not an organization and that he is not carrying on a crusade nor leading a movement: that he is weary of institutionalized religion and tired of vested interests and party machinery; that *Mission Messenger* will remain plain in appearance (it’s for plain folks!); that it will die and be buried with him.

The Fellowship of the Unashamed

After a brief review of the courageous lives of those ancients who died in faith, seeing God's promises only at a distance, observes that a new army of faith, the fellowship of the unashamed, began to form and march under the orders of the Risen Lord, invading every part of the earth and penetrating every stratum of society. Although they had none of the "advantages" of any of the machinery deemed essential in our day to promote and procure success, they had three things: a divine relationship through the Spirit, a divine mission with the Spirit, and a divine service in the Spirit. Theirs was the life of the Spirit of life in whose power they went forth conquering and to conquer. Concludes with a challenge to become a vital part of the fellowship of the unashamed— "Instead of taking danger out of life let us restore it; instead of removing risk, let us renew it." We must quit talking about holding services and start to render them. Crosses were not made to sing about, but to carry and to die upon.

A Marked Copy

Reacts to a copy of a letter sent by a preacher to his congregation, warning them of the ability of Carl Ketcherside to "completely undermine the church as we have known it . . . as if he had a new . . . commandment. . . ." The author makes a number of observations regarding his own writings, then notes that "the church as we have known it" is not really the body of Christ. We should rather be concerned to return to the community of saints as God wants it. Concludes with other observations related to his own struggle with partisan pride and intolerance.

One Day of Life

[Essay]

Acknowledges several personal barriers to service which the Lord enabled him to overcome, resulting in a sense of inner peace and freedom from fear. Then shares the events of a twenty-four hour period of his life in which the Lord opened several doors of opportunity for him to share with others in various discussions. Lists four things which originally acted as mental barriers and made it difficult for him to openly witness to his convictions.

The Solvent of Doubt

[Essay]

Reflections upon a letter from a college student majoring in art in which the student expresses doubt about the existence of God— that each person creates his own image of God. Observes that modern art thrives upon distortion and seeks to reduce the real to an unreal imagery. While we need to alter our concepts of many things as we mature, to postulate that we invent that about which our concepts alter, and that such alteration is proof of invention is itself and immature concept. The mere ability to conceive of God, and the universal exercise of that ability, seems to constitute a very strong presumption that God exists.

Priests and Pontiffs

[Essay]

Maintains that the only way God can bridge the great gulf

between himself and the world is to penetrate it as Word become flesh. He did this through a Son. Jesus was God incarnate. He came to the world and he calls us to do the same— to be God in the flesh, “little Christ.” To go into all the world for him was not a geographical concept. It did not mean covering every mile of every road to contact every man, but accepting the burden and the concern and the sensitivity of every sinful being on earth, wherever that being was. To fulfill our mission we must start as he did. The word of God must become flesh— our flesh. As did he, we must translate the word into life. We must become bridge-builders (pontiffs) so those who inhabit the fragmented world may cross over that bridge which God has built in Christ. We must never forget the purpose of our anointing— to allow the word of God to become flesh in our flesh. This is not a work we can relegate or delegate to others. Wherever one’s lot is cast, there is his “world.” It is into that world that he is sent as minister, priest, and pontiff.

The Ministry of the Cross and the Growth of the Church

[Essay]

In an address at Milligan College, suggests a few areas in which we need to revise our thinking in order to recover the power of God for our age. We must (1) quit talking about the symbols of our faith and begin to exemplify the reality of our divine-human relationship; (2) relinquish the hope that we can conquer the world by a group of professionals; (3) develop a strategy for the recapture of those territories from which we have withdrawn and forfeited to the enemy (such as education and science); (4) recover our faith in the attested truth of God so that it may be built not upon the wisdom of men but upon the power of God.

Heralds of Hope

[Essay]

After a series of quotations from several historians of the early church (Celsus, Newman, Fisher, de Pressense, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian), takes note of those factors contributing to the spread of the faith throughout the known world. Concludes with observations concerning implications for our day: (1) we must recapture the concept of every Christian is a minister of God; (2) we must recapture the concept of the transformed life; (3) We must crucify our prejudices; (4) we must recapture the raw courage of faith; (5) We must recapture the impact of the message of hope.

God and Time

[Essay]

Response to a letter from a college student inquiring about the nature of God and time. Notes that there is only one honest motive for belief and that is to be intellectually consistent with fact or truth. Cautions that one can make an idol out of a concept as well as out of a tree trunk. Whether Paul Tillich meant to posit a non-personal God from Paul's statement that "in him we live and move and have our being" may be questionable, but one would have to wrest the passage in order to do so. Any real approach to God must be predicated upon belief in his existence, and it must include the idea that he is not impersonal. Regarding the concept of time, asserts that what we call time is simply our way of measuring that segment of eternity in which our existence is cast. Time is for man. Neither God nor lower animals would require it.

Conflict with Caesar

It is evident that the success of the early Christian movement was due to a divine power shaping its destiny. The secret of their strength is to be found in the following: (1) Their relationship to Jesus was not an organizational one, but personal; (2) Every saint was a soldier, a runner, a fighter in the arena; (3) Their message was not a recital of decrees or a repetition of dogma; (4) They knew the value and power of the fellowship created by the Spirit and found comfort and strength in an association composed of those who rejoiced at the great salvation wrought in their behalf. Observes that in order to recapture the dynamic of the early Christians in our day we must (a) cease to equate our sectarian structures with the one body filled with and impelled by the Holy Spirit; (b) cease to judge loyalty to the King by an attitude toward secondary matters in the Kingdom; (c) stop trying to deceive men by false claims about our identity, projecting an image that is patently false; (d) start “leveling” with our generation and stop concealing our partisan bias in clever phraseology; (e) begin practicing congregational autonomy in honest fashion; (f) find a way to implement in a meaningful way the priesthood of all believers; (g) cease to think of what is done in our religious edifices as service; (g) stop dividing life into sacred and secular compartments; (h) cease talking about holy days, places, and liturgy; (i) revive the message of hope and proclaim anew the resurrection.

The Uncommon Faith

In spite of the great power of heaven demonstrated in the manifestation of divinity in the slave garb which made it possible for him to share with the earthborn ones, some must still seek

reassurance in lesser demonstrations which, ultimately, are symptoms of doubt. For the man of unadulterated trust there is no need to ascend into heaven and bring Christ down. Such a man does not require a “burning bush” or to be fed by ravens. Our problem is we find it easier to walk by sight than by faith—afraid to trust the testimony of the ages. Gives personal testimony that such additional proof is not required.

As Shaw Said It

[[Essay](#)]

Commenting on a quote from George Bernard Shaw, notes that the outstanding thing about the primitive community of grace-sharers was its roominess, in contrast with the narrow Jewish sects and Greek cults. The Way could unite the world because it ignored the distinctions which kept it divided. We need to restore the roominess of the ransomed community. God’s house is big enough for all his family. The Father has begotten no surplus or unwanted children.

The Stumblingblock

[[Essay](#)]

Our movement, that began as a project to unite the Christians in all the sects, has ended up more divided than those whom we sought to unite. This came about by a false philosophy developed in our initial fracture. The symbol of that philosophy is the use of instrumental music. To those who oppose it, it is viewed as an indication of rebellion. To those who defend it, it is visible proof of their liberty. It is apparent to thinking men that we must go back and heal this original fracture or remain a divided movement. The alternatives are to continue to attack

each other, or simply to ignore each other. The first approach has not worked for over one hundred years and the second is not the way of Christ—it is dishonest. The real hope lies not in one party surrendering to the other but both parties surrendering to Christ. To undo the factional error of our fathers, instrumental music must be removed from the category of a test of fellowship. Suggests five considerations which may make the task of reconciliation easier: (1) The use of the instrument is not a test of one's respect for the authority of Christ; (2) Both those who defend and those who oppose instrumental music do so upon the basis of deduction— based upon a philosophy of interpretation growing out of presuppositions formulated by collating and interpreting isolated passages. (3) Each side approaches the scriptures with an interpretive bias for which there is no specific authority; (4) We must reject as childish the notion that we cannot be in fellowship with “brothers in error” since we are all brothers in error, although not all in the same error; (5) The use of instrumental music does not negate our relationship as brothers. Concludes with a personal declaration regarding fellowship in spite of differences.

Transplanted Hearts

[Essay]

In response to a letter in which the death of a well-known individual is offered as evidence that God does not exist, observes that except for the publicity it was given it was no different than the death of any other person on earth. So the essential question becomes simply, “Why do men die?” Then the death of any specific individual (regardless of the circumstances surrounding his death) cannot be used as the proof of the existence or non-existence of God. The best way to determine whether God exists or not is by taking him at his word in unreserved obedience. He has promised to give a new heart to

those who submit their will to his unqualifiedly.

The Unsearchable Riches

[[Essay](#)]

Just as nothing has been added to the material universe since creation, nothing has been added to God's revelation since John penned the book of Revelation. Yet, as in the natural realm, so in the spiritual, there will be unexplored depths to beckon men on until Jesus comes. The Bible is an inexhaustible storehouse written for all men of every age. It offers each generation new fruits which have never before been gathered. Nothing would discourage study more than the realization that there was nothing to be achieved by it.

The Question Box

[[Essay](#)]

Responds to questions prompted by his article titled, "The Stumblingblock" (Volume 30, No. 7) in which he proposed that the question of instrumental music cease to be regarded as a "test of fellowship" among brethren. The ten questions and answers appear in three categories: Debating the Question, Congregational Singing, and The Possible Effect.

Moral Philosophy

[[Essay](#)]

Responds to a letter from a graduate student of philosophy who asserts that "every moral or ethical precept enunciated by

Jesus was borrowed from a prior source and was not a divine declaration” (as the student was taught to believe). Observes that moral obligations are inherent in the nature of man as a social and rational being. Laws may define and clarify them but they can never create them. Since brilliant thinkers existed long before Jesus, we should not be surprised to find a wealth of wisdom literature in the philosophic works of many ancient people. However, one of the clearest examples of a unique ethical precept enunciated by Jesus is his teaching related to love—*agape*— that active and benevolent good will which stops at nothing to accomplish the good of its object. It required the cross to demonstrate its depth and give it meaning. Until this time, the natural concept was that love is responsive to that which was lovable in the object. But *agape* is exactly the opposite. It is the ability to love the unlovable, thus creating worth in the object. The uniqueness of Christianity is not in the code of morals which it predicates but in the revelation of God himself in Jesus as the manifestation of eternal life. Heathen philosophers discovered moral truths but they could not find power to implement them in their own lives. Christianity is not an ethical code trying to make us good from without, but an inner transformation which purifies from within.

More Questions

[Essay]

Responds to additional questions prompted by his article titled “The Stumblingblock” (Volume 30, No. 7) which proposed that the matter of instrumental music be removed from that category of doctrines regarded as tests of fellowship. The questions are: (1) How can we overcome the problem of division on a local level? (2) How would you approach the problem of a Christian Church and Church of Christ in a small town who have little contact with each other due to bitterness created in

the past by outside evangelists? (3) What can a group of concerned students in a non-instrument oriented Christian college do to further unity as you see it? (4) It seems to me that you have sold out and adopted the policy that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. What do you say? (5) What should a congregation do where half the members want to put in an instrument and half oppose it? (6) If we silence our instrument when non-instrumental brethren are visiting, should they not put one in when we visit them? (7) I would like to call on the Church of Christ preacher to pray when he comes to our service but I fear dividing the congregation. What should I do? (8) I cannot see how we can demonstrate unity while meeting in separate places — some using the instrument and some refusing to do so. Concludes with practical suggestions for achieving unity.

About Authority

[Essay]

Responds to recent assertions that there is room in the kingdom for diversity in understanding, opinion, and method of operation, so long as the authority of Jesus is respected as absolute. Notes that upon closer examination, those making such statements still insist on the infallibility of their partisan deductions with regard to controversial issues— precisely the spirit which prompted our schisms at the outset. It is not becoming of them to insist upon respect for the authority of Jesus in areas where he has said nothing while coldly disregarding what he has repeatedly said in another area of such importance— the sin of division and the crime of “setting at naught a brother” for whom Jesus died.

Rivers of Living Water

[Essay]

Describes in detail the elaborate ceremony associated with the Jewish feast of tabernacles, the feast at which Jesus stood up and cried out: “If any many thirst, let him come unto me, and drink . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,” referring to the Holy Spirit that they that believe on him were to receive after his departure from the earth. Discusses the relationship of thirst and belief, noting that the believer is to be the channel through which the Holy Spirit abundantly flows. Points out that the fountain of living waters is the result of the indwelling Spirit, noting that the Spirit (1) was to be a gift, (2) could be received only by those who believe in Jesus, (3) could only come after Jesus was glorified, and that (4) we can only become channels of blessing by receiving the Spirit. Shows the fallacy of arguments claiming that the Spirit is identical with the word of God and that the promise of the Spirit was given only to the apostles. Asserts that the community of God is a fraternity of the Spirit— filled ones who (1) worship by the Spirit, (2) glory in Jesus Christ, and (3) put no confidence in the flesh. It follows that the community of God is a spiritual community because it is the community of the Spirit.

The Big Mistake

[Essay]

Maintains that the gravest error contributing to division in the religious world is the mistaken view that the new testament is composed of twenty-seven books or letters. Asserts that not one word of the new testament has ever been written with ink or put on paper. The word “testament” means “a covenant.” The old covenant was written on two tablets of stone, consisting of ten commandments. The new covenant is written directly on minds and hearts. The Big Error is in perceiving the new covenant to be a new law and salvation as contingent upon one’s understanding it all perfectly and obeying it meticulously. But

many died for the faith before a single apostolic letter was written. The new covenant is a person (Isa. 42:6; 49:8) and the relationship created by the new testament is a personal relationship. Jesus is God's new testament. The new covenant was completed on Pentecost. Nothing was ever added to it. The gospel is good news consisting of seven facts. The apostolic letters were all written to people who were already in the testamental kinship. The letters were intended for the instruction of God's children.

An Open Proposition

[Essay]

Asserts that the position of brethren in "Churches of Christ" on fellowship is a flat denial of the principle of the restoration movement as set forth in "The Declaration and Address." It is contrary to the fundamental teaching of the apostolic epistles, and is both unscriptural and anti-scriptural. It is carnal, spiritually immature, and divisive in its very nature. It is an approach to unity that is dishonest—professing respect for the authority of Jesus but cloaking the fact that it substitutes partisan interpretation as the real authority. The exaltation of views relative to the millennium or instrumental music to the realm of tests of fellowship negates the divine dynamic of brotherly love. Concludes with a proposal to hold a public discussion with Reuel Lemmons, editor of the *Firm Foundation*, at a place of his choosing. Pledges politeness and decorum and to act in kindness and love. Observes that it is tragic for us to continue divided and dividing while the rest of the world thinks in terms of unity and uniting.

Body and Spirit

[Essay]

God's direct involvement with mankind occurred through the Word becoming flesh. Just as Jesus entered the physical body of man to do God's will, man must enter the spiritual body of Christ to do God's will. One in whom the Spirit does not dwell is not in the body, the *ekklesia*. The body of Christ is a fellowship of the Spirit. The body is a creation of the Spirit. It is the action of the Spirit in and through baptism which brings us into our corporate relationship with one another and with Christ. It should be noted that: (1) the body of Christ is not composed of sects, denominations or parties; (2) The Holy Spirit never created a sect or faction; (3) The body of Christ was vitalized by the Spirit on Pentecost and has never died since that day; (4) The party spirit is always working to divide; (5) The unity of the Spirit is absolutely unaffected by racial or social differences; (6) The work of the Spirit does not cease with our introduction into the one body. We dare not limit fellowship to the adherents of any one historical movement.

Two Letters

[Essay]

Contrasts two letters— one from a young doctoral student disillusioned with “Church of Christism,” and another from an elder in the Church of Christ who asks what it is this “college-educated bunch of complainers” don’t like. Lists ten attitudes against which younger brethren are revolting: (1) The pre-occupation with partisan issues above human welfare; (2) The arrogance of clericalism and the hypocrisy which pretends that we do not have a professional clergy; (3) The assumption of infallibility in interpretation of Scripture; (4) The studied refusal to take a positive stand upon the important problems threatening the world of mankind; (5) The hypocrisy involved in making it appear that we have no partisan power structures to restrict or restrain brethren; (6) The unwarranted equation of

the restoration movement with the one body to the exclusion of those outside one of our factions; (7) The scrapping of scriptural texts, selecting isolated passages to create a system and defending the same as the will of God (“church of Christism”); (8) The closed door policy toward meaningful dialogue with other sincere students of God’s word; (9) The intrusion of censorship groups which judge fidelity to Christ by the brotherhood journals to which one subscribes; (10) The vanity of those who have majored in Bible and conclude that this makes them experts in all other fields.

The Moral Being

[Essay]

By nature man is a moral being. The exercise of the rational powers with which he is endowed leads to the development of a principle within to which he is obligated. This principle produces a sense of moral obligation or oughtness which is not subject to further definition since being primary there are no simpler terms into which one can break it down. Since man is a moral agent it is essential that he understand the conditions imposed upon him by virtue of the rationality of his being. Moral agency grows out of the fact that man can not only conceive of right and wrong, he can choose to perform what his conscience endorses as right. Moral obligation is the obligation to choose an ultimate end of life as the highest good in the universe, as well as the necessary means by which to obtain that end. Man cannot be made a moral being by law or statute— by imposition of authority from without. Man is conscious that he is free, and it is this nature that makes him a moral agent. Any religion which attempts to make man be good by authoritarian pronouncement is doomed to failure.

The Spirit and Liberty

The first community of saints lived, walked, and rejoiced in the Spirit, apart from whom they would have been helpless. The people of God are more than a group of individuals who believe in God. They are God at work in his world, the temple of God, a living vehicle to take God to men. They experienced persecution of every kind but they drew upon the power of God. That same power is available to us. But in its absence we have been seduced into believing that we can generate our own power through printing programs, advertisement, and the perfection of liturgy and ritual. Yet the structure we have created is dead. We go to great lengths to breathe life in to it, but it is the life of the system. We mistake mass enthusiasm for the dynamic of God within. The answer to our condition is simple: we must leave our nets— the things in which we have trusted for security, support, success, and welfare— and follow Jesus. Our task is to recover the sense of closeness to God through recognition of the power and purpose of the Holy Spirit. We should take note of what the Spirit did for the first believers: (1) granted strength and power in their inner being; (2) overpowered and overcame the temptations of the flesh; (3) experienced a life on an altogether different level than that in the flesh; (4) allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace; (5) articulated their deepest yearnings, translating them into the language of heaven. Our life in Christ is dependent upon our relationship with the Spirit through faith.

Throwing Down Error

While commending the general attitude of a fellow-editor's plea for unity, asserts that there is a concealed "booby-trap" in his proposal that states that "when each has thrown down what error he may have possessed and embraced the truth his brother

has been able to show him, we . . . will have undenominational Christianity.” The questions are: Does this brother affirm he is free from error or does God endorse his ignorance? Is there any person on earth in the fellowship who is not possessed of some error? If one does not need to “throw down what error he may have possessed” as a condition of entering the fellowship of God, why must he throw it down to be received into the fellowship of men? How much error can one hold and still be in the fellowship? Who determines the amount of error acceptable to God? Who is the official interpreter? Any person who makes freedom from error the basis of unity can never make Jesus the common denominator for oneness. When you substitute knowledge of propositions for faith in a person as the basis of unity you become a schismatic. If a person is right about Jesus, he can be wrong about a lot of things and still be saved; if he is wrong about Jesus, he can be right about everything else and still be lost. The solution to the problem is simple: we must receive all whom God receives upon the same basis that he has received them. Freedom from error is not a condition of entering heaven or none of us would ever make it. It is one’s attitude toward truth that makes the difference.

[At the Milepost](#)

[[Essay](#)]

An informal “chat” with readers about finances, fees, and future plans. Suggests that there must be a complete revolution in our concept of ministry and in our relationship to structures and a distinction made between what we have concocted and what God has created. Mentions plans to present an occasional article from a brother who is “different,” considering that honest dissent is wholesome. Pledges to allow each man to stand upon his own merits without condemning him ahead of time because someone has placed him in a partisan stereotype. Notes

the staleness of what regularly appears in some of the brotherhood journals. Observes that the brethren are going around and around on the partisan treadmill, answering questions no one is asking and saying nothing that touches life as we have to live it.

Commandoes for Christ

[Essay]

After announcing the theme for the present year—Commandoes for Christ—expresses a sense of inner urgency to share in the months ahead what may appear evolutionary. Observes that our illusion that we are conquering the world for Christ must be recognized for what it is. We are losing the battle, but it was not intended to be thus. Soldiers of Christ were to be “more than conquerors.” There was to be discipline, hardship, suffering, and endurance. But somewhere along the line the Enemy convinced us to withdraw from the combat zone and build fortresses into which to retire in safety. We have created the institutional church and become victimized by our own creation. What we think of “the church” bears little resemblance to the *ekklesia* of God. But to be effective, one must work within an existing fellowship. Those who try to reform by starting over historically always create a group more sectarian than the one they abandoned—due to the fact that it was started by sectarians. Revelation 2, 3 reveals that God accepts the faithful within unfaithful congregations, and he never recommended that the faithful pull out and start a rival institution. The institutional church of our day is a vast mission field. After surveying the current situation of the institutional church and suggesting a complete tactical change, concludes with an outline of a ten-point program to be elaborated in future essays.

The Place

[Essay]

Artfully describes the special place where he used to go often as a young preacher still going to high school, a place that had a special pull on his heart, an isolated, moss-covered ledge extending out above a gently winding river, a place that helped to clear the cobwebs from his brain and air out the musty corners of the soul. Observes that when you have known such a place you can go anywhere on earth without doubting the existence or the providence of God. Once you have come to know the Presence in your life, nothing else that happens can stifle or erase it.

The Concerned Remnant

[Essay]

It is evident that “the church” in our day is wholly unlike “the Way” as depicted in Luke and Acts. We seldom think of “the working of his mighty power.” There is no thought of wrestling with the cosmic forces of the universe. Instead, we find that (1) we have watered down sin until it is no longer considered an offense against God; (2) We have lost the sense of the need for personal reconciliation with God; (3) We have been betrayed into resting our hope in an institution rather than in a Savior; (4) We have allowed ourselves to be brainwashed into dividing our lives into areas called secular and sacred. The real question is how shall we recapture our freedom and regain the power which can make us “more than conquerors through him that loved us”? The ground for optimism lies in the *ekklesia* within the *ekklesia*— the remnant of concerned ones— who remain within the institutional church but come together as cell groups to become the leaven in each congregation, to work

toward a restoration of freedom in Christ and a return to the power of God in the life of the body.

The Touch of Life

[Essay]

The religious establishment of our day does not exist to further and promote the ideals of Jesus upon the earth. Reform is long overdue. Jesus did not come to establish a new religion in the earth. He came to put an end to “religion” as a means of serving God. The only religion acceptable to God is life itself. It is going personally to ascertain the needs of widows and orphans with a view to relieving them. There is no intimation of anything done in a chapel. It involves worship in spirit and in truth. It is expressed in concern for the helpless and with the life of integrity. The scriptures are not to be converted into a legalistic code lest we nullify the purpose of the cross. Jesus came that we might have life— through a vital personal relationship— not religion. The scriptures are to lead us to Jesus and Jesus’ message is always “Follow me!” It is possible to get so wrapped up in religion that we actually forget about the life that Jesus came to bestow and confuse religious activity with that life. The life of Jesus touched *all* of life about him, and he was no less the Son of God when dealing with the physical needs of mankind than when dealing with the spiritual. Salvation is for the whole man. Jesus describes the criteria for the final judgment in terms of active concern for the needy— not upon doctrinal correction. Jesus would say, if your enemy hunger, do not preach him a sermon, but feed him. Jesus may be nearer the slum dwelling than he is to the modernistic suburban cathedral. Our plea is that we cease to trust in our rituals to purchase God’s approval and move into the world in meaningful encounter.

Opening Our Windows

The division within our movement nullifies our appeal for unity and gives lie to our claim of superior knowledge of the will of God. Our orthodox editors continue to claim it is simply a question of respect for the authority of the word. But the arrogant assumption that only one minority group has any real respect for the authority of Jesus is merely an escape from facing up to meaningful encounter with those who differ with our interpretations. It is time for sweeping reformation. There are things we must surrender: (1) We must reject the concept that restoration of the ancient order means the reproduction in our age of any congregation established by or existing in the days of the apostles; (2) We must divest ourselves of the notion that every method of Jesus in the implementation of his divinely ordained purpose is equally important with that purpose; (3) We must forever free ourselves from the grave error that fellowship is equivalent to endorsement; (4) We must rebel against factional leadership whose purpose is to maintain our sectarian status quo and who thwart every move toward a greater sense of oneness; (5) We must develop the courage to speak out boldly against the intolerance and bigotry which characterizes the sectarian attitude of which our brethren are victims.

The Unmistakable Scent

Provides details of a typical Roman victory procession as a historical backdrop to understanding Paul's statement to the Corinthians that "God . . . leads us on Christ's triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him spread throughout the world like a lovely perfume!" (2 Cor. 2:14-16). Notes that wherever Christians go the scent of Christ is perceived— those who are heading for death imagine it to be the smell of doom. To the rest

it is the very breath of life itself.

Spiritual Pioneers

[[Essay](#)]

Christians in our day have often lost the spirit of adventure contributing to a mere “treading of the courts” by apathetic worshippers. We have allowed ourselves to become blinded with the rays of tradition. What is called “Christianity” by millions has produced a lukewarm institution that makes even God want to vomit. But our hope lies not in the apathetic mass but in the lives of the venturesome few: the missionaries who cut themselves loose from financial apron strings; the school teachers who go into the ghettos, the college youth who open up inner city “coffee houses” as a lifeline to those battered by waves of passion and storms of hate; university students who dare to challenge the smut-merchants, parents who maintain unswerving discipline and who refuse to lower their ethical standards. The spirit of daring is not dead. To these the Way is not one of cold indifference. They have the courage to go wherever the action is.

Vocabulary Problems

[[Essay](#)]

Almost every word employed by the Holy Spirit through the envoys of Christ has been abused and given a misleading connotation in our generation. It should be one of our tasks to rescue that terminology and restore it to its proper place so that it will once more communicate the thought of God. We need to emphasize that every Christian is a life recruit in full-time service for Jesus, and we are God’s children wherever we are.

We must abandon our unscriptural and misleading distinctions which perpetuate the idea that life is compartmentalized into “secular” and “spiritual.” The “high calling of God” is not to enter the pulpit but to come into Christ. We must recognize that while we are all important to the body we cannot all do the same thing in the same way. We must avoid the conclusion that the only way men can function is through organized activity. One must avoid being motivated by a spirit of sectarian rivalry. We must cease to think of our brethren as cogs to keep the wheels of the institution turning.

The Planned Experience

[Essay]

If death is all there is then there is no sense at all to existence. But if suffering and death are part of a plan leading to a transcendent experience, they are at least understandable. Statements by Paul make it evident that if one can grasp the significance of grace and come to rely on it, he has the foundation for a sane evaluation of self and destiny. The legalistic approach makes God a police judge instead of a Father, and leaves us unfitted for a life free from worry and concern for self. Grace frees us from inner dread. One may even choose pain if he realizes that it is a road to a better life (e.g., a cripple submitting to the pain of corrective surgery). Pain is only intolerable when it seems pointless. A Christian does not leave home when he dies, he goes home!

The Complete Eclipse

[Essay]

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul makes it clear that the former

covenant, and the temporary glory associated with it, has been completely eclipsed by the glory of the new. Not only has the law been done away, we have been freed from the law as a means of hope of justification. But men have changed the epistles of love into a written code and like the Jews their hearts are hardened and they cannot realize that Jesus did away with the veil. Let us remove the veil so we can see clearly that we are not under law but under grace.

The Cultural Challenge

[Essay]

A challenge to the whole general approach to the life and needs of the latter half of the twentieth century, which is affirmed to be irrelevant and out-moded, and ineffective. The body of Christ must change as human demands change. The change must come in our approach to life and the environment in which destiny has placed us. Our world has shifted from a rural to an urban culture, and this makes some of our methods as outmoded as a scythe in a thousand acre wheat field. A good example is our three meetings per week, which has become a fixed and formal pattern. While it suited the needs of a rural lifestyle it is likely not best suited for our day (for reasons enumerated). The same may be said for “revivals” and “gospel meetings.” As a remedy it is proposed that we (1) re-evaluate our meetings to determine if we are simply maintaining a tradition which is no longer meaningful; (2) play down the idea of church and recapture the idea of a divine *family*; (3) put our meetinghouses to use to serve real needs; and (4) stop the brain drain and talent waste by drawing upon the intellectual resources of the whole body of believers. We must place preachers in the role of parent or coach—inspiring others, providing incentives, training and disciplining each member until he responds automatically to the openings and

opportunities which are presented.

God's Man Yes

[Essay]

Exposition of 2 Cor. 1:19, 20, in which Paul refers to Jesus as the divine “yes.” The implications are that (1) Jesus is not a doubtful quantity; faith in him is established by the same rules that govern the establishment of fact by witnesses; (2) Jesus is the expression of the creative power which made the universe; men look for thrills in gambling and drugs because they no longer conceive of themselves as working together with God, plugged into the power source of the universe; (3) Every divine promise finds its affirmative in him; (4) Only through Jesus man finds his ultimate in spiritual enrichment in sharing the glory of God.

Living Letters

[Essay]

Although God announced numerous covenants, there were but two designated the first and second, the old and new. Both covenants were written by “the finger of God,” the Holy Spirit—the first upon two tablets of stone, the second upon the tables of the heart. But not one word of the new testament was ever written with pen or ink. There are not twenty-seven books in the new testament. The new covenant is not a written code as was the old—it is inscribed on the sensitized heart of every recipient of grace, enabling us to “reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord.” This glorious relationship is actually a new birth, introducing us into a new humanity through a process of inner transformation. The purpose of the new covenant scriptures is to

develop responsible citizenship; they are love letters from the Father, regulating conduct and behavior. But our relationship with God is not created by conformity to a written code. It is carved into the heart by the Spirit.

Commandos I Have Known

[[Essay](#)]

Explains that commandos are soldiers who often fight apart from the regular army, but always as a part of it; they are always where the action is, so they must be versatile and inventive, adapting their strategy to the changing tides of the conflict. Tells about numerous commandos for Christ that he has met, including a lead miner, a cotton farmer, the wife of a successful salesman, a fork-lift operator, a gasoline service station operator, a college student, a pharmacist, and students planning to become involved in the political realm. Concludes by noting that all truth is one truth. Therefore, no one ever teaches any truth without teaching God's truth. Every good gift comes from God and all must be channeled into his service.

Harvard Experience

[[Essay](#)]

Gives a summary of an exchange with several scholars (Krister Sendahl, John Lord O'Brian, Robert Hutchison, Charles Warren, and James Fisher) at Harvard Divinity School on the theme "Toward a Conservative Ecumenism." His presentation dealt with the extent, nature, place, and purpose of unity. Provides a summary of remarks by Stendahl, Hutchison, and Fisher. The encounter was written up in the Boston Globe.

Meeting an Author

[Essay]

Provides details of an encounter with Dr. Joseph Fletcher, author of *Situation Ethics*, during a two hour lecture by Fletcher on “Verbal Tools in Christian Ethics” at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. Dr. Fletcher’s theme had to do with “Pauline ethics.” While Fletcher maintained that there was a difference in the ethics of Paul and the ethics of Jesus (described in the essay), when asked by the author if the two differed in their understanding of *agape*, Fletcher opined that they probably did not. When Fletcher asked the author to share with the class his personal views on *agape*, the latter suggested that if Jesus and Paul were present and could be questioned, any apparent difference in the view of ethical behavior might melt away.

Student Revolution

[Essay]

Recounts details of events witnessed at Harvard during the student revolt of April 9. Observes that most of us are still living in the dreamy past, in an era of the easy answer philosophy. We still want to stroll down the violet-bordered lanes of childhood, in a world where everything was either black or white. We plaintively ask why people cannot be satisfied with the good life of ease and comfort. We have worked hard for what we have and ask why we cannot now enjoy it. We point to our gleaming automobiles, our sparkling appliances, and our shiny gadgets. But we have reared a generation which sees these things of our culture as symbols to hide sham, pretence, and hypocrisy. They do not equate life with things. They are not unaware of the millions who are starving nor that our foreign policy is selfish.

There is also a feeling that the church is sometimes more concerned with itself than with the needs of suffering humanity. It is important that we listen to our young people and not be bothered by their long hair to the point of forgetting the humanity of our sons.

About Our Buildings

[Essay]

Points out that while the primitive saints owned no “church edifice” our tradition has come to equate the spiritual strength of a congregation with the real estate holdings, not upon its service to humanity. In our day it is often unwise to erect “church buildings” in certain areas, yet these are the places where the penetration of the Presence is most desperately needed. While not suggesting that we abandon our structures, does suggest that we re-examine them and their purposes and convert them into meaningful units in the service of the Master. Suggests that our buildings be converted into launching pads, filling stations, and arsenals, that we stop our simplistic approach and equip our brethren to cope with life as it is and where it must be lived— in school, office, shop, and neighborhood. Our buildings must be considered as radiation centers from which power reaches out to touch life where it is and as it is. We must not enter them to hold a service, since service is what we do in the world, not what we do in a “church building.”

Our Real Purpose

[Essay]

The purpose of *Mission Messenger* is to plead for the unity

of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet unity is but a means to an end— it is the means by which the whole world will be led to believe that God sent his son. Until we can demonstrate that we have a unitive principle magnificent enough to hold us together, we labor in vain to influence others to think in terms of the one body and one Spirit. Two perversions of the truth have made us a laughingstock in the eyes of those who know that our divided status belies our words: (1) We have applied scriptures designed to separate us from pagans to our relationship with other children of God; (2) We have propagated the inconsistent view that fellowship in Christ is contingent upon conformity of interpretation of doctrinal matters. It is time to recover the majesty and might of the kingdom Jesus came to proclaim. Let us answer the prayer of Jesus in our generation. Let us cease the sectarian double-talk and let the world know that we are for unity— not unity at any price, for the price has already been paid, at Calvary.

The Magnificent Concern

[Essay]

Reflecting on 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2, observes that when we are moved to generosity we need to recognize that we are the recipients of grace, not the dispensers. There is the danger that we may feel that we are essential to God and that grace could not come without us, when the fact is that we could not go without grace. The purpose of life is to glorify God and we do this when we share unselfishly with others.

Student Attitudes

[Essay]

Notes the growing state of student discontent in the liberal arts colleges maintained by Churches of Christ. While students would like to hear controversial figures and have the opportunity to openly question them, administrators are generally dedicated to maintaining the status quo. Does not share the feeling that students ought to simply accept what they are taught without question. If we have become the most ardent challengers of the whole religious world, we ought not to object when we are asked to sup from our own spoon. Each generation must honestly face up to its own errors in thinking if it is to eliminate rather than perpetuate them.

Men and Morals

[Essay]

After noting that his purpose in life is to “serve his own generation by the will of God,” proposes to face up to the so-called “new morality” or “situation ethics.” Asserts that the real basis of situation ethics is that circumstances alter cases and mercy is often preferred in spite of our laws. Further observes that Jesus emphasized the spirit behind the law, which is the foundation of situation ethics. The new covenant scriptures are God’s response to human situations, telling us how Jesus would react under such circumstances. Gives brief account of his own spiritual encounter some years prior. Then gives an overview of the historical origin of the phrases “new morality” and “situation ethics” by John A. T. Robinson. Reviews the thesis of Robinson’s book, *Christian Morals Today*. Robinson does not believe there is a Christian ethic for all times but that as times change Christians must change with them, continually revising our views as to what is moral and non-moral. Cites as proof the changing views of theologians regarding war, capital punishment, homosexuality, and suicide. Promises a continuation of the essay in a subsequent one (“**Freedom and**

Ethics”).

The Authority Totem

[Essay]

Asserts that brethren in the Churches of Christ confuse their deductions with God’s declarations and regard the rejection of their interpretations as a disregard for the authority of God’s word. This has resulted in a restoration totem pole with a couple of dozen grotesque figures squatting on each other and representing the factional image passed along to us by our factional forefathers. According to this hierarchy of doctrinal positioning, a sectarian is one who has what we oppose, and an extremist is one who opposes what we have. This results in absurd simplistic propositions for eliminating division. Our difficulty is not a question of attitude toward the authority of God but an attitude toward brethren. In accepting a brother one does not accept the errors of his thinking. No one can be accepted unless it be in spite of his errors. Concludes with an appeal to reject the errors of our forefathers and to resurrect the ideals which gave us birth and unfurl the flag of peace as the rallying standard for the Christians in all the sects.

Authority of the Word

[Essay]

An address to the Fourth Annual Unity Forum. Denies we are divided because of a disrespect for the authority of the scriptures else we would not appeal to them even in debate. Rather, we are divided over our deductions from scripture. Revelation is what God said; interpretation is what men think he meant by what he said. The fact is that we all examine the word

of God upon the basis of our pre-suppositions derived from a philosophy of interpretation— which we confuse with the basis of authority. Rules of interpretation attempt to measure what God has said by something he did not say. Our problem is not speaking where the Bible speaks, or remaining silent where it is silent, but that we approach the speaking and the silence from different positions, neither of which is dictated by the Bible. Concludes by responding to several objections to his thesis: (1) will this not place us in fellowship with brethren in error? (2) Is not one condemned who brings another gospel? (3) Can two walk together unless they be agreed?

Freedom and Ethics

[[Essay](#)]

Continuation of an earlier review of “the new morality” as defined and described by John A. T. Robinson in his book *Christian Morals Today*.” Regarding chapter 1, “Fixity and Freedom,” concurs that (1) one must have an accepted ethic to avoid becoming unglued or fragmented in the absence of a proper standard or guideline; (2) Jesus did not come to give us a classified code of ethics; (3) love is the one absolute in the divine-human encounter, and (4) it is in application of love that we experience the greatest diversity. On the other hand, (1) does not concur with the documentary hypothesis as applied to the old covenant scriptures; (2) does not agree that there is a difference in the ethical teaching of Jesus and that of Paul; (3) denies that there are no changeless principles. Observes that if there are no bounds of relativity then relativity is an absolute. If it is a measuring criterion, who is to do the measuring and upon what immovable object shall he stand to plumb the depths of the universe? Agrees with a great deal contained in the chapter titled “Law and Love.” Agrees that love abolishes law as the foundation of our vital relationship with God and that the

Christian ethic can never be set forth as law plus love or law qualified by law. Maintains that we must go beyond the situational ethicists and explore the nature of the love that fulfills the law. There must also be a definition of the “situation”— its antecedents and consequents. Believes that man’s tendency will be to accept current standards of morality in a given situation rather than to weigh the effects of his actions dispassionately.

The Spring of Action

[Essay]

Taking the mainspring of a watch as his point of departure, notes that human beings, like a watch, receive their motivating power from within. Man is a creature of motivation, subject to drives, desires, and ambitions. Being a creature of will he can surrender to these or subjugate them. Notes that the apostle Paul declares that his heart was an open book, readable by God, and that there was no selfishness in it. Every action he performed grew out of the love of Christ, implying that love and selfishness are antithetical. The very essence of the Way is that Jesus gave up everything. He was the great unselfish One. If the love of Christ is the motivating force of life, that life will be different. If one can cleanse his heart of unworthy motives and allow the spring of action to be love, his whole existence will be transformed.

Law and Morals

[Essay]

In his book, *Situation Ethics*, Joseph Fletcher asserts that there are only three possible approaches in reaching moral

decisions: legalistic, antinomian, or situational. The author dismisses the antinomian position as having no place in the Christian life. Provides an extensive analysis of the legalistic approach, characteristic of many within the restoration movement, and rejects it on the basis of his analysis of scripture. Then concludes by examining the “law of liberty” for which a summary of concepts is enumerated: (1) The Christian is not subject to a written code imposed from without; (2) the new covenant scriptures were never intended to be compiled into a code of statutes but as a collection of love letters, designed to serve as guidelines of behavior; (3) In interpreting the new covenant scriptures one must resist the impulse to show himself as an “enforcer of the law;” (4) If the new covenant scriptures are a legal code, I must comply in absolute obedience. I cannot have law and grace— it is law or grace; (5) The absolute in our relationship to God is love *agape*! Love, rightly understood, properly defined, and correctly applied, is the foundation of Christian ethics.

Ministry and Ministers

[Essay]

Our brethren have no adequate concept of ministry as set forth by the Holy Spirit. Every child of God on earth is made a full-time minister by the same act that made him a child of God. We enter the ministry by accepting Jesus and we leave it by rejecting him. It is a bit dishonest to pretend that we in “Churches of Christ” do not have a clergy-laity system. One who follows his conscience and chooses to minister for Jesus in a way other than pulpit proclamation does not thereby forsake the ministry or leave full-time service.

Inside the Circle

Through the blood of Christ those Gentiles who were outside the pale are now inside the circle of God's love. There is nothing else that can purge the conscience of guilt. And it is sin and guilt which make us hate those of another race. It was not our goodness which eliminated the fence that separated us from God but the boundless love of God in allowing the Son to die. This is the divine answer to racial problems. No one can be "with us inside the circle" (Eph. 2:13) who is not first with us within our hearts. When we cease to see men with different colored skin and see only men for whom Christ died, we are on our way to the removal of the pale from our hearts. We need to have our hearts gently touched and strangely warmed by Jesus until the glow of a transformed life acts as a magnet to draw those inside who are still without the pale.

The Supreme Dynamic

The last in a series of articles on morality and ethics. The position taken in this article is that love is the standard by which all else is measured. Our problem centers around the nature of love. The love that God had for the world, that Jesus manifests for us, and the love we must have for both God and our brothers is *agape*. (1) This love, which is poured out into the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit, is not an emotion or sentiment, but an act of the will. (2) This love— the life of God incarnate, in us just as in Jesus— is always active in the accomplishment of its purpose, which is also the divine purpose. (3) The opposite of this love is not hate (which is the absence of love) but selfishness. One can hate without ever exercising any conscious feeling of animosity. (4) This love, which can love its enemies— something impossible for human love— creates value in its object. It is not

a reaction to something loveable or pleasing in the object. Love is that active and beneficent goodwill which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object. It gives assurance that we have passed from death to life; it completely banishes fear; it is indestructible. To say that love transcends all legalistic code is to say that the life of God is not confined to statutes. Paul says love sums up all the commandments, thus law has no more claim upon one who really loves, since love cannot do wrong.

The Fading Fear

[Essay]

Reports on a meeting of top-level men in Churches of Christ with a prominent brother from the Christian Church. The mention of the event never leaked to the orthodox journals, but the effect has been seen from coast to coast. Also reports on the Manhattan Church of Christ entering into “the fellowship of giving and receiving” with an important Christian Church family. Also mentions that the administration of Pepperdine College reached the conclusion that the use of the instrument was no barrier to fellowship and both have spoken for the North American Christian Convention. Other similar reports are given as evidence that the futility of preaching unity while practicing partition is being recognized. Calls for a bold new approach: (1) freely admit our error in equating the restoration movement with the kingdom of heaven; (2) let the non-instrument brethren openly admit that our fathers were wrong when they made a test of fellowship out of instrumental music; (3) concede that we have betrayed the original restoration ideal as set forth in the “Declaration and Address” by Thomas Campbell. Our position on instrumental music is a deduction, an inferential truth which should not be bound upon others as a test of fellowship (proposition six of the “Declaration and Address”).

The Capture of Thought

[[Essay](#)]

We are engaged in a struggle for the minds of men. Men's hearts belong to God. Our task is not to discourage men from thinking. To stifle original thinking is to eradicate the image of God from the heart. We are to capture every thought and bring it to acknowledge the authority of Christ, whether that thought be labeled literary, scientific, mechanical, poetical, fictional or whatever. We need to encourage literary genius in our day. Let us not deride creative hearts, regardless of the art form. But let us recognize that all truth is one truth and all truth is God's truth.

Words of Lipscomb

[[Essay](#)]

Three quotations from the writings of David Lipscomb, former editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. The first gives insight into Lipscomb's thinking about the racially segregated churches, a concept and practice for which he could find no precedent in scripture. The second discloses his position on sectarianism. The third has regard to the fact that the only servants God has on earth have imperfect hearts.

Things to Come

[[Essay](#)]

The time has come for a real searching of God's word, our present condition, and our own hearts. Our present course is shameful. What is the real basis for our division? Every one of

our factions says it's a lack of respect for the authority of the word. Yet every one believes that it alone respects that authority while all of the others do not. If the Word is as plain and simple as the brethren declare it is, why are there any divisions at all? Do only dishonest persons divide? We cannot continue in our childish course. It must be admitted that our attitude toward the new covenant scriptures has created division among honest and sincere brethren. There must be something in the way we regard the scriptures. The author announces plans to probe the difficulty of the restoration movement in which he will challenge the whole ground of Church of Christism and its mistaken view of the design and purpose of the apostolic writings. Intends to show that what our brethren call the pattern was not prescribed by God at all but is a compilation of partisan deductions and traditional preconceptions.

The Secret Plan

[Essay]

Expounds upon the significance of Eph. 1:9, 10, where Paul states that God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan in which he purposes that all human history shall find its fulfillment in Christ. Notes that (1) God is the God of a plan, that our universe is not the product of blind chance but that all that is made is linked together by the Maker into an unfolding pattern of such beauty that man must have a transformed nature to ever appreciate it. (2) God is the God of a secret, concealed for ages and revealed only after his children had reached maturity. Notes that we are fortunate to live in the age of the shared secret. (3) God is the God of human history which will be consummated in Christ. He is our existence, our motivation, our ground of being. (4) God is the God of fulfillment. There are no spare parts scattered over the workbench of time. Every desire, every thirst, every hunger,

every legitimate drive finds its fulfillment in him. The secret is out; the dawn is coming, and he stands on the far-off shore beckoning.

Consecrated Diversity

[[Essay](#)]

Address to an academic institution. Notes the example of Jesus who chose to present himself to mankind as a teacher and a priest— who was one of the people, revealing the sublimely sacred as being truly secular— as a teacher-priest. Suggests that academic teachers are in a unique position to serve students in their capacity as teacher-priests. Enumerates a variety of ways in which this is true. Then focuses on the man in the pew, where the numbers and potential strength of the church lie. Maintains that these ought to be developed by church leaders to become teacher-priests in whatever walk of life they may find themselves.

The Slave Mentality

[[Essay](#)]

While expounding on Gal. 4:31, notes that the way in which we look at ourselves is going to affect our whole attitude toward God and our demeanor toward one another. The law enslaved and made prisoners of men. If God is regarded as a tyrannical slave-owner we will get the idea that the community of saints is a group of unreconciled individuals living in slave quarters. But if we recognize that we are sons, born of the free woman, we can sit down together at the table without hostility and inner trauma. There is an insecurity which characterizes those who see security in law-keeping. They try to save others

but dare not testify that they themselves are saved. They cannot really forgive for they are not sure they are forgiven. They develop a smug hypocrisy which makes bold claims while filled with inward doubt. What a sense of freedom comes when grace swoops down and lifts the crushing burden off one's back. We are sons of the free woman— grace!

The Priority Value

[Essay]

Describes the controversy that arose in the early Christian community over the issue of circumcision. Observes that Paul wrote that the only thing that matters is “faith which expresses itself with love.” Notes that while circumcision is no longer an issue, we have substituted other issues in its place. Yet Paul’s observation in Gal. 5:6 still holds. We are always getting caught on the “either-or” hook: “either circumcision or uncircumcision.” We say a thing has to be either right or wrong, but we overlook the fact that regardless of which it is, it still may be relatively unimportant. All truth is equally true but not all truth is equally important. It is not true that everything in the Bible is equally valuable to know. Some things have no real validity in Christ. The essential thing is to be in Christ. If Paul were writing directly to our situation he would say, for example, In Christ Jesus there is no validity in using instrumental music, or in not using it, it is a matter of faith which expresses itself through love.

Facing the Issues

[Essay]

A critique of an article titled “Faith or Opinion” written

by Rueul Lemmons and published in *Firm Foundation* in the September 30, 1969 issue, which gives the highlights of a meeting of leaders in Churches of Christ and Christian Churches to discuss ways of getting the two bodies closer together. Notes that while the article alleges that the problem between the two groups continues to be one of faith versus opinion, the real issue concerns who shall be the infallible interpreter of scripture for other men. Goes on to examine and refute each of the arguments used to support the idea that the instrument is a matter of faith rather than of opinion (Nadab and Abihu, Hamburger in the Lord's Supper, areas of silence, and others). Concludes by first noting that such meetings as the one referred to in the article by Lemmons are not really for the purpose of seeking truth, since the participants seem to think they already have it. Denies that we must locate all of our issues in either faith or opinion before we can be one. One man's faith is another man's opinion, by definition. Rather than rejecting the brethren first and then discussing how to get them back together, suggests we receive the brethren first, then seek to resolve our problems. Proposes to make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition for salvation.

The Supreme Need

[Essay]

The Galatian letter stands as a constant reminder that men may be formed in Christ without Christ ever being formed in them. When we begin to trust in legalistic performances as the basis of our justification, we stifle the Spirit and thwart the further development of the transformed life. The image of Christ can only grow in an atmosphere of freedom, and this freedom is a product of grace. When we cease to trust in grace we are automatically cut off from the transforming power. It is only through complete surrender and utter abandonment of self to

the Spirit that one can free himself from the flesh, that state of alienation from God where law reigns and one is under its dominion. Our supreme need is to have Christ formed in us.

According to the Pattern

[Essay]

Relates numerous examples of division within Churches of Christ over the years, then asserts that these are merely symptoms of a deep underlying fallacy entrenched in our thinking. Proposes an objective study of the underlying causes and basic reasons for our divisions. Notes that divisions have resulted from a fear of violating a divinely ordained pattern. Yet suggests that the whole “pattern concept” which makes of the apostolic letters mere legalistic documents be examined. Observes that every faction among us rejects as being a part of *the pattern* that which every other faction accepts as an essential part of it. It is not enough for one party to say that all that is necessary is to take the word of God for what it says, since that is precisely what each party feels it is doing now. Each party feels that it has an infallible interpretation and those who do not concur with the party exegesis do not understand the Bible at all. In each instance *the pattern* is the partisan interpretation which is equated with the will of God. This is creedalism in its worst form. Concludes with a series of questions and observations which will be explored in subsequent essays.

Our Personal Pattern

[Essay]

Observes that among the heirs of the restoration movement it is taken for granted that the new covenant

scriptures constitute a detailed blueprint designed to meet every exigency and provide for every emergency, and that loyalty to Christ consists in finding and binding oneself by these details and binding them upon others. Asserts that there is no such legalistic pattern— that our pattern is to be found in the person of Jesus. While affirming the infallibility of God’s revelation in scripture, denies the infallibility of any human interpretation, including his own. Maintains that a “pattern” was needed by Moses as the agent charged with building something never before seen, whereas no pattern was needed for the real tabernacle since it was constructed by God himself. The apostolic letters were written not as a pattern but to call men back toward an ideal involved in their acceptance of Jesus. That ideal is the character of Jesus himself. It was never their intention to compile a code of laws. Insists that our pattern is not a law but a person. Jesus is our pattern and love is our guiding principle. Love is the *summation* of all law as well as the *consummation* of all law. If we view the new covenant scriptures as a code of laws we must have an official interpretation. In the case of the law of love, Jesus— our pattern— is the interpreter, the conscience is the immediate judge, and God is the final judge.

A Pattern of Freedom

[Essay]

While affirming belief that the scriptures are the word of God, as well as respect for both their origin and the authority for which they were given, asserts that to make a divisive instrument of that which was intended to unite us runs counter to the divine purpose. Notes that (1) God has always sought to insure the togetherness of his people. In a previous age this was done by law, but he now accomplishes it through love; (2) the previous covenant was written on tablets of stone, whereas the

new covenant is written on tablets of human hearts; (3) to convert the grace of God into a law is to deprive us of the very thing we hope to achieve by such action; (4) the righteousness of God is not revealed in a law but in persons; (5) when the apostle says we are no longer under a custodian, he means we are no longer under a law; (6) all law requires interpretation and he who interprets regards his interpretation as law; he will regard those who fail to conform to his interpretation as violating the law. The apostles wrote to deal with specific conditions which change from one generation to another. But all such problems are problems of relationships and the principle by which relationships are governed never alter. Their validity inheres from the authority of their author. In carrying out the divine purpose the primitive saints made use of the means available to them and we are free to do the same. The relative importance of certain truths may fluctuate in different eras and in diverse areas. The method of implementing principles or truths may vary according to custom, environment or tradition, as may be seen in the cases of the washing of feet and in the feminine veil.

The Supper Pattern

[Essay]

The Lord's Supper serves as a good illustration of how honest men divide over what they think is involved in "the rigid pattern concept of the new covenant scriptures." It is especially important because it was to serve as a viable witness to our oneness. In it we give constant testimony to faith, hope, and love — a visible testimony to the unity of the one body. To insist upon the use of unleavened bread and one container is to assume that the historical account narrating the action of Jesus was intended to be a meticulous law of procedure binding upon Christians at all times and places and a criterion for judging the spiritual

worthiness of others. Yet none of the postulates used to support such claims can be proven by a single passage from the new covenant scriptures. They represent a philosophy of interpretation, based upon rationalization and presupposition, a philosophy which is applied inconsistently. It simply ignores that Jesus sat down when he preached and opened his eyes when he prayed. It insists on unleavened bread— which was never commanded— yet glibly explains away footwashing and the holy kiss to which we have direct commands. The basic fallacy is in the assumption that the new covenant scriptures were intended as a written code of legalistic procedure to be applied irrespective of circumstances, thus knowing nothing of mercy. For to show mercy is to condemn the whole philosophy. To face human deductions to the point of division is not fidelity to God but a failure to understand the divine purpose. Our task is not to lay down laws governing the Supper but to live up to the love which it entails and embraces.

Sources of Our Patterns

[Essay]

When men believe that God provided a specific detailed pattern they must find one for everything. Most of our patterns consist of a combination of elements derived from three sources: (1) cultural and environmental factors; (2) reactions to other religious groups whom we consider as apostates or compromisers; (3) misconception and misapplication of scriptural passages lifted from their contextual setting and used to establish our preconceptions and presuppositions. So long as we think God intended to provide us a microscopic pattern with all details filled in we will be searching through our factional microscopes and arguing minutiae. If we realize that we have general guidelines and not a rigid set of regulations we will be free to work as best we can in whatever situation we confront.

There will come a great realignment of our forces which will ignore the battle lines of yesterday. More and more we will come to see that God has not imposed upon us a rigid and stereotyped pattern, but has given us guidelines within a historic situation.

That Glorious Generosity

[[Essay](#)]

Observes in Ephesians 1:4, 5, (1) the plan of God for a community of saints, not as an afterthought but as a fellowship designed for our spiritual growth toward maturity; (2) the purpose of God to have a family with whom to share his love in a reciprocal relationship; (3) the praise of God's glorious generosity which is our perpetual responsibility; and (4) the perfection or guiltlessness which is imputed to us because we are in Christ, resulting in our sharing in his eternal love.

The Money Pattern

[[Essay](#)]

Suggests that the reason we are divided over the apostolic pattern is because there is none. Our pattern is a person. The purpose of scripture is to bring us to him in a vital relationship known as eternal life. We have been the victims of *eisegesis* rather than recipients of *exegesis*. A case in point is the issue dubbed by the term "institutionalism." The whole thing centers around how a community of saints may spend its money, stemming from a mistaken view over what constitutes worship. The word "worship" is never once applied to anything we do on the Lord's Day morning. The terms "acts of worship" and "the worship" are not in the Bible. The concept of a public collection from the members every Sunday results from taking a specific

instruction (1 Cor. 16:1-4) and elevating it to a universal law. This particular collection came about as the result of a spontaneous desire on the part of the givers (Rom. 15:26). All of this talk about “giving of your means” every Sunday as a legalistic requirement of heaven is just so much froth dreamed up by the Establishment for the perpetuation of its own image! The overwhelming majority of commentators agree that the money was to be set aside *at home*. Concludes that there is not one indication in scripture that any congregation of saints ever took up a public contribution every Sunday. To declare that this was a “divine pattern” is simply not true.

Internal Power

[[Essay](#)]

It is a tragedy that men so often live beneath their potential, oblivious of the power of Christ which can be theirs. The very power which created and sustains the universe is available to us through Jesus. It is the power to overcome self, but it is never imposed. Jesus will only dwell and work in the heart as we allow or permit. Christ will enable us to go as far as we are willing to go, but this requires absolute trust and complete surrender. It does not take much of a man to be a Christian but it takes all of him there is. Only when we give in to him can he freely give out to us!

The Name Pattern

[[Essay](#)]

Acknowledges that an essay written many years ago, “Whose Name Shall the Bride Wear?” written to prove that the Church of Christ was not a denomination, was actually more

sectarian than those whom it was seeking to reach. Maintains that the *ekklesia* had no specific name in its inception. The saints were corporately designated only by simple nouns describing a relationship (functional unity, divine origin, present authority, in relation to government, in relation to heritage). To select any one of those terms and make it the means of identification for a specific group of believers is to create a denomination, and to do so in order to separate those Christians from others is the very essence of sectarianism. Examines the use of a lower case “c” in “church of Christ,” noting that sectarianism is an attitude of heart, not an accident of spelling. Notes that the term “Church of Christ” is not even found in scripture. Observes that if the church is to wear the name of the groom, contrary to the custom of the middle east at that time, it would be called the “church of Jesus” since “Christ” is his title, not his name. Quotes from Alexander Campbell in support of his abhorrence of sectism. Then quotes from G. C. Brewer’s lecture at Abilene Christian College in which he states that “to exalt any one of these [names] into the patented name of the church is to sectarianize that expression. If we have not done that very thing with the expression *church of Christ* then why do we not vary our terms in speaking of the church?” This topic is continued in the following issue of the paper.

A Sectarian Name

[Essay]

Continuation of a previous essay on “The Name Pattern.” Examines the arguments, and the scriptures upon which they are based, used to support the idea that the church has a formal and exclusive title— “the Church of Christ.” Examines Acts 4:12, Acts 20:23, Eph. 3:14, 15, and Heb. 12:23. Concludes, as earlier, that there is no official title for the *ekklesia* of the new covenant. While the expression “church of Christ” may be

employed as *a* name of *the* church, it must never be employed as *the* name of *a* church. Acknowledges that there are Christians in the sects, that these are in the church of God by divine appointment and in sectarian pastures through personal choice, influenced by tradition, teaching and early training. Maintains that our task is not to unite sects but the Christians within them. We cannot accomplish this by creating another sect.

The Apostolic Attitude

[Essay]

Denies that we are under a legal code of statutes. Holds that such a system belongs on the other side of the cross. Law was to last only until faith came. One is either under law or under faith— but not both. Law does not rest on faith. But if we are not under a written code, what is the purpose of scripture? The primary purpose of scripture is to bring us into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord— eternal life. But if one thinks he has eternal life in the scriptures, he may become so devoted to them that he never comes to Jesus at all. The purpose of the law was to bring us to Jesus as the source of life. But if we are not led into a life giving relationship with him, all of our scriptural knowledge will go for naught. To have life in his name is to have life in his person. This life come to those who receive him. The first to do so were Jews who had no intention of abandoning the law of Moses. They were not looking for another law in the instructions of the apostles. The apostolic teaching was not then, nor has it ever been since, a written code or law for justification. Such a law requires machinery to enforce conformity; it requires interpreters of divine meaning. We serve in a new way— the way of the spirit. We are no longer under the way of a written code. The apostolic letters were designed to convince their recipients of the love of the writer. When we make of them a written code we revert to a pre-Calvary means

of justification, living B.C. lives in an A.D. world.

Right On!

[[Essay](#)]

The title reflects the fact that the author is in revolt against the sectarian *status quo*. Observes that God's children are divided in open defiance of the divine will. But unity will not come at the hand of factional partisans nor by those who are dependent for financial and emotional support upon our partisan establishment. Predicts that our silly "Berlin walls" will be beaten down by courageous younger men who grasp the difference between being faithful to Jesus and being a satellite to a sect. Resolves to recognize and receive all of God's children as brothers regardless of their thinking about instrumental music, "institutionalism," the millennium, or spiritual gifts. Determines to pursue "the more excellent way." Urges that we abandon the philosophy of divisiveness and recognize that unity is not based upon conformity but upon community in Him. It is not knowing all of the same things, but all of us knowing the same One that makes us one. Insists that we be men and show the world that the bond of peace is not an imaginary and visionary something but a real tie that binds.

The Happiness Pattern

[[Essay](#)]

The purpose of the apostolic letters was not to produce life but to inform those in Christ that they already had it. Where the term "word of God" is used with reference to birth or begetting, it never refers to an apostolic epistle. Faith comes by the gospel. In the new testament preaching always concerns the proclamation

of the good tidings of God to the non-Christian world. The apostolic letters do not comprise a written code. They were never intended to be a compilation of laws. They are guidelines to happiness (2 Cor. 1:24). The Living Way marked out the Way for us which, in most cases, calls for the use of commonsense and judgment, tempering our actions according to the needs of our brethren. Some things are always wrong. Others are wrong only under certain conditions. Our pattern is Jesus. The good news about him leads to faith in him— belief *into* him which involves commitment or surrender to him. In him we become partakers of eternal life, his life. In him we grow and mature in various aspects of life. It is here that the apostolic letters fulfill their role.

Brother Thomas on Unity

[Essay]

A review and reply to an article by J. D. Thomas entitled “Observations on Unity,” published in the *Gospel Advocate* for August 6. Reproduces the article in its entirety for perusal by the reader. Observes that the article is actually an apologetic for division and that Thomas’ definition of unity is wholly without scriptural basis. Notes that Thomas’ references to “full fellowship” are evidence that he is not dealing with fellowship on a scriptural basis. Rather, he seems to have it confused with endorsement. Concludes that the whole burden of Thomas’ essay is there will be no unity until everyone sees everything just as he does, which means that our unity is not in Christ’s redemptive act but in Brother Thomas’ expository ability. Commends Thomas’ attitude exhibited in his statement that “It is nothing less than stupid for us to fight one another, as well as its being sinful.” Adds that it is also stupid for us to perpetuate division and schism.

Irrelevant Antagonism

The antagonism between Jew and Gentile was simply a reflection of the way they stood with reference to God. Jesus did not unite them by removing the antagonism but by reconciling them both to God through the sacrifice of one body on the cross. If anything else could produce harmony the cross would not have been necessary. It is the place where one act made irrelevant the antagonism between bitter rivals. It is the answer to all partisan hostilities. Our “circumcision” today is anything external in which man trusts as a symbol of his covenant relationship with God. So long as men trust in such symbols of faithfulness the cross is made of none effect. Such trust causes men to forget grace and attempt to be justified by law. At the cross every man is seen for what he is— helpless, hopeless, unable to keep law perfectly. Here his complex schemes of doctrinal orthodoxy are shown to be cobweb ladders which he has built to try and achieve reconciliation, always too short, always ineffective. He cannot even attain to his own ideals. The cross does not make us alike. We are simply all reconciled to God. Being right on every point of doctrine is of no consequence. We no longer receive one another because of attainment or achievement. The ultimate criterion is in the fact that we have been given life together in Christ, making utterly irrelevant the antagonism between us.

No Human Invention

One’s view of the veracity of Paul’s claim that his gospel came to him by divine inspiration will determine whether it has authority over his life. While we cannot prove that Paul was correct in his statement, the agony he willingly endured for the sake of his gospel proves that he believed what he said was true.

However, the real proof of the authorship of the gospel is inherent in the message. The *nature* of the gospel proves it is no human invention. It runs counter to all that men would devise if they were to attempt a plan for universal redemption. The gospel begins not with one of humble parentage being elevated as a god, but with one who was God emptying himself, adopting the nature of a slave and making himself “of no reputation” through (1) the circumstances of his birth, (2) the place of his birth, (3) his boyhood home, (4) his choice of disciples, (5) his daily companions, and (6) the manner of his death. The whole scheme of redemption bears the imprint of the divine mind upon its very face. The gospel is not merely words announced, but a life shared with us.

Miracle at the Pool

[Essay]

Jesus was always conscious he was doing the work of the Father. This enables us to know what God wants his sons to do by observing what his Son did. The “greater works” which are laid upon us are not in the domain of the material (since no one could do a “greater” work than raising the dead) but in the area of human nature and its transformation. While Jesus was attending a Jewish feast in Jerusalem he left the temple and went to the pool of Bethesda where he healed a lame man and commanded him to take up his bed and walk. The Pharisees became incensed because the man was carrying his bed on the sabbath. But Jesus demonstrated that God was not interested in days but in men. When faced with the conflict between a crippled man and a code of laws, the human need took precedence. This is what the sabbath was all about. Life is cheap to a legalist. Human values are far down the scale. Men exist only to keep the law alive, even if they die in their attempt. Religion is life. It is not a code unloaded from above but a life

shared from above. It is a life of service. There is no other way to serve God than by serving men made in his image. Just as Jesus proved he was the Son of God by working like the Father worked, we must show that we are the sons of God in the same way.

These Tremendous Issues

[[Essay](#)]

Observations based on the first thirteen verses of chapter three of Ephesians as translated by J. B. Phillips. Notes that the noble secret of which Paul speaks is that the Gentiles are to be equal heirs with God's chosen people. This is part of the eternal plan for the unity of all things in the universe in Christ Jesus. It is an announcement that the war is over, hate is dethroned, and selfishness is revealed as a blatant usurper. Blood washed away the barrier between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Angels were not in on the secret but they are witnesses of the unfolding of God's complex plan— how the diverse elements can be united in one body by the cross. These are the tremendous issues of which Paul speaks before which all other pale.

That Inner Illumination

[[Essay](#)]

Expounds upon the “inner illumination of the spirit” to which Paul refers in Eph. 1:18. Notes the difficulty translators experience with the word *pneuma* which may refer to the Spirit of God or to that divinely given attribute within man. Holds that the spirit of man is capable of being floodlighted or given insight by the Holy Spirit. But distinguishes revelation from illumination, the former relating to the impartation of truth

undiscoverable by other means while the latter having to do with perceptiveness of that truth. The Spirit will not impose the Word upon our minds but infuses the mind into the truth to the extent of its willingness and capability. (No two persons in the world have the same capacity for understanding.) Our willingness to accept new truths may be affected by prejudice, loyalty to the party, indifference, or fear of loss of prestige or power. When one arrives at the point where all else is counted as refuse and he surrenders himself unreservedly to the Spirit who dwells within, his heart is prepared for illumination.

The Satisfying Bread

[Essay]

After describing the background which evoked the statement of Paul in 2 Cor. 9:10, suggests that Paul may have been quoting a popular proverb related to sowing by scattering seed in broadcast fashion. To sow sparingly for fear of weather conditions or insect invasion would result in a poor harvest. Observes that in the sharing of life's bounty we must remember that all will not turn out as we planned. Those whom we help may not respond as we hoped. So we must decide whether we are giving in order to purchase goodwill and commendation or whether we are motivated solely by a spirit of altruism and compassion. The harvest starts in one's own heart before the planting begins, and the seed is fertilized and watered by one's attitude. When the strings of the heart are drawn taut by the hands of stinginess God cannot deposit the riches of His grace in that heart. It is only as we are willing to turn loose of the seed which God places in our hand that we can expect a harvest.

The Butting Brethren

[Essay]

Observations regarding attacks upon the author by other writers. Notes that since he did not change factions, but merely stopped being factious, his brethren in the factions don't know what to do with him. States that he has simply resolved to love all his brethren without going anywhere— without changing parties. States that it is a genuine thrill to know that the only brethren he has are brothers in error. Observes that he is not concerned with the fact that things being said of him are untrue, since one of these days everything is going to be straightened out. By following Jesus as closely as possible he has learned how to love even those who think they are his enemies. Notes that it isn't always easy, but it is always satisfying. Resolves never to return to the narrow, bigoted, sectarian outlook which shackles the heart and quenches the Spirit.

The Ascent of Faith

[Essay]

In preparation for essays dealing with Romans 8, provides an introduction to Paul's letter to the saints in Rome. In this letter Paul sets forth for those whom he had never met what the life of faith was all about. States that the theme of the letter is justification by faith, then defines faith as more than mere mental assent. It involves the surrender of self without reservation to him who is its object, an embracing of the Son of God so fully and completely as to lose one's own personality in identification with him. Observes that justification is necessary because of our guilt. Man cannot obtain justification by undoing a single sin, nor by living a sinless life. We cannot win, merit, or deserve it. Through the death of a sinless person God made it possible for justice and mercy to meet and merge without clashing. One who gives up his life on earth to become identified with Jesus in his sinlessness is simply counted as righteous by God. Man can never save himself by his own wisdom nor by his

own legal rectitude. But through faith he is acquitted by God, made free, and given a new life. He is reconciled to God. He has peace with God, restored to the state of being with God which man enjoyed before sin came. The love of God is poured out into his heart by the Spirit. Selfishness is washed away. We live not because of our sinlessness, but because of the sinlessness of Jesus. We are declared righteous. Our sins are not counted unto us! His righteousness is!

Taking a Stand

[[Essay](#)]

Notes that the latest controversy over which the “some-whats” are attempting to force all to take a stand concerns the work of the Holy Spirit and how they stand on Pat Boone’s claim to have spoken in tongues. Urges that the question is simply not worth exalting to the status of a prime target. Insists that whatever one thinks about the matter has nothing to do with one’s relationship to Jesus. Notes that if you really love Jesus you can love Pat Boone and all of the rest of the brethren. Concludes that a good way to demonstrate that you do not know the Spirit is to kick up a fuss and disturb the peace about how you think he works.

Flesh and Spirit

[[Essay](#)]

Follows a previous introductory essay on Romans 1-5 with an exposition of the theme of Paul in Romans 6-8. First explores the way Paul relates grace and baptism, observing that either all who died to sin were baptized or Paul’s entire argument is rendered ridiculous. Quotes W. E. Vine’s statement that “the

word *baptizo* was necessarily transliterated into English, as there was no equivalent in our language. . . . To baptize . . . involves submersion and emergence— death, burial and resurrection.” The man who has been baptized had died to sin. He is therefore free to be joined to Christ. He is free from law. While the goal of law is conformation, what we need is transformation, freedom to serve God in a new way, the way of the Spirit— not under a new law but in a new way, the way of the indwelling Spirit empowering us to withstand the cosmic forces of evil. To be in Christ is to sustain an intimate relationship with him. In him no condemnation resides. To walk after the flesh is to be without God in the various relationships of life. We cannot reason ourselves out from under the domination of the power of evil. We must be rescued by a superior power. There is no plan or human organization which can provide the power to free from the lower nature. What we must have is an inner dynamic— the power that comes directly from the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit is a personality as may be seen from an examination of his attributes, abilities, the ascriptive terms used to refer to him, his actions, and his association with the other two personalities of the *Godhood*.

The Spirit of Life

[[Essay](#)]

In Christ the animating principle is the Holy Spirit and the life we share is the life of the Spirit. This is what Paul referred to as “the law of the Spirit of life.” “The law of sin and death” is the principle which prompts one to sin even against his own wish — “the sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:17). This continual conflict creates an agonizing situation in which the way out is the indwelling Spirit who infuses us with new life. The lower nature makes it impossible for man to achieve righteousness by law-keeping since he is powerless to obey it in perfection. Jesus

fulfilled the law and earned the right to adopt men unto himself. Because of his sinlessness he could take our sin and purchase our freedom from the guilt and consequences of sin, and make us partakers of the divine nature. To be carnal minded is to be alienated from the life of God; it is to be dead while one lives. To be spiritually minded is to be in the dominion of the Spirit, to put on the new nature of God's creating. It is to have peace with God.

Re-Baptism

[[Essay](#)]

From an extended quote from Alexander Campbell, in the *Millennial Harbinger* of 1836, it is evident that the only thing which can justify re-immersion is a confession on the part of the candidate that he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, at the time of his baptism and that he now believes and desires to be buried and rise with Christ in faith of a resurrection to eternal life. The instant that re-baptism is preached and practiced on any other grounds, (1) we have contradicted in some way and made void the word of the Lord, "He who will believe and be immersed shall be saved," (2) abandoned the principles of the present reformation, (3) instituted experience meetings, committees for examining candidates, (4) changed the bond of union, and (5) made something else, other than the belief of the gospel facts, the faith of the gospel. Includes a significant statement by David Lipscomb regarding the correct motive for baptism.

Spirit and Word

[[Essay](#)]

Responds in the affirmative to the question, peculiar to members of “Churches of Christ,” does the Spirit operate independent of the word of God? While believing scripture to be a product of the Holy Spirit, a revelation of the divine mind, denies that the Spirit retired after sixty-six books had been bound in a single cover— although denies that he is revealing additional material today. Notes that the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of the alien only through the gospel, when it is heard. But he dwells with and in the saints of God, and he did so for decades before the first apostolic letter was penned. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, the love that enables God to love through the believer. The Spirit puts to death all the base pursuits of the body; he makes it possible for us to cry “Abba! Father!” He brings us into a genuine relationship with the Father; he comes to our aid in times of weakness in prayer; he pleads for us; he translates our groanings into words which reach the ear of heaven; he provides that eternal life which we share, since he is the very source of life to God’s children. He makes it possible for us to experience the dimensions of God’s love and to know that love, though it is beyond all knowledge.

The Indwelling Spirit

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:9-12. Observes that regardless of our claims, one simply does not belong to Christ if he does not have the Spirit of Christ. When Christ dwells in us through his Spirit the attributes which belong to the divine nature are ours in which to share. The same power that was exercised in raising Jesus from the dead dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. The resources of power which were employed to raise Jesus from the dead are now available to all those who live in him. The lower nature has no further claim on us. The only

thing that counts is a new creation. It is not enough to feel like a new man; we must become new men. And that is exactly the function of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of Adoption

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:13-17, focused primarily on verses 15-17. As an illustration of the consequences of living after the flesh, tells the story of a derelict who, as a young man, was baptized by the author. Laments not knowing enough at the time to tell him about the Spirit who would come in and help in time of need. Notes that to be led by the Spirit is to surrender to the influences and guidance of the Spirit— a proof of divine sonship— to be led by that love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. Enumerates the effects of slavery to sin in contrast with what it means to be adopted by God as sons. Provides a lengthy overview of the adoption process and the extent parental rights (*patria potestas*) in Roman culture (noting that adoption was not practiced within Jewish culture). Calls attention to the fact that a witness was required to corroborate one's adoption should his rights of inheritance be contested. Points out that God's adoptive children have the Holy Spirit as their witness, enabling them to use the term "Abba" (Daddy) as evidence of their sonship. The indwelling Spirit is our guarantee that we are going to inherit every provision of grace. Concludes with the story of the martyrdom of Rawlins White. Expresses a personal note of gratitude for the influence of White's life and death upon his own life.

A Universe on Tiptoe

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:18-23. It was to those living in an atmosphere of crushing sorrow and complete despair that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. In chapter 8 he met the problem of human suffering and gave answer to it— temporary suffering is not to be compared with the splendor that is to come when the sons of God march in the great triumphal procession of the redeemed. The original term for “eager expectation” is translated by J. B. Phillips as “standing on tiptoe.” Creation will share in the liberty and splendor of the children of God. We will be raised in glory although sown in humiliation. So long as the physical body of man suffers and is tormented by pain, so long will the universe be subjected to corruption, crying out, moaning and groaning because of its ignominious state. All creation is forced to agonize because of sin, including the children of God. For this reason we cannot assume that because one suffers he is out of harmony with God. The faithful children of God are destined to dwell in three states or kingdoms: nature, grace, and eternity. These are entered by being born of the mother’s womb (generation), the water and the Spirit (regeneration), and of the grave (resurrection).

The Power of Hope

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:24-27. Observes that while all men have hope, the hope of those who know the Lord increases as they grow older, whereas the hope of those who do not know him wanes with age, often being supplanted by dread and despair. Hope is a joyous anticipation of the future, combining desire and expectation in equal proportion. Although Paul says we are saved by hope, he does not mean that hope is the cause of our salvation. It means that we have been saved but there is more to come. There is something for which the universe is joyfully and triumphantly expectant. When hope becomes

reality it ceases to function as hope. Hope is grounded in endurance. It is validated by God's love. Love is the soil in which hope grows and blossoms. Hope comes to our aid in counteracting despair and makes it possible for us to endure and hold on in spite of suffering. But we have another helper in the Spirit who comes to the aid of our weakness when we pray. The Spirit translates our inward inexpressible desires into prayer, putting them in the words of heavenly language. We do not need to learn to pray so much as we need to learn to trust. The Spirit pleads for God's own people in God's own way.

Quenching the Spirit

[Essay]

A response to an inquiry concerning what it means to quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Suggests that the phrase is probably directly related to the stifling of the prophetic gift, but should not be limited to this, since it could apply to any sublimation of the Spirit's work and influence. Just as a fire may be quenched in three ways— (1) by pouring cold water onto it, (2) smothering it with non-combustibles, and (3) by neglect— so may the Spirit's influence be put out: (1) through bitterness, complaining, bickering and backbiting, (2) becoming involved in the affairs of this present world, and (3) by failure to nourish the inner man through prayer, study of the word, and the mutual edification of the saints.

Answering the Buzzer

[Essay]

A review of an article by George G. Beazley, Jr., ecumenical officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),

titled “Beazley ‘Lashes Out’ at Attacks on Ecumenical Groups” (*The Christian*, Feb. 14). Responds to Beazley’s concern that ecumenical institutions “are in real danger of being destroyed” and that cutting off funding due to mistakes in spending money is not the way to deal with such mistakes. The author opines that the consultation on Church Union is a tragic error and would forfeit every principle our fathers fought for. Asserts that cutting off funding is exactly the way to deal with repeated mistakes in spending. Contends that what we need more than anything else is to get back to a real, genuine, vital, and personal relationship with God through the blood of his Son and the power of the indwelling Spirit. While there may be nothing wrong with institutions, when men begin to consider them indispensable to the purpose of God they become dangerous.

The Spirit at Work

[Essay]

Responds to the question from a correspondent, “Is there any scriptural teaching that the Holy Spirit will not or cannot lead a child of God into contact with an open-minded soul in need of salvation, or bring to memory a scripture appropriate for the occasion? Expresses reluctance to write on such matters due to the fact that one must relate personal experiences to justify his position. Affirms belief that the Spirit is actively working through the children of God using their unique personalities to do unique things. Holds that God is interested in every phase of our existence, that when we are completely surrendered to his purpose he can providentially shape our destinies. Concludes with a personal testimony as to how God has, on numerous occasions, provided unplanned opportunities for him to share with those who were ready for a new dimension of life.

God Works for Good

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:28-30. God is interested in everything we do, and the greatest thing about his being Lord of all is that the Spirit can so order and arrange everything that it will work out for ultimate good. Everything is going to work out to his praise. “We know” is positive. It lifts the matter out of the realm of speculation, and it excludes no area of life. There is a purpose behind this universe, and purpose implies design. I can look for his hand in anything that happens, thus giving life new dimensions. Sometimes what first appear as perplexing detours turn out to be highways to success and happiness. It is unfortunate that verse 29 has been made the ground for the most bitter theological conflict in the Christian realm. Obviously the passage is inserted merely to demonstrate that the truth that God’s concern is to “call many sons unto glory.” Before the foundation of the world, God conceived the idea that men would respond to a divine call by their own choice. He not only foreknew this but destined in advance that such persons would become like the image of his Son. In the matter of obedience all were left free. Our ability to rely upon God for the power to be free from ourselves (our flesh) provides strength, confidence, and incentive to meet the trials and temptations of each day.

The Backlash

[Essay]

There is a backlash of unrest and resentment which currently characterizes “the Church of Christ.” The whole factional mess is seething with unrest and discontent. It stems from the fact that institutional arrogance and insolence have had their day. This kind of appraisal brings deep resentment because

it is regarded as speaking against “the Lord’s church.” Yet this is one of the problems: we have confused an early nineteenth century restoration movement with the one body. While we set out to convince the world that all who believe in Christ Jesus on the basis of apostolic testimony could be united on a foundation of one provable fact— that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Yet the non-instrument Churches of Christ made the use of instrumental music an article of faith and elevated it to creedal status. What we need to do is to go back to the fork in the road and admit that we were wrong in setting up a non-instrument creed as the basis of our hope of eternal life. We will never again be a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects until we can unite the Christians in the restoration movement. The question is not the right or wrong of instrumental music, but whether any opinion or view should be elevated to creedal status. We must banish every creed but Jesus, chop down every party standard, eradicate every test of fellowship except the one God enunciated!

More Than Conquerors

[Essay]

A commentary on Romans 8:31-39. If everything fits into a pattern for good, then nothing that happens can work our ultimate defeat. The problem of doubt about future victory is settled for the believer from the moment in which he accepts that God actually and purposely delivered up his own Son for us. *Agape* is the love that knows no bounds. Those who do not grasp the intensity of *agape* can never understand how God could “spare not his own Son.” If God did not forbear to give up his own Son, surely he will not hesitate to bestow all else that is required to fulfill the divine purpose as relates to all of us. He cannot condemn one whom he has justified. Justification is not subject to reversal. In Christ we are free. We are safe. We are made to be guiltless by divine fiat. There are four reasons why

Christ will not condemn us: (1) He died for us; (2) He will not condemn the body over which he is head— and there is no other power in the universe which can do so; (3) Instead of condemning us, Christ pleads our case in heaven. The question raised in verse 35 is not, Who shall separate the love of Christ from us? but, Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ? To be more than conquerors (v. 37) is to be invincible, or unconquerable. The apostle then enumerates (verses 38, 39) a list of things which acted as real enemies in the minds of the superstitious Romans and Greeks of his day. But he confidently affirms that none of these can overthrow the purpose of the living God.

My Only Creed

[Essay]

Refers to the historical accounts of cannibalism by the members of Sir John Franklin's expedition to the Arctic Region and to that of the Greek fable of Erisichthon. Suggests cannibalism as an apt metaphor for the current state of the restoration movement which has sought to protect, perpetuate and propagate itself through self-destruction. It has severed its own members, gouged out its own eyes, cut out its own tongue and fragmented itself in many communities. It has done this under the guise of upholding the truth. Indicates that the remedy for our state is to go back beyond every unwritten creed, to a creed of such importance that the very issue of eternal life is suspended upon its acceptance. There is only one creed endorsed by heaven as the basis of union and communion for the saints of God, and it is not a precept, but a person. God has proposed to unite all who believe in Jesus upon the basis of one great universal fact. Jesus is the personal embodiment of truth— not some truths or certain truths. Faith has to do with facts, not with abstract truths. One who accepts him who is *the truth* thereby

commits himself to the acceptance of all truths as they become known to him. Our relationship to Jesus stems from faith, not from knowledge or personal experience. Our problem in this age is that we have lost Christ in the Bible, we have lost the Bible in the church, and we have lost the church in the world. Christianity is not Jesus pointing us to a book, but a book pointing us to Jesus.

The Reasonable Worship

[Essay]

An analysis of Romans 12:1, 2. Takes note of the fact that the person who is holy, who has been sanctified, is (1) separated from the unregenerate world and does not share a common life (fellowship) with the unbelieving mass of mankind, and (2) this separation makes a difference that lies in the fact that one belongs to God. Holiness is about having transcendent value; it is not an attitude toward things. Our “reasonable service” (*logikos latreuo*) actually consists of the surrender of self to God — giving the members of one’s body to God, in a voluntary act of commitment which entails the devotion of bodily desires, feelings, passions, and sensations to God. Thus everything one does in the body, with an eye singled to the glory of God, is worship. For the Christian there are no “acts of worship” since there are no acts which are not worship. Concludes with Trench that the “world” is that territory pre-empted by base desires and ruled over by Satan. Paul admonishes that to engage in true worship one must be radically transformed. There must be an alteration of one’s very nature, in which the mind is no longer set on earthly things.

Seeking Guidance

[Essay]

Responds to the question “How may one seek the guidance of the Spirit and ascertain the will of God for his own life?” Prefaces his answer with the observation that his response— his personal approach— may not be valid for another individual, since no two people have the same intellectual, temperamental, or spiritual caliber, plus the fact that the Holy Spirit must not be boxed in by one individual’s experience. On a personal note, states that for several years he has been trying to live a more surrendered life, which has resulted in inner tranquility. Believes that nothing occurs in his life outside God’s purpose for him. His personal approach to seeking the Spirit’s guidance involves (1) seeking to immerse himself in the total revelation of God, (2) persisting in prayer for guidance in specific and immediate problems until an answer is forthcoming, (3) seeking the advice of other saints, (4) seeking to live in the shadow of God’s umbrella of grace all of the time, abiding in the tent of the Spirit, and (5) relating his entire being to the dynamic of love, injecting it into every life situation.

The Differing Gifts

[Essay]

A dissertation on Romans 12:3-8. Summarizes by noting that (1) each one of us is to make a sober estimate of his ability based upon an assessment of the gift of God as bestowed by grace; (2) we are bound together as functioning members of an organism (not of an organization) which has Jesus as its center of life and activity; (3) there are no useless members of the body of Christ; (4) the unity we enjoy is a creation of the Spirit, not an achievement by men; (5) we are interrelated and made into a cohesive unity by the indwelling Spirit; (6) any aptitude or endowment which enables us to perform any function in the body is a gift of grace (provides a detailed analysis of each of the gifts mentioned by Paul). Concludes that we must employ the

gifts we possess for the good of the whole body, and the body must provide an opportunity for us to grow and develop within the framework of fellowship. No one can say to another he has no need of him.

With Brotherly Love

[[Essay](#)]

An exposition of Romans 12:9, 10. Observes that unless the Spirit transforms our hearts until we can love one another, all else is vain; that we will be judged not by our orthodoxy but by how we treated the least of the brethren. States that the word “dissimulation” in verse 9 is a transliteration of *hypokrites*, to speak under or behind a mask, as did the Greek dramatists. Its opposite is sincerity, which in Greek comes from the idea of examining merchandise in the sunlight to better ascertain its true quality. That which passed the test was said to be “sincere.” Evil is any destructive force. While all sin is evil, not all evil is sin. Evil is to be hated with such intensity that we neither embrace nor condone it. Just as there is no dynamic to compare with brotherly love, so there is no hatred so bitter and intense as that which is shown when brethren turn against one another (numerous examples included). Notes that one of the most difficult things to do is to prefer one another in honor. Yet Paul clearly indicates that we should be willing to allow others to take the credit due ourselves.

The Pleasure of God

[[Essay](#)]

Spanning the chasm between God and man caused by sin, and transcending all racial, social, and national barriers, Jesus

came to reconcile us unto God and, thereby, unto one another. In Ephesians 1:7-10, Paul states that the hidden purpose of God concealed through the ages, is now disclosed: that the universe might be brought to unity— in Christ! The approach to this ideal is to call individuals from a life of sin, reconciling them to God, so they may share in the life of God. The demonic forces are united to thwart the accomplishment of God's purpose. One of the devices employed to that end has been to fragment those who acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God into warring sects whose hostility toward other believers has been more intense than it has been toward evil. Yet the purpose of God will triumph. We must actively participate in helping to bring the divine pleasure to fruition (1) by grasping afresh the basis of *koinonia*, or fellowship, and (2) by understanding the real nature of the *ekklesia*. We must find the center upon which the acceptance of God into his fellowship is conditioned— the divinely revealed and fundamental ground upon which God proposes to gather all those who trust in Jesus.

The Death of a Dream

[Essay]

Recounts the circumstances out of which Thomas Campbell wrote his *Declaration and Address*, regarded by the author as “one of the greatest uninspired documents written by human hand.” Lists five of the more salient points raised in the document, then comments on its radical and revolutionary nature, calling special attention to the safeguard it erected around the right of private interpretation of scripture— a hallowed watchword of the Reformation led by Luther. Points out that the *Declaration and Address* further provided that doctrinal interpretations were not to be made tests of fellowship. Notes how doctrinal differences among the early pioneers of the movement were not causes of division. Refers to Aylett Raines

and John Smith as cases in point. Makes observations concerning the fall of that vision for unity from its high estate, noting that our only approach to differences since that time has been division. Concludes with an appeal for the resurrection of the glorious ideal laid aside by predecessors. Urges that we direct the dynamic of the love of God against the walls which have been opaque, and see them become transparent; that we learn to love those who differ with us, and find that peace that passes understanding.

The Sectarian Game

[Essay]

The first step in the program of God to bring the universe into a unity in Christ is for all who trust in Jesus to be one. Our divisions postpone the acceptance of the gospel by the masses of mankind. So long as we think of sectarianism as a kind of harmless game which we can play without consequences we will not be led to abandon it. The currently divided state of believers resulted when they moved the center of their faith from its original object and position to various points on the spiritual map, and as groups were formed around these diverse centers, sects resulted. To recover the unity that once prevailed, we must again locate the center around which all may revolve and prove with such clarity that it is the divinely-given rallying-point, that all will be persuaded to join hands about it and restore the unity of all the disciples of Jesus. However, that task is made difficult by the fact that every sect thinks that its present center is the divinely-given one and that the emphasis it makes is indispensable to a closer walk with God. Sectarianism does not necessarily result from the espousal of error. Sometimes it is a truth held to the exclusion of other truths. Truths are not all equally important. One should never relinquish truth, but neither should a secondary truth be made a condition of

acceptance or fellowship. Whatever is required to believe in order to have life is more important than what one must learn in order to grow and develop. It will not be easy to give up our centers of polarization because we are emotionally attached to them. We have been conditioned by history to think of ourselves as the guardians of orthodoxy. All sectarianism originates in human egotism and is perpetuated by human pride. Every sect seeks to maintain and polish its own image regardless of cost. Sectarianism is a sign of carnality and immaturity. This whole attitude must be renounced. No man can please God while maintaining a schismatic stance. We must overcome the sectarian spirit or we will perish in this sin.

The Recovery of Reason

[Essay]

One of three Roy B. Shaw Memorial Lectures delivered from October 20-22, 1971, at the Green Valley Church of Christ in San Jose, California. We are beset by tradition and frightened to face up to the only eventuality which can rescue a splintered restoration movement rendered imbecilic by its own quarrels and incapable of securing unity because of its own division. The route back to sanity is simple— merely taking the medicine we prescribed for others. If there is any validity in the restoration plea, our only hope is to return to the principles upon which we began, the very thing our brethren fear to do. Each party wants to freeze unity at its own level but this would require a moratorium on thought and reason. The formal division over instrumental music was the gravest mistake of our fathers, and if we continue stubbornly to perpetuate the error, we will answer for our obduracy at the throne of God. We must face up to instrumental music because it is the cultural and historical problem which confronts us. If we can realistically solve this problem, we will have discovered the principle upon which every

other issue that divides us will be placed in a proper perspective. The following questions are raised and answered in the remainder of the speech: (1) Does this mean we repudiate all that for which our fathers fought, and the gains they made in restoring the ancient order? (2) Is it not a fact that instrumental music is condemned by the scriptures? (3) Does not the authority of silence forbid the use of instrumental music? (4) How can unity come about while some use the instrument and other cannot?

About Theology

[Essay]

Introduces an exposition on John's vision in Revelation with remarks about the nature of theology. States that his "theology" is a person—the Theos-Logos, the divine Theology of whom John gives one of the most thrilling descriptions. Identifies much of the symbolism in John's vision of the unfolding of the great drama of the universe involving the Lamb and the Lion of Judah. This occasion, when a transfer of power was taking place, was the single most important event ever to transpire in the celestial courts as related to the earthly creatures made in the image of the Creator. There was only one person in the entire universe to whom the Creator could surrender the destiny of the cosmos. The Lamb, who had willingly laid down his life, won the right to rule by a blood-bought purchase of such transcendent significance that the world can hardly comprehend it even yet. The Lamb is identified as the Lion of Judah and as the Root of David, the man on the white horse. Never was there a more solemn moment in time than when the Lamb stepped forward and received the scroll of destiny from the right hand of the One who sat upon the throne. Jesus is the center and circumference of the whole realm of saving grace. He took the scroll of destiny and when the final

seal is opened, he will be King of kings and Lord of lords, and the whole creation will know it.

A Faith for the Future

[Essay]

One of three Roy B. Shaw Memorial Lectures delivered from October 20-22, 1971, at the Green Valley Church of Christ in San Jose, California. Expresses optimism for the future exhibition of brotherhood among the followers of Christ upon the grounds that (1) there is a growing realization that unity in Christ is not something to be achieved but simply something to be received; (2) there is a growing recognition that harmony is not a prerequisite to fellowship, but that fellowship creates the atmosphere in which to labor toward harmony; (3) we have reared a new generation, better educated, spiritually oriented, and dedicated to the Lord of life as opposed to the cult of conformity. We must examine anew the admonition of Romans 15:5-7 to accept one another as Christ accepted us.

What Is Christendom?

[Essay]

Expounds upon the nature and development of “Christendom.” States that while “the faith” was the creation of God’s revelation, Christendom was the result of evolution in human thought and action. Provides a detailed overview of the events of early church history that eventually produced the Nicene Creed which would eventually shatter the religious world to fragments. Posits that Christendom is the machinery of the clergy, the new mediator between God and man, the kingdom presided over by popes, cardinals, primates, etc., the realm of

ecclesiastical jargon. It is the imposer of creeds and forms, binding the intellect out of reverence for tradition. What men call Christendom will never be united. We must go back beyond the written creeds of others and the unwritten codes of our own if we are ever to recapture the spirit of vital relationship with God which the Incarnation was intended to make possible. The right of the individual to go humbly to the divine revelation for himself must be recovered. There must be no Supreme Court except the individual conscience, no compulsion except that of the eager heart yearning to be like Jesus.

Two Sons of God

[Essay]

After an historical overview of events leading up to the triumph of Octavian over the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra, in 29 B.C., tells how there came to be two “Sons of God” on earth with identical goals— universal peace, which each believed would come through the acknowledgement of his sovereignty. The forces and strategies of these two kingdoms are analyzed and compared. Recounts events leading to their inevitable confrontation. Lists the characteristics of every political, social, economic, and religious revolution of the past: (1) a sense of destiny; (2) recognition that the forces of revolution are always the aggressor; (3) acceptance of the idea that the cause is more valuable than any person engaged in its prosecution; (4) unquestioning trust in the Intelligence Department to direct the forces in the field; (5) a flexibility in strategy which will allow for adaptability of weaponry to changing conditions and circumstances; (6) the ultimate goal must be envisioned in its completed state. Takes note of the way in which the early Christians dynamically met every one of the above requirements and composed a tremendous fighting force. Asserts that the conquest of the Way cannot be explained when

divorced from the terminology of war in which it is described. Concludes with an urgent call to all who are in Him to get on with the battle, risking it all and trusting the Lord for the outcome.

The Secular Influence

[Essay]

Asserts that the Christian profession has become secularized. Yet secularization is not all evil. It is used by God to accomplish his purposes, specifically in our day to undermine rigid and authoritarian structures that have enslaved the minds of men. Secularization is now enabling men to exercise their personal freedom. Although Jesus came to put an end to the distinction between secular and sacred and introduce love as the motivating principle for every action, the lust for power moved in to alter this and created an institution which arrogated to itself the right to dispense grace or deny it. Whether the unholy synthesis of Judaism, paganism, and Christianity as found in Romanism, or the modern-day eldership, the same reasoning is behind the issuing of official interpretations— which are equated with the will of God— and the requirement that such be accepted or be cut off from the people of God. The principle of legalism must be abrogated. The means of renunciation of the human establishment which has usurped the place of the temple of God. It means the recapture of the apostolic proclamation, purpose, and power. Secularization's de-emphasis upon partisan forms may play a decisive role by showing religious rivalry in its true light— as a struggle to maintain the pride of the party. But it is not necessary in order to relieve ourselves of the despotism of men that we also renounce the Lordship of Jesus. If Jesus is Lord, and if his will has been communicated in word, we are not free to disregard it.

Our Real Task

[Essay]

The process of being born again does not destroy our natural abilities. Rather, they are sanctified and enhanced by the Holy Spirit until we have been recreated and made into vessels fit for the Master's use. Factions have attempted to pummel God's children into their own moulds, rearing parrots and not children. Most find it difficult to make the ministry of all the saints more than an ideal to which they pay lip-service. Furthermore, we are hooked on the idea of a professional clergy. The big problem is that we ceased to be the family of God and made the church "big business." We quit being brothers and sisters and became "members" and stockholders. There are signs that the glorious thought that we are on earth to share in the agony of mankind is being recaptured by men and women everywhere. It is when one ministers to the least of those who are suffering that heaven touches earth.

The Majestic Experience

[Essay]

States that one of the most difficult experiences in life is that of trying to be non-sectarian in a sectarian world. Being non-sectarian is a matter of attitude; a firm conviction that while one belongs to Christ he is not one's captive. The non-sectarian has only one creed— Jesus. He never allows himself to become upset with those who differ with him about the issues that create party exclusiveness. He refuses to be hostile toward the children of his Father, esteeming the blood of Jesus as of greater value than his personal opinions. Being non-sectarian does not mean the absence of strong conviction. It simply means refusal to make anything a test of fellowship which God has not made a

condition for salvation. Being non-sectarian allows one to embrace every truth within any sect without endorsing an error pertaining to the sectarian economy. Our only hope of embracing all truth is to be free of all sectarian allegiance and be joined only to Jesus. Perhaps the most difficult choice is not to merely swap sects but to come to terms with God where you are. Being non-sectarian is like the kingdom of heaven— it is within you.

The Awesome Patience

[Essay]

Relates the story of the conflict between Elijah and Ahab, followed by God's call to Elijah in the still small voice at the top of Mt. Sinai to leave his retreat and to return to the center of political action. Suggests that the ultimate purpose of God which will change the world will probably be wrought by those who wait and listen for the still, small voice. The transcendent purpose of God is to restore unity to a world fragmented by sin. Our task is to contribute to the fulfillment of this eternal vision, however minute our contribution may be. We are not required to know how this purpose will be accomplished but we are required to believe that it will be. Not all are optimistic. Most want to see majestic revolution in earthquakes and conflagration, forgetting that this is not the divine approach. God's ways are not the ways of man. God's way always seems painfully slow to those who pace back and forth, who want to cut through the red-tape and get things done now. We are not called upon to achieve God's purpose, not for the world but in our lives. We must begin the unifying process where we are— within the family circle. Next there should be a sincere attempt to become a real force for peace among local saints, accepting in love of those one cannot like. Peace must be waged. The thought of unity must become a real passion for all— a living hope.

Some day the sheep of God will all be gathered from the sectarian hills. The sectarian spirit will be purged from the hearts of all who know the Lord. This will be accomplished through the dynamic of love, the weapon of the Spirit. This love is the essence of God's nature, unconquerable and imperishable — the only transforming, energizing power which can ever restore true order to a chaotic universe. It can only come from the Holy Spirit, poured out into a heart stripped of the pride of human accomplishment.

Spiritual Argonauts

[Essay]

After introducing the story of Jason and his journey with the Argonauts in search of the golden fleece. Posits that the golden fleece for which the argonauts of the spirit must diligently search is the *truth* which will transform us and free us from enslavement, adding that nothing is a greater safeguard for people than to seek the truth. Explores the nature of truth, which he defines as essentially conformity to reality. Notes that God never intended to reveal all truth to man— not even all moral truth— and that man must be free to probe for truth in the whole universe. Attempts to face up directly to some of the problems related to truth, such as the idea that all truth is relative. Argues that truth in its origin and its ultimate is not propositional, but personal. Asserts that what makes truth absolute is that truth originated with God. Jesus was truth in its origin. Examines the implications of Jesus' statement that "the truth shall make you free." Concludes that *the truth* which frees is the Son of God— not the accumulation of facts about him, but the experience of an intimate relationship with him that brings freedom. While Jesus is the truth who sets men free, his word is intended to bring us to this experiential relationship. Consequently, it is essential that we distinguish between the

truth which saves and truths related to our salvation. Lack of knowledge is not a sin unless it is deliberate. Concludes with observations related to the universal nature of truth.

The Hope That Cheers

[Essay]

Relates the frustrations of a young couple over the legalism in which their local Church of Christ had been caught up. Notes that what happened was inevitable and is not limited to the Church of Christ. It is characteristic of most religious denominations who have known little of the grace of God and whose members regard themselves as “keepers of orthodoxy.” Observes that our fathers made a grave mistake when they came to regard a movement with the church of God in scripture and themselves as the kingdom of God to the exclusion of all others who did not join them. Concludes that with the current intellectual explosion every authoritarian structure is in danger and no religious party can escape the challenge. Every dogmatic institution feels the threat of unprejudiced thought and seeks ways to inhibit and prohibit it. We are passing through a period of re-examination, and this is good.

Argument from Silence

[Essay]

Response to an editorial by Reuel Lemmons published in the *Firm Foundation* of June 20, titled “The Music Question,” preceded by the complete text of the editorial. In response, asserts that the real symptom of the problem that obstructs unity within the restoration movement is not the instrument but articles such as the one under review which betokens a mistaken

view of what constitutes worship and a childish approach to fellowship. Denies that our current problem is rooted in two attitudes toward authority, since those who use the instrument respect the authority of scripture. What Lemmons calls attitudes toward authority are actually presuppositions arrived at through human deductions, used as a frame of reference in which to approach the scriptures, mental spectacles donned before the reading begins. Lemmon's thesis is that unless you agree with his presuppositions (regarding the silence of the scriptures) you do not respect the authority of the scriptures. Examines Lemmons' reference to the "inconsistent application" of the "silence of scripture" among "non-instrumental people," namely, the creation of "other institutions to do the work of the church." Charges that Lemmons equates his philosophic approach to scripture with scripture itself, leaving little difference between his approach and that of the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas the latter has an infallible interpreter, the former has an infallible interpretation. Maintains that it is not the authority of God which divides us, it is the authority Lemmons and other preachers seek to exercise where God has not spoken.

About Movements

[Essay]

Honest attempts to offset division seem always to end up fragmenting further those whom they seek to unite, due to the fact that men equate their movements with the church for which Christ died. Those who think they have arrived have actually departed. While there is nothing wrong with writing a personal creed, it is a sin to cease writing— to bind oneself to defend the immature faith of yesterday. A movement which ceases to move becomes a monument to the glories of the past. The canonizing of heroes always involves the crystallizing of their views. Only an

open-ended movement holds forth any hope of uniting the saints. The moment we shut the gate to hold what we have gained, we forfeit our freedom and forsake our ideal. When a movement becomes a “church,” by whatever title it may be designated, it automatically casts itself in the role of a sect. Let us not embalm truth in an attempt to preserve it.

The Body of Christ

[[Essay](#)]

Comments on incidental lessons to be learned from 1 Corinthians 12: (1) The unity of the body is a unity in diversity. (2) There are no useless members or superfluous parts. (3) The unity of the body is the natural result of adherence to Christ. (4) Every member of the body comes into the relationship in identical fashion. (5) In this new relationship we are all sustained by divine provision. (6) The body of Christ is not a human organization, but a divine organism. (7) Membership in the body is not contingent upon being able to perform the same function as any other member of the body. (8) Membership in the body is not dependent upon recognition of one’s relationship or value by another member. (9) Division in the body is avoided through recognition that those who seem to be more frail and unseemly are actually indispensable, and by exertion of special effort to give honor to those who might be regarded as humble parts.

An Old Remedy

[[Essay](#)]

An exposition of Psalm 37:1-7. Observes that those who jealously spend their time planning evil and revenge will be lopped off like weeds, while those who simply plant their roots in

the soil of faith are assured of being sustained. If we really tune our hearts in on the divine wave length and are happy in the Lord, we can receive the desires of our hearts without reservation. Our accomplishments are in the hands of God. Only one who is truly convinced his cause is right can sit quietly and wait for God to vindicate his cause. The secret of the fulfilling life is found in trusting in the Lord, delighting in the Lord, committing one's way unto the Lord, and resting in the Lord.

What Is Your Life?

[Essay]

The text of an address to a youth conference. Posits that life is but a sequence of separations— from the womb, from parental supervision, from home, from the mother and father image to be joined to a spouse, and finally from the body upon death. But the greatest separation of all is the death to self and a resurrection to the unselfish life— a crucifixion of material ambition, and a resurrection of spiritual responsibility. Notes that Elton Trueblood lists four marks of the new reformation in our time: commitment, ministry, fellowship, and voluntary discipline. As regards *commitment*, points out that before one may give anything effectively he must first give himself away. Notes that the world needs committed men and women in every vocation who sanctify any occupation they touch. The truly committed soul is a witness for the Christ that is in him. Makes further suggestions as to how to make the committed life serve the practical purpose which God intended. Commends the lives of Dr. Thomas Dooley and Dr. Albert Schweitzer as examples of those who concluded that the best way to serve God was to serve neglected humanity. Closes with a challenge to put Jesus first in every endeavor of life.

The Way of Holiness

Begs to disagree with a commonly accepted view of Isaiah 35:8, which is generally understood to teach that God's entire revelation is so clear that even a traveling man who is not too bright can grasp it perfectly. Maintains that the Bible does not say that at all. Calls attention to Peter's statement that there are some things in the scriptures that are so obscure that unlearned men are liable to warp and wrest. Suggests that the word "highway" in Isaiah's statement is probably better translated by the word "causeway," as it appears in the New English Bible. The causeway leading through the watered plain which once was desert will be designated the Way of Holiness and will be reserved for use by a holy people. The unclean will not be able to use it for immoral practices and fools will be barred from traversing it to propagate their error. This example serves to bolster the principle of interpretation that any interpretation which relies for its validity upon one version to the exclusion of all others, is probably a faulty one.

Faith and Baptism

Sets forth personal views regarding the nature and design of baptism and its relationship to faith. Defines baptism as the immersion in water of a believing penitent, as a response to the Good News proclaimed concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, Lord, and Son of God. Regards baptism to be essential as a validation of one's faith and to entrance into the kingdom, the rule of heaven, under the dominion of God's Son. Immersion in water is an initiatory act which transfers from a state of alienation into a state of citizenship. Notes the frequency with which the Spirit spoke of baptism and the absence of any unimmersed person among the primitive saints. Jesus himself

was baptized, as a visible demonstration of subjection to God's will. While one can acknowledge belief in the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God by verbal testimony, he cannot acknowledge lordship by this method. That Jesus is Lord of one's life is a matter of personal demonstration based upon obedience of the will. Obedience is the validation of belief, and our acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus is tested at the very outset. "He that believeth and is baptized." These are the words of Jesus and no amount of equivocation will alter or abrogate them. Paul asserts in Romans 5:1 that we are justified by faith. In Romans 6:2 he affirms that all were baptized into Jesus Christ. There is no conflict between the two. Unless baptism is a demonstration of faith it is useless; unless faith is operative in obedience it is dead. Faith *at* work is not faith plus something else in justifying us. Rather, it is faith manifesting, demonstrating and validating itself in the only manner that is possible. There can be no example of faith until faith becomes exemplary.

Our Tragic Traditions

[[Essay](#)]

Presents a lengthy excerpt from correspondence from a youth minister in a Church of Christ who was accused of advocating "Ketcherside doctrine" and threatened by an elder with the loss of employment and reputation if he persisted. Quotes from *The Calling of Dan Matthews*, written by Harold Bell Write, a Restoration movement preacher who makes numerous observations about serving the institution rather than serving God. Notes that we have made the "eldership" into a dictatorship. The word of God does not teach the absolute power of any group of men over the family of the Father. There is no government without the consent of the governed. The word of God does not teach that I must contribute financially every

Sunday or suffer the pangs of eternal damnation.

The Scale of Values

[Essay]

Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote that through international broadcasting and printing, the world has unwittingly become one through its instantaneous awareness of what transpires in every place. Yet it lacks a sense of uniform values with which to interpret the events of which it shares an awareness. He suggests that art and literature can create for mankind one system of interpretation for good and evil deeds, showing us how to embrace the first and avoid the latter. While recognizing the power and influence of both art and literature, the author does not share Solzhenitsyn's optimism. Rather he reminds that both can be prostituted and become mere propaganda tools. Posits that neither can ever become the yardstick for human behavior because they are expressions of sinful men. Concludes that Jesus alone can unite the world in life. Without Him it can only be united in death.

Facing the Future

[Essay]

Announces plans to cease publication of *Mission Messenger* at the end of 1975. Recaps the history of the paper, how it was financed, published, and distributed. States that the current subscription list is almost 7500, with readers in many countries, in all fifty states, and in every province in Canada. Recounts how he began to write on fellowship in 1957 and that the title of his last bound volume (1975) will be "Fellowship." Announces his intention to destroy the files of private exchanges of a

controversial nature, that most have already been burned, and that the address stencil will be destroyed. Resolves never to retire but to continue research and writing which constitute his greatest joy.

About the Word

[[Essay](#)]

First in a series of articles in which the author responds to questions posed to him over the years. Prefaces his responses by stating that he is offering his own opinion as to what he conceives of God's word as teaching, with no thought of being dogmatic or authoritarian. Maintains that his thinking is binding upon no one further than his own knowledge and conscience lead him to accept it as valid and true. Responds to the following: (1) Do you regard the entire Bible as being given by the revelation of God? (2) Do you make a difference between revelation and interpretation and if you do, what is it? (3) Why do we need to interpret God's word at all— why can we not just take it for what it says? (4) Do you take the position that the Bible is the word of God, or that the word of God is contained in the Bible? (5) How do we know that the men who were responsible for compiling the NT canon accepted and rejected the proper writings? (6) Were the documents which compose the canon sacred at the time of their writings or did they become sacred later on because they were gathered and compiled?

Gospel and Doctrine

[[Essay](#)]

Responds to questions posed by various individuals either in public forums or by private mail. Desires to avoid any

semblance of pretense in reference to the matters discussed. Admits to limited knowledge and a restricted scope of understanding. Expresses an eagerness to share his understanding, agreeing with Lord Bacon that “the real use of all knowledge is, that we should dedicate that reason which was given us by God to the use of and advantage of man.” Pledges that nothing he writes will be dogmatic in tenor, as it does not become a servant to try and impose his will upon the other servants. The questions to which extensive responses are given are: (1) On what grounds do you make a distinction between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine? (2) Do you not make too big a deal out of this— is it really that important? (3) The objection has been made to your thinking that you believe one must be right about the gospel but after that you do not care what he thinks about the rest of the Bible— isn’t that a dangerous position to take? (4) I was born and reared in Kentucky, where we were taught to have nothing to do with premillennial congregations— are you implying that we were wrong in thus drawing a line?

About the Church

[Essay]

Responds to questions coming from an interview with a young brother doing a paper on the theme of the author’s writings concerning the nature of the church: (1) Do you regard the kingdom of God as identical with the church for which Jesus died? (2) In your previous writings you have expressed the thought that the word “church” should not be in the Bible. I do not understand what you mean. Can you explain it to me? (3) What false impressions can result from use of the word “church”? Granted you are right about it, what difference will it make? (4) Are you saying, then, that you do not believe that Jesus founded a church? (5) Do you have any real hope of

brethren adopting the views you have enunciated, or do you think yours is a hopeless cause?

The Right Name

[[Essay](#)]

Responses to queries which arose during an open forum session in Illinois. The discussion turned to “the name of the church,” to which the questions in this article pertain: (1) I understand that you take the position that the church has no scriptural name. Is that correct? (2) But did not Jesus say “Upon this rock I will build my church,” and is it not his church? (3) How do you propose that we be distinguished from the denominations? (4) If the church is the bride of Christ should she not wear the name of her husband? (5) What do you do about the statement of Paul in Ephesians 3:14, 15? (6) Are you familiar with the argument used to get the name “Church of Christ” into Acts 20:2? (7) Are you saying that our usage of the name Church of Christ in our advertising is sectarian?

Baptism and Brethren

[[Essay](#)]

Responses to questions raised in a taped interview with several young preachers who had asked to meet with the author to explore his position: (1) You claim to be working for the unity of all the brethren, but I would like to know who you regard as your brethren. (2) You are aware, are you not, that a number of brethren are saying that you claim to be in fellowship with anyone who is a believer in Christ, regardless of whether such a person as been baptized or not? (3) What about this “brother in prospect” view that you are alleged to hold? Can you tell us

what you mean by that expression? (4) Does the word of God make the distinction you make, or does it not use the same term for the whole birth process that you use for begetting? (5) Suppose that one who has sincerely believed dies before he is baptized what will happen to him? (6) But are you not saying that God may possibly overlook rebellion against his will? (7) If God does as you say, and takes the intent for the deed, why will not the man who is sprinkled be saved on his sprinkling?

The Cherished Freedom

[Essay]

No other right of citizens of the kingdom of light should be more cherished than that of liberty of opinion. The right to read scripture and meditate personally entails the corollary privilege of forming conclusions and making deductions for oneself. Abrogation of the right of private interpretation makes a farce of the right of personal investigation. Fellowship in the one body is not based upon acquiescence in the opinions of one another. Within “our own situation” this means receiving those with whom we differ first as brothers, then discussing together as equals in the Lord our differing views on matters such as instrumental music. Elders do not have a right to forbid opinions. They are forbidden to lord it over those assigned to their care. In the kingdom of heaven the shepherds are also sheep— they are not infallible. There is a difference between divine directives and dogmatic dictatorship.

More About Baptism

[Essay]

Continues to respond to questions related to baptism after

noting that the current restoration movement has forsaken the ideals of its fathers and today would exclude even Alexander Campbell from its communion: (1) Would you receive a man into your fellowship on his “Baptist baptism”? (2) But is not a remission of sins the design of baptism, and if so, can one be saved who is baptized because he believes his sins have been remitted? (3) Can a person be baptized into Christ upon the basis of a wrong doctrine? (4) You said there were nine designs of baptism mentioned in the scriptures. Will you list them for us?

The Plan of Salvation

[Essay]

Answers to queries fielded from a good-natured group whose members were not all in agreement with the author’s views: (1) Is it true that you hold that there is no plan of salvation? (2) Did Walter Scott originate the idea that there were five steps? (3) Will you dare to name specifically one of the items in “the plan” which has been added without warrant? (4) Did not Philip require the eunuch to make the confession before he would baptize him according to Acts 8:37? (5) Would you make a comment about our practice of singing invitation hymns at the close of a service?

A Growing Army

[Essay]

Acknowledges recent correspondence with a number of young preaching brethren who are having difficulty remaining where they have been chafing at the sectarian restraints placed upon them. States that he has encouraged them to remain where

they are and to continue sharing with the brethren with whom they have labored. Observes that it is tragic that brethren get their opinions mixed up with God's revelation, and those who can tell the difference are always in a predicament when they must work among those who value tradition above truth. Believes the best thing about the current dissatisfaction with the *status quo* is that it is not limited to one party but is directed against the whole divided and divisive philosophy which fragments God's children into hostile tribes. Predicts that more and more men will choose to be free in Christ and elect to exhibit their liberty by crossing back and forth over the silly barriers erected by debates over trivia.

Questions About Baptism

[Essay]

Responds to a letter regarding baptism from a correspondent and subscribes to *Mission Messenger* whom the author identifies as a writer of renown, a professor of theology in a seminary known throughout the world. Reproduces the letter in its entirety. The question is raised as to whether those who practice water baptism using a form other than immersion are in the same category as those who do not practice water baptism (e.g., Friends), and whether such persons may be regarded as brethren in any real sense. Examines the view of baptism held by members of the Society of friends and asserts that they are sadly misled by their assumption that baptism and the Lord Supper are mere ceremonials having no efficacy in conveying the blessings of God. Concludes that Quakers are not in the fellowship of the called-out ones. Posits that one is accountable (1) for what he knows and will not do; (2) for what he could know and refused to learn; (3) for what he professes to know and will not practice. Observes that one cannot be expected to obey a command which he has never learned. God will be the

judge of whether one could have learned or not. With regard to sprinkling and pouring asserts that these do not constitute baptism in the context of scripture. States that when we speak of baptism we must mean what Jesus and the apostles meant. If we use a word they used but mean something else than they mean, we are either deceived or deceivers. Baptism is the very act appointed by God in which and by which one appropriates the forgiveness through grace by personal identification with Christ. Regarding the unimmersed sincere conscientious believer, states that he will regard them all as begotten of the Father and quickened by faith in the womb of grace. Pledges to treat them all as believers and not as pagans or heathen. But to regard those who are unimmersed as having been brought into the family relationship upon the same basis as those who have been immersed would make an empty farce of immersion and the testimony of the scriptures on the matter both useless and meaningless. This, states the author, "I cannot do and answer to my God with a clear conscience."

Thinking Out Loud

[Essay]

Serves up a potpourri of questions which have accumulated from various forums and seminars: (1) What do you think about "Situation Ethics" as advocated by Joseph Fletcher? (2) Don't you think it is dangerous to teach that the only law under which we operate and serve is love? (3) Do you suggest that we repeal all laws in the world and allow love to be the only consideration? (4) What you say about this really troubles me because we are plainly told that we are not without law to God, but are under law to Christ. How do you reconcile this with your views? (5) What about the commandments of Christ which we are obligated to keep? Are these not a law, and if they are not, why not? (6) Isn't it dangerous to teach people in

the church that they are not under law? (7) Will your view ever come to be accepted and dominate the thinking of our brethren generally?

Strained Arguments

[Essay]

Takes issue with material in a pamphlet which uses Psalms 2:7 and Hebrews 1:5 to prove that since God used (and thus approves of) the “law of exclusion,” it should legitimately be used to exclude the use of instrumental music in public praise. Observes that if God ordained a “law of exclusion” which is that specific, it would appear that all of the brethren who respect the Lordship of Jesus could interpret it alike and exclude the same things. Rather than purify our religion, as the pamphlet proposes, it has fragmented our brethren into about two dozen exclusivistic parties. Suggests it might better be called the “law of exclusivism.” Denies that the author of Hebrews was making an argument based on the law of exclusion.

About Opinions

[Essay]

Takes note of the praiseworthy effort of those who undertook to restore the pristine unity of all believers in Christ. They captured the concept of oneness predicated upon belief in the reliance upon historical facts directly related to the person of Jesus and, at the same time, distinguished between those facts and any opinion formed concerning them. Considers it tragic that most of the heirs of the restoration movement have lost all consciousness of their great patrimony. Responds to questions related to the introduction: (1) What do you think was the

greatest mistake in our history as a people? (2) Is there any practical solution to the problem we inherited? (3) Will it not be more effective to move more slowly and divest ourselves of our problems gradually? (4) You have been under scathing attack for your position on fellowship in a number of brotherhood papers lately. How do you react to this inwardly? (5) How would you react if they should “withdraw fellowship” from you? (6) Will your position not weaken discipline in the local congregation?

Reading History

[Essay]

Regards history as an account of the footprints of God in the passing centuries of human behavior. Points out that while in our day we are called upon to face up to modernistic philosophies, each one has its counterpart in the Greek schools of thought. States that the faith faces no new foe in this generation. Expresses concern for the weakness of the saints, not from the power of the enemy. Considers it impossible for a secondhand faith to gain the victory over “hollow and delusive speculations” because the one who holds it cannot defend it. Believes it will help us, when we are assailed by clever advocates of philosophy, to remember that we are battling against a foe which is not invincible and which has been put to flight upon numerous occasions. We are fighting upon familiar ground under the leadership of one who never lost a battle.

Visions of Love

[Essay]

Reflecting on Jesus’ new commandment, the author

envisions the world of two millennia past. Among the images of an unfolding panorama, he sees John on the isle of Patmos. It occurred to him that love may mean loneliness, banishment waiting for the angels to come. And there was Paul in a prison in shackles, suggesting that the way of love, which never counts the cost, may be the road to prison. Finally, he observes a skull-like hill with three crosses. Over the center one the word love was arched in technicolor. He knew that here was the love center of the universe, and all human love was simply a beam or ray flashing from it.

Forced Conformity

[Essay]

Introduces a series of questions by observations related to religious intolerance, including quotations from John Milton, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Sebastian Castellio, John Locke, and Alexander Campbell. Takes note of a frantic wave of exclusion currently sweeping through Churches of Christ in which some congregations appear to have been victimized by power-hungry dictatorships which reserve unto themselves the power to save or condemn. Responds to the following: (1) But are not elders charged with regulating opinions of members? (2) If elders cannot draw a line on the opinions held by brethren, who can? (3) Why should one not divest himself of his opinions if it creates problems for others?

Applied Dogmatism

[Essay]

Pursues further the serious problem created when dogmatism leads to despotism. Deals primarily with abuses of

the eldership; cites numerous examples in which elders denied redress of grievances, prohibited the distribution of written materials with which they were in disagreement, threatened members with having their names removed from the church roster for being absent, without prior permission, for three consecutive Sundays, imposed a ban on association with anyone who happened to associate with anyone who was dismissed for his views on the millennium, withdrew from a couple for failure to deny they had experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way. Observes that such occurrences run counter to the very spirit which Jesus came to inculcate. Points out that such actions freeze ignorance at the present level, place a premium upon spiritual illiteracy, and enshrine the *status quo* as the ultimate of heaven's plan. While admiring shepherds who look with love upon the flock of God, deplores those who become drunken upon the wine of their self-importance and who play God with the lives of others.

Statement of Conviction

[Essay]

A Summary of the author's views related to fellowship, which he refers to as the fellowship of the Spirit and defines as the sharing of eternal life, the life of God. Asserts that no man has the power to extend to us a share in eternal life. Consequently, no man has the power to withdraw it. Considers it downright silly to talk about "withdrawing fellowship" from other brethren. Regards fellowship as having the everlasting arms around us, riding on eagle's wings, basking in the sunlight of a love so great that it soars above human understanding. Acknowledges having once mistaken a life of stale conformity for the glorious communion of the Spirit. Observes that sincere men who love God will never see everything alike, and to demand that they do so as a basis for fellowship is but to kindle

the flames of schism. Such a course will only make bigger hypocrites. Suggests that brethren who differ ought minimally to be able to work together up to the point of division. Would like to know on what ground the plain teaching of the scriptures on loving and receiving the brethren is ignored. Asks whether the silence of God is to be interpreted so as to countermand the revelation of God. Concludes with a statement of personal conviction regarding fellowship.

Letters to the Editor

[Essay]

Responses to questions contained in letters to the editor:

(1) How can you justify the fact that you seem to preach for the Christian Church as much as you do for the Church of Christ? (2) How can you help people see the light if you fellowship them in things that are wrong? (3) Isn't all this talk about unity in diversity a real come-off? Is that unity at all? (4) What can I do to encourage the unity of the believers of which you speak? (5) I am a Junior in high school and I wanted to start a rap session one night per week, but the elders will not allow us to have it at the church. What should I do? (6) I live in an apartment complex and I am alone every day until my husband returns from his office in the evening. Is there anything I might do to help with the work of Christ? (7) Are the efforts being made to encourage recognition of fellowship making any real progress that you can see? (8) To what factor in your own approach do you attribute the growth of interest in fellowship and unity?

Return to Sanity

[Essay]

Tells about an unexpected visit from a student from a “loyal school” in Florida who had been warned about the “liberalism” of Ketcherside but after reading one of the bound volumes of *Mission Messenger* became a regular reader of the journal. He had come to apologize for the way he had regarded the author and for the things he had said about him. The author contends that we are starting to burst out of our shells and breathe the air of freedom. States that he constantly receives letters from every state in the nation in which brethren confess they are changing their position. Urges that we must abandon our unsavory attitudes and discard our unwholesome trappings and with unbroken courage for the future begin anew the trek toward sanity and renewal.

Two More Years

[Essay]

Rationale and observations concerning the editor’s plan to cease publishing *Mission Messenger* at the end of 1975.

Defining My Purpose

[Essay]

Defines his purpose for essays in the current year. Is chiefly concerned with our use and abuse of words selected by the Holy Spirit to convey the thoughts of the divine mind. Points out that Alexander Campbell gave top priority to recapturing “the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit” as requisite to producing a reformation. From this idea came the slogan “we speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” Yet it wasn’t long before it was being quoted to exclude those who could not conscientiously conform. Believes that a

disorderly and indiscriminate form of speech contributes to a deranged and perplexed body of believers. We can never restore peace and harmony in the Spirit if we do not know what the Spirit revealed, and we can never know what the Spirit revealed if we use the terms he employed in a sense which he never intended. Suggests two ways by which the truth can be obscured and made to appear indecisive: (1) taking terms which have a specific application in God's word and giving them a general scope (e.g., the use of the word "church"); (2) taking general terms and restricting them to certain specific things (e.g., the use of the word "ministry").

Who Is Sectarian

[[Essay](#)]

A response to a letter from a brother in Arkansas reacting to the author's intimation that the segment of the restoration movement with which the correspondent is affiliated is a sect. The author recalls the day when he too shared the same sectarian outlook, as well as the shock he experienced from suddenly realizing that he had been defending a sectarian image couched in a non-sectarian plea— opposing God's purpose by his own bigotry and intolerant attitude. Insists that those who make tests of fellowship out of things God has not made conditions of salvation are not Christians only. Notes that by creating a special segment of "antis" the brother from Arkansas automatically puts himself in a special segment of "pros" and becomes as sectarian as those whom he wants to separate and segregate. Acknowledges being in the one body with every member of the Church of Christ or Christian Church who is in Christ, along with a lot of folk who are not in either one. Confesses that he was able to escape partisan antagonism the day he was able to admit publicly that he had been wrong about fellowship all his life. Not only did he recognize that he was

mistaken, but that he was actually defeating God's eternal purpose when he thought he was advancing it.

The Scotch Influence

[Essay]

Comments on statements from Alexander Campbell in which he notes that in the confession of Peter that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, we find all that is peculiar to Christianity, adding "A clear perception, and a cordial belief of these two facts will make a man a Christian." All that follows in one's life thereafter, in terms of growth in the image of God, "is but the mere result of a proper apprehension of, and conformity to this confession." These statements by Campbell are characterized by the author as the "first shaft of light from the rising sun" which enabled him to eventually recognize that every party among us sprung from another creed— another belief bound as being essential to fellowship. Notes that "in our zeal to make better Christians we were un-Christianizing them In other words, whatever it is to which one must subscribe to be received into fellowship by any community is the creed of that community, and that community is built upon a different rock than that upon which Jesus built his own. Every party is based upon a creedal foundation. Concludes with a quote from John Locke regarding conditions of Christian communion.

The Carnal Spirit

[Essay]

The party spirit causes one to regard those of his party as infallible in interpretation and wholly consecrated to God. Yet every party tolerates in its ranks those who are greedy, covetous,

and envious while castigating others whose only crime is that of intellectual honesty. Recalls the days when he, as a factional leader, stood before an audience and accused brethren by name whom he had never met and whose writings he had never critically examined. Wishes he could excuse such an uncharitable attitude upon the basis of youth and immaturity, but recognizes that it was evil and vicious and contrary to the spirit and instruction of the Lord of life. Notes that Satan never did a better job for populating hell than when he convinced man that compassion is compromise, fellowship is failure, and walking in love is weakness in the Spirit.

The Clergy System

[[Essay](#)]

Discusses what he considers to be one of the gravest errors into which the religious world has ever fallen—the rise of the clergy system with its unwarranted and unscriptural distinction between “clergy” and “laity.” Never has there been a more serious imposition upon the kingdom of heaven, and never another more widely accepted. It is the one which will be virtually impossible to overcome. While there is nothing seriously wrong with the mere words clergy and laity, the creating of a distinction between them is fraught with danger. Describes the characteristics of the Levitical priesthood and its distinction between priests and the people they served. But points out that the cross of Christ forever wiped out all such distinctions. Every child of God is now a priest. But like the trembling multitude at the foot of Horeb, we did not want God speaking to us. We were afraid to be sons. So we wanted worship to be something done for us, carried out by trained actors. We have refused to believe that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, that we are the temple of God, that the only sanctuary God has on earth is a consecrated human heart. The

praise of God is not intended to be a spectator sport. In Christ not one item of praise or spiritual performance is the exclusive right of a particular class. The purpose of special functionaries is to train God's people for works of service.

Not an Ambassador

[[Essay](#)]

Relates experiences with the “Jesus Folk,” many of whom are from homes where parents had no commitment to Christ. They do not question the origin of the scriptures or doubt the validity of what they teach. Some conclude they are the recipients of prophecies or direct messages from God. Notes that he is never confrontational but seeks out such and explains to them in private that our knowledge of God's will for our lives is by deeper insight into revealed truth and not by additional revelation. Points out that he has no ambassadorial power; there are no ambassadors for Christ alive today. Neither is he a prophet or revelator— the apostles and prophets to whom the revelation was made had no successors to office. Modern prophecies are generally the fruit of a meditative and contemplative heart suddenly rescued from despair and depression and brought back from the brink of death.

Error and Sin

[[Essay](#)]

While sin is the revolt against God— sometimes deliberate, sometimes through ignorance— of an accountable being, error, or simply being wrong or having faulty understanding, is not a sin. No one has yet apprehended all truth in its fullness; no generation exhausts the possibility of apprehension so that

knowledge can be frozen at the level of that generation and all research cease. To attempt to freeze knowledge at a given level is actually to freeze ignorance. All sects demanding conformity are based upon the false premise that all honest men will reach the same conclusions when exposed to the same doctrinal revelation — any person that forms a divergent opinion is considered to be simply dishonest. Since none among us acknowledge that universality of opinion is attainable by thinking men, they elevate one issue and polarize around it, while exercising tolerance on many other matters. The issue or interpretation is made into a creed and becomes the foundation for a new sect. There are no error-free disciples of Jesus. There is room in Christ for those who are mistaken, else none of us could be in him. Being mistaken is not a sin unless it is deliberate and voluntary.

White or Black Shoes

[Essay]

After providing a brief background on the Dunkard Brethren and their efforts at restoration, notes that every restoration movement has two barrels at hand while studying the scriptures— one for what is binding and the other for what is not. The trouble arises because they cannot all agree on which things go in which barrel. Even after they get the party barrels filled to their satisfaction, someone always gets itchy fingers and lifts something out of one and throws it into the other. Then a fight breaks out and a new faction is spawned. Recently the Dunkard paper, *Bible Monitor*, published an article by a sister concerned with what she considered to be immodest dress— the wearing of white, pink, yellow, or blue shoes. She raises the question about the future of the Dunkard Brethren if this trend continues. The author notes that the Dunkard Brethren are right to urge modesty, but they are wrong in thinking it can be

obtained by arbitrary selections bound upon others by human dogma. Observes that one can be pure in heart even if he has lapels on his coat as well as immoral without lapels.

Transforming Speech

[Essay]

Is convinced we are trapped into perpetuating a system which is not scriptural but which we feel we must hang on to. While all pay lip service to the priesthood of all believers, the thought that we should practice it has somehow escaped us. We've got a big team but nobody ever carries the ball but the coach—the rest stay in the huddle. Suggests four changes in our spiritual vocabulary which will help us to more nearly do what we timidly affirm we would like to do: (1) We need to quit talking about people “entering the ministry” when we mean taking up preaching as a profession. (2) We need to quit talking about people volunteering for “full time service” when referring to them accepting a special assignment. (3) We need to quit talking about people “leaving the ministry” when they take up other employment. (4) We need to quit making a big furor over those who propose to prepare for certain kinds of ministry to the exclusion of those who expect to pursue other avenues of service. We should not get rid of preachers. We can use more than we have, and we should support them and do so well. But we need to free them to take the good news to a perishing world. Why can we not learn to feed ourselves. Since we are all priests let's start acting like priests. Let's straighten up our vocabulary and straighten out our lives.

The Last Prophecy

[Essay]

When some of those present at the raising of Lazarus returned to Jerusalem to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had done, a meeting of the Sanhedrin was called. Caiaphas, the high priest, made the statement, “You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” John adds, “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.” God took the words of Caiaphas and used them as prophetic of the atonement of the unity of God’s scattered children. With his statement Jewish prophecy came to an end. So long as the children are not one, that long is the will of God not done on earth as it is in heaven. If he died to make us one, we should live to help realize that unity. God regards nothing as the body of Christ which contains fewer than all the saved of all the earth. We must receive one another where we are and as we are. We are called out of sin and called together in Christ that we may further the divine purpose of uniting the scattered flock.

Was That Thunder?

[Essay]

On one occasion Jesus cried out, “Father, glorify thy name.” Immediately a voice spoke from heaven. Some of those who heard the voice said that it was thunder. There are those today who cannot tell the difference between God speaking and thunder. A good example is the case of the feeding of the five thousand. It is suggested that the multitude all had a lunch stashed away but were selfish and didn’t want to share. It is alleged that Jesus’ act merely put the crowd to shame and caused them to take out their own food and eat. But no one living today can *deny* the miracles of Jesus. All he can do is question the veracity of the witnesses by showing either that they

were not present or did not have adequate opportunity to know what transpired or that they were incompetent due to an ulterior motive or untrustworthy character. Matthew and John were present. They helped pass out the food. Mark records the disciples saying “they have nothing to eat.” Surely the writer would not have let this statement stand (they were writing long after the event) if it turned out to be untrue. Furthermore the very people Jesus fed wanted to make him king— an unlikely event if Jesus had done nothing more than inspire them to be unselfish.

The Changing Scene

[Essay]

Although the whole idea of a professional ministry is foreign to the very nature of the family of God, the practice has been around so long brethren do not want to re-consider it in the light of the word. They are victims of the amalgamation of the once-delivered faith with the influence of western civilization. At one time it was argued that we could not hold people without a good pulpit man. But then a revolution occurred in which “the establishment” came under fire. When directed at the religious establishment it focused on the clergyman, and his value hit a new low. The fault for this decline in the effectiveness of the paid professional clergy is not with preachers themselves, but with the system which we inherited. We’ve tried to make ourselves believe that it is of God. But it is not God’s doing. We have developed a machine which is not patterned after God’s design at all. We do not have the concept of ministry, fellowship, or service which was revealed by the apostles, and we are not about to return to the simplicity and unadorned worship of God which was a part of the freshness of the morning of the new creation. Then every congregation was a training center for every saint. We now “hold services” rather than render them, and this must

be done by someone trained in the art because saints are no longer qualified to exhort and edify one another. Our task should be to determine the will of God and make it work rather than to devise and alternative.

Alice in Wonderland

[[Essay](#)]

Gives the background of *Alice in Wonderland*, then observes that like Alice, many people, the young in particular, are in search of their own identity. The world outside seems jumbled and mixed up. Often children can see what parents cannot due to their having insulated themselves from reality by the materialism in which they are wrapped up. Many, like Pablo Picasso, are alone within. States that one is never empty if his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. There is a victory which overcomes the world and overcomes doubts. There is no problem of personal identity when Jesus is real within the soul—Jesus who said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

What Happened?

[[Essay](#)]

How did the heirs of an effort to unity the Christian in all the sects become so hostile to one another? What happened to splinter it into two dozen factions? When the question was raised as to whether Aylett Raines should be admitted into the Mahoning Association, given his Universalist leanings, Thomas Campbell stated that he would put his right hand into the fire and have it burned off before he would raise it against him. When the followers of Alexander Campbell and those of Barton W. Stone met in Lexington, they received one another and

embraced the unity of the Spirit. It was when a third generation arose that lesser men developed the fallacious notion that purity of doctrine could only be maintained by division of the body. In 1906 the formal division was recognized by the U. S. Census Bureau and men began to deal with issues by debate rather than by dialogue. Since that time we have divided ourselves out of influence with thinking people and rendered our plea for unity a joke. We need not remain in the trap. We must renounce the philosophy which severed us from one another; we must return to our first schism and undo it. If we fail to do so we will remain a fragmented people.

Into the Action

[[Essay](#)]

As a soldier enlisted to fight with the sword of the Spirit in allegiance to the King to recapture every province overrun by the implacable foe, he is particularly concerned with the abandoned field of higher education. The great university complexes represent the place where the action is. Considers it a personal obligation to capture this humanistic stronghold—capturing every thought and making it do obeisance to the King. Christian campus centers should be drill fields for training in the art and science of spiritual warfare. If they are used only as a place to associate with young Christians, a generation will pass and the revival of Greek philosophy and pantheism will pass unchallenged. We have not been called to hold the fort but to storm it. We are to guard the faith but also to share it. Jesus died for intellectuals as well as for the rest of the world. Proposes to stalk relentlessly every teacher of error, shadowing him until he finds the weakness in his reasoning, then moving in to capture his thinking for the Captain of our salvation. Points out that we have not been given a long-range rifle but a sword, which requires close infighting. The wisdom of this passing age can

never overthrow the wisdom which is from above. But they were made to clash head-on. Our task is to bring the truth as it has been revealed into direct conflict. We must conquer or be conquered.

Pastoral Flypaper

[Essay]

Opines that like flies in flypaper, a lot of people are all bogged down in the semantics of the clergy system in the restoration movement. We were lured by the sectarian system and we have given up the struggle and are discouraged of ever achieving our goal. Our restoration fathers had much more to say about what they called “the one-man hired pastor system” than they ever did about any other problem that confronted them. Asserts that the system we now practice is without scriptural basis. By our actions we are denying the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of all the saints. Pastors in the primitive communities of the saints were not the preachers. They were bishops or overseers. They were not imported but selected from the flock. We, on the other hand, have adopted a new office and created a new officer to fill it. Our brethren were not converted to the task of serving, but of being served. So what can be done? (1) If you are employed to minister to a congregation, change your thinking. Remove the title from your letterhead. (2) Change the emphasis from delivering sermons to teaching the word. (3) Be a coach; educate people; train them by telling them how, showing them how, and by letting them do it! Work yourself out of a job! Concludes by calling for a radical revolution in the church, noting that there is a vast difference in the church as we have contrived it and the body of God’s dear son. Calls attention to the fact that the purpose of the fellowship of the saints is to give everyone the opportunity to develop to his fullest potential, to encourage and strengthen him for growth in

grace as well as in knowledge of the truth.

The Art of Nitpicking

[[Essay](#)]

After giving the etymology of the word nitpicker, states that in the religious realm nitpickers are the people who major in minors, throw tantrums about trifles, and fragment saints over fly-specks. While the world around is grappling with prodigious problems, we tend to become unstrung and pursue gnats with a gun loaded for elephants— we think heaven is all agog about our issues. Nitpicking will destroy a home or a congregation. Nitpickers give the Lord one stalk of spearmint out of ten, but they don't have time to attend to such weightier matters as justice, mercy, and faith. The legalistic mind has a way of justifying the neglect of justice and mercy while making a great hullabaloo about things not nearly so important. It seems a shame that those who know “the power of Jesus’ name” should get so embroiled in fighting over insignificant matters.

The Common Error

[[Essay](#)]

Lord Salisbury said, “The commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcass of dead policies.” The author suggests that the idea of attempting to secure or maintain purity of doctrine and uniformity of opinion by division of the body of saints has been proven wholly unsuccessful. Our very first division ended the effectiveness of our appeal for unity, and directed most of our time, talent, and treasure toward fighting each other. As bad as things were in the seven congregations of Asia Minor, not once were the faithful few told to go out and

start a loyal group. According to Paul the problem is simple—we haven't grown up and we are still carnal. It is time for those who have grown up to demonstrate it by healing the breaches. We live in a different age than the raw frontier culture which helped to spawn our divisions over opinions and interpretations which grew into traditions and made void the law of God against division among the saints. It is no honor to stick to the decaying carcass of dead policies. God did not wait until we all agreed with him before he reached down from heaven to take us in his arms. Nor can we wait until all see everything alike before we receive his other children.

Queen of Epistles

[[Essay](#)]

The first of a short series on Ephesians 4:1-16, dealing with God's secret for the edifying of the body. While this essay makes preliminary statements relative to the overall purpose and content of the epistle, it focuses on the first three verses which speak of a call, a walk, and an endeavor. Comments at length on the characteristics of lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering as they relate to the unity that is of the Spirit. Concludes that our real problem is in the love department. As human beings we are inclined to be selfish and childish—and we are that way. What we do not realize is that love is of God. It is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given unto us. Our divisions did not come over “issues” at all. It is silly to wait until others see everything as you do before you love them. Just about the time you get things patched up, one of you will learn something new and upset the applecart again. Agape is unconquerable, indestructible benevolence which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved. A lot of people will never see how love can conquer division while differences exist. Yet that's the only time it can conquer it. It is the Spirit dwelling

within that binds us to God and to one another. The bond of peace is the tie that binds us in proper relationship to our brethren *because* we are in a proper relationship with God.

Simple Trusting Faith

[[Essay](#)]

Letters from many who read his book, *Simple Trusting Faith* (1969). Said the book was helpful but was very far from being simple. States he learned from this experience. While he is all for a rational approach in presenting a logical case for Christianity, we have to get faith down on the street level. It is doubtful that very many are led to the faith by erudite argument. While we will probably never be able to work out a systematic sequence of syllogistic proof which will overthrow skepticism, it is altogether possible that God never intended for us to try. Perhaps the faith has a built-in logic of its own. Faith has its difficulties, but the incredibilities of unbelief are so vast that their very existence constitutes an argument for the Christian faith.

One Body in Christ

[[Essay](#)]

Second in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. Observes that unity involves seven items which define and describe our calling and give it reality--each contributing strength to the whole and each deriving strength from the others. Asserts that the one body is not a sect nor a federation of sects, since all sects are post-apostolic. The one body is not a conglomeration of congregations. It is not composed of movements in history, although affected by them. The body never died and it did not

have to be restored (the efforts of the Campbells, Stone, and Scott were designed to find a better way to please God than by splintering every time someone came up with a new theological insight). The one body is composed of individuals. It is composed of every child of God in the world, even though they may not recognize one another. It is not composed of those who have scored a passing grade on a theological comprehension test, but of those who know Jesus. Everlasting life is a personal relationship, not a memory feat. The one body is composed of every sincere immersed believer on earth.

The Ultimate Design

[Essay]

“What am I doing here” is the question of multiplied thousands in our world today. The modern world, nurtured on the idea that the supernatural is non-existent and that there is no message from above, has no answer. The scientist has no answer! The humanist has no answer! The hedonist has no answer! To dismiss God is not to straighten out your thinking, but to corkscrew your mind. The question should be what *should* I be doing here, and the answer is simple but sublime: The ultimate supreme purpose of man is *to glorify God*. He who glorifies God justifies his existence. But we have lifted the glory of God out of the world of reality and think of glorifying God as something we do in comfortable pews on Sunday. Yet none of this is part of God’s plan or purpose. Every deed is worship when done under the Lordship of Jesus! Jesus came to remove the barrier between the secular and the sacred. The litany of the lawnmower may be as sweet in the ears of God as singing in the choir, if it is accompanied by a thankful heart. We should strive to glorify God by the way we die as well as by the way we live. If one lives in the Lord he can die in the Lord. If we allow Him to live in us — which really means to allow Him to love all men through us,

for that is what life is all about— we can magnify and glorify him by our death. One does not have to wait until after he dies to share the life of God. Glory can be experienced here and now.

One Spirit

[Essay]

Referring to his early days, recalls how the Spirit was confined to the pages of scripture. It was assumed that the more passages you could quote, the more of the Spirit you had (based on a misunderstanding of John 6:63). Confesses that it was a long time before he outgrew his error about the passage in which Jesus is contrasting the bread of life with manna. One reason for the skittishness about the Holy Spirit was that there were too many “holy rollers” who claimed to be guided directly by the Spirit. Acknowledges that it was his respect for the revelation of God which finally prevailed to lead him into a closer walk with Jesus through the Spirit. Admits that there are a lot of things about the Spirit that he does not know, but discovers more every time he studies the Word. Believes the Spirit helps in every phase of life to act more rationally. Best of all he enables us to love our enemies. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. Our bodies are his temple. He is a seal of ownership. He takes away any sense of loneliness. His is with us and in us! If all Jesus gave us was a book we are still orphans. An orphan needs someone, someone who understands and cares. The Spirit walks with us all the time. He is as interested in how we mow the lawn as in how we sing when the saints come together. It is through him that we have oneness.

One Hope

[Essay]

Third in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. Defines hope as joyous anticipation— desire and expectation compounded in exact proportions. The “one hope” is hope in the ultimate degree. It is victory over death at the very moment it looks like death is the victor. Hope is using death, which appears to be the key that locks you in, as the key that lets you out. Our hope rests upon the immutability of God’s promise and his oath. It is an anchor to the soul. Our hope is Jesus. He is not simply the answer to life. He is the life. Our hope is a living hope because of the resurrection without which there is absolutely no sense to the universe. Hope is the result of faith which is based upon the facts of history, facts which changed the course of the world when first announced by simple fishermen, slaves, and social outcasts. If we ever get over our intoxication with creeds and proclaim the resurrection, hope will return and darkness will once again flee away. There is one hope and it is unitive. It is the common hope of all who trust in Jesus. It is the golden thread woven into the unity of the Spirit on the loom of everlasting life. Hope will not be extinguished by the chill wind of death, because when a Christian dies he doesn’t leave home—he goes home!

One Lord

[Essay]

The fourth in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. While commenting on the majestic scenes of Revelation 19, notes that the leader was called *Faithful* and *True*. Asserts that absolute truth and absolute faith are found in a person— who is eternal life. These are identified with the living Word, which is not something said by God but the one who says it! He is the *theos*- (God) *logos* (Word) or theology of heaven. Theology is a person. Theology is Christ Jesus, not a course to be studied. His biography does not exhaust his being. Jesus is Lord! He is Lord

of *all men* and of *all things*. He is Lord of the lawnmower. He is the Lord of light, life, and love. There is one Lord— the magnetic center toward which we are drawn. He defines the context or composition of the unity of the Spirit. Unity is not agreement upon interpretations, it is togetherness in Christ. Eternal life is not knowing all about the Bible, but knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

One Faith

[Essay]

Fifth in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. Begins by pointing out what the *one faith* intended to secure the unity of the Spirit is not. It is not Catholicism, Lutheranism, or any other “ism”— not even Church of Christism (that bundle of views, explanations, and tradition which have been molded into a set of beliefs, to which all must subscribe in order to be received into and recognized as communicants in “The Church of Christ”). It is not composed of the twenty-seven books of what is mistakenly called the new testament (since the faith existed prior to their being written). The one faith is not and can never be conformity to a legalistic formula which gives kingdom status. The one faith is acceptance of the reality of the elemental trust that in death and by death Jesus opened up a new and living way through the curtain of his own flesh. The faith is pinpointed in history— there was a “before faith came” and an “after faith came” (Galatians 3:23, 25). The one faith is Jesus. He is the center of it and its circumference. He is the gospel personified. The faith for which we are to contend is the faith of the gospel. The gospel is the good news of what God has done for us in Jesus. Our faith is the response to that news in absolute surrender and unreserved trust. Ours is the visited planet. The one faith is acknowledgement of that supreme fact. It is the ground of hope.

One Baptism

[Essay]

Sixth in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. Quotes at length from Alexander Campbell regarding terms of admission into the community of faith: “The belief of one fact and submission to one institution . . . is all that is required.” The author reminds that there is one baptism, which regards as water baptism administered to penitent believers. Quotes William Barclay in support of his conclusion that immersion in water— not sprinkling— is the initiatory act into the fellowship, the means whereby the forgiveness of sins is personally appropriated. With this most scholars agree. This was the concept of the primitive saints. Does not believe the one baptism to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit (which he believes occurred only twice and was never again mentioned). Believes that every child of God receives the Spirit at the time he is born into the family. Affirms that there is no such thing as a child of God who does not have the Spirit of God.

One God

[Essay]

Seventh in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. Paul’s statement that there is one God does not refer to the existence of God. This is the capstone with which to crown his list of seven planks in the divine unity platform. Paul refers to the fact that God is the *Father* of all, which breathes a divine concern and speaks of tenderness and compassion. God is *above* all, which speaks of divine control. He is above all nature. God is above all *history*. He sees the end from the beginning. He is above all of his *children*. He is *through* all. This has to do with both *communion* and *communication*. The same God works through all of us— in

proclamation, in preparation, in performance, and in production. God is in all, which speaks of companionship. The Spirit dwells in our bodies as temples— to strengthen our weakness, to supply our wants, and to share our worship.

Functioning Gifts

[[Essay](#)]

Eighth in a series of essays concerning Ephesians 4:1-16. Takes note of the seven things we hold in common, which create and make unity possible. Goes on to point out that each of us receives grace in a special way. From *charis* (grace) we have *charisma* (gift)— a gift which cannot be earned or secured by effort or practice. There is no such thing as a charismatic age since there has never been a non-charismatic age. The called-out community was created to enable every person to develop to the fullest potential in service to others. For this, training is required for which special functionaries were gifted: apostles and prophets (who laid the foundation of the reconciled community, who continue in their function without successors), evangelists (who were itinerate preachers of the gospel who taught and trained their converts and then moved on), and pastors (who are to be teachers). Discusses abuses of these functions.

Equipping the Saints

[[Essay](#)]

Ninth in a series of essays on Ephesians 4:1-16. The body is not one with ministers, but a body of ministers who must touch man physically, morally, mentally, and spiritually. It can never be wrong for the body to minister as did the head while he was in a body on earth. Every gift must be exercised in love— love

for the unlovable, for the unlikable. Love is the only dynamic which will change the world. It was not Jesus' purpose in giving gifts to create a special caste to be trained and put up for hire. (1) Every gift is designed to be used for the good of all for the edification of the body. (2) The community of saints was created for the purpose of enabling every disciple to develop to the fullest degree in whatever area he is endowed by God. (3) Any system which operates so as to inhibit the use or development of any gift of God is detrimental to the cause of Christ. (4) The training and development of a special caste to minister, to the exclusion of the development of every member as ministers, is foreign to God's purpose and plan. The practice of hiring a man as *the minister* of a congregation of saints is without scriptural warrant. The purpose of the gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and instructional shepherds) was to prepare God's people for works for service whereby the body builds itself up—God's method is to equip all the saints to function for the highest degree in the exercise of their gifts. *The System* has betrayed us into hiring someone as "our minister." Brethren are always seeking a minister instead of seeking to minister. The primitive saints did not gather to hear a sermon. They could all speak one by one, that all might be built up. The first thing we must do is to forget the concept of "church" and recover the concept of a family—in whom the Lord dwells. To have every member reach the stature of the fullness of Christ is the reason for all the training. We, however, have developed false standards of measurement. The result of proper training will be to protect members from becoming the victims of deception. Only when we substitute truth for deception can we help our brethren grow, but the truth must be spoken out of love. Unity plus togetherness plus work plus increase equals edification—the divine formula for body growth.

Time to Change

[Essay]

If it is hard for an individual to alter his course, it is even more difficult for an institution to do so. The same is true for every faction in the restoration movement. The non-instrument Churches of Christ are dominated by powerful leaders, governed by *editorcracy*. Although there are exceptions, they mostly remain underground. But reformation must continue because there are always persons in each party who love the truth more than party shibboleths and who will catch the vision and continue. All growth involves change. If we in “the restoration movement” expect to survive and have any impact upon this intellectual age, we must make some real changes: (1) We must change our vocabulary and speak not only *where* but *as* the Bible speaks, distinguishing gospel from doctrine, the new covenant and the new covenant scriptures; (2) We must change our view as to the utility of so-called church buildings and turn them into drill-grounds, filling-stations, and mess-halls for the army of God; (3) We must revise our thinking about ministry—to regard one man as “the minister” is to discourage every other man from thinking of himself as a minister; (4) We need to change our thinking on fellowship— stop equating it with endorsement and recognize that it is a condition created by the Holy Spirit in which we share, not something to be extended or withdrawn;; (5) we must change our emphasis on the motto we have proclaimed— love will not allow me to impose my concept of faith upon another’s realm of opinion. “The Church of Christ” in its present organizational sense cannot survive.

[A Personal Visit](#)

[[Essay](#)]

On the eve of the 37th and final year of the publication of *Mission Messenger*, the editor responds to multiple inquiries from subscribers as to why he is bringing the publication to an end. His list of reasons provides insight into his views on the

purpose of the paper and his function as editor.

Another Gospel

[Essay]

During an open forum three men showed up and attempted to create a little havoc by accusing everyone present of teaching “another gospel.” On another occasion a brother stated that those who use individual containers in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper were advocating “another gospel.” Another correspondent indicated that the Sunday School is “another gospel.” All of these brethren are ignorant of the nature and content of the gospel, the situation in Galatia to which Paul addressed himself, and they are ignorant of what Paul meant by the term “another gospel.” The truth of the gospel of which Paul speaks to the Galatians is justification by faith. The gospel is the good news of what God has done in Jesus to bring man into a relationship with himself. The Galatian letter was not a part of the gospel message. One can be mistaken about a lot of things without perverting the gospel. To accuse one of advocating another gospel because he disagrees with your position upon some point of doctrine speaks more forcibly about your ignorance than about his. The one who is in danger of projecting another gospel is the one who make fellowship dependent not upon our relationship to God through the Spirit but upon agreement with his faction upon some point of theological deduction.

The Longest Prayer

[Essay]

Examines the longest recorded prayer in the new

testament scriptures, as an introduction to a series of articles on the theme “one in Christ.” Observes that the glory which God gave Christ he gave to the disciples so that they could become perfectly one; explains the relationship between glory and oneness, pointing out that the glory of God signifies his presence. Notes that Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God. This is not mere recognition. Eternal life is experiencing God, sharing in the life of God, which is the essence of fellowship. Asserts that there is a great gulf fixed between the world and those who belong to Jesus. Jesus’ prayer is focused on the latter. To keep the disciples in the *name* of the Father was to hold them to his person as if the very reputation of Deity was at stake. There is no real joy obtainable except through Jesus. Knowing him is knowing joy. Our transformation from the state of abnormality created by sin to the reality of righteousness in Christ Jesus is predicated upon faith, and that faith is the natural result of an honest heart receiving the words of God. Jesus is the “Great Divide.” The world hates those who are not of it. The way we are preserved from the evil one is by sanctification. A sanctified person belongs to God; he is consecrated, and thus different. The “word” by which we are sanctified is that of the gospel— the truth about himself— not the apostolic doctrine. Belief in the Son of God is the dividing line across which men must come to be a part of this prayer. Oneness must be viewed from two different aspects: visible and invisible. The first is unity impressed upon us by the Spirit; the second is expressed by us through the Spirit. The unity for which Jesus prayed was that visible unity which can be seen by the world— which will lead the world to believe that God sent Jesus. We have allowed our views of things to become more important than belief in the Son. The world has seen this and found a very shallow view of the importance of faith. We will never see things alike. To be joined to each other *as* the Father and son are joined, we must have the divine nature. The only place we can ever be one is in Christ— sharing the common life of the Spirit, the love of the Divine Nature. The world will be won to believe in Christ, when those in the world who believe in Christ are one! It’s just that simple!

The Common Life (1975)

[Essay]

Recalling years of personal experience as a party leader within Churches of Christ, describes at length and in detail the outlook and behavior of those who are driven by the party spirit, pointing out the influence of the party leaders and their tactics for maintaining the *status quo*. Examines the historical North-South divide among these churches and comments on the racism by which they were characterized. Tells of his experience as he awoke to the reality of the sectarianism of which he had been a part. Proposes to share some things he has learned about fellowship. Provides an analysis of the word *koinonia* and the various words used to translate it into English. Notes that fellowship is created by a response to the call of the gospel. Fellowship is not and cannot be created or maintained by doctrinal conformity. It is a creation of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship does not imply endorsement as is clearly seen in the fellowship between Paul and the saints at Corinth, and more clearly in the fact that we are in the fellowship of the Father who obviously does not endorse our ignorance and inaccuracies. Uniformity of knowledge can never be the basis of fellowship because (1) all human knowledge is relative; (2) knowledge is not universal; and (3) all knowledge is affected by our past association and attainment. All sectarianism is born of fear and pride. Love is the answer to all our problems.

The Sharing of Life

[Essay]

An analysis and explanation of the first chapter of 1 John, which seeks to emphasize the nature of the fellowship of which

we are partakers and lift it out of the pitiable state to which it has been subjected. First presents an explanation of first century Gnosticism which denied the incarnation upon which the whole Christian faith rested. Then examines the meaning of “this doctrine (2 John 9, 10) which has been used to justify all types of division within the Christian community, especially within Churches of Christ. Observes that the common life we share is eternal life, the life of God; that this sharing of the divine life is the fellowship into which we have been called by God. Since God does not condition his fellowship with us upon equality of understanding, then it cannot be a criteria for our relationship with each other. Argues that walking in the light as God is in the light (1:7) is loving as God loves; that sinlessness is not a condition of fellowship. Concludes that John wrote his epistle to enable the saints to stand against the wandering Gnostic teachers, observing that nothing is more important where the life of the body is being threatened than for the brethren to love one another.

The Legal Tangle

[Essay]

An exposé of legalism. Defines a legalist as one who seeks to attain and sustain righteousness by living up to the law. The legalist believes Jesus nailed one law to the cross only to hand down another one. Maintains that while justification is by divine declaration upon the basis of faith, if we were still under a written code and seeking to be justified by it we would be under condemnation. Every written code is weak for the same reason. God did not send another law. He sent his Son. Anyone who seeks to convert the new covenant scriptures into a written code by which a man must be justified makes them simply another law of sin and death. The apostolic letters were never intended to be a compilation of legal statutes as even a cursory reading of

the letters will reveal. Yet the legalist must get it down on paper. Laying down the law is easier to do than living up to love. Responds to several questions often asked of him in open forums: (1) If the new testament scriptures are not the new covenant, why do you quote from them to validate your position and refer to them as authority for what you say? (2) If we are obligated to obey the commands of Christ what difference does it make whether we regard them as a written code of laws or not? (3) If the apostolic letters are not intended to be a written code, why were they written at all? (4) If we are not under law, why does Paul speak of the law of faith? (5) But did not Paul say he was under the law of Christ? Makes four suggestions that may help restore sanity to the restoration movement: (1) Begin to regard “the church” as a family, as the entire collection of the redeemed— not limited to those who have a correct understanding of certain doctrinal points. (2) Put the new covenant scriptures back into proper perspective— not as a compilation of laws under grace but as love letters, a recipe book for life, a roadmap to show how to follow the Way, as white lines on the edges of the highway. (3) Do not confuse the restoration movement with the “Lord’s church.” (4) Begin to enjoy the freedom with which Christ has set you free without engaging in oratory or flag-waving; start by visiting other groups and looking for things you can commend. In closing shares a personal strategy (ART) of *associating* with all who regard Jesus as the Messiah of God’s Son, *recognizing* as brothers all who have been born of the water and of the Spirit, and *teaming up* with others to relieve human suffering.

The Art of Peacemaking

[Essay]

Defines peace as a state or condition in which a proper relationship is maintained so that tranquility prevails. States

that he is writing about peace because he thinks our sectarian squabbles are a disgrace to the faith which we profess. All we have done for the past one hundred years is to prove to the world that we cannot get along with one another in Christ. Through our missionaries our divisions affect the whole world. Lists five essentials to a strategy of peace: (1) We must have an understanding of the nature of peace; (2) All peacemakers must begin with themselves— achieve a well-integrated personality, which only Jesus can do for us; (3) Peacemakers must see division for what it is— a sin against the authority of God; (4) Peacemakers must carry on their effort with undaunted faith— confidence, trust, or assurance— that unity is the will of God; (5) Peacemakers must be persons of prayer. Within the restoration movement we have developed certain presuppositions which serve as a screen through which is filtered all that we say. This stifles original thinking and freezes ignorance at the current level.

The Spiritual Eclipse

[Essay]

While Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the complex wisdom of God's plan being worked out through the church in accordance with his timeless purpose centered in Christ, there are few today who think of the church in such categories. It seems that the church has come between herself and Christ, eclipsing the sun of righteousness. In many places God's purpose is no longer conceived as centered in Christ but in the organization we have contrived and passed off as the church for which Jesus died. In many places the church exists chiefly to keep itself in existence— as the perpetuator of tradition of which we have become victims. We confuse our traditions with God's will and stubbornly resist change. It is possible that we are concerned with defending our distinctiveness and proclaiming

our peculiarities, until we have not time for, and little interest in sharing the grace of God.

What Lack We Yet?

[Essay]

Comments on a book compiled by J. D. Thomas consisting of forty-seven contributions from representatives of non-instrumental Churches of Christ having a variety of views. Commends the editor for his fairness. Notes that every contributor, without exception, would be branded as a “brother in error” by someone else in the book (and adds that they would all be right!). Observes that it is obvious that unity in diversity is the “in thing” at last among a people who have always practiced it as ardently as they have denied doing so. Asks, If we are a people who “speak where the Bible speaks,” how does it happen that we lack so much? Concludes that if we still lack a book full of things, we probably should be a little more charitable to other honest folk who also lack a few items (a sentiment echoed in part by Roy Osborne’s article in the book).

Discerning the Body

[Essay]

Observes that the two places where Paul puts extra stress on the fact that there is one body are Romans 12:4, 5, and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, where the subject is introduced in a direct context of spiritual gifts. While most of our brethren use the apostolic expression relative to the unit of the body to draw a line of demarcation between their own religious community and what they refer to as “the denominations,” these passages were not written in such a context. Paul was asserting that there is one

body to encourage all who were in it to function in harmony as a unit by each complimenting the other through the exercise of divergent gifts. There is no more apt illustration of an organism functioning as a unit than the human body (a grand demonstration of unity in diversity). The phrase “member of the church” never occurs in scripture. The term (*melos*) means a limb or organ. While all members have not the *same* function, all have *some* function. Paul introduces the Roman passage dealing with the one body by urging all of us to think with sober judgment— out of a desire to act wisely with prudence. We have divergent functions (Paul mentions seven). We are not all the same. It is the purpose and responsibility of the congregation to provide a framework and atmosphere in which every member could use his gifts and develop to his fullest potential. Any congregation which sublimates any gift of God is acting in opposition to God’s purpose. Paul’s thesis is that since there is but one body, and all are members of it, they should function together and in harmony.

No Discord

[Essay]

Examines Paul’s exposition in 1 Corinthians 12 of the illustration that the unity we have in Christ is that of the body. Takes note of the fact that the Spirit manifests himself in different ways to different persons, bestowing gifts on those who can use them— not selfishly, but for the benefit of the body. We are interrelated and there must be a correlation of our efforts. The design of the body is to provide for the functioning of the gifts; the purpose of the gifts is to provide for the functioning of the body. God only created one body. When we see the body we see Jesus. When the body is at work, Jesus is at work. It is important, therefore, that we discern the body. All who are joined to Jesus are one, regardless of racial and ethnic problems

that indicate division. It is impossible to have a body with a single organ--not one of the senses is expendable. The fact that Paul says that God arranged the organs in the body as he chose affirms (contrary to theories of evolution) design, order, and arrangement. Paul mentions three kinds of body parts for special concern— weaker, less honorable, and unrepresentable. The secret to avoiding discord in the body is to give greater honor to the inferior parts (gives several illustrations from personal experience). God's ideal is for the members to have the same care one for another. We show our concern for Christ by our care for one another. We best serve the divine purpose when we serve in harmony and strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If we truly love Jesus we will not become dissidents or drop-outs from the spiritual body.

A Startling Proposal

[Essay]

Proposes that “Churches of Christ” supply the incentive to answer the prayer of Jesus for the oneness of all believers with new and daring approaches which will capture the attention and imagination of our day and focus them once more upon Jesus as the Lord of the whole of life. Gives reasons why he thinks the brethren may have a greater hope of success than any other group on the contemporary scene: (1) We began as “a project to unite the Christians in all of the sects.” (2) We have historic ties with many of the sects still in existence. (3) We do not need to secure permission from a central hierarchy. (4) Historically, our brethren already have to their credit the actual union of two groups into one. (5) We have recaptured many values which are basic to any step toward uniting the Christians among the sects. (6) A sincere attempt to understand all believers and to promote a real thrust for unity may better come from us than from most others. (7) In a few places the brethren have already

demonstrated that it is possible to create a favorable atmosphere for further discussion with the entire religious community. Lists probable objections to this proposal: (1) We should first settle our differences. (2) Other believers will be suspicious of our motives and tactics. (3) It will result in compromise. Concludes by stating that he is personally convinced that the “Churches of Christ” in many localities could spark the greatest renewal of interest in the kingdom of heaven that has been since the days of Martin Luther.

The Apostolic Commission

[Essay]

Expands upon the meaning, implications, and scope of the so-called “great commission” as recorded in Matthew. Maintains that the expression is unscriptural (although not anti-scriptural) in that no inspired writer ever referred to it as such. Notes that while it is almost universally assumed that the commission was given *to the church*, and that we still operate under its terms, a little calm reasoning will show that this assumption is without warrant. Denies that the church could carry it out even if it had been given the responsibility. Supports his position by pointing out first that this was the second of two commissions given to the apostles (who were uniquely “ambassadors”) and that the church is no more under the second than it was under the first. Secondly, calls attention to the fact that in order to carry out the second commission one would need the ability to speak foreign languages which were new to them— which power Jesus assured the apostles they would have. Thirdly, the apostles had to fulfill the commission during their lifetime or they did not fulfill it at all. Fourthly, when Paul wrote to the Romans (10:18) he stated, with regard to the preaching necessary for faith, that “their voice has gone out to all the earth . . . to the ends of the world.” And to the Colossians he specifically said that the gospel had

been preached to every creature under heaven (1:23). This, he concludes, represents the completion of the apostolic commission. Cites several commentators who agree that “the end” that was to come following the preaching of the gospel “throughout the world” (Mt. 24:14), refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Delivered Faith

[[Essay](#)]

First of three essays expounding on the message of Jude. States that Jude needs to be studied because of the way he deals with a crisis situation. Takes note of the fact that Jude is self-effacing and willing to be known by his relationship to his more prominent brother, James. Makes numerous comments regarding Jude’s introduction to his epistle, examining and defining several words such as *love, mercy, grace, and peace*. Points out that although Jude states he was very eager to write concerning our common salvation, and had begun to do so, he then received information which caused him to alter his plans. His letter is an appeal (as the word *parakaleo* would indicate), an appeal to contend (*epagonizesthai*), which contains the word “agonize”) for the faith. The word “faith” does not refer to the entire new testament canon (since it hadn’t yet been written) but to our absolute trust in Jesus as God’s Son and Anointed. The scriptures constitute the testimony of that faith. The faith is not a philosophy, a compilation of laws or a compendium of ethical precepts. The faith came. It is historical. There was a time “before faith came” (Galatians 3:23) and a time designated as “after faith came” (Galatians 3:25). The faith is both a gift and a response to that gift, and both are personal. The faith was proclaimed fully on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord. Not a word was ever added to the faith. The reason Jude wrote this letter under such pressure was to warn of

saboteurs (probably Gnostic teachers) who had wormed their way into the church and were perverting the grace of God into licentiousness.

Yesterday's Wisdom

[[Essay](#)]

An overview of the book of Proverbs based on the author's earlier book of radio sermons titled *Proven Proverbs* (1947). Suggests that with the onset of world trade, under Solomon's administration, the first nine chapters of the book may be viewed as a workbook prepared by the diplomatic corp for the orientation of young men applying for jobs in the Department of State. Chapters 10 and following represent the kind of encapsulated philosophy with which kings of the day sought to instruct their subjects. One of the interesting things about the "workbook" is its warning of dangers in the city to which an unsuspecting small-town youth would be exposed. It warns against street gangs, the red-light district, bored married women whose husbands are commercial travelers, excessive sleeping, staying calm under pressure, staying off the bottle, and co-signing a note for a bank loan. For those wanting to get their heads screwed on right suggests using the divine lug wrench provided in the book of Proverbs.

A Necessary Reminder

[[Essay](#)]

Second of a two-part analysis of Jude. Calls attention to the fact that Jude refers to God's judgment in connection with three historical events— the destruction of the Israelites in the wilderness, the casting down of the angels who sinned, and the

visitation of wrath upon Sodom and Gomorrah and neighboring cities— as an illustration of what a serious crime it is in divine sight to reject the testimony related to the divinity of Jesus. Sees in Jude's reference to God having saved the Israelites out of Egypt only to destroy some afterward, a clear denial of the idea that a child of God cannot so sin as to be eternally lost. Opines that one who wills to accept Christ can will to reject him: God's children are willing, but not will-less. Believes that Jude's reference to the angels is to show that just as Michael and the angels were called to do battle to vindicate the right of God to rule, so the holy people are called upon to contend for the faith which asserts the right of Christ to rule. Regarding Jude's reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, states that there are times when the mass is so corrupting that salt cannot affect it and must be withdrawn for its own preservation. Takes the opportunity to point out the clear condemnation by scripture of homosexual and lesbian acts. To show the consummate folly of mere men reviling against higher beings Jude records that even Michael would not speak evil of the devil. In presenting this argument Jude does not quote from scripture but apparently from, *The Assumption of Moses*. Jude notes that these men (like Gnostic teachers) deride what they do not understand rather than admit their ignorance, and in those things they knew by instinct they destroyed themselves. Concludes asserting that no man denies the faith once delivered who sincerely believes that Jesus was raised up and made both Lord and Christ or by taking a position upon the issues which have divided us. Many of our problems stem from the fact that we confuse *the faith* with the letters addressed to those who are in it.

Letters I Receive

[[Essay](#)]

A sometimes humorous review of letters received by the

author, most of which are critical of his writings. Suspects the best thing that ever happened to him was to learn that one does not have to agree with him to be received of God and recognized as his child. Recalls that it was while aboard an American Airlines plane that the thought first hit him that we are all brothers in error, just about different things. Is convinced that wherever men are free to think there will be differences. Believes our brethren have no real concept of being a “Christian only,” and must categorize everyone they meet— the result of trying to identify with God through an organization rather than through the indwelling Spirit. Is convinced that we can whip the problem of division. But we must quit making tests of fellowship out of the things that divide us. Asserts that God did not make conditions of salvation out of these things (instrumental music, Sunday Schools, individual cups, etc.), so we must quit making them into conditions of union and communion. Urges that we hold our opinions and not forge them into dogma; that we not violate conscience, but that we not measure others by it. If it is a sin to be divided, then we must give up our divisions and unite!

Wandering Stars

[Essay]

The last of a three-part study of Jude. Examines verses 12-25. Cites Barclay and Hase in explaining the Love Feast which Gnostic heretics used as occasions for attempted seduction of the women present. Those who deny the identity of Jesus are like the Upas tree which produces death to any bird or animal attracted to it. The Gnostic regarded those who trusted in revelation as ignorant of the greater mysteries of knowledge which came from inner light, and yet it was for those that the gloom of darkness was reserved. Observes that the statement regarding Enoch may be a quote from the *Book of Enoch*. Verse 16 contains five indictments of these disreputable characters.

Verses 17-19 calls to mind a quotation from the apostles (Paul and Peter) in which they warn of scoffers who set up divisions by their infiltration of the love feasts. In verse 20 we have the four ingredients essential to the successful spiritual life. Verse 21-A warns against letting one's love for God grow cold through exposure to evil. Verse 21-B encourages one to wait for the mercy of Jesus unto eternal life—the life of God. Verses 22 and 23 speak of those who are in doubt, those who must be dealt with abruptly, and those whose garments are so corrupted that one must hate the garment, but not the person. Verses 24 and 25 contain an ascription of praise of him who is able to keep us from slipping on the ski trails of life and to make us stand without blemish in the great presentation ceremony in the face of his glory.

Secular and Holy

[[Essay](#)]

The coming of Jesus in the flesh marked the end of the distinction between secular and holy. Jesus came not to bring us a new religion, but to make void “religion” as an approach to God. In Christ there are no holy days or places, as there are no unholy days or places. If God’s Spirit is dwelling in a person, wherever he goes is sanctified. Every act one does in Christ Jesus in reverence to him is an act of worship. Paul wrote to the Colossians “Whatever you do . . . do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. . . .” We should regard that “whatever” to be as big as God made it.

What Is Justification?

[[Essay](#)]

A Sunday evening talk at Oak Hill Chapel on the meaning of the word justification as it was used by the writers of the new covenant scriptures. Sin destroys the relationship with God because the nature of the divine requires that he be clothed in absolute justice and impartiality. All are guilty before God and no one can undo a single act. Justification by faith is man's only option. To justify means to acquit or absolve from guilt. It does not mean that one is guiltless. Justification never means to make one worthy. But the grace of God has *declared* us worthy. Our faith is counted to us for justification. Jesus atoned for our sin. All we need to do is identify with him, absolutely and uncompromisingly. This identification is made by faith. The alternatives are "a righteousness of my own" or "the righteousness from God." The divine motivation for justification is grace; the blood of Jesus is the atoning basis; the name of Jesus is the authoritative domain; the enabling response is faith only. Although Voltaire saw a contradiction between Paul and James, Paul affirms the fact of justification by faith; while James describes the quality of faith which maintains the relationship with God. A faith without works is like a watch without works. Justification is directly related to justice, which sternly requires that for every sin there must be proper payment. Sin is an offence against the majesty of God; the elevation of the ego to the chair of the sovereign, the supreme worship of self.

Killed By Attitudes

[[Essay](#)]

Tells the story of an elderly couple that over the years killed the church under their leadership due to an attitude wielded as a club, while thinking they were doing God a service. They loved the church, but not the people. A lot of things get blamed when our human attitude is the real culprit. Tells two other stories, also from personal experience, of preachers who

strangled themselves by their own attitude, always wondering what was wrong with everyone else but themselves. A bitterly critical attitude can change but there must first come a deep conviction of the sinfulness of one's present state. One can mouth the words of Jesus all of his life and never really allow them to filter down into his inner being and transform him. Perhaps nothing is quite so important in this age in which our lot has been cast as to identify with people in their sheer agony and to bring the dynamic of love into their shattered and tormented lives. The kind of selfishness which manifests itself in Pharisaic disdain and indifference has no place in the lives of those who are followers of Jesus.

The Party Spirit

[Essay]

When we read through Paul's list of works of the flesh it is easy to filter out the ones we do not want to see, as for instance the "party spirit" which has ripped to shreds the cloak of Christian union. The greatest tragedy of the party spirit is the influence it wields over the individual heart, breeding hostility and destroying intimate relationships. The party spirit makes cannibals of men. It is the exact opposite of love. (Compares at length the characteristics of love with those of the party spirit.) The party spirit will shrivel the soul and sear the emotions. It is the spirit of arm's length rather than of the encircling arms. It shakes fists rather than hands. It carries a chip on the shoulder rather than a concern in the soul. It confuses values and overthrows priorities. To overcome the party spirit we must come to recognize the magnitude of the divine provision for our salvation. The more one meditates upon it, the less he is inclined to estrangement and hostility. The party spirit can be conquered just as we can overcome any work of the flesh, but we must want to be free from it. We must recognize it for what it is, and we

must apply ourselves by starting to undo our errors by starting to associate with those from whom we are separated. Peacemakers do not wait for others to come to them.

Hail and Farewell

[\[Essay\]](#)

The last essay by the author in the last issue of *Mission Messenger*. Reviews the history and purpose of the journal; expresses gratitude for those who were responsible for supporting it through the years, and reviews his mission and message as reflected in the pages of the journal. Makes several prognostications based on what he has seen in his extensive travel and work among the various branches of the Stone-Campbell restoration movement. Concludes as in most of his essays, with an appeal for maintaining the unity of the Spirit.

MISSION MESSENGER

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